

**Speech by Hon (Mrs) L.D. Dookun-Luchoomun,
Minister of Education and Human Resources,
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
100th Anniversary of Mr. Frank Richard
Friday 11 November 2016**

Protocol.

Let me start by saying how happy I am to be here in your midst today.

Special people have a special way of making themselves known and remembered.

And today is one such occasion.

A lot has already been said and is yet to be said about Mr. Frank Richard today. And so, this leaves me in a seemingly unenviable situation where I have to ensure I do not engage in any kind of duplication.

However, that should be generally do-able: the man has been so multidimensional in stature that everybody would have something to say about him but from different perspectives. His family , his former staff, probably his former students would all look at and speak on different aspects of the man and still probably would not do full justice to him.

So, let me today focus, for starters, on something else.

Wherever we are-- with friends, with family, in the classroom, on the football field, in politics – anywhere – all of us are always on the look-out for real leaders. And real leaders have among others, a

mark of greatness that characterizes them. The leader is the one who sees miles ahead into the horizon and then gathers the troops together to get to the destination.

But good leadership is not only about the destination and getting there: it is about making the journey worthwhile.

And the journey can become meaningful if the leader carries the vision and sees to it that everyone buys into that vision. Of course, there will not always be total buy-in. Divergence in opinion, in approaches, in directions are bound to exist – but the leader will take these on board, because the more variegated the perspectives, the more these will serve to fine-tune the vision and make it become a shared and collective one.

And when this vision is shared, it makes everyone feel empowered.

The leader is thus seen as enabling people to internalize a sense of mission, a felt need to better themselves and to push their limits to the extreme.

But above all, the leader is the one who knows that, while he or she has masterminded the vision, that vision is called upon to outlast him or her. Because the leader has set his sights on the future, it is the generations to come that reap the benefits.

That is the defining characteristic of their life, the one that wins them the natural respect of one and all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have not talked about Frank Richard – not yet at least – but you must have realized by now that I have, all the while, been actually talking about him.

I know for many of you, he has been a mentor and a leader, and to me, this is his standout quality.

Those of you who have known him and worked under him will surely testify to his strength of character, his presence, his ideas, and his wealth of knowledge, amongst others.

I think another outstanding quality in Frank Richard was the capacity to arouse awe and appreciation everywhere he went. All of us who knew Ton Frank, as he was fondly called, will remember him for his presence and his charisma.

Many will testify to the fact that, where he was concerned, the dichotomy between person and personae never existed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We cannot forget the association of Mr. Richard with the MIE. Certainly, as the first Director of the MIE, he clearly situated the institution on the educational landscape, giving it a firm footing,

If this is not the mark of a great leader, then what is? Thinking about education in the 1970s was one thing: thinking about teacher education and actually giving teacher education its due institutional consideration for the very first time in Mauritius was a different ball game altogether. The richness of Frank Richard lies in having giving the MIE an identity, and thereby, laying the foundations for others to follow, not in his own 'image and liking', but by creating a launch pad.

The success of Frank Richard I think can be seen in the fact subsequent directors of the MIE belonged to the Frank Richard school of thought.

Well, at one time when I thought about Frank Richard, I often wondered where all this passion came from. And then it dawned on me that it was his literary background, that he was as well a teacher of literature.

As a teacher, he could draw inspiration and in turn inspire. I get the impression that this was also what helped him understand others--- and perhaps *see through* others with greater clarity.

Dear Invitees,

In the educational field, we are condemned to be always looking ahead – working for the future, and creating the conditions for the child of today to become the responsible adult of tomorrow. But I must admit that I am extremely pleased that we are also looking back at the past. The present builds itself on the past, and this is what shapes the future.

There are a number of lessons we need to learn from Frank Richard's vision of education as well as of Teacher Education. I am happy that on the occasion of his birth centenary, we are not only celebrating him as a person, but we are looking at his legacy, by going back to the past to rethink the present.

This country has been lucky to have had a number of deeply committed persons who were endowed with a Midas touch: they left the domains they excelled in in a much better shape than what they had inherited. Probably, in all humility, many of us would have to admit that we stand where we are because of such founding fathers.

And Frank Richard was definitely one of them in the field of education.

It is always a matter of great pride when your charismatic reputation outlives you. Mr. Frank Richard was so blessed.

And I am glad to announce this afternoon that the Government is agreeable to make the MIE become a degree awarding institution .And this is one of the fruits of the work and efforts made by Mr.Richard during his career.

I believe his family and we all who are here today should be proud that Mr. Richard aligned himself throughout his life on the philosophy of Plutarch that

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you all for your kind attention.