

A Remarkable Family

by Janet Jagan

Out of Guyana's history, several remarkable families have emerged. One generally thinks of the Luckhoo family in this sense.

I am thinking of another family, which contributed three much excelled men to enrich our society. I am referring to the Ramkarran family of which "Boysie" Ramkarran led the way and produced two worthwhile and talented sons - Ralph and Baynie.

Ramkarran, who had only one name and was proud of it and resisted all efforts to have the standard 2 names (some tried to divide it into Ram Karran or Boysie Ramkarran, but it never worked) was a humble man from humble parentage. When I got to know him, he was a conductor on the Georgetown-Rosignol train and an ardent trade unionist, belonging to the then powerful Transport Workers' Union.

When Cheddi Jagan began campaigning for the 1947 elections as an independent candidate for the lower East Coast Demerara seat (Kitty to Buxton), he met and engaged two persons who were to be later involved in the formation of the PPP in 1950. Ramkarran and Sydney King (later to change his name to Eusi Kwayana and to leave the Party). Ramkarran remained a loyal member to his death, becoming many things - Treasurer of the PPP, Minister of Works (1957-61) and again a Minister in the PPP government of 1961-64. He was a Member of Parliament for many years, from the time of his first appointment as a Minister through the 80s. He also became General Secretary of GAWU.

In Parliament he was known and appreciated for his sharp wit and wry humour, which even the often-bitter opposition benches enjoyed and appeared to look forward to.

Ramkarran, who was so absolutely humble, never beat his own drums. He was excessively modest and seemed to want to be unnoticed, but it was hard not to notice him because of his utter honesty, integrity and loyalty.

How proud he would be today to see his eldest son sworn in as Speaker of the National Assembly and another son, Baynie, as the most excellent and highly respected Ambassador to Venezuela! Both of these sons have followed the high standards in life set by Ramkarran. He gave these sons a good education at great sacrifices, as he never had one himself, but as a good father, did his best.

These three men, have given to their country valuable service, and Ramkarran's sons continue to uphold his good name and make their own special contributions to their native land.