



CENTRAL BANK OF
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Twentieth Dr. Eric Williams Memorial Lecture

**The Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, ON, PC, QC
Former Prime Minister of Jamaica**

"The Promise of Caribbean Unity"

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**Central Bank Auditorium
St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain**

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Honour and Privilege

It is for me a distinct privilege to have been invited to deliver the 20th Memorial Lecture before this august audience.

To follow in the wake of outstanding personalities who have made presentations in this forum, commencing with Sir Arthur Lewis, who inaugurated this learned and illuminating series, is nothing short of intimidating.

And yet, when the invitation, crafted in such alluring terms was extended to me during my last visit here, I could not resist the temptation. For who in retirement would not wish to indulge in nostalgic reminiscences before reaching the sixth age of which Shakespeare wrote and long before the ?

*"Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history
Is second childishness and mere oblivion
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."*

The confluence of the 25th Anniversary since the passing of this intellectual icon and political giant with the 50th Anniversary of the People's National Movement makes this occasion truly special, thereby increasing the inestimable honour you have conferred upon me to make my own contribution to this lecture series which has now become – a gilt-edged asset in our Caribbean heritage.

Your letter accurately reflects that part of my involvement in the search for regional integration overlapped with that of Dr. Williams.

On reading that, I was reminded of what Forbes Burnham said at the Conference of Heads in 1982:

“When some of us, like myself were in knee pants, when others were afraid of the hustings and yet others chose to accommodate themselves to the ancien regime, Eric Williams spoke out and acted.”

By the time I joined the circuit of CARIFTA Ministers in 1972, Dr. Eric Williams had already been in power for some sixteen years, having won four national elections –

By then he had firmly implanted party politics in the political landscape of Trinidad and Tobago with the establishment of the People’s National Movement, and aided the process in the wider West Indies as part of the West Indies Federal Labour Party.

Governor,

What you could hardly have known is that my pupilage with the Doctor began long before then – the uncharitable would say, before I should have come out of short pants.

It would be preposterous for me to claim any role in the launch of the long and successful political career of the Doctor. But history will attest that it was at a meeting in 1955 when as Guild Chairman of the External Affairs Commission, I presided over lecture he delivered in Arts Lecture Room 3 where Dr. Eric Williams announced for the first time on Caribbean soil, his intention to get back to Trinidad, to create the PNM and to embark on his long and illustrious political career.

He had resigned one week before from the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission located in Puerto Rico and decided to return home via

Jamaica in order to meet with Norman Manley who had won the Elections in Jamaica earlier that year.

Because of the limited space in the lecture theatre, many were seated on the unyielding turf outside, with only their scarlet gowns as a slight shield between them and the damp grass.

I vividly recall the spellbinding eloquence and erudite analysis from this celebrated Caribbean thinker and visionary to an audience which mesmerized an overflow crowd, consisting virtually of every student and lecturer on the entire Campus.

The good Doctor was obviously comfortable - (without the benefit of a single note) – and at his inspirational best.

He asserted that the best prospects for the transformation of Caribbean society were to be found in changing the mindset and expanding the mental and psychological horizons of the young.

His closing words still resound in my ears. “I shall return to my homeland for the awakening and upliftment of my people and to rid the country at once and forever of political rascality and corruption.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the rest is history.

The Cornerstone of Our Theme

Over the years, the presenters in this forum have used the series as a springboard to treat with a rich variety of themes, exploring several aspects of the human condition in the Caribbean and in the wider world. That, I might say, is most fitting in a Lecture Series dedicated to the memory of Eric Williams.

For his intellectual interests and achievement, and the motivations that animated his approach to political action, radiated in several directions and spanned multiple dimensions.

Williams was at the heart of the construction of Caribbean ambition.

He brought to the task his acute insights into the broad sweep of historical forces, his innate grasp of social psychology, his unique understanding of the interplay of imperial economic and political interests, and his keen awareness of the historical role that mass political organization would be called upon to play in the decolonization of Trinidad and Tobago and thereby the wider Caribbean.

I too, am happy to use this year's Memorial Lecture to express some thoughts on a subject that not only excited the intellect of Eric Williams but even more than that, was central to the mission of his life's work.

I speak here of the prospects and promise of West Indian unity; of the long and often fitful struggle to give meaningful form and content to the deep-seated yearning of West Indian people to tap into their potential for making common cause at home and abroad: in short, the promise for the West Indian man in the street of a West Indian identity, a West Indian culture, a West Indian economy, a system of West Indian governance that could sustain and reinforce regional community.

