

20th Sitting of the House of Representatives
On Monday 4th July 2016

Today we convened this Parliamentary Sitting with knowledge of the passing last Saturday 2nd July 2016, of a former Member of Parliament for San Fernando East; of our nation's longest serving Legislator, and a former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago:

Mr. Patrick Augustus Mervyn Manning

As a nation, we were informed of Mr. Manning's hospitalization early last week but little did we anticipate that his death would be so soon.

This occasion should confront us with a deep sense of our own mortality, our own fragility and vulnerability in the face of an unknown future. Who am I? Where am I going? - These are the existential questions that probably arise in the shadows of our mind at this time.

Those questions are usually in the shadows because they are the ones that the majority of us rather not consider as they force us to be real with ourselves; they force us to be authentically honest and to realize that in contemplating our individual and collective experience of Mr. Manning, we are really contemplating our own attitudes towards life, death and dying.

Those of us who had the experience of working and interacting with Mr. Manning would bear testimony to the fact that one of his favoured statements of encouragement or motivation was of biblical origin:

“TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN MUCH IS EXPECTED”

That statement aptly encapsulated Mr. Manning’s gratitude for not all that he had accomplished or acquired materially but also for his God-given talents and additionally coloured his approach to selfless-service to his country.

Thus, as persons gifted with the responsibility for governance of this country, of this nation, much is also expected of us.

It may be reasonable that the detached bystander may expect that the primary question for us here gathered in this time of national mourning must be:

“How can the passing of Mr. Manning help us to be better parliamentarians, better citizens and above all better humans?”

My ruminations have caused me to recall the words of Frantz Fanon—

“Death is always close by. And what’s important is not to know if you can avoid it but to know that you have done the most possible to realise your ideas”

No one in this Honourable House can deny the array of ideas and dreams that Mr. Patrick Augustus Mervyn Manning realised for the wellbeing of this nation during

his 44 years as a Legislator in this Parliament in the service of not only his constituents of San Fernando East but of the entire Trinidad and Tobago.

May his legacy be honoured with accuracy and truth, may his family find solace in the outpouring of local, regional and international tribute, and his soul rest in peace. Amen

Members, I have directed the Clerk of the House to convey, on our behalf, our condolences to the family of Mr. Patrick Manning.