

HOW IT WAS THEN

by Janet Jagan



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other. That's how it was then.

I remember when I served as Minister in two PPP governments (1957-61 and 1963-64). One had as permanent secretaries two men who carried out their functions without any political prejudices. In those days, as of now, there were plenty of people who hated the PPP. Nothing new about that! But in the majority part of the civil service, the officials did their work in an acceptable manner. Of course, there were a number who did not and tried to slow up or halt what we were doing.

I guess I was one of the luckier ones, because my two

permanent secretaries gave me excellent support, particularly Mr Evan Drayton when I was Minister of Labour, Health and Housing. With his consistent help I was able to complete a number of projects that improved the welfare of the working people in the three areas of my ministry.

To some extent, the PPP was fortunate in the 1957-61 period, because the PNC was busy trying to build a party – which Mr Burnham had formed after the PPP won the 1957 elections. The PNC, at that time, was too busy trying to build a strong opposition and did not move to its terrorist designs until it faced defeat at the 1961 elections. So, it was during that period that the PPP's achievements, even though still a colony, were easier to come by – no frequent interruptions as were later to be the norm, by violence in the streets and other means.

Of course, things have

changed greatly since those years. There are those who

in values, trust, responsibility and the blind eye to criminal

consider wrong. I remember once addressing a youth

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reflect on the changes in people's behaviour, outlook and performance since that time and after. By after, I refer to the 28 years we lived under a dictatorship that gained and maintained power through rigged elections. People changed considerably during those critical years and their values and expectations and way of life were influenced by the powers in control at that time.

Many see the breakdown

activities, moral decline, attitudes to drugs and sex as part of the cost to a generation of losers.

Today, we bear the weight of that lost generation, if it can be so termed, and what it has done to the psyche of the Guyanese people.

Of course it is true that each generation sees the new generation as lacking in many things or doing things that the older generation would

conference. I began with a quotation from Plato in which he decried the way the next generation was behaving, so there is really nothing new in this complaint which goes back for centuries. However, the new factors of technology development change the pace of life and permit, even encourage, some of the factors considered detrimental to society and its welfare.