

No. 9

THURSDAY

First Session

22nd November, 2001

Seventh Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NINTH MEETING, FIRST SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CONSTITUTED AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE 2 TO THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ORDER, 1979.

SEVENTEENTH SITTING

22nd November, 2001

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 4:55 p.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning,
Economic Development, Labour, Information,
Grenadines and Legal Affairs.

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Commerce and Trade.

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

Minister of National Security, the Public Service
and Airport Development
Honourable Sir Vincent Beache

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives,
The Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriagua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central
Windward

Minister of Telecommunications, Science
Technology and Industry
Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Clayton Burgin

Member for East St. George

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Montgomery Daniel

Member for North Windward

Minister of State in the Ministry
of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade
Honourable Conrad Sayers

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

Government Senator, Parliamentary
Prime Minister's Office, Special
Responsibility for Labour and
Grenadines Affairs

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/
Leader of the Opposition

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Minister of Health and the Environment
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 22ND NOVEMBER, 2001

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker, read the Prayers of the House.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Mrs. Gonsalves, Your Excellency Hugo Chavez, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Mrs. Chavez, Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Arnhim Eustace, Members of Parliament, distinguished ladies and gentlemen; this special sitting of Parliament is being convened to commentate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and particularly to facilitate the visit of His Excellency, President Hugo Chavez and members of his delegation.

Today's event marks the second occasion on which we have had the opportunity and the privilege to welcome to this Parliament two presidents from your country, the first being President Jaime Lushinchi, approximately 20 years ago. This visit however is not without its historic significance in that his Excellency is paying his first historic visit to an English speaking country since he assumed the office of president of his country. Your Excellency, we warmly welcome you.

I have now the distinct honour and privilege to invite Dr. the Honourable Gonsalves, Prime Minister to address this Honourable House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Your Excellency Hugo Chavez, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Mrs. Chavez; Other distinguished Office-Holders who constitute part of His Excellency's delegation; The Honourable Leader of the Opposition; the Honourable Members of Cabinet and other Honourable Members of the House of Assembly; Members of the Judiciary; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Other invited guests; Members of the Press Corps, local, regional and international; Ladies and Gentlemen; Fellow Vincentians. Joy erupted in our land when His Excellency Hugo Chavez Frias arrived this morning.

Your Excellency, when you and I met for the first time in Quebec City at the Summit of the Americas in April this year, we knew instinctively, in our embrace and dialogue, that we were kindred spirits determined to promote developmental processes in our respective countries within the interest of our own people. You may recall that it was at Quebec City that I first invited you to pay a state visit to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. You graciously accepted the invitation and we both promised each other to work out a convenient date before the end of this year. We have both kept our promise. That invitation was issued to you when my government was merely six weeks old.

This morning our Governor-General and I welcomed you to the bosom of our nation. So did our people as a whole. I welcome you again most warmly my dear brother and friend. The people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are over-joyed at your presence here.

Today marks a magnificent commemoration of just over twenty years of unbroken and strong diplomatic relations between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela. On October 29, 1981 our two countries formally established diplomatic ties. St. Vincent and the Grenadines was then barely two years old as an independent nation state. The founding father of our nation-state, the Rt. Honourable Robert Milton Cato, our country's first Prime Minister, and the Honourable Hudson Kemuel Tannis, our country's first Foreign Minister, both now sadly deceased, had the wisdom and foresight to forge and develop institutional links with our brothers and sisters in Venezuela. We remember their pioneering work, and those of their Venezuelan counterparts, reverentially, in this regard.

Your Excellency, the widow of our founding father, Mrs. Lucy Cato, is very much alive, and today we recognise her most warmly and lovingly.

Present too, Your Excellency, Honourable Members, are two distinguished personages who were members of this Parliament at the time of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Venezuela and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I refer to the Honourable Minister of National Security and the Public Service, our nation's elder statesman Vincent Ian Beache, who was a member of the Labour Government which initiated the diplomatic bonds between our two countries, and I refer to the Honourable Speaker who was then a Senator in this Parliament.

Indeed, Your Excellency, the Honourable Vincent Beache is the only member of this Honourable House who was in this said House when the then President of Venezuela, Jaime Lushinchi, visited our shores in 1988. Mr. Beache was then the Leader of the Opposition.

Your Excellency, you have come to our country and to accord us the honour of addressing this special sitting of Parliament, in circumstances vastly different to those which obtained internationally, regionally, and nationally in our two countries thirteen years ago when your predecessor-in-office made a formal state visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In 1988, the Cold War was still raging albeit less fiercely than before. Centrally-planned regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were in the early stages of unravelling. The post-modern version of globalisation was in its early phase and had not yet become a rampaging, elephantine animal. Incipient trade liberalisation was on its march but was not yet doing so to the beating drums of the commandist World Trade Organisation (WTO). The revolution in information technology was in its infancy; its utterly transformative influence and power came a little later. Then, the gospel of neo-liberalism appeared triumphant and pervasive although seeds of resistance to it were beginning to germinate and, in some countries, even flourish.

