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P.P.P. ELECTION BROADCAST

by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, 19 November, 1985.

Fellow Guyanese,

On December 9, you will be exercising your right to vote -- a right which was won for you by the PPP in the early 1950's.

One of the first battles we fought was for the right of every Guyanese to vote. Universal adult suffrage was and is for us a fundamental question. Without that, there can be no democracy. And without democracy, there can be no progress.

The right to vote should permit you to elect the government of your choice. But for some time now, it has been seriously imperilled and has resulted in a skewed, truncated system, what some call an administrative dictatorship. Consequently, you are excluded from meaningful involvement in the process of decision-making and nation-building.

Lack of democracy has taken its toll. Coupled with incorrect economic planning strategy, wrong priorities, political and racial discrimination, extravagance and corruption, it has put a brake on production and productivity. That's why production of our main exports is stagnating even below levels reached two decades ago.

With real people's democracy, our country would have been producing about three times what is being done now. That would have given the government more money, and so enable it to pay decent wages and salaries, maintain subsidies and improve social services.

Increased exports would have earned more foreign currency to import goods for production and consumption, including wheaten flour, split peas and so on.

And the small man would have become the real man, and the nation would have been fed, clothed and housed as the PNC had proclaimed in 1972. Indeed, our country would have become the Caribbean bread-basket and showpiece.

Therefore, we must struggle for democracy. It will not come as a gift. At the social level, we must fight for the genuine organisations of the people to be recognised and respected by the state; at the industrial level, for bona-fide trade unions to have a real voice in management and decision-making; and at the political level, for representative national, regional, district and municipal governments. Local elections, overdue since 1970, were probably not held now because they would have necessitated counting at the place of poll, and this would have applied also for the regional and national elections.

We make no apologies for calling on you to engage in all peaceful forms of struggle for free and fair elections and a political solution. The Constitution guarantees peaceful methods such as strikes, demonstrations, marches, vigils and picketing. Those, who distort our call for such methods of struggle as advocacy of violence, seem bent on army intervention, hijacking of, and tampering with, ballot boxes.

So far, you, fellow Guyanese, have scored a partial victory. You have got postal voting abolished and overseas and proxy voting restricted. You have to continue your fight for an independent election machinery, non-involvement of the army, clean voters' lists and counting of the ballots at the place of poll.

President Hoyte has said that opposition parties' agents would be allowed to accompany the ballot boxes. This must be fulfilled in a meaningful way. We must be able to keep our eyes constantly on the ballot boxes from the beginning of voting to the beginning of counting.

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We must fight for this because in the past leading PPP members like Ram Karran, Isahak Basir, Gail Teixeira and others had been prevented at gun point from accompanying and observing the ballot boxes. There was no question of shortage of personnel to accompany the boxes.

The PPP is committed to free and fair elections, democracy and a plural political system. We feel that these must be coupled with a socialist-oriented programme, and a broad-based National Patriotic Front Government of all left and democratic forces.

To achieve development, racial and cultural cohesion and national defense, such a government is absolutely necessary. Further, we say, give the genuine organisations of workers, farmers, businessmen, professional and religious people a voice in parliament.

This is in line with the PPP's democratic tradition, its national-patriotic position and winner-does-not-take-all politics. Often, we have stated, that even though we can win a free and fair election, we alone will not form the government; we will include other progressive forces.

In the early 1960's, we had offered the PNC half of the government. If they had accepted, you won't be experiencing hardships and difficulties now.

Again an opportunity came to the PNC in 1976-77, when the economy was going into a serious crisis. But, instead of heeding the call of the TUC and others for a broad-based government and implementing the very favourable agreement made in April 1978 with the Soviet Union, it postponed the elections and embraced the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

We warned them against the IMF. But they praised it and rammed down your throats its prescriptions.

The IMF medicine has been bitter for you and our nation. You have been brought to a point of desperation through IMF impositions -- devaluation, wage freeze and wage restraint, dismissals, cuts in social services, removal of price controls, removal of subsidies on food, cuts in imports leading to shortages and blackmarket prices.

Incidentally, had the Guyana-Soviet agreement been implemented, the 1700 bauxite workers, nearly a third of the work force, would probably not have been dismissed.

Our country has also been bankrupted, the good name of our nation sullied, and our people insulted and humiliated wherever they go.

Our warnings have proved correct. By 1982, even the INC became critical of the IMF. Its new prescriptions, including a 66 to 100 per cent devaluation, were described by the late President Burnham as "a recipe to riot".

But now, the dominant conservative section of the PNC sees a new deal with the IMF as the only way to maintain positions and privileges. This new deal is likely to mean another devaluation of our dollar by about 25 per cent. How are you going to exist with such a devaluation in the face of a miserly wage increase of 4% or 5%.

All Guyanese want a change. The present hybrid system of bureaucratic-state and parasitic capitalism, which is masquerading as socialism, has proven a failure.

But what the IMF, the imperialists and their local agents want is even worse. Look at Latin America. There, the free enterprise, dependent/distorted system of capitalism led to a sea of problems for the people and to revolutionary upheavals, as in Cuba and Nicaragua in the past, and in El Salvador today.

Jamaica is a good example of the bankruptcy of this type of capitalism. A rapid decline in living standards led to spontaneous demonstrations, riots and barricades; eleven persons were killed by the Jamaican military in February this year.

Yes, we must have change, but not just any change. We want to get out of the PNC frying pan, but not to fall into the imperialist/rightist fire.

Guyana needs real, meaningful change: change to the left, in a democratic and socialist-oriented direction, as in some non-aligned countries. This is the only way forward. This is the PPP way to real peace and social progress.

On December 9, vote P.P.P. Vote for the Cup.