

Election of President

Friday February 15, 2013

ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Friday, February 15, 2013

The College met at 2.00 p.m.

PRAYERS

[HON. WADE MARK *in the Chair*]

[*National Anthem*]

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

Mr. Chairman: I now call to order this Electoral College.

Hon. Members of the Electoral College, in accordance with section 28 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I have convened this meeting of the Electoral College for the purpose of holding an election for President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Before we begin, I am to advise that I have received a request to be excused from this meeting of the Electoral College from Sen. The Hon. Timothy Hamel-Smith, President of the Senate, who is currently acting as President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members, pursuant to section 26(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the date of the election for President was published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Gazette* of Thursday, January 17, 2013. In accordance with section 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona was nominated for election as President by a nomination paper signed by him and 12 Members of the House of Representatives.

The 12 Members of the House of Representatives who signed the nomination paper were:

Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar

Mr. Errol McLeod

Mr. Jack Warner

Mr. Prakash Ramadhar

Mrs. Caroline Seepersad Bachan

Mr. Nizam Baksh

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Mr. Anil Roberts
Mr. Chandresh Sharma
Mr. Rupert Griffith
Mrs. Vernella Alleyne-Toppin
Mr. Stephen Cadiz
Dr. Roodal Moonilal

Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona has signed the declaration in the following terms:

“I, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona 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 and Trinidad and Tobago and the Electoral College Regulations, of 1976:

Flag Staff, St. James

Witness my hand 4th day of February, 2013.

Anthony T. Carmona”

Hon. Members, Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona was the only person nominated for the Office of President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, in accordance with session 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Regulation 9(1)(b) of the Electoral College Regulations of 1976, I hereby declare Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona elected President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

At this time I will invite the hon. Prime Minister to make remarks on the occasion of the election of Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona. Madam Prime Minister you have my leave. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC): Mr. Chairman, esteemed colleagues of the Electoral College, we have just witnessed another significant and momentous event in the history and continuing development of our country. In keeping with the tenets of our Constitution and our commitment to maintain our sacred democracy, we have, with unanimous national commitment, elected our new President.

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The presidency of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a commanding authority in our political and social landscape. He is a person of the people, by the people and for the people. At the same time, he must be above all the people.

When my Government was elected approximately 1,000 days ago, we knew of the enormous challenge that would come before us this 15th day of February, 2013. We were deeply conscious that we would have been required to nominate a candidate for the office of President during our term of office. We were very mindful of our responsibility to ensure that the esteemed Office of President was maintained with the highest traditions, consistent with the formidable responsibilities of the office.

We fully recognized that the President was a tangible symbol—in both word and deed—of our democracy. We shared the conviction that this office was the beacon of our collective endeavour to achieve our own unique place in this world and the meaningful embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of every single citizen of our beloved country.

Against this background, Mr. Chairman, after a most exhaustive and searching review, I had the honour and privilege on February 04, to submit on behalf of my Government, a nomination, standing in my name and in that of 11 of my colleagues, of former Justice Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, Senior Counsel, for selection as the fifth President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman, I am gratified that my Electoral College colleagues across the aisle saw it appropriate to fully support this nomination, which has indeed been welcomed by the entire national community.

President Elect Carmona represents all that is good and noble in our beautiful Trinidad and Tobago. He was born in the rural village of Los Charros, Palo Seco on March 07, 1953, to proud parents Stephen and Barbara Carmona. The family is devoutly Roman Catholic and this firstborn to his dear parents was christened Anthony Thomas Aquinas, after two exalted patron saints.

He attended the Santa Flora Government Primary School, wrote the then Common Entrance examination and earned a place at Presentation College, San Fernando, where his studies included Latin and English literature. Education, I am advised, was always a priority emphasized by Stephen and Barbara Carmona for their six children, and we are told that after a hard day's work, Stephen Carmona found the time each evening, whilst his wife Barbara prepared the evening meal, to sit the children down and go through their lessons, one by one.

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[HON. KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

After ‘Prez’, Presentation College, President Elect Carmona taught briefly at the Fyzabad Secondary School and later at schools in Jamaica whilst he read for his first degree in English and Politics at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies.

He returned to Trinidad, he remained committed to his community and became a teacher at Palo Seco Government Secondary School.

Later, he joined the Faculty of the University of the West Indies in the Department of Languages and also tutored in Government, as well as Business Law at the San Fernando Technical Institute. During this period, he studied for his law degree, graduating with Honours from the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies and thereafter graduating from the Sir Hugh Wooding Law School with his LEC.

On his graduation in 1983, he started a very outstanding public service career as a state counsel. In 1989, he became a Senior State Attorney, rising to Assistant and then Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions and then acting as Director of that Division.

And, as we have just concluded our annual Carnival festival, Mr. Chairman, it is instructive to note that Mr. Justice Carmona won a Calypso King Competition, in Jamaica whilst he was a student there, and many of our folk in the south land may recall he even once faced the Skinner Park crowd at the Calypso Monarch semi-finals.

2.15 p.m.

In 2004, former Justice Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona was appointed a judge on the Supreme High Court of Judicature of Trinidad and Tobago, following a very successful and notable assignment as an Appeal’s Counsel in the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Court of Justice.

He also served as a legal advisor to former President Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson who championed the cause of an International Criminal Court. Up to last week, he had been sitting as a highly respected member of the Bench, serving in the High Court in San Fernando.

Last year he was appointed in the very first round of balloting by the Assembly of Parties, to be a judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. He was due to leave the country on March 1, to take up this appointment.

It is a sterling tribute to his sense of patriotism that former Justice Carmona chose to eschew that prestigious international appointment and instead to accept my

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Government's nomination and the country's widespread acclamation, to serve as our fifth President of the Republic.

Our new President Elect and his wife Reema, are the parents of two children—Christian, 12, and Anura, 10.

As you would note, Mr. Chairman, the man Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona brings unique and special qualities to be our next Head of State. He is guided by the deep spiritual convictions of his faith. He comes out of the bosom of and remains rooted in Trinidad and Tobago, equipped with a distinguished academic and legal career spanning over three decades. He has been nurtured by loving parents and a family who instilled in him demonstrated qualities of high human and moral characteristics of faith, fairness, humanity and love.

Our new President Elect is still very much a man of the people, but fully committed, without fear or favour, to universal justice and equality.

He is a man who is an equal with the highest echelons of our land, but still rubbed shoulders with the ordinary folk on his regular journeys on the Water Taxi to and from San Fernando or joining hands with fellow parishioners at services at the Assumption Church, Maraval, and at times at the La Divina Pastora Church in Siparia on Sunday mornings. In fact, we saw him only a few days ago “playing mas” with fellow revellers.

Mr. Chairman we have been blessed to have been well served in the past by leaders of distinction. From our first Governor General, the eminent Sir Solomon Hochoy, followed by their Excellencies: Sir Ellis Clarke, Mr. Noor Hassanali, and Mr. Arthur N R Robinson and over the last 10 years, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards. They have all left their indelible mark on our nation.

In this context, on this occasion, I again pay public tribute to our outgoing President His Excellency Professor Maxwell Richards who served us faithfully, with honour and dignity.

May I also say, Mr. Chairman, that it was reassuring to me and my Government that we had no shortage of fine men and women who were available for consideration as the next President. Protocol and good sense will not allow me to name any of them, but as Prime Minister it was heartening, albeit challenging, to read the résumés and achievements of the very outstanding men and women who would have served our Republic admirably, if any of them were so chosen. We believe, and in this we are surely gratified, that the entire nation has proclaimed support, that as a country we have now chosen wisely.

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[HON. KAMLA PERSAD-BISSESSAR SC]

Today, Mr. Chairman, in this hallowed Chamber, we concluded another important formal step in the sequence of events that would, on March 18, culminate in former Justice Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona being sworn in as the fifth president of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said earlier the Presidency is no mere ceremonial position. Our President is the vital and critical collective voice and conscience of our people. His role in our Republic is far-reaching, decisive, constant and always vigilant. His impact will be experienced in all spheres of our national life and by citizens throughout our twin-island Republic.

On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend congratulations to our President Elect Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona and also offer to him our very best wishes on his 60th birthday, which he will celebrate in a few days from now.

I look forward in the months and years ahead, to my Government and the people of this country benefiting from the wisdom, the vision and guidance of this esteemed and noble son of our soil. I thank all Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, comprising this Electoral College, for their unanimous support of Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona to be our next President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, in accordance with section 32(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Regulation 9(2)(a) of the Electoral College, Regulations of 1976, the required instrument shall today be signed and sealed by me the Speaker. The Instrument reads as follows:

“Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

The Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

Instrument

Made by the Speaker of the House of Representatives

under section 32(1)(a) of the Constitution

Know all men by these presents that Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona was the only person nominated for the election for the office of President fixed for the 15th day of February, 2013, at the Parliament Chamber, Tower D, 1A Wrightson Road, Port of Spain, and was at a meeting of the Electoral College held for the purpose at the said Parliament Chamber on the aforementioned date, in consequence declared elected

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President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Constitution.

Given under my hand and seal this 15th day of February, 2013.

Wade Mark

Speaker”

Motion made and question proposed: That this Electoral College be now adjourned sine die. [*Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members of the Electoral College, before putting the question for the adjournment, I would like to join in making some brief remarks conveying expressions of appreciation to the outgoing President and congratulatory remarks to the President Elect.

Hon. Members of the Electoral College, today marks a significant milestone in our nation’s history as we begin the transition from one Head of State to another. I, too, join in wishing the President Elect, Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, my warmest congratulations in ascending to the highest office in our beloved Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The fact that this election was uncontested confirms the unanimous approval of Mr. Carmona by you, the Members of this Electoral College and, by extension, the vast majority of the national community.

This proud moment is evidence that our democracy is indeed strong and that as a people and a nation, we do have a lot to be thankful for.

For some 10 years now, the stability of our democracy has been bolstered by the leadership of our esteemed President, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards, whose tenure in office guided us through important periods in the evolution and growth of our Republic.

During his decade in office, His Excellency has consistently carried out a wide range of duties as Commander in Chief, making constitutional appointments, assenting to numerous pieces of legislation, opening and proroguing eight sessions of Parliament, receiving the credentials of foreign diplomats, as well as carrying out a number of ceremonial functions.

In addition to these duties, His Excellency’s work has focused on several critical areas of our nation’s development. During his term in office, His Excellency has also supported several charitable causes, including the differently-abled, victims of domestic abuse, drug rehabilitation and animal rights. His Excellency has also been a proponent for developing mechanisms to preserve and promote our national heritage.

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To this end, we, the Members of the Electoral College, would like to express our appreciation for His Excellency's warmth of spirit, strength of character and unwavering devotion to this country.

May I, on behalf of the Members of the Electoral College, extend best wishes for a happy and comfortable retirement, good health and longevity to our outgoing President, His Excellency Professor George Maxwell Richards. My sentiments are also extended to the family of His Excellency.

May God continue to richly bless the President Elect with wisdom and knowledge. I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Electoral College adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.27 p.m.