

THE THINKER

Volume 5

July - December 2021



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AT THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

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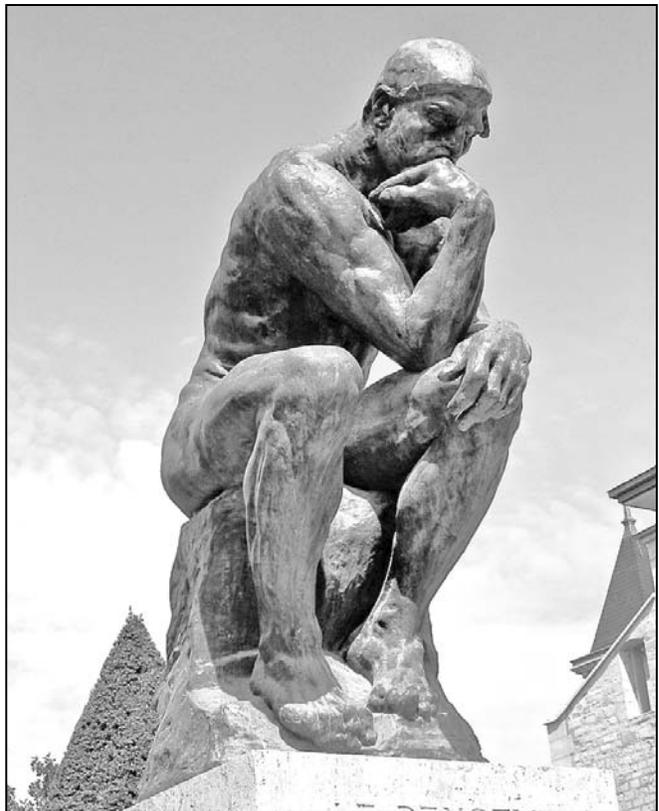
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The Thinker (French: Le Penseur) is a bronze sculpture by Auguste Rodin.

EDITORIAL

This edition of The Thinker coincides with a number of important events both at the national and at the international levels.

At the international level, the United Nations-sponsored Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP26) took place in Glasgow, Scotland recently. The Conference has taken place at a time of rising temperature levels which has resulted in severe disruptions in weather patterns and consequential destruction of lives and livelihoods in several parts of the world including Guyana. Several new commitments were made on climate mitigating measures and, if past experience is anything to go by, the chances of these being honoured remain at best doubtful. There is also the continuing devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic with renewed calls for greater equity in vaccine distribution between the developed and the developing world.

At the local level, the country has observed some significant milestones. The PPP/C has completed its first year in office after the drama of the March 2, 2020 National and Regional elections when attempts were made by the APNU-AFC coalition to rig the elections.

Other historic milestones include the 75th anniversary of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC). The PAC is the forerunner of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and played a key role in raising the ideological and political consciousness of the Guyanese people during the period of colonial rule. This year also marks 55 years of our independence.

At the international level, there is the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune, the first working class revolt against the capitalist state. Other historic milestones include the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the 50th Anniversary of the South African Communist Party and the 60th Anniversary since the Soviet Union sent the first man into space and 20 years since the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center.

These and other developments have been captured in this edition of The Thinker which we hope will be of interest to readers.

As is now customary, we have included an Obituary to a fallen comrade, Mr. Rohit Persaud, who had contributed to the politics and governance of Guyana in a significant way.

We take this opportunity to express our appreciation to our contributors and to our readers for their continuing patronage. We also take this opportunity to wish our readers and contributors a happy holiday.

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The Thinker

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Race and the Need to Relook at the Electoral System



Over the last three decades, Guyana has been experiencing profound changes in all aspects of life. This was made possible by the fact that for the first time since independence, our people's struggles scored a vital victory, we won the right to elect a government of our choice through free and fair elections. That was achieved on October 5, 1992. It was indeed a Dawn of a New Era.

The changes that have occurred since then have proven Cheddi Jagan and the PPP to be correct when they proclaimed long ago that there could be no sustained socio-economic progress without political democracy.

It is true that democracy is more than just free and fair elections. However, without it we would not be able to achieve any real progress. Free and fair elections are at the heart of democracy.

One matter that has not yet been solved even though we have won the struggle for democracy is that of race. This is still a bug bear and it continues to be an inhibiting factor to progress. This is continuing despite great efforts by the PPP and the PPP/Civic governments over the years. That issue continues to sit heavily on our shoulders.

When speaking to, or listening to political leaders in the country on that question, they all express a desire to put an end to this racial prejudice. They all recognize that it is a major hambug to our socio-economic progress.

If we accept that every person who expresses such a view is honest and really desire strong inter-ethnic unity, then we have to ask why it is still a sore point. Clearly just wishing that racism would disappear is not enough. We have to look elsewhere for the solution. We must therefore identify where the problem is. It is the view of this author that the problem lies in our electoral system of Proportional Representation (PR).

Proportional Representation – A world experience

The PR system has its genesis in Europe more than two centuries ago. It has now been abandoned in most of the countries on that continent.

The reasons for its rejection are many. Those countries have found that the negatives in the system far outweighs the positives.

It is known to create political instability in almost all the countries in which it was used.

Italy for instance had the PR system for a long time, in the post war period. That country became notorious for the frequency with which it had to hold elections. Indeed between 1964 and 1993, that is a period of thirty nine years, Italy had 52 governments, more than one election per year.

Between 1946 and 2016, that is a period of seventy years, Italy had 65 governments compared to the UK with 25 and Germany with 24.

The Italians modified their system in the early to mid 1990s to ensure that it had a stronger majority government. The political instability caused by the PR system was one of the main reasons that Italy lagged behind the other countries on the continent in terms of its economic development. The political instability that PR created impacted in socio-economic progress.

Some political scientists even attributed the rise of Hitler in Germany during the 1930s to the system of Proportional Representation. Since that time Germany

had changed that electoral system and is now the most economically developed the third largest economy on the world.

Today we see the instability that exists in Israel. Over the last two years that country had four general elections. Moreover, it was felt that the last vicious attack by the Israeli army on the Palestinians in GAZA was caused by the political instability in Israel. Recall that the country was on the eve of another election. The attack on the Palestinians was to demonstrate the toughness of the regime in relation to the Palestinian resistance.

This brought out another important, but negative feature of the Proportional Representative system. It exploits and fosters divisions in a society. The attack on the Palestinians was racist and aimed at exploiting the racist sentiments that exist among the Israeli population.

PR and Guyana

The Proportional Representation electoral system was introduced in our country the then British Guiana, for the general elections forced upon the then colony on December 7 1964. Since then we have been using it at our elections.

At that time we were the only country in the Commonwealth that had that electoral system. Today South Africa has adopted it as well. What we have seen since the South Africans adopted PR is the loosening of the strong unity between the non-white sections of the population which was strong during the anti-apartheid struggle. The riots recently were focused against Indian South Africans and it has the potential to divert the attention from the real exploiters of South Africa's working people.

The imposition was another attempt of the British, now joined by the Americans, to destroy our Independence Movement that was led by the People's Progressive Party since its inception in 1950.

The efforts to destroy the movement became very intense after the PPP won the first national elections that were held under Universal Adult Suffrage. At that time the constituency or First Past the Post System was in place. The PPP's victory was massive, it won eighteen (18) of the twenty four (24) seats in the Legislative Assembly and was able to form the first government arising from a democratic elections. It was an historic victory and held out great promise for the future. The PPP was then a strong anti-colonial party with a

socialist orientation. It refused to betray the confidence of the masses and to allow itself to become a neo-colonial party.

For that reason it was viciously attacked by the British and was removed from office after only 133 days.

The British further engineered a split in the PPP in 1955. They managed to get the most prominent African Guianese leader, Forbes Burnham, to break away with the promise of their support to make him the head of the colony.

They organized another election in 1957. However, they manipulated the boundaries to give an advantage to the Burnham led faction of the PPP. That ploy failed. The PPP led by Cheddi Jagan was victorious, winning nine (9) of the fourteen (14) seats in the Legislative Assembly.

The following year 1958, the first call was made for proportional representation to replace the First Past the Post system of voting. Interestingly the call was made by one of the most senior officer of Bookers, the company that owned most of the sugar estates in Guyana and controlled the economy, Mr. Anthony Tasker. Shortly after he became the chairman of Bookers companies in the then British Guiana, he (Tasker) was a nominated member of the BG Legislative Council (National Assembly).

At first no one took him seriously. The colonial office was still of the view that PR was not a good system. Mr. Burnham himself was probably of that view for he did not express support for the call when it was made by Mr. Tasker.

He was most likely of the view that he could win an election with the support he was given by the British and the fact that he was gaining some mass support by peddling a strong racial line. He later merged with the League of Colored People, a racial group composed of middle class African Guyanese, to form the People's National Congress (PNC). He was joined by another popular Black leader of the PPP. That was Mr. Sydney King, now known as Eusi Kwayana. King had become popular as a PPP leader among the working people, including the African farmers and workers. That helped to boost Burnham's support and served to increase the Burnham/King racist propaganda. All of this in the service of Colonial bosses.

Burnham and his British backers were no doubt

calculating that they would be in a good position to win future elections. The Burnham/King alliance was bringing the African Guyanese masses in the camp of the PNC. They were also calculating that Dr. Latchmansingh, who had broken from the PPP with Mr. Burnham and who was the President of the popular sugar union, the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU), would win sugar workers votes for the PNC.

That did not happen. The workers recognized their true champions and stayed with Cheddi Jagan and the PPP.

The PR bogy was resurrected at the 1960 Independence Talks. It did not get the support of the British nor Burnham. They obviously believed that with some more manipulation they could win.

The next elections were held in 1961. At those elections Forbes Burnham, with the support of the British was confident of victory. The British once again worked to help the PNC by once more manipulating the electoral boundaries to the disadvantage of the PPP. The Guyanese people once more frustrated their scheme.

The 1961 elections were fought with Independence being the goal. At the Constitutional Conference in the UK in 1960 all the parties agreed that whichever party won the elections would lead the country to independence. Apart from the manipulation of the boundaries the PNC unleashed great violence against the other political parties in the contest these were the PPP and UF. Indeed after the elections the UF in a statement said that it was good that the PNC lost because it was a violent terrorist party with dictatorial tendencies. It complimented the PPP for acting honorably in victory.

The PPP once again defied the odds and obtained the elections once more, it won 20 of the 35 seats.

The other major feature of the 1961 elections was a new trend that was developing. After the split in the PPP in 1955 the Burnham faction ably supported by the Local Pro-Colonial media began organizing and advocating racism. That was how he and the PNC support among African Guyanese grew, but worse the all out opposition of PNC, UF, the British, the US, TUC etc deliberately created hostility towards Indian Guyanese.

The PPP, on the other hand did not respond by organizing only among Indians. It continued to advocate the unity of the people as the best way to frustrate the colonial powers and to force them to concede independence. By 1961 its strong unity push was gaining significant



Riots of the early 1960s

grounds. This was noted by many independent observers such as the Commonwealth Commission of 1960.

Professor Peter Newman of the University of Michigan, wrote about the heightened appeal to race by the PNC after it lost the 1961 elections. In an article he wrote for a magazine in the US called "Race" in May 1962 he said "the defeat of the Burnham led party resulted in its increased emphasis on African race-consciousness..." He went on to add that "not surprisingly, this attention to a unified African front led to a need for common enemy, a role which was filled by the East Indians..." He continued. "...the main anomalies of the party (PNC) were focused on the racial issue..."

He went on to show that that policy was leading progressive African Guyanese away from the PNC. This is how Prof. Newman put it "...since the PPP continued to maintain a public image of non-partisanship...many African intellectuals, especially among the younger group, began to feel dissatisfied with the racial policies of the PNC..."

Another independent commentator Mr. T. McKitterick in his analysis noted that the PPP won between 15 – 20% of the African working class votes in 1961. He concluded that had race been the decisive factor in those elections the PPP could not have won. He showed that in 4 and possibly 5 constituencies won by the PPP, Indians were definitely in the minority.

The Anti-independence movement had to therefore engineer a new way to get out of their commitment to grant independence to the country under the leadership of Cheddi Jagan and his PPP.

It was at this stage that Burnham's PNC and the UF coined the slogan "No independence under Jagan and new elections under the system of Proportional Representation". No doubt they were encouraged to do

so by the US and the British.

To reverse the trend of more African support moving towards the PPP and to give the UK/US the excuse to renege on their commitment to grant independence to BG, they began a campaign subjecting Indian Guyanese in general and African Guyanese PPP members and supporters to unbelievable violence.

That began in 1962 and continued right down to December 1964 when their plan came to fruition.

The PPP was confronted with a really massive force, the UK, which had control of the British Guiana Police Force, the US which financed strikes and encouraged violence and the local anti-PPPs, the media, a section of the business community led by Bookers and D'Aguiar and of course the PNC, the main instrument for violence in the country.

Recall too that Bookers had appointed to its Board of Directors Ptolemy Reid who was an executive member of the PNC and the then chairperson of the PNC, Winifred Gaskin. This brought the PNC more under the influence of Big Businesses and another possible source of its finances.

The rationale for imposing the PR system on our country was that the PPP had won a bigger percentage of seats in the Legislative Assembly in relation to the popular votes that it obtained.

It was immoral for them to have done so because the very British Government that imposed PR on BG was in the exact position in relation to the UK elections. The conservatives had a majority of Parliamentary seats with less than 50% of the popular votes.

In addition to that, it had just granted independence to Jamaica in which the Jamaican Labor Party (JLP) was in the same position, i.e. a majority of Parliamentary seats with less than 50% of the popular votes.

The call for PR was also raised by the opposition in Trinidad at the independence talks, the British had refused the demand and agreed with Eric Williams that PR would balkanize Trinidad. Therefore one can safely conclude that the imposition of the PR in Guyana was to prevent racial unity from developing and consolidating in the country.

Indeed both Trinidad and Jamaica were against PR system

in British Guiana because they felt it was going to worsen the racial situation in BG. Sir Alexander Bustamante was so upset that he refused to send an observer team to the 1964 elections. He took a principled position and a Caribbean position because he felt that it was not good for the region.

The obvious reason for the imposition was that the colonial power and the US wanted a neo-colonial country in post independent Guyana. Jagan and the PPP were too strong, patriotic and would never have agreed to compromise on sovereignty of the country, thus Burnham and the PNC who were seen to be more pliant were pitch forked into the position of Premier at the end of 1964.

Weak Governments: the Unspoken Reason for PR

There was however another unspoken reason for imposing the PR system. The British/American wanted a weak government in the country so that they would always be in control of the economy and in a position to direct the politics of the land. Remember at that time the economy was controlled by Bookers in sugar and retail trade and Bauxite in the hands of a Canadian company, ALCAN whose parent company was American, ALCOA.

They also knew of Burnham's excesses. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. who was an advisor to President Kennedy wrote in his book, "John F. Kennedy, a Thousand days in the White House" that "...our policy had been based on the assumption that Forbes Burnham was, as the British described him, an opportunist, racist and demagogue intent only on personal power..." pg. 778.

They felt that by forcing him into a coalition they would have been able to contain his excesses. They failed miserably.

Things did not unfold as the Americans had hoped. Burnham got a majority in the National Assembly by bribery and corruption of a few opposition members of the National Assembly. This included members from the United Force, the other party in the coalition. The case of Mohamed Kassim the then Minister of Works in the coalition is a classic example.

Mr. Kassim was from the UF. His Party leader Mr. Peter D'Aguiar, who was then the Minister of Finance reported to the Parliament that Kassim could not account for five million dollars. He strongly suggested that the money was stolen. Mr. Burnham the Prime Minister promptly got up and said that he had authorized the spending.

Kassim immediately crossed the floor and joined the PNC. That is how the PNC got its first majority in the National Assembly as the first elections in independent Guyana approached in 1968.

Having seen all of that maneuvering people knew that the PNC was about to rig the elections of 1968. Many felt it was a waste of time to contest. As a result, no new parties emerged. Only four (4) parties contested those elections. They were the PPP, PNC, UF and GUMP. A fall from seven (7) in 1964.

In 1973 elections again saw only four parties contesting. They were PPP, PNC, Liberator Party and a new party the People's Democratic Movement (PDM).

The Liberator Party was a fusion of the UF and a group called 'Liberator'. It was headed by Dr Gunraj Kumar a prominent and popular medical doctor. The PDM was led by Lewelling John, a former Minister of Home Affairs in the PNC/UF Coalition. He was key in the rigging of the 1968 elections. He fell out with the PNC and created his own Party.

In 1980 the contesting parties fell to three (3). The PPP, PNC and the UF. This was a demonstration that the situation was seen as hopeless by many who probably wanted to contest but knew the PNC was changing the votes after seizing the ballot boxes.

We began to see a change in the 1985 General elections. By that time Forbes Burnham had died. His successor, Desmond Hoyte began to make some reforms which gave the hope to some that the elections would have been free and fair.

The reforms included some relaxation on the press, in that period the Stabroek News was born. He also abolished Overseas voting, a method used extensively by the Burnham led PNC to rig elections.

As a result, seven parties contested the poll. They were PPP, PNC, UF, Working People's Alliance (WPA), Democratic Labour Movement (DLM), National Democratic Front (NDF) and People's Democratic Movement (PDM).

Hopes for a free and fair election were cruelly dashed. Desmond Hoyte's PNC massively rigged the 1985 elections. It was the worst rigged elections in our history. The key being the army seizing the ballot boxes at the end of the poll and PNC operatives changing the votes.

That defeat did not daunt the participants, they began to advocate even more vigorously for a return to Democracy. The opposition parties united into The Patriotic Coalition for Democracy (PCD). The PCD was formed to pressure the government for real changes. It was making important gains. The Guyanese people's resistance increased greatly, this was seen in the Trade Union level, the six union movement and at the religious level with the joint letter by the Anglican and Catholic Bishops. The oppositions to the regime kept growing while the PNC regime became more and more unpopular. In the meantime, the international situation had undergone a sea of changes as well. The cold war had ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fear of communism evaporated and anti-communist propaganda lost its effectiveness. That brought more solidarity to the struggles at home.

The combination of a united opposition at home and a new international situation, in which the threat of "communism" was removed, created favorable conditions for change in Guyana.

The Republic Day message by President George Bush to President Desmond Hoyte in 1991 clearly signaled that the US position on the toleration of rigged elections in Guyana had come to an end. That gave great hope to the democratic forces that the people's vote would finally be counted.

As a result, eleven (11) parties contested the 1992 General Elections in which the PPP/Civic emerged victorious, despite many predictions that it could not win 50% of the votes. The PPP/C won 53.45%.

Since then the amount of parties contesting the elections were more or less constant. What has been changing is the fact that some parties have been combining before the elections. We have seen GAP/WPA, GAP/ROAR and later APNU in which some seven parties have combined.

Recently we have seen a massive jump in the amount of political parties on the scene. A lot of parties are emerging representing smaller and smaller groupings in the country.

In an atmosphere of the possibility of free elections many began staking claims. To get into the National Assembly a party only needs approximately five thousand votes. However, that one or two seats can give that party much greater bargaining power than its popular vote. This could be so in a situation where no party or combination

of parties gets fifty one percent of the votes.

With Free and Fair elections the second objective of the then colonial power when Proportional Representation was imposed began to become a reality. That is to have “weak” coalition governments in Guyana.

No doubt some, particularly leaders of the smaller parties, would see this as a good thing. That they would have great bargaining power way beyond their support and even be able to bring down governments.

This however, could be the worst thing that can happen to our country, with the exception of rigged elections and undemocratic governments. Weak governments create instability and are a big obstacle to progress. More efforts will go towards making deals, bringing down and creating new regimes and little attention to real development needs of the people.

The reality of Proportional Representation creating divisions is very plain in our country. The People’s National Congress (PNC) continues to organize on the basis of race. They have managed to hold onto the vast majority of African Guyanese voters despite the fact that during their periods in office the working people, including the vast majority of African Guyanese were pauperized. Yet the PNC gets their votes. This is because it guarantees them mass support and encourages them to constantly and falsely accuse the PPP/C of racism.

The only reason that our race relations are not worse is because of the PPP’s refusal to adopt racial policies as well. It has maintained its position of being a National Party for all the people of our country. It has remained loyal to one of Cheddi Jagan’s strong held view that the people’s common interests will bring them together. It happened before and would happen again.

It is clear that to defeat the racial politics in Guyana the PNC must be forced to develop national programmes and to make national appeals instead of holding onto racism to ensure its popularity and existence.

The constituency system has proven to be a system that forces political parties to adopt multi-racial/ national policies. Elections can then become a contest of programmes, plans and ideas instead of being a racial census.

Moving to solve our racial problems has now taken on an even greater urgency. This is due to the fact that we are now a major producer of oil and gas. We are attracting greater investments into our country. Huge corporations with revenues that are many times bigger than our GDP are here. They have an even stronger interest here now than when Demba and Bookers were here. They would obviously take a position on our politics overtly or covertly. We have seen what those corporations can do in many parts of the world. This is why we need strong governments capable of defending our sovereignty.

We must therefore be aware that our divisions can be used against us. It has bedeviled us in the past from 1763 to the present. We only had a brief glimpse of how powerful we could be when we unite. The year 1953 must serve to remind us of that power.

Over the years we have learnt that unity would not be forged by good intentions alone. We have to ensure that we create a system that would make national interest a priority over sectorial concerns.

