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Trinidad and Tobago Independence Celebrations

Prime Minister's Address to the Youth
Rally, Queen's Park Oval, August 30th,
1962.

Tomorrow, Independence Day, you will be the children of the citizens of the independent State of Trinidad and Tobago, and in a few years after that, you will be called upon, by the law of the land, to share in the privileges and responsibilities, the rights and duties of citizens. Tomorrow I shall have an equally great honour and responsibility - that of being the first Prime Minister of an Independent Nation. I am very happy indeed therefore to take part today in this memorable rally and to send a message, through you the boys and girls here today at the Queen's Park Oval, to all the young people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our new nation must maintain and develop its political system and its democratic machinery. It must provide the Cabinet Ministers, the Members of Parliament, the civil servants, the doctors, the lawyers, the engineers, the ambassadors, the nurses, the teachers, the skilled workers and the writers and artists which every independent nation has and provides for itself. It must organise and plan our economy to increase the national wealth and improve our living standards.

We who are doing all this today as well as we can will have to give way in the years to come to you young people who will come forward to take our place. The Nation is on the march. There is no turning back. The road from now on leads forward and only forward. Your responsibility, therefore, is a very heavy one. If you shrink it, you betray our Nation. If you fail in that responsibility, you jeopardise our Nation.

I have given to the Nation as its watchwords, Discipline, Production, Tolerance. They apply as much to you the young people as to your parents. The discipline is both individual and national; the individual cannot be allowed to seek his personal interests and gratify his personal ambition at the expense of our Nation.

We must produce in order to enjoy. Wealth does not drop from the skies for any individual or any Nation. Reduce production, skylark on the job, take twice as long to do a job and make it cost twice as much - do any of these things and in effect you reduce the total amount available to be shared among the total number of people, you don't pull your weight, and you fatten at the expense of others.

Your rally here today is a good demonstration of our mixed society. Some of you have ancestors who came from one country. Some of you profess one religion, some another, others a third or fourth. You in your schools have, like the Nation in general, only two alternatives - you learn to live together in peace, or you fight it out and destroy one another. The second alternative makes no sense and is sheer barbarism. The first alternative is civilised and is simple common sense. You, the children, yours is the great responsibility to educate your parents. Teach them to live together in harmony, the difference being not race or colour of skin but merit only, differences of wealth and family status being rejected in favour of equality of opportunity. I call upon all of you young people to practise what you sing today and tomorrow, to translate the ideal of our National Anthem into a code of everyday behaviour, and to make our Nation one in which "ev'ry creed and race find an equal place".

I give to you, the young people, one additional principle on which to base your lives for the salvation of our Nation. This principle is honesty. In your future career you will at some time or other have responsibility for money that is not yours, whether your employer is the Government of the country or a private firm. Every country makes special provision for the control of public expenditure and for the protection of the property of its citizens. In the final analysis, however, the control is exercised not by the Government or by the police but by the citizens themselves. Make honesty the guiding principle of your lives from this day forward. Let your ambition

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be the development of a Nation which, whatever its limitations, is distinguished in the eyes of the world by the honesty and integrity of its citizens.

And so I say to you young people, forward to Independence. Do not allow anyone to disrespect our National Flag. Do not allow anyone to destroy one single National Bird. Do not allow anyone to desecrate our National Anthem. They are your Flag, your Birds, your Anthem. It is your Nation, even more than it is the Nation of your parents. You are the future; we are at best the present, at worst the past.

To your tender and loving hands the future of the Nation is entrusted. In your innocent hearts the pride of the Nation is enshrined. On your scholastic development the salvation of the Nation is dependent. At the birth of our Nation, four of its leading personalities, four of the people with the heaviest responsibility for its guidance, in the Cabinet, Parliament and the Judiciary, are scholarship winners, educated abroad at the expense of your parents, the taxpayers: the Prime Minister, The Chief Justice, the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Representatives, and the Leader of the Opposition. When you return to your classes after Independence, remember therefore, each and every one of you, that you carry the future of Trinidad and Tobago in your school bags.

Good luck to you all, to your parents and your teachers, and to Trinidad and Tobago.
