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***Speaking Notes of***

**The Hon Kamla Persad Bissessar, MP, SC**

**Political Leader of the United National Congress**

***and***

**Leader of the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago**

**UNC’s 29TH ANNIVERSARY**

**INTERFAITH SERVICE**

**COUVA SOUTH MULTIPURPOSE HALL**

**SATURDAY 28th APRIL 2018**

***Kamla: “I am proud to have been involved in our great party at different levels, and to have worked, as your leader and as Prime Minister, to fulfill the vision of our founding fathers of improving the lives of the people of our beloved nation. Over the past 29 years many persons of different religious backgrounds, different ethnicities and different walks of life have seen our great party as a beacon of hope, as a symbol of unity and as an avenue for development whether personal or national.”***

As we celebrate the 29th anniversary of the inception of our great party, I have always asked that we put God in front and we walk behind.

This is a significant milestone for our party, having been born out of the struggle of people who wanted better governance, a safer country, better educational opportunities for their children, better health care, and a better Trinidad and Tobago.

I am proud to have been involved in our great party at different levels, and to have worked, as your leader and as Prime Minister, to fulfill the vision of our founding fathers of improving the lives of the people of our beloved nation.

Over the past 29 years many persons of different religious backgrounds, different ethnicities and different walks of life have seen our great party as a beacon of hope, as a symbol of unity and as an avenue for development whether personal or national.

We could have chosen many different ways in which to celebrate our Party’s anniversary but we have never forgotten from where we first started.

We have never forgotten the blood, sweat and tears upon which this great Party has been built and we have never forgotten that to whom much is given much is expected.

Today, as your leader, I join with you in thanking God for his bountiful mercies. I thank God for his strength in the times of adversity and I also thank God for his many blessings.

It is often said that during your darkest moments the good Lord never abandons you and today I reaffirm that we will never abandon him. It is during those dark moments of pain and suffering of anguish and turmoil that the Lord carried all of us in his arms.

There are many naysayers, many doubters and many critics but together, remaining firm in our conviction, and with faith in our hearts, we have endured and we shall continue to overcome; the only judgement we shall face is that of the Lord.

I am very clear in my mind and in my heart that we have tried to do the best for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago at all times. That is why I continue to lead you with compassion, purpose and a focus on our nation’s children and their wellbeing whether in education, healthcare or safety.

Today I also join with you in paying tribute to the many unsung heroes who toiled and laboured in the trenches and in the cane fields to bring us to the point where we are today. I pay special tribute to our founding fathers who fought against all oppression and indignity to bring us to the point of electoral and socio-economic revolution in our nation. Through the work of our great Party they have laid the foundation upon which we continue to build, to bring about a better quality of life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to spend a few moments reminding you of the things that are most important in our lives. The things that matter most to us and that is being at peace with our maker and our belief that he will provide for a better day tomorrow.

We are often told that God helps those who help themselves and therefore my brothers and sisters we must continue to lift ourselves and our nation out of despair under this wicked government and this uncaring prime minister.

Any time we as a nation and as people have lost sight of what is most important our nation shall surely perish. Today I am seeing signs of destruction, I am seeing signs of frustration and I am seeing signs of hopelessness being experienced by our citizens.

I want you to remember that no weapon formed against you shall prosper

**HOLY WAR**

The state has embarked on a very dangerous road. The state has engaged in a holy war with our Muslim brothers and sisters as they continue to single out followers. The state has declared war on our Hindu brothers and sisters as they attempt to demolish a temple. The state is attempting to destroy a Church declaring war against our Christian brothers and sisters.

You and I both know that the glue that binds us together is the values, beliefs and principles enshrined in our respective faiths. I have always told you our greatest strength lies in our diversity and our ability to coexist peacefully and in harmony. Will we stand by and allow our religious institutions to come under attack from this wicked Rowley administration?

I remind you of a quotation taken from Martin Niemoller, a prominent protestant pastor who emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolph Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps:

***“First they came for the socialist, and I did not speak***

***Because I was not a socialist***

***Then they came for the trade unionist***

***And I did not speak out***

***Because I was not a trade unionist***

***Then they came for the Jews***

***And I did not speak out***

***Because I was not a Jew***

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me”

My friends will you stay silent as they come for the Muslims?

Will you remain silent when they come for the Hindus?

Will you remain silent when they come for the Christians?

The very moral fabric of our society is under attack from this government. They are attacking all the great religions that make our country such a unique and beautiful place.

You will recall that as your Prime Minister I spent a considerable amount of time reaching out to faith-based organizations as I understood and still understand the great role that they play in lifting our society out of the scourge of poverty and crime.

Do you remember that under my watch every church, temple and masjid in this country shared in the patrimony of our state. We gave grants to them to ensure that they could build themselves up, today ROWLEY WANTS TO TEAR THEM DOWN.

Recently we have seen how masjids have been disrespected. We have seen innocent men, women and children brutalized because they are profiled as terrorist by this Rowley led administration.

We have seen attempts to demolish a mandir in San Francique, displacing worshippers at that mandir.

Now it has reached the doors of our Christian brothers and sisters who’s church is being torn down in Naparima. This is the holy war I tell you of. The state is at war with our religious institutions.

