MEMORANDUM TO THE UNITED NATIONS
by
DR. CHEDDI JAGAN

THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE IN BRITISH GUIANA

INTRODUCTION

1. This Memorandum is to be read in conjunction with the Memorandum submitted on the 20th November, 1961, by the People's Progressive Party. A copy of this Party Memorandum is attached hereto as Appendix 'A' for reference.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

2. Subsequent to the distribution of the first Memorandum in December 1961 the Premier of British Guiana, Dr. C.B. Jagan, called upon Mr. R. Maudling, Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies in London on the 13th December and requested that the demand of the 83.6% of the electorate in British Guiana who had voted for immediate independence be granted. Mr. Maudling refused to fix any date certain for British Guiana's independence. Further, he refused to fix any date certain for a Conference to decide on such a date, but promised to raise the matter in the Cabinet and inform Dr. Jagan of their decision.

3. Implied in this answer was the possibility of the British Cabinet refusing to agree to the demand for immediate independence. As the Premier of British Guiana took the stand that independence is the right of the people of British Guiana and not something within the grant of Her Majesty's Government, he immediately appealed to the United Nations for help.

4. At the 1251st Meeting of the Fourth Committee of the United Nations it was decided to invite Dr. Jagan to address the Committee and Dr. Jagan did in fact address
the Committee, as a Petitioner, during its 1252nd Meeting which was held on the 18th December, 1961 (See U.N. Document A/C 4/515).

5. At that meeting, also, a Draft Resolution (L/728) was tabled calling upon the Government of the United Kingdom to negotiate the issue of Independence with the Government of British Guiana. (See United Nations Document A/C 4/1.728) This resolution was debated during the 18th and 19th December and on the suggestion of the Delegate for Ghana no decision was taken but the matter was held in abeyance with the understanding that if the Government of the United Kingdom granted Dr. Jagan's demand for a Conference to fix a date for independence then the matter would not be put to the vote.

6. The Delegate for Ghana also asked that the Sixteenth Session should not be closed until the matter had been decided and it was therefore agreed to leave the matter on the Agenda to be dealt with after the Christmas adjournment.

7. On the 22nd December the Committee adjourned after having agreed to reconvene on the 15th January to dispose of unfinished business including the Resolution on British Guiana's Independence.

8. On the 14th January, the day before the Committee was due to reconvene, the Colonial Office of the United Kingdom Government informed Dr. Jagan that they had agreed to hold a Constitutional Conference in May and a Press statement to this effect was released at 0001 hours on the 15th January in London.

9. By letter dated 15th January, 1962 from Sir Patrick Dean, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the Secretary-General the Fourth Committee was informed...
informed that:

"The Secretary of State for the Colonies having considered the resolution of the British Guiana Legislature calling for early independence has informed Dr. Jagan that he is willing to hold a Constitutional Conference in London next May to discuss the date and the arrangements to be made for the achievement of Independence by British Guiana."

(See United Nations Document A/C 4/520 dated 16th January, 1962)

10. From the moment that it became known in British Guiana that the Government of the United Kingdom had agreed to a Conference to fix a date for Independence an intense and bitter campaign against Independence was commenced by the reactionary United Force Party led by Mr. Peter D'Aguiar. In this campaign the Press took an active part led by the "DAILY CHRONICLE" which is a newspaper hostile to Government, owned by a Company of which Mr. D'Aguiar is majority shareholder. The Government was bitterly attacked, emphasis being placed on the allegations that it was biased racially, communist, anti-democratic and a satellite of the Soviet Union.

11. Objective examination of the local newspapers for the relevant period will show that this campaign was completely irresponsible and contrary to all normally acceptable journalistic standards.

12. As a result of this campaign a state of unrest began to develop and racial animosity greatly increased.

13. On the 8th February Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., asked in the British House of Commons when the Constitutional Conference on the future of British Guiana would be held. The Government answered officially:

"As was announced on January 15th, the British Guiana Independence Conference will be held in London in May of this year to discuss date and arrangements to be made for the achievement of Independence by British Guiana."