Thirteen years ago when your predecessor visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines, our banana industry – then our principal employer of labour and chief earner of foreign exchange – was still cocooned in the protective embrace of the Lomé Convention and preferential market arrangements in the United Kingdom, our main banana market. In 1990, St. Vincent and the Grenadines exported nearly 80,000 tons of bananas with gross bananas earnings in excess of EC\$100 million. Today, both the volume and value of our banana exports are a half of what they were when your predecessor came just over a decade ago. This is but one example of monumental changes which have occurred nationally before our very eyes in a short time. Swiftly, we have had to push for the diversification of our economy into tourism and offshore financial services, and in difficult circumstances.

The global landscape has indeed been altered significantly: trade regimes which formerly recognized the differentials in developing States like ours now spread the evangelism of trade, based on rigid rules and regulations; but the inequality between developed countries, on the one hand, and those like Venezuela and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on the other, their inequalities remain stark; and despite the advances we have made, we must now play “catch-up” with the developed world which owns more than 80% of the world’s wealth and resources.

Yet for all of this, we cannot throw our hands up in the air in despair. Indeed, we shall marshal all of our energies to confront in unison the challenges before us. The unity of the Caribbean and Latin America is not just an option, it is a strategic imperative in order to confront the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities which are present in the globalized world.

Mr. President, the Republic of Venezuela provides us with an emerging example of the building of solidarity among the stakeholders in the society, but especially among the ordinary people whose voices, concerns and agendas must be fully represented in an evolving participatory democracy.

Your Excellency, your clear-sighted and fulsome analyses of your own country's political economy have taught us that revolutionary changes in the tradition and spirit of the heroic liberator, Simon Bolivar, have been taking place in your country. The whole world, and more particularly the Caribbean and Latin America, look on with profound interest at your government's thorough and thoughtful response to the challenges and opportunities which arise out of globalisation, trade liberalisation and the revolution in information technology.

This Parliament applauds your efforts at constitutional reform, the revamping of your education system and the focused changes in your country's own fiscal regime. All this you have combined with a renewed commitment to teaching and applying the Bolivarian principles of equality and social justice.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and St. Vincent and the Grenadines share many commonalities. Both countries are deeply committed to enhancing participatory democracy and to strengthening popular controls on the state administration. Our peoples and governments strive to ensure a full enjoyment of internationally recognised fundamental rights and freedoms within the protective framework of an alive constitutionalism. Our nations, at home and abroad, are steeped in the spirit of solidarity, an element so necessary if we as developing countries are to defeat poverty, ignorance, disease, and economic hardship and put our countries on the path of genuine development in the interest of our peoples' own humanisation.

Your Excellency, you and I know that our countries represent much of that which is noble in our respective Caribbean and Latin American civilisations within the wider frame of what has been called "Our America" of which the USA, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and your beloved Venezuela are major players. It is our duty in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela as free independent and sovereign peoples to ensure that no new imperium of whatever kind deters us from the further ennoblement of our respective civilisations. To be sure, we are pragmatic peoples and know our possibilities and limitations. But we must never forget that we represent legitimate, authentic, independent and noble civilisations. This idea is deeply rooted in our existential souls and beings. That idea is unshakeable.

It is in this context, too, that we have unequivocally chosen the path of further ennobling our respective civilisations and thus have stood firm, in words and deeds, against the barbarism of international terrorism. In that regard, we have firmly denounced the terrorist attacks against the USA in New York and Washington on

September 11th. As member-states of the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) we have been steadfast in support of international and hemispheric peace and security. Our internationalist obligations enjoin us to implement and follow binding United Nations' resolutions and decisions including the recent UN Security Council Resolution No: 1373 against terrorism, including the fight to suppress of the financing of terrorism. Our hemispheric duty in the OAS and our solemn obligations in the Declaration of Quebec City demand that we do everything possible to promote and sustain democracy, security, human rights, peace, justice, political hygiene, balanced economic development, and freedom for all our peoples in Our America. Our membership in the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) imposes on us certain responsibilities to find joint solutions to our problems in the areas of trade, transport, tourism and technology. I look forward, Your Excellency, to working with you and other Caribbean leaders on these matters at the ACS summit in Venezuela early in December this year under your distinguished Chairmanship.

Your Excellency, the entire world can therefore see that there are factors which both pre-dispose and induce our two countries to have closer relations. Later today, both of us will sign two agreements of profound significance to our countries. The first of these agreements provides a wide framework for co-operation in a range of functional matters touching upon trade, education, health, culture and technical and economic cooperation generally. The second agreement is more specific and relates to energy. Under the Caracas Energy Accord, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will benefit substantially from the provision by Venezuela of some of the refined oil needs of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on easy credit terms.

