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Open Letter to Mr. Greenwood



DR. JAGAN ANSWERS COLONIAL SECRETARY'S ALLEGATIONS IN THE TRIBUNE (LONDON)

Sir,

I would like to reply to certain allegations which you made in reply to a question from the Tribune.

The main allegations are:—

- ◆ That the Coalition in British Guiana is representative of the majority of the population.
- ◆ That the Coalition has worked well.
- ◆ That Burnham is also a Socialist.

THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

In what can only be described as a castrated attempt to justify your acceptance of the new electoral system, you said that my Government did not enjoy the support of the majority of the Guianese people.

If I am to accept seriously the logic of your contention then you are in fact negating the right of the Labour Party

to govern, since it does not enjoy the majority support of the British electorate.

It is patently dishonest to apply this yardstick to British Guiana when you have refused to apply it in your own country. Electoral reform, like charity must begin at home:

I may point out that there have been several colonial territories, where multi-parties systems exist; and where the ruling party does not enjoy the support of the majority of the electorate. Yet in none of these countries did the British Government impose the system of Proportional Representation (PR) Surely what is applicable to one should be equally applicable to all. The excuse or rationale is a transparent one.

You seem to have forgotten that Mr. Harold Wilson described the imposition of PR as a "fiddled constitutional arrangement" and Mr. H. Bottomley said that it was "riddled with disadvantages and which is quite unknown in any other Commonwealth country.

Those who supported him (Sandys) have done so not because they think this will reduce racialism but because they think that it will put someone in power whom they prefer to Dr. Jagan." Was the world not told by the Western press in the language of the Financial Times of December 15, 1964 that "PR has served its purpose in defeating Jagan's Peoples's Progressive Party"?

THE COALITION

You asserted that the coalition government enjoys the support of the majority of the population. This is definitely not true. It can be established at any time. Nearly 30,000 voters were not enrolled because of the change in the method of registration. Besides, large numbers of people are disenfranchised. More than half of the Guianese people, almost 57 percent; are below the voting age of 21 as compared with only 29 percent in the United Kingdom. A large majority of these are PPP supporters. This is the explanation for the rejection by the Tory government of the demand to Dr. Jagan." Was the world not told by the Western press of the Legislature for voting at 18.

Ideologically, the coalition does not reflect the wishes of the electorate. Both the PPP and PNC declared at the elections in favour of independence and socialism, the latter albeit demagogically. The United Force made its position quite clear as an anti-socialist, pro-big-business party.

The people voted overwhelmingly (PPP 46% and PNC 40%) for socialism and independence. Clearly, they rejected the views of the United Force, whose percentage of vote declined from 16 to 12.

There is no doubt that had the coalition between the PNC and UF become an election issue, the voting strength of these parties would have been substantially reduced.

The present Premier and several of his party spokesmen had rejected any suggestion of forming a coalition with the United Force while the United Force had told its supporters that it was quite capable of forming a government without the support of any other political party.

The Guianese electorate at the time of voting had therefore no indication of the coalition that was to be foisted upon them.

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

The December, 1964 election results were a vote of confidence in my party and my government. My party increased its percentage of vote by 3.3 per cent as against a drop by the PNC of 4 per cent, and the UF of 4 per cent. And we demonstrated that had the elections been conducted under our traditional first-past-the-post basis we would have won in the same 20 constituencies out of 35 which we won in 1961. These facts cannot be glossed over by spurious arguments and rationalisations.

I cannot understand the logic which accepts the principle of a coalition yet permits the formation of a government which excludes the largest popular movement.

Neither can I understand the logic by which you arrived at the conclusion that the present coalition enjoys the confidence of the Guyanese people. Perhaps you used the primitive mathematical argument that 40 per cent, plus 12 per cent, makes up a majority support.

Other simple logical contentions can be proposed to show that two minority parties cannot ipso facto make a majority.

