

## Guyana says farewell to Dr Jagan

After an extended period of mourning, countless tributes, and an unimaginable collective outpouring of grief and solidarity Guyana, last Wednesday, said farewell to President Cheddi Jagan.

From the time Dr Jagan suffered his heart attack to the time of his cremation, his illness and passing received unprecedented coverage on radio and television, as people throughout Guyana and further afield, became nervously and sadly engrossed in the events.

For two and a half hours last Monday morning Guyanese of all races, classes and political persuasions remembered, praised and prayed for their former president at the official state funeral ceremony.

Prayers were said by representatives of the Christian, Muslim and Hindu faiths.

Bishop Randolph George who represented the Christian Community thanked God Dr Jagan's example as an outstanding leader in our public affairs, as a husband, as a father and as

a friend. "We thank God for his abundant gifts of personality, his complete integrity and his boundless enthusiasm in championing the cause of the less fortunate, his foresight, his courage. We thank God for the richness of the quality of his life," the Bishop said. also prayed for all who mourned Dr Jagan's death especially his wife Janet, his family and relations.

Most other speakers' recollections of Dr Jagan were of him being one of the most relentless fighters for social justice and freedom from external domination.

Minority leader and one of Dr Jagan's more ardent political adversaries over the years, spoke of him as part of a historical continuum of remarkable Guyanese men.

Mr Hoyte also suggested that Guyanese should work together in a spirit of unity and generosity as a tribute to the late president.

Many of those who travelled to Albion for the cremation of Dr Jagan remarked that one of the more outstanding features of the events there

was the almost totally dignified behaviour of the enormous crowds. It was clear that the massive influx of people from all over Guyana was much greater than anticipated. Yet the various ceremonies went exceptionally smoothly once the crowds had been assured that they all would have been allowed to pay their last respects.

At 1.10 pm on Wednesday afternoon almost seven days after his death Dr Jagan's son Joe and daughter Nadira lit the funeral pyre on which his body had been placed. Thus began the final stages of this delayed cremation ceremony.

With Mr Sam Hinds taking up the reins Guyana now has to adjust to a new President who may not be a member of the party which won the general elections yet he has executive powers to appoint and dismiss cabinet members.

One of the first people the new President has to select is a Prime Minister who will also be his constitutional successor.

*Please turn to back page*



For two days there was an unending flow of Guyanese from all walks of life through State House to pay their respects to Dr Jagan

### Guyana says Farewell

At the same time Dr Jagan's party which had no deputy nor obvious successor now has to appoint a new leader.

One person could fill both positions but it could well be two different people.

Information Minister Mr Moses Nagamootoo has been quoted as saying that Dr Jagan's wife Janet is the front runner to replace her husband as party leader. With a general election due in nine months it is believed that Mrs Jagan could be a good drawing card following successful precedents such as Mrs Corazon Aquino and to a lesser extent Violetta Chomorra, Benazir Bhutto and Rajiv Gandhi. Janet Jagan is also the longest serving member of the ruling party and the person closest to the late President. Pundits say she is also the one most likely to continue his policies.

However at seventy-five, and with her own health problems the question of the leadership of the party is likely to remain an open one for several days to come.

# Catholic Standard

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## Moments We Will Remember

One PPP leader is reported in the press as saying that per capita the funeral of Dr Cheddi Jagan was the biggest in the world. At first glance the statement looks more like an emotional rather than a factual observation. However after taking a number of variables into account the opinion may not be an exaggeration.

From the time the body was placed at State House for viewing going through the ceremony at Parliament building through the journey at Albion, then the second phase of the viewing of the body at Albion until the final act of cremation the total count of participants and observers has been estimated to have been in the vicinity of 250,000 persons. As a percentage of the population this means about 40 per cent of Guyana may have turned out to see Dr Jagan.

The funeral of Dr Jagan has created history in the Caribbean. But that comes as no surprise because the man himself created history.

After witnessing this momentous funeral one is tempted to repeat the words of Dr Jagan's son and daughter when they told their interviewers that Guyana will never again witness such an out pouring of numbers and emotions. Dr Jagan's daughter was more guarded. She said maybe not in the next 100 years.

It is a plausible statement to make to say that Guyana and the Caribbean will not for a long time experience an event such as Dr Jagan's funeral in terms of the sheer weight and volume of participants and observers.

There are many heroes whose last rites will make history and many names will easily come to mind.

But the numbers though they made history do not tell the whole story of this wondrous event.

The funeral of Dr Jagan saw a strange cultural trait which one would think was common to other lands rather than English speaking Guyana. But when we speak of the English speaking Caribbean we tend to forget the existence of eastern culture in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

As the procession moved eastward on its journey to Berbice human emotions showed phenomenal shapes. At Industry a woman and her child threw themselves in front of the military vehicle bearing the body of the late president. The traffic escort had to rescue both mother and child.

The event was repeated at Enmore and again the police escorts were on hand to save the day. Then for a third time we saw this attempt at human sacrifice at Canje.

Finally Dr Jagan got his wish from the Guyanese people. A wish he appealed for his entire life. His funeral cemented different people with different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The unity of the races in a monumental show of respect for this great man was best exemplified in the Afro-Guyanese village of Buxton. Here the people requested the procession to stop so that they too could directly participate in administering the last rites.

It is now up to the nation to let this multi-racial glow burn brightly and burn forever.

## ROUND AND ABOUT ...With Fr Terence Petry



I FIRST READ OF CHEDDI JAGAN in 1953 when the English "DAILY MAIL" had a front page headline: "What is going on in British Guiana?" Jagan and Burnham were depicted as trouble-makers, appealing at hugely attended meetings for the people to rise up and demand an end to colonial rule. As we know, the Governor called for troops to restore order, the Constitution was suspended and British Guiana would have to wait 13 more years before it became independent and changed its name to Guyana.