I have no doubt that this Accord will have a significant and measurable positive impact on the economy of this country. Moreover, I predict that neighbouring Caribbean countries, which do not possess oil refineries, will follow the leadership of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in this vital area.

Your Excellency, these agreements will build upon pre-existing cooperative links between our two countries. We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are deeply honoured that this is the first English-speaking Caribbean country to which you have chosen to make a formal State visit. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is among the smallest nations not only in this hemisphere but in the Caribbean itself. Your Excellency, it is a mark of your humility that someone of your unquestioned international stature from a great country, Venezuela, have found it possible to visit us.

We in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, a great people from a small nation, welcome you most joyously and embrace the magnificence of your spirit and your soul. Today, the Liberator Simon Bolivar is celebrated. So, too, is José Martí, Joseph Chatoyer, Milton Cato, Ebenezer Joshua and our other heroic forebears of Our Caribbean and Our America.

Welcome again, your Excellency! Together Now!

Long Live the peoples of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines!

Long Live the solidarity between our two nations at home and abroad!

Long live the ideas of President Hugo Chavez! I thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: May I now invite the Honourable Arnhim Eustace, Leader of the Opposition to address this Honourable House.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, and Mrs. Gonsalves, your Excellency, Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela and Mrs. Chavez, Members of our Parliament, judiciary, our diplomatic corp, the media and our distinguish guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Opposition in this Honourable House, I extend a warm and cordial welcome, Mr. President to you and your delegation to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and to our highest institution, the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Our two countries, Mr. President have had formal diplomatic relations for twenty (20) years but in reality relations between our two (2) countries predate that period by many years; Mr. President, I can remember for example, as a young economist in the Ministry of Planning visiting your country as part of a delegation headed by then Premier James Mitchell in 1972, twenty-nine (29) yeas ago. I recall, Mr. President, at that time Premier James Mitchell was accorded Venezuelans highest honour, the Order of Simon Bolivar the Liberator by your predecessor President Caldera.

Today Mr. President, merely thirty (30) years after that visit and some twenty-eight (28) years after what is referred to as the energy crisis of 1973, and some thirteen (13) years after the visit of President Jaime Lucinchi to St. Vincent and the Grenadines our two (2) countries now participate in an entirely different world. A world increasingly dominated by globalization and trade liberalization which present both treats and opportunities for our respective peoples. A world increasingly dominated by those who have wealth and power at the expense of those who are powerless. Our two (2) countries however are developing strategies, difficult as it is, to deal with the reality of this new world, and to advance the standard of living of the people we have sworn to serve.

Mr. President, I wish to express heart-felt appreciation to your Government and people for the assistance your country have provided to St. Vincent and the Grenadines over the years. Whether it be an oil facility, education or training or cultural exchanges. I

wish also to thank your country for its longstanding regional membership of the Caribbean Development Bank and for your steadfast support of that organization. We have also benefited here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for your financial contribution to that institution.

Mr. President, as we all strive to further the political and economic integration of our regions, there are some issues between our respective countries which predate your Presidency and impact on our relations. I refer here, Mr. President to territorial boundary dispute and the control of the seabed between OECS countries and Venezuelan and secondly, the longstanding boundary dispute with our CARICOM neighbour Guyana. Mr. President, without denying the difficulties of resolution it is important for our deepening relations that a solution, mutually acceptable be found to these longstanding disputes.

In closing, again, Mr. President, a very warm welcome to St. Vincent and the Grenadines to you and your delegation and may the bonds of friendship that join our two (2) countries grow even stronger. Thank you.

SPECIAL ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, through a translator.

PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ: Rt. Honourable Hendrick Alexander and members of the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Rt. Honourable Members of the Executive Cabinet of the St. Vincent Government, Rt. Honourable Eloise Gonsalves, Madam Theresa Juienata, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Rt. Honourable Members of the Diplomatic Corp, the international organisations present and greeted by the St. Vincent Government, members of the official delegation accompanying me, distinguish guests, representatives of the media, ladies and gentlemen, and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

First of all I would like on behalf of the Venezuelan people to expressed my thanks for the words, the expression of love and solidarity that we have received during the whole day today, this has been indeed a wonderful day, I dare to say it has been a very intense, a vibrant day, in this Caribbean Paradise, I mean St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in these waters, in these lands and under this sky, where we were meant to live as brothers and sisters; and it is in this capacity as your brother I take the floor today. [Applause]. And also from the bottom of my heart I want to convey the warm greetings of the Bolivarian people of Venezuela.

