

Dr. Jagan: I want to welcome you to this Press Conference. We are sorry that we have kept you waiting for so long. Part of our report is not yet typed but it will be ready as you leave. We arrived here only yesterday, last evening, and didn't have time enough to study the White Paper and have had to take the opportunity this morning to begin working on it as we were at the House of Commons last evening.

My colleague, as you are probably aware, is Chairman of the P.P.P. and I am the leader of the Legislative Group of the Party. I am going to read for you a statement which we have prepared on the White Paper. Later, if you care to ask questions, then we will be prepared to answer to the best of our ability. This is the statement which we have written out in reply to the White Paper.

READ THE STATEMENT TO THE PRESS.

Question: Is there a Communist Party in British Guiana?

Answer: No. There is no Communist Party in British Guiana.

Question: So if somebody is ideologically a Communist does he get admitted to your Party?

Answer: There are all shades of opinion represented in the P.P.P. There is no Communist Party as such.

Question: But you say this was an issue at the election.

Answer: It was made into an issue. Two weeks, two Sundays, before the election - which was held on the Monday - and the main point in this supplement - the four page supplement - was that the P.P.P. was a Communist organisation and that P.P.P. Communists were working against the interest of British Guiana. Many of the illustrations were taken out of context. There were actually statements and they had been taken out of context. People's words misconstrued.

~~ANSWER~~

Question: Then your statements were contradictory

Answer: Well, let me explain, illustrate, by giving a few examples.

Question: Clear up the contradiction in statement

Answer: Statements given were quoted out of context....

Question: As you like, it means that as you stated it you made the statement in error yourself....

Answer: Some were erroneous and some taken out of context, inaccurately reported.

Question: In view of what you say, could you say that your Party is anti-Communist?

Answer: No, definitely not anti-Communist.

Question: Are there any active Communist persons in the party? You deny yourself that you are a Communist, but you do say that any shade of political opinion is accumulated into the Party. Are there any Communists, acknowledging themselves as such, in the Party?

Answer: We cannot say there is any single definition of Communism. We would say that there are many individuals in the Party who have studied Marx, studied very carefully, and they are Marxist in the Party.

Question: Would they regard themselves as Communists? Would they say "I am a Communist" if you asked them? I means that these people are understood, and have said, "I am a Communist".

Answer: I am a Marxist. I believe in the Marxist philosophy.

Question: Since when has British Guiana been under British law?

Answer: Napoleon wars, late 18th century.

Question: What is the percentage of illiterates?

Answer: 21%. The figures have to be taken in the various races. Among the Amerindians the total of illiteracy is high. nil Among East Indians/40% Africans. Illiteracy among the other races is very small.

Question: Have you a high school there?

Answer: Two government high school, one for boys and one for girls and secondary school.

Question: I would like to clarify the point of loyalty against the Speaker. Isn't he representative of "

Answer: No. The Speaker is appointed by the Governor. He is an old Legislator who was defeated in 1947 elections.

Question: Was it rejected on general criticism or were there some particular phrases rejected?

Answer: It didn't follow the normal pattern. There was a lot of legislation involved.

Question: But how exactly did it differ. What did it say exactly?

Answer: It conveyed thanks to Her Majesty.....

It was a simple statement.....

There was no policy of contention at all.....

Lot of flowery language - which we didn't think necessary - but...

I can't understand why this

Question: You speak of impartiality of the police in U.K. Do you include Belfast police? - not Northern Ireland? You must amend your statement! Also are you aware that mail has been opened in Belfast Post Office belonging to Members of the House of Commons? Make it impartiality of police in Great Britain! (Just general laughter and comment here)

Question: What is extent of foreign capital in British Guiana?

Answer: Practically all capital is that. ~~Majority of it~~
~~is that~~ Greatest part of it.

Question: Majority American?

Answer: British capital is invested in commerce and sugar plantations. Canadian in boxite and American in We have a great deal of British capital tied up with M.P.C.A. Local population, they have small interests, some small mining interest and rice factories, small rice factories. That's about all. Small things like laundries and service establishments.

Question: Are you proposing to go to India? And what help do you think Nehru would be able to give you?

Answer: We can't say what help he could give.

Question: What about U.N.O.?

Answer: We are going to watch debate today in the House and we hope for the help of various organisation here to take up the cause.

Question: Are you going to try to see Mr. Lyttelton?

Answer: Yes, certainly, but, as you know, he has already indicated that he won't see us until after Mr. Hopkinson has returned.

Question: What about the election campaign? What opposition did the Governor have in connection with that particular question? May we ask you whether when your manifesto was published, any particular section of it was opposed to by the Governor of parties opposing you?