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AT THE TIME OF COURSE, I never knew I would spend over 40 years in this country, getting to know the people and like all our priests being at the service of all.

My first parish when I arrived in this country in 1956 was at Kitty with Father Ellis. He had spent some years at Port Mourant and told me something of those years in Jagan's birthplace. At a public meeting there, Father interrupted Jagan over some point, and the local supporters turned on him. Cheddi said "Let the Father speak, we have free speech here." That is a little anecdote that I remember, and it seems typical of Jagan's attitude. He was never vindictive nor did he ever show malice.

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EVEN IN THE YEARS of opposition, Cheddi Jagan was a giant figure in the history of Guyana. He is truly a hero whose memory will live on in the hearts of the people and in the history books still to be written.

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# Letters To The Editor

## WHAT DOES MR HOLDER MEAN?

Dear Editor

Mr. Ovid Holder gave a rather distasteful interview to the Stabroek News in which he offered his response to the second consecutive holiday proclaimed by the state for Dr. Jagan's funeral. While his reason for not wanting the second holiday can easily be argued against, Mr. Holder is entitled to his views, and should not be criticised for explaining his points.

What is the purpose of freedom if one is not allowed to speak about his or her disagreements with the Government of the day. But Mr. Holder descended to a level of human failing that at a Freudian level betrays his conceptualisation of the Jagan/PPP legacy. He then becomes very entangled in self-defeat in fighting his way out. In his interview, he said, "We are tarnishing everything he stood for.... it is becoming like a nightmare.... there are scores of dignitaries here while the masquerade is going on...." The next day (heaven only knows how he got in a letter to Stabroek the very next day) he pens an awful response as to why he used the word masquerade.

## NEW ERA CONTINUES

Dear Editor

A spontaneous combustion of grief and regret erupted through all Guyana and in Guyanese communities in other parts of the world as well as among the citizens of CARICOM countries on learning of the death of our revered and beloved President Dr Cheddi Jagan.

We all know that one day we must lose him but none expected this to happen so soon - the sudden illness, apparent period of recovery, sudden relapse and death.

All the people, along with First Lady Janet Jagan, children Joey and Nadira and grandchildren, relatives, close friends and associates have gone through a traumatic period which will continue for some time to come.

Here was a charismatic, dedicated leader of integrity committed to the ideal of helping to provide a better life and opportunities for all Guyanese especially the deprived and disadvantaged.

Born with a mission.... dying he has left a bigger mission for those left to lead. At the start of his career in politics, his vision and ideals people together as evidenced by the manifest unity of the people in winning eighteen out of twenty-four seats in the National Assembly in 1953 and all elections since then but was cheated never defeated. At his death, the people came together even more in their grief and loss.

In his political career spanning nearly 50 years including over 4 years as Executive President of the country with the restoration of democracy on 5th October, 1992 he brought a freshness and openness to government and the corridors of power; people felt free to express their opinions and views even if they were critical of himself and his government.

With the coming to power of the PPP/Civic a new era was commenced; with the death of President Jagan the era has not ended but continues.

We must now rally behind our new President His Excellency Sam Hinds and the government and be supportive of each other in just ideals and aspirations.

JOHN DASILVA

He rubbed salt in the wounds by saying that by masquerade he meant how the people at Albion behaved. Mr. Holder called the demand by the people of a great leader to allow them to see the body of their hero a masquerade. Shall I define for Mr. Holder what masquerade means or is it that Mr Holder knows what this frequently used word connotes but was expressing his conceptualisation of the people who live far away from Georgetown and do not embody urban culture as Georgetowners do and who are not as sophisticated as Georgetowners whatever the word "sophisticated" means.

I will answer my own question. I believe Mr. Holder was being at best flippant, at worst contemptuous of the feelings of the country people who loved and worshipped Dr. Jagan. But let me remind him that those "unsophisticated," "uncultured," "masquerading" people constitute the salt of this land along with their counterparts spread throughout this land. And I would like him to know that they have their "sophisticated," "cultured," "urbanised" sons and daughters in Georgetown who will defend them passionately against those who think they are superior to them.

Mr Holder is yet to explain what he means by "tarnishing everything he stood for." Who is doing that? Secondly, "It is becoming like a show." Can Mr Holder tell us what exactly is he referring to. These are questions which must be asked of and answered by Mr. Holder. It is inconceivable that on such a historic occasion, the moment of which may never repeat itself, Mr. Holder can reduce the passion, purpose,

empathy and lives of a suffering people out of whose womb Cheddi Jagan emerged to a masquerade.

Anyone with a modicum of intellectual ability would know where Mr. Holder is coming from. It is a question of class and culture as expressed by the town/country divide. One should not be surprised by Mr. Holder's Freudian outburst at this historical moment. It was Cheddi Jagan who removed the ensconcement of a certain class and culture powerfully niched in the political sociology and political economy of this country. For this, we can never repay him. He freed us from a certain type of class and culture.

Frederick Kissoon.

## One Memory Of Dr Jagan

Dear Editor,

About forty years ago Dr Cheddi Jagan extracted one of my teeth. It continued to bleed a little over the weekend. When I returned to his surgery on Monday morning Dr Jagan was very annoyed. "Why didn't you catch a car and come and pick me up at home. We would come to the surgery to look after you over the weekend. Why are you taking these risks with your health?" As he attended to the gum he asked whether I needed any money from him to get back home. Needless to say he never charged for the extraction nor the additional treatment.

That is the kind of man I remember him to be.

JOE PERSAUD

(Sexton, Brickdam Cathedral)