

Election of Speaker

Friday, February 14, 2003

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Friday, February 14, 2003

The College met at 1.00 p.m.

PRAYERS

[HON. BARENDRA SINANAN *in the Chair*]

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to declare open this meeting of the Electoral College which, as you know, is a unicameral body comprising the Members of the Senate and of the House of Representatives.

You were summoned here by letters dated January 24 and February 03, 2003. There is just one item on the agenda, which is the election of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Only Members of the House of Representatives are competent to nominate candidates and there have been two nominations. These were signed by the nominees and the required number of Members of the House of Representatives.

I shall give you details of the nominations. The first nomination received by my office was on Tuesday, February 04, 2003 at 3.00 p.m.

Details of the nomination are as follows:

RAMDIAL, Ganace.

Address: 2 Paria Avenue

Shorelands

Point Cumana

Occupation: Legal Consultant.

Those Members of the House representing the undermentioned constituencies who signed the nomination paper were:

Name	Constituency
Basdeo Panday	Couva North
Ganga Singh	Caroni East
Hamza Rafeeq	Caroni Central
Chandresh L.D. Sharma	Fyzabad

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Roodal Moonilal	Oropouche
Adesh Nanan	Tabaquite
Nizam Baksh	Naparima
Manohar Ramsaran	Chaguanas
Harry Partap	Nariva
Kelvin Ramnath	Couva South
Kamla Persad-Bissessar	Siparia
Subhas Panday	Princes Town
Fuad Khan	Barataria/San Juan
Gerald Yetming	St. Joseph
Gillian Lucky	Pointe-a-Pierre
Winston Dookeran	St. Augustine.

The declaration of Mr. Ganace Ramdial, according to the nomination paper filed, was as follows:

“I, GANACE RAMDIAL nominated in the foregoing nomination paper hereby consent to such nomination as candidate for election as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and name as my address for serving of process and papers under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Electoral College Regulations, 1976—

Address: 2 Paria Avenue, Shorelands, Point Cumana

Witness my hand this 4th day of February, 2003.

Signed: Ganace Ramdial.”

The second nomination was received by my office at 3.57 p.m. on Tuesday, February 04, 2003. Details of the nomination are as follows:

RICHARDS, George Maxwell

Address: 24B Spiers Flats, Valley View, Maracas/St. Joseph

Occupation: Chemical Engineer.

Those Members of the House representing the undermentioned constituencies who signed the nomination paper were as follows:

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Name	Constituency
Colm Imbert	Diego Martin East
Eulalie James	Laventille West
Edward Hart	Tunapuna
Jarrette Narine	Arouca North
Camille Robinson-Regis	Arouca South
Anthony Roberts	St. Ann's East
Pennelope Beckles	Arima
Franklin Khan	Ortoire/Mayaro
Diane Seukeran	San Fernando West
Lawrence Achong	Point Fortin
John Rahael	Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West
Patrick Manning	San Fernando East
Keith Rowley	Diego Martin West

The declaration of Mr. George Maxwell Richards according to the nomination paper filed was as follows.

“I, GEORGE MAXWELL RICHARDS nominated in the foregoing nomination paper hereby consent to such nomination as candidate for election as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and name as my address for serving of process and papers under the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Electoral College Regulations, 1976:

Address: 24B Spiers Flats, Valley View, Maracas/St. Joseph

Witness my hand this 4th day of February, 2003.

Signed: G.M. Richards”

Hon. Members, both nominations are in conformity with section 30 of the Constitution and, according to Regulation 5 of the Electoral College Regulations, the two candidates are deemed to stand nominated. Nothing has been submitted to me by anyone thereby giving proof to my satisfaction that either candidate nominated is dead, not qualified under section 23 of the Constitution, or that either candidate has withdrawn. A poll by secret ballot is therefore required with

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each accredited Member of the College having a vote and with me also having a casting vote.

By Regulation 8(6) of the Electoral College Regulations, 1976, no debate on the merits of a candidate shall be held except that a proposer of each candidate may address the Electoral College on the merits of his or her candidate for a maximum of 15 minutes in terms of a text submitted to me and already approved by me.

I now call on a proposer from among those nominating both candidates to address the Electoral College if he or she so desires. It is my understanding that the hon. Leader of the Opposition will speak on behalf of Mr. Ganace Ramdial and that the hon. Prime Minister will speak on behalf of Mr. George Maxwell Richards.

