

Home Secretary instructed the immigration officers no longer to allow Commonwealth male fiancés to settle in this country.

Their brides might be entitled to live here, but they could only live alone. If they wanted to live together, they would have to go to the husband's country. The Home Secretary's instructions did not distinguish between bogus and genuine cases, nor did they apply to alien male fiancés who could continue to marry British women and live with them in Britain. Because some Asians obtained entry on the pretext that they were the elderly parents of immigrants settled here, a Labour Home Secretary made it a rule that such parents had to be 65 in order to qualify for entry, whereas aliens could be only 60.

It was not clear why abuses of immigration control would be reduced by increasing the period of separation of elderly dependant relatives from their families. Because some Asians produced forged documents in their efforts to enter Britain illegally, the Home Office came to regard any official documents emanating from the Indian sub-continent with grave suspicion.

Harassment

British Asians have been trapped for years in East Africa, unemployed, destitute, and separated from their families. Others have been shuttlecocked about the world, imprisoned in Britain and Europe, and prevented (under secret international agreements) from travelling freely to other countries. On a more trivial but damaging level, journalists, business men and other influential visitors from the new Commonwealth have been interrogated by British immigration officers on the basis that it was for them to prove that they were not attempting to obtain employment in Britain. Commonwealth immigrants arriving with valid entry certificates (the equivalent of visas) have had even these British government documents ignored on their arrival here.

These practices were all either developed or continued by the last Labour Government. On the other hand, to its credit, the Labour Government did introduce an appeals system against the decisions of the immigration authorities, which has been seriously weakened by their Conservative successors. But Labour's appeals system could not mitigate the rigours of the Home Secretary's instructions to immigration officers or the day-to-day practices of junior officials whose lack of bias was sometimes noticeably absent.

The justification advanced for this unhappy story was, ironically, the need to safeguard decent race relations in this country. It was argued by Labour ministers that a restrictive immigration policy (by which they meant a racially restrictive policy) was necessary so as to contain racial prejudice and to ensure equality of opportunity for the coloured community. Not surprisingly, however, the effect of this policy has been to increase insecurity and mistrust on both sides of the colour line.

(To be concluded next month)

Guyana faces new struggle against the ruling elite

We invited Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan to write about the elections for us. Mr Burnham has promised to do so shortly. In the meantime, here are Dr Jagan's views.

AT the recently-concluded general election, the People's National Congress (PNC) was given for the 53-member National Assembly 37 seats, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) 14 and the Liberator Party two.

But this allocation was not a reflection of the will of the people. For what took place on 16 July was not an election, but a "selection". The PNC, with the help of the army, seized and impounded ballot boxes at army headquarters in Georgetown, the capital, where they were tampered with.

To facilitate the tampering with ballot boxes, the PNC regime changed the electoral procedure. Prior to 1968, ballot boxes were taken to a central counting place in each constituency or electoral district. In 1968, they were transported over long distances to three centres only, one in each county. In 1973, the day before polling day, the law was changed, and all ballot boxes were brought to Georgetown, the capital.

Electoral reforms

In 1968, polling agents and candidates of opposition parties were not permitted either to travel in the same vehicle with the boxes or to follow with other vehicles the vehicle with the boxes. With the electoral machinery completely under the control of the PNC, ballot boxes were tampered with. In one box for the Pomeroon electoral district were found four wads of ballot papers, marked PNC and wrapped with rubber bands.

Because of the extensive fraud of the 1968 general election, the PPP mounted a campaign for electoral reforms including:

1. An impartial Elections Commission
2. New voters lists impartially compiled
3. An end to proxy voting
4. An end to overseas voting
5. A preliminary count of ballots at place of poll
6. Reduction of voting age from 21 to 18.

The PNC regime refused to accept these reforms, except voting at 18. The latter was agreed to only on 26 May 1973, after the regime had corruptly compiled a new register and was assured that it had a majority of those between the ages of 18 and 21. Because of this, the PPP was forced to vote against a Constitutional amendment for the lowering of the voting age to 18.



Padding of the voters' lists has become a regular feature of political life under the Burnham regime. In the 1968 election, the lists represented a 19 per cent increase for the four year period, 1964-68 as compared with a 22 per cent increase for the 11 year period, 1953-64.

For the July 1973 election, the lists increased by 25 per cent, an impossible feat considering a net population increase of about 2.5 per cent per year.

The official figures of all Guyanese aged 21 and above was 314,564 on 7 April 1973. Yet the voters lists as of 31 May 1973, had 384,434 names (not including 34,801 registered overseas voters). In other words, about 70,000 represented dead, under-age and non-existent persons. These voted by means of the postal (first introduced in 1973) and proxy system of voting.

For the PNC stronghold, the Linden-Wismar-Christianburg area, the voters lists increased from 18,117 in 1968 to 24,968 in 1973. But the total population of the area in 1973, as estimated for a water survey by the US Company, James S. Montgomery, Consulting Engineers Inc. was 31,637. This means that about 79 per cent of the population was adults over the age of 21!

