

My Dear Friends,

You have been asked to listen to this broadcast. The reason is because I wished to report to you on the recent developments in our country's fight for Freedom.

At the London Constitutional Conference held in 1960, the issue of Independence was specifically raised. It was then conceded by Her Majesty's Government that this Colony was entitled to its Independence. A formula was laid down. This provided that if two requirements were met, a Conference would be held to decide the date. These two requirements were (i) that both our Legislative Houses should pass resolutions asking for Independence and (ii) that a decision should have been taken to grant independence to the West Indies Federation.

Now these two conditions have both been fulfilled.

Motions asking for Independence were passed in both our Houses shortly after we took office. A date, May 31st 1962, has been fixed for Independence for the Federation. I therefore attended on Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Reginald Maudling, in December and asked that he give us his undertaking to grant this Colony Independence by the 31st of May next.

Mr. Maudling bluntly refused either to name a definite date for our Independence or to fix a date for a Conference to discuss the Constitutional changes necessary for this step. I must confess that I was both surprised and angered by this attitude. It seemed to me that Her Majesty's Government was failing in a moral obligation to implement their 1960 promise especially since the pace of constitutional advance has recently been accelerated. Further, at Christmas-time, Mr. Maudling made a Press statement which purported to deal in principle with the entire issue of Independence for the Colonial areas. But in view of his talks with me in London, it seemed that he was speaking primarily to us here in

British Guiana.

Those of you who have followed the long and weary history of my Party's fight to free this country from Colonial rule will understand how deeply I was stirred and angered by these developments. It seemed as though the prize was being snatched from our grasp as it came within our reach.

Because of this, I took unusual and far-reaching steps to mobilize the country for a bitter fight on this basic issue. We started with a general appeal to the United Nations. A preliminary survey carried out for me a few months ago disclosed the fact that the large majority of the member nations were prepared to give us their support on the issue of our Freedom. A memorandum circulated to every delegation in the United Nations apprised them of the facts and asked for their support. As you are probably all aware the response was immediate. The Fourth Committee which is concerned with political matters was then discussing colonialism and it agreed to extend its discussion to include British Guiana.

As ~~it~~ ^{soon} ~~became~~ ^{go it} clear to me that Mr. Maudling was not prepared to give any definite undertaking on the issue, I immediately left London for New York to press our country's case before the United Nations. There I met with warm and heartening support. In a move which was without precedent in the history of the United Nations, I was invited to address the Fourth Committee as a petitioner although our territory is not independent. This unusual procedure was objected to by Her Majesty's representative on the Fourth Committee. In the debate which followed on procedure the representative of the United States sided with the British in opposition. Nevertheless a large majority of the Committee were in favour of recognising me as a Petitioner. I was therefore able to argue our country's cause personally before this most important organisation. After my speech several members including the representative of the United States spoke in support of my demand for immediate Independence. A resolution was put forward sponsored by

17 countries. It had two main points. Firstly, it urged Great Britain to re-open negotiations immediately with us on the Independence issue. Secondly, it called for the 17-Nation Committee of the United Nations which has recently been charged with assisting Colonial territories to attain Independence, to look into our situation and report back to the General Assembly. The General Assembly adjourned just before Christmas for the holidays. It is to reconvene this week when our matter is due to come up again.

This, then, is the position in our battle for Freedom to date. It will be apparent that what had happened was tantamount to an open rift between my Government and Her Majesty's Colonial Office with an appeal by us to the superior tribunal of the United Nations. I need hardly say how distressed I was to be forced to take these extreme measures against the British Government. I have always had warm regard for the British people despite the unhappy history of their Government's dealings with me. I am keenly aware of the benefits that have flowed to this country from the association with Great Britain and of the further benefits which will accrue to us in the future if circumstances allow us to fulfil our desire to remain within the British Commonwealth of Nations. And I have therefore regarded the progressive deterioration of relations with Her Majesty's Government during the past few weeks as a most unfortunate development from all points of view.

I am therefore very happy about the announcement that at the eleventh hour wiser council has prevailed and Her Majesty's Government has agreed that a conference will be called during the month of May to decide on the date for our country's Independence and on the constitutional changes necessary to implement it.

You have all doubtless read the irresponsible statements now being peddled in certain quarters to the effect that the Government intends to force upon this country a Constitution drawn by us. I wish to repeat once more what we

have said several times. Whatever Constitution is eventually adopted by this country will first be subjected to the closest scrutiny and criticism by all sections of the community. To this end, we propose to submit the draft constitution which is now being completed by the Attorney General for the consideration of the public and if there is no objection to a Committee made up of all members of both Houses. In this Committee, full and fair opportunity will be given to members of the Opposition to criticize and amend our draft in the hope that the final document which will emerge for presentation to the London Conference in May may reflect as far as possible the essential requirements of all.

I take this opportunity to appeal once more to all of you, Leaders and Followers, for a united front on this important issue. Our nation's freedom should be a cause above party politics. We stand before the world's gaze now. Let us try for once to sink the differences of race, class and colour in a joint effort to lift our people from the bondage of colonialism to the status of free men. It will be easy, all too easy, in the discussions which are now pending, for men of little vision to denigrate this country, to malign our people and to belittle our people's ability in the hope that by these tactics they may delay Independence and preserve for a little longer the petty privileges of an outworn system. For my part, I give you my assurance that so far as is humanly possible I and my Party will try to the best of our ability to concede the reasonable requests of the Opposition groups wherever this may be done without harm to our basic principles.

Let no one underestimate the importance of this issue. Not only does Independence mean Freedom in the context of the present situation, it also means prosperity. We are now in dire need of foreign assistance if we are to complete our present developmental programme and move on to the far greater schemes for industrialisation which we have in hand. I have reason to believe that when we have once won our Independence we will be able to borrow substantial sums of money on easy terms and without

political commitment of any sort. Only thus can we beat back the spectre of unemployment which is looming larger over us each week and thereafter get to grips with the problem of raising our standard of living.

To all of you now listening, I say, seek out your Leaders of whatever political party they may be and demand of them that they now put first things first; that they join with us in this fight against the centuries old oppression which has kept you poor.

Let us sink our differences and move forward together as one people, to a new and just society of dignity and wealth.

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