/14...
14. On the 31st January, 1962, the Government of British Guiana presented its Budget for the current year. This included proposals for increased taxation for a Compulsory Savings Scheme and for preventing the widespread tax evasion which has long been a feature of life in British Guiana. It was designed to raise $8 million B.W.I. more than in 1961 by taxation and $3 million B.W.I. by the Savings Scheme. This was needed to meet a general demand by the Public Service for salary increases totalling about $4 million B.W.I., and to meet public debt charges, to undertake vitally necessary maintenance works to Sea Defences, etc., and to finance the Colony’s development scheme which was short of funds. A short precis of the financial position is attached hereto and marked Appendix “B”.

15. The Government was assisted by the United Nations adviser Professor Nicholas Kaldor who framed the proposals. While the Budget introduced new taxes it was calculated that it would cause an increase of only about 3% in the cost of living of the working classes; of this 3%, 2 \( \frac{2}{3} \) came from increased taxes on spirits and tobacco. Close examination of the Budget has brought favourable comment from the "NEW YORK TIMES" and from persons including Sir Jack Campbell, British head of the Booker Group of Companies in British Guiana and Mr. Anthony Tasker, the local head.

16. While there was a risk involved in any attempt at increased taxation in an economy as poor as that of British Guiana, Government had no alternative but to introduce the Budget. Attached as Appendix "C" is a memorandum on the many efforts made to obtain outside assistance without material success. Since funds could not be obtained abroad the Government was forced to ask...
the people of British Guiana to assist themselves.

17. The United Force immediately seized on the Budget as a weapon to be used against the Government in the battle to block independence. A campaign of intense virulence and distortion was launched in the local Press. Many merchants raised their prices on all commodities irrespective of whether taxed or not. These reactionary elements with other opposition forces used the Budget issue as an excuse for an attempt to overthrow the Government.

18. The temper of the urban population of Georgetown was raised to such a pitch that the situation got out of hand and rioting and arson broke out on the 16th February in Georgetown which is the main area of opposition support. Nevertheless, the large majority of the population in the rural areas was unaffected and it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be held that the outbreak was general or had support from the majority of the population.

19. It is considered that the major cause of this breakdown in order was the division of power which is created by the present constitution. Under this constitution, control of armed forces is vested in the Governor and control of public prosecutions for major offences is vested in a Director of Public Prosecutions over whom disciplinary control is vested in the Governor only. Because of this it proved impossible for the Government to take effective steps to prevent the outbreak although this was foreseen by Dr. Jagan who warned of what was likely to happen in a statement to the House of Assembly on the 9th February, 1962. A copy of this statement is attached hereto as Appendix 'D'. In this context it must be noted (a) that the Government, some 18 hours before the situation got out of hand, insisted that the Governor send troops into the disaffected area and despite a firm promise by the Governor to send troops by 1 a.m. on the morning of the
disturbances they did not in fact arrive until 3 p.m. when fires were burning; (b) that despite the fact that a great deal of evidence exists as to illegal actions by political personalities connected with the Opposition no major prosecutions have yet been instituted with respect to the outbreak of the 16th February.

20. Immediately after this outbreak Mr. D'Guan on behalf of the United Force, commenced to demand that independence be withheld because of the situation in British Guiana and this line was carried widely by the British Press.

21. On the 22nd February the question of British Guiana's Independence was raised before the Fourth Committee of the United Nations by the Delegates for India, the U.S.S.R. and Guinea. Sir Hugh Foot for the United Kingdom stated that no new decision about the proposed Constitutional Conference for British Guiana had been taken. In view of this Mr. Jha, Delegate for India, moved that Resolution (L/728) which was still pending should be considered concluded and this was agreed to without a vote.

22. On March 9th, shortly after the disturbance, Mr. Hugh Fraser, Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, visited British Guiana and insisted that a Commonwealth Royal Commission be appointed by the Government of the United Kingdom in place of a United Nations Committee of Investigation which had been suggested by Dr. Jagan. All the members of the Commission did not arrive in British Guiana until May 16th.

23. Mr. Fraser also considered it advisable for the leaders of the three political parties to meet and decide on common ground, as far as possible, for the constitution for an independent British Guiana. A series of these meetings were held and eventually the leaders of the two opposition...
opposition parties refused to attend further unless the Government lifted the state of emergency which had been declared as a result of the disturbances. This the Government considered inadvisable and the talks were therefore stalemated.

24. On the 4th May, 1962, the Governor informed Dr. Jagan that "it was unlikely that the Constitutional Conference would be held in May as planned because (a) a Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances was to be set up to enquire into the circumstances; (b) the initial areas of disagreement between the political parties had to be narrowed; (c) financial talks had to be held. Dr. Jagan objected strongly to this postponement of the talks to an indefinite date, but, nevertheless, the Secretary of State for the Colonies went ahead and adjourned the Conference unilaterally by an announcement on the 8th May.

25. Dr. Jagan was subsequently informed that the talks would be held on the 16th July and as this was a date certain and the postponement was for a short time only no steps were taken to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations.

26. During a special mission to the United Kingdom by Dr. Jagan during the latter part of May, the short term financial difficulties which had been referred to by the Governor and which had been occasioned by the opposition to the Budget were settled by negotiating an advance from the United Kingdom under terms which amount to an advance on revenue to be collected later in the year.

27. On the 30th June the Secretary of State for the Colonies informed Dr. Jagan that he had been informed that the report of the Commission of Enquiry would not be /available...
available until mid-August and that he therefore proposed to adjourn the Constitutional Conference until "after the meetings of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in September". Dr. Jagan once more objected in the strongest possible terms but without avail and the Conference remains adjourned to an unspecified date in the future. A copy of Dr. Jagan's letter to the Governor of British Guiana is attached hereto and marked Appendix 'E'.

28. During these negotiations the United Nations General Assembly went into recess and will not be reconvened until September.

PRINCIPLES INVOLVED

29. Strong objection is taken to the principle that the freedom of the people of British Guiana is in any way linked to the findings of the Commission into the disturbances. Implicit in this principle is the suggestion that as a result of the riots British Guiana may be deemed to be unfit for independence. To this suggestion the People's Progressive Party is strongly opposed and in this stand it is supported by the People's National Congress whose leader, Mr. Burnham, has stated that postponement of the Constitutional talks on this ground is both unjustified and unjustifiable.

30. It is considered that this continued series of adjournments are in direct breach of the statements made by the Government of the United Kingdom's representative in the United Nations as the result of which Resolution L/728 was withdrawn. They are also in direct contradiction of binding promises made to the Government of British Guiana.

31. It is considered that this policy of vacillation on the part of Her Majesty's Colonial Office is, in the
circumstances, most unfortunate. The experience of other territories, and in particular of Trinidad, has been that a disgruntled and dangerous opposition tends to settle down and cooperate to a much greater extent once the decision to grant independence to the majority has been taken or is clearly in the offing.

32. In the context of this country, the continued unwillingness to concede the rights of a majority of over 51% of the people represented in the two major political parties, the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress, to their freedom is merely fostering the determination of the small reactionary opposition to resort to extra-constitutional means to block the people's will.

33. It is considered that the policy, or rather the lack of policy, now shown by the Colonial Office can have only one effect. It will lead to further disturbances. What is needed now is a clear, categorical statement by Her Majesty's Government that this country will be granted its independence at a definite date this year. It is well known that in matters of this sort there can be nothing worse than a policy which is weak and amenable to minority pressure. The unhappy history of Algeria is an example exactly in point. All these facts lead to the conclusion that a definite attempt is being made to block the Independence of this territory.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

34. It is now therefore requested that this matter be taken up by the United Nations and that steps be taken to bring pressure to bear on the Government of the United Kingdom to fix a date certain within this year for the Independence of this territory. If it is felt that the facts outlined above need to be checked or amplified, it is suggested that the Committee of Seventeen or part of it visit British Guiana immediately to investigate the situation on the spot and report back.

CHEDDI JAGAN

Appendix “A” = Document # 510 ; Appendix “D” = Document # 518 ; Appendix “E” = Document # 522
Appendix B

The Hard Facts of the Budget.

1. The Budget as originally presented called for just over $54 million dollars on the recurrent estimates - an increase of $8 million dollars on the 1961 Revised Estimates ($57 million). Of this increase, 4 million dollars is required for personal emoluments as follows:

- (a) increased salaries etc. 2.6
- (b) salaries for additional teachers and teachers salary increments .9
- (c) New posts .4

Total = 4 million.