And after hearing the extraordinary speech of my brother the Prime Minister, and also after listening to the extraordinary speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition,

and I thank from the bottom of my heart the words expressed by both speakers, I also expressed my thanks to the speaker of the House for his words, I think this is the right place and right moment today as a political forum of the people from St. Vincent and the Grenadines since this is the place where legitimate representatives come to discuss and debate, about matters that concern St. Vincent and the Grenadines and also matters that concern the whole of the Caribbean, to discuss matters regarding Latin America, regarding what happens in this Hemisphere and as a matter of fact what happens in the world. So this is as I said the right place and the right moment to discuss with you a few things regarding matters that are going on in my country Venezuela.

And what is going on in Venezuela has had and will continue to have certainly some impact in the daily lives of the Caribbean and of the rest of the hemisphere. Many people wonder what is going on in Venezuela, simply what is going on in Venezuela is a revolution, a revolution stemming from the very bottom of time. A revolution that remains suspended in time some 1200 years ago, it is the very same revolution which started 200 years and that was started by Simon Bolivar, it is a democratic and very peaceful revolution, but it is a revolution. It is based on a political concept, a Bolivarian political concept that was already enshrined in our Constitution of 1819. And Bolivar had already said that the best type of government is the type of government that provides its people with the largest sum of social security, the highest sum of political stability, and the largest sum of happiness possible. A revolution based on this principle of the union of South America, of the creation of a block of different forces. A revolution that is based on the historical tragedy that the Venezuelan people has witnessed during the last years.

Now what is the international framework of this Venezuelan revolutionary process? The Prime Minister already mentioned globalization and he said as a wild animal this globalization process has unleashed. I think he even mentioned the word elephant to described this process, that tries to trample the rights of the small countries of these world.

Well, I am going to use these very idea mentioned by the Prime Minister which is so clear in order to try to insert the Venezuelan revolution process in this international frame work. You know, at the end of the 20th century this was wide idea that the world had reached the end of history, the idea that that new world order was about to begin, and it was even said that there was no alternative, and it was said that neo liberalization was the right path to follow. The principle that invisible hand will settle and arrange everything, that happened as a result of the falling of the Berlin wall, and also as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, some people said history is over, now there is just one way to follow, just one path, the only way to heaven, the way, the road that leads to paradise, and come join us on this train, this is the last train. However we realize that this train is not heading towards paradise, this train goes

directly to hell, [laughter] those who want to get there come in, join the train, now there will be a warning for those who want to get on the train. Dante Alegaris said that he had reached the fifth hell in the Divinia Comerdia he said so. And he said after the first hell, things did not do too bad after all, but then, you know, there is the second hell, which is a little bit tougher, and then there is a third one and things become grim and then the fourth and Satan is around, and then there is a store that leads us to the fifth hell, well in that very door that lead us to the fifth hell it seems that there is a sign that says, those who get in here, please lose all home. Well, these neo liberalization train lead us to that fifth hell.

So this last decade of the 20th century was characterized by these principles, invisible hands, they were to settle and arrange everything, so in a way it is like the hand of God, right? But not even the hand of God, because I am a believer, I believe in God, I believe in Christ, the one to come to redeem us, and I do believe that this struggle that we have to wage today, are the same waged 2000 years ago. Those struggles that led Christ to the cross.

Now if we look at the world and the realities today we can clearly see that the hand of God cannot solve everything. However, people who believe in neo liberalism tend to believe the hands of the market is more powerful than the hands of God, since it is able to solve everything.

Now, the world and ourselves we were surprised by the eruption of these principles and thesis this was an unforeseen phenomenon that no one, not even analysis or philosophers had predicted, indeed in 1985 no one in his right mind could have guessed that the Soviet Union was about to disappear, so you know it took us some time to simulate this sudden phenomenon. This phenomenon that no one expected, it took us some time to understand what was going on, so it took us some time in the '90's to understand, we devoted all our effort to understand this new phenomenon, this new globalization process that was about to begin. So, today at the beginning of the 21st century, almost everyone has understood that this is not the way to go. And not only that we witness the beginning of a new phase, a total rejection to this phenomenon. A reject that in some parts of the country has become violent, and indeed all over the world we see people protesting against globalization when I had the luck to meet you in Quebec City during the summit, something very weird happened there, normally when I visit different countries I usually lay a wreath to the statue of Bolivia, however in Quebec City I could not reach the statue of Bolivar. We were told that we cannot leave inside of the parameters of the wall that was built around us, and I said what a wall? You mean the Heads of State and the Government has are surrounded by a fence? Yes, indeed that is the case. My room was at the top floor and from there with some binoculars, I was able to see the fence, it was that high. And this wall was surrounding the place where the Summit of the Americas took place.