Life has shown that the constituency system is much more robust in promoting national unity and the strengthening of our sovereignty. It is therefore an important national issue.

We must deal with the vulnerability that PR has created.



Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People’s Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.

THE RULE OF LAW - the foundation for economic and social progress: the case of Guyana



The rule of law is undoubtedly the foundation upon which modern civilization rests. In September 2005, the Council of the International Bar Association passed a resolution in which it said: “The rule of law is the foundation of a civilized society. It establishes a transparent process, accessible and equal to all. It ensures adherence to principles that both liberate and protect...”

In its absence, anarchy prevails. Naturally, adherence to the doctrine of the rule of law is a fundamental characteristic of good governance and public order in any society. In 1776, Thomas Paine famously declared that:

“...For as in absolute governments the King is Law, so in free countries the Law ought to be King; and there ought to be no other.”¹

This statement captures the very essence of the placement of the rule of law in the hierarchical structure

of an ordered society: the law is the ruler. One former President of the United States of America once famously remarked “Government is by law not men.” Over the years, it has been difficult for jurists and authors across the globe to postulate a settled definition of the rule of law. What then is the rule of law? In discussing the rule of law, the former Lord Chancellor of England, Lord Bingham articulated:

“The core of the existing principle is, I suggest, that all persons and authorities within the state, whether public or private, should be bound by and entitled to the benefit of laws publicly and prospectively promulgated and publicly administered in the courts.”

Closer to home, Justice Jacob Wit of the Caribbean Court of Justice proffered, in *Attorney-General of Barbados v Joseph and Boyce* [2006] CCJ 6 (AJ), “that the rule of law is a multi-layered concept that embraces natural justice, protection and due process of the law.”

¹ Thomas Paine, ‘Common Sense’ (1994) 279.

The rule of law today

The expression “the rule of law” was coined by Professor A.V. Dicey in 1885 and its meaning and tenets have evolved since then, with necessary changes, modifications and adaptations.

Lord Bingham has famously outlined eight sub-rules of the modern concept of the rule of law. (The Rule of Law: 2011) Professor Albert Fiadjoe neatly summarizes them, thus;

- “(a) accessibility
- (b) limiting of discretion
- (c) universal application
- (d) protection of fundamental rights
- (e) right of access to courts
- (f) need for reasonableness and good faith in the exercise of power by public officials
- (g) fairness of procedure in adjudicative procedures; and
- (h) compliance with international obligations.²

While I have no doubt that the aforesaid compendium by Lord Bingham, summarized by Professor Fiadjoe, embraces them by implication, I will nevertheless expressly add two more tenets for emphasis and completeness:

- i. an independent judiciary; and,*
- ii. free and fair elections at periodic intervals*

In the third world these concepts must not be taken for granted. They must always be asserted as indispensable ingredients of the rule of law and a prerequisite for an orderly democratic society. Having regard to Guyana’s peculiar experiences since Independence provide more than sufficient evidence of the importance of these concepts not only to democratic ethos but equally essential for economic advancement and social progress. In the case of Attorney General of Guyana v Cedrick Richardson³, the Caribbean Court of Justice interpreted the phrase “Guyana is...democratic sovereign state...” in Article (1) of the Constitution to mean a constitutional recognition of the rule of law and the doctrine of separation of powers as fundamental pillars of Guyana’s legal system. Indeed, such was the clear intention evinced by the crafters of Guyana’s Independence Constitutional order and schedule thereto, conceived and drafted at

Westminster and promulgated here on the 26th day of May, 1966. Unfortunately, as will be discussed later, this intention was rendered illusory by politicians occupying governmental power for the next ensuing twenty-eight (28) years.

Speaking of the rule of law, Justice A.K. Sikri of the Supreme Court of India expressed these seminal observations:

“The rule of law is not merely public order. The rule of law is social justice based on public order. The law exists to ensure proper social life. Social life, however, is not a goal in itself but a means to allow the individual to live in dignity and development himself. The human being and human rights underlie this substantive perception of the rule of law, with a proper balance among the different rights and between human rights and the proper needs of society. The substantive rule of law “is the rule of proper law, which balances the needs of society and the individual.” This is the rule of law that strikes a balance between society’s need for political independence, social equality, economic development, and internal order, on the one hand, and the needs of the individual, his personal liberty, and his human dignity on the other. It is the duty of the Court to protect this rich concept of the rule of law.”⁴

These sentiments elegantly and compendiously capture the quintessence of the rule of law and its immutable value, not only to society but to the very life of the individual. In its absence, anarchy and tyranny shall prevail.

It is hardly disputable that in a society where there is anarchy or tyranny, economic development stagnates and social progress perishes. Such a society becomes moribund, on its journey to certain death. Needless to say, the impact upon business, commerce, and indeed every financial or economic undertaking or endeavor would be devastating and eventually fatal. Businesses become bankrupt, insolvent or are forced to close doors. The people of that nation either remain in that pauperized society or they find ways and means of exiting. These are realities to which Guyanese can relate, having endured nearly three decades of political dictatorship, rigged national elections, authoritarian rule, and consequential breakdown of the rule of law. This will be commented upon later.

² Albert Fiadjoe, ‘Commonwealth Caribbean Public Law’ (3rd edn, Routledge-Cavendish 2008) 130.

³ Attorney General v Cedrick Richardson (2018) CCJ 17 (AJ) 1

⁴ Dr A.K. Sikri, J. in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India*, (2014) 5 SCC 438, para 131

The rule of law and business

The former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, stated: “The rule of law is crucial for promoting economic growth, sustainable development, human rights and access to justice. Where the rule of law is strong, people and businesses can feel confident about investing in the future.”⁵

In June 2015, the United Nations Global Compact published the Business for the Rule of Law Framework which is outstanding literature with the underlying theme that businesses that operate in an environment governed by the rule of law enjoy commercial certainty. The benefits of such strict adherence do not stop there. Conforming with the rule of law facilitates long-term investment and sustainable development. It conduces to the creation of a safe environment; it fosters certainty and it inspires confidence – all of which are requisites for substantial investments that will generate the degree of commercial and financial activities which eventuate into economic prosperity and social progress in a society.

Speaking on the same theme at a Guyana Manufacturing Services Association business luncheon at the Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown on August 2nd 2018, President of the CCJ, Justice Adrian Saunders, after alluding to the significant economic takeoff for which Guyana is poised, due to its fertile landmass, oil deposits, precious metals, the abundance of rivers and the country’s natural beauty, underscores:

“this economic progress...can be significantly enhanced with good governance and faithful adherence to the rule of law. The rule of law in this sense implies - legal accountability, fairness, respect for minorities, the observance of human rights, judicial independence, separation of powers, and equality.”

President Justice Saunders further emphasized that adherence to the rule of law will increase business confidence, attract investments and ensure respect for and enforcement of property rights and freedoms. With these sentiments, no rational mind can disagree. The world is littered with instances and examples which will not only substantiate these assertions but will at the same time illustrate the impact that flows from the absence of the rule of law.

No serious investor will pump money into a country where property rights are not respected and are not

accorded strong protection, or where there is no independent, fair and competent judiciary. Neither will there be an atmosphere conducive to competitive business in any society where there is social disorder, absence of individual rights and freedoms, or where the government is not elected by the will of the majority of the electorate and operates above the law.

Rigged elections and the rule of law

Again, I need not refer to any other country than Guyana as illustrative of these realities. Prior to Independence, British Guiana was regarded as the prized jewel of the British Empire in the Caribbean. Endowed with vast natural resources, large arable land mass and a talented population, it was identified to be the “breadbasket” of the Caribbean prior to Independence. It was far ahead of its Caribbean counterparts on almost every conceivable front. However, after three decades of political dictatorship and the consequential absence of the rule of law, by 1992, it was an economic basket case, with most of its people outside of its national borders and was regarded as the poorest country in this hemisphere, second only to Haiti.

Writing on this issue in a recent publication, Anand Goolsarran, a former Auditor General of Guyana, offered this analysis:

“The Constitution specifically states that Guyana is a sovereign democratic State, and that sovereignty belongs to the people. Periodically, through a free, fair, transparent and credible electoral process, citizens choose their leaders to manage on their behalf the affairs of the State. A government that has been elected through this process must be accountable to the people for its stewardship responsibilities. If it fails to do so, citizens are likely to exercise their power by choosing new leaders in the next round of elections. This is the essence of democratic governance and accountability. When that process – accountability to the people – is tampered with to subvert the will of the people, all other forms of accountability are likely to collapse around it. This was what happened in the 24 years of authoritarian rule in Guyana during the period 1968 to 1992. Public accountability had been brought to a standstill in 1981, only to be restored with effect from 1992. That gap covering the period 1982 to 1991 remains a significant blemish in the history of public accountability in Guyana. By the mid-1980’s, Guyana was unable to meet its debt obligations to the international and bilateral agencies,

⁵ United Nations, ‘Business for the Rule of Law Framework’ (UN Global Compact 2015).

resulting in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) declaring the country ineligible for the grant of further credit. Guyana became the first member country to be so declared. It was therefore technically bankrupt. Foreign currency shortages had a crippling effect as the economy was brought to a standstill.”⁶

It was during this period that the independence of the Judiciary was perhaps at its lowest ebb in Guyana’s history, with the flag of the political party in government flown on top of the country’s apex court, shamelessly demonstrating that the Judiciary was under political influence. The country was guided by a concept known as ‘Party Paramountcy’ which rendered subservient, the constitution, the rule of law and every institution of State, to the political party in government.

During this period, the Government of the day not only appropriated millions of dollars in foreign capital investments in the name of “nationalization” but also confiscated private property, including businesses, without paying just or any compensation, in some instances.

The national army was used by the Government to illustrate the power of the State, with Guyana boasting one of the largest national army per capita in the world. The State became the owner of over 80% of the business and was said to be “in control of the commanding heights of the economy.” In such a dark, authoritarian and repressive environment there was no place for vibrant or competitive private businesses. The private sector simply ground to a halt and literally disappeared. Guyanese left this land by the tens of thousands and by any means necessary, in search of a better life.

Fast forward to 2015-2020, where there was a constant violation of the Constitution by the Government, including by the President of the Republic. State Agencies such as the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU), the State Asset Recovery Agency (SARA) and the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) were all used to drive fear in certain segments of the society, the Berbice Bridge built with private investor finances were essentially appropriated by the State. We saw again the absence of any major local or foreign investment in the country for five years. Instead, we witnessed widespread closing down of businesses. For example, Bai Shan Lin and Barama, the two major operators in the forestry sector closing their doors. To get a very clear and most vivid picture, I invite you to examine the mid-year Report of

2021 of the Minister of Finance and you will see very clearly, the decline in every productive sector from 2015 to 2020 and the corresponding increase in activities in those very sectors from January to July 2021. For example, in the hospitality sector alone, the Report speaks to the establishment of 20 new branded hotels to be constructed.

I cannot close without mentioning the unprecedented six (6) months of trauma and fatigue to which this country and its people were subject as the government of the day, transparently tried to rig the 2020 National Elections and have declared, fraudulent and perverse results of those elections. Despite one hundred countries of the world standing on the side of democracy and the rule of law in Guyana, the fraudsters persevered for six long months. It was the rule of law and an independent judiciary, more particularly the Caribbean Court of Justice, that rescued Guyana from the precipice of definite destruction.

Democracy and the rule of law

Today, I am pleased to report that in Guyana, there is a democratically elected Government that is committed to uphold the Constitution of this land and the rule of law, with due regard to all its various ingredients and tenets. This has brought with it public confidence and an avalanche of interests from investors across the globe, in a manner never seen before. Once these investments begin to manifest themselves, the rule of law will continue to play a dominant role in our society.

Guyana was recently hailed at a trade fair in Dubai as one of the fastest growing economies in a world economy devastated by the worst public health pandemic in living human memory. In his mid-year Report, the nation’s Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh has reported a staggering 14.5% growth in Guyana’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The non-oil GDP grew by 4.8%, despite the evolving repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic and floods over several months which precipitated President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali to declare it a national disaster. In just one sector, the Minister of Finance in that Report informs that twenty (20) new international hotels are slated to begin construction. This is only the tip of the iceberg.

In recognition of these anticipated transformational changes and opportunities that will unfold, the rule of law will assume even greater significance. The Government is alive to this reality. A complete overhaul

⁶ Swatantra Anand Goolsarsran - Triumph of Democracy and the Rule of Law: Guyana 2020 Elections and their Aftermath (2021)

of the country's legislative architecture has already begun. The Judiciary is continuously being modernized. The law enforcement agencies and the investigative and forensic capacities of the State are being upgraded and enhanced. The Attorney General's Chambers have already begun work in the establishment of a new architecture that will qualify Guyana as an international arbitration/mediation/conciliation destination.

Guyana is now widely recognized as the next Dubai. Its great fortunes and future have been written about in most of the major magazines of the world, investors across the globe are flocking at its doors, ready to invest in multiple and disparate undertakings. With prudent management, prosperity is assured for Guyana and its people. However, just over a year ago, the future of the country and the very survival of its people were under serious threat, as attempts were made to rig the national elections, subvert the constitution and uproot the rule of law. Were those attempts successful, I would have been writing a radically different essay, today.

This practical and pragmatic comparison of the effect upon the Guyanese society, when the rule of law and democracy are under threat, demonstrates more than anything else, the value of the rule of law to modern civilization. The anguish, pain, fear and pandemonium which gripped this nation for five months after the March 2nd, 2020 elections, are still fresh in people's minds and may forever be etched in the memory of some of us. We witnessed how close our country came to the brink of total disorder and implosion. While international and local pressures emanated from many quarters, it was rulings emanating from certain courts within the judiciary, including the Caribbean Court of Justice that saved the day.

New found oil wealth aside, Guyana is blessed and known for its huge fertile land mass and abundant natural resources. Yet for decades, just in the CARICOM community alone, it was regarded as the poorest among some of the smallest economies of the world, that were largely dependent upon a singular industry – tourism.

Their citizens enjoyed a higher standard of living and better quality of life than Guyanese. It begs the question "why"? Apart from Haiti, all these smaller countries, until recently retained the Privy Council (United Kingdom) as their final Court. The Privy Council, therefore, was and still is for many of these territories, the summit of their judicial system. I submit that the presence of this court, more than anything else, ensured that the rule of law prevailed, the constitutional rights of the people were maintained and democratic traditions observed. The result was economic activities and social progress flourishing.

On the other hand, in 1970, the Forbes Burnham administration abolished all appeals from Guyana to the Privy Council, severing that court from Guyana's Judiciary. The plight of Guyana's Judiciary thereafter has already been explained. As a result, economic activities stagnated and the descent of the society began. I am convinced that was the Privy Council not abolished, authoritarianism, political dictatorship and the consequential destruction of the economic base and the social fabric which took place in Guyana would not have occurred. The power and glory of the rule of law would not have allowed it.

Fortunately, the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) is now with us. It saved Guyana when it thwarted efforts to derail democracy between 2015 and 2020; and restored the rule of law as the north star by which we must be guided. If we ever depart from such a course, we do so at our peril. The consequences will be dire. We have travelled that road. Learn, hopefully we have.



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Scandal at Scandal Point



It would seem that the APNU/AFC regime decided in early April 2020 to convert the Oceanview Hotel into a COVID 19 Hospital. Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo announced this at a virtual press conference on April 4th 2020. Following this announcement, construction started at Oceanview Hotel on April 6th 2020. No information was shared with the country's citizens on the scope of works, the costs, the tendering process, the companies and the deadline for completion. On April 17th, 2020, when Joseph Harmon was asked about these arrangements, he replied, "the financial arrangements are still being worked out, but because it is a matter of national emergency, I think that the facility was made available to the Ministry of Public Health." The cost was a subject of speculation; some thought it would be about 600 million dollars until this was clarified by Winston Jordon on April 19th, 2020, "to retrofit and outfit it will be more than a billion (and this) excludes running costs."

Immediately after this disclosure, Moses Nagamootoo let the cat out of the bag. The Government had applied to various financial institutions for assistance, but none were forthcoming. Nagamootoo said at a press conference, "I believe that because of the political situation in Guyana while we are in transition to a government that will emerge after [the] March 2nd 2020 elections that we cannot for sure say whether some of these international multilateral lending agencies are going to be dealing with Guyana's applications any time soon. They probably would want to sit it out and wait until the President is sworn in." The Office of the Presidency

quickly refuted this statement. Not trusting its AFC partner, President Granger appointed Joseph Harmon as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Taskforce Secretariat. Granger declared that "He described him as a team player who has a clear vision of the objectives and urgency of the counter COVID-19 campaign and a commitment to overcome the challenges facing the country at this time. The CEO has led the Government on previous crises and emergencies and is familiar with the mechanisms which have to be effected to ensure that Guyana is capable of addressing the effects of the COVID-19 disease. He is skilled at mobilizing and managing manpower and material resources." This gave Joseph Harmon sweeping powers to politically managed the pandemic. Including, "the national plan of action to counter the disease", "completing the East Demerara COVID Sanatorium," establishing benchmarks to prompt prudent actions", "protection of the health and safety of the wider community" and "enabling each regional task force to combat the disease."

On April 29th, 2020, Volda Lawrence issued a notice in the Official Gazette, "To facilitate the care and treatment of persons suffering from the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (Covid 19) and related diseases, a National Sanatorium will be constructed at Ocean View-Hotel."

Acquiring the Oceanview International Hotel

Jacob Wilfred Haimram Rambarran is a longtime friend and supporter of the PNC. He was able to acquire several government assets under the Hoyte Administration. In



2008, he acquired the Oceanview Hotel from George Lord. On July 15th, 2011, the Oceanview Hotel was used to launch the APNU. In 2015 he was a candidate for the APNU/AFC slate.

In 2017, the Auditor General raised an interesting concern that the MoPH used the Oceanview International Hotel to store drugs and medical supplies in seven rooms. The report, "the manner in which the items were packed made it difficult to conduct a stock count, as the items were not arranged in a manner that made them easy to access and check. In addition, there was evidence of termite infestation in the rooms and damages to the boxes and items stored." What cost the MoPH incurred in storing these items were never determined. It seems that Volda Lawrence had this arrangement in place to assist APNU supporter Rambarran financially.

In 2020 he claimed that the APNU government had agreed to rent his hotel for \$13,000,000 per month for a year. However, according to Basil Williams, in a Kaieteur News article published in September 2020, the property has been in receivership since 2009 because Rambarran defaulted on payments to the Guyana National Co-operative Bank (GNCB). He owns this Bank for over \$1B. According to Williams, Courtney Perry was appointed as the receiver on May 29th, 2009. However, this was disputed in Court. The High Court settled the matter in 2016. On April 29th, 2020, under the hand of Dawn Hastings-Williams, the Granger administration signed an Order under the acquisition of Lands for Public Purposes acquiring the property, which was described as "block lettered A being a portion of a piece or parcel of land part of the Front lands of Sophia and Lilliendaal and that part of Turkeyen known as Pattenson and now known as Scandal Point."

Conversion of the Oceanview Hotel to COVID 19 Sanitorium

The Volda Lawrence Order was made on April 29th, 2020, but construction started on April 6th, 2020. There were no engineer's estimates on what was needed to retrofit this derelict hotel into an infectious disease sanitorium. There were no bid documents to invite any companies to tender for the retrofitting. There was no evidence that any tendering was done. Yet despite the flagrant violation of the procurement process, seven companies started working on the site without any letter of commencement.

According to the Auditor General report, contracts for all the Lots were awarded and signed on June 16th, 2020. These contracts were signed about two and half months after the commencement of the job. The companies International Imports and Supplies signed a contract for Lot 1 for \$381, 825,605 and Lot 8 for \$86,232,939, Ivor Allen signed for Lot 2 at \$388,402,665, KP Thomas and Sons Contracting Inc Lot 3 for \$49,201,944, James Nicholson Construction Services Lot 4 for \$54,761,525, Associated Construction Services Lot 5 for \$64,728,615 Andy Moore Lot 6 for \$4,100,000 and Antarctic Maintenance and Repairs for Lot 7 at \$22,074,712.

As the contract requires, the contractors did not provide any performance bonds or guarantees, and there were no deductions of the 2% withholding taxes. This is a clear breach of the Financial Management and Accountability Act.

On the same day that contracts were signed, payment certificates ranging in valuation from 67% to 90% was also signed. Payments were made to the contractors before the respective heads of department and the accounting

officers signed the payment certificate. As expected, there were overpayments of more than \$74,493,240. The contractor for Lot 3 was paid \$14,760,583 without doing any work at the time of verification on August 7th, 2020.

Opening of the Sanitorium

The Executive Secretariat of the National Taskforce, of which Harmon was CEO, reported that the opening shifted from May 31st 2020 to June 8th 2020. These dates were moved about five times until it was reported on July 23rd 2020. Despite the building being incomplete, with no electricity, water, and medical equipment, the facility would be commissioned on July 25th 2020.

On July 31st, 2020, President Granger, accompanied by Volda Lawrence, had an official opening ceremony. At the opening ceremony, he said, "Government recognized the urgency of having an institution, which could be dedicated exclusively to providing treatment to coronavirus patients. The model which we developed in the early days of the pandemic requires us to have the capacity and the capability to achieve accommodation of 197 ICU patients at any one time." The nation was told

that the hospital was ready for patients.