I therefore now call on the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Basdeo Panday. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva South*): Mr. Chairman, I wish to nominate for the post of President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Mr. Ganace Ramdial. Mr. Ramdial, who is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and lives at 2 Paria Avenue, Shorelands in Point Cumana, began his secondary education as a student of the Naparima College in San Fernando. He is a barrister-at-law of the United Kingdom and an attorney-at-law of Trinidad and Tobago, having attended the College of Law and the Inns of Court School of Law in London. He is an honourable member of the Inner Temple and had practised law in Trinidad and Tobago for a short period before he began pursuing another career.

Mr. Ramdial is also a trained banker. He is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of the United Kingdom. He is trained in banking, finance and management and pursued his studies at several international institutions including the Bank Administration Institute, Chicago, United States of America; the Manchester Business School of the University of Manchester; the International Management Institute in Geneva; the Long Term Credit Bank in Tokyo, Japan and the Institute of Directors in London. He has also had the benefit of short-term training achievements at the National Westminster Bank and Lloyd's Bank of London.

His career spans a wide range of experiences. As a young man, he was a tax officer in the Inland Revenue Department of the Marylebone District in London and, later, revenue officer in the legal department of the Board of Inland Revenue in Port of Spain where he acted as senior legal officer on many occasions. He held

executive positions at the Standard Life Assurance Company and the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company. He held the posts of deputy managing director of the National Commercial Bank, executive chairman and chief executive officer of the Trinidad and Tobago Cooperative Bank and the Trinidad and Tobago Cooperative Trust Company. Between 1961 and 1967 he was also a part-time lecturer in the extramural department of the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Ramdial is not without considerable experience in the world of corporate governance in the private sector. At one time or another he was a director of the board of the National Commercial Bank, the National Commercial Bank Trust, the International Industrial Merchant Bank, the NCB Corporate Services Limited, the National Energy Corporation and served as chairman of the National Petroleum Marketing Company, the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Company Limited, Trinidad and Tobago Printing and Packaging Limited, Trinfinance Limited, Trinidad Cooperative Bank Limited and Trinidad Cooperative Bank Trust Limited. Mr. Ramdial was also President of the Institute of Banking of Trinidad and Tobago.

Between 1995 and 2002, Mr. Ramdial was President of the Senate, during which time he acted as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on 20 occasions for a total period of 405 days, that is to say, approximately 14 months, including a period of six and one half consecutive months in 1998 when the incumbent was gravely ill. Mr. Ramdial has an enviable record of parliamentary experience. He was joint president of the Trinidad and Tobago branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, serving as chairman of the executive committee of the local branch on several occasions. He was also a member of the executive committee of the International Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as representative of the Caribbean, American and Atlantic regions. He led the Trinidad and Tobago delegation at several seminars and conferences of the CPA in various parts of the Commonwealth. Having a special interest in constitutional law, he benefited from several international seminars and conferences of Speakers and presiding officers.

During his entire career, and particularly during the period that Mr. Ramdial served as President of the Senate and as President of the Republic, he demonstrated a quality of impeccable moral rectitude and unimpeachable integrity. The nation applauded his display of total impartiality when, during a debate in the Senate, there was an equality of votes between the government on the one hand and the Opposition and Independent Senators on the other, Mr. Ramdial, as presiding officer, had no hesitation in acting in accordance with the

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parliamentary convention that required a presiding officer to use his casting vote to maintain the status quo. Mr. Ramdial promptly voted against the Government. [*Desk thumping*] He showed no signs of fear or compunction in disciplining Members of that House, even when they were from the government side.

Mr. Chairman, at this stage of our nation's development, that is the kind of person Trinidad and Tobago needs to heal the wounds that threaten to fracture our society irretrievably. We have always maintained that this country will only move forward when vacant posts are filled on the principles of meritocracy. The post of President should be no exception. We have nominated Mr. Ramdial purely on the basis of merit. I hasten to add that our nomination must in no way be interpreted as a slight upon the character of anyone, including the other candidate. I therefore appeal to Members on this solemn occasion, when the entire nation is looking at us, to shed their partisan cloaks, to consider the interests of this fragile nation, to put country above party and above self and to vote according to their respective consciences.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: I now call on the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Patrick Manning): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Chairman of the Electoral College of Trinidad and Tobago, hon. Members of the Electoral College; we who are privileged to be hon. Members in our nation's Parliament are here at the behest of the sovereign people of Trinidad and Tobago who have mandated us to pursue the best interests of this country while respecting the Constitution and the law of the land. All our words and deeds as parliamentarians must have their basis in this sacred mandate from the citizens of this country.

This is another momentous day in the life of our nation as we seek, in accordance with our Constitution, to elect the fourth President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This exercise gives us still more reason to be proud of the democracy we practise and protect in Trinidad and Tobago. Whilst, in the opinion of some, it would have been ideal to have had a single candidate based on agreement between Government and Opposition, we are nonetheless convinced that our democracy will be well served by today's dignified contest for the highest office in the land. The region and the world will once again see the maturity of Trinidad and Tobago as we settle our differences through the democratic process and as we hereafter enjoy the productive stability that comes from acceptance of the wisdom and will of the majority.

Mr. Chairman, hon. Members, on behalf of Members on this side of the House and the Senate, I have the honour to nominate George Maxwell Richards for the

office of President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We consider Prof. Richards to be eminently qualified to hold the highest office in this country. He is a citizen of great and varied experience. He started from humble origins, worked his way through the ranks and achieved excellence and success through discipline, dedication and diligence. He has had an outstanding career in academia where he earned significant esteem as an instructor, intellectual and administrator. Notwithstanding the great demands of his professional life, Prof. Richards was always willing to answer the call of service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. He has demonstrated a capacity for sacrifice and commitment to the national interest and there can be no doubt about his loyalty and devotion to our beloved nation.

He is a man of irrefutable integrity and established trustworthiness and is also well known for his warm and exuberant personality. He has always displayed genuine compassion and concern for the unfortunate and disadvantaged, revealing the humanitarian heart that resides in the breast of the professional academia. This balanced personality and approach have been the basis for action and opinion which, in turn, have earned him the reputation for sensitivity, sound judgment and dispassionate assessment.

Prof. Richards holds a doctorate in chemical engineering from the University of Cambridge, in addition to BSc and MSc degrees from the University of Manchester. He spent over 20 years in academic service at the University of West Indies as a senior lecturer, professor of chemical engineering, deputy principal of the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies and emeritus professor, a position which he holds up to the present time.

His record of public service includes chairmanship of the National Training Board and the Marine Affairs Council of the Institute of Marine Affairs. He was also a board member of the Industrial Development Corporation, the National Advisory Council, the National Gas Company, Trintoc and the Trinidad Publishing Company. He has professional membership of the Association of Professional Engineers of Trinidad and Tobago, the Institute of Chemical Engineers, the Institute of Petroleum and the Royal Society of Chemistry, all of the United Kingdom. In 1977, George Maxwell Richards was awarded the Chaconia Gold Medal for both his achievements and service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman, hon. Members, our country has been very well served by all those who have so far held the office of President of the Republic. Their collective record will always be a source of great inspiration and instruction for those who take up the mantle after them. On this occasion, it is fitting that we pay

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tribute to the outgoing President, His Excellency Arthur N.R. Robinson, for his unique and evolutionary contribution to the presidential tradition of Trinidad and Tobago. There is no doubt that he presided over a most challenging period in the political life of our nation and we must be thankful for his vast experience which furnished him with the wisdom and insight to steer us through that very testing time. His presidency, like the rest of his public life, marks him out as a hero and patriot of Trinidad and Tobago.

We believe that our candidate, George Maxwell Richards, will also bring, in a most positive way, his individual stamp to the Office of the President. He too has the capacity to enrich the Office of President. He has the experience, wisdom, integrity and impartiality that are required of the President of our Republic. He is a firm believer in democracy as the best form of governance and, as President of the Republic, he is certain to be a guardian of the Republic and our democratic way of life. We look forward to the support of hon. Members for George Maxwell Richards as the fourth President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman and hon. Members for your attention. May God bless our nation. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before I declare the poll open and hand over the conduct of same to the Clerk of the House, I wish to indicate to you some of the arrangements made to facilitate the poll. The Clerk of the House will be calling every Member present in alphabetical order to cast his or her ballot. The Clerk of the House would initial the ballot which you are given, in your presence, thereby validating it. The Clerk would demonstrate to you how to fold your ballot paper in such a manner that only her initials will be visible. You will then proceed to the voting booth, which is located to the back of my chair. In that booth you will find an "X" stamp which you will use to place your X in the space provided therefor on the right-hand side of the name of the candidate of your choice on your ballot paper.