The Start of the Struggle

The struggle towards West Indian unity did not begin with the establishment of CARICOM or with the launching of CARIFESTA. Neither did it begin in the years of the federal adventure, nor even in

the upswelling of the political ferment that swept the region in the 1930s.

Rather, to find the deepest tap roots of the consciousness that shaped a sentiment of West Indianness, one needs to go back to the extended era of slave resistance and revolt in the Caribbean. In various places within the region this stubborn and persistent “no” to dehumanization came to a spectacular head at times: from Bockman and Toussaint in Haiti to Tacky in Jamaica to Cudjoe in Guyana. The resistant slaves were not conscious that they were laying the psychological foundation of a Caribbean movement. Yet, that was indeed the objective meaning of their determination to confront their subjugation.

The post emancipation decades of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw this psychological foundation being extended and consolidated, with indentured Indians striving to ameliorate their lot and as whole societies in the region struggled against the exclusion, marginalization, and impoverishment of Crown Colony Government. A strong intellectual and political leadership was emerging to give systematic articulation to decades of subterranean rumblings and resistance.

The “Froudacity” of imperialist assumptions and impositions came under relentless attack by a long line of nationalist luminaries, starting with the landmark contribution of J. J. Thomas, followed by the work and voices of numerous others such as A. A. Ciprani, Cecil Rawle, Albert Marryshaw, CLR James, W. Adolph Roberts, W.A. Domingo, and George Padmore. Their cumulative impact, building on the psychological foundations of the preceding decades of resistance, was the forging of a national consciousness.

While anchored in the specific conditions of individual societies in the region, this national consciousness was West Indian in scope and unbounded by territorial limits.

But it was with the impressive range of his prolific academic output that Eric Williams was destined to accomplish his historic task of giving full and complete expression to the spirit of West Indian nationalism. His immediate stage of operation was Trinidad and Tobago, but his wider theatre transcended insular preoccupations and caught the imagination of many.

He was central to the process of construction of a constituency for a truly West Indian social and political project. Who can hover in the environs of Woodford Square today without hearing in one's imagination the echo of the lectures delivered by Williams in that famous and inclusive university of the people?

I believe that decades of spontaneous struggle and resistance, eventually shaped and given direction by conscious intellectual and political leadership, spawned a cross-border consciousness of mutual belonging.

In essence, this comprised the affective roots of a West Indian social and cultural collective. In a real sense, a nation had emerged, in search of a State or some other workable political construct, and which needed to be underpinned by a coherent economic base.

Eric Williams himself was explicit and unambiguous in his view that the spirit of West Indian nationalism should find ultimate expression in a political federation with a strong center.

Others in the regional leadership, including Grantley Adams and Norman Manley shared in the consensus for an advance into political federation, even if they were not as convinced as Williams was to the idea of a strong federal centre.

It is now history that the federal adventure became unstuck after Jamaica's secession, a seismic political event which continues to reverberate in West Indian Affairs down through the years.

There are those who still today question Williams' mathematics. But his subtraction that "one from ten leaves nought" now appears to be more in the nature of political prophecy than what appeared at the time to be his own special and seemingly self serving calculation.

He had concluded that the regional edifice could only be designed by sovereign nations, devoid of colonial influence or manipulation.

His exasperated declaration that 1 from 10 left nought was not a signal for any cooling of his passion for West Indian unity. Dr. Williams was determined to prove that the collapse of the West Indian Federation would not be fatal to the spirit of West Indian unity and regional consciousness.

The centripetal force of West Indian togetherness took the federal debacle in its strides and energized West Indian leaders towards the construction of new regional institutions and the consolidation of pre-existing organizations.

As Prime Minister, he immediately grasped the mantle to convene the first meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1963 and thereby rekindle the embers of regional cooperation.

His regional credentials were beyond question and so it was not surprising that he took umbrage at having been excluded from the initial Group to establish Carifta which was set in motion by Bird, Barrow and Burnham with the 1965 Dickenson Bay Agreement.

The early years of regional cooperation saw Williams' vision, leadership capacities and regional commitment at the best. Working in tandem with the 'genius' William Demas, his former national economic adviser as CARIFTA Secretary General, Dr. Williams ensured that the movement could gain strength under their direction and guidance.

The orchestration from CARIFTA to CARICOM took place in accordance with the Doctor's baton. Every decisive step at the highest level saw him playing a critical leadership role. In November 1972, the Heads of Government met under his leadership at Chaguaramas and took the historic decision to transform CARIFTA to CARICOM.