On the August 7th, 2020, the Auditor General had this to say, " the facility is currently inoperable, works on the electricity supply network for the main buildings and back up generator were still in progress, elevators are still to be installed along with medical gas installations, while interior finishing works were still in progress in one section of the main building. Exterior works to the triage shed, access bridge and gate were incomplete. The contracts awarded and examined are for civil works and does not include the supply and installation of medical equipment and general outfitting of the various sections of the buildings such as laboratory, operating theatre, X-ray room etc."

Apart from electricity, there was no water supply and no sewage disposal. The entire plumbing had to be redone. There wasn't any medical staff assigned to the hospital, nor was there any medical equipment. There wasn't any ICU bed. The place was an incomplete shell. This was what the PPP/C inherited.



Dr. Frank Anthony is currently Minister of Health. He is a graduate from the Russian Friendship University in Medicine and has a Master's Degree in Public Health from the Hebrew University in Israel. He is also a Member of Parliament and an Executive and Central Committee Member of the People's Progressive Party.

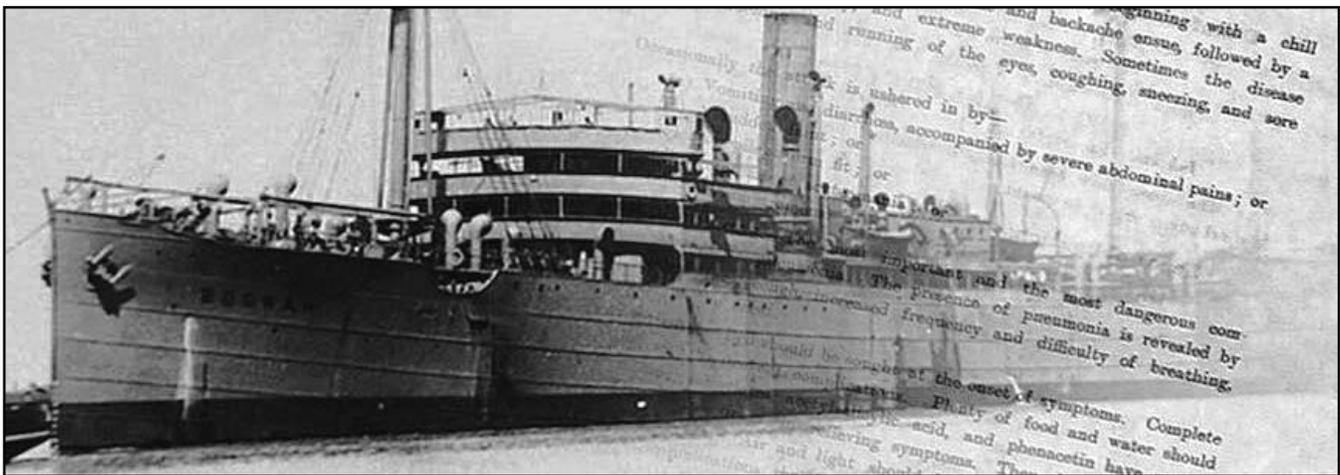
Past, Current and Future Perspectives on Pandemics – What we’ve learned and what we can do better

Pandemics are not new and are bound to emerge time and time again. COVID-19 is not the first or will it be the last. The best we can do is learn from them and implement robust pandemic (and epidemic) strategies, or improve upon old ones, for the next time we face such a challenge.

Historical Perspectives

Historical records show massive infectious disease outbreaks dating back as early as 3000 BC with Hamin Mangha in China. Throughout history infectious diseases have followed humans across the globe. Some of these include: (1) the Antoine Plague (165-180 AD) killing 5 million people, (2) the Black Death (1346-1353), a bubonic plague pandemic, which killed 75-200 million people in Eurasia and North Africa, (3) smallpox (1520) killing 56 million people, (4) the Russian Flu (1889-1890) killing one million people and now thought to have been caused by a Coronavirus (OC43) because it not only caused flu-like symptoms but the loss of taste and smell, usual symptoms of a Coronavirus infection; OC43 is now

There isn’t much detailed documentation on the 1918 Influenza Pandemic in the Caribbean except for a historical review by Dr. David Killingray (Soc Hist Med. 1994 Apr; 7(1): 59–87). It was estimated that about 100,000 people died in the Caribbean (likely underestimated). Dr. Killingray writes that the virus entered the Caribbean via North American shipping routes; the global spread of Influenza was primarily due to the transport of soldiers on ships to and from different locations during World War 1. There was an outbreak in Guyana in July 1918 then, by December a second wave arose which was of an epidemic scale. Infection rates soared among those in densely populated ill-ventilated places such as the living quarters of labourers on the sugar plantations along the coast and river mouths. Morbidity was very high and estimated to be 40-50% along the coast. By mid-December three hospitals along the coast (Georgetown, Suddie and New Amsterdam) were overwhelmed with infected patients and one third of all government medical staff and half of the dispensers had Influenza. F. Assad et al. wrote in an article entitled ‘Influenza-World Experience’



The 1918 Influenza was spread globally via shipping routes. Here is the Boonah an Australian ship, off the South African coast, that was overcome with Influenza in 1918 and not allowed to dock because of fears it would spread the disease. The ship carried World War I soldiers who were infected with the virus (Source:ABC News).

endemic as a more mild form of the virus causing the common cold, (5) the 1918 Influenza pandemic caused by the H1N1 strain of the Influenza virus which had an estimated global death toll of around 20-50 million.

“In the Public Hospital, Georgetown, where many cases of a severe type were being treated, a visit to an influenza ward was most distressing: frequent and noisy coughing, combined with the ravings of delirious patients created such a din that it was difficult to make oneself heard.

Added to this, the attempts of the delirious to leave their beds or even to fall out of them if not closely watched, made the work of the nurses, whose members had been sadly depleted by the disease, very anxious, trying and laborious.

People understood how the virus was spread but it was difficult to prevent its spread particularly in very populated areas; worse in poverty-stricken areas like the barracks packed with East Indians on sugar plantations. Dr. Killingray writes that ships and infected people were quarantined but this didn't help much as infection rates were too high already so authorities then banned large gatherings, closed schools, churches and places of entertainment. Pamphlets and advise on basic hygiene were distributed. Similar to current times, misinformation ran amok – milk and beef tea to whisky and rum were advertised as treatments. A widely recommended means of keeping off infection was a dose of quinine daily or washing out the nostrils with salt and water or gargling it. Quinine or any of these methods was not and is not a cure for the flu or COVID.

We still have influenza around albeit a mild form, 100 years later, and there is no cure. We vaccinate every year to protect against dominant strains in circulation. At the time of the 1918 pandemic, control measures were key as the vaccines developed were not based on the Influenza virus but on bacterial infections which arose as secondary infections after infection with the virus. Therefore, these vaccines only helped with secondary infections, not as a preventative protective measure like the existing COVID vaccines; so there wasn't anything to protect against the severe form of the disease. There was no genome sequencing technology to sequence the virus genome, which allowed for record development of vaccine and testing in current times; of course, changes in the virus structure (mutations) could not be tracked either. For context, the SARS-CoV-2 (virus which causes COVID-19) genome was sequenced and made available on January 10 (2020) less than a month after we know of COVID-19. For the 1918 influenza pandemic, scientists were only able to sequence part of the influenza virus genome 79 years later using preserved lung tissue from a victim who died in 1918 pandemic; the full genome was sequenced in 2005. The WHO now has a global surveillance program that meticulously track changes in existing strains of Influenza to make recommendation for vaccine development and many countries have improved up surveillance programs for COVID variants.

Since 1918 there have been several outbreaks of viruses including Ebola, Avian Influenza, SARS and MERS; the last two are coronaviruses. There exist many potential pandemic viruses some being far worse than SARS-CoV-2 (virus which causes COVID-19). Although scientists have been warning, for years, of pandemics to come,

COVID-19 shows us how unprepared the world was for this and therefore lessons must be learnt.

The Current Situation

COVID-19 is the deadliest pandemic since the 1918 Influenzae. A very interconnected world allowed it to gain pandemic status. As of August 12 (2021) confirmed cases and deaths number 204 million and 4.3 million respectively. The good news is that vaccines – the tool that will get us out of the pandemic if most get vaccinated and we are able to acquire population immunity faster than a worse form of the virus can emerge – were developed and made available for use within a year due to advancement in analytical technologies like genome sequencing (the genome sequence is vital for vaccine, therapeutics and diagnostics development and updating these to target specific variants/strain as well as surveillance for variants of concern (VOCs)), tremendous knowledge and existing research in vaccine science and development, a huge collaborative efforts from scientists in industry, academia and governments globally and billions of dollars inputted; according to the US Congressional Budget Office, the Biomedical Research and Development Authority (BARDA) spent \$19.3 billion on COVID-19 vaccines while the UK's public spending watchdog estimates their spending to be about £12 billion. As of August 12 (2021), we have administered just over 4.5 billion vaccine doses with low-income countries receiving less than 2% of these shots. This inequity in vaccination globally and the high vaccine hesitancy (fuelled by anti-science misinformation in some countries coupled to emergence of a more transmissible variant (Delta) with vaccine resistant properties makes it terribly difficult to acquire local and global population immunity which will allow us to fully suppress the virus. The latter along with a virus that is likely to become endemic means the end of the pandemic is not as near as we would like it. *An endemic virus means one that will circulate in sections of the world for many years to come with a risk of outbreaks in regions where it has been eliminated or there will be seasonal outbreaks.* Influenza (flu) is endemic in tropical regions of the world with seasonal epidemics elsewhere.

The general pandemic strategy of most governments around the world is to have a combination of public health measures (with varying degrees of strictness) and to vaccinate enough (or most) of the population then declare it over (with a slow reopening process by most). What "enough" of the population means range from 70-85% to achieve 'herd immunity'. The inference here is that there is an 'end', however, as we've seen with the rise and dominance of worse variants in Brazil (Gamma) and India (Delta) and now the highly contagious Delta variant achieving global dominance and causing surges in areas with low vaccine coverage, declaring the pandemic

under control too soon can be devastating. Even with a higher vaccine coverage in some countries they are still nowhere near a state where the virus is fully suppressed. While Guyana remains one of the leaders in the Caribbean for timely vaccine procurement and implementation of vaccination campaigns there are many who still succumb to misinformation surrounding vaccination and fake COVID-19 cures, not unlike the time of the 1918 Influenza pandemic. However, this is not only a Guyanese problem but a global one. The spread of misinformation, disinformation, myths and anti-science propaganda is currently one of the bottlenecks in achieving high enough vaccine coverage for population level immunity. Oftentimes false information spread takes on a strong hold because it may have started with a bit of truth. For example, after COVID-19 vaccines were administered the truth is that women wanted to know if it could impact their menstrual cycles so this was being monitored by doctors and researchers with a large amount of data being systematically accumulated. With this being under investigation (as is usual with scientific research), online forums and groups popped up on Facebook in which this was discussed. While some women had legitimate concerns there were many anti-vaccine 'activists' who were part of this group. One of these was Naomi Wolf (now banned from twitter for spreading anti-vaccine misinformation) who was an influencer, had a significant social media following and garnered credibility from her feminist writings supporting women. She kept raising doubts without presenting specific facts and added more myth to the concerns over menstruation: Can vaccines cause infertility? Can vaccines cause miscarriages? Other influencers got on board, repeated the lies with more lies and clickbait websites brought on the fake stories. This was further compounded by a petition sent to the European Medicine Agency (Dec. 2020) by Drs. Wolfgang Wodarg and Michael Yeadon requesting that the Emergency Authorization for the Pfizer vaccine be put on hold, with zero evidence, because they believed it caused infertility. They claimed that the spike protein on SARS-CoV-2, generated by COVID-19 vaccine, shares a bit of the genetic sequence with syncytin-1, a protein critical for placental development. They argued that people who took the mRNA vaccines would develop antibodies not only against the virus but also the placenta leading to a miscarriage or infertility. The science shows no evidence that vaccines can cause what they claim and their theories have since been discredited by peers in the scientific community numerous times; millions of women have been vaccinated with mRNA vaccines to date without these issues. However, these ideas were amplified by social media influencers, went viral and the damage in spreading vaccine misinformation was done. Science communication campaigns with positive messages on vaccination were now left with the large task of undoing this but its difficult with the seed already planted.

The future

The worse part of governments and people assigning a discrete end or prematurely declaring the pandemic over or acting like it is, is that they are unprepared for the opposite; we have seen this with the crisis in Brazil and India. Further, an evolving virus along with new surge in infections due to a more fit form of the virus, to date, illustrates that the pandemic is very much not over. It is highly likely that there isn't an end to SARS-CoV-2 but it will weaken over time losing potency; similar to the H1N1 influenza strain currently in circulation and OC43, a Coronavirus responsible for mild illness like the common cold. Therefore, as we continue to deal with the current dynamic situation, we must implement measures that can be extended in future pandemic (and epidemic) responses. These means:

1. A plan for sustainable vaccine supplies. This is not only in preparation for an endemic virus but we may even need boosters that comprise vaccines that target variants; possibly one which targets multiple variants. The delta variant shows some vaccine resistance hence the need for two doses in order to get adequate protection. The National Institute of Health (NIH) in the US kicked off a Phase I/II clinical trial on June 3rd (2021) to test different booster shots (note vaccines can't just be adjusted and made available to the general population, new clinical trials need to be done). To quote Dr. Fauci, "Although the vaccines currently authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration offer strong protection against COVID-19, we need to prepare for the possibility of needing booster shots to counter waning immunity and to keep pace with an evolving virus."

Hopefully there won't be variants that render a vaccine completely ineffective. Sustainable vaccine supplies of course poses a problem with the inequitable distribution of current vaccine supplies across the globe. However, looking into establishing partnerships with regional manufacturers (Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Columbia) who have various partnerships (local and international) and are seeking to upgrade and improve their current infrastructure to manufacture and distribute their own may be a good way to boost supplies for the future (in addition to regular procurement and COVAX).

2. Making sure we have access to sustainable supplies of proven and approved COVID-19 treatments/drugs/therapeutics.

3. Efficiently scaling up (or down) testing when necessary.

4. Implementing systematic genomic surveillance to monitor variants of concern. The emergence of a new variant can wreak havoc if presented with the opportunity as we have seen in Brazil and India and, now

a form of the variant first detected in India becoming dominant in the world creating surges in infections primarily in the unvaccinated. We are only able to know what specifically we are dealing with and what proportion we have in circulation because of genomic surveillance. Consequently, public health measures were and are being adjusted to deal with this dangerous form of the virus. Thus far, I think luck is on our side that we have vaccines that are effective against variants of concern however preparing for the alternative scenario is prescient. To quote Dr. Anurag Agrawal, from an article he wrote in Nature, "As head of one of India's main genomics laboratories, I am part of the consortium that first reported the B.1.617 strain of SARS-CoV-2 as a potential variant of concern. I keep asking myself how we might have predicted its danger sooner, tracked it rapidly and stalled its spread... the rise of more-transmissible viral mutants demands new ways to prevent, detect, track and treat SARS-CoV-2 infections." The Delta variant (B.1.617.2) arose from B.1.617.

5. Immunizing the public to misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is not having factual information whereas disinformation is when people and groups of people (oftentimes with an agenda) knowingly spread false information with the intent to deceive and mislead. We have seen both of these with COVID-19 and social media plays a huge role in this type of information spreading like wildfire, undermining vaccination campaigns. An example is the US who possess the vaccines needed to vaccinate their entire population but found this challenging when they hit the 50% fully vaccinated mark. Canada who lagged behind was able to surpass the US with 62% of its population fully vaccinated (see first image below). In addition, more of the 'unvaccinated and unwilling to get vaccinated' of the Canadian population were willing to get vaccinated as the pandemic proceeded whereas the US stagnated (see second image below). I think science communicators, scientists and health professionals who were involved in positive information campaigns throughout the pandemic played a major role here in the progress made. It was (still is) a continuous process of presenting good factual information supported by research and data that is published, peer-reviewed and/or reviewed by scientific and health authorities as well as independent expert panels. It's important that this is a continual process since myth and myth can pile on and propagate very quickly via social media thereby taking quite a strong hold on what people believe as true as discussed *a priori* with the infertility myth.

6. To effectively and successfully manage an evolving situation like this pandemic or anything related to science and technology, science and evidence-based decision making needs a permanent place in government. Elected representatives need to stay up-to-date and be

informed on issues in order to make informed decisions. The United Kingdom has a Science and Technology Committee in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. The House of Commons' Committee set their purpose as "to ensure that Government policies and decision-making are based on solid scientific evidence and advice." These select committees are able to call in experts and professionals for advice when needed. A reflection of this committee is seen in Canada's recently passed motion (May 2021) in the House of Commons for a Standing Committee on Science and Research. Kirsty Duncan, Former Minister of Science and currently Deputy House Leader of the Government spoke in House, who put forward the motion for such a committee, spoke in the House saying,

"Science and research should have a permanent place where issues that are important to the research community, Canadians and the future of the country can be studied; where scientists, researchers and parliamentarians can come to know one another; where parliamentarians can get a better understanding of science and research; where parliamentarians can learn about Canada's research strengths in areas such as computer science applications, fuel cells, neurodegeneration, personalized medicine, bioinformatics and regenerative medicine; and where parliamentarians can learn about what is needed to make improvements and yield benefits to Canadians."

The pandemic has shown us that continuous precise thorough well-informed evidence-based information is vital for the implementation of response strategies and effective communication to the public before misinformation can take root. Establishing scientific committees at the highest level would aid in setting an example for society to follow – a logic and evidence-based one, not one mired in the propagation of conspiracies and fake news.

We have come a long way since the 1918 Influenza Pandemic where technological advances and knowledge garnered on viruses allow the record development of vaccines (the tool we know will get us out of the pandemic) and other countermeasures like therapies and diagnostics. However, we can't make the same claim about human behaviour. To quote David Hume,

"Mankind are so much the same in all times and places, that history inform us of nothing new or strange in this particular."

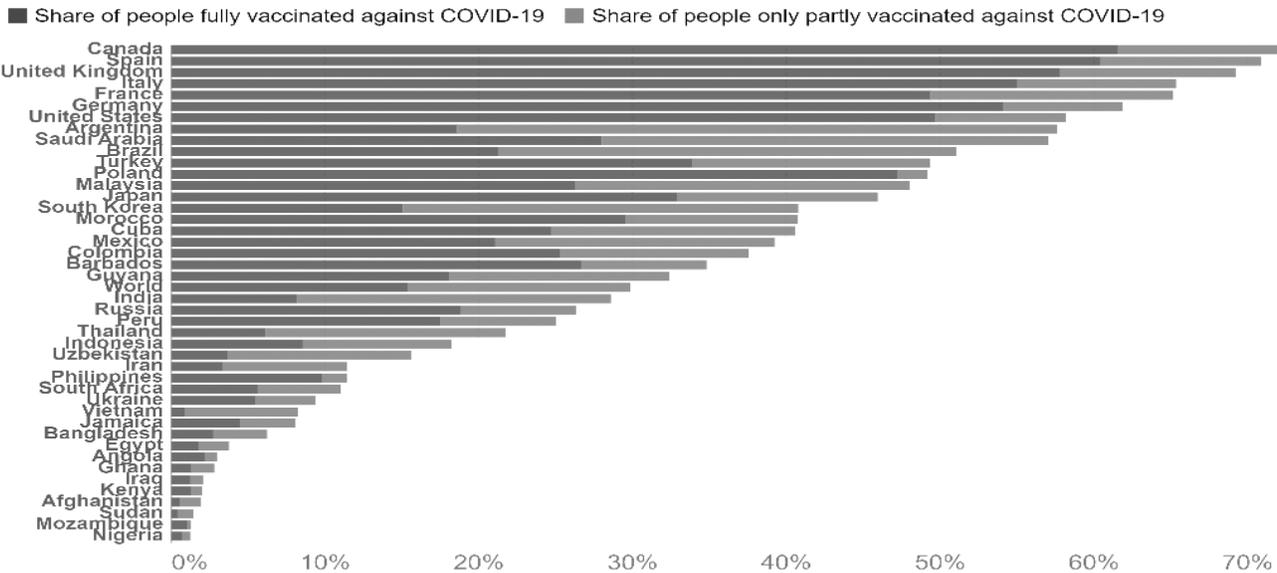
Even worse we live in a time where misinformation and disinformation spreads, arguably, worse than viruses themselves because of social media. This spread has allowed for significant undermining of public health measures – vaccinations campaigns stagnated because

of it. Therefore, in addition to response strategies involving physical countermeasures we must have the continuous education of the populace and set the stage for a society engaged in critical thought instead of riding

on the bandwagon of conspiracy theorists with their own agendas. We can do so by making it a priority to establish systems that propagate scientific evidence-based thinking, everyday.

Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19, Aug 7, 2021

Our World in Data



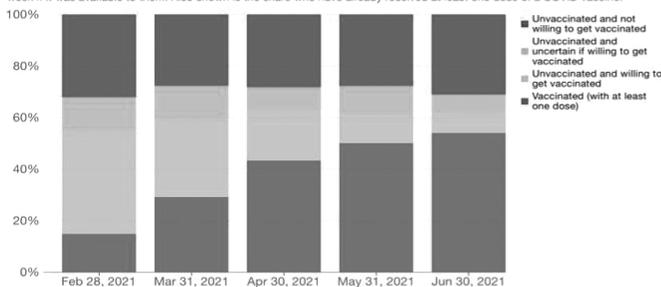
Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data. This data is only available for countries which report the breakdown of doses administered by first and second doses in absolute numbers.
CC BY

Share of people fully and partially vaccinated in different countries and the world. Canada was able to surpass the US, after initially lagging behind, because of less vaccine hesitancy in Canada.