The other main heads which required increased provision are:

- (d) Public Debt charges 1.4
- (e) Services for Development Schemes .8
- (f) Maintenance of roads, buildings and sea defences .7
- (g) Civil Aviation .3

Total = 3.2

2. Revenue from the old taxes was expected to yield $58.2 million dollars, i.e. 7 million dollars less than was required to meet recurrent expenditure and leaving nothing over to help finance development.

3. It will therefore be seen that with inescapable commitments for increased salaries and debt charges adding 5 million dollars of 8 million dollars increase on last year's recurrent expenditure and with the bulk of the remainder of the increase in the form of expenditure which cannot be avoided except at greater cost to the community, Government had no alternative but to introduce new taxes to raise money and certain amendments to tax laws to prevent evasion or avoidance of tax.

The new tax proposals were expected to yield $10.2 million dollars. This sum would have covered the deficit of 7 million dollars on the
5. The Development Budget as presented called for $31\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars. Of this sum, $20$ million dollars was in sight as follows:

(a) U.K. Exchequer loans $8.8$ million dollars (This sum includes the $3$ million dollars loan to which formal approval has recently been given by the Secretary of State for the Colonies).

(b) C.D. & W. grants $6.4$ million dollars

(c) Local loan $2.0$ million dollars

(d) Contractor-finance $2.5$ million dollars

(e) World Bank Loan $1.0$ million dollars

(f) U.N. Special Fund $0.1$ million dollars

Total $20.0$ million dollars

6. In addition to this $20$ million dollars in sight for development it was proposed to realise another $6\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars for development as follows:

(i) $3\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars from revenue over and above that required for revenue estimates (See paragraph 4 above).

(ii) $3$ million dollars from the national development savings scheme.

Thus the money available for development this year would have been $26\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars - a sum still five million dollars short of the $31\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars required for the Development Programme this year as set out in the Development Estimates.

7. The position since the withdrawal or modification of taxes is as follows:

(a) the yield from additional revenue will be reduced from $10.6$ million to $7.2$ million;

(b) as the deficit on the recurrent budget as presented stands at $7.1$ million no money will be available for transfer to development.

8. At the moment that money in sight and available for development stands at $19.5$ million dollars.
(a) U.K. Exchequer loan 8.0 million dollars
     (includes 3 million dollars to which formal approval was
      recently given by the Secretary of State for the
      Colonies).

(b) C.D. & W. grants 5.4
     (With a smaller programme less C.D. & W aid will be
     available as C.D. &W aid is given as a percentage
     of the total cost of projects).

(c) Local loan, including
     savings from National
     Development Saving Scheme
     now estimated at 2.5

(d) Contractor finance 2.5

(e) World Bank Loan 1.0

(f) U.N. Special Fund .1

19.5 million dollars.

9. So the money available for development is now 19½ million instead
   of the 26½ million originally envisaged. That is why there has to
   be further cutback on development expenditure and consequent
   retrenchment of workers.

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Unemployment

In 1956, Mr. McGale, an expert from the I.L.O., conducted a survey on unemployment and underemployment in British Guiana. He concluded that there were 18% of the labour force unemployed and 9% underemployed and noted that if there were no new opportunities for employment, other than 7,000 new jobs arising from planned development, there could be by 1966 up to three times the number who were unemployed in 1956. This Report also disclosed that about 41% of the unemployed was concentrated in the urban areas. This distribution of the unemployed between town and country tended to aggravate tensions between the predominantly African urban population and the predominantly Indian rural population, especially since in the short-term period development was performed heavily concentrated on the agricultural and communications sectors (rather than, say, industrialisation) which political leaders in the opposition criticised as a deliberate attempt to help Government supporters in the rural areas.

After the Elections in August 1957, elected members of the Government stated publicly on several occasions both here and abroad that if the social and economic problems affecting the people of the country were not solved, an explosion would eventually occur. For example, this opinion was expressed and emphasised at a conference held in London in the summer of 1958 with the Colonial Office. Representing British Guiana were the then Governor, Mr. Patrick Ramsay, Financial Secretary, Mr. F.W. Nagel, Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. G. Jagan, and Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Edward Beharry. Because of the economic and consequential social problems existing in the country, Dr. Jagan suggested that the old $91 million 1954/60 Development Programme should be revised and expanded to $200 million but his proposal was rejected. Instead it was decided that the Plan should be reviewed in the summer of the following year (1959).

