

STATEMENT BY THE PREMIER DR. THE HON. C.B. JAGAN

The Premier, Dr. the Hon'ble Cheddi Jagan yesterday (Friday) sent a cable to the United Nations Committee of 24 asking the Committee to grant a hearing to the Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Assembly, the Hon'ble Brindley Benn, who arrived in New York on Friday.

The cable, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, read as follows:

"Local Trade Unionists and political opposition, aided and abetted by I.C.F.T.U. and its international affiliates, are now engaged in strikes, intimidation and violence with sole purpose of creating disorders and economic dislocation so that British Government will have excuse of suspending constitution or delaying independence. Big business including Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and foreign-controlled sugar, oil, shipping interests and collaborating with lock-outs and economic blockade. Last year budget with many innovations was used as pretext to overthrow Government, this year it is Labour Relations Bill largely patterned after US National Labour Relations Act. Grateful Committee grant hearing to Brindley Benn, Minister of Agriculture." CHEDDI JAGAN.

The background to this cable the Premier stated is as follows: At an early stage of the present Strike, when it became clear that by far the larger number of sugar workers were willing to work, Government approached local sugar interests and requested them to reopen the factories as the industry was of vital importance to the economy. •

Representatives of sugar interests stated at the time that there was no point in operating the factories, even if skilled labour could be found, because the bulk storage was not operating and foreign shipping was at a standstill.

Later when a large number of bulk storage workers sufficient to operate the plant informed Government that they were locked out, the sugar producers were so informed.

The Sugar producers then stated that it would be uneconomic for them to operate their factories unless operations were maintained continuously in 3 shifts. They didn't think that enough skilled workers could be found to permit this.

Government then proposed that the sugar producers should operate their factories in rotation. The Sugar Producers also raised the difficulties associated with coastal shipping and road transport of sugar. Government offered to help find persons to man such transport. •

The representatives of the sugar industry however once more changed their ground and stated that they were afraid to work their factories in view of possible sabotage/...

sabotage. Government gave them the assurance that the factories would be protected against sabotage but the sugar producers were nevertheless still unwilling to reopen their factories.

Government takes a serious view of this decision of the sugar producers as their decision is calculated to jeopardise the whole future of the economy. Moreover, at a stage when the world price of sugar is higher than it has ever been before the country as a whole and large numbers of workers are being deprived of the benefits and bonuses which would come from these higher prices.

The position of the oil companies is as follows:

In view of the growing shortage in fuel, Government requested the oil companies to bring in their usual supplies of fuel. The oil companies however stated that they were unwilling to do this as the TUC had refused to provide labour and there was, the oil companies claimed, a boycott of shipments to British Guiana by overseas oil workers.

At one stage, however, one oil company agreed to bring in three tankers if Government would agree to provide indemnity against loss or damage. This indemnity was accordingly provided for the month of May and one tanker came.

The TUC and other interests then brought pressure to bear on this oil company and the remaining two tankers were withdrawn. In the meanwhile Government indicated to these oil companies that it was willing to pay premiums for complete insurance cover.

Government now has definite proof that oil workers in neighbouring territories are not blacklisting shipments to British Guiana. In view of this fact there is no good reason why the oil companies should not bring tankers in.

Government has given the oil companies an assurance that arrangements would be made for the unloading of such tankers and for the storage of fuel. The oil companies are still, however, maintaining their stand and subjecting the Government and the country to a fuel stranglehold.

The position of the shipping companies is as follows:

At a meeting with the shipping companies they were requested to bring in ships, as food was in short supply and Government was in a position to provide both registered and nonregistered workers to unload them.

The shipping companies expressed fears that they might be blacklisted by the TUC or subjected to international boycott. It has since been pointed out to the Shipping Association that in spite of the claim of the TUC overseas dock workers were/....

were willing to load ships for British Guiana. The shipping companies are however still refusing to bring in cargoes which in consequence are being offloaded in Surinam, Curacao, Trinidad and Barbados.

The Government is now seeking the cooperation of the Shipping Association to uplift by Government and other small craft, the food cargoes now lying in neighbouring ports.

It is in the light of these facts, concluded the Premier that Government maintains that local business and especially the sugar, oil, and shipping interests are acting in consort with local trade unionists and the political opposition to subvert and overthrow the government.

Office of the Premier,
Public Buildings,
15th June, 1963.