Willingness to get vaccinated against COVID, United States, Feb 28, 2021 to Jun 30, 2021

Our World in Data

Share who have not received a COVID vaccine and who are willing vs. unwilling vs. uncertain if they would get a vaccine this week if it was available to them. Also shown is the share who have already received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine.

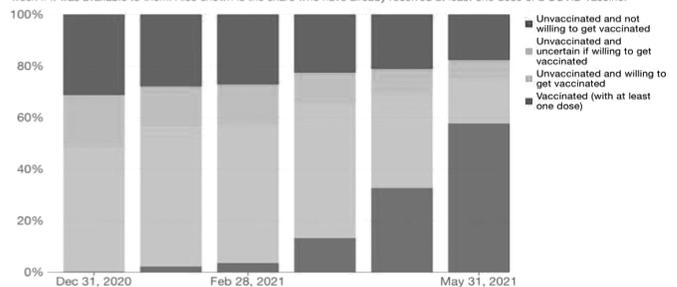


Source: Imperial College London YouGov Covid 19 Behaviour Tracker Data Hub – Last updated 3 August 2021, 09:00 (London time)
Note: Months containing fewer than 500 survey respondents are excluded. We infer willingness to get vaccinated among a country's population from survey responses of people aged 18 years and above, which may not be representative of the entire population. Nevertheless, we expect such differences to be small.
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Willingness to get vaccinated against COVID, Canada, Dec 31, 2020 to May 31, 2021

Our World in Data

Share who have not received a COVID vaccine and who are willing vs. unwilling vs. uncertain if they would get a vaccine this week if it was available to them. Also shown is the share who have already received at least one dose of a COVID vaccine.



Source: Imperial College London YouGov Covid 19 Behaviour Tracker Data Hub – Last updated 3 August 2021, 09:00 (London time)
Note: Months containing fewer than 500 survey respondents are excluded. We infer willingness to get vaccinated among a country's population from survey responses of people aged 18 years and above, which may not be representative of the entire population. Nevertheless, we expect such differences to be small.
OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

People's attitude towards vaccination in the US and Canada, for data available, over several months. The willingness of the unvaccinated to get vaccinated improved over time for Canada.



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Political Affairs Committee: 75 Years Later

The Political Affairs Committee (PAC) was founded 75 years ago in the month of November. Its founding members were Cheddi Jagan, his wife Janet, Ashton Chase and HJM Hubbard. Of the four, only one is still alive, Ashton Chase. The PAC obtained its name from the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations of the United States. Its formation represented the first genuine attempt to establish a platform that would reflect the broad interests of the people, in particular the working class.

It was not envisaged at the time of its formation to be a political party and it started out initially as a discussion forum. That was deliberate as the focus was mainly on the growth and development of labor and progressive movements in the then colony of British Guiana with the bigger objective of establishing a strong, enlightened party, equipped with the theory of scientific socialism.

It did not take long before the PAC established itself as a serious body of opinion makers. Its popularity increased through its many planned activities including its PAC Bulletin which was widely distributed, discussion

groups and public meetings. The PAC leaders were able to connect with a wide cross-section of the people, especially the working people.

Significantly three of the four founding members were also founder members of the People's Progressive Party which was founded on January 1, 1950, a mere four years later.

One inference that could be drawn from the above is the convergence of thinking on the part of the leadership of both organizations with one major difference. The first was more propagandistic and educational while the latter was more political. In fact the PAC was regarded as the forerunner to the PPP as it was able to raise the political and ideological consciousness of the Guyanese people. Shortly after its formation the PAC Bulletin was issued which became a powerful medium to enlighten workers as to the reasons for their poor living and working conditions. The PAC also arranged several meetings with workers and played a key role in the mobilization of sugar workers to stand up for their rights and their dignity.



Three of the four founding members of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC): Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan and Ashton Chase

So effective was the work of the PAC that by the time the PPP was formed the groundwork for an assault on the colonial system was already laid. The PPP scored a landslide victory in the elections of 1953, the first under universal adult suffrage.

Much of that victory could be attributed to the hard and painstaking work done by the PAC. Indeed, it was the work done at the grassroots level and the one and one contact by members of the PAC and the ordinary people that were to prove a formidable force to reckon with. Both the PAC and the PPP were to benefit from the organizational prowess of Mrs. Janet Jagan who became the life wire of the both organizations

To a large extent, the formation of the PAC could be seen as the catalyst for change and one of the main triggers of political transformation and constitutional reforms. The struggle for universal adult suffrage, internal self-government and national independence were already ignited by the PAC. By the time of the early 1950's the case was already made for constitutional reforms and the granting of universal adult suffrage which materialized just ahead of the 1953 elections.

It is necessary for a full understanding and appreciation of the PAC and the role it played in raising the political and ideological awareness of the Guyanese people to examine the situation that obtained in the country at that period in time.

It should be noted that conditions of life in the then colony of British Guiana was extremely poor. Throughout the 1930's there were disturbances in the British colonies. As a result, the British Government appointed the West Indian Royal Commission on 5th August 1938 to investigate and to make recommendations on the social and economic conditions in the various territories. The Commission was led by Lord Moine and became popularly known as the Moine Commission.

The Commission visited Guyana during the period between January 27 and February 20, 1939 and was in session during the Lenora disturbances. Among the organizations that gave evidence before the Commission were nine registered trade unions, the Civil Service Association and the Sugar Producers' Association. A number of individuals, including sugar workers also gave evidence before the Commission.

Of interest to note is that although the Commission completed its report in 1940, the British Government did not release its findings to the public until July 1945, after the end of the second world war. The Report was highly critical of colonial policy towards the colonies and the poor living and working conditions of the people in the colonies and it was for that reason that it was not made

public out of fear that the German government would have used it for propaganda purposes.

The Report was particularly critical of the plight of the sugar workers and small farmers and condemned poor conditions of work. It also condemned child labor and discriminatory policies towards women at the workplaces. It found that workers were forced to work for long hours and there were no collective labor agreements between workers and their unions which meant in effect that wages were imposed by employers.

On the question of drainage and irrigation, the report highlighted the fact that almost all well-drained lands were owned by the sugar planters. The areas devoted to rice and pastures 'were badly drained and abound in large swampy areas where almost amphibious cattle, sheep and pigs eke out an unusual existence'.

The Commission also looked at the political system which was in existence at that time in the colonies and recommended an expansion of the franchise and extending the opportunities for people other than the rich and powerful to stand for election. Overall, the Commission felt that the root of the disturbances was a demand for better living conditions for the people.

It was in the above context that the PAC was formed with the objective not only to expose the exploitative and inhuman conditions under which the masses were living but also to explain the reasons for such misery and ways in which such condition could be ameliorated. The PAC's platform was not only to explain the situation but more fundamentally to change the situation by way of galvanizing public support to become politically involved. The only way to do so was to advance the struggle to a higher political level which became a reality a mere four years after with the formation of the PPP.

It was not that there were no other labor organizations or political parties at the time of the PAC but these were at best fragmented and represented sectional interests and in many cases were more concerned with the maintenance of the status quo rather than the interests of those they claim to represent. Among these were the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union (GIWU) and the Man Power Citizen's Association (MPCA). Other organizations such as the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA), the League of Colored People (LCP) and the Portuguese Club represented the views and interests of their respective ethnic constituencies. In other words, there were no over-arching organization that transcended narrow sectional interests until the formation of the PAC and later on the PPP.

As to be expected, the activities of the PAC did not escape



Cheddi Jagan addressing workers in 1948.

the wrath of the the colonial administration and their local lackeys who dubbed the PAC 'Push All Communism' and there were even calls for the organization to be banned. The PAC even caught the attention of a nominated legislator in the British House of Commons, Vincent Roth who was critical of the work of the PAC and calling for it to be banned.

Despite the criticisms and constraints, the PAC was successful in achieving its objectives, namely to raise the level of political and ideological consciousness of the masses of people and prepare them for the political battles led by the PPP.

The formation of the PPP in 1950 did result in a new political dispensation. Many of the recommendations of the Moyne Commission were acted upon under

pressure from the PPP including universal adult suffrage and improved conditions for workers for which the PAC must be credited for laying the foundation.

The formation of the PAC, without doubt, ushered in a new era in Guyana's political evolution. It marked the beginning of an intense period of struggle against British colonialism and for national independence. It also began the process of igniting the flames for economic and social justice in the country. Both the objective and the subjective conditions were ripe for an assault against the status quo. With the return of Dr. Jagan and his wife Janet to the colony in 1943, a new level of political activism commenced which was later consummated in the formation of the PAC and the PPP.



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What is Currency?



Let us begin by first explaining what we mean when we say Currency and what we mean when we say Money. Lots of people, myself included, use the terms interchangeably. Therefore, let us first make some clarification. Let's first define currency: Currency is what you have in your pocket, the paper bill. Currency is tactile, you can touch it and feel it. It is used to represent money as a medium of exchange: you can take a few of those paper bills and exchange them for food at New Thiving or a TV at Courts. It is relatively durable, I am sure you have dried a few dollars after accidentally washing it while it was in a pants pocket. The bill doesn't change whether it is in my pocket or your pocket, we are both equally limited in what we can buy with it. While the paper is made of the same material an accounting number \$100, \$500, \$1000 allows each piece of paper to represent some "value". And this is the definition of money. It is the value that the bill represents. So when you check your statement online or pay via debit/credit card you are using money, but when you pay with a paper bill you are using currency.

So where does Money get its value? That depends; when gold and silver were used then we had a case where currency and money were one and the same. This has changed and money now gets its value from faith, belief and perception. In that way money is like a religion. Let us look at the history of money and its associated currency. Their ever changing properties will help show how our perception of what has value also changes.

Currency is believed to have developed at least at the same time of writing, even believed to have inspired the cuneiform in Mesopotamia, the first known writing system in the world. Before this currency didn't exist but money did. However, money then was difficult to use as it

belonged to the barter system. A smith would exchange some tools for grain, but how much grain exactly? And then there was the issue of moving this grain around. The people of Mesopotamia innovated this process. They created tokens. The earliest tokens discovered date back to 7000BCE, while cuneiform is believed to have been created in 3500BCE. Each token carried some accounting information. For example a token in the shape of a cone represented a small, unknown, amount of grain, while a spherical one with a line through it represented a measure of textile. This would evolve into envelopes containing the tokens with the cuneiform explaining what value exists in the envelope. This system was further evolved into a credit based system. Credit was the next major development towards currencies. Clay tablets from around 2500BCE have been found indicating a creditor and debtor. However, this system was still restrictive as it only indicated specific commodities that could be traded. And as civilization developed so did the number of commodities. Continuing a token system would have become extremely unwieldy. It is not known exactly how the first coinages were created but it is known that the first were based on metals. The people of ancient Mesopotamia eventually settled on silver. Tin, lead, copper and barley were also used, but these were denominations of silver; the cents to the dollar. Metals like silver, relatively rare commodities, could be easily manipulated into a shape and weight and was thus easy to transport. As trade expanded it was the metals that became dominant.

These developments weren't limited to Mesopotamia. Egypt also used silver. Native Americans used obsidian and shells, early Chinese used shells and then bronze, silver and copper coins. The Aztecs used cocoa beans, they believed that cocoa was a gift from the gods, they

are probably right. India used a combination of gold, silver and copper coins. The Greeks adopted gold and silver coins from Lydia around 700BCE and in turn introduced these currencies to Europe via the Roman empire. The use of coins dominated trade for thousands of years until the Chinese invented paper currency. For large transactions it was difficult to travel with large sums of copper coins, the official currency at the time. So traders would leave the coins in the safe keeping of some trusted person and get a promissory note issued to them. This note was then used in trade with the trusted person acting as a clearinghouse for the exchange of the coins. The government took notice of this and eventually refined the system. Printing paper currency instead of minting coins with the promise that each note was the equivalent of some amount of silver coins.

Travellers like Marco Polo brought these innovations to Europe. In the city states that made up what we call Italy trading had become incredibly important. The Italians used the idea of the Chinese paper money and innovated it to be outside the system of government. They created bills of exchange which was basically a note that you can take with you from city to city and exchange it for a quantity of gold. The institutions that kept the gold became the first banks. They further innovated by creating city bonds, insurance on trade and credit and debit to traders and individuals.

As this paper currency gained traction a curious thing happened. The banks realized that many people weren't coming asking for gold or silver in return for their paper. So the banks began issuing more paper than they had gold, this innovation is now called leveraging. When the first central banks were created they realized that this leveraging allowed them to expand the economy in a myriad of ways the most important of which was managing the expansion of the economy through interest rate changes. It became obvious that what mattered was citizens' trust in the paper currencies issued by various governments and not the gold or silver you could get back. After all outside of electronics, gold's only intrinsic value is that it is pretty and people have agreed it is valuable. A similar belief system evolved around paper money it is valuable because it is a worldwide accepted medium to get some service or good. Think about it, when we speak of gold or silver we think of its value in terms of how much paper dollars we can get for that ounce of gold or silver, we hardly ever think of how much gold my dollars can buy, unless you are shopping for jewelry.

In much of the world paper currency has all but disappeared. In China, Korea and Japan paper currencies are hardly used. For the US dollar transactions only 10% are done using paper currency. Payments are done using digital systems like credit cards and debit cards.

To use these systems people have to have a relationship with a bank. Payments are electronically sent from a merchant through computer networks, usually the Internet, to payment processing systems that interact with your bank. In the case of a debit card a deduction to your savings or chequing account is debited and the merchant's is credited. For a credit card system you are loaned the money to buy the item and have to pay it back in monthly instalments or all at once. Failure to do this incurs interest rate charges, just as a normal loan from a bank. These systems just use our current concept of currency but digitizes it eliminating the need for the end user to walk around with paper or coins.

So we see that a large number of the population in the world is quite comfortable with payments being done using digital money. In fact in China people hardly use cards for payments, they instead use their mobile or even face recognition systems to make payments. So a move to a completely digital form of money transactions is an obvious next step. Cryptocurrency is one of the technologies that can fulfill this economic need.

What is Cryptocurrency?

The word Cryptocurrency is really a misnomer. It is not a currency, but it can become money. By definition money has the following properties:

Fungible: \$100 will generally be able to buy the same goods over various locations over time. Here we assume that inflation and geographical scarcity aren't major issues. The same goes for an ounce of gold. The same is true for cryptocurrencies, although some cryptos are more fungible than others.

Durable: Money must not be easily destroyed and should last a fairly long time. In this cryptocurrencies are as durable as dollars or euros. This is because cryptocurrencies are based on large distributed, stable networks; dollars and euros are based on governments and banks networks.

Portable: The money must be easily divisible into smaller units and quickly transferred between people. Cryptocurrencies are digital and once a network connection exists to the system it can be transferred quickly. Additionally cryptocurrencies are divisible into smaller quantities. For example Bitcoin's smaller units are called Satoshis where 1 Satoshi = 1×10^{-8} BTC.

Recognizable: People must be comfortable using it and believe that using this money will get them the goods or services they want. Currently this is a work in progress. Companies like Microsoft, NewEgg, Overstock etc. accept Bitcoin as a form of payment. However, it is not universally accepted as major currencies like the US or

Canadian dollars, Chinese Yuan or Euros.

Stable: Cryptocurrencies are not stable. They are extremely volatile. The most popular cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, is extremely volatile. As an example in 2010 Laszlo Hanyecz spent 10,000 Bitcoins to buy two pizzas, worth about USD40. That would be paying USD600M for 2 pizzas today. One month ago that number would have been USD400M. With the current speculation on cryptocurrencies volatility dominates and it is the major barrier preventing it from becoming money.

Well we see that cryptocurrency has the potential to become money. However, it still has the stability issue. But what exactly is a cryptocurrency? To explain this we will look at the two main technologies that create a cryptocurrency. The Blockchain and the Mining. These are also the technologies that give cryptocurrencies their intrinsic value.

What is a Blockchain?

Blockchain is a type of data structure that can be used to create a database. It consists of a sequential chain of records that are not changeable. While it would be incorrect to say that a blockchain is 100% incorruptible the energy (power, wealth and time) required to corrupt a blockchain is very high. As the name suggest a blockchain is a set of blocks that are chained together. A block contains the data and each block is chained to a previous block. The sequence of these blocks indicate a timeline of activity. The link that connects each block to the another is the hash value of the previous block.

What is a hash value? A hash function converts a set of data to another set of data that is called it's hash value, and can have some defined properties. For example the CRC-32 hash function converts an input like "Luke I am your father" to "f12bd78b". The property of CRC-32 is that no matter the length of the input the output will be 8 characters in length. Other hash functions can have additional functionalities like cryptography that encodes the data. These hash functions are not limited to text data but can be used on all kinds of data. It is these hash functions with the cryptography properties that are the crypto in cryptocurrencies.

So far we see that the block contains two sets of data, the record of interest and the hash value of the block that came before it. This is what gives the cryptocurrencies their "non changeable" properties. For example if a chain has 10 blocks. All the blocks, except block 1, will have the hash value of it's predecessor. Now if someone manipulates block 4 by even changing a single character the hash value will be something completely different. So block 5 will not recognize block 4 as being part of the chain and this will signal that an attempt at tampering

has occurred. Let's look at CRC-32 again; "Luke I am your father" gives the hash value "f12bd78b"; while "Like I am your father" gives "c2db4145". CRC-32 is not considered secure and is not used in creating hash values in cryptocurrencies but even here we see that one character change created a completely different hash value. Additionally each block will also have an index value indicating it's position in the chain, example 4 for the 4th block etc. The hash values created for each block can also be used as a method of referencing a block. The index/height for Bitcoin is currently 706,801. A new block is created about once every 10 minutes.

Let us go into a little bit of detail of what data the blockchain of a cryptocurrency contain. We will be specific to Bitcoin. But other cryptocurrencies will have similar information with caveats here and there. But for simplicity's sake we will just look at the first cryptocurrency. A Bitcoin block is made up of two main sets of data:

The Header: The header contains the hash value of the preceding block. A summarized list of all transactions contained in that block. Basically each transaction is converted into a hash value and set up in a structure called a Merkle Tree. This data structure allows you to search for a specific transaction without having to download all the blocks and search each block for a specific transaction. Lastly the header contains the nonce value used in the mining process. This is explained in the next section.

List of Transactions: Each block contains about 2700 transactions. The transactions may or may not be related, most aren't. A transaction contains the following information: a) A transaction ID, b) the sending user (encrypted) and the amount of bitcoins being sent, c) the transaction fee d) the receiving user (encrypted) and the amount they are receiving, e) the status of the transaction. While waiting for a block to be created the transactions are queued and the status is "unconfirmed". Confirmation only occurs when the transaction is added to a mined block.

Now we will look at the second technology used by cryptocurrencies, the mining of bitcoins.

What is Mining?

Mining is the process used to create a blocks for cryptocurrencies. First let's realize that a blockchain does not require mining to work. If you want to create your own database system using a blockchain data structure on a centralized system, then this can be done without the need for mining. However, cryptocurrencies work on decentralized systems. With a myriad of people/ organizations (nodes) having access to the network in

order to create new blocks and confirm transactions there must exist a method that allows all these nodes to create blocks and encode transactions into them without duplication. That is you don't want two blocks to be created containing the same information.

To do this a mining algorithm is used. The very basic property of this algorithm is that it has to solve a difficult problem, a problem that requires a lot of energy and time to solve. However, the solution to the problem must be easy and cheap to verify by any other node on the network. Each time a new block is created the node that created that block (solved the problem) is rewarded with bitcoins. The node that creates the block is also rewarded with the transaction fees. When the bitcoin first started the reward was equivalent to 50BTC, it is halved after the creation of 210,000 blocks (approximately every 4 years). Currently the reward for creating a block is 6.25BTC, at current time of writing is worth USD402,740. It will be halved again in about 920 days. The transaction fees for the node that created the block 706,801 was 0.07260719BTC or USD4,498.

Now let us briefly look at how mining is done. There are two main parameters used for mining. The first is called the difficulty, this provides the value for which the node has to find a solution. The second is the nonce, this is a value that leads to a solution. Bitcoin uses SHA256 algorithm to do the hashing. This is a cryptography algorithm that the nodes will try to solve. However, the criteria for solving is simpler than finding an exact match; instead the mining process has to find a hashed value that is equal to or less than the value the difficulty specifies. The only way to do this is to hash random values and hope to find a hashed value that matches the criteria. This is what the nonce value does. As time passes and more bitcoins are mined the difficulty increases.

The following is the process that occurs during mining:

A transaction is created and sent to the nearest node. This transaction is broadcast to all other nodes creating a pool of transactions.

Each node creates a temporary block adding transactions until their block is filled based on some criteria, each node can have it's own.

A nonce value is chosen and placed in the header. The header is hashed and checked against the value created by the difficulty. If a hash value is found the node broadcasts their header with their nonce to other nodes who check that when the header with that node is hashed it indeed meets the criteria. Once the majority of nodes agree the node that successfully created that temporary block has created a new block and is awarded the 6.25 bitcoins and all transaction fees.

If the hash value of the header is not met a new nonce value is chosen and the header is hashed again. This continues until a) a header hash matches the criteria or b) the node receives the broadcast header from another node whose nonce and header match the criteria.

If either successful or not, a new round begins to try create a new block.

A new block is produced on average every 10 minutes.

This in brief is a description of Bitcoin with much of the technical detail not included, however, most cryptocurrencies operate in a similar fashion.

Will Cryptocurrencies replace money of nation states?

Will cryptocurrencies replace the US or Canadian dollar? Will it replace the Chinese Yuan or Japanese Yen? This is up for debate. However, I believe that if the volatility we see in cryptocurrencies continues the chances of any cryptocurrency replacing national money is remote.

Many countries have begun exploring their own digital currencies. This is basically replacing cash with digital money that basically follows the same economic principles as their paper currency equivalent. These are called Central Bank Digital Currencies. China is looking at the Digital Yuan with the possibility of blockchain being the underlying technology. Additionally England, Canada, the Eastern Caribbean, the US and others are also developing their own version. If these countries can launch their digital currencies before cryptocurrencies become stable then it is more likely than not that cryptocurrencies will only take up a niche in the economy and not displace our current monetary systems.



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Devastation and a light at the end of the tunnel – the 2021 flood

How the Government of Guyana was able to “get down to business” during a time of crisis

Guyana has experienced above-normal rainfall during the months of May and June, which has caused widespread flooding across all regions of the country. As a result, thousands of households were affected by flooding, some with water entering their homes, domestic animals and livestock were in distress, and farmlands inundated. The President subsequently declared the ongoing flooding a National Disaster.

The agriculture sector suffered tremendously as over 92,000 acres (43,473 acres of cash crop and 48,589 acres of rice) of farmlands were affected. The operations of the sugar industry were also significantly impacted with all productive estates (Albion, Blairmont, and Uitvlugt) being heavily inundated, with the Albion Estate being the most affected. Preliminary estimates suggest that GuySuCo is set to lose an estimated 14,000 metric tons of sugar in the second crop due to the floods.

These extensive damages and loss of crops, livestock, and fisheries have negatively impacted the livelihood of farmers while also posing a threat to our nation’s food security.

As floodwaters in several communities begin to recede, agencies within the Ministry of Agriculture like the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB), and the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) have commenced a national flood impact assessment.

From the onset, President Irfaan Ali and his entire Cabinet ensured that support and efforts were made to bring relief to those who were affected. It was the Head of State himself who led the charge, visiting affected communities as part of a massive national flood assessment exercise. Ministers of Government were also profoundly involved in the exercise, meeting with farmers and other affected residents across the country.

In this regard, several agencies focused their efforts on the effects of the flooding and the required interventions to swiftly rebuild the agriculture sector.

The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), the agency in charge of providing primary drainage





and irrigation services across the country immediately deployed a number of machines and pumps to mitigate flooding as much as possible.

The President immediately informed affected residents that the government will be giving assistance to every affected citizen. He also made clear the government's intention to ensure that every citizen's health was secure and that they had access to healthy food and drinking water.

While it is difficult to fully evaluate the full impact of the flooding and destruction on farmlands and households across the country, it is estimated that approximately 52,000 households and farmers were affected. This includes approximately 30,000 cash crop farmers, 2,500 livestock farmers, and 2,000 rice farmers.

The country's average rainfall for May 2021 was the second-highest average recorded since 1981. With that being said, the impacts of climate change are irrefutable and our country remains exposed and vulnerable to its devastating impacts.

Even with the challenges that were and are still being faced across the country, the efforts of agencies like the NDIA, the GLDA, and the NAREI to minimize flooding, have proven commendable.

Interventions of the NDIA and other agencies

With more than 300 communities directly impacted by flooding, the NDIA deployed machines to execute critical works to mitigate flooding across the country. Whether it was the dredging of outfall channels in Region Two, the heightening of embankments in vulnerable communities in Region Three, the deployment of additional excavators in Region Five, or the installation of pumps and tubes

in Region Six, the NDIA was able to effectively disperse its resources to offer as much relief as possible to those affected. These interventions, over time, resulted in a significant drop in water levels in many residential and farming communities across the country.

Although things have taken a positive turn in many Coastal areas, several Hinterland Regions continued to battle with flooding given the high water levels in many creeks in Regions One, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Nevertheless, floodwaters have begun to recede to some extent in many of the once severely affected Hinterland communities.

With all systems on go, some of the infrastructures developed minor, and in some cases, major issues along the way. Whether it be the development of mechanical issues of drainage pumps or breaches in barges that were being used to transport heavy-duty machines carrying out excavation works, the NDIA was able to overcome those hurdles and get the job done.

Today, floodwaters from many of the areas that were inundated have receded. With the onset of the flooding, extension officers from the Ministry met with farmers and residents from more than 45 affected communities, distributed 46,345 pounds or 713 bags of livestock feed to livestock farmers, and treated approximately 35,000 animals for flood water-related ailments.

The GLDA was also able to provide transportation services to affected livestock farmers and managed to relocate over 20,000 animals and distribute 7,885 broiler chicks to farmers in Regions Three, Four, Five, and Six.

NAREI, through the support of IICA, was also able to procure \$3 million in vegetable seeds and seedlings that will soon be distributed to affected farmers.

Then and Now: A Government that Cares

Similarly, in 2019, spring tides battered sea defenses across Guyana's coast resulting in flooding in almost every coastal region leaving hundreds of persons at risk. The unprecedented high tide had affected several communities in Regions Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six.

Initially, villages in Region Three faced the brunt of the fury of the tides. The effects quickly spread to villages along the coastline who were also affected, with some facing severe flooding. Wakenaam, Parika, areas in the Mahaicony, and even up the Demerara River at places such as Craig and Grove were severely affected as water overtopped the dam and flowed in a constant stream. In Region Five, over 200 meters of the sea defense was compromised in areas like Danzig. This entire ordeal resulted in damages to hundreds of acres of farmlands.

When floodwaters had receded, several cries were made for help by those who were affected. These cries, however, fell on deaf ears as the then APNU/AFC Government made no attempts to offer any form of assistance to those who lost their livelihoods.

Fast forward to the present day, President Irfaan Ali announced that the government will soon deliver on its commitment to assist those who were affected through a \$7.8 billion flood recovery assistance package. While addressing the nation on July 31, 2021, the Head of State said that \$7.3 billion will be in the form of a direct cash injection to those who suffered losses during the National Disaster. The remaining funds, he added, will be utilized by the Ministry of Agriculture.

President Ali explained, that based on an assessment, over 300 communities and approximately 52,000 households were affected by the flood. The Head of State disclosed that large-scale farmers stood to benefit from up to \$10 million in relief assistance, while more than \$3.5 billion will be transferred to homestead farmers, kitchen garden farmers, and households that excluded either of the two farms. President Ali further explained that every affected homestead farmer will benefit from \$100,000, every kitchen garden farmer will benefit from \$50,000 and persons with households excluding kitchen gardens and homestead farms will benefit from \$50,000 each. Livestock farmers, the President said, will benefit from a \$600 million direct cash transfer. \$136 million will be expended to procure materials for genetic improvement as GLDA moves to replace animals lost as a result of the flood while \$275 million will also be expended to purchase seed paddy that will be distributed to rice farmers.

Ongoing infrastructural works which include rehabilitation of dams, farm-to-market access roads, hinterland roads, mining grounds, community roads, and drainage systems are also expected to continue.

President Ali and the entire PPP/C Government throughout this entire process demonstrated compassion for the citizens of Guyana, demonstrating the true characteristics of a caring government and Guyanese can look forward to this continued support and leadership under the rule of the PPP/C as the government works to restore progress and prosperity to this great nation.



Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha is currently the Minister of Agriculture and the Executive Secretary of the People's Progressive Party.

Covid-19: Becoming an International Political Football

At the end of 2019, the Chinese authorities announced to the world that they detected a virus that was attacking the respiratory system of people and had killed quite a few in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The need to alert the world was because of the fact that the virus was being spread in the air and therefore, in the highly interconnected world we live in today, was likely to spread the world over.

In order to battle the spread of the disease China immediately locked down Wuhan City.

That proved to have been a very effective way of fighting the virus.

Inevitably the disease began spreading. South Korea was attacked early and shortly after the Europe began to be affected.

People began dying. The World Health Organization (WHO) sprang into action and sought to give leadership in the world. At first the question was how this condition should be treated. Many drugs were tried and many were also discarded. Fear and frustration stalked all lands. A big effort began in many countries to develop a vaccine to protect the masses.



In the meantime, two views emerged in the United States. On the one hand, the scientists were urging that the situation be taken seriously. They urged that immediate preparations be made to deal with the outbreak. They warned of serious consequence of not taking immediate steps.

On the other hand the Executive, led by Donald Trump felt that the issue was being over-exaggerated. Moreover, the Trump administration and President Trump in particular expressed some overconfidence. After all the US was the most powerful country in the world and it would be able to wipe out the virus in no time should it reach the US. This was the sentiment up to early March 2020 in the US.

Apart from some display of arrogance on the part of the President Trump and some in his administration that behavior became a defence the government due to its earlier actions in preparing or not preparing the US for such eventualities.

US experts, like experts in other developed countries, had long been talking about an event such as the COVID-19 attack. This was their summing up of the world experience and the many pandemics that had visited us throughout history. Only a hundred years ago the "Spanish Flu" had killed millions in the world. Scientists warned that another such event was almost inevitable.

Based on that conclusion, scientists have been warning and urging governments to take precaution and to prepare for such an eventuality. After all mankind's actions were rapidly changing the world's environment which was making a pandemic a most likely outcome.

The George Bush administration had taken this issue very seriously. The US government under President Bush established a task force/think tank of scientists to advise government and guide the government's preparatory actions.

The President Obama, who replaced President Bush, maintained the organization and ensured that it was well equipped and funded. Those Presidents took the

warnings seriously and had put an organization in place to deal with such an eventuality. They quite rightly took guidance from the scientists.

Enter Donald Trump. On the assumption that he wanted to cut out unnecessary expenditure, Trump disbanded the group that was preparing for any type of Pandemic. America became one of the most ill-prepared developed countries for a pandemic. This was an extremely short sighted decision.

Therefore, when COVID-19 first made its appearance President Trump began to play down and even trivialize the real dangers that it posed. He himself is on record as saying that it would just disappear, nothing to really be over-concerned about.

He was even insulting to the WHO and the efforts it was making. He developed great hostility to that organization and pulled the USA out of that UN body and removed America's financial contribution to it. That was a very serious blow to the world's response to COVID-19.

He began to show much impatience with his own scientists who were urging that this matter be taken seriously. They recommended wearing masks and even lockdown. Many of the technical personnel were removed from their posts because they showed disagreement with Trump. He was often insulting to many of the leading scientists in that field like Dr. Fauci whose position became very uncomfortable. It was only Dr. Fauci's high sense of responsibility that kept him from resigning.

Trump himself refused to wear a mask and even organized many public meetings. Most people at those meetings were not wearing masks and social distancing proposed by the experts were disregarded. Therefore, the Commander in Chief became the chief spreader of the disease.

This situation, led to political consequences. Trump began to lose popularity at the time when the US was going towards a Presidential Election. He therefore had to find another scape goat to blame.

He began pointing accusing fingers at China. In this exercise he had the full support of the US media. The media in the US seems to be Programmed against some countries, China being the foremost. The chorus was that China was to be blamed. To use the situation to politically attack China they began to accuse China of manufacturing the virus. All of this was to divert the public's attention from the great folly of disbanding the organization that was established to deal with the issue.

In the meantime the WHO organized a high level team to

investigate the origin of the Virus. This group, made up of highly respected scientists, spent twenty eight days in China working intensely on the matter.

Their conclusion was that it was very unlikely that the virus could have been created in a lab. The technical challenges for that appears to have been too great a challenge. The very strong evidence was that it was transmitted from animal to human. Most likely from Bats which are known to be carriers of Covid virus.

One would have thought that that would have been the end of the matter. However, that was not to be. The issue was turned into a political one to feed the anti-Chinese sentiments that have been created by the media in the United States for sometime. The media played a big role in propagating this China falsehood.

They had considerable assistance first from Donald Trump who coined the term "China Virus".

With the change of government in the United States one would have thought that the matter would have come to an end. After all Joe Biden advocated taking the advice of the scientists during the elections campaign. He strongly attacked Trump handling of the COVID crisis and his blatant disregard for science. He did make considerable political mileage on Trump's anti-science stance and that was probably the main reason that Mr. Biden got elected.

On taking power, President Biden did a great job in getting the vaccines, which appearance coincided with the victory of the Democratic Party, into the arms of its citizens. His aggressive actions helped to slow down the spread of the virus considerably. He rightly listened to the experts and was guided by them.

However, President Biden has also shown his anti-China attitude on assuming office. Indeed, in many areas on the international scene we see no difference between Biden and Trump.

President Biden is probably more anti-Chinese than Donald Trump. He has increased tensions in the South China Sea and has intensified anti-Chinese campaign. He has even gone further than Trump in reversing an old US policy on China/Taiwan sovereignty issue. He made no secret of his stance which is to stop China's ascendancy in every sphere of social life.

The US is now even going so far as to using its influence to force smaller countries to recognize Taiwan. This is raising tensions since China sees this as a sovereign issue and is not brooking any interference.

The political nature of the blame China was shown at

the G7 meeting which took place shortly after Biden's elections. At this meeting he took a very strong anti-China stance. He even advocated that the G7 and NATO alliance countries create an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. What is significant about this is that the main objective was not to help poor countries, but to retard and stop China's influence in the world.

This too is governing his China policy on the COVID-19 origins.

Despite having a scientific analysis and conclusion from the WHO sponsored team, which stated that it was unlikely that the virus originated in a lab, President Biden ordered his intelligence agency, mainly the CIA, to launch its own investigation.

It is clear that Mr. Biden is looking for some cover to blame China. Having not gotten it from the WHO he turned to the CIA. He seem to have hoped that the US intelligence community would come up with some "justification" to continue criticising China.

After all it is the US intelligence community that justified President Bush's invasion of Iraq, with 100% false information. This was not a case where it misled Bush, but where it helped him to make a false case to invade Iraq.

All of this is occurring because of the phenomenal and social economic progress that China has made over the last four decades. The People's Republic of China has become an alternative source of finances for third world countries. It has thus managed to break the monopoly of the World Bank and Western Sources of Finance. In doing so Third World Countries have a greater degree of freedom.

An example of the growing independence and confidence of the Third World leaders was seen in a recent interview between Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados with the BBC. The BBC interviewer was stopped in her tracks by the firm reply she got when she asked about Barbados and the Caribbean relations with China. It was a short response.

The constant attacks on China have forced it to respond.

In doing so it has unearthed much information which shows that the virus may not have started in the Wuhan area first. It even raised questions on the work of labs in the US suggesting leaks could have emanated from them. Those arguments are also very strong.

All of this is taking place because of an irrational fear of China's progress by the USA.

It is therefore a great pity that instead of uniting in the face of a common danger, the world has become more divided than ever.

The need for global cooperation has never been stronger than now. The US have shown that it has great possibilities in defeating the pandemic as we see since the new administration took power. At the same time China's contribution to this cause has been second to none. Its approach has helped it to recover quickly from the effects of the COVID and is having positive economic growth.

Instead of making the COVID-19 an international political football to be kicked around in the mad haste to stymie the economic growth of the People's Republic of China, we should seek total cooperation to end this deadly disease. President Biden and the corporate media should stop the blame game, stop dividing countries and people we all need to get past this crisis in the world.

If China and America work together and take the lead in fighting COVID-19 together the whole world would be better for it and the sooner we would be free of the Pandemic.



Donald Ramotar is the former President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. He also served as General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party. Mr. Ramotar is a graduate from the University of Guyana in the field of Economics. He is an avid writer, and contributes regularly to the Mirror newspaper and other publications.

Trade Unionism in Guyana: The Struggles of the Forties and Fifties

Ploughing into the recesses of the past serves at least two purposes. It helps us and should benefit us to recall the course we have traversed and enables us to intelligently plot how to achieve desirable goals in the future, avoiding the pitfalls of the past.

It also gives us an opportunity to assess the contributions made by major actors and to reflect on the things that influenced the development of the movement.

I keep to my mandate which limits me to the 1940's and 50's. In the 40's we witnessed the first flush of a large number of registered trade unions. Whereas the British Guiana Labour Union was our only registered trade union throughout the 20's and 13 trade unions were added to the Register in the 1930's, come the 1940's, fifty trade unions were registered to be followed by another fifty trade unions in the 50's. So that by the end of the 50's, 114 trade unions had been registered, a few of which were employers or trade protection bodies.

Basically the growth in trade unions in the 40's and 50's was hinged to the needs of several groups of workers to secure representation to improve their conditions in life through better wages and salaries and better terms of work.

The first trade union itself - led by Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow - had encompassed wider objectives.

Apart from the basic bread and butter issues for which it stressed that unity was a prerequisite, it also aimed at a number of political objectives. It had as its objective the ending of the then monopoly of political power by the capitalist class and was established to use its industrial strength in favour of a political organization "for the enforcement through and by means of the Court of Policy of such measures as were deemed essential to help in the realisation of a collectivist state". The preface to its Rules showed that it would press for nationalisation of land and of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Combined with the foregoing was its struggle to reduce the qualifications for voters and the qualifications for membership of the Court of Policy. It should be borne in mind that there was no adult suffrage in those days and that political control of the State machinery rested in the hands of the planters .

Except for the extension of the franchise, those high sounding objectives of the British Guiana Labour Union were not pursued in a systematic and purposeful manner. Such were the exploitation and deprived state of workers, that the Union was mainly confined to struggle to improve the basic lot of its members and for women and children of the working class.

The phenomenal growth of trade unions in the 1940's and 50's was due in part to the BG Labour Union's inability to satisfy the day to day needs of the general work force. But it was more particularly due to the widespread disturbances and riots of the post mid 30's, the greater acceptance of trade unions and the later establishment of the Labour Department.

Social upheavals, strikes and disturbances were so general in the British territories in this Region that the British Government by warrant dated 5th August 1938 set up a Commission now popularly known as the Moyne Commission to "investigate social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad & Tobago and the Windward Islands and matters connected therewith, and to make recommendations". It is mentioned here because its recommendations were implemented in the 1940's.

The then General Secretary of the (British) Trades Union Congress, Sir Walter Citrine was a member of that Commission. All the then existing trade unions here gave evidence before that Commission .

Among the recommendations of the Commission was the establishment of Whitley Councils similar to those in United Kingdom with consequential extensions of similar bodies to subordinate staff and teachers. This helped trade unions for civil servants and other trade unions like the Transport Workers' Union, Post Office Workers' Union, Subordinate Medical and Subordinate Government Employees Unions and the like in their struggles to improve the emoluments and working conditions of the employees in those services.

Another recommendation that had even greater impact on the development of trade unionism here was that for the establishment of a Labour Department. Manned at the beginning by professional officials from the United Kingdom, the Labour Department encouraged the formation of trade unions, introduced machinery for the avoidance and settlement of disputes, and through the Labour Ordinance of 1942, the mechanisms of conciliation, advisory committees, wages councils, collective labour agreements and arbitration were put in place.

In the 40's some of our trade unions were headed by non-"wage earners". This preferment arose as it guaranteed the Head against victimization, gave the unions some measure of competence in their representation, and, although not always so, insulated the Head from being corrupted or compromised by the Employer.

It was a practice that the officials of the Labour Department did not welcome. In like manner they were uncompromisingly opposed to trade unions being involved in politics. Their mission was to steer trade union away from programmes that involved them in politics. Witness the clash between these officials and delegations from the Caribbean attending the British Guiana Labour Union's 25th anniversary celebration and the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Conference sponsored by it in 1944.

Preceding this was the appointment by the Colonial Government in 1943 of Messrs Hubert Critchlow and Ayube Edun to represent Labour in the Legislative Council, and the appointment in 1944 of Mr Hubert Critchlow to the Executive Council - the highest seat in the administration. It was the campaign of the trade unions themselves that had helped secure this recognition.

Mr Ayube Edun was the President and a founder of the Manpower Citizens Association (MPCA.). That Union had struggled to improve the wages and conditions

of work of sugar estate workers. In the course of its struggles for recognition in early 1939 four workers were killed and several injured by police action at Leonora. A Commission of Inquiry was set up but before its report was presented towards the end of March of that year, an agreement was entered into between the Sugar Producers Association (SPA) and the MPCA, according recognition to the latter and for the resolution of disputes. This issue of recognition and freedom of association laid at the root of this and other previous industrial agitation and turmoil on the sugar estates. It is also of significance to record that in the 1950's the MPCA had displaced the BG Labour Union to become the bargaining agent for bauxite workers at Mackenzie.

Aimed at consolidating the struggles of the workers and having a collective advocate for the trade unions, the BG Trades Union Council was registered in 1941, as the 16th registered trade union. Much of the general agitation was channelled through this body. But lack of resources, among other things, resulted in its being short-lived. It was dissolved in 1951 and a new body No. 74 under the same name was registered in 1951. The Labour Department's vision for trade union could again be underscored.

The first Trades Union Council comprising of 14 trade unions had among its objects - public ownership of our natural resources, workers' participation in the control and management of industries and nationalization.

The larger new TUC, at the instance of the Labour Department, did not include the foregoing in its objects. In essence it merely provided for the promotion of the interest of its affiliated organisations and generally to improve the economic and social conditions of the workers through such measures as the Council from time to time approved.

Three major strikes in the 1940's can be classified as significant events in the struggles of our trade unions.

The first was that of bauxite workers at Mackenzie and Ituni from 13th April to 16th June 1947. Among the grievances of the workers were lack of permit for union officials to visit Mackenzie (trade union activity being confined to Wismar/Christianburg); discrimination and segregation (notably exclusive 'white' areas, the RH Carr (steamer) and the Mackenzie cinema); the pass system; ejection at will from employers' premises and searches of employees' home without a warrant; censorship of handbills for circulation at Mackenzie; superficial

"recognition" of the MPCA; victimization; overtime payment only being made after 60 hours work in a week; and for most employees only six days holiday per year. An 8-point demand on wages and related issues was submitted to the Demerara Bauxite Company, a subsidiary of Alcan, but despite advice tendered by the Labour Department the Company refused to have any discussion on it with the union or the workers.

As a result of an enquiry by a Committee set up in 1947 under Section 6 of the Labour Ordinance, many of the above claims were satisfied and a standard collective labour agreement was entered into with the MPCA. The second major strike was that of the Transport Workers' Union. It lasted four days and ended with the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the strained relations between the Union and the General Manager. The strike had as its genesis the sidelining of and disrespect for the Union by the new General Manager - Col. R.V. Teare. It soon blossomed into a demand that "Teare Must Go". The strike succeeded in bringing Colonel Teare's tenure of office to a premature end.

Except for a few scabs at the Head Office, the strikers were united. Rail and steamer transport country-wide was brought to a halt. The dislocation and inconvenience were enormous. It was the first occasion on which the enormous power held by these workers was demonstrated. The transfer of Mr J.H. Pollydore and other union officials which was the catalyst for the strike and which the Colonel had embarked upon in his union-busting tactics was arrested. Purposeful recognition of the union was restored.

Of special importance is that shortly thereafter the Transport Workers' Union became the first local trade union to secure the check-off system for union dues. This was later followed in other areas of work; it enhanced the funds and financial stability of the trade union movement. The extent of arrears of union dues had hitherto inhibited all our trade unions and reduced their capacity to financially back their operations and to recruit and pay for the services of competent officers.

The third major struggle in the 40's took place in the sugar industry. Despite the recognition of the MPCA by the Sugar Producers Association, wage rates in the industry remained depressingly low; unofficial strikes at several sugar estates were the order of the day: dissatisfaction with scales, pricing and representation were predominant.

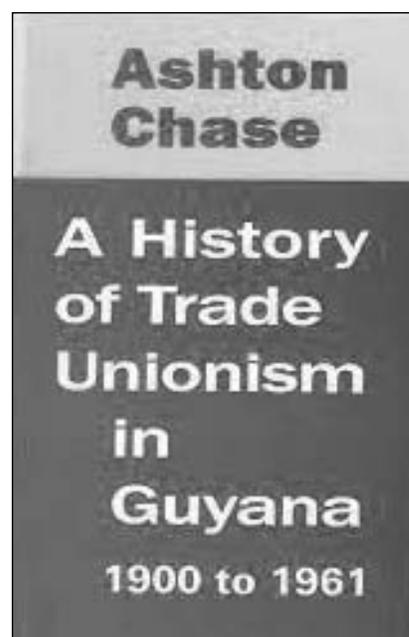
In the result after various unsuccessful efforts to change the MPCA. from within, a rival union the Guyana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU) was formed in 1946 and registered in 1948. It was then headed by Dr. J.P. Lachmansingh, President and Mrs. Jane Phillips Gay, Secretary. Its membership was more than double that of the M.P.C.A. It led all the strikes in the industry from its formation but even after registration it was unable to get grievances of its members investigated even by the Labour Department.

The sugar workers' strike started on 22nd April, 1948 and lasted 4 1/2 months. The claim for recognition of the GIWU was the base cause of this strike, but there were also put forward opposition to cut and load versus cut and drop; frustration with the machinery for resolving disputes created through the establishment of Estate Joint Committees; starvation wages and harsh working and living conditions.

There were incidents from time to time as the solidarity of the strike varied but on 16th June, 1948, they erupted at Enmore into the wounding of around 14 workers and the killing of five by the police. These five are the acclaimed Enmore Martyrs.

The GIWU did not gain recognition then. A Committee was appointed by the Governor to enquire into and report on the circumstances relating to the disturbances at Enmore and neighbouring areas. The Committee found that the Police were justified in firing on a mob of 400, although it hinted that the shooting may have gone beyond what was reasonably required and with more foresight on the part of the Police the incident could have been averted.

In October 1948 the Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed the Venn Commission to enquire into and report on the organisation of the sugar industry in



British Guiana, with particular reference to the means of production, wages and working conditions and other relevant matters and to make recommendations .

The following recommendations of the Venn Commission are an index of the fruits of the struggles of the sugar workers led by the GIWU. (later renamed GAWU):

- that creches should be provided on each estate and tasks in the field so arranged that the women have the opportunity of returning home to prepare meals and look after their children.
- that women and girls should as soon as possible, be prevented by Ordinance from working in water; and that so long as a considerable number of women were employed in field work, their gangs should be placed under the charge of women.
- that fresh water be supplied aback, and that shelters be built at the back dams for protection against rain and to provide a place where the workers could take their meals.
- that roads be constructed on which the workers could comfortably travel to the fields that were several miles aback. "Slushy dams" were criticized. The drudgery of walking several miles impaired the workers' freshness for work and their readiness for recreation when the day's work was over.
- better social amenities for factory workers, such as bathrooms, canteens, rest rooms, water closets and improvement in factory safety.
- amendment to the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance to include compensation for unmarried wives and illegitimate children (a reference to Hindu and Muslim marriages and their offspring which were not recognized by the then existing law).
- the provision of means to enforce the 1946 Education Ordinance to prohibit child labour in the sugar industry.
- plots of land to be given to regular sugar workers to plant ground provisions and rice.
- that the imperial Government give a subsidy of \$1 per ton of sugar produced locally, guaranteed for 15 years subject to quinquennial cost of production reviews and,

- that all the logies and ranges on the sugar estates be demolished by the end of 1953 and that the workers be re-housed. Hence the beginning of the extra-nuclear housing schemes, which have transformed the housing of sugar workers.

The Commission favoured the retention of the cut and load system, but conceded the resort to cut and drop when there was an insufficiency of punts.

It was following this strike also that a number of specialist trade unions in the sugar industry won recognition from the Sugar Producers' Association, which up to then had refused to treat with these trade unions, viz Sugar Estates Clerks Association registered in December 1946 (later changing its name to National Association of Agricultural Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE); the Drivers (later Headmen) Union, and the British Guiana and West Indies Sugar Boilers Union. Clerical Workers then worked 9 hours per day for six days per week, with often an additional half day on Sundays. Sugar Boilers up to 1948 were still working 12 hours per day; 8 hours per day were suggested by the Commission.

At the time of these historic struggles in bauxite, transport, sugar and other industries or services, two important events must be borne in mind, as they weighed favourably towards the struggles by the trade unions and made lasting contributions to the development of trade unionism in Guyana. They were first, the entry of Dr Cheddi B. Jagan in the Legislative Council in November, 1947 as representative for the Central Demerara Electoral District; and secondly, the formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) the forerunner of the PPP (People's Progressive Party). Dr Jagan, son of a sugar worker, a renowned Marxist, joined the working class struggle here soon after his return to British Guiana in 1943 after qualifying as a dentist in the USA in 1942. Both he and his wife Janet played an important role in all thereof the major strikes to which I have just alluded. They, as part of the PAC played a key role in assisting the bauxite workers during their strike, in the subsequent presentation to the Committee of Enquiry and in directional and propaganda work, and helped in the TUC synthesizing workers elsewhere and mobilizing their support for the bauxite workers.

The PAC publications exposed the anti-trade union practices in the Transport & Harbours Department (T &HD) under Col. Teare.

As regards the sugar workers strike, it must be recalled that Dr Jagan was himself an official of the GIWU. He held the post of Treasurer in 1946. He was among those who tried but did not succeed in changing the MPCA from within. Both he and his wife addressed several meetings of strikers on the East Coast and elsewhere and inspired them to keep united. They gave yeoman support to the strikers in such areas as fund raising for "soup kitchens" and general propaganda work.

The Political Affairs Committee (PAC) itself was founded by Dr Cheddi Jagan, Mrs Janet Jagan, Mr HJM Hubbard, at a material time the General Secretary of the TUC. (also Secretary of the British Guiana Clerks Association (later the Clerical Workers Union) and your humble servant who was then the Assistant General Secretary of the BG Labour Union.

The PAC's supportive role in these struggles and its role in articulating public opinion in support were crucial factors in this era.

Strikes were the main weapon utilized by the trade unions in their struggles in the 1940's. In nearly all the instances, they brought results in securing some measure of improvement in the wages, salaries and conditions of work for their members and others. Apart from the major strikes referred to in the 1940's there was similar action in several other areas of work, among them Grassers at the Guiana Match Factory, Mental Hospital Workers (with appropriate skeleton staff), boat builders, shipwrights, cinema operators, postmen, printers and bus operators.

The struggles of our trade unions in the 1950's were greatly influenced by what took place in the 1940's. The developments in the one era had a profound effect on what took place in the succeeding decade.

I have already briefly referred to the formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and its work in the trade union field and to the election of Dr Cheddi Jagan to the Legislative Assembly. His cogent arguments in the interest of the working class and his flood of statistics transformed that placid body.

Among the many Motions he moved during his membership of the Legislative Council was one calling for reduction in the normal hours of work of shop assistants from 56 per week to 48 per week, as well as that for an additional half day off on Sundays. Both propositions were defeated.

And at a Federation of Unions of Government Employees (FUGE's) rally at the Parade Ground in March 1952 to protest the dumping of milk by Government he was the only Legislator present and responded to an invitation from Mr Andrew Jackson, the Union's President, to address the gathering, wholeheartedly backed the workers' cause.

The other major influencing factor was the formation of the People's Progressive Party on the eve of the 1950's. It was a working class party founded on the principles of scientific socialism and united all with a common working class interest. Its basic goals were independence for British Guiana and the transformation of the economy to state control of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

In this context it attracted and had the endorsement of all the major trade unions save for the MPCA and the Civil Service. The leadership and membership of the Transport Workers' Union, Post Office Worker Union, the BG Labour Union with waterfront and other support, the Clerical Workers' Union and the Sawmill Workers Union were all valiant collaborators with the PPP. So also were the sugar workers led by the GIWU, several bauxite workers and the peasantry headed by rice farmers.

The effect of this coordination is encapsulated in "A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana 1900 to 1961" at p 177.

"The PPP recognised that if it were to successfully pursue the class struggle it had to work in close collaboration with the trade unions. It was fortunate that at its inception many of the trade unions were under class conscious leadership.

The result was that the PPP and the trade unions worked together, planned together and struggled together to uproot privilege and a decadent political and economic system. For the first time the ideals enshrined in the preface of the first set of rules of the BG Labour Union began to be translated into reality.

This cooperation between the advanced guard in the workers' political struggle and the trade unions paid dividends. The union movement was strengthened, its militancy sharpened. Greater respect and more purposeful recognition were accorded the movement."

That two facets of the same movement were moving in the same direction and with perfect understanding was

a situation that alarmed the capitalists and the Imperial Government.

The energies of the reactionaries were henceforth to be directed to breaking this amalgam.

Came 1953, and notwithstanding the vicious propaganda including the infamous Luckhoo "Communism supplement" in the "Argosy", the PPP wholeheartedly supported by the progressive trade union movement won a significant victory at the polls. The efforts of the reactionaries were rewarded, first by direct British intervention in suspending the Constitution in October 1953. Secondly, by the sowing of seeds of disruption which resulted not only in splitting off trade unions from the PPP, but also in dividing the working class along racial lines. Only the working class has suffered from this division. And finally, through the intervention of the Americans the basis for corrupting the trade union movement was well and truly laid.

This period therefore starts off on a high note of expectancy and hope springing from a firm unity that was being built up in the ranks of the working class. It ends on the low note of such high hopes having been dashed asunder."

A little before 1950 Dr Jagan was elected President of the Sawmill Workers' Union. Along with Mr S.N Barclay, Secretary, he appeared before the Cost of Living Advisory Committee appointed on 29th October, 1950, to consider whether additional remuneration in the form of a temporary cost of living allowance was appropriate. He also led other delegations touching wages and conditions of work for sawmill workers.

Dr Jagan led that trade union for many years and was in 1955 precluded from attending the Union's Conference in Bartica because of the restriction that had been imposed on him following the declaration of a state of emergency in 1953.

Prominent among the struggles of the 1950's is the GIWU's struggle for recognition and against eviction notices and trespass notices that prevented the leadership of the union (including Dr. Jagan and Mrs Jagan) from going on the sugar estates. Paradoxically enough, Dr. Jagan could not go on the East Coast sugar estates to consult those of his constituency who lived there and whom he represented in the Legislative Council. This embargo was withdrawn after the general elections in April 1953.

The big strike for recognition of G.I.W.U in 1953 took place while the PPP was in office. Recall that the PPP went into office in April 1953 having won 18 of 24 seats in the House of Assembly. The strike took place from 31st, August 1953 to 24th September 1953. On this occasion, in a remarkable show of solidarity to secure for the sugar workers recognition of a trade union of their choice, trade unions in the T.U.C went on a sympathy strike with them in the last week of the strike.

The strike was called off on an undertaking that the government would pass a Labour Relations Ordinance similar to the law in the U.S.A. to permit workers through a poll to democratically choose the trade union they wanted to represent them.

The government had good relations with the workers and its track record in the labour field in this short period was exemplary.

The Legislation promised saw the light of day. It was passed by the House of Assembly on the 8th October, 1953. But as you know, the Constitution was suspended by the British Imperial Government on the 9th October, 1953, with all the consequences flowing there from.

The suspension of the Constitution had a deleterious effect on the trade union movement. The TUC was shaken at its foundations - disbanded under pressure of the emergency that was promulgated and a new British Guiana Trades Union Council was registered on 11th December, 1953. Needless to add, this new body lacked the militancy of its immediate predecessor and was under the tutelage of the Labour Department.

The wave of arrests, detentions, terror and restrictions that followed truncated the militancy of the trade unions. In addition the political movement was split. The 1955 split in the PPP put a strain on the trade union movement and sowed the seeds of racial antagonism.

After the suspension of The Constitution in October 1953, an interim government of trusted individuals was installed by the British Government. It lasted until 1957 when fresh elections were held. During this period of 'marking time', many efforts were made to strengthen the TUC, but these could not repair the damage done to the trade union movement. At the international level the differences in the local trade union movement were underscored. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) at a Regional Conference in Trinidad in 1955 did not invite the trade unions that

were left of centre. The TUC, which was represented at the formation of the first international body - the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) - was invited to this rival body due to its new stance and did attend. It became affiliated to the ICFTU in 1955.

The (British) Trades Union Congress threw its weight behind the MPCA. It did so in one of its first international commitments to give special assistance, both financial and advisory, to promote a healthy and vigorous trade union movement in the Colonies. It also sent out a resident representative to guide the movement along the lines originally envisaged by the Labour Department.

Financial assistance from overseas both from Britain and the USA marked a new development in the trade union movement in the 50's. The Cold War struggle had its manifestations in British Guiana in the 50's. The Inter-American Confederation of Workers became active here in this decade. ORIT represented that the struggle here was one to combat the offensive launched by the PPP to destroy the free trade unions in this country. The MPCA was portrayed as a strong anti-communist body and the GIWU strikes in the early 50's were said to be aimed at removing the bulwark against the communism, i.e., the MPCA..

Both the British and the American trade union movements defended the suspension of the Constitution. The American Federation of Labour proclaimed that it was the only recourse of the British to prevent the setting up of a communist totalitarian state in British Guiana.

The MPCA's representation for mineworkers ended in the decade I am now reviewing, although its recognition for sugar workers continued for a long time thereafter. The Berbice Mine Workers' Union was established in October 1953 to represent mine workers in the Ancient County, but by 1956, its existence came to an end when it merged with the British Guiana Mineworkers' Union, which thereafter represented all bauxite workers.

Industrial action by some sections of the British Guiana labour union membership, by the Post Office Workers' Union, part of the Transport Workers' Union, the Municipal Labour Trades Union and the Sawmill Workers' Union, among others, marked the closing stages of this decade. The object was mainly against victimization, for improved conditions of work and better wages. Modest success marked these efforts.

The 1957 General Elections marked the return of the P.P.P. to office. And 1958 saw Mrs. Janet Jagan, as the then Minister of Labour opening the new TUC's Fifth Annual Conference.

On the 12th February, 1958, the Legislative Council approved an amendment to a Motion by Mr R. Tello, the then General Secretary of the TUC that May Day be declared a public holiday.

The PPP government declared 1st May, 1958, a public holiday. At the same time the holiday on 24th May for Empire Day was scrapped. Ever since 1958 May Day has been a public holiday here. Critchlow who first agitated for this holiday only witnessed one; he passed away on 10th May, 1958.

Also introduced under the 1957 PPP government were amendments to a number of ordinances dealing with 'labour' and orders and regulations prescribing better wages and conditions of work for certain employees.

I trust I have been able to highlight the high as well as the low points in the struggles of the trade unions in the 1940's and 1950's during this relatively short presentation.

And so I conclude by thanking the Cheddi Jagan Research Center for inviting me to refresh my memory of the events of past decades and hope that in so doing I have been able to stimulate some interest in those events and give pointers and hope for the future.



Ashton Chase, OE was a founding member of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and served in several leading positions in the Trade Union Movement and at the political level. He is currently an Attorney-at-law and the author of several publications including "Trade Unionism in Guyana".

Industrial Relations in Guyana



The Government of Guyana has remained committed to encouraging and facilitating improved industrial relations, conditions of work and safe work environments for all employed persons across the length and breadth of Guyana. That was evident with the re-establishment of the Ministry of Labour, following five years of its absence and the inability to adequately serve the people of this nation.

The Ministry's policy initiatives have been guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, the PPP/C administration's manifesto and of course, the labour laws and the International Labour Organisation Conventions. The Ministry's Labour Department accounts and functions within the context of a modern economy and its system is contrived to provide effective labour inspections, enforcement of the labour laws and facilitate a stable industrial relation climate. In the main, the department is guided by the following strategic priorities:

- Maintaining a stable industrial relation climate through conciliations, mediation and advisory services
- Monitoring and enforcement of ALL labour laws
- Provide information, education and advocacy for employers and employees
- Trade union recognition and development through support to the Trade Union Recognition Board

- Facilitating frequent engagements with our social partners

The Labour Department has been robust in the execution of its mandate this year.

The department has received a total of seven hundred and eleven (711) complaints from walk-in employees from January to September 2021. Most of these complaints were from the security and commercial sectors. Of that figure, the security sector accounted for 20.10%, while the commercial sector accounted for 20.58%, with most of the complaints received in the months of February, April, May and June 2021.

Great concern has been plastered on the security and mining sector since they are deemed to be more in breach of the labour laws and as such, the department will undertake engagements with employers in these sectors to sensitize them on the laws and adequate working conditions. A total of 725 complaints have been closed thus far for the year of which 219 complaints were from 2020.

Further to that, the Ministry of Labour can proudly state that it was able to recover thirty-four million six hundred and ninety thousand nine hundred and ninety-two dollars (\$34,690,992) from employers on behalf of employees for the year 2021. The months of March, April and June saw the most monies being recovered. That is explainable since it was mentioned that a higher percentage of complaints were received in these months (February 12%, April 14%, May 14%).

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the department was forced to scale back on its inspections activities. However, plans have been made to augment inspections activities in all of the regions. Currently, the new labour officers are working on regional inspection plans. As it relates to new officers, the labour department was able to recruit 9 officers to serve across various administrative regions, which is also a part of the efforts to increase the Ministry's manpower for more functionality.

Adding to that, the Ministry has moved to set up labour offices to extend its services to all parts of Guyana. Below is a breakdown:

- **Region One- Labour Offices have been set up in two sub districts**
- **Region Two- A new Labour Office was set up in Anna Regina**
- **Region Three- A new Labour Office is being set up in Parika**
- **Region Four- New Labour Offices are being set up on the East Coast of Demerara and the East Bank of Demerara**
- **Region Five- A new Labour Office has been set up at Mahaicony**
- **Region Six- A new Labour Office has been set up at Number 59 Village, Skeldon, Upper Corentyne**
- **Region Seven- A new Labour Office has been set up at Bartica**
- **Region Eight- Land has been acquired to set up an office in Mahdia**
- **Region Nine- A labour office has been set up in Lethem**
- **Region Ten- A new Labour Office has been**

set up at office in Linden and one another in Kwakwani

On the other hand, the Labour Department to date has conducted approximately seven hundred and thirty-seven (737) meetings with employers intending to settle the respective issue with the employees. The department will continue to engage the employers and employees in a bid to settle issues and avoid prosecution. Several training sessions have also been held with employers, which includes sensitization sessions so that they can familiarize themselves with the labour laws.