Please note that regulation 12(3) requires an X to be made. Once you are finished voting, please fold your ballot paper so that the initials of the Clerk can be seen without opening the ballot. This procedure will be further demonstrated to you by the Clerk. You will then return to the Table along the left side of my chair and show the initials of the Clerk on the ballot paper, without opening the ballot, to the Clerk or depositing it into the ballot box which is provided. Should you spoil your ballot paper in any manner, please return it to the Clerk who will issue you with another.

Regulation 17(2) of the Electoral College Regulations provides that, in counting the votes the Clerk shall reject all ballots that are on ballot papers that have not been supplied by him/her; that have not been marked by any candidate or have not been marked in the manner prescribed by these Regulations on which votes have been given for more than one candidate; where it cannot be established for whom the Members voted and upon which there is any writing or mark by which the Member can be identified.

Hon. Members, I now formally declare the ballot open and hand over proceedings to the Clerk of the House and, in doing so, to hand over to her a book of 100 ballots with names of both candidates on them and the keys to the ballot box.

[Document and keys handed to Clerk of the House]

Madam Clerk: Hon. Members, I am satisfied that there is no material in the box. The box is now closed and it shall so remain until the end of balloting. The voting process will now begin.

[Voting process begins]

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before I formally announce the closing of the poll, I wish to request any Member present who is properly accredited and who is desirous of voting and has not had the opportunity to vote, to so indicate. There being no such indication, I now formally announce the close of the poll in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Electoral College Regulations.

One proposer representing each of the candidates is now invited to sit with the Clerk to count the votes. I understand that Mr. Ganga Singh is willing to do so on behalf of Mr. Ganace Ramdial and Mr. Colm Imbert is willing to do so on behalf of Prof. Maxwell Richards.

Ballots counted.

Statement of Poll handed to Chairman.

Result:

No. of ballot papers received from the Clerk	—	100
No. of ballots cast for Ganace Ramdial		25
No. of ballots cast for George Maxwell Richards		43
No. of rejected ballots		0

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, in accordance with section 31(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I now declare that Prof. George Maxwell Richards has obtained the greater number of votes and, as such, is elected as the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] This shall be for a five-year term as set out in section 33(1) of the Constitution.

In accordance with section 37(1) of the Constitution, “a President shall before entering upon the duties of his office take and subscribe the oath of office...” The current term of the Office of President shall continue until 30 days after today’s date, in accordance with section 33(3) of the Constitution. An instrument duly signed and sealed by me certifying the election at today’s meeting of Prof. George Maxwell Richards, as President, in consequence of the ballot, shall be issued.

On behalf of the Members of Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, I take this opportunity to extend congratulations to Prof. George Maxwell Richards, on his election to the esteemed Office of President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I wish him a successful term of office.

To the outgoing President, His Excellency, Arthur N. R. Robinson, I extend best wishes for a happy and comfortable retirement, good health and long life. My sentiments are also extended to the family of His Excellency. May God continue to bless the president-elect and His Excellency with wisdom and knowledge.

Thank you.

Hon. P. Manning: Mr. Chairman of the Electoral College, I am sure that when Parliament convenes at an appropriate time, we will have a chance to pay our respects and congratulations to Prof. George Maxwell Richards, our president-elect.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of—I believe that I can speak for—all Members, to extend sincere congratulations to Prof. George Maxwell Richards, on his election to the exalted Office of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

May I also say to Mr. Ganace Ramdial, that the PNM considers him to be a very fine citizen of this country. The fact that he was not elected today does not mean, in any way, that those of us on this side hold anything against him. We consider him to be a fine citizen and somebody who is very worthy of the nomination that he has received.

Thank you.

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Mr. Basdeo Panday: Mr. Chairman, we on this side of the House wish to join with you and the hon. Prime Minister in also congratulating Prof. George Maxwell Richards, on his election to the Office of President. Like you, we wish him a successful and unbiased term of office.

Thank you.

Motion made and question proposed, That this Electoral College be now adjourned sine die.

Question put and agreed to.

Electoral College adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.42 p.m.