

**The Caribbean Academy Of Science In
Service Of The Caribbean And The
Caribbean People**

Address by the Honourable Prime Minister
Mr. Samuel A. Hinds on the 5th Annual Conference
of the Caribbean Academy of Science

Professor Saunders, Dr. Hall, Deputy Secretary General of CARICOM, Professor Anne McLaren, Foreign secretary of the Royal society, Officers and Members of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences, Distinguished Guests.

Amongst the distinguished guests before me, I want to recognize particularly Dr. Omar Khan and his wife Michelle—Omar and I went barefoot to primary school, Novar Canadian Mission school, way back in the first half of the nineteen fifties. It was a great pleasure and delight many years later, in 1986 to have spent sometime with him and his charming wife in London, where he had gained recognition as an authority in CAT scanning. I was happy to learn in 1990 that Omar was moving back, this was to Mount Hope in Trinidad. I shall hope that as conditions improve in Guyana, he would be encouraged to travel the remaining three hundred and sixty miles to Guyana.

I want to recognize in the audience too, Guyana's Dr. Gorinsky from our Rupununi Savannahs. Many of us grew up in a period when only two careers were known, doctors and lawyers. I was tending more to becoming a doctor. About 1962 I read a book on medical advances and one story related the introduction of curare—a traditional poison used in hunting by the Amerindians in this area—as a component in anaesthetics in Western Medicine. Dr. Gorinsky played a major role in that introduction.

I want to observe too that I became a colleague of Mel Sankies, Deputy Vice Chancellor of UG, when I began working at the bauxite company in Mackenzie in 1967.

I see in the audience a number of other distinguished persons with whom I have had the pleasure of associating over the years.

I welcome you all, on behalf of our President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, on behalf of the Government and people of Guyana and on my own behalf, to our dear land of Guyana. We are indeed honoured in your choosing to host your 5th Annual General Meeting in Guyana. I do hope that you were moved to come here to learn first hand about the changes in Guyana, the rebuilding that has begun, the spirit of social and Economic Dynamism which is in the air. I do hope that you have chosen to come to Guyana, to sense the challenge, to participate and contribute in the great tasks of rebuilding and building anew which abound in Guyana. Your field trips on Friday would provide you with the opportunity of seeing Guyana beyond Georgetown, and I do hope that you enjoy some of the variety of terrain that exists in Guyana.

Guyana, the Caribbean and the many developing countries face great tasks and challenges in their desire to attain the living standards and life styles of the developed countries—living standards, and life styles which today our people could not help but know about from the TV sets everywhere, living standards and life styles which are irresistible thanks to the skills and resources of those in the advertising business. Our great difficulty, is the understandable desire of all of our people, to move directly from where we are now to where the developed countries are today, all in one jump. Notions of equality of man, human brotherhood, demand why not? Why can't we who are equal enjoy the same today? But such a transformation of our society would probably require a generation or two, for we are looking not only at changes in individuals but changes in society as a whole, changes which should include each and every member of our countries.

In Guyana, many of our scientists, engineers, lawyers, doctors, graduates of universities, have been feeling intensely the pressures of living in a less developed country. First, the ever present question of income. In the late sixties when I began working, science and technology graduates in Guyana obtained about one third to two thirds of what their classmates were receiving in North America. It was brave enough then, and difficult enough to maintain then, that there was no absolute worth of anyone, his worth depended on the community that he was in, of which he was part and his expectation of what he should be paid should be guided by a sense of some equitable, reasonable distribution of what the community had produced. It was difficult enough, even for me, to accept this rationale when my pay was $\frac{2}{3}$ (two thirds) of the North American pay, and almost impossible to accept as our real incomes dropped to one third, one tenth, one twentieth and less, of pay being received by fellow classmates in

North America. Our communities look to our scientists and technologists to contribute significantly to increasing the cake which our community produces and shares. We scientists and technologists should not disappoint them. We must work for the steady increase and our fair share openly take.

The sensitivity of this issue has been heightened even more today in Guyana, with an inflow of experts and specialists with various assistance programmes and institutional strengthening arrangements. We need to keep before us that these arrangements are for a period and serve us—they are but our servants. We need to accept that often, even though we have a number of excellent individuals, we would not have all the skills, experience and expertise within our small countries to completely satisfy our needs. We should promote contacts, combinations and links, as well as openness to the rest of the world, even as we look for novel ways to satisfy our needs, from within.