It was again under his Chairmanship that we took the irreversible step with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguarmas establishing the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

I will always treasure the immense personal pleasure of witnessing the four original signatories, Barrow, Burnham, Manley & Williams, execute their signatures which brought into being the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

Credible Progress

The road has been long and at times the journey difficult in the quest for Caribbean unity. But let that not obscure the stark reality that in the course we have established the Caribbean Community as the longest surviving integration movement throughout the developing

world and the one which, with the exception of the European Union, has achieved the deepest forms of internal cohesion.

The region embarked on a new process of strengthening political consultation, advancing intra-regional free trade in goods, and establishing functional cooperation in a number of key areas.

When the Dickenson Bay Agreement was signed in 1965 establishing CARIFTA, Commonwealth Caribbean intra-regional trade was a mere 4 to 5 percent of the total trade of the group.

After CARIFTA had been deepened into CARICOM – and particularly during the mid 1980s – intra-CARICOM trade was beset with acrimonious disputes triggered by intra-regional protectionism. Today, intra-CARICOM free trade in goods which satisfy clearly defined origin criteria takes place relatively unfettered, and is taken for granted around the region, without too much fuss or bother.

In terms of absolute quantities, combined intra-CARICOM imports and exports rose from nearly US\$9.4 million in 1990 to US\$23.2 billion in 2004.

This performance comprised 10.4% of total CARICOM imports and exports in 1990 and 12.7% in 2004.

I would like to emphasize that the significance of these developments in the CARICOM trade regime goes well beyond the absolute numbers and the ratios mentioned. The origin criteria have been strengthened, especially during the 1990s, to deepen processing and to achieve greater added value in intra-regional production, thereby promoting a process of restructuring of regional economic operations.

Even after making allowance for the dominance of Trinidadian energy exports in intra-CARICOM trade, the process has made a favourable impact on broader areas of intra regional production and trade. Considerable potential still remains in this direction.

Crucially, all of this links back to the issue of creating high quality jobs and expanding incomes within the region, which we must always see as one of the fundamental objectives of Caribbean unity.

Of course, the open regionalism which we must now operate, in an era of globalization and trade liberalization, means that the transformation of intra-CARICOM production and trade must be pursued on an internationally competitive basis, so as to increase and defend the jobs we create within the Community.

On the level of inter-governmental cooperation in functional matters, there has also been some encouraging fulfillment of the promise of post-federal West Indian unity.

The University of the West Indies, established as a regional institution ten years before the federal experiment with strong inter-governmental support, has been going through a process of expansion and strengthening, to deliver better tertiary education and training, and to execute the applied research, necessary for social and economic development.

The Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) is another example of how the promise of West Indian unity is being fulfilled.

Individual national systems, in addition to their higher aggregate cost, would in all likelihood provide a service of uneven and indifferent quality.

In any recapitulation of major areas of achievement in the CARICOM region, one cannot fail to mention the Caribbean Development Bank. This premier regional development finance institution has been a strategic collective instrument for social and economic transformation in the Caribbean Community.

It has been able to mobilize equity from its CARICOM and non-CARICOM shareholders, concessionary loans and grants from bilateral and multilateral institutions and finance from international capital markets.

Some 50% of the financing deployed by the CDB has gone into infrastructural development around the region, while 25% has gone into the strengthening of national financial intermediaries and the rest into education, training and institutional capacity-building.

In my document, "CARICOM BEYOND THIRTY: CHARTING NEW DIRECTIONS", I suggested that the CDB, with its triple A rating, is a valuable common asset which can be exploited more intensively for the benefit of national and regional development, without compromising its financial soundness.

I proposed that:

CARICOM members of the CDB invite non-borrowing shareholders of the bank to consider a substantial increase in the size of the Bank, so as to mobilize more resources to undertake the increased volume of financing which the challenges of transformation within the region will

demand. In this, the CDB, in addition to continuing its financing of national infrastructure projects, should refine and enlarge its private sector window, and encourage viable public and private sector projects that are regional in scope."

I feel confident that enlargement of the CDB's role in these directions would lift the fulfillment of the promise of West Indian unity to a higher plane.

All these major areas are indicative of actual and potential benefits from regional action, even at the relatively modest level of free trade in goods and inter-governmental functional co-operation.

Others come readily to mind which might be mentioned:

- joint action in the area of health with outstanding highlights in regional common services in epidemiology and drug testing, and the development of a collective programme to confront the HIV/AIDS crisis;
- the harmonization of laws programme which produced model legislation in important areas such as Companies Law and Copyright Law, for use by Member States in the development of their respective national legislation.
- The pursuit of functional cooperation among regional airlines;
- Inter-governmental arrangements for collective action to mitigate the impact of disasters, and the operation of joint programmes in the field of hydrology;
- The pooling of resources for the purpose of conducting joint research in the field of agriculture, and the creation of an inter-governmental framework for cooperation in fisheries management.

