

Youth Arm Of The PPP

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Thirty-five years ago, in March 1952, at the Second Congress of the PPP, it was decided to form a youth section of the Party. And only 2½ years after the formation of the PPP, on September 6, 1952, this decision was put into effect and our youth section was formed, named the **Pioneer Youth League**. Since that time, it has been in constant motion, the vibrant, stimulating and vigorous right arm of the Party.

An important part of the PPP's history involves the youth section which was under severe attack from the British government barely a year after its formation. On October 9, 1953, the British suspended the Constitution of Guyana and threw out the legitimately-elected government of the PPP, elected at the most popular poll ever held in our country, the first elections under universal adult suffrage.

When British warships arrived on October 9, 1953, and poured out hundreds of marines who proceeded to put the country under martial law, the Pioneer Youth League was declared illegal. Forced to go underground, it made short appearances under different names, each time having the same fate of being blamed for the resolute resistance of the people under the leadership of the PPP. It carried the following names — **Guyana Youth Movement**; the **Guiana Union of Democratic Youth** and the **Guiana Union of Patriotic Youth**.

The period of illegality continued until 1957, when the PPP won the general elections in spite of severe manipulations and the false belief of the British that the rightist Burnhamite split of 1955, had permanently destroyed the Party. With open, legal work resuming, the first Congress was held in 1957 and this Congress adopted the name **Progressive Youth Organisation**, which it retains to this day, (data from PYO booklet commemorating period 1952-1983).

The Progressive Youth Organisation, from the beginning of its legal activities in 1957 to the present, has been a major moving force within the Party. It has revitalised the Party at crucial moments; it has given inspiration and

firm solidarity in periods of stress or during periods when divisive forces were seeking to wreck the Party. The youth arm has provided cadres that moved into the Party's leadership. **It has consistently pumped new blood, new ideas and a vibrant spirit into the PPP.**

The youth arm, during the period of the struggle for independence, was always marching at the forefront and made very positive contributions to the end of colonial rule. In pursuit of the aim of moving in the direction of socialism, the youths have never shirked their responsibilities of educating and enlightening the Guyanese population on the benefits of the socialist path. This has been done consistently in its planned educational activities including building of libraries, seminars, sale of literature, attendance at the Accabre College of Social Sciences, debates, camps and cultural activities.

In fact, one of its first identified tasks in a series of objectives includes the: **"mobilisation of the Guyanese youth to struggle for a socialist Guyana"** and **"the orientation of our members towards scientific socialism, the building of their class consciousness and the cultivation in them of a deep sense of patriotism and proletarian internationalism"** and **"the dissemination among all Guyanese youth of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism"**.

The theme of the PYO at its 9th Congress in 1976 was: "Towards Unity in Anti-Imperialist Struggle: Youth Rights and Socialism"; at the 10th Congress in 1977, the theme was Unity—Liberation—Socialism; the 11th Congress in 1980—"Youth in the Struggle for Democracy and Social Progress".

Other tasks identified by the youth arm include the moulding of members into reliable and faithful allies of the working class and other working people of Guyana and the world over; the defence of the rights of Guyanese youth and the promotion of their welfare; the preparation of members for admission to the PPP; the organisation and mobilisation of Guyanese youth for full participation in the overall struggle led by the PPP for the liberation of Guyana.

In pursuit of these objectives, the PYO carries out various activities which include public meetings, demonstrations, picketings, protest rides (bicycle), petitions, representations, sports, cultural activities like concerts, film shows, and drama; house-to-house campaigns, sale of literature, fund raising and recruiting members.

The PYO is affiliated to various democratic international youth movements such as the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the International Union of Students and OCLAE, and holds executive positions in both WFDY and IUS. The organisation actively participates in the work of these organisations locally, regionally and internationally and periodically represents these bodies at various conferences.

The PYO has consistently worked at the local level to highlight the struggles of youth and students the world over, by organising solidarity activities, symposiums, rallies, video shows, etc., in keeping with the broad outline of the various international bodies.

In a more practical manner the PYO was host to many conferences organised by WFDY, IUS, and OCLAE. Here the opportunity is taken to bring our Caribbean and international counterparts up to date on the burning issues affecting our youths and students internally.

Generally, youths and students of the world are united in one common cause — the anti-imperialist struggle for peace, democracy and social progress. A cause which the PYO has been championing since its birth as the Pioneer Youth League.

Among the PYO's several activities, mention must be made of its publication, **Youth Advance**, an outstanding periodical highlighting youth problems, advances and tasks. The PYO has been particularly active in the field of sports, conducting tournaments, holding weekly sports nights at Freedom House and generating greater interest among youths who do not have opportunities to enter sports at the higher competitive level. In other words, the PYO offers grass root sports opportunities.

Another activity of the PYO which has brought it acclaim is the special coaching for high school students preparing for examinations and given each term at Freedom House and in other areas. This has attracted a large number of students who attend classes 5-days a week after school and who would be unable to afford such tuition if the PYO had not provided it free.

The Progressive Youth Organisation is an independent mass organisation of youth and has its own structure — a Central Committee elected at biennial congresses, with an Executive and a Secretariat. Its group representatives serve in district and regional bodies. It has national committees for organisation, education, propagan-

da, finance, international affairs, sports, culture, student affairs, young women, pioneers and working youth.

The PPP Constitution has a section dealing with the PYO, stating that while it is an independent mass organisation of youth, **the PYO recognises the leading role of the Party.**

As set out in the PPP Constitution, the PYO's main functions are to assist the Party in its work in relation to Guyanese youth; to organise and educate the youth in Marxism-Leninism; to organise and involve the youth in political, social, cultural and sporting activities; to build the character of youths and ensure their all-round development to lead responsible lives and to struggle for a socialist Guyana and further, to organise and involve children in the spirit of patriotism and dedication to the interests of all working people and for the development of their personalities.

As regards work among children, greater emphasis has been placed on this during the past ten years. There is still much to be done, but a good start has been made and continues since the formation of the Pioneer Section on June 1, 1979.

PYO representatives sit on a number of Party committees like the Organisation Committee, the Education Committee, the Cadre Development Commission and, the Propaganda Committee to name a few. The integration of the PYO into the Party exists also at group level, where in some instances there are joint meetings of PPP and PYO and sometimes WPO groups.

The Party Constitution provides in its Articles on Regional and District Organisations for observers from the youth and women sections to attend both Regional and District Conferences. The youth section is always represented at Party Congresses.

Thus there is excellent coordination and co-operation between the youth section and the Party, while the youths, at the same time, maintain their independence and take initiatives on their own.