Answer: Yes, I'm referring to some of the things. We intended to introduce, to give, universal education, for municipal and village elections, and that was utterly opposed by re-actionary elements in local councils because they hadn't been elected some of them on a strict franchise so that was one thing we had clearly stated in our manifesto... Another matter was the Bill we introduced regarding the Rice Federation in 1945 in British Guiana. This, among other things, controlled rentals for rice lands and also compelled rice farmers to observe what they call "laws of good husbandry". ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ And if the farmer he could be turned out by the landlord. On the other hand, landlords, supposed to keep drains clean etc., but if not, there was no We said, if Landlords refused to clean drains etc. then the should give him specified time to do the work and if he didn't do it then undertake the work and charge him..

Question: What about the officials?

Answer: The police prepared by us was opposed by ~~xxxxxxx~~ upper house. They said it was totalitarian. In British Guiana, although we have a small population of merely 1/2 a million people and large country - nearly as big as Great Britain - it is strange we have land hunger. The average holding for rice cultivation is 5 acres, and that is about \$500. And that is the average holding of farmers in British Guiana.

Question: American dollars?

Answer: Another party which put up six candidates and didn't succeed in winning one seat, People's National Party. Reading the White Paper one would get the impression this Union was very strong and that we are trying to subvert its influence, but it is significant to note that the Secretary of this organisation ran for a seat in a sugar area and within the same area there was boxite too. In other words, out of a community of about 10,000 voters about 8,000 of the voters belong to sugar industry and boxite industry and the secretary lost his deposit in that constituency! They claim that the M.P.C.A. is strong in sugar constituencies. They are recognised by _____ to represent them.

Question: He chose the seat as one which he thought he could win?

Answer: Yes.

Question: What about John Carter?

Answer: John Carter lost his seat in the 1947 election when Mr. Crit... former Secretary of the British Guiana Labour Union was displaced from the old legislation as a result of _____ against him. Carter won seat in Georgetown. _____ Member therefore of the old legislation but not last election. He was defeated, by a Chinese member of our party. That is significant too, because Georgetown is a predominately African and it is very significant that our Party, with a Chinese candidate, was able to win again. He was a very popular African, Carter, and belonged to National Democratic Party. Incidentally, now all the opposition has united themselves into a Party called United Democratic Party. _____ Now become a foil for vested interest in British Guiana.

Question:

Answer: Under the official ministry we have 10 ministers in Executive Council, 6 elected by House, three civil servants and one ex-civil servant who is now member of the Financial _____ Security.

Question: Duties are the official police?

Yes.

Question: Why did you refuse recognition in regard to N.P.C.A. as Trade Union? Can you explain that?

Answer: Because for one reason the proposition that the N.P.C. should organise the factory workers and the G.I.W. was to organise the field workers and there is some conspiracy there if you will follow the situation very carefully in British Guiana. Most of the factory workers are African and most field workers are Indian and this was a subtle attempt, trying to divide workers along racial lines. Our Party was able to bridge this racial gap and to bring all races together, Indian and African, into a single cohesive force.

Question: Can you detail the activities which the Ministers were undertaking which prevented them doing their official work?

Answer: Well, let us first of all give you the facts. There were numerous files dealing with a large number of problems. I myself had to deal with agricultural lands and mines jurisdiction, apart from being legislative leader of House. So I should be familiar with every file in each one of these departments. If I wanted any file I had to go back and read all material which went before, in other words, to get information and a lot of that information was hidden from us and we were busy getting that information to know what took place before.

Question: There was lack of co-operation by officials?

Answer: Yes in some instances, especially with Minister of Works and Commissions (Commerce?)

Answer: I wished to start a literacy campaign but the main bone of contention and opposition on my educational policy was making our schools rather than allowing it to continue under churches. ~~Thaxxhuxkxkxkxkxkxkx~~

Question: The church schools. Did you intend to keep them?

Answer: We intended to make them state schools and we intended also to allow various religious denominations to go in at arranged times to give religious instructions to children of their faith or

So actually we were going to make it more democratic from religious point of view than it had been in the past.

The majority were Roman Catholic, next Canadian Presbyterian, next Methodist, and the same has happened in England where the Catholics followed closely by the Anglicans and the methodists.

Question: Can you tell us if you feel that the U.S.A. had anything to do with the situation which now exists in British Guiana?

Answer: We can't say, but we were surprised to see the quick action which the American Government took in endorsing what the British did in Guiana.

Question: Are there any other religions, other than Christians, in the country?

Answer: Well there are Hindus, Moslems, a large number of these, about Jagan 42% of population are East Indians and most of these are non-Christian.

Burnham: And that is a great disadvantage for any teachers, because you normally can't get a job in a church school unless you are a member of their denomination. It's professional prostitution. Many have to profess to be Christians so that they can get jobs as teachers.

Question: This was correctly set out in your election manifesto? Were you going to abolish any planned

Answer: No, we didn't intend to abolish it but you can clearly see what happened if you follow context of constitution as such. Governor had right of veto. They didn't suppose one party would get such power at the last election to control majority in House of Assembly, and consequently ~~MM~~ would not have been in a position to control Executive.....

Should it pass through the Council the Governor could veto, but of course our winning 18 seats gave us control in the Executive Council and ~~xxx~~ also they had control of appointments..... Examination for posts usually includes examination of literary for certain posts. To give you an illustration. There was an appointment made to the nursing profession in British Guiana

That was a young woman from the United Kingdom who had less experience and qualifications than some of our nursing girls who had been trained in the United Kingdom, and we objected to it because we feel it should not have been done. And the Governor said he was going to contact the Secretary of State to transfer the girl to United Kingdom, but up to now nothing has been done. That's the type of thing which happens in our Civil Service.

Question:

Answer: In the first place we personally thought that a combination of British American system would have been better than absolutely copying the British.

Question: Didn't you same similar things in ~~xx~~ your previous press conference in 1948 (?)?

Answer: Yes - of course, I remember you were there...

Some Ministers complained that they found it difficult to work with old Civil Servants. It is in my contention not to carry Civil Sefvants from one system to another.

In the American system you have all key positions chosen by President. We want something similar, to at least have persons with whom you can get on, and not persons subject to hide-bound prejudices, and whose outlook is antagonistic to your own.

At one time we asked to be allowed to see personally files of those who may be appointed, because in the past there has been a great deal of nepotism and there has been great distrust because of the apointments which have been made over heads of Guianese people. Furthermore, Governor did agree to appoint a committee for the Guianese of our Civil Service, but now that is being used as an accusation against us. At the time he said he sympathised with us but now they say we are trying to put our "finger in the public service pie".

Question: With the abolishing of the Constitution, has Parliament been abolished?

Answer: No, House has been ~~xxx~~ preroged. The Governor now rules with official adviser. He is an absolute dictator now.

Question: Do you intend to go to India?

Answer: It will depend on developments here.

Question: Were you aware of arrangements made in your name by the Caribbean Labour Office? Were you aware of arrangements of Press Conference and public meeting?

Answer: No. I find that my name has been listed and I will certainly take the opportunity of addressing a meeting.

Question: Is it true that your Secretary was a police agent?

Answer: I don't know. All these people were put in our office and they may have been for all we knew. That's why we wanted right to appoint other people.

Question: What about a split between Burnham and you, Dr. Jagan?

Answer: That's not true at all.

Burnham: They would like to engineer a split between us. They have attempted to do it by searching his house (Jagan's) and not mine!

Question: Have you invited other Governments to bring in and help in any way?

Answer: We have made public utterances in House and Press, giving assurances that we would encourage capital. I myself have been approaching certain agencies of U.N. to see whether any technical assistance could be given to us.

.....

Question: Do you wish to hold industrial or world bank?

Answer: No. Not as such. But there has been too much emphasis placed on agriculture and commerce and very little on industrialism of British Guiana. 22 out of 66 millions were devoted to commerce and roads. We thought that was an exorbitant amount.

Question: It wasn't ~~NECESSARY~~ necessary?

Answer: Not that, it is a question of proportion.

Question: M.P.C.A. is being by employers?

Answer: We have said we know of one officer who was put on the pay roll. We could tell from the and everything else, and I knew about discussions taking place, that they were really not fighting for workers.

But haven't they got wage increases?

Answer: Yes, because other unions are making demands outside and the M.P.C. have to give a hand-out.

Question: Have all strikes which have taken place since the elections been determined by ~~the~~ raising salaries or wages?

Answer: Why, yes, of course - wages, working conditions etc.

Question: How did the differences arise between your Government and the Governor? By your election programme?

Answer: My view is that with regard to Trade Union Labour Relations Bill. The Governor didn't like that Bill - opposed to it in principal. He said so openly. We had been trying to pass it since M 1949. We had been trying to get it on the Statute Book. The Last Government would not do it. It was in our manifesto. I had asked Governor that after the passage of this Bill - through House of Assembly - should a State Council oppose it whether he would use constitutional powers to call a meeting of joint houses. He said he would not do it. There is allowance in the constitution for this. Now that we have 18 members in the House and two members in State Council it means that we would carry it through in a joint Council. They had no intention of ~~bringing~~ calling a joint Council. To avoid all that they have brought in this ~~single~~ sledge-hammer, the Army, the Navy

Question: Could the Constitution have been suspended without arrival of British ships?

Answer: If they had suspected that there would be violence used then, all right, bring in troops and use them. But there was no excuse for this. If a Minister had done something ~~un~~ unconstitutional he could have been dismissed. He could have been dismissed at any time.

Question: Did Governor have power to deal with situation?

Answer: Yes, definitely.

Question: Did Governor indicate what would happen?

Answer: My colleague (Mr. Burnham) tells me fourteen hours before.

We heard of the landing of troops in British Guiana from the B.B.C.

Question: Had the Governor, before that happened, indicated that individual ministers were doing their jobs badly?

Answer: No, never said so.

Question: What would your reaction had been if Government had said so?

Answer: I myself, as Leader, would have challenged my colleagues to see if they were true. And then I would ask my colleagues to dissent from what he was alleging. But it came as a bolt from the blue.

Question:

Answer: Our position has been that we do not need the officials in the House of Assembly, or in the Cabinet, in fact our neighbours in Dutch Guiana have a fully elected house of one Chamber, and fully elected Cabinet, no officials, ~~xxxx~~ no nominated members.

Question: You don't approve of any checks at all?

Answer: Only for foreign affairs. We should have a Ministry responsible for internal matters. At least give us what they had in Surinam. That was their speech which was recorded during debate on constitution in British Guiana.

American customs in Porto Rica as models to be adopted.

Question: You would have been prepared to accept Governors veto power in foreign affairs but nothing else?

Answer: Possibly, yes.

Question: You didn't regard it as a big step forward....?

Answer: It was a big step forward, but we have seen and we would have seen in a few months time, that this big step was not such a big step after all.

Question: You would need some time to get experinece.

It has taken 3 or 4 months to get the files sorted.

We intended to incorporate certain factories land, impose land tax.

We had village council and town council to be represented.

Question: You had enough experience to go straight on ?

Answer: We realise that we have to make every effort to get information from all types of organisations, etc. We have written to the Bureau of Mines in U.S. and to get information on mines loans. I got Land Law from - we were gathering as much information as possible. We were not sleeping. But they seriously hindered our control. Our standard was high. But the officials - who put them in, who do they stand for? Working to the British principal, Civil Service is supposed to be non-politically. Then why have civil service in Police? They knew nothing about the people.

Question:

Answer: I called a Press Conference in 1951 in which I pointed out limitations of constitution.

Question: Don't you feel the other side of the argument, that a colony with such an amount of illiteracy, it's a great measure not to be checked at all.

Answer: What about other countries? With a higher degree of illiteracy. What about India?

Question: Don't you see that argument, from the other side?

~~XXXXXXXX~~

Question: Would you agree that you had as much power in your country as Labour Party when they took over in 1945?

Answer: I can't answer

Question: Should state constitution have Ministers keeping their trade union offices?

Answer: The Ministers were in trade union movement before. In order to understand you have to look at the situation yourself. People in British Guiana have confidence in certain individual leaders - and so on - they have not had long training as you have.

Question: The question is, how much time you have.

Answer: I was only nominally President. I told my union that. They wanted me to be President, that's all, they had confidence in me. There are other officers in the Union who do the routine work. The President doesn't have to do all the work.

Question: On what choice are P.P.P. leaders elected in your Party?

Answer: All chosen from members, delegates, coming to Annual Conference.

Question: Did the officials help to run the

Answer: One was ex-Palestinian official, first secretary House here now. We did find he wasn't helpful. As a matter of fact, he has always been opposed to the Party.

Burnham I doubt't whether he was capable of being helpful.

Much the same observation would apply to Financial Secretary in many cases. Point is almost as a matter of principle. Any controversial matter which we sought to reduce from our manifesto was opposed by the three officers, indeed, you can be sure always in the House of Assembly, if the officials had previously opposed a measure, then the opposition will, and if the officials had opposed it then State Council would have. It is not surprising, but it doesn't make for smooth running of Cabinet. It could never be a success.

Question: You only want one Party?

Answer: One party Cabinet.

Question: The White Paper suggests a confident fear that you might establish a state in British Guiana similar to the Soviet state. I wonder if you would care to comment on the attitude of P.P.P. and your own attitude towards that form of Government and State?

Answer: I don't see that that arises out of the question we are discussing here.

Question: It arises out of the White Paper.

