JAGAN THE PHOENIX

By Festus Brotherson Jnr.

One immediate benefit of a Jagan presidency would be the return of Guyana of a badly needed work ethic. Put differently, the PPP leader appears to be the one political figure who has the capacity to reinvigorate the workforce—a sense of pride and efficacy important requisites in any attempt to boost the yearly slumping levels of production. This is especially the case in the sugar industry where the opposition leader’s mass support has remained constant and impressive for the past 24 years through his leadership of the country’s largest trade union, the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU). And sugar has remained a major revenue earner for the nation.

Many political leaders who oppose Dr. Jagan do so on unpersuasive grounds. Their politics of disfavour have strengthened rather than weakened the PPP leader’s chances of electoral victory. One frequent charge is that the PPP leader has been around for too long and it is time for Guyanese to be allowed to choose from among newer and younger aspirants to high office. (Dr. Jagan is now in his 70s). A principal spokesman for this school of thought is Mr. Eusi Kwayana of the Working People’s Alliance (WPA). He, unprompted, took himself out of the running for top office and has urged other older politicians to do the same.

In the Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD), the umbrella group which loosely unites opposition parties, talks were stalemated for months on the question of choosing a consensus candidate for the presidency. These meetings have now been abandoned but during their sessions, all sorts of alliances, proposals, and counter-proposals were examined, principally by the WPA, the Democratic Labour Movement (DLM), and the PPP. The Reform Movement, Guyanese Action For Reform and Democracy (GURD), proposed Mr. Ashton Chase, a respected lawyer, veteran trade unionist, and former political activist.

But Mr. Chase has himself been around for too long and it is time for Guyanese to choose from among newer and younger aspirants to high office. Their politics of disfavour have strengthened rather than weakened the PPP leader’s chances of electoral victory.

The PPP leader has also given timely assurances on racial politics on which the PNC was equally guilty as the PPP during the 1960s, and which resulted in blacks and East Indians slaying and maiming one another in a senseless spree of political violence. Dr. Jagan has promised: “We want to tell the people that in any government in which the PPP or Jagan is part, there would be no racial or political discrimination whatsoever.” These are reassuring words.