

PRESS RELEASE BY THE PREMIER

Maudling's Statement on Independence

I have read Mr. Maudling's remarks on Independence as reported in the Guiana Graphic of the 1st January.

In view of the fact that this statement came immediately after my interview with him in London and the discussion of the matter before the Fourth Committee of the United Nations, it seems reasonable to interpret this statement as specifically directed to British Guiana.

I have read the statement several times and with great care. It seems to me that this is a classic case of double talk. On the one hand Mr. Maudling claims that Britain's policy is to grant self rule to its colonies; yet immediately thereafter says that "many hurdles must be crossed before Independence can be granted". What the hurdles are he does not say. But what is apparent is that there has been a return to a position that was abandoned a long time ago by Her Majesty's Government. When British Guiana's present constitution was being discussed at the Constitutional Conference in London in 1960, I personally asked the then Colonial Secretary how it was that Cyprus and other territories could be granted Independence and not British Guiana and what was the yardstick by which the country's suitability for Independence was measured. I was told then categorically that there was no yardstick and that Her Majesty's government no longer intended to impose conditions for independence. It is disturbing to find that we are once more back where we were five years ago having to meet unspecified conditions and surmount undisclosed hurdles.

Even more disturbing is Mr. Maudling's statement "timing is very significant and is not in our hands alone". Since both the Government of British Guiana and the Opposition had agreed to the demand for Independence now this statement can only mean that Great Britain has to seek permission from some other foreign power before she can set a date for Guiana's independence. The only possible interpretation of this strange statement is that the United States has been conceded the right to have a say on when our country shall be granted Independence. Implicit in the words is the suggestion that the other