It may appear particularly perverse that being denied the satisfaction of good pay, we are also denied the satisfaction of great works and great achievements. We do not have the resources in Guyana, the computers and other equipment, the libraries, the funding to show what we could be. No doubt even as we congratulate many of our Guyanese who have achieved so much abroad, we wonder if we could not have done similarly, and should we not have stayed abroad? We should recognize that there is achievement even excellence, in service, in doing what has to be done, even though convention may not deem what we do as respectable, in lancing abscesses whilst others are transplanting hearts

We need to work at increasing feelings of community, the cohesiveness of our community, whilst maintaining open the rest of the world. This is a job mainly for our social scientists, our politicians and our artists—this job of holding us together—but scientists and technologists can contribute. I think that whatever profession we pursue in life, we are first of all citizens of our communities, and our role and responsibility as citizens are primary and over arching. We should not yield to the temptation, particularly in a difficult social and political circumstances, to hide from those difficulties under the umbrella of being only a scientist or technologist. We must always be concerned and be responsible for the ends which we serve. I say this particularly because in our Guyana during our difficult period of the seventies and eighties, many of our Guyanese scientists, technologists and other professionals, in taking the position that "*we are just professionals,*" became tools of the system. But then as that period was brought to an end and even

unto today, the prevailing explanation for the great decline in Guyana, is that our professionals were not competent. In fact, I am still wary of the word "professional". I held for many years now, and still do, that our failures in Guyana have been primarily not as professionals but as citizens.

On the question of those who make their home here and those who go abroad, let me say that I hold it neither for or against any individual how he answers that question, good can be achieved either way. But for those who for whatever reasons are in Guyana and the Caribbean, we must be first of all members of our community, sharing in all the experiences of the community advising through participation and as we participate. It would be no good if we stay on in Guyana and the Caribbean and be full of regrets all the while.

These considerations lead us to ideas of the role of scientists and Technologists in Guyana and the Caribbean.

Firstly, there is the need to provide to the community the services and benefits of science and technology developed by all mankind—some selection from all that mankind has developed in Science and Technology, some affordable selection that is effective and efficient, giving good returns to our limited resources. We must accept living within the limits of what our community could provide, otherwise we may be wasting our lives, baying at the moon. We should recognize that in a way, more may be demanded of us, than of our classmates in North America. University courses in science and technology generally prepare persons, as they ought, for work at the frontline of science and technology. This is quite appropriate and enough for the developed countries of the North, but for us in Guyana and elsewhere in the South, we should know not only the front line science and technology of today, but in addition all the science and technology from a thousand years ago to today. Our task would be to discern some appropriate combination from all this which fits well with where our community is today, a combination which would involve and motivate all our people and from which we could steadily advance and hopefully merge with the North in a generation or two.

There is a role and responsibility too in maintaining awareness of the advances in science and technology around the world, in educating our community about those advances, the effects they may have on our lives, the dangers and opportunities they present.

For some, the highest achievements and accolades in science and

technology lie at the end of Research, new original discoveries. I think that for us, the priorities may be reversed—application with adaptation being our first concern, then development of known work, then original research. This is not to say that if we happen upon some gem of a new, original discovery we should ignore it. To draw a parallel with cricket, we in the West Indies depend on finding gems like Lloyd, Lara and now Chandarpaul. I am told that in the U.K. much more hope is put in developing cricketers by expert coaching. I think that we will look more towards being happy when we stumble upon an original discovery, rather than funding and directing research to make original discoveries.

Mister President of the Academy of Sciences of the Caribbean, it may be that I have been preaching to the converted for the set of papers listed for presentation here fall within the views I have been propounding. But it is good for us from time to time to affirm our views, so that we and fellow members of our community could be aware of where we stand.

Mister President, I want to commend all those who worked for the formation of this six-years young Caribbean Academy of Sciences and those who have kept it going. I admire the width of coverage of the papers. It is good that the Scientists and Technologists of the Caribbean area should meet and talk of their work, maybe even just meet socially, for a number of things suggest to me that perhaps the greatest indicator of the potential for development of a community is its social connectedness, the richness of the between the individuals of the community.

Our relatively small numbers may not provide much opportunity for peaking with another in our particular specialization—but perhaps this could be our strength—in becoming aware of similarities in different disciplines, different areas of activity—biology and economics, medicine and engineering. I came across an article recently, which spoke of great enlightenment in bringing some biological awareness and approaches to economics and some economics awareness to biological questions. I have often thought during my chemical engineering career that one should probably seek the assistance of an anatomist, expert in the arrangement of the blood vessels, when designing the layout of piping and instruments in a complex chemical plant.

Mister President, I close with my best wishes for a successful 5th Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences.