

SPEECH BY DR. CHEDDI JAGAN

SECONDING VOTE OF THANKS TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS, the  
DUKE OF KENT

Mr. Speaker,

The severing of the British colonial tie in Guyana and the attainment of political independence are welcome features of the struggle of this country and its people for a better life. These features, in today's context, do not however guarantee the realization of the better life we all seek; they merely represent a further stage -- an advance -- in the continuing struggle.

I wish to thank their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Kent as representatives of Her Majesty for their presence in this House to hand over the new constitutional instruments.

But lest our position at this historic ceremony be misunderstood, it is necessary for me to observe that the people whom my party represents hold considerable reservations.

The form of the constitution being handed down at this time is one which perpetuates divisions in our society and entrenches minority rule. The Constitution has failed to lay the foundation for national unity. The fundamental rights which the constitution seeks to safeguard are in great measure non-existent, and the government has provided evidence in great abundance of its intention to render all safeguards nugatory.

Detention without trial has plagued the country since June, 1964, when by a constitutional amendment the United Kingdom Government gave to the Governor, acting without advice, powers of detention without trial. This power was made to appear, by the world press and radio, to have been exercised by the government of which I was the head. The powers were in fact arbitrarily exercised by the Governor to the detriment of

themembers and supporters of the People's Progressive Party. The abuse of these powers now transferred to the government and the extension of the state of emergency beyond the date for the attainment of independence have generated fear in our land and have frustrated the efforts of many of our people in their struggle for peace and security.

As Leader of the Opposition, I have accepted invitations to consult with the Honourable Prime Minister on the making of appointments to those important public offices which form the pillars of constitutional government; but on no occasion has there been any measure of agreement. The result is that the people whom my Party represents are denied any significant participation in the governmental process. Consultation has amounted, in practice, to no more than an intimation on every occasion of the names of persons whom the inflexible government wished to prefer to high offices in this land.

Besides, political independence has been attained under the continuation and consolidation of foreign economic control and the maintenance of the colonial type of economy based on primary production and extraction. This has already resulted in the relative deterioration of the living standards of the working people.

Debt burdens are also increasing with resulting pressure upon the economy. And annually recurring budgetary deficits will mean inevitable dependence upon other governments for budgetary support,

In these circumstances there is no prospect of real independence in external affairs; and the protestations of the government of pursuing a 'neutral' policy are illusory.

The People's Progressive Party has been the victim of repeated constitutional manipulations designed to keep it out of public office.

We are nonetheless confident that despite these manipulations the PPP can be triumphant at future elections

if they are fairly held. Parliamentary democracy has an important place in this country and a heavy onus lies on us all, but more particularly on the government, to see that it works.

The PPP, the vanguard of Guyana's struggle for national liberation is convinced that liberty is achieved only after it has been struggled for and won. It cannot be the gift of charity. For the people of Guyana, real freedom is a prize still to be won. And win it we will -- as a reunited people!

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