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Address by the Prime Minister
to the Rotary Club of Port of
Spain.

Mr. President, Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very glad to be here with you this evening at the Annual Dinner of the Rotary Club of Port of Spain, when your outgoing officers are handing over to your new team, and I thank you for your invitation to speak to you on a subject of my choice. I thought that I should speak to you, and through you to the Nation, on developments in the field of public policy over the past few months.

Your meeting is being held against a background of a series of world uncertainties and world problems. If only for reasons of geography, we cannot be indifferent to the progress of subversion in Venezuela. The Middle East cauldron has not yet settled down, with all that that means for the production and distribution of oil. The Nigerian Federation has reached the breaking point, with what effects on world oil production is still unclear. The War in Vietnam continues. The prospect of Britain joining the European Common Market is still uncertain, with possible disastrous consequences for our markets for sugar, citrus, cocoa and petroleum.

In this general situation the Government is doing the best it can to keep the country going forward, and going forward in domestic peace. Fortunately, as oil is exhausted in one area, with all the human problems that that involves, welcome increases of production are being made in other parts of the country. Sugar is too dependent on satisfactory economic arrangements on the world market for me to make any

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prognosticaiion as to its future, except that it is fairly certain that the struggle to maintain our competitive position in the world market, with all that that means for employment opportunities, remains the decisive consideration.

On the financial side, the Fiscal Reform Committee unostentatiously continues its work to try to improve the investment climate. The Central Bank has now become de facto and de jure the Banker to the Government. Government accounts previously held and operated privately have finally been transferred to the Central Bank as provided in the Central Bank Act, and we are about to hand over the executive control of the Exchange Control function to the Central Bank. We are now taking steps formally to make the Central Bank the agent through which some of our foreign loans will be raised.

We are tightening up on the income tax situation, especially now that the Appeals Board has been constituted. We have enlisted the assistance of the United States Government Internal Revenue Department in investigating the administrative and technical problems of the Division of Inland Revenue, in providing training facilities for staff, and generally in guiding the Department to greater efficiency. At the same time we are taking steps to improve the efficiency of the Customs and Excise Department. Firm proposals for the introduction of a social security programme have been submitted to Government and the appropriate legal instruments are being finalised. More and more posts in the Public Service and the Statutory Boards are being unfrozen in order to staisfy urgend needs. In international financial circles our continued creditworthiness is attested to by the financial participation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in our Southern Highway project from Chaguanas to San Fernando, and the Bank has further expressed interest in two other projects, education and water supply, which are being investigated at this moment,

Steps are being taken to improve the liaison between the Government and the Statutory Boards for improving their efficiency in the light

of Government's decision that the revenue-generating Boards should be self-sufficient. All Ministers now meet with their Boards once a month and I have recently held one of a series of monthly meetings with the Chairmen and Secretaries of all major Statutory Boards for a discussion of the responsibilities of these Boards in the Government's overall financial programme. Negotiations continue over the future of B.W.I.A. and the effort to make it the regional carrier while expanding and improving its equipment.

From the standpoint of jobs the Supplementary Development Programme has begun to get into its stride. The programme is already underway in respect of the Tobago programme, the sewerage connections programme, the programme of roads, bridges and coastal erosion, and the minor water mains. Tenders have been awarded for the construction of flats and work should start almost immediately. The essential preliminary work for the development of housing sites for sale to the public is under way. The Industrial Development Corporation has taken the initial steps in respect of the programme of construction of factories and hotels. Construction work on the 10-storey block of Government offices should begin in three months time.

We have taken the necessary preliminary steps for joining the Inter-American Development Bank and we should formally be admitted in a few days. We expect the first mission to follow immediately thereafter to discuss in detail five major economic aid projects which we have already submitted to the Bank.

The Industrial Stabilisation Act has been amended to provide for reinstatement of workers dismissed in harsh and oppressive circumstances. The possibility of even further amendment is now being discussed more leisurely; this will not exclude the prospect of outside expert assistance. Amendments to the Trade Union Ordinance, principally aimed at the better control of union funds, are now available for public comment. The Population Council has been appointed by the Cabinet, looking towards the easing of the population problem and the problem of job opportunities in the long term.

