

# GUIANA PRIME MINIS APPEALS TO BRITISH STUDENTS

# Student Voice

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## BACKGROUND TO GUIANA

Population: 431,000 mainly of Indian and African origin.  
Area: 83,000 sq. miles.

A British Colony since 1814, based on slave and plantation labour.

### HOUSING

Housing: "In Georgetown, of 7,944 houses surveyed, 2,309 were found to be unfit for human habitation, 5,303 to be in need of repair and, only 382 structurally sound."

"On the sugar estates more than half of the population live in company-owned houses, many of them in the old-fashioned 'ranges,' barrack-like dwellings the condition of which is very poor."

(Economic Survey of Colonial Territories, Vol. IV).

### HEALTH

Health: "90 per cent. of the children examined showed evidence of dental caries, one of the signs of nutritional deficiency."

(Commission of Enquiry 1949).

"The waiting list of sufferers seeking to gain admission to the Best Hospital stood at 548 at the end of 1951, compared with 454 at the end of 1950 and 329 at the end of 1949."

(British Guiana Society for Prevention and Treatment of T.B., 1952).

### EDUCATION

"In schools with an approved accommodation of some 400 pupils, it is not uncommon to find that 800 children and more have been admitted . . . classes of over 90 are not uncommon."

(Report of Primary Education Policy, 1951-52).

"No grammar school education is or can be provided for 99 per cent. of elementary school children."

(Government Director of Education).

### WORKING CONDITIONS

"Men and women up to their waists or even higher in the water, were pulling out weeds mud and debris in small baskets."

(Commission of Enquiry, 1949).

### PRICES

Prices: "In 1951 (the latest year for which figures are available, prices stood at 261 per cent. of the 1935 level."

(Colonial Office Report, 1951).



Dr. Cheddi Jagan is the son of a sugar worker (his father was foreman of a field gang in a sugar estate). He worked his way to Chicago to study dentistry, and since then has practised in British Guiana.

### WAGES

Table of average weekly earnings.  
(Source Colonial Report British Guiana, 1951)

Sugar Industry	Resident		Non-Resident	
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Field workers:				
male	1 17 10	2 0 6		
female	16 7½	18 5½		
			Unskilled	
Factory workers:				
male	2 0 1	2 19 0		
female	19 3			
Rice Labour:				
male			2 7 3	
female	1 3 1			

### WHO OWNS GUIANA?

- Booker Brothers, McConnell. Issued capital £1,776,059. Controls 70 per cent. of sugar output. Net Profits: 1949-1950—£331,000, 1951-1952—£637,000; Dividends: 1951—10 per cent., 1952—15 per cent.
- Demarara Co., capital £380,000. Dividends: 1951 18½ per cent., 1952—21½ per cent.
- S. Davson & Co., capital £300,000. In March, 1953, a 100 per cent. share bonus was issued. Shareholders include: Lord Sinclair, Lieut.-Col. Harry M. Davson, Sir Geoffrey Davson, Sir Rhys Rhys-Williams and the Dowager Lady Margot Davson.



### Exclusive Article by Dr. Cheddi Jagan

Overseas British naval and military forces have occupied British Guiana. The constitution has been suspended. My colleague Ministers and myself have been dismissed. Six leading members of the People's Progressive Party have been arrested. Police raids have been conducted. The House of Assembly has been prorogued and Emergency Regulations, including the banning of gatherings of more than five persons, are in force.

You will have read in the newspapers that the British Government and the Governor of British Guiana have taken these steps in order to confound

a Communist plot to cause disorder and overthrow the Government.

As students who are used to studying facts and analysing them before making up your minds. I ask you to consider the case of the elected representatives of the Guianese people.

On April 27th this year there took place for the first time in the history of my country democratic elections based on universal suffrage instead of a property qualification basis. The P.P.P. won 18 out of 24 seats.

### OUR POLICY

Our programme presented to the electorate was: universal adult suffrage for village and town councils; land law, bringing about land reform and establishing land authorities with powers to tax, acquire, lease and develop large estates held uncultivated by absentee proprietors; abolition of dual control (government and religious denominational) of primary schools; bulk purchasing of the colony's imports; establishment of a State Lottery; compulsory recognition by employers of Unions having the support of the majority of workers, as established by the U.S. Wagner Act during the Roosevelt era.

This was the policy which gave us an overwhelming majority. In my own constituency I received a majority of over 5,000 votes.

Yet this was the basis of what has been called a Communist Conspiracy.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies has published a White Paper, "British Guiana—Suspension of the Constitution" (Cmd. 8980) in which an attempt has been made to substantiate the charges levelled against us.

I ask you to read it. If we had done one hundredth part of what this document claims, we could have been arrested months ago. Yet no action was taken. Further, the White Paper contains abundant charges but not a jot of proof. All it can do is to refer to "reliable sources" without naming a single one of them.

Even the most bitter and consistent enemy of the P.P.P., the Editor of the "Daily Argosy," a war-time security officer, knows "of no organised plan for such a revolt." He said in an editorial of October 11th "What the P.P.P. leaders were aiming at (and all the evidence points

### THE CONSTITUTION REVOKED

### COLONIAL SEC



Captain The Rt. Hon. Oliver Lyttelton was educated at Eton and Trinity College Cambridge. Late of the Grenadier Guards he has been Secretary of State for the Colonies since 1951. His industrial interests have included the British Metal Corporation, Ltd., and Electrical Industries, Ltd.—together representing £14 million. He has an estate in Wiltshire and a town house in Belgrave Street. For clubs he uses Buck's, St. James, Turf and Grillions.

(that way) was a political and constitutional crisis, in the hopes of going back to the country and returning with a renewed mandate that might, with difficulty, be questioned."

Long before the election we criticised the Constitution and pointed out its limitations. The Governor and officials knew the legislation we would wish to enact if returned with a majority. There is nothing new in any of that.

Our enemies are saying that we are bent upon taking away and destroying the rights of the people. But, the people, with their eyes wide open, gave us an overwhelming majority for our programme.

Thus the action of the British Government is the real challenge to the right to exercise a free vote—the very basis of democracy.

Must the people be told—yes you can vote, but you have no right to vote for a Left wing party or the Left wing element in a party. This is the fundamental question.

### DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL

Once the right to vote is restricted the basis of democracy will always be on shifting ground.

Neither the P.P.P. or Communism is on trial to-day in Guiana. Democracy itself is on trial. Western democracy will stand or fall in the eyes of millions throughout the world by what happens in my country during the coming weeks.

I am confident that every liberal-minded student will give his unstinted support to the campaigns which are being developed throughout all sections of the British people to help the Guianese preserve their own democracy and civilisation.