

September 6, 1963.

PREMIER'S MESSAGE TO THE NATION ON EVE OF DEPARTURE TO U.N.

My dear friends and fellow Guianese,

Tomorrow I take leave to go to speak before the United Nations. I, as Premier, and Mr. Burnham, as Leader of the main Opposition party in the Legislature, have been invited to appear before a sub-committee of the United Nations Committee of 24. As you are aware this Committee deals with questions of Colonialism. Both Mr. Burnham and I have accepted the invitation.

We leave behind us a country which is no longer under a state of emergency, an emergency which the Government, with deep regret, had to declare because our country was dangerously, destructively divided against itself and the need to safeguard the economy and to preserve law and order had become an urgent matter.

The Emergency is now ended. Those who take more than a selfish interest in the affairs of our country know that the sorrows through which we have recently passed are themselves the result of what has gone before. But the past is past and gone and the future lies before us. What the future of our country will be depends on what we are going to do now.

Our country badly needs unity. We need unity between racial groups and political groups and greater understanding between groups who still feel that their economic interests are at variance. I have said time and again that the divisions which exist in our country are basically economic. We need, and we must find, a national identity.

On this point of national identity, it may be of interest to note the views of Sir Jock Campbell, the head of Bookers - a firm with a big stake in the economy of British Guiana. In his latest report to the shareholders of the Booker Group, Sir Jock said - and I quote:

"I believe that the people of British Guiana can only find a national identity in an independent Guyana under a constitution, and with an electoral system, which ensure that the Government is democratically elected by voters squarely facing the fact that they are voting a Government into effective power; that the Government, when it is elected, has the authority to govern; that at regular intervals it may be democratically voted out if it fails the people, and that the interests of racial groups who feel that they cannot identify themselves with the Government are lastingly safeguarded. I believe it is possible to devise such a constitution and electoral system without resorting to self-defeating ingenuity. The constitution of Trinidad and Tobago might offer a good example for British Guiana."

/ One week ago....

One week ago, I offered our country's congratulations to Trinidad and Tobago on the island's first anniversary of independence; I told them that their progress during the last year showed how, with independence, a people inevitably turn their latent energies from internecine jealousies and strife into the constructive and prosperous channels of unity and nation building.

I draw attention to this now because it may, for one reason or another, have escaped the attention of many Guianese, at a time when our energies should be devoted to finding this national identity which, with independence, has come to our friendly neighbour.

Let us hope that out of this visit by Mr. Burnham and myself there will come one more step towards the freedom which we all desire. This country cannot be allowed to lag further behind the other Caribbean territories. We are already one year late. To catch up with our neighbours we must work together for the common good and I for my part am prepared to do all in my power to achieve this great aim.

- Cheddi Jagan
PREMIER.