

A Perversion of Truth

by Janet Jagan

I read with utter amazement a report published in the Stabroek News of August 20, 2005 of the Guyana Fiduciary Oversight Project issued by the World Bank.

I could only come to the conclusion that someone who prepared the report needs counselling or the Stabroek News incorrectly reported on the matter.

Firstly, the report noted that “Members of Parliament were elected only if they could secure the support of the leadership as the leadership controls the party list and each candidate’s place on the list.” It also noted that “the influences of the Party leadership is extremely rigid.”

To begin with, we have to examine the historical aspects of proportional representation. Before 1964, Guyana had the constituency system, first past the post. But to remove the People’s Progressive Party from office, which it had won in free elections three times in 1953, 1957 and 1961, the British, pushed by the USA, after investing tons of money to destabilize the country, changed the electoral system to proportional representation, and then manipulated Messrs Burnham and D’Aguiar into a coalition, since the PPP won the majority of votes, but not over 50%.

Stabroek News has been publishing previously secret documents about Guyana. In its issue of September 18, 2005, it published documents of the Johnson era and noted this: “After Burnham was elected Premier in 1964, the US government again through the CIA, continued to provide substantial funds to both Burnham and D’Aguiar and their parties.”

Now that free and fair elections were re-established in 1992, those who still nurse antagonisms to the PPP, and, particularly, the PPP in office, will do and say almost anything to again change the system which was imposed on Guyana’s voters. In other words, the PPP has beat the system calculated to defeat it, and having won the elections of 1992, 1997 and 2001, those who hate the PPP are thinking of a new system to remove the PPP from office.

Next, to understand how the list system works, yes, the fairly and democratically elected leadership of the PPP selects the names for this list. The PPP just had its 28th Congress and at that function, duly elected delegates from the Party’s many Groups, at democratic elections, elected their leadership, the Central Committee, which is the highest authority in the party in between Congresses, which are held every three years.

So, who else would select the names of the members on the list, from which the Members of Parliament are chosen? Maybe those who can find every gripe and criticism of the PPP would prefer if the media makes the choice?

The report in the Stabroek News of the Guyana Fiduciary Oversight Report say this: “the impact of the party whip was therefore overwhelming, and any MP especially Government backbench MPs wishing to depart from the “Party line” - is in danger of losing their seat in Parliament.” This preposterous statement

makes no sense in relation to reality. That is what prompted me to suggest that whosoever prepared the report needs counselling or has not done his homework.

Take the case of Khemraj Ramjattan who was on the PPP list and made an MP. Subsequently he broke with the PPP and was expelled, so he is no longer associated with the PPP which selected him for the National Assembly. He has or is forming another political party, but hangs on to his seat in Parliament. So the suggestion by the report that the party whip can oust him from Parliament is all nonsense. He refuses to give up his seat and there is no way of getting him out of Parliament unless he chooses to resign.

A similar situation occurred when Mr da Silva who was on the PPP's 1992 list and became an MP, then changed his allegiance, but held on to his seat.

These two gentlemen have claimed that they won their seats and have their own constituency or electoral support. It will be interesting to see if either will be back in Parliament in 2006!

The report also, erroneously, paints the PPP and the PNC under the same tar brush of racism. There is a great distinction between the two major parties on the issue of race. Many, like those who reported, as above, do not have a clue about the reality of Guyana. All they have to do is examine the statistics of how the nation's wealth is distributed in all aspects of government, from housing, health, education, infrastructure, etc., to see that an even hand has been used throughout. Job distribution, scholarships, educational opportunities up to University, etc., confirm the total lack of race preference by the present ruling party.

There are those who peep at us from outside, who know little about what goes on in Guyana, who may rely on a very hostile media that is given full range to say what it wants. They try not to arouse the hostility of the PNC by using the sorely tried practice of "plague on both houses." It's much easier, and more diplomatic, to charge both parties with the sins of one.

But then, what is new?

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