This is a pattern that has been developing, they have refused to finish many of our denominational schools to help our children. The Parvati Girls and Shiva Boys Colleges remain incomplete, the Princes Town Presbyterian No. 1 - they say it is not a priority of this government, the Santa Rosa RC school plagued with several woes.

**COUVA Children Hospital**

My friends you know how much the welfare of the nation’s children mean to me. I have spent over 25 years in public life fighting for the causes of children in this country. As Prime Minister children were one of my primary focuses and today with or without the office of Prime Minister attached to my name children remain at the centre of everything that I do and envision for this country.

While the Prime Minister attended CHOGM 2018 in London we got word here at home that Rowley met with Prime Minister Modi of India to discuss ayurvedic medicine and how the Indian Government would assist in the operationalizing of the hospital.

I found it strange that Rowley was engaging Modi on this matter when we were hearing that INTERHALTH CANADA was in talks with the UWI and by extension the government since late last year on the administration and functionality of the hospital.

Therefore the Prime Minister’s recent statements about the Couva children’s hospital left me and many others stunned and baffled.

The Prime Minister appeared to be suffering from split personality disorder. He spoke one thing in London and then came home and said something different to the nation.

In fact, while he was addressing members of the diaspora in London, Rowley said that if no suitable operator is found for the Couva Hospital by the end of this month (April), it will be incorporated into T&T’s national health care system as the country’s **first paying health care institution[[1]](#footnote-1)**.

But it must have been he spoke out of turn, **or** the government in a matter of days found an arrangement for a different model entirely.

Indeed the Cabinet Minute reveals that cabinet had already taken a decision on April 12th 2018.

Rowley, on his return from London, announced at this week’s post Cabinet media briefing that “an arrangement is currently being finalised to bring the Couva Hospital on stream as an offshore medical school.

“The facility will be run by UWI as a joint venture with the State and international healthcare service provider Interhealth Canada, which will allow the government to ‘kill a number of birds with one stone’ as it will assist in settling a $200 million debt owed to UWI as well as provide valuable medical training…”

As usual, because he doesn’t have a clue, Rowley now has to try to save face.

Let me tell you a little about the vision of the People’s Partnership Government which I led, with respect to this important health facility.

The Couva Children’s Hospital was intended to be a self-contained, centralized medical facility equipped with the most modern and high-end equipment.

The catchment would be for over 300,000 persons.

It was to be used to create jobs, provide taining and earn foreign exchange from medical tourism.

The first phase development included:

* A 230-bed Hospital that will encompass 80 pediatric beds and
* 150 adult beds with a total square area of 26,035 square meters
* A 300-student Multi -Training Facility with a total square area of 7,790 square meters – so that was already there – now he’s talking about turning it into a teaching hospital as a bright new idea.

This hospital features

* a Children’s and Adult Hospital with full inpatient services including Emergency Departments,
* Surgery Department,
* Imaging and Radiology,
* Outpatient Clinics,
* Women’s Services,
* Laboratory, Kitchen
* Central Pharmacy
* A Burns Care Unit where specialist services and the best technology can be provided to nationals;
* Central Pharmacy;
* UWI School of Medicine, Nursing and Pharmacology;
* Separate Children’s and Adults’ Accident and Emergency; and
* Helicopter rooftop access for emergencies
* A teaching and training building will sit adjacent to the hospital and also be a part of the development.
* A Central Energy Plant with all main service equipment for electrical, water, and gas
* A Waste Water Treatment Plant with capacity to treat wastewater from the Hospital and Multi - Training Facility
* External works to include 598 parking spaces for both staff and visitors, access roads, drainage and landscaping within the site boundaries
* The scope also includes the installation and commissioning of all major Medical Equipment, FF&E, Security System, Data and Wireless networking.

The Hospital Facility would be equipped to deliver services such as:

* Diagnostic and Imaging
* Surgeries - Same Day
* Burns and Plastics Program,
* Critical Care – Pediatric ICU’s, Adult ICU’s and HDU’s
* Gynecology and Birthing Endoscopy
* Pediatric Outpatient Clinic
* Pediatric Rehabilitation
* Adult Outpatient Clinic
* Pharmacy
* Laboratory
* Psychiatry
* Pediatric Accident and Emergency
* Adult Accident and Emergency

**Digital Hospital**

And one of the important and distinctive features of this facility – it was intended to operate as a Digital Hospital.

What does this mean? Your government, the People’s Partnership government, understood that the use of digital healthcare would lead to better service quality, improved efficiencies and saving on key medical resources.

Plans were in place to include digital healthcare as a key

component of new hospitals being constructed under the Ministry

of Health’s Infrastructure Programme.

Digital healthcare was a key element in the implementation of a

Health Information Management System (HIMS), which would

properly identify every patient interfacing with health care

services.

This was part of our thrust to move Trinidad and Tobago into the digital age,and take advantage of technology to improve service delivery and the quality of lives of citizens.

Do you think this government, under Keith Rowley, cares about any of that? They are so spiteful, they’ve kept this facility closed for close to three years – just because it was built under the government I led.

