

Cheddi Jagan Memorial Service 25th May 1997

Remarks by Billy Strachan

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, etc,

I was extremely honoured and indeed flattered to be asked to make comments on what I knew of Dr. Cheddi Jagan's life as a personal friend of his and his family for the past forty or so years.

I first encountered, or preferably, learned about the existence of Cheddi Jagan by receiving a copy of the P.A.C. Bulletin at the turn of 1947/48. A young student in London from Guyana, Forbes Burnham, (known fondly as Odo) and myself discussed the fact that such an amazing bulletin, clearly backed by Marxist thought, should come out of Guyana at this time. Burnham and I discussed the possibilities of groups of Caribbean people at home in their territories meeting together and exchanging views with a view to the independence of our individual territories. May I say, that we did think as Caribbean people, seeing no distinctions at the borders of the territories across the Caribbean up on to the mainland of Central America and South America, which had been controlled by Britain. That is, the imperialist Britain, which not only dominated the Caribbean area but vast stretches of Africa, Malaya and, up until recently, the sub-continent of India.

Burnham at that time had nearly or had recently completed his studies as a lawyer and was due to return to Guyana. We were so inspired that we talked about building a political party based on the thinking of the P.A.C. Bulletin and so we introduced ourselves in writing to Cheddi Jagan.

At this time I had already, with the authority of the Caribbean Labour Congress, set up the LONDON BRANCH of that nationalist organisation in London.