We have abolished work permits for a range of skilled persons and need to take further steps to embrace the wider part of our citizenry. Suriname was the first nation to issue a CARICOM Passport. We must insist on the timetable for implementation by all Member States so that it becomes a powerful symbol of regional unity.

The Mona Lens – 1955

As we celebrate the life and memory of an outstanding scholar and historian, and applaud the monumental contribution of an architect in forging of West Indian unity, I suggest we revisit the promise of Caribbean unity through the lens of his 1955 Mona “tour de force”.

His central theme was very clear. We in the Caribbean had to chart a radically new course for ourselves. For it to be effected by others would perpetually use condemn us to accept a world view which was anathema to people who understood the power of principle and the obligation of individuals and nations to realize their full potential.

Dr. Williams rejected any notion of hegemonism or any suggestion that our geographical location condemned us to living in anybody’s backyard.

When he founded the PNM, the present concept of globalization was unknown. We were, however, inhabiting a world where there were increasing tensions between superpowers in the East and in the West. We were in a period where for strategic economic and geopolitical reasons, the small states of the Caribbean were virtually at the mercy of others – some of whom might be more paternalistic and benevolent than others, but any consideration was dictated by their own self-interest.

That is the way of the world. So it was then. So it is now. We integrate or else we will all perish.

He spoke of the value of combining our resources. He spoke of what Nettleford was later to express as "outward stretch and inward reach." It was clear to him that our solutions lay in a proper use of our human as well as our natural resources, and that collectively as people located in this region, originally as outposts of Europe, but now with our own centuries of history and civilization, we should equip ourselves to take full charge of our future.

The transformation he envisaged would be driven by the development of human and social capital. As Caribbean people we should seek to create and nurture Caribbean thought. As an important part of our development, he implored us to produce intellectuals from our region who having benefited from the academic disciplines in or derived from metropolitan countries, are able to create Caribbean perspectives, formulate Caribbean theories whether they be in economic, education or governance, but all derived from our unique experiences.

That we have done. Indeed, we have been careful to avoid what some have described as "Caribbean exceptionalism," which is a term used to suggest that we set a lower level or more restricted compass for our ideas and our analysis of events than is compatible with international norms. Our academics have demonstrated their international relevance and their international competitiveness.

What has been of equal importance, however, is that our homegrown academics have been able to create frames of reference which allow us to challenge the assumptions and prescriptions so often and so mindlessly applied to our situation by those who come from elsewhere; who are wedded to particular kinds of theories and approaches, and

who claim to know what is good for us instead of what we know about ourselves.

Our investment in human capital has also enabled us in small but significant ways to make a difference to the international environment in which we operate by providing Commonwealth, United Nations and other international organizations as well as regional institutions with competent persons who make important decisions affecting us and the wider world.

The Knowledge Economy

The drive for Caribbean unity is more than a cry for togetherness and the pooling of resources. It is a summons to improve the quality of life for our people, to facilitate economic growth while being responsive to social need. It is a call for prosperity, for excellence and for respect.

None of this can be achieved without shared objectives and agreed strategies as to how we create our own niche and capitalize on our unique strengths in a global economy, which is more than ever driven by knowledge.

Given the perils which our traditional commodities now face, we have to build a knowledge economy because of the emergence of new products in world trade principally computer-based and the related growth of international trade in services which now represent over 50% of the value of total trade.

If countries today are to retain their share of the world market, whether in traditional categories such as food and beverages or new ones such as telecommunications, they have to step up the process of innovation and product development.

We must become cost competitive based on high and rising productivity, thereby becoming more attractive destinations for local and foreign investment, whether producing for domestic markets, or for export (outsourcing) or as sources of highly skilled migrants to join the workforce, hopefully on a temporary basis, in the developed countries.

In setting new rules for international trade in goods and services, such as in the Doha Round and similar endeavours being pursued at the plurilateral and bilateral levels, the Caribbean has to argue for sufficient space to permit us to participate in these rising flows of trade in goods and services on terms advantageous to our development.

A major objective of our development policies throughout the Caribbean should be to achieve and sustain high levels of international competitiveness based upon capacities to produce and export a wide range of goods and services to different destinations in the world.

This represents a challenge to our capacity to produce highly educated people capable for running sophisticated operations based upon the latest technology, and in appropriate cases, equipped to engage in scientific and investigative work that can yield improved and new products and to innovate at every state of production and trade.