Attempts to get Financial Aid

Efforts to obtain development finance from other sources were made and the "Swiss Bank" in London indicated that they would be prepared to lend the British Guiana Government under a United Kingdom Government guarantee a sum amounting to £6 million. The United Kingdom Government, however, stated that it was not in keeping with its policy to guarantee such loans. Following upon this refusal, Dr. Jagan sought permission of the British Government to make a direct approach for a loan to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank). This request was approved and a preliminary application was prepared at the Colonial Office and forwarded to the World Bank.

Dr. Jagan and Mr. Beharry (at the time Ministers of Trade and Industry and of Natural Resources respectively) then proceeded from London to Washington and had discussions with officials of the World Bank and U.S. Government agencies - the Development Loan Fund (D.L.F.), the Export/Import Bank, International Cooperation Administration (I.C.A.) etc. Previous to this visit an application was made in early 1958 to
the D.L.F. for economic assistance amounting to $34 million (U.S.) for water control and road construction projects. Discussion of this application did not bear any fruit. The Controllers of the Fund expressed the view that the amounts involved were too large, but did not give any indication what sum was likely to be obtained and to what extent the application was to be modified. Discussions with the other Agencies were equally fruitless.

5. Towards the end of 1958, an Economist from the World Bank, Mr. John Adler, visited British Guiana and in a confidential report suggested that any new Five Year Development Programme was likely to be within $110 to $125 million (B.W.I.). On the eve of his departure from British Guiana, he said:

"I have been informed about the Government's tentative Development Plan for the next 5 year period. It would be presumptuous for me to comment on the programme in detail but from what I have seen it is clear to me that the top priorities have been correctly selected. There is no question in my mind that the provision of more agricultural land through drainage and irrigation and the improvement and expansion of the transportation system, particularly through better roads, deserve top billing."

6. In early 1959, U.S. Government Officials from the State Department also visited British Guiana. Discussions on the Government's application for economic assistance were again held but no definite commitment was made.

7. In the summer of 1959 the present Five-Year 1960/1964 Development Programme was approved in London. The Programme was limited to £100 m., on the advice of Professor Berrill, a Cambridge Economist, who had come to British Guiana as an Adviser to the Government in early 1959. Mr. Berrill argued that at the then prevailing rate of interest (6%) British Guiana could not afford a bigger Programme and were it to embark on a larger Programme it would run into serious financial difficulties as too large a proportion of its recurrent budget would have to be devoted to the payment of debt charges. The elected Members of the Government did not share Mr. Berrill's assumptions about the rate of economic growth for the future and projections of revenues and debt burden in the long-term (15-20 years) period. The Colonial Office admitted that the British Government needed a larger Development Programme to cope with its present social and economic problems, but expressed the view that neither was the British Government in a position to loan more than the sum of £10 m. of which £4 m. was approved and £4 m. was to be considered later nor was British Guiana in a position to finance a bigger programme.

8. Dr. Jagan argued for a bigger Development Programme on the basis of a lower rate of interest. He was told that the British Government could not reduce this rate because of an Act of Parliament which determined the rate of interest on Treasury Loans.

9. Dr. Jagan again visited Washington in the summer of 1959 and held talks with Officials of the World Bank and U.S. Government Agencies. At a meeting with State Department Officials he was told that a sum of about $5 to $8 m. (U.S.) would be made available to the British Guiana Government towards the cost of the construction of an interior road from Parika to Lethem. This did not in fact materialise. A request was also
made to the Commodities Division Office of International Resources in the State Department in order that the country's imports of flour and stock feed from U.S. (\$2.5 m. U.S. p.a.) may be given under United States Public Law 480 so that the proceeds of the sale could be used for development projects. This request was turned down. It was explained that any assistance under the law must be over and above the existing volume of imports. In an approach was made to the Export Credit Corporation for these imports to be supplied on credit but this was also turned down on the ground that it cannot be justified since British Guiana had no currency difficulty to overcome. The Export/Import Bank was sounded out for help in financing equipment for a flour-mill and a feed-mill. The response was not encouraging. The answer given was that the congressional interests and U.S. flour millers were likely to be critical of such assistance.