Political concepts such as the "popular consensus" and the "national will" cannot be reduced to these naive mathematical formulations. They must be measured not only in quantitative but also in qualitative terms.

PEACE

You implied that the coalition had restored peace. If by peace, you mean absence of violence, I would agree. The reason is simple. There is no violence because the authors of violence are now in positions of authority.

Surely, you have not forgotten the two secret reports of August and September 1963 of the Security Branch of the Police which I handed to you in November 1964, headed "PNC Terrorist Organisation" outlining the activities of what the Commissioner of Police later called "an organised thuggery" which is centrally directed, in which leading members of the PNC, were cited for being responsible for the bombing of government and other buildings, arson and general intimidation and terror.

I showed you that in the second report, 25 of the persons named in the first report were recommended for prosecution and pointed out that because of the complicity of the British and American governments in the disturbances in 1962 and 1963, (Drew Pearson, US journalist wrote on March 22, 1964 that 'the strike was' inspired by a combination of US Central Intelligence Agency money and British Intelligence. It gave London the excuse it wanted) no action was taken and besides the reports were withheld from me and thus not made available for the October, 1963 Constitutional Conference in London.

I suggested to you that had they been available, the outcome of the Conference would perhaps have been different. I requested you to postpone the elections and re-examine the whole situation by appointing a Commonwealth Commission as Mr. Wilson had proposed in June, 1964. You brushed aside my request.

You now say that it would have been a breach of faith to have delayed the elections and it might have led to violence and bloodshed. How could there have been a breach of faith when my government's normal term of office was not to expire until August, 1965? It was indeed a breach of faith that it was being terminated at premature elections in December, 1964 under a rigged constitutional arrangement.

COLLABORATION WITH U. S.

You seek to justify your and your government's collaboration with American imperialism by referring to the document which I signed giving your predecessor the right to decide. You must not try to throw dust in the eyes of the British public and particularly the Labour Movement.

I signed because of pledges given and commitments made by the British government at the 1960 constitutional Conference which were dishonoured. At that time when proportional representation was demanded by the opposition but rejected by the British Government, the latter in a White Paper said that all matters of substance, save that of independence had been settled and that when another conference was called, the question of independence was to be the main issue.

This is how paragraph 59 of the Command Paper puts it:—

The revision in 1961, resulting from the deliberations of the Conference formed, in the views of Her Majesty's Government, a comprehensive and carefully balanced whole, naturally leading to the expectation that when another Conference between Her Majesty's Government and a Delegation from British Guiana was held, there should be no question of substance for discussion save that of independence, the principle of which has been accepted in the terms of the formula set out in paragraph 12 of this Report.

The Sandys imposition exceeded even the wildest expectations of the opposition. It placed a premium on bombings, arson, looting and murder.

If by peace you imply a confidence in the new government, you are sorely mis-informed. I may point out the rate of emigration still continues at an undoubted pace; there is a current run on bank deposits; there is depression in the rice industry; there has been wholesale victimisation of civil servants; there have been attempts to tamper with the Judicial system; there are strong rumours of the New Detention Bill: there is talk of partition throughout the land; there is industrial unrest and fears of inflation.

SHADOW OF DETENTION

These are the material symbols of the achievements of the new government. You who live in the comfortable remoteness of Whitehall may well pontificate on theories of peace and confidence. But my supporters who live under the ever present shadow of the Mazaruni Detention Camp and who have experienced the bombs and bullets of the government's "centrally organised thuggery" know the stark reality of fear.

You try to justify your betrayal of the cause of socialism in Guyana by referring to Burnham as a

socialist. Anyone can claim to be a socialist; demagoguery is very cheap. Socialism is an outlook and a way of life. Burnham is not a socialist but a demagogue. This has been recognised by many independent observers.

As long ago as 1954, Mr. Gordon Walker, after a visit to British Guiana said that Mr. Burnham had opportunist tendencies and would "tack and turn" as the situation demanded.

