Claude Christian - An Example for All

by Janet Jagan

When we examine Claude Christian's life and his contribution to our movement, we see it as a guide to our members, for in few others do we find such qualities.

Comrade Christian wanted nothing for himself – neither position, money, power. When he worked – and few have ever worked as hard – he worked for the Party, not for himself. We who have worked with him at Freedom House knew him to work at times from 6 a.m. to midnight, with a bun and sweet drink his only food for the day. When he went on money raising tours throughout the countryside, he was prodigious in his physical endurance. He would drive others to work as hard as him, to be as disciplined and selfless as himself.

He demanded a lot from others, but he did not sit at a desk and make the demands; he showed them how to work and always set the pace. He made our comrades give of their best. I can remember one occasion when there were a lot of items to be removed from Freedom House – heavy items like benches and tables. Some of our comrades at Freedom House, who were responsible for this activity, sat around and left the moving to others. Claude was furious at their laziness or refusal to do manual work. He quarrelled with them, then took off his shirt and began hauling the benches on his back. They soon were ashamed and helped in the work. This is one of the lessons he taught us all – no one is too high and mighty to do any work, no matter what it may be.

Self discipline and discipline for others was his belief and those with whom he worked had to learn discipline. No more coming to work when one pleased, no more half measures in doing a task, no more forgetting assignments or responsibilities. During the two periods of Comrade Christian's management of Freedom House, he established a high standard of efficiency and dedication to work.

As the Party Chairman said, "Claude shaped the Party's finances." This is very true, for it is to Claude that the Party can be grateful for its buoyant financial position. Prior to his management, funds were so scarce that normal payments could hot be met. But with his tremendous drive and his wealth of ideas, he soon lifted the financial gloom. Fund raising drives which at one time flopped, under his management brought surprising results. Dances, barbecues, fairs, were not only fun for everyone, but were smashing financial successes. His contribution to our Congress meetings, our educational seminars, our women's congresses, etc., was sweat and good organisation. He could never be persuaded to receive the thanks, the garlands, the bouquets – he wanted none of that. He was pleased and happy when things went smoothly and his reward was to see that there were no complaints, no criticisms and that everyone was satisfied with how things went.

A look at the books Claude had in his library reveals the man. He believed in socialism. He read books on the subject and although he never considered himself very learned on the subject, he quietly read and quietly digested what he read. He was an anti-imperialist to the bone. No one was more disappointed than Claude when the London conference last year failed to set a date for the country's independence.

One of Claude's failings was his utter disregard for himself. When his health started failing about three years ago, he had to be forced to visit a doctor. When the doctor advised hospitalisation, he refused, and again pressure had to be put on him to enter a hospital. Even on the last occasion, when he was lying weak in his bed, he insisted that he would leave the hospital in a few days.

While some were fighting to be candidates at elections, officers of the party or to achieve ministerial rank, Claude spurned these honours. He flatly refused to be a candidate at the last general elections and firmly stated that he would make a better contribution to the Party by remaining as office manager.

At the last Party elections he declined nomination to one of the officers' posts. He had to be virtually forced to become a Minister, always declaring that he wanted no honours – he just wanted to keep the Party organisation and finances in good shape. Money, too, had no real attractions for Claude. Whatever the Party could afford to pay was satisfactory to him.

As a human being, a comrade, a friend, Comrade Claude was all things to all men. Few could dislike this full-blooded, warm-hearted, fun-loving giant of a man who endeared himself to all those with whom he worked, even those who did not agree with his politics. He was a great success as a Minister. When the Leader of the Opposition at the London Conference, 1962, made a scurrilous remark about the type of Ministers the PPP was choosing, and referred directly to Claude, a high Government official curtly remarked that the Minister of Home Affairs was by far one of the most capable men he had known.

Claude was rough and tough when his orders were not obeyed or when he felt an injustice was being done. He could shout and curse with the best, but when he was finished, he carried no malice to the wrong-doer, the incompetent or the one who miscarried his directions. He was a humble man, and knew no false pride. If he was wrong, he admitted it; he was not afraid of criticism, nor was he afraid to criticise the highest if it was necessary.

In short, Comrade Christian brought discipline, efficiency and organisation to the Party He personally set a high standard by his own devotion to duty, respect for his seniors, absolute honesty, and his love of Party and country. He was a reliable and trusted comrade, a man of good humour and amazing generosity. He set the pace for many to follow. We need more men of Claude Christian's calibre in the movement. His contribution will never be forgotten.

(Thunder, June 1963)

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Life for Comrade Christian was not all work and my play." He had an amazingly good sense of humour. This photograph of Claude and comedian Sam Chase was taken at the dinner in honour of the Premier, shortly after the 1961 elections. The two were obviously exchanging jokes.

Comrade Christian was a very only attable and genuine to his devoted worker in our movement immediate friends, but also a and was determined to achieve stalward among the leaders to socialism and independence in our country tonay British Guiana. We regret that death prevented him from seeing these realities. This irreparable loss will always be remembered.

'Members and compades of the was dedicated to his party's area offer their deepest sympathy cause" at the less of one of our ablest ministers and comrades"

Havana) 'We must pledge our- an irreparable tost. He was one selves that his death shall not of the great staiwarts of our have been in vain"

the struggle against Claude Christian colonialism and for national independence and world peace.

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Junior Chamber of Consuerve - By colleagues are fully conmisant of this great loss to the Campbelville Group. PPF - community of one who was not

CHTANA GRAPHIC - "A F-T man to the end there were many sterling qualities he Coverden Group. PPP __ possessed. He was honest. He

Dr. Cheddi Jagan - "The death of Claude Christian has Charlie Cassato (capled from come as a great shoot. His is movement and one of my ablest Ministers. He was completely WFDY - On behalf of 101 selfless and never spared himmillion young people, members of self, in time and energy, for the the WFDY we express deep sake of others. The youth and regret at the death of our friend people of new Guyana will do Claude Christian, Grent defender well to emulate the life of

P.Y.O. - "Claude Christian Canal No. 2 Palder, FFP group was a man of the people, and - "We know that our country as he rose to higher heights has lost one of its worthiest sons of national service be mever and a sincers member of the lost contact with those he Party. We deeply regret that served. He died young. But the last funeral rites could not few men have succeeded in he performed because of the compenitating so much, as he shocking behaviour of certain did in such a short life it is sections of the community. We because he lived a studied hope and pray that he is resting life of devotion to his country's cause and never did he PPP _ spare himself in timeless up-

esty, conviction and incustry



In 1957 Claude Christian went to Canada where he re-

mained until the Party requested him to return in 1960.

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