As it relates to prosecutions, some 50 cases are currently active, with three matters filed in August 2021. Of all legal issues this year, wages owing and terminal benefits (payment in lieu of notice and severance) accounted for 79.48% as it relates to complaints received, with wages owing at 49.54 % and terminal benefits at 29.94%.

Finally, the department was able to facilitate many conciliations, with the most significant being between Demerara Timbers Limited (DTL) and Guyana Agricultural and General Workers' Union (GAWU), Skeldon Energy Inc. (SEI) and GAWU and the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GTT) and Guyana Postal & Telecommunication Workers Union.

Following conciliation meetings with SEI and the GAWU, SEI has agreed based on the Ministry's recommendations to sign a collective labour agreement with GAWU. Further to that, GTT signed a collective labour agreement with the Guyana Postal and Telecommunications Workers Union (GPTWU) and agreed to give 4% and 6%, wages and salary increases. This was after lengthy negotiations. DTL, through the Ministry's intervention, has also agreed to meet with GAWU to have bilateral relations and collective bargaining after years of disagreement on the collective bargaining process.

This department remains committed to being robust in its outreaches, enforcement and all other mandated practices as the Ministry of Labour aims to build the most efficient labour sector this country has ever seen.



Joseph Hamilton MP is currently the Minister of Labour.

October 5 - A Defining Moment

It is now close to three decades since the return of democracy to Guyana after nearly a similar period of undemocratic rule. It will be recalled that democracy was returned to Guyana after nearly three decades of dictatorial rule, thanks to the PNC which rigged its way to power ever since it was catapulted to office in 1964.

In this article, I propose to examine the socio-economic and political impacts of life in Guyana during the period of undemocratic rule and compare that to an almost similar period of democratic rule. On the basis of such a comparison, a correlation can be established between democracy and development.

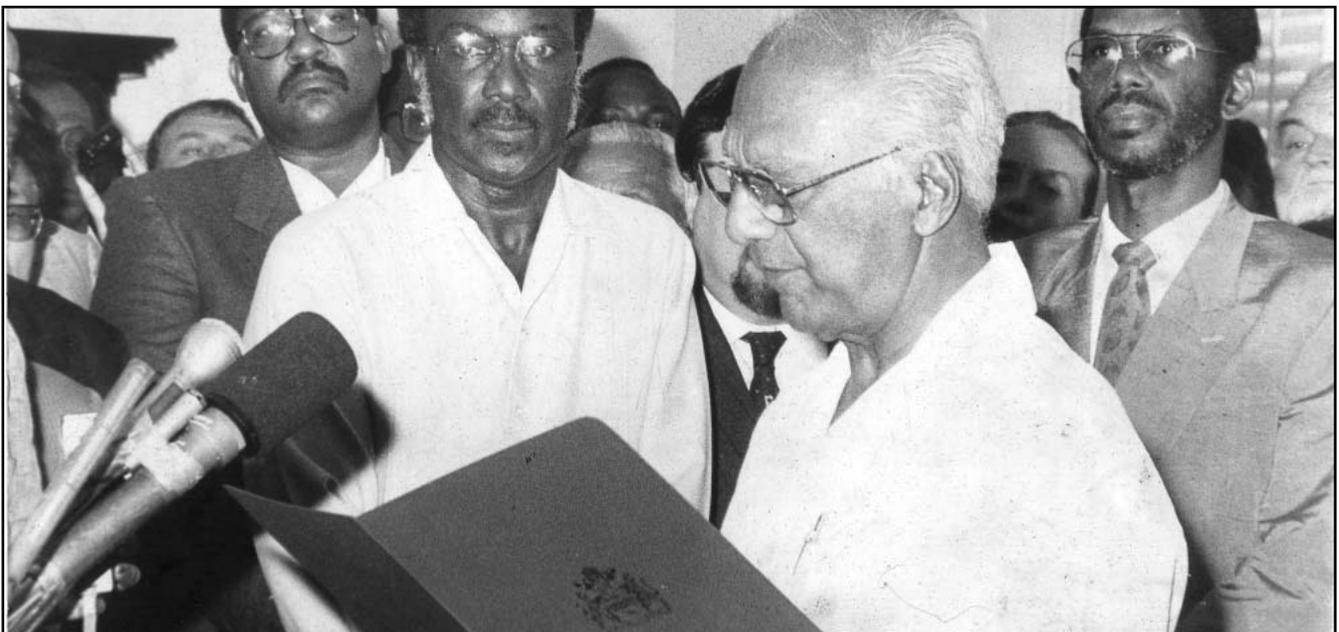
One difficulty in making comparisons is the objectivity and reliability of the instruments used to measure development especially since there is an element of subjectivity in the definition of the term development. A standard measurement used by economists is that of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

On a comparative level, Guyana during the early 1960's had a per capita income similar to that of Singapore. Two decades later Singapore had achieved a per capita almost on par with the United States of America. Guyana, on the other hand was ranked among the poorest country

in the western hemisphere with a per capita income almost that of Haiti. A similar observation was made by Sameul P Huntington in his book "Culture Matters' in which he compared Ghana and South Korea. The two countries had roughly comparable levels of per capita GNP; similar divisions of their economy among primary products, manufacturing and services. Thirty years later, South Korea had become an industrial giant with a strong industrial base and the 14th largest economy in the world; multinational corporations, major exports of automobiles, electronic equipment and so on. No such changes had taken place in Ghana whose per capita income in one-fifteenth that of South Korea.

How could such an extraordinary difference in development be explained in the case of both Guyana and Ghana, on the one hand, and Singapore and South Korea on the other? The reasons are multi-dimensional but there appeared to be some merit in a view that cultural dissimilarities which emphasize the norms and values of thrift, hardwork, savings and investment, openness, democracy and the rule of law do play a determining role.

The story becomes all the more intriguing when consideration is taken of the fact the Guyana enjoyed



Dr. Cheddi Jagan swearing in after the historic October 5, 1992 elections

a much greater comparative advantage in terms of resource endowment.

One explanation had to do with a leadership style that encouraged savings and investment. Guyana, by contrast, under the doctrine of party paramountcy stifled economic growth and began a wave of nationalizations of private companies, most notably the Bookers Group of Companies that included a number of grinding sugar estates which employed a significant number of agricultural employees. Other companies nationalized were those operating in the bauxite and mining sectors.

One immediate consequence of the nationalizations was a significant drop in foreign direct investment and investment as a whole as the government declared its intention to create a 'socialist' state. Production and productivity fell dramatically as the government was forced to rig elections to perpetuate its political life. Meanwhile, conditions of life continue to deteriorate to appalling levels forcing a significant number of Guyanese, including those with skills, to migrate. Guyana during that period became a major victim of the brain drain.

For most of its post-independence years, Guyana pursued a set of economic policies characterized as 'co-operative socialism'

That combination of low investor confidence, political and economic decadence and the brain drain provided fertile conditions for underdevelopment. By 1988, the situation has reached crisis levels, despite the much vaunted Economic Recovery Program initiated by former President Desmond Hoyte which in fundamental ways dismantled the domination of the state on the economy. In 1990, the GDP contracted by 3.2% and the rate of inflation soared to 65% and production in the critical areas of sugar and rice production reached record lows.

One lesson from the above is that economic reforms without political democracy is inadequate to bring about positive changes in the economy and in the overall improvement in the quality of life of the Guyanese people.

Sustained levels of economic decline has had a devastating effect on the social and physical infrastructure of the country. According to a World Bank Country Report (1993), most public sector infrastructure necessary to support the private sector had deteriorated to the point of non-existence. Power and water supplies were so erratic that many large private sector firms were forced to invest in their own generators and water sources. The road system had deteriorated, especially farm to market feeder roads. The sea wall system which was meant to protect the agricultural and coastal lands had been breached multiple times. Even in urban areas, most of

the population lack access to safe water supplies. Social services were also in a bad state. Schools lacked basic supplies, books, equipment and supplies. Employers complained about the lack of basic competencies among school and college graduates. Hospitals operated with malfunctioned equipment; drugs shortages were not uncommon.

The decline of the public sector also resulted in a sharp decline in real wages. It was estimated that real wages in the public sector were just around a third of that offered in the private sector which resulted in a drift of skilled workers to the private sector or abroad.

One consequence of the above was a rise in poverty levels. An estimate by the IDB in 1989 revealed that 67% of the population were living below the poverty level with some other estimates putting it much higher at 86%.

Faced with such a situation, the government was forced to borrow money which resulted in an unsustainable debt burden which, along with economic mismanagement and incompetence turned out to be a drag on the potential for development. Guyana at one time was living on borrowed money.

It was not until the return of free and fair elections on October 5, 1992 that the country began, as it were, to turn the corner. There were some who credited the economic recovery to the free market policies of Desmond Hoyte but the facts, as outlined above do not lend credence to such a view. Indeed, over five years into the so called Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) implemented by the new Hoyte regime, the country found itself in a much deeper economic and social crisis. This was so even as the Hoyte administration privatized several of the leading companies in the country and broke the stranglehold of the state on the economy. The privatization process began with an ambitious plan to encourage greater private sector role in the economy. Plans were well advanced for the privatization of some of the commanding heights of the economy including the Guyana Sugar Corporation and the Guyana Mining Enterprises among others. The thinking was that the privatization program would have increased efficiency levels, generate more competitiveness and attract a much higher volume of investment capital.

None of the objectives of the Economic Recovery Program based on free market policies and privatization of state assets were realized. The country instead found itself in a much deeper economic crisis fueled by falling production and productivity. Sugar and rice, two important foreign exchange earners saw record lows in terms of production.

In addition to the privatization program, several fiscal measures were put in place to encourage investment by the Hoyte administration but with limited success. As the World Bank in its 1993 Country Report noted, there was no evidence that those fiscal measures were effective in attracting overall investment in the country or had any beneficial impact on the allocation of resources. In fact, the incentive package was heavily biased in favor of the bigger companies. In addition, the system lacked transparency due to the multiplicity of criteria and the policy of the government not to make available information on the incentives granted. This lack of transparency raised doubts on the part of investors concerning the fairness of the system.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the above is that economic liberalization is inadequate to bring about economic and social progress unless it is done within the framework of democratic and rules based culture which places emphasis on good governance. It was not until

the return of democracy on October 5, 1992 that the economic reversals of the past began to be corrected and the country began to develop with a human face. The new PPP/C administration under the leadership of the charismatic Dr. Cheddi Jagan began the reconstruction of a new Guyana with emphasis on human development and putting people at the center of the developmental processes. The private sector was named as the 'engine of growth' and incentives were given to private sector development along with strong labor laws to protect the rights of workers.

Today, the country is one again enjoying a wave of foreign direct investments due partly to our newly found oil and gas resources. In the final analysis however, it is the fresh air of democracy, rule of law and good governance that are the main drivers of our economic growth and development.



President Jimmy Carter greeting former President, Desmond Hoyte



Hydar Ally is the holder of a Master's Degree in Political Science from the University of Guyana. He is the Author of two Publications, "Insightful Views on Guyana" and "Pragmatism or Opportunism: Guyana's Foreign Policy Behaviour". He is also Chairman of the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre.

Editor's Note: The following is a lecture delivered by former President, Mr. Donald Ramotar on the occasion of the fifth death anniversary of former Cuban President, Dr. Fidel Castro.

Fidel Castro Lives!



On the 25th of November the progressive and democratic forces throughout the world will observe the fifth year since the passing of one of their greatest champions, Fidel Castro. During his lifetime Fidel was involved in and was one of the foremost leaders struggling for progressive changes in the world. He has left us an incredible amount of his thoughts on every issue of a national (Cuban) or international nature that were the most important in his time.

On the national level the achievements of the Cuban people under his leadership are truly revolutionary and deep going.

For this audience I do not have to go into great details, you know of them. However, you will allow me to generalize on some of these.

Life expectancy in Cuba matches the most developed countries in the world. It is some seventy seven years. Cuba has the most educated people in this continent and can compare very favorably with any country in the world.

In the sphere of health, Cuba is a beacon of light. It is

probably the only country in the world where every family is covered by a family doctor. It has advanced remarkably in this area having independent discoveries.

In this time of the COVID-19 Pandemic Cuba has developed its own vaccine and has been able to administer it to almost 100% of its population.

The heights that Cuba has achieved in many areas of human endeavors have been shared with the peoples of the world. Cuba has helped to educate tens of thousands of doctors, engineers and other essential skills for the peoples in developing countries. Even students from developed countries, many of whom cannot afford tuition fees in their own countries were accommodated in Cuba.

We in Guyana have been among the many beneficiaries of this important assistance by Cuba. At one stage in our country's history it was Cuban medical personnel that prevented a total collapse of our health system. That was in the 1980s and 1990s.

If this is monetized I am sure that we would see that Cuba's assistance compares very favorably with other

countries who give economic assistance. Indeed Cuba's assistance builds human capital which contributes greatly to a nation's sovereignty.

A distinguishing feature of Cuba's assistance is that it comes without any strings attached. It is based on human principles; it is truly humanism.

In times of disaster we find Cuban workers and professionals are the first on the scene braving great dangers and uncertainties. I recall the outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the devastating earthquake in Haiti, Cuban doctors heroically went into action in the spirit of the revolution and Fidel to save lives.

My dear comrades and friends what is even more heroic is that these things have been achieved despite the very difficult circumstances that the Cuban people had to confront. In the first place, there was an economic blockade that has done enormous damage to the Cuban economy. This blockade has created great shortages of many essential items.

This is being done by the United States, a country that advocates the upholding democracy. Yet every year an overwhelming amount of countries in the world vote at the United Nations, the most important of the world's institutions to remove the blockade from Cuba. They are promptly ignored by the US.

While I join with progressive mankind to condemn this unjust and inhuman blockade allow me to digress a bit to speak about sanctions and to make my position clear on this matter. I am not against all sanctions. I believe in some circumstances sanctions can play a positive role for a greater good.

I recall during the time of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the people of the South Africa, Namibia and others in Southern Africa countries were calling for sanctions against the racist regime. The US and UK ignored those calls and that prolonged the life of the racist regime. In fact it was even worse than that. They described the forces and people that were fighting to liberate their countries from Apartheid and colonialism as terrorists!

I would be the first to support international sanctions against the Apartheid regime in Israel to assist the Palestinian struggles for a homeland. But that is not happening instead the US actions are tantamount to encouragement of the Israelis in seizing Palestinian lands.

Needless to say, I supported the threats of sanctions against the APNU/AFC regime that was attempting

to rig the elections here in Guyana. This was/is an important measure of solidarity and this should not be underestimated.

However, to place an economic blockade on a people that have done so much for the oppressed peoples of the world is unjustifiable and morally bankrupt.

Let me continue.

Cuba's achievements must not only be measured by the unfavorable conditions created by the inhuman blockade that has cost it so dearly, but also from the amount of resources it has had to use in securing the nation. Since the failed Bay of Pigs invasion the US has not given up on using subversive techniques and even terrorists to undermine the Cuban Government. We all know about the more than one hundred attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro while he led the country. This must be costing the country millions that it could ill afford.

Cuba therefore has all the conditions for rapid growth, but it is being stifled by the economic blockade and the constant threats to its security.

How is it possible that the Cuban people were able to withstand so much of difficulties and was still able to make the advances that it has made? Many countries collapsed under less pressure, but Cuba continues to withstand the pressures and continues to make progress even though every step forward is made difficult and even painful.

The answers are many. However, we must rate the question of leadership as being very decisive. The Cuban Communist Party has done a tremendous job in organizing, mobilizing and educating the Cuban people. The masses of Cuban people are conscious of the efforts being made to stymie their progress. More over they are prepared to defend the revolution at any cost.

A lot of this political and ideological staunchness is due to the quality of leadership that Fidel Castro gave during his lifetime.

He led by example and from the front. In the most dangerous of situations Fidel was there during the Bay of Pigs invasion for instance he directed operations and defeated the counter revolutionary attacks. His title of Commander of Armed Forces was not just a formality; it was actually earned over and over again. But he was more than just a combatant.

He led with great intelligence. The hundreds of speeches that he made on many important topics are all distinguished by a profound knowledge of the subjects. He is acclaimed as being a great strategist and tactician.

That feature of the man has sprung from his deep knowledge and the creative way he applied Marxist-Leninist theory; to therefore to speak of him only as a revolutionary warrior is not giving a complete picture of the man. He was a deep thinker, a philosopher.

For Fidel, politics was not just a science, it was also an art. There are very few in history who could compare to him as a strategist and tactician.

I believe one of the reasons that the ruling class in the United States hated him so much had to do with the way he was able to turn everything thrown at him back to the US. They were often embarrassed.

I recall the attempts to embarrass Cuba by encouraging anti-social elements to break down barriers of some western embassies claiming they wanted to leave. The US was making it a big propaganda event the whole idea was to depict Cuba as lacking freedom. Then Fidel announced that all who wanted to leave could do so. Thus the Mariel boat lift. Here was a situation where the US was being used to cleanse Cuba of its anti-social and criminal elements.

Two months after the US administration opened discussions with Cuba asking Cuba to take back some of the people who had left in that time. That led to some agreements for the US etc to handle visa applications more expeditiously and to create a better atmosphere for persons to migrate.

We must also recall one of the most dangerous phases in the world, the missile crisis of 1962. In that Fidel gave courageous leadership and defended his position with integrity. His stature kept growing and together with Jawaharlal Nehru was recognized as the most influential leaders of the developing world.

We must not forget the contribution of Cuba towards the liberation of Southern Africa and to the ending of Apartheid in South Africa. Cuban soldiers fought alongside fighters from the ANC and soldiers of the government of Angola in defeating the attack of the South African army and the forces of Unita in Angola at the battle of Cuito Cunavale. Fidel was a true internationalist.

Today too I wish to recall the leadership that he provided in the Non-Aligned movement and the international campaigns for a New Economic Order and for the relieving of the debt burden from the backs of the developing countries. These were profound actions and deep intellectual works. The relentless campaign he undertook resulted in renegotiation of the Third World debts and in the writing off of some as well. Guyana benefited from the campaign.

The foregoing was just a glimpse of Fidel's enormous contribution to world affairs. It is so profound that it is almost inexhaustible.

Now I would like to turn my attention to many of the problems of today and using the thought process and methodology of Fidel Castro to make a brief analysis of them and seek a way forward.

My dear friends we are faced with extremely serious problems of a global nature. Foremost among them is the issue of climate change.

The science on this issue is very clear. The danger that exists is directly related to how we humans treat with our environment and in my view calls into question our relations to the economic life of the world, to production and productivity. Long ago Frederick Engels, one of the creators of Marxism wrote in his work *The Part Played by Labor in the transition from Ape to Man* the following "...animals merely used its environment, and brings about changes in it simply by its presence; man by his changes makes it serve his ends, masters it. This is the final, essential distinction between man and other animals, and once again it is labor that brings about this distinction.

"Let us not, however, flatter ourselves over much on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes it revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the result we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people, who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivatable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centers and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries. When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the Southern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby drifting their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons. Those who spread the potato in Europe were not aware that with these farinaceous tubers they were at the same time spreading scrofula. Thus at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature, like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst, and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly..."

It appears that for profit we have forgotten this!

Scientists have told us that we, by our activities are changing the weather pattern of the world to such an extent that we could end life on earth, as we know it today. Yet we seem incapable of changing direction, we seem unable to help ourselves, we keep going closer and closer to the precipice.

In the name of progress we have destroyed most of the world's forests, thus releasing mega millions of tons of CO2 into the world's atmosphere that is leading towards global warming. This has resulted in very extreme weather conditions. The frequency and intensity of hurricanes, the wild fires in California and of all places, Siberia. Every year things are deteriorating.

Although accusation have been thrown at China and India as being large producers of CO2, when we look at the figures on a per capita basis we find that they are not as high as many in our world that are not being mentioned. The top ten most polluting countries, according to the IPCC per capita are as follows: Qatar 37.05 tons, Kuwait 23.49 tons, Saudi Arabia 19.39 tons, Canada 16.85 tons, US 15.74 tons, Germany 9.7 tons, China 7.72 tons, Spain 6.09 tons, France 5.02 tons, Thailand 4.05 tons. So you see China is number 7 yet China is doing more than any country in relation to developing renewable energy sources. Instead of working with this great nation to save the world, NATO powers are trying to retard its growth and threatening war.

These figures are also incomplete. They do not include the pollution caused by the military the world over. During the negotiation of the Kyoto protocol in 1997, the United States successfully managed to get pollution caused by the military to be excluded from being reported in the documents of the UN.

This is understandable from their stand point, because the United States is the world's largest spender on military equipment etc. I have with me recent figures which show the US spending \$778.0 billion, China \$252.0 billion, India \$72.9 billion, Russia \$61.7 billion, Saudi Arabia \$57.5 billion, France \$52.7 billion, Germany \$52.8 billion, UK \$48.7 billion, Japan \$49.1 billion and South Korea \$45.7 billion on their military.

Of the top ten US spends \$778.0 billion and the other nine \$703 billion.

According to Sandra Folzer of the "Weavers Way Environment Committee" the US military put 750,000 tons of toxic waste in the environment every year; it uses 21 billion liters of fuel every year. That is more carbon emissions of many countries in the world.