The Robertson Commission of 1954 described him as 'ambiguous'. And the Commonwealth Commission into the Disturbances of 1962 described his attitude as "callous and remorseless" and his party's professions as "somewhat vague and amorphous. There was a tendency to give a racial tinge to its policy."

BACK TRACKED

The Guyanese people know that Burnham has back-tracked on many of the progressive stands which he took when he was Chairman of the PPP.

If Burnham was a socialist and was interested in the working class, how is it that he rejected my offer of a PPP-PNC coalition based on parity in the Council of Ministers (Cabinet.)

If, as is alleged, he had personal ambitions to become Premier, there could have been accommodation as I had declared publicly that the question of Premiership was negotiable.

By refusing to join us, and electing to join the United Force in a coalition government, he has abandoned the road to independence and socialism, for the road to capitalism, imperialism and fascism.

REACTIONARY NATURE OF U. F.

It was the PNC leadership itself, who, prior to the 1961 general elections, launched out an attack on the United Force with such epithets as "fascist".—More recently, prior to the 1964 elections similar juicy plums were hurled pointing out the reactionary nature of the United Force.

How can we continue to use the term socialist to describe Mr. Burnham when his government has made deals concerning our bauxite and oil resources with the

foreigners without disclosing the particulars and has repealed or drastically modified the budgetary proposals capital gains tax; gift tax; turnover tax; property tax; compulsory savings — which were introduced in 1962 based on the recommendations of Mr. Nicholas Kaldor, now adviser to the British Government.

At a time when the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom has seen it fit to increase capital taxes to a 30 per cent. ceiling, this government has reduced it from 45 per cent to the ludicrous level of 10 per cent.

At a time when your government has tightened on your entertainment allowances, this government has given businessmen a carte blanche. The net effect of the fiscal policy of this government is to emasculate the taxes on capital and to frustrate the attempts of my party to level off inherited inequalities of wealth and to establish in Guyana a system by which social reward would be based on merit and not on the mere ownership of property.

Is there a single socialist proposal contemplated or executed by the coalition? There is nothing to support this myth except the mercurial utterances of a man, distinguished by the fluidity and inconsistency of his political beliefs.

CONTINUING FRAUD

Mr. Greenwood, you must not talk in demagogic terms about democracy and socialism and shift the burden of your conscience to our shoulders. You say that "so long as the PPP will not take their seats (in the House of Assembly,) there is bound to be doubt about their democratic intentions."

What you have failed to tell the British public is that our refusal to attend was a continuing protest against the fraud perpetrated in Guyana and the continued rule by emergency, suspension of constitutional guarantees and detention. Fourteen of our comrades are still languishing in the fly-infested Mazaruni Concentration camp.

In November, 1961, addressing the National Press Club in Washington, DC, USA, I said, "It is not our concept of democracy which is on trial, but yours." This is even more true now.

How can you talk about democracy when you proceeded by constitutional amendment to remove me from office. Why did you not follow British conventions here? If this was done and I was asked to form the government Mr. Burnham would then have been placed in the position of refusing to join us in a coalition. I could then have continued as a minority government as Mr. Lester Pearson and his predecessor, Mr. Diefenbaker, had done in Canada. And if my government fell subsequently, I could have gone back to the country. The electorate could then have had a clear view of the issues involved and to vote for the alignments or coalitions which they wished.

Even if you could not have postponed the election, you could have found a solution after polling day. That was your responsibility. But you and your government succumbed to the US pressure.

Today we see the ruthless and predatory actions of US imperialism and the complete subservience of the British Labour government to it in various parts of the world.

Your government's policy in British Guiana is only part and parcel of the big stick policies now being pursued to maintain the old order. If you still believe in democracy, peace, progress and socialism don't lecture us; put in practice what you preach. This is your duty to the labour movement which placed its faith in you and voted you into office.

Yours truly,
CHEDDI JAGAN.

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