In the Western Hemisphere and the Caribbean the Government has agreed to the establishment of a Mixed Commission with Venezuela which will consider matters of common concern to both countries, with particulrr reference to the possibility of the establishment of a regional sub-growing within

the Latin American Free Trade Area comprising Venezuela and Colombia among other countries. Our Latin American connections will necessarily assume greater importance as the prospect of continued British preferences more and more recede as Britain moves closer to Europe. We are actively preparing for a meeting of officials in Guyana on the question of Caribbean economic integration which is to precede a Heads of Governments meeting in Barbados later in the year. In the meantime we are making preparations to be hosts to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers in September.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a brief review of the activities of your Government over the last few months. The question necessarily arises what can businessmen do to further these aims and objects, and particularly the Rotary Club. I apppreciate the assistance of the business community in the work of the Fiscal Reform Committee. I welcome, Mr. President, the tangible assistance that has already been provided by the business community of Trinidad and Tobago in the provision of short-term jobs by bringing forward their development programmes for 1968. That has been very helpful in these difficult days.

But you must remember two things the first is that you must keep the national interest in mind and that nothing whatsover is gained by merely getting up and criticsing Government's actions or Government's intentions or Government's nominees. There is only one Government of Trinidad and Tobago. That Government must take the national interest into consideration, and it is always guided by the fact that it is put in power by a Political Party whose clearly constituted objectives and principles have been supported in three elections by the population of the country. The business community is only one of the many interests in the country that the Government has to bear in mind.

The second note of warning I want to strike relates to our success at Expo '67. The amount of talent that we have been able to bring forward for the satisfaction of the world in this single exhibition is the particular field that we decided to emphasize only suggests that we have such hidden talent in other fields, and that we only have to search for talent and give it an opportunity to express itself if it is to make an outstanding success of our capacity to help ourselves as our artistes have done at Expo '67. Whilst we have expedited the procedures for the issue of work permits, merely seeking out every occasion and on the flimsiest of alibis to bring in foreign talent on the ground that local talent is not available does not in the long run conduce to national progress. If non-nationals must be brought in, then they must be

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associated with specific provision of training opportunities for our local people.

And now, Mr. President, I give the Rotary Club two specific fields in which it can help to promote the Government's objectives of maintaining peace and stability in our country in a world that is falling more and more in confusion. The first is that you should participate more fully and directly in the purchasing of Government Treasury Bills and Savings Bonds. I warn you businessmen of what you are too frequently apt to forget - that every form of assistance from foreign countries and international agencies is produced on the mobilisation of local resources and the provision of local counter-part finance in a proportion even greater than the foreign aid provided.

The second is that, while congratulating you on your work at the Boys Industrial School, you should pay additional attention to the youth of the country - the youth who are frustrated by a lack of employment opportunities, confused by the deteriorating world situation, becoming more and more addicted to dope and to vice and to violence. A few days ago the Seventh Day Adventist Community, following the example set by the Government, instituted a Youth Camp. The capital and recurrent costs of such a venture are high. It is possible for the Rotary Club to select as its major project for 1968 the establishment of a Youth Camp in some part of the country for a minimum of 100 boys to provide them with an opportunity for disciplined life in congenial surroundings and for training in some of the arts and crafts which are so essential to the modern-day survival of a small country in a world indifferent to small countries?

I put this suggestion to you for your careful consideration. You want to bring people of different countries together, to develop better principles of life, and to do community work in surroundings of each individual Club. That is what you, Mr. President, have told me of your aims and objects. Contribute by your business activities to the improvement and enrichment of life in Trinidad and Tobago, provide more jobs, help to promote civilised and refined industrial relations practices, seek to give the obvious talent in the community a chance to express itself and to contribute to the national welfare, help t to mobilise local savings for economic and social development, and to give the youth a chance to perform some aspect of national service.

I wish your Club well and I thank you for giving me this opportunity of speaking to so many of you.