One clear success of the Williams strategy is evident right here in this twin island state. He articulated and worked to establish a Trinidad and Tobago in which the ownership of resources and policies was located within the Trinidadian society – and by extension to support Caribbean wide strategies dedicated to the same ends.

There is no doubt that whatever the route we have chosen as sovereign countries within this CARICOM region, we have done well at taking ownership of the management of our resources, whether they be natural resources, the educational resources or industrial resources.

As Caribbean nations, we have been prepared in the international arena to declare our positions on international policies which affect any or all of our nations. It is particularly, pleasing to me that we held to a principled position grounded in the OAS Charter in relation to Haiti. We are now able once again to restore Haiti to its rightful place around our Community table, democratic processes having been restored.

Dr. William's mission was substantially accomplished but clearly to complete it we will have to take into account the changing international environment related to trade, political ideologies and indeed political action in the hemisphere.

One of the keys to advancing the progress at this time remains in the arena which Dr. Williams first identified by virtue of the locus of his first presentation at Mona.

Higher education institutions within the region must continue to play a critical role. Indeed I believe that there is an even greater sense of urgency now than there was then for all.

Our regional university and all other institutions of higher learning must use their academic freedom in the most positive and creative way possible to free the minds of their students and empower them to be activists in their own development – at personal, community, national and regional levels.

I would not expect all of them to be regionalists at heart or by training. But I would hope that all of them are at least exposed to the realities of our historical background, our current political and social situation and recognize that even though there are development options, development itself is not an option, but an imperative.

I would hope for all of them to understand that development is not only the responsibility of governments but is a social obligation which involves them as both contributors and beneficiaries.

I would hope for every graduate that the choices which he or she makes would impact positively on the collective future of all of us who occupy this Caribbean space. Caribbean people must reverse the trend of putting humankind at greater risk with each passing day, through naked intolerance, social neglect, environmental irresponsibility or harmful political decisions.

I believe that the inheritors of the Eric Williams vision are committed to this task and have invested very generously – and commendably so – in higher education. One accepts the need for both national and regional institutions of higher learning. We in Jamaica have – and I daresay successfully – established that there are complementary roles to be played by each category in such an arrangement.

Indeed, I believe that model mirrors in some way the response to the present global challenges and in the rationale for a strong regional community system operating in tandem with a vibrant and intelligent nationalism.

When you look at the world, particularly during the past two decades, two opposing tendencies appear at work and yet operating in a relationship of healthy and creative tension for the most part.

There exists, on the one hand, local culture and the sense of community. There exists, on the one hand, local culture and the sense of community. There exists, on the other, the need for larger economic and political blocs, be they regional, continental or hemispheric – which operate in the interests of the members and contribute to national progress and social well being. These are the realities of the modern world.

As recently as this week, Serbia and Montenegro have become two nations and Montenegro – with its 650,000 people – is likely to become part of the ever growing European Union in short order. Unity in diversity, or perhaps more accurately sovereign rights and deliberate integration will always remain a viable modality in the modern world.

The question is: how do we establish the correct balance and generate the most effective and sustainable development outcomes for the benefit of our people?

In relation to the enlargement and enrichment of higher education, I see what can be dubbed the Manning model for Trinidad and Tobago providing a major contribution in the spirit of the Eric Williams legacy.

We should welcome heartily and support the creation and maintenance of a strong national higher education institution with a focus on the scientific, technical/technological areas most relevant to the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

The graduates of our Regional University constitute a cadre of professionals with a strong sense of community. The proper blend of nationalists in the student body and faculty on each campus can make an immense contribution to the promotion of our regional identity.

As Prime Minister Manning has acknowledged, the value of this provision out to be combined with strong support to our regional institution UWI that provides a residential “incubator” system to foster and encourage regional consciousness, regional cohesion, and regional cooperation. The region will for some time need cadres of strategically placed graduates who think regionally and think futuristically but who are also firmly grounded in their own disciplines and are of practical value to the regional cause.

Lifting the Regional Integration to a Higher Level

As we have seen, the establishment of free trade in goods, the operation of inter-governmental common services and the conduct of political consultation and coordination have yielded useful dividends for CARICOM states and citizens. Yet there has long been consensus that these dividends do not exhaust the possibilities inherent in the CARICOM integration process. There has been a mounting groundswell for the impact of the Community to be more effectively reflected in the daily lives of our people.

The general climate of impatience triggered a new drive towards greater fulfillment of the promise of West Indian unity, commencing with the landmark Grand Anse Declaration.

I had the pleasure of participating in the historic signing ceremony earlier this year to formally launch the CARICOM Single Market. This milestone was reached with a shared commitment that the full Single Market and Economy will come into being by 2008.