10. At one stage a U.S. Official in British Guiana indicated that economic assistance might be forthcoming for the Tapacuma Drainage and Irrigation Project. Later, when the Project Report was ready Government was informed that assistance for this Project was not likely to be forthcoming because of possible congressional objections to a scheme which would be solely devoted to the cultivation of rice of which the U.S. had a large surplus.

11. An application to the Export/Import Bank in June 1941 for rice milling equipment - cleaning, drying and storage - amounting to about $2 m. B.W.I. has not yet been considered.

12. In 1959 together with the then Financial Secretary, Mr. F.W. Essex, Dr. Jagan visited the Federal Republic of Germany and held discussions there for economic assistance. In Italy discussions were held at about the same time for economic assistance for the taking over of the Demerara Electric Company, now termed the B.O. Electricity Corporation. A small World Bank loan of $24 million (B.W.I.) was approved in 1961. This was, however, to be used only for credit to private individuals and cooperative societies for the purchase of equipment and implements for agricultural, forestry and fishery development.

13. In the latter part of 1961 Dr. Jagan and the Minister of Trade and Industry visited Canada and the United States in search of economic aid. At about the same time the Minister of Natural Resources visited Germany, Italy, and France for the same purpose.

14. Unfortunately, little besides technical assistance has materialised out of the Government's efforts to secure aid abroad.

One tangible offer of assistance was made. In the summer of 1960, the Cuban Government proposed a loan to the British Guiana Government of an initial sum of $5 million (U.S.) (at a rate of interest of 2% repayable in ten years in the form of timber products) to finance the establishment of an industrial timber project. The Cuban Government was also prepared to finance the external costs (cement, generating equipment etc.) of a hydro-electric project estimated to cost about $32 million (B.W.I.). There was resistance to these offers for political reasons from various quarters including the former General Secretary of the Trades Union Council (T.U.C.). The British Government was of the view that such offers should be examined minutely and promised to pursue the matter with the Cuban Government. Unfortunately nothing more has been heard of this from the Colonial Office.

...
The amount of technical, as distinct from financial, assistance received from abroad, especially from the United Nations, is, however, quite impressive. It included a Special Fund assistance for a bar siltation project, an aerial survey, an aerial magnetometer (geophysical) survey, land development pre-investment survey. Each of these projects involved expenditure of U.N. funds exceeding $40,000.

In addition technical assistance in a wide field was received, e.g., in petroleum exploration; industrialization, fiscal and financial policy, statistics, marketing, forest inventory, water resources (including hydro-electric development, public administration and economic planning). Technical assistance in the field of social assistance, education and mineral resources development have also been approved.

"Contractor Finance"

15. Having failed to obtain enough direct loans to finance the Development Programme, Government through the previous Minister of Trade and Industry (Dr. Jaras) sought to obtain assistance in the form of "contractor finance." This attempt was successful to a certain degree. A Consortium made up of Associated Electrical Industries, Taylor Woodrow and International Combustion Company is financing the take-over and expansion of the Electricity Corporation. The Grupo Del Conte, a Venezuelan firm, is now engaged in the construction of a road from Parika to Makouria on the right bank of the Essequibo River as a result of a "contractor finance" arrangement with the Company.

Attempts to block assistance to Government.

16. While the Government was seeking to raise loans from abroad, attempts were and still are being made to prevent such assistance being given. It has come to the knowledge of Government that attempts have been made by persons close to the United Force to persuade the Grupo Del Conte not to undertake to finance any project here and to influence the World Bank not to grant any loans to the Credit Corporation. More recently; newspaper reports have indicated that Mr. L. F. S. Burnham, O.C., the leader of the P.N.C., during his last visit to the U.S., some weeks ago, urged that no U.S. assistance should be given direct to the British Guiana Government, but rather that it should go to Trade Unions and Cooperative Societies. This is illustrative of the attitude of the opposition towards the Government's attempts to secure financial aid for the country's development.