It means that the Heads of States of the democracy of the hemisphere of all the Americas, sorry there was one missing, there was one excluded, democratically excluded of course, Fidel Castro. He was excluded; of course, they did not ask our opinion about this, because I am certain if they had asked for the opinion of the people the Americas we would have said yes, we wanted him to be invited. [Applause] But you know democracy sometimes has two faces, they have two faces when they talk about democracy. Well, the fact of the matter was that Fidel was not there, but all of the rest of us were almost there, but then there was this weird fact, that the Heads of States of the democracies of the hemisphere we were talking about democracy but we were surrounded by a fence to prevent the people's on the other side from coming in, is not that a contradiction, those who were protesting they were numerous people, they open a hole in that wall, they rush in, in this democratic area that has been built, and democratically the law enforcement authority pushed them away, using teargas of course, what a contradictory democratically spectacle they gave. And in Geneva something even worst happen, even someone die during the protests, same thing in Washington, in Seattle, these summits, there is no way they are going to find a host country for those summits, they fear to host that kind of summit. And I think they are going to chose the Rocky Mountains of Canada to hold the next summit over there, far removed up there from the peoples not to get there, and during my trip to Europe, one Head of State told me that the summit that should be held there no one, no one wants to hold that summit, so I feel that they are going to use a submarine or something to hold that summit in there, I am not joking, that is true. So, what I am saying here is that these reject against globalization is growing and growing and will keep growing in the future.

Because these neo globalization is destroying peoples, it is destroying the peasants, it is destroying women, it is destroying children, it is destroying the industries of small countries, it is destroying life. Every day there is more and more poor. There was a terrible growth of poverty of the last decade of the 20th century. The employment reached historic levels, and misery and poverty, and hunger and death. And do you think our peoples are going to sit around and wait to be killed? And this is very dangerous.

I was in jail once. And was reading the interview with an Indian person, from some American country, that together with other Indians they took weapons, arms and produce a movement, and in this process some people were killed. And some Indian people also was killed. Now a journalist went to forest to interview these people and interview the leader of these Indian movement, and they asked well, how come you went out to kill people and even to put your life at risk? And the answer that these persons gave are very profound and very disturbing, but humane, he said, why? Because I prefer to die while I struggle, than to die out of hunger. For him it is a matter of choosing how to die. He cannot choose how to live. That is why I say that this new stage against globalization and neo liberalization will continue to grow. That is why

thinkers, planners around the world are trying to find out alternatives to globalization. So after this stage of protest, and rejection, there will be a new stage otherwise, and we know that is not the right way to go, because, that one is not the right way to go, what is the way, brothers and sisters, after these thousand of years the way is not just there that you can see it, calling us to get that road, I don't think so, we have to create this new way, we have to pave this new way, the way is not ready waiting for us, but we are lost so far, we have been going around and around in a forest lost. I think that today we are going through a crucial time in our history.

And over the last two and a half years, I have been able to travel around the world, almost, trying to find his way in this struggle. We went from Washington to Santiago, De Chile, we went to Havana, Santo Domingo, Bogotá, Managua, and today we are here in this beautiful country. We went to Moscow, to Senegal, to Beijing, we have crossed the sands of the Persian Gulf, went to the very heart of Africa, we have crossed the Chinese seas. And I am in the list of the bad boys, because, you know, out of ignorance perhaps, or innocently, well, even though if I had known what I had to know, I would have done the same thing, any way, well, what I didn't know is that since the Gulf War the so called Desert torment, no other head of state, no other president, neither Prime Minister or anything, had set foot in Baghdad, and I went there. Well, in some places they got mad, now I am the President of a free country, right? [Applause]. As far as I know I am not the representative of the country that is a colony. But we went to Baghdad, so we traveled around the world, Europe, Asia, and whenever you go, you find a lot of confusion, you find the tragedy of all mankind. And this tragedy creates a great danger that jeopardizes the life on this planet.

The world as it is, is not viable, what happened in Washington and New York on September 11th, we condemn those terrible events, but you condemn but you have to do something else, but we have to wonder what are the causes of such a terrible event, where are the causes of these events, and without being fearful to ask these questions, without any fear, we need to know the causes, so we are able to tackle not only the effects of these events but also the causes of these events. [Applause]. Of course, we can find the answers in many places. Now in the Bible it is crystal clear the only way to peace is justice. [Applause]. So do we want peace in this world, let us build justice first. Now, you cannot impose peace with weapons and bombs and so on, peace can only be the result of love, you want your children to be robbers, you want your children to be drug traffickers, well leave them in the streets, well don't give them love, just let them go, and those beautiful children, those children who are the most sublime thing we have, those children who are in my view almost like God, I always say in the eyes of the children you can see God, today, I saw God in the streets of St. Vincent. [Applause]. But when you see children abandon, without education, without the orientation of the father, without love, you can bet, you can bet, 90% certain that those children will become simply the people who will commit crimes, will be drug

traffickers or use drugs. Living like animals, and they will lose what is most precious for human beings, their soul. That is why the world today is suffering this combustion.