**Special Purpose Company to manage Couva Children’s Hospital**

Now I just want to return to what Rowley said about the Canadian company Interhealth Canada and the arrangements that are being finalized.

It has come to my attention that Cabinet deliberated on setting up a Special Purpose Company - I have here a copy of Cabinet Note H(18)33, dated 11 April 2018 and Cabinet Minute dated 12 April 2018 which reveal that the Government accepted the recommendations of the Minister of Health in paragraph 8 of the note.

Paragraph 8 speaks to the establishment of a special purpose company to be called the Couva Medical and Multi-training Facility Limited (CMMF Ltd), to be majority owned by the government and minority owned by the University of the West Indies.

With regard to a framework agreement between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of Canada, the Ministry of Health would seek, through this new special purpose company, to **purchase services** from the operator.

These services would include, but not be limited to:

* Cataract surgeries
* MRI/CT scans
* Joint replacement surgeries, hip and knee
* Open heart surgery
* Angioplasty
* Burns unit
* ICU and HDU services

But before any of this is done, the government is conducting assessments of the facility of the physical infrastructure, equipment and ICT infrastructure.

The cost of this is estimated at $141,000 US dollars. What is interesting to note is that the cost is expected to be borne by the operator, but if the government does not move forward with the named operator, who pays? The Government pays. So you pay for these assessments.

We are very concerned about what the Government is doing with this Couva Children’s Hospital. They must answer to the people as to what their plans are.

What share exactly of the Special purpose company (CMMF) will be allocated to the UWI ( a regional body ) , in other words TT assets paid for by TT taxpayers being vested in UWI ?

How exactly will the arrangement between UWI and the Operator work ?

Will the offshore medical school give preference to TT nationals who can afford it ?

It is being proposed that the MOH will purchase services from CMMF Ltd at preferential rates

* What does this mean?
* Will services be free to the public?
* Will the Operator employ local doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers? (no mention in Cabinet note )

The list of clinical services does not include any pediatric services except ICU and HDU

There is a purpose built children emergency facility at the site ( only one in TT and in keeping with first world standards,

In UK , 20 % of all EDs have a purpose built area

Are they going to repurpose the Children’s Wing ? If so, why, Spite ?

There are 80 beds and rooms specially designed for children with equipment already purchased What will happen to this ?

There are children beds in Mt Hope and San Fernando but none in Central Trinidad.

**Non-Disclosure Clause**

**Why?**

What ae they planning to hide?

Taxpayer’s money spent and to be spent. There must be transparency.

Anor Darrel Smith – non-disclosure

Anor Dillon – sealed court records?

What was the process used to get Interhealth Canada?

Was any due diligence done.

Any person can google that company’s name and instantly many alleged corruption scandals about them pop up.

**Preparing to return to Government**

My brothers and sisters, I did not want to go too much into details about these issues, but they are important, and I felt it was critical that I share this with you.

Over the past two and a half years under this Rowley-led government, we have witnessed the collapsing of all sectors.

People are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet – food prices continue to rise; more people are being sent home and have no income; you can’t walk out your door without worrying if today is the day you get robbed or worse; and you can’t even get basic medication in the health centres and hospitals.

We need to fix this, we need to return good governance to our beloved nation.

Your party has been hard at work – we’re on the ground hearing your concerns, we’re finalizing our vision and plan, we are working for you.

We have appointed co-ordinating teams in the marginal seats where we do not have a UNC MP; they have been had at work and we thank them.

We will continue to speak on your behalf, and on behalf of all citizens who are fed up, unhappy, angry with this wicked PNM Government.

Today, I applaud my team, a lot of good work has already been done, but we need you to support us, and to join with us.

LG Bye elections are long overdue

Nomination forms are available at UNC Headquarters

Constituency Executive elections will be held during the period May and June.

Now, more than ever we must make the commitment and renew and focus our energies on building and strengthening our party.

Let us pledge today to remember the vision of our founding fathers, and to work towards shaping a better future for our party, for our people and our country.

The voice of the people is the voice of God. Not only is he turning away from God... he is turning away from the people. Retroactive Property tax on our poor, cancellation of grants and support for children and adult with special needs...

Speak out

Stand up

Thank you, my UNC family. May God bless each and every one of you.

SEE APPENDIX for links and stories.

**APPENDIX**

<http://www.post-carbon-living.com/blog/index.php/2015/04/18/the-privateers-the-damage-done/>

<http://www.mapleleafweb.com/forums/topic/5421-part-two-exposing-the-private-healthcare-industry/>

<http://tcweeklynews.com/controversial-interhealth-canada-contract-leaked-p2877-127.htm>

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THE full version of the controversial InterHealth Canada deal was leaked this week via two online news sites.

The full document, which includes 187 separate files and a mind boggling 7,665 pages, was published on [www.tcinewsnow.com](http://www.tcinewsnow.com/) and [www.caribbeannewsnow.com](http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/).

**ABSOLUTE SCANDAL**

<https://www.thecaribbeanradio.com/commentary-the-turks-and-caicos-national-health-insurance-scandal/>

1. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/news/2018-04-23/rowley-couva-hospital-coming-stream-soon> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)