

Address at Babu John - 2007

by Janet Jagan

We are here again to honour a great man, a man of the people, a man who opened the minds and hearts of the people of this nation to struggle for a better life and to bring justice, not only to the people of Guyana, but to all people everywhere.

Sixty years ago, Cheddi Jagan entered Parliament, the youngest member at 29, and served for the rest of his life, the longest serving Parliamentarian in the history of our country.

It was in those early days that many of the ideas and ideals that would direct his life were formulated. From the very beginning of his public life, certain characteristics became clear and unchanging. He was first of all, an honest man, a man of genuine integrity, a man whose hands were clean throughout his whole life. I emphasise this quality because his unabashed honesty was the quality that let to trust, and trust is a very important aspect of life, particularly political life.

He was trusted by all, even those who disliked his policies and his beliefs! In his whole lifetime there was never a shadow cast by any doubt of his integrity. And of course, trust leads to many things, willingness to fight for and sacrifice, when necessary, for the goals set. And Cheddi with his comrades, set difficult goals. First was the struggle to end colonial rule and become an independent nation. That is why he is called the Father of the Nation.

Second was his determination and his tough and relentless leadership later, to remove the chains of the PNC dictatorship and restore democracy.

He achieved both of these goals before his death ten years ago. He set Guyana on the path of rebuilding an almost completely destroyed country and in his 4½ years as President, set the guidelines for a strong and united Guyana.

The Cheddi we all know and respected and loved, and this is as evident today as it was decades ago, was a man of the people. His ideas and his attributes and his goals were derived from his frequent and genuine contact with Guyanese of all ranks of life. They were part of his decision making process. The views of the man-in-the-street, the farmers, the workers, the vendors, the merchants, the women, the children were important to him and he absorbed these contacts into his ideas and plans. For these and many other reasons, we can be proud that a man of his stature and unique character lived and led us.

Today, at the site of his cremation ten years ago, we again pay honour to a man of the people, our own Cheddi Jagan!