And I will never forget my grandmother, who is in heaven, when I was a kid, and I was scared when she said so, that the world will end by the year 2000, or so, I was ten years old at that time, and I knew how to count, so I started to do my calculations, to see if I was going to be alive by the year 2000, yes by that year I will be something like 46, if God will. Yes, God wanted and I am here, so, I was very fearful, I said, oh, my God the year 2000 terrible things are going to happen. So now, I remember my grandmother and I see her around where ever I go, yes, there are threats around the world, however I think there is still time to be true to our commitment, we have to change the world and for that we need a huge effort, and I am certain that God is going to lend his hand, and I believe help yourself and God is going to help you, so let's pray God, but let us struggle as well, to start transforming this world, so I was mentioning three phases in the process of globalization, so the first one started in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall. The second one started in the year 2000 after Seattle, first we try to understand the phenomenon, the second we understood the phenomenon and we rejected it. Now the third is to proposed what are the alternatives.

So over the last years, Venezuela has been moving in a weird way. I would dear to say that Venezuela has been like a unique case which is different from the rest of the cases we have analyzed. Brothers and sisters, what I am saying here today, these principles are not mine, I have taken this principle from a very well known respected European intellectual and his name is Ignacio Ramonet, who is the Director of the Lymon Diplomatic. I had the opportunity of listening to Mr. Ramonet with a similar statement, in a meeting in Paris, during a meeting called the Venezuelan Revolution a Utopia or a Reality. And during his speech he presented a number of ideas that I took for myself and took note of those principles and then try to discuss them with Ramonet. And he said, that Venezuela is a very unique case, because where as in the rest of the world for some time, people were trying to understand these new phenomenon of globalization, started in 1989, Venezuela did not try understand these phenomenon but went directly to the second phase that is the rejection of these phenomenon. So in some way it started before the rest of the world, and at least in the case of Latin America this is true because where as in other countries of Latin America they accepted without protest the thesis of neo liberalization, and they started to implement the policies of the IMF called the shock policies, and they injected those poison to most the South American countries, Latin American countries.

Well, that very year 1989 when in the rest of the hemisphere were implementing this neo liberalism and policies of the IMF in Venezuela there was this first violent rejection against these measures. There was this violent explosion that today history known as the Caracaso, this happened on February 27th 1989. Well, what happened at the time, well a newly elected president, he had been inaugurated 25 days before, so at

the beginning of his administration, he signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and he tried to apply this shock policy, and the syringe was ready with this poison to be injected in our economy and the people said no, they reject it, and the syringe dropped, and there was a spontaneous popular rebellion, hundred of thousand of people took the streets and they looted the shops and whole masses were in the street, you could not control it. And they raised barricades in the streets; and violence took up all the spaces of the Venezuelan society. Police couldn't do anything against these mobs, well what happened? All the prices of all the utility services were increased, gas, electricity and so on and so forth, and that is what triggered this violent movement of people. And of course, since the law enforcement authorities could not control these masses, so the people who were governing the country at that time decided to call upon the army to control the mass, to save and protect democracy. What a contradiction. A democracy that has to kill its own people, after looting that same people, after humiliating these same people for 40 years, after taking these very people that lived on a sea of gold and oil, a country like many other countries that has been blessed by nature, a million square kilometers with largest reserve of oil outside the Persian Gulf, huge gold reserve, mountains and hills of iron, of bauxite, of gems, huge rivers, like the Orinoco, Arauca, Apure, huge lakes like the Maracaibo, huge sea, huge wealth, millions of fertile lands, and that democracy let this country with people surrounded by so much wealth, led them to have an 80% of poverty people.

So it was the opposite of the medias kin. And on top of all that you have to apply neo liberal policies. And those who did that seem to have forgotten that the Venezuelan people is the result of the mixture of the Caribbean Indians, of the black slave who found their freedom, and in their blood, or in their veins they have the blood of the warriors, that only 180 years have found or seem to have the freedom of this whole continent. They liberated all these areas until the Candacoca Hill in Peru, so something had to happen in Venezuela. And well that happened. The people reacted, and took up the streets, and it was massacred by the bullets of the soldiers. The soldiers that belonged to the same people, even though I did not shoot a single bullet, and I would not dare to do such a thing, but I was an active part of the Venezuelan Army at that time. I was Major, and I was working for the Government palace at that time. I didn't have any troupes with me at that time, and perhaps God wanted me to be ill at that time, so from my bed I had to see this disaster, and to feel how these believers were falling on all the Army, because Bolivar said so, because soldiers that turned their weapons against their people, they should be damned

So that was a malediction, so we had to react, so indeed that manner the military used f the time and I am honoured to belong to that youth, because I am still a member of that youth, because as a part of philosophy you are human being, you are there, you are something, and you can be in many places in many way, because water is a store right? It could be very liquid like the sea of the Caribbean, and there it is indeed a store, right, or it could take a solid form in the Northern Pole, but it is still a store, or it

could be in the clouds and still be a store. Well, the same thing is true for human beings, you are what you are, no matter where you are, I am a president, not really, I am now a president due to different circumstances, but I am a soldier, that's what I am indeed. A soldier, that took an oath to give his life, in case it was necessary to give his life to save a country called Venezuela.

