



STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR, SC
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SIPARIA
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
IN TRIBUTE TO THE LATE PATRICK M. A. MANNING
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Madam Speaker, I rise to join the nation in mourning the death of Mr. Patrick Manning, who served in this honourable house for 44 unbroken years.

No one in our country has served the people that long ... and that alone is testament to the former Prime Minister's dedication to the people of San Fernando East and our great country.

Williams Shakespeare wrote: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them."

In Mr. Manning's case only one applied to him; he was neither born great nor had greatness thrust upon him. He was born a simple, humble man who achieved greatness through dedication, hard work and a deep commitment to his party and Trinidad and Tobago.

Greatness, Madam Speaker, was what he achieved on his own.

He was one of three PNM members who survived the political tsunami of 1986 but he faced the challenges ahead with the strength of a true leader. Many people facing those circumstances would have given up and walked away. Mr. Manning did neither. His party needed leadership and that is what he provided. He rebuilt his battered party and triumphantly led the PNM back to office in 1991.

It took courage and a clear vision to achieve such a feat. And when circumstances sent him back to opposition, he remained steadfast in his determination to guide his party along a path that he defined. And that resilience is what caused him to return to government with clear mandates in 2002 and again in 2007.

Mr. Manning was a worthy opponent.

We stood on different sides in the political battlefield and crossed swords on many issues. We had different visions on how to take our country forward but the common thread was that we were both committed to Trinidad and Tobago; our respective visions were developed out of our love for country and our commitment to the enhancement of the life of the people.

That, Madam Speaker, is what leadership is about. And that is what defined the life of Patrick Manning.

He was a new kid on the block when he entered Parliament in 1971 as the member for San Fernando East, the successor to Mr. Gerard Montano. From that beginning Mr. Manning rose to become a respected leader at home, in the Caribbean region and internationally not because greatness was thrust on him but because he was determined to learn and follow before leading.

He learned well from his leader, Dr. Eric Williams, and his other political contemporaries and mentors. Perhaps the most important lessons were about loyalty and commitment.

Mr. Manning faced many setbacks in his career. He had to wait ten years before getting a full ministerial position but he never lost patience or turned against his party. He used the time to learn; and he learned well, Madam Speaker.

Patrick Manning was not just a true patriot, he epitomized what a politician should be. He was one of the most dedicated members of the PNM and never lost hope or deserted even in the party's darkest hours. He sincerely believed in the greatness of his party and its motto that it would always prevail; no PNM leader fought as hard he did to make that happen.

And he took responsibility for his actions. When the party faced humiliation on May 24, 2010, Mr. Manning took full responsibility. And though he was literally chased out of the leadership by members of his own party, his loyalty never waned.

That is a striking characteristic of an outstanding leader; that is who was Mr. Manning.

Even though his health was failing he was prepared to return to Parliament in 2015 to serve his constituents and Trinidad and Tobago. That was not to be.

The party sent very clear signals that it was time for him to leave the stage. Most people would have been bitter and resentful. Not Patrick

Manning. He put aside his differences and the humiliation of rejection and supported his party.

Mr. Manning sat in opposition more than once, but his focus never shifted; his commitment remained unshaken and he achieved what no other leader of our country ever did.

Trinidad and Tobago will remember him as the only leader who has been in an out of office twice. In 1995 he could have returned to government in a coalition but he maintained the PNM's independence and preferred to walk away from the prime minister's office, knowing that keeping focus would take him back to government. And it did.

Patrick Manning served his people with integrity and loyalty. He worked with a range of other people to achieve the greatest good for the general population, often with people who held conflicting political views.

His strength of character defined him, as did his deep sense of humour, his laughter and his infectious charisma. Even his harshest critics agree that Mr. Manning was an outstanding and charming gentleman. He was never afraid to stand up and say what he felt was needed to be said, even though at times it may have seemed to be politically incorrect.

And while many of us would continue to challenge some of the decisions he made, at least he had a vision that charted the course for the decision he made. And I have no doubt that in all sincerity he believed that whatever actions he took were in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Manning inspired many young people to work hard and to stay focused in order to achieve success.

His wife, Hazel, said what made her husband a special politician was his love and charisma, and his commitment to our youth.

Mr. Manning demonstrated that commitment with the establishment of GATE, building on what a previous UNC government started with its dollar for dollar program. It didn't matter where the idea originated;

what mattered was that it was good and he improved it so future generations would benefit from education.

I endorse the sentiment of Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley who said Mr. Manning "made development and the well being of Trinidad and Tobago a priority and in doing so dedicated his life to serving our twin island state."

We have lost a role model, a brother, a father and friend. Today the nation is in grief for the loss of a true patriot and leader.

The loss we have suffered would be felt for many months and years to come.

Today we mourn his passing but we also celebrate his life as a courageous leader who put country first.

Patrick Manning will remain immortal because people die only when we forget them. Who in all honesty can forget Patrick Manning, who guided his party and this nation through some of the most difficult times?

There comes a time for all us when the body dies, but the soul lives on. In the words of the poet John Donne – **"One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more..."**

Patrick Manning's voice will no longer be heard in this august chamber but he will continue to live and to occupy our thoughts. Let us remember the happy times, the laughter and everything that made Patrick Manning so special to us.

Madam Speaker I close with the words from **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**:

"We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

Let us pray that while our brother is gone to be with our Father, he will continue to remain with us, to continue to watch over us, even as his soul finds eternal rest.

I thank you.