

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CHEDDI JAGAN
ON CONTROVERSY OVER TRAVEL LODGE SPEECH, TORONTO
OCTOBER 30, 1996

I have noted that some troublemakers and propagandists are engineering a campaign of hate and attacks against me, based on a deliberate distortion of what I said at a meeting in Canada.

A few weeks ago the PNC's organ, New Nation, falsely deemed me a drug baron. In its latest issue, on the basis of fabrication, I am deemed a racist attacking our Afro-Guyanese brothers and sisters. The PNC mouthpiece says, "Dr. Jagan tells Toronto Audience: Black People are at the Lowest Scale of the Social Ladder in Guyana". The words "**in Guyana**" were deliberately inserted to change the meaning of what I said.

Speaking about race, class and politics, I said at a meeting in Toronto on October 30: "The PPP is not an Indian Party. The British and the Americans did not remove me from power and put Burnham in because of race. In fact, if they were using race, I should have been kept there and Burnham should have been kept out forever. Because as we know Black people are at the lowest scale of the social ladder."

Anyone who has listened to my entire address and has an iota of logic and commonsense would have noted that the last sentence could not have referred to Afro-Guyanese but to blacks in the United States of America.

I lived in Washington, New York and Chicago and my personal experiences and views about the social alienation of blacks in the United States of America are well known and documented in my book, "**The West on Trial**".

The lowest social status of Black people in America, lower than Asians, was noted by Jawaharlal Nehru in his **Autobiography**.

It was therefore inconceivable that in the early 1960s, when racism and discrimination were widely practised against Black people, that the ruling class would on purely racial consideration supported a Black leader in the United States, Guyana or elsewhere.

L.F.S. Burnham was chosen to lead Guyana not because of race but because, at the height of the Cold War in the early 1960s he was willing, for ideological and political reasons, to serve Anglo-American class interests. Everyone is aware that he was deemed, as the British described him to the Americans, as **“an opportunist, racist and demagogue intent only on personal power”**.

On my recent trip, I took to Toronto and elsewhere the theme of unity, racial harmony, peace and social progress for all Guyanese. In my speech, I had said that we were now celebrating not just the PPP/CIVIC Fourth Anniversary in Government, but the 50th Anniversary of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), which was multi-racial and working class.

I also stated that the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) victory of 18 out of 24 seats in the 1953 elections represented national, racial and working class unity; further, that when I was sworn in as President on October 9, 1992, I had said that we would make a new beginning and return to the spirit of 1953.

It is therefore abundantly clear that what I said in Toronto was deliberately and maliciously misrepresented to sow racial divisions and hatred in our society.

All my life I have spared no effort in working for national and racial unity, and justice for all working people. We have made significant progress in this direction during the first four years of our Government.

Guyanese therefore must not allow themselves to be misled by self-seekers, opportunists and racists. Say “NO” to the mischief-makers!

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NOVEMBER 19, 1996.