

ISHMAEL ALWAYS SAGS AND FLOPS

IT seems that the only time Mr. Richard Ishmael of the MPCA comes out of his cocoon of complacency is when his members start kicking up their heels, as they have been doing with greater and greater frequency of late. One is by now getting a bit bored with the hopelessly puerile demonstrations, of solidarity with him and his union, by him and his crew.

I can recall the genuinely spontaneous demonstrations of opposition to his poorly bargained Pension Scheme of a few months ago. Mr. Ishmael, who plays the ferocious tiger in the newspapers and over the radio, always sags and flops when the real challenge is put to him.

By Janet Jagan

I put the challenge during our discussions on the Sugar Pension Scheme and dared him to go to the estates and hold public meetings with his members and determine their views on his Scheme. This challenge he scrupulously avoided. I notice now that Njodha Singh has also put the same challenge to him, which he is brushing aside with haughty laughter.

CHALLENGE

Of course, one should never have to challenge a trade union leader about testing his support with the members of his union, to whom, under normal circumstances, he owes his position of authority and responsibility. But one must never forget that the MPCA is rather unique in its own little way.

To begin with, it has the largest number of members on paper, but it also has the least support from its members.

Its President, Mr. Ishmael lost his deposit when he fought a Legislative seat in a sugar constituency in the 1953 elections. Its President again contested a seat in the August 1954 elections, again in a sugar constituency, but when he saw the handwriting on the wall — a second loss of deposit — he hastily withdrew.

COMPANY SUPPORT

One also cannot forget that the check-off system, which

under normal trade union conditions is a good thing, in the hands of a company union, is a means of company support to build membership and collect dues.

Ask any ten workers on a sugar estate if they agree to being members of the MPCA or if they allow deductions because of fear of victimisation by the management. The answer would not be hard to find, and I can safely predict that fear of victimisation is the reason why the MPCA shows such a high enrolment and collects so much in union



Mrs. Janet Jagan

MPCA UNDEMOCRATIC

Another vital point to keep in mind is the fact that democracy just does not exist in the MPCA. Some people quarrel about a new union in the sugar

industry, a 'rival' union and say that that is wrong. But the simple question is — can the MPCA leadership be changed democratically? The answer is clearly — no.

When Ishmael's leadership was challenged in 1957, it was quickly arranged that he be sealed into office for four years, shamelessly violating the constitution which called for annual elections — which is common practice in the trade union world.

As soon as his four years were up this year, it was again arranged for him to be, in a rigged set-up, cemented into office for a period of three years, again carefully avoiding annual elections and normal trade union practice.

TIP-OFF

We can no longer be fooled by such antics of Ishmael as now calling for increased benefits to workers because of the higher price being paid for sugar in the U.S.A. We know that he knows that the Majority Party was making official inquiries into the increased prices being paid by the U.S. He got the tip-off and immediately, anticipating something militant from those genuinely interested in the sugar workers, started to jump on that hard waggon.

Is it any wonder that the trade union movement in B.G. comes in for scathing criticism, both locally and internationally? It is time that there is a clean-up, and the workers are properly led and militancy developed.

DR. JAGAN'S STORMY PLEA FOR U. S. AID

Washington, Oct. 24 — Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the Premier of British Guiana, has come here in search of economic aid, and his approach has made some people rather breathless. He sees the request for aid as a test of basic principles and he told members of the National Press Club today. "It is not my concept of democracy which is on trial but yours."

The approach is at least refreshing. Other national leaders who have trod a path to the door of the United States Treasury have assumed that the United States was democratic. But not Dr. Jagan, who for good measure defended Dr. Castro, commended the Governments of the satellite countries and rejected the charge that the Soviet Union is an imperialist Power.

His main thesis was put as a series of questions. The United States said that its concern was to foster and preserve democracy and that the internal affairs of the countries it helped, did not concern it. "What then happens when a people, by an admittedly genuine popular vote, opt for a socialist economic system? Will the United States respect this decision? Will she give aid and succour to preserve that democracy? Or will she withhold her aid at the very real risk of that democracy being overthrown by a dictatorial uprising based on the people's poverty? Will the United States Government give in to pressure groups . . . and so act as to preserve capitalism by sacrificing the democracy it has so long championed."

SOVIET ALTERNATIVE

He left no possible doubt that if the United States did not match his high expectations, he would seek aid from the Soviet Union. Nor could the Americans hope for any friendly understanding of their problems if they did demonstrate the genuineness of their democracy. "I mean to pursue a policy of active neutralism," Dr. Jagan said. "I take no orders from anyone . . . I am not interested in the cold war."

Dr. Jagan wants \$200m. (about £72m.) for the first four years, a not inconsiderable sum for a country of about half a million people. But he refused to compromise on what he regarded as basic principles. "Sooner or later his issue has to be squarely faced and clarified by your Administration."

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Executive Committee of the British Caribbean Association

Bigger loads of produce