Well, that is the tragedy of the Bolivarian soldiers. The so-called democrats, called us to massacre the people, after humiliating that people and submitting that people to poverty. Thousands found their death that day, children and aged people, innocent people, innocent women, well that was the trigger that happened three years later, a military movement, a revolutionary movement, and I had the responsibility of leading that movement, heading that movement, and as a result we ended up in jail, but nine months later these gave rise to a new movement, so immediately Venezuela we stated second stage of protesting against neo liberalism and we did it in our own unique way, popular rebellion in 1989, and in 1992, two military rebellions, and then very soon after we started to make proposals, but today it is not only a proposal, these proposals became something concrete, our constitution, this constitution which is just here, it is already, implemented, it is being implemented, and this constitution was the result of a constitutional process as soon as we were inaugurated. And these constitution was voted by those very people who took up the streets in 1989. And these people still in the streets, and some intellectuals have written that in February 27th 1989 the Venezuelan took up the streets and they have not come back to their homes, it remains in the streets and here is the president that has accompanied the people in the streets. [Applause]. And he is not alone, and he is with other soldiers who also accompanied the people in the streets, not to kill the people, no, but working hand in hand to build the Bolivarian Venezuela. So this proposals, ladies and gentlemen, these are already on the way, -- how much time to I have? [Laughter and applause]. I know you are extremely kind but you can also turn off the microphone if you want. I do not want really to take advantage of your huge generosity, and far as I know I think we have other meetings, now, we have to sign a few agreements, and His Excellency the Governor General has organized a cocktail party, but I guest that cocktail party is going to take place at midnight. [Laughter]. What matters, time does not matter.

Well, so let's try to finish now. So, this constitution is a project, it is not simply law. This constitution is the result of a huge national debate, and here you can find the dreams of a people and this very people now fighting to defend this constitution. Of course they are fighting against many obstacles. A number of problems, some of them natural obstacles, and others are artificial created by those both in Venezuela and outside of Venezuela fear the constitution, fear this small blue book. However, I am hopeful that these projects will succeed. This constitution is just a baby; it is only two years old. On December 15th we went to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the passing of this constitution. Now this constitution contains a project with five main accesses. The first access is the social one, with a long-term goal, social justice, that is our goal, and over

the last two years we have had some successes in it, we had implemented a number of social policies, different policies to protect the human development. For instance, the latest report of the United Nation for Development, it says that Venezuela was the only Latin American country that would be able to stop the growth of poverty. So this green beast that grew for a long time in our country we have succeeded in stopping it. And likely this phenomenon of poverty is starting to decrease, so we jumped from the 65th to the 61st in place, in this list regarding the human development and this happened during the first year of the revolution that is in 1999. [Applause]. So these human factor is essential to us. Because what is the use of economic growth if it doesn't translate into social growth. What is the use? And that is one of the huge problems with neo liberalism. Because neo liberalism, economy is the basis, it is essential and the social aspect is the second aspect, even third in importance.

Now for the Bolivarian revolution people the social issue is first and foremost. Regarding the death of a child or the child mortality we reduced it from 21 per thousand to 19 per thousand. And we have succeeded in enrolling in our schools, almost 1 million children who did not have access to schooling. [Applause]. And to do this we had to double the budget we use for education when we were inaugurated the percentage was 3% of the GDP and today it is 6% of the GDP. [Applause]. And this is what happened in the social area, now we are far away from our goal, because we have a huge social crisis in our country, we just make a few steps in that direction, so in the economic field, we want to transform the economic model from a model base solely on the production of oil, to a diversified economic model. And we have made some progress in that regard as well, for instance, yesterday we were discussing the figures of the economic growth for the third quarter of this year. And even though the growth in the oil sector was negative this year, I think we had to cut almost 350,000 barrels a day and prices have plummeted, so it has resulted in a negative growth, however, the economy has grown in areas such as construction, 15% almost, mining activities, almost 6%, telecommunications 14%, 66% in manufacturing, in agriculture 2%, so there is a diversify process of growth of the economy, specially the case of small and medium size businesses, unemployment went from 18% to 13%, in a nutshell the Venezuelan economy is one of the strongest of the continent, \$30 billion in international reserves, because we have been saving money in a special fund, because we have saved almost \$7 billion out of our oil revenue and we have put this money in the special fund. And the economic growth has achieved almost 3%, so despite recession and despite the drop in oil prices we have started to turn up our engines in our economy, but of course we still have a long way to go.

