

Jagan Advocates: FEDERATION ALONG SOCIALIST LINES

Guiana's Premier in a forthright statement on the results of the Jamaica referendum has reminded Guianese and WI politicians of his old stand on the issue of committing the territories to federation. He has also called upon Eric Williams and Grantley Adams, the Federal Prime Minister, to set up a federation with a strong centre which they advocated and to refashion the federal economy along real socialist lines.

Premier Jagan said:

The withdrawal of Jamaica provides both a challenge and an opportunity for the people of the West Indies. It is a pity that Jamaica has now voted to come out of the WI Federation. I have always maintained that the question of Federation should have been subjected to the test of a referendum in each territory well in advance of the setting up of the Federation. As is well known, this has been for long my stand in British Guiana, and if this course had been followed the present unfortunate situation would not have arisen.

At this point some may tend to gloat; others to despair. I can well imagine the degree of anxiety of the peoples, particularly of the smaller units who have tied their hopes and aspirations to Federation. But this is a time neither for gloating nor despairing.

It is rather unfortunate in these days when there is a distinct trend for separate countries to get together politically and or economically for a regional unity, however tenuous, to be broken up.

One must realise, however, that the proposed independent federal constitution was so emasculated that it was hardly likely that the objectives of the WI peoples — economic well-being and higher living standards — could have been achieved. A weak federal Government would hardly have been able to go in for effective overall planning and balanced development for the region as a whole.

Sir Grantley Adams and Dr. Williams have always been in favour of a federal government with strong powers at the centre. They now have an opportunity to re-write the constitution and head a strong Eastern Caribbean group. But this obviously will not be enough. Jamaica's exit will leave a big financial hole. The only way to raise living standards is to re-fashion the economy along real socialist lines and drastically slash the overgrown and expensive superstructure of the present Federation.

It should nevertheless be possible in spite of the projected political separation for wise statesmanship to work towards economic cooperation by formulating an economic plan for the area to include all Caribbean territories such as is envisaged by the Caribbean Organisation. In any event, we in Guiana will continue to regard with the same goodwill the peoples of Jamaica and the West Indies.

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