

Contesting Elections

by Janet Jagan

Elections have always posed a challenge to our Party, and no doubt, the same could be said of most political parties. However, in the case of the PPP, very different considerations come to the forefront when the question of elections is raised and a date announced.



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The very first time the PPP faced an election was not the famous one of 1953, when we won, for the first time, a sweeping people's victory. The first was a mini-election, that for the Georgetown City Council just 11 months after the Party's foundation. The PPP put up three candidates, Cheddi Jagan, L.F.S Burnham and Janet Jagan, the latter being the only winner. In that election, campaigning was on a much smaller scale than today, but the main ingredient, the enthusiasm and energy of the rank and file member was already developing.

There are many positive and negative features of elections, and as the years go by and the elections be-

come more fraudulent and corrupt, the negative features are bound to grow. These are well known to all of those who participated one way or another, and to the onlooker, or just the ordinary voter.

On the positive side, elections seem to be like the oiling of the machinery of a good engine; it makes it function even better. First is the decision to contest the elections and in the years since the first rigging began in 1968, this has demanded a very careful and wise decision. It's not like elections in most countries where the question of rigging is not the major issue. Here, it is. Generally, the Party's decisions have been made in the most democratic way; full consultation with the membership through the various facets of our Party's structure.

Once the decision is made, the Executive Committee of the Party appoints a committee to handle all aspects of elections and also appoints the Party's Elections Officer. He is legally responsible for a vast number of matters, including the appointment of polling agents, the filing of the proper documents for the nomination of candidates, and the filing of various papers.

All of the Party Secretaries have their tasks. The Organising Secretary has to arrange an enormous number of public meetings. He has to send out information to groups, call for nominations of candidates for Regional Democratic Council, collect names of persons willing to serve as polling agents, etc. The Propaganda Secretary has to see that handbills and posters are printed, that press releases go out, and that the speakers and speeches are ready for the radio time allocated to the Party.

The Secretary for Mass Organisations has the task of mobilising support from a wide range of mass bodies while the Executive Secretary and the Manager of Freedom House have to see that there are vehicles and loud speakers available for meetings and that things in general function smoothly. The General Secretary, of course, has the most responsibility and like the conductor of an orchestra, he has to see that all things work in unison and give to the overall performance, the energy, vision and dynamism needed for success.

At all levels of the Party, members get into action — the groups meet and give assignments to members for preparing meetings, looking into advertisements,