The third access of the Bolivarian revolution is the political field. We have left the aside most of the so-called democratic regime. And we have new institutions now, a new political system, defined thoroughly here, democratic system, but a representative movement or regime, and participatory regime. And passing laws in order to foster a greater popular participation, not only in the political arena but also in economic arena.

A new political system with five branches which were the ideas of Bolívar two hundred years ago, the executive branch, the legislative branch, the judiciary, the electoral branch; all these branches work independently although they are intertwined, a fully legitimized democracy with a huge popular content. Political parties that are undergoing transformation, armed forces have been re-structured and also working very hard in the development of the country. A new idea is now burning in Venezuela, it is the Bolivarian democracy. The fourth access is the territorial one, the development inside the country, and the fifth one is the reason why we are here today, the international field. [Applause].

We have defined our international vision, in the following terms and this is part of challenges of our every day action, around the world. We have to strengthen the national sovereignty, in the framework of the plural world and we said so this morning. In the world today we have enough room for more than two poles, in the 20th century we witness a bi polar world, but it didn't work, and as a result, well some might think well, we are going to have a uni-polar world, well that could even be worst, than the bi-polar world. This must be the century of plural polar world. In America we have room for at least two poles, and Bolivia has already sold them. The North American pole, and our American poles, of the Caribbean Latin America pole, it is our duty to shape these polar forces. The union of our peoples, the union of our political models, the union of our republics, the union of our economies, the union, a block of different forces, and this our common task for the upcoming century.

There must also be a pole in Africa, in Asia and Europe, at least five. In the Americas we need at least two poles, from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the leadership that you represent today, a noble people struggling in the streets, could do a lot in order to reach this goal, to create a fair and more balance world. And we have come here to convey these ideas, to make all these reflections with you, but we want more than that, because we need to go from words to practice. You will be terrible, just to be stuck in pure reflection. Simon Bolívar who was a very fierce man, once he said, to be indifferent to revolution, was sort of treason, the treason to the hope of the people, we cannot be indifferent to the people. We cannot be fearful, because what is at stake here is the very lives of our children. Only together can we increase our level of living. Venezuela cannot do it on its own. Brazil cannot do it on its own. Argentina cannot do it on its own; neither Peru, nor Cuba, nor St. Vincent and the Grenadines, nor Grenada, nor St. Lucia, or Jamaica, no one can do anything on its own.

What Fidel said a few months in Venezuela was true, either we integrate ourselves or we disintegrate. Let us choose. Let us choose the way, for our children, and I say it filled with anguish, we cannot waste a single day. Two centuries ago Bolívar said, in the revolutionary city of Caracas of 1811 when there was so many fearful people around, and they were discussing these matters in these type of rooms, some of them proposing independence, other conservative said no, because that could unleash the

furry of the empire, then a speaker took the floor and said, you have to be quiet. You have to quiet, you have to do little by little, and Bolivar a young Colonel at that time, that was filled with this flame inside, with this sacred flame inside, this flame of love, stood up and said, and it was the first memorable speech, he was not even 30 years old, and he said, big project should be reflected upon, very quietly. Well, three hundred years of reflection went very far. It was then without any fear, high time to place the fundamental stone of the South American freedom, they couldn't hesitate, because if we hesitate, we lose. A few months later they were already in the battles. Ten years later they were raising the flag of liberty. Today no matter what happens, no matter the cost this flame is there once again, and it is up to you, up to us to decide to choose. And I dare to repeat here once again, collecting all these ideas that has been expressed over the last two hundred years, in this beautiful and sister nation, in the very heart of the Eastern Caribbean, I want to recall the very words of Bolivar, and to repeat it like a call from the very heart, translating the pain of thousand of our brothers and sisters, that today at this very hour are suffering, all over this hemisphere, that at this very hour we are trying to over come death, in the quagmire of misery, of hunger and lost hope, I dare to say brothers and sisters, without any fear, let us put there the fundamental stone, the corner stone of a new liberty, of Latin America and Caribbean liberty. And I dare to add the same thing, if you hesitate, not only we will lose, if we hesitate we will lose ahead of time, we will lose the future of our children and the future of our people.

So with this very love I feel and with this optimism, I think there are reasons to be optimistic. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart this attention you have given me in this Parliament, I will never forget. Thank you so much. [Applause].

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we just heard the most inspiring speech by his Excellency and I am sure that all the people of St. Vincent who listened on radio, would be inspired to build that foundation. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, given the fact the House would be prorogued on Friday, tomorrow and would resume on Monday with a new session, I think it is right and proper for me today to move the adjournment sine die.

ADJOURNMENT

*House adjourned sine die
Question put and agreed to
House adjourned at 7:05 p.m.*