Yet, nagging concerns and impatience with the pace of CARICOM integration still persist.

For his initiative in leading the response this time round, I must pay tribute to Prime Minister Patrick Manning, who learned his politics and his regionalism exceedingly well at the feet of his worthy pedagogue, Eric Williams.

The special consultation he convened here in Port of Spain led to the establishment of a Committee of the Heads, chaired by Prime Minister Ralph Gonzales, to carry forward the review of options for governance.

Following the presentation of that report to Heads more than a year ago, it is high time that Heads of Government take and implement definitive decision on the further steps and mechanisms which can advance the deepening of integration.

Whatever the process of analysis and deliberation that might be employed, the challenge of moving regional integration to a higher level boils down essentially to three sets of issues. The first of these is the issue of the basic purpose and *raison d'être* of the regional integration process. The second is the matter of the substantive content of the deeper integration that is to be pursued; and the third is the governing framework for decision and action, required for effective fulfillment of the purpose and substantive goals of more intense integration.

These three sets of concerns have featured at all times, implicitly or explicitly, in debates and discussions about the future of CARICOM, but especially so since the Grand Anse Declaration and the report of the West Indian Commission.

Basic Purpose & Raison D’Etre

As our efforts at enhancing CARICOM gather momentum, we must never tire at recalling the basic purpose and raison d’etre of the integration process. Indeed, it is for reason of that basic purpose that we seek to deepen the integration process. I think that any severing of the link between the two would render our endeavour fruitless.

That basic purpose is simply the improvement of the quality of life of the people, comprehensively conceived on both material and non-material dimensions. CARICOM should loom large in people’s minds as an instrument helping to create and protect quality jobs within the region through which they can secure at reasonable cost, the basic goods and services necessary to sustain life above the level of brute existence: food, shelter, health education and creative leisure.

CARICOM must also ultimately provide opportunity for the people to be connected culturally and socially with one another within the region and beyond. In its highest meaning, CARICOM must be present in their lives as a protector of social justice. As I have said elsewhere –

“If CARICOM people cannot discern a clear connection between the Community and the resolution of these concerns then the specific formal organizational expression of the integration process will remain a remote irrelevance in their eyes.”

In a profound sense, the CARICOM integration process must be more than a scheme for merely connecting regional governments. It must be a process that responds to and nurtures the sense of community that people feel among themselves.

Providing Scope for Collective Identity

This sense of community among the people of the region anchors a collective identity which the integration process must nurture. We must never belittle the importance of identity, which is integral to our sense of psychic wellbeing.

Nurturing and sharing a collective West Indian identity does not, of course, mean the negation of our individual national identity. That would not only be impossible in the CARICOM region that I know, but also clearly undesirable.

Rather, the idea is that CARICOM people would experience a progressive positive reinforcement of identity as they go from village to village, to province, to country, and then to the CARICOM region. A robust sense of collective CARICOM identity enables us to mitigate the threat of marginalization we might otherwise face as small countries.

Our shared regional identity enables all of us to feel buoyed whenever any of us excel in the wider world: whether it is the Nobel Prizes of Arthur Lewis, Derek Walcott, or Vidia Naipaul; or whether it is the "Reggae Boys" qualifying for the World Cup Finals in 1998 or the march of the 'Soca Warriors' to Germany this year; or whether it is the impressive harvest of medals achieved by our athletes at the last Commonwealth Games.

Popular music, from calypso through to reggae/dancehall belongs to the mass of our population. The Mighty Sparrow, Kitchener, David Rudder, Arrow, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff represent creative talent that command worldwide acceptance.

Then there is cricket. I have to observe that our psychological attachment to the unifying force of the game remains strong in the expectation that the rebound must come.

The painful angst we have felt whenever West Indian cricket is in the doldrums is due precisely to its importance “beyond the boundary” as a carrier of our sense of mutual belonging and a symbol of our aspiration to be a “collective somebody” in the world.

The initial costs of hosting World Cup Cricket 2007 will admittedly be high, but if this is not an area where we can showcase Caribbean life and culture as part of our tourism product and entertainment capacity, we will never fully understand how to exploit our comparative advantage in the global economy.

The Content of Deepened Integration

Greater fulfillment in the future of the promise of West Indian unity calls for marked deepening and widening of the substantive content of CARICOM integration.

What is contemplated is nothing less than a complete disappearance of national boundaries among CARICOM Member States, so that not only goods would flow among them, but also trade in services and movement of labour and capital, including the right of establishment, underpinned by efforts towards monetary union.

The drive towards the CSME is not an imposition from on high. During numerous public hearings in members States by the West Indian Commission, strong popular sentiment was often encountered in

favour of unfettered movement of people around the region. We have made a start, but the tape is still some distance away.

Interestingly, there were also popular calls for what one huckster in a public hearing referred to as "one money" meaning a common currency.

It is essential to maintain an active programme of public education and to so structure the arrangements that the CSM now, and the CSME later, become a rising regional tide that lifts the boats of all Member States.

The potential of the CSM will not be self-actualizing in any automatic way. What is being accomplished by inter-governmental action is the construction of enabling framework which frees workers and their skills and business person with their capital and entrepreneurial acumen, from being bottled-up behind their respective national borders, and opens up to them a larger common space for the flexing of their productive energies.

I anticipate that as economic actors at all levels will indulge in cross-boundary use of the CSM framework. This will bring about a greater rise in aggregate output and employment, than could be achieved without such engagement.

As persons from Dominica see and exploit untapped opportunities in Guyana and vice versa, a new growth propelling dynamic can be triggered that would make the CSM a living reality.

The aluminum smelters in Trinidad & Tobago, using the bauxite alumina from Guyana, Suriname and Jamaica will reflect what we

mean by the pooling of resources. If we fail to do so, all the talk would mock the fulfillment of the Dr's dream project.

We look forward, in particular, to capital, management, skilled labour and marketing expertise being mobilized from all parts of CARICOM and beyond, to exploit viable opportunities for integrated production which would feed into enhanced levels of intra and extra-CSM trade.

It has to be admitted that the advance into monetary union, to complete the CSME, will face tough challenges. Central Bank Governors have been tracking in a somewhat passive mode a set of convergence criteria for monetary union, having to do with the level of import cover, the amplitude of exchange rate movements, debt service ratio to exports, the limit on fiscal deficits, and limits on inflation.

Monetary union is going to require that CARICOM countries get on a more pro-active and purposive path to macro economic convergence. Valuable time is being squandered and Member States must rise to this challenge at once.

The strengthening of CARICOM will also require expansion of the substantive content of the Community beyond the CSM and eventually the CSME. We must add to the current range of inter-governmental common services wherever it is feasible to do so. An acid test of feasibility is whether the unit cost of the benefits brought to the people is lower than is the case with other options.

It seems to me, for instance, that there might be scope for profitable pooled procurement of certain carefully identified products. I recall that there was an initiative by CARICOM in the 1980s to venture into pooled procurement of pharmaceuticals. However, the matter was proceeding too slowly for the OECS countries, and they therefore, went ahead and set-up their own scheme of pooled procurement of

pharmaceuticals. This provided a resounding success in terms of the savings it was able to achieve for the end users of medical drugs.

In today's age of instant communication, we cannot overlook the role of the 4th Estate. Constant and reliable flows of communication are essential in order to strengthen regional identity and understanding.

The Issue of Sovereignty and the Challenge for Enhanced governance of Community Affairs

I earlier recalled in summary form the search since 1992 for improved governance of CARICOM affairs. This pre-occupation has stemmed from deep concerns about the efficiency of the CARICOM institutional framework in making and implementing decisions.

Innovations in the political and technical institutional structure of CARICOM were introduced through the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, in the hope of streamlining the operations of CARICOM.

It is now more imperative than ever to settle this issue. The governance framework of CARICOM cannot be out of sync with the evident commitment of governments and people around the region to move the Community from the level of mainly inter-governmental cooperation to the level of true integration.

We cannot fulfill our destiny within the Caribbean, while the Caribbean Court of Justice is confined to its original jurisdiction.

Who could justify before the Dr. or Norman Manley, that 44 years after our political independence, the vestiges of an external court still remain in our judicial system? Is there still doubt that we have the

persons of character, learning and ability in the Caribbean to be judges of a court of final adjudication in our own legal affairs?

How can we discharge our functions as a Group of Sovereign Nations for the welfare and progress of our Caribbean people with the final dispensation of justice as the sole exception?

Let me hasten, however, to calm any nervous jitters out there by stating that it is not the expectation – certainly not mine – that the strengthening of CARICOM governance is going to mean wholesale creation of structures with autonomous powers along the lines of the CCJ.

There may be indeed specific areas, to be carefully and rigorously defined and agreed, that warrant this kind of treatment. But on the whole, I do not think that we are about to set up an array of non-accountable supranational monster institutions to run our lives within the region. The search for enhanced CARICOM governance must be within the context of continuing political control by Member States, but with a focus on enhancing the efficiency of processes.