Answer: It does not.

We are not trying to establish communist tactics. We use no

force - we had no ~~violence~~ force - we had no violence.

We didn't pass any laws preventing anyone from exercising the franchise. There would still be free elections, you can vote for any party. We had no intention to set up totalitarian dictatorship.

Question: You mean that you had no intention of setting up state similar to Soviet?

Answer: I've never been to Soviet Union. I'm talking about totalitarianism. They have our papers they can see if we had any draft to prevent non-P.P.P. members voting. Mind you, the Governor controls the Police and the volunteers, and, incidentally, the Fusileers.

Question: Did you intend to introduce Bill to discourage war-mongers?

Answer: That was what we were asking Her Majesty. She could have accepted or rejected it. It was more people who support war and racial hatred - that was the phrase.

Question: Who was going to judge them?

Answer: Same judges who prove whether you are guilty of arson.

Question: What articles were the judges going to use?

Answer: My power of legislation but judges find yardsticks.

Question: Have you got warmongers?

Answer: There are some individuals, but they must not be divorced from other - racial hatred.

Question: You want to organize a People's Police?

Answer: I said in the form that the Police had always been controlled by the senior officials who were always against the workers and we wanted this to be changed, that is, the police to be for preserving law and order.

Question: You said the Governor is in control of police. That was what you were going to change?

Answer: The First Secretary was the person within whose province the police came. We wanted to change it, yes. The Home Secretary is head of police in London here.

Question: You wanted Minister in charge of police?

Answer:

Question: Would you want to establish constitution on Marxist?

Answer: Indeed, on many occasions we have had reason to refer the Governor to certain of British constitution. There have been many occasions in history when the constitution has been attacked a certain Joseph Chamberlain attacked it and nothing was done to him! The Whig party in 1832 attacked the constitution

on principles and when we advocate them we are told we are Marxist.

Question: Is your colleague one too?

Answer: I have called myself a socialist.
(Burnham)

Question: Have you had any replies to the two cables you sent?

Answer: No, we haven't received them.

Question: Have you had any reply from the British Labour Party?

Answer: We have met the British Labour Party, that is enough reply.

(Conversation here, several taking part, regarding a "Mr. Fletcher")

Question: Does your Party intend to nationalise sugar industry?

Answer: We've not gone into it. We do not intend to nationalise it. We would nationalise public utilities - that doesn't seem to us totalitarian. There is no need to nationalise sugar.

Burnham: We would nationalise public utilities. The British, I understand, did something similar.....

Question: (re federation)

Answer: We support the principle of federation, but not the type being put out by British Government.

We wanted internal self-government. The constitution which has been given to the federation is almost similar constitution which British Guiana had.

Question: You are not prepared to wait 2 or 3 years after colony federation.

Answer: It depends who gets control.

Question: Why do you think British Government took this action?

Answer: The Governor would have been thoroughly exposed and within next few months he would have become unpopular.

Question: Isn't he unpopular now?

Answer: He is a person who enjoys popularity. By constitution he should have called joint Council and he would have refused to call joint council and the whole constitutional construction would have been exposed.

Question: It's your fear that it's the Governor who took initiative?

Answer: We can't say exactly, but as we said already, the Governor was on quite friendly terms all the time.

Question: He didn't disclose anything to you about this crisis?

Answer: We feel that had a great hand in the matter. They were formerly of the Palestinian Service and it may have something to do with this they were his principal advisers. I can't say exactly, but the Governor was probably relying on their advice. The officials are not really in touch with the people. They don't know the peoples' views. They didn't anticipate what happened at the last elections.

Question: Would there have been uprising with regard to the governor?

Answer: He certainly seems to be a person who likes to enjoy popularity.

Question: You

Answer: Not not at all.

Only thing was withdrawal of savings bank and we made appeal to people, publicly, from the House. But we believe that there was who were trying to embarrass us.

Question: Might not an economic crisis have been feared. The Governor might have feared on what might have happened in Guiana?

Answer: No, because the principal industry is rice, which has

boxite, so there couldn't have been a crisis foreseen.

When we were elected we were working with a budget prepared by the old legislation, so that we didn't introduce or do anything which was likely to change things at all, materially, except to introduce legislation.

Question: When Grantley Adams was here last he made comments to Fabian Society, saying that the P.P.P. wouldn't last in Assembly for six months. Did you ~~xxxx~~ hear of that?

Answer: May be Mr. Grantley Adams had information from inside, I don't know.

thanks offered to Dr. Jagan & Mr. Burnham,
Conferenced ended.

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Cheddi Jagan Research Centre