Proxy votes abused

Prior to and during the 1961 general election, proxy voting was severely restricted. But in 1969, against the strong opposition of the PPP, there was some relaxation, and proxy votes jumped from about 300 in 1961, to 6,635 in 1964, of which the PPP secured only 9.6 per cent. A critical comment from the Commonwealth Team of Observers of the 1964 Election was that the

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“one administrative provision which seemed open to manipulation was the proxy vote . . . we feel it is our duty to point out that the proxy system is liable to abuse”.

And abuse there was. In 1969, because of further relaxation, proxy votes cast were estimated at about 30,000 (the lists of proxy votes were never published as required by law). But the official figure was 19,287, equivalent to about 7 per cent of the votes cast, without which the PNC would not have “won” 51 per cent of votes or a majority of one seat inside Guyana (overseas votes gave it a working majority of seven seats). Because of criticisms of malpractices and other factors, the PNC regime restricted proxy voting in 1973 but permitted all those debarred the facility of postal voting.

Thus there were about 10,000 proxy votes and about 23,000 postal votes, almost all of which went to the PNC on account of administrative manipulation and irregularities.

For instance, in South Georgetown, a certificate in the postal ballot box showed that 846 postal ballots were issued and 546 were cast. Yet, when the ballots were counted, there were 680 votes, and despite protests, the 134 extra ballots were recorded for the PNC.

As regards the overseas voting, first introduced in 1968, the PNC secured in the recent elections 98 per cent of the votes cast as compared with 95 per cent in 1968.

Fraud and tampering

Commenting on the 1968 electoral fraud, Mr Humphrey Taylor, Director of Opinion Research Centre, in the Granada TV expose, *The Making of a Prime Minister*, said “Obviously I don’t know what happened in Guyana, but as far as Britain is concerned, the compilation of the register was a totally dishonest and corrupt operation. And, as we have clearly established, the great majority of the people listed, do not exist. This I would think is unprecedented for a Commonwealth country, as far as I know; and it’s you know, a pretty awful and disgraceful episode”.

Granada’s Research Editor, Gus Macdonald in the same film said “It is my firm conclusion that the election inside Guyana was neither free nor fair”.

Now, in another film, Granada TV has again exposed the extensive electoral fraud which helped the PNC to remain in power.

But the greatest fraud took place through the tampering with the ballot boxes. All the boxes, except those for Georgetown, were stored in the Lecture Room at Army Headquarters for long hours, even days, before they were taken to the three counting centres. Here, keys could not fit locks; many boxes had to be broken into. Seals in the majority of boxes had been damaged. The numbers of ballots cast did not tally with the numbers found in several boxes. In four boxes for the North West electoral district were found 21 wads of ballot papers with elastic bands or held together with paper clips!

For the Mazaruni-Potaro district, parcels

of ballots were found folded together not twice as required by law, but once.

Objection had been raised and recorded about the wrong official stamping at a Canals Polder polling division of each ballot paper on the inside. When the box was opened, all the ballots were stamped on the outside, as required by law, and marked for the PNC!

Nothing but fraud and tampering with ballot boxes could explain the massive voter turnout of 93.4 and 98.6 per cent respectively for the North West and the Mazaruni-Potaro districts. These are sparsely populated but extensive areas with long distances between polling stations.

By contrast, in the compact eight districts in Georgetown, the voter turnout averaged about 70 per cent. And in four of these districts, the PNC votes dropped absolutely. But in the North West district, PNC votes increased from 6,789 in 1968 to 13,090 in 1973, and in Mazaruni-Potaro from 9,701 to 15,974!

Bitter experience

The PNC claims that its “victory” of 37 seats was the result of serious inroads into PPP strongholds. This is mere propaganda. My personal estimate is that the PPP true strength is about 60 per cent of the electorate. That is why the PNC regime vigorously opposed the post-election proposal of the PPP to conduct at its own expense impartially-supervised polls in one or more of the several electoral districts claimed to have been won by the PNC.

A new stage has now been reached in the struggle for national liberation and socialism in Guyana. The people, through their own bitter experience, have come to realise that they cannot win political power so long as the PNC is in complete control of the electoral machinery, the police and army.

In 1964, the PNC with only 40 per cent of the votes came to power in coalition with the United Force (UF) through the support of Anglo-American imperialism and a change from the first-past-the-post, constituency voting system to proportional representation.

Civil resistance

In 1968, the PNC “won” power without the UF through electoral fraud and overseas voting. In 1973, fraud alone could not suffice; the army actively intervened and even shot and teargassed the electorate to ensure a PNC victory.

The PPP has refused to take the 14 seats assigned to it on the grounds that the National Assembly does not reflect the will of the people, and has been reduced to a farce as a mere rubber stamp for the regime’s edicts. Instead, it has embarked on a campaign of civil resistance and non-cooperation.

In the coming months, mass struggles on all fronts will be intensified against the minority, racist, neo-fascist regime as it draws closer to imperialism, and accentuates its policy of corruption and bribery for the benefit of the ruling elite.