I firmly believe that we should be prepared to introduce a CARICOM Commission “or other executive mechanism” into the institutional structure of CARICOM. The idea is to introduce a function with CARICOM with a capacity to mobilize political consensus on issues awaiting decision, and to pursue expeditious implementation of decisions already made.

Having withdrawn from frontline duties in this exciting theatre of operation, I do not want to second-guess my former colleague Heads of Government in what their final determination might be. I would only observe, as an interested private citizen and stakeholder, that two

issues arise for attention if the proposed Commission or 'other executive mechanism' is to have the intended effect.

One issue is the exact specification of the authority and design of the operational procedures that would attach to this contemplated quasi-political executive function. Also, would a distinctive new presence be needed for this function, or could already existing capacities be strengthened for the purpose?

We can no longer postpone a decision on the automatic resource transfer for the financing of Community Institutions. We need also to accelerate the reform of the CARICOM Secretariat to enhance its effectiveness as the administrative and technocratic arm of the Community, in accordance with the conclusion of the Rosehall Summit in 2002.

I call upon the technical and political managers of CARICOM, acting within the general policy climate of the Community, to fashion an enhanced regime of CARICOM governance that will be strategic in fulfilling the most ambitious promises of West Indian unity.

I am optimistic that with perseverance we can arrive a framework of principles and action to make advances on several fronts:

- to forge a truly common economic space with depth and breadth
- to broaden the range of solidly anchored intergovernmental common services.
- To interface efficiently and flexibly with the international system, including the conduct of external trade negotiation

- To extend the demographic boundaries of the Community to include the vibrant West Indian Diaspora outside the geographical confines of CARICOM.

Given the history of Caribbean migration, we must involve members of the Diaspora to view the wider CARICOM as an enlarged homeland and encourage them to partner or initiate synergies for cultural and productive activities which yield profitable returns to all.

Very importantly, a rational framework of principles and action will allow us to deal with the issue of sovereignty in a sober and level-headed manner, avoiding strident knee-jerk accusations that federation is being introduced through the backdoor.

The existing Charter of Civil Society needs to be transformed into a legally binding obligation, so that it enjoys in the active functioning of CARICOM societies. CARICOM citizens should have recourse to the CCJ, under its original jurisdiction, to redress breaches of the Charter.

On the question of political integration, I have had occasion to observe elsewhere that:

'While our leadership in some particular Member States have evinced a readiness to advance into political union, some of the other Member States currently view political union as a very long term matter, and yet others do not have it on their radar screens even for the long term. Accordingly, the challenge is for the membership of CARICOM as a whole to find a modus operandi to pursue an effective multi-dimensional strengthening of CARICOM without prejudice in the meantime to their various differing perspectives on the question of political union.'

I, for one, trust and accept the instinct of the people on the question of deeper union, whether up to the political level or below that level. Let us not take the feeling of the people for granted.

I firmly believe that every encouragement should be given to any two or more CARICOM members who want to advance into political union. I daresay this would only redound to the strengthening of regional unity, while at the same time altering the number of states in the Community.

It is unlikely that the common economic space which we are constructing can in the foreseeable future be accompanied by a unitary CARICOM-wide common political space. Such a decision must have to await the will of the next generation.

In the meantime, in pursuing the promise of West Indian unity, the CARICOM membership, we must press on with the mission of agreeing on the particular areas where we are prepared to pool the exercise of sovereignty, whether in a supra-national way, or in an inter-governmental mode.

Every such development has to be the result of a sovereign decision by each participating Member State, and could well lead to the creation of a collective sovereignty in the particular area that is stronger than the aggregate force of our separate uncoordinated sovereignties.

Many years ago, Eric Williams anticipated the prevalent tendency to rush passionately to the defence of our often fragile individual national sovereignties. He saw West Indian integration as an almost indispensable instrument for enlarging and safeguarding sovereignty with the region.

Tonight we salute Dr. Eric Williams, the man, the visionary, the scholar, the historian, the politician, the nationalist, the regionalist. He was undoubtedly a complex personality of tremendous endowment, intellectual and otherwise. He was idiosyncratic, charismatic and sometimes mystifying. He contributed significantly to the liberation of his people and to the building of a Nation. In demonstrating the capacity to challenge successfully the imperial powers on both sides of the Atlantic in defense of personal, national and regional interests, he helped to enhance the sense of self worth and pride of the Caribbean people.

Let us demonstrate our most earnest appreciation to one who was truly a legend in his own time. Let us commit ourselves wholeheartedly to completing the structures of regional integration and the enrichment of our Caribbean civilization.

For the solid majesty of his vision still beckons us across the years.

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