What is not counted is the terrible damage caused by wars, in Ethiopia; South Sudan; Syria; Israel's frequent bombings of the Gaza Strip and Syria among others.

Recently, October to November, the UN held the COP 26 meeting. A lot was said and commitments made but we must not judge what people say, but what actions are being taken. Already the signs are not good.

As soon as the leaders left the conference, for some it was back to business as usual. While the meeting was in progress, the UK was planning to start a new coal mine and the US approved more places to explore for oil.

The reason for this seeming duplicity may not be connected to the insincerity of some leaders, many may well be sincere. However, these actions show really where power lies in those countries. The huge multi-national corporations in the oil sector; the giant Pharmaceutical corporations and the big banks are the real powers in those societies. As a result the commitments given by Western Capitalist countries are not respected and remain unfulfilled.

For more than fifty years the oil companies knew that their operations were responsible for serious environmental degradation. They were aware, from their own scientists that they were very substantially responsible for climate change.

They however chose to bury those reports and to attack scientists who have been raising the alarm. They decided, consciously, to create doubts in the minds of the world's people while they continue to pollute. Indeed they increased the pollution.

They have also invested heavily in political parties around the world and in the US in the elections of congress and senate members. They spend heavily in recruiting the top lawyers and professional lobbyists to expand their influence in the various corridors of power. Really it's more than just expanding their influence, it is more of increasing their control of various nations.

It is clear that they are using the mass multi-national media to create doubts about the climate crisis. In an article "The Guardian" written by Emily Holder is stated "...over the last three decades, five major oil companies have spent a total of at least \$3.6 billion on advertisements – not counting their investments in public relations programs like sponsored beach clean-ups, or their influence through trade associations, dark money groups and campaign donations..."

Here they are working on bending the minds of the people.

This behavior is reminiscent of the inhuman actions of the tobacco companies. They knew for decades that cigarettes were causing cancers but hid that information. They went on to advertise cigarettes even to children. For them profits beats human lives every time.

At the COP 26 and many other forums solutions have been put forward. The solutions advocated are fundamentally technical in nature. They talk about cutting emissions, replanting forests, planting some mangroves and so on. These are good initiatives and should be pursued. However, I make bold to say that those plans are not enough and would not save us from the mounting catastrophes that have been afflicting our world.

While technologies have a big role to play in seeking solutions it is really, really insufficient. If the problem was just technical then it could be solved overnight and would have been solved already. Because never before did we have the marvelous technologies and equipment as we do today therefore the problem is clearly not mainly technical.

The problem lies in the system of relations, international and national socio-economic political relations. Capitalism, particularly monopoly capitalism is incapable of solving this matter.

By its nature capitalism seeks to maximize profits. Here I want to quote a passage written by one P.J Dunning more than one hundred and fifty years ago. It was quoted by Karl Marx in volume one of capital. I think Marx quoted it because it captures beautifully the nature of the capitalist system that is the dominant relation in our world. Here is what he wrote "...capital is said by a quarterly reviewer to fly turbulence and strife, and to be timid, which is very true; but this is very incompletely stating the question. Capital eschews no profit, or every small profit, just as nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profits, capital is very bold. A certain ten percent will ensure its employment anywhere, 20 per cent certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent positive audacity; 100 per cent will make it trample on all human laws; 300% and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it would freely encourage both..."

The situation today resembles that described by Dunning.

So here we find the main contradiction of our times that is conservation and protection of the environment on the one hand and maximization of profits which entails raping the environment, massive exploitation of natural

resources and an unbelievable amount of waste, just so long as it brings a profit to capital on the other hand.

The attitude of the major capitalist power tells us that their leaders cannot deliver on their promises. The unprecedented spending in the military and the foreign policy of instigating wars show that we are not going to meet the targets which we have set ourselves. Imagine the US is surrounding Russia with military bases and moving NATO armies close to its border but turns around and accuse Russia of being aggressors, because it move its army close to its border, within its own country. How much more provocative can we get?

This issue cannot be solved without ending poverty and the tremendous inequalities that is plaguing our world. The ridiculous situation where some 26 billionaires have as much wealth as the bottom 50% of the world's population is revealing on the concentration of wealth. Therefore, inequality has to be addressed urgently to assist in saving our world.

We have to address the issue of hunger. It says a lot about the system we live under. At when the world is producing much more than we can consume, millions of tons of food are wasted every year and contributing to the production of green house gases, while millions are starving.

So my dear friends this means we have to do much greater mobilization, much greater organization, much more work to educate the masses. This issue will not be solved just in the conference rooms, we must get the involvement of the broadest masses of people, we must get them on the streets, only mass participation will be able to change the system that is driving us to doom.

That in my humble opinion would have been the approach of comrade Comandante Fidel Castro!

I thank you for your attention!



HELLO DIASPORA!



A cursory google check on the meaning of the word DIASPORA seemed to suggest that it was first associated with the dispersion/scattering “of Jews from Palestine after the Babylonian captivity”. Other definitions refer to other groups of people scattered outside of their traditional homeland, on most occasions involuntarily, for example, in cases where Africans were taken from their homes in Africa to North and South America. It is a fact that millions of people, either voluntarily moved or were forcibly moved from the lands of their birth to other locations, mostly across oceans and thousands of miles away. These persons comfortably fit into the other and more acceptable category of Diasporans, i.e those persons (and their descendents) who live in a country other than their country of birth, whether by their own choice or were forced to do so. This essay would concentrate on Guyanese living in lands not of their birth, whether voluntarily or involuntarily.

During my stint in Ottawa, Canada at the Guyana High Commission, many Heads of Diplomatic Missions raised eyebrows when I mentioned at a forum that Guyana possibly had just as many Guyanese living out of the country as those living within it’s borders. The movement of Guyanese occurred mainly in the 1960’s to the 1980’s, due mainly to political discrimination, victimization and marginalization, economic mismanagement of the economy of the country, corruption and continuous and violent criminal activities. Almost every one still living in Guyana has a relative living outside of the country.

Persons living outside of Guyana have been continuously supporting their less fortunate relatives and friends in Guyana by financial remittances and items of food,

clothing, consumables, house building materials and implements, etc.

Some have strongly argued that at one time such remittances contributed to a dependency mentality.

For years, the two major political parties in Guyana, through their branches and support groups in the diaspora, have also been soliciting financial and familial support from their membership and loyalists who have done well in the diaspora, especially for their Party congresses and more aggressively at elections times.

Party campaign materials in many and varied forms have been the main items used to encourage support and endorsement and to ensure visibility of the Party. Party flags, buttons and TShirts with candidates’ faces, Party symbols (the cup in the case of the PPP), pens, backpacks, etc. have all been distributed freely to their supporters and used extensively in the arsenals of the parties.

For many years the political parties have stayed wedded to their supporters in the Diaspora with the hope that they would not only make representation to the politicians in their countries of choice (Congressmen/ women and Senators in the USA) whenever a real or perceived need arises, but to also demonstrate either in favour of or against visiting decision makers, determined by which side of the political fence they choose to be.

Also, for as many years, Guyana governments have been trying to woo the diaspora to contribute to developments in Guyana. These have all been responded to, in my

opinion, in a “half hearted way”.

The PPP/C governments, since before the 2000’s have been trying to encourage diaspora involvement, in an informal way and with the establishment of a unit within the Ministry of Foreign affairs, with cabinet approval in 2012, in a formal way, in limited and specific areas of investment.

Aligned to encouragement of the diaspora to invest in Guyana, was a re-migration scheme which was in existence from as far back as 1993 and which allowed re-migrants to re-settle in Guyana, with incentives such as the opportunity to purchase houses and land to build houses, duty free concessions for house building materials, tools of trade, household equipment, implements and equipment for agricultural, mining, forestry and other such activities and importantly and much sought after, the importation of motor vehicles. These schemes attracted much support and attention in spurts and bursts, and waned for long periods afterwards. Credit must rightfully and definitively be placed, for both the Re-migration and Diaspora initiatives, with the 1992 Government of Cheddi Jagan, who campaigned for such inclusion for years before his election as President.

Now again, with the advent of the PP/C government in August 2020, a renewed assault is being made to attract diaspora support and contribution to the developments taking place in Guyana. Skills, especially now that the oil and gas industries are in the forefront of every economic discussion and calculation, investment in agriculture, industry, infrastructural works, housing development, fisheries and forestry, commercial activities, mining, and almost every imaginable area of development and investment, are on the agenda for diaspora involvement.

To achieve the best and equitable results of this initiative, the Diaspora Unit under the Ministry of Foreign affairs has been re-established and is currently headed by a dynamic young, knowledgeable professional, very fluent and convincing in discussions and in her presentations. In my brief discussion with her I sensed the passion with which she is approaching her formidable tasks and can only wish her a competent cadre of equally committed supporting staff to achieve the desired involvement of the diaspora.

There have been a number of outreach initiatives including, among others, a joint discussion involving the Bank of Guyana and the Commercial Banks operating in Guyana, which resulted in many obstacles to doing business in Guyana being aired and hopefully being addressed.

There have been also other engagements through the virtual medium which have addressed and discussed

multiple areas of concern of persons and organisations in the diaspora, all aimed at identifying the areas in which the diaspora can be involved and again identifying bottlenecks in systems and suggestions for rectifying them. It is imperative, that the problems identified be addressed in an urgent time frame, to avoid the loss of interest, as in the past.

Problems, perceived or real, must be dealt with in an honest manner and if cannot be changed, must be so stated, with the reasons for being unable to be changed, eg. When the Laws of Guyana need to be amended to achieve change, etc.

It is my understanding that unit to oversee Diaspora involvement is headed by the Foreign Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in the person of a former Minister of Government. I also understand that the Consulates in Toronto and New York are also privileged with Diaspora units.

In my opinion, these units can only be successful if the personnel heading and manning them are au fait with the functioning of agencies in Guyana, the Laws of the country, the culture of Guyanese (which may be different to the acquired culture of Diasporans) the geography of the country, the needs of Guyana and Guyanese, the skill sets of Guyanese at home, etc, etc. This is necessary to be emphasized since some in the Diaspora (and in these units) have been out of Guyana for many years and would of necessity, need to be “re-oriented”. I am conscious of this being a somewhat controversial statement but is being made in the interest of the success of the entire Diaspora programme.

Updates on Past Diaspora conferences, prepared by the Diaspora unit of the MoFA, include, but not limited to, include:

The Government’s position on the Diaspora, to involve investors, philanthropists, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, etc.

Thematic areas, including economic, youth engagement, philanthropy and human capital, integration, etc.

Building trust between Diaspora, Government of Guyana, Agencies in Guyana and the people of Guyana.

The approach to Diaspora engagement and the primary functions of the Diaspora Unit.

Categories of possible groups that can be engaged, including: alumni, professional, cultural, sports and religious.

There is also a list of government and other agencies which are already involved to enhance Diaspora engagement, including Guyana Revenue Authority.

Central Housing and Planning Authority, Go-Invest, Environmental Protection, etc.

Diaspora groups and Associations, mainly in the USA, Canada and the UK, already on board and engaged.

Project areas, Investments and Commitments in which Diaspora groups are already involved, including oil and gas, construction, medical outreaches and donation of medical equipment, flood relief, sports development, etc.

A number of engagements and events are planned for the remainder of 2021, (some which may have already been held) including youth, medical, academic and trade diaspora conferences and webinars.

Much attention is intended from these interactions and conferences, resulting in the establishment of an inter agency workgroup for investors, the intended creation of an Investment Process Group and the creation of a Local Diaspora Group in Guyana to foster support and share experiences with re-migrants.

The unit intends to soon launch a Diaspora Website and an E-Diaspora magazine. The 2020 updated Strategic Diaspora Paper and plan of Action developed by the International Organisation of Migration will be posted on the website and allow for comments, feedback and suggestions.

Opinion is divided on whether the diaspora is more

interested in what they can get out of Guyana (to develop themselves ONLY) rather than if they are interested in contributing to the development of the country of their birth while at the same time their own development.

Time, explicit policies, controls and laws (including labour laws related to the employment and remuneration of Guyanese) attitudes, incentives and defined areas of investment are some of the determinants of the success or failure of this venture.

Another seeming area of contention is that overseas based Guyanese, some while remaining out of Guyana, can encroach on the job market in areas such as consultancies, “experts” and “advisors” in fields that “home based” Guyanese are equally or more qualified, with the further dissatisfaction of the former being more lucratively rewarded, in terms of financial and other conditions.

In my opinion, careful and serious consideration needs to be given to these concerns.

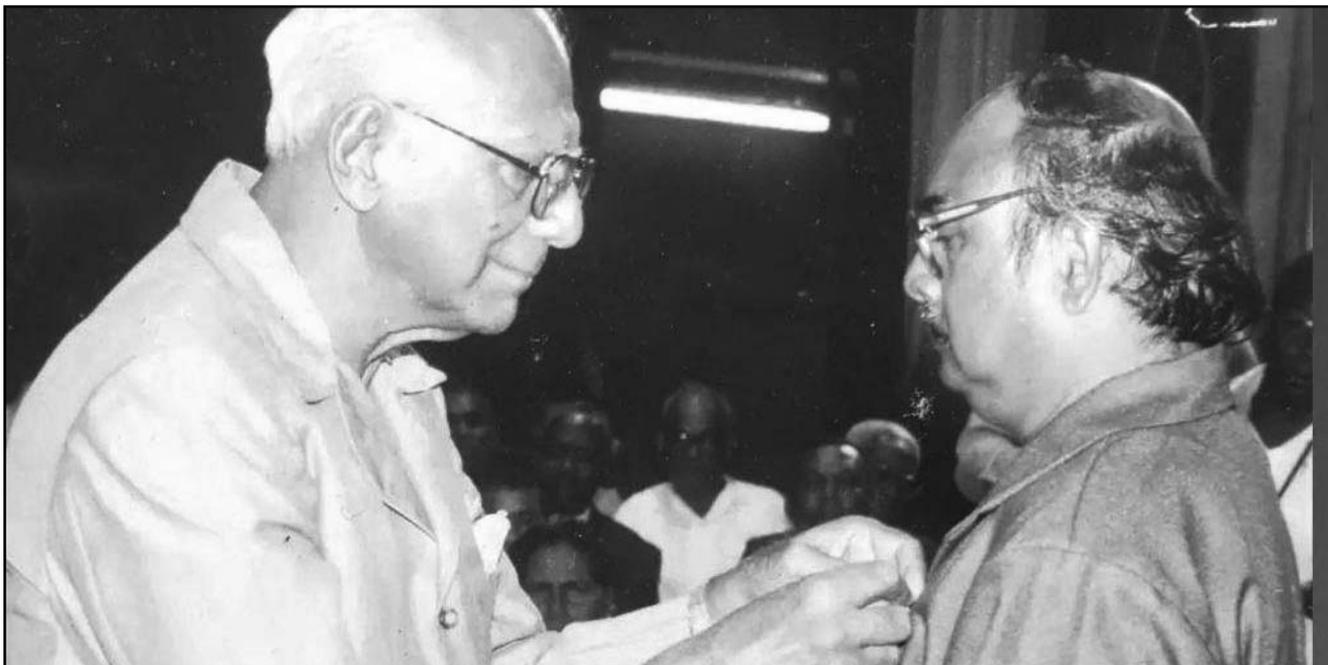
With serious and committed support from persons involved at all levels; Government and its Ministries and Agencies, the Diaspora, in Guyana-private and public, Communities and organisations, and others interested in Guyana’s development, the intended Diaspora engagements can make real and positive changes to Guyana’s economic, social and cultural landscape and convert many dreams into realities.



Harry Narine Nawbatt was the Former Executive Director, Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP), Former Project Manager, Poor Rural Communities Social Services Project (PRCSSP), Former Minister of Works, Hydraulics and Communication & Minister of Housing and Water, Former Ambassador of Guyana to Brazil and High Commissioner of Guyana to Canada.

Obituary: Rohit Persaud - An Unsung Hero

by Hydar Ally



Rohit Persaud being honoured for his service to the nation by former President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan

There are many people who would have passed on in life without their story being told and who are just happy to know that they have made a difference to society in a quiet and unassuming way.

People like those are often referred to as the unsung heroes of society. They give of their service to society without any expectation of reward. For them giving is more rewarding than receiving.

One such individual is the late Comrade Rohit Persaud who from an early age became involved in the struggle for a free and democratic Guyana. Like so many people of his time, Cde. Rohit was influenced and inspired by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, and like Dr. Jagan, he dedicated his entire adult life to the cause of the PPP and a free, democratic and prosperous Guyana.

When Rohit joined the PPP and became a political activist, the country was still under colonial rule and Dr. Jagan and the PPP were in the forefront of the struggle for independence and national liberation. The PPP had just won a landslide victory in the elections of 1953, the

first under universal suffrage but was removed from office because of the intrigues of Anglo-American vested interests which did not want a leftist PPP to govern Guyana. After a mere 133 days in office, the British Government suspended the Constitution and the PPP was removed from the seat of power.

After four years of marking time, the PPP was again returned to power after again winning a landslide victory. By that time, Forbes Burnham had left the PPP and formed his own political party, the People's National Congress. That split marked a turning point in the country's political history and race became a factor in the country's politics. Despite attempts to create racial and political instability in the country by Anglo-American vested interests in collaboration with local reactionary forces, the PPP was returned to power in the elections of 1961. However by 1964, the British imposed a new electoral system based on proportional representation. The aim was two-fold: to deny independence to Guyana under a PPP government and to remove Dr. Jagan and the PPP from power which did in fact happen in the elections of 1964.

It was against that background that the contributions to Guyana's politics by Cde. Rohit Persaud has to be situated. He was not simply a card-bearing member of the PPP but he threw himself in the struggle for independence with one goal in mind- to see a democratic and independent Guyana based on the ideals of social justice and human dignity.

Rohit Persaud had a difficult life but he never sought an easy one. He inserted himself in the struggle from an early age and never looked back. He became a PPP Organizer working in several parts of the country. He later became Party Supervisor for Region Six. When the PPP won the historic elections on October 5, 1992, he was appointed to the post of Regional Chairman for Region Six. Prior to becoming engaged in the political struggle at an activist level, he worked as an assistant administrator at the New Amsterdam Hospital. He studied Political Science in Moscow, USSR which would have served to solidify his political and ideological convictions. He succeeded Balchand Persaud and later Bhola Persaud to become PPP Supervisor for Region Six.

it was during his stint as PPP Organizer Region Six that I came to know Cde. Rohit Persaud at a personal level. Young, dashing and full of passion for party politics and the good of country, he would visit often the home of my father, the late Muntaz Ali who was also a leading PPP activist. Cde. Rohit would come with his German-made motor cycle which at the time was much bigger and robust than the other models. He struck me as very committed and dedicated to his job as Party Organizer. He spoke with great passion and was very articulate and knowledgeable of national and political issues. Very often he would bring along party material and literature for sale to raise funds for the Party. I remember being greatly influenced by his activism and we became much closer after he became Party Supervisor for Region Six. I was at the time Personnel Manager of Rose Hall Sugar

Estate and we became much closer as I would very often visit him at the PPP New Amsterdam Office.

It was during one of those meetings with him that I suggested to him that he should arrange for a visit of Dr. Jagan to the Rose Hall Estate which he dutifully arranged. I remember the excitement as Dr. Jagan accompanied by Cde. Rohit Persaud and Philomena Sahoye-Shury visited the Estate, thanks to permission granted by the CEO of GUYSCO Neville Hilary, at a time when Dr. Jagan was seen as an 'unwelcome' visitor to the Estates by the then PNC regime.

Rohit faced many challenges at a personal level. He lost both a daughter and a son, still in the prime of their time. He was never interested in making money or becoming wealthy and never used his position as Regional Chairman to enrich himself. He was contented to live on his salary as could be seen from his modest lifestyle and his personal house at Tain, Corentyne. In his latter years, he suffered the loss of his two children, both still in the prime of their lives, something that must have pained him a lot. He was dedicated to his family and was highly regarded by all those who knew him.

Rohit Persaud was indeed a role model for aspiring politicians who by his life and work had demonstrated that there is virtue in public service and that there is more to be gained by giving rather than receiving. He has certainly led by example, putting party before self and country ahead of his own material interests. Life both at a personal and professional level may not have evolved exactly the way he would have wanted, but he bore them all with strides and remained a dedicated member of the PPP until his dying days.

The PPP and indeed the country as a whole is poorer for his passing. May his soul rest in peace!



Rohit Persaud being flanked by Hydar Ally, Frank Anthony, the late Komal Chand and other Party Comrades

Statement on the 150th Anniversary of the Paris Commune 1871 - A lesson from history

This year marks the 150th anniversary of a little known activity in history. Many often wonder why?

Every year at the site of the place where many brave Communards lost their lives, many would visit and pay tribute to their heroism and sacrifice. Their attempt at social change has been an inspiration and a cause for celebration by progressive humanity the world over.

As Karl Marx, one of the greatest revolutionary thinker of all times wrote in the 'Civil War in France', the workers of Paris were "ready to storm heaven".

For the first time in history the working people seized power and established a model democratic government. Marx called such an example, a prototype of the governments to come. History has confirmed Marx

was right but at the time of the Commune. It was an experiment doomed to fail.

Europe and the rest of the world was very much different from what it is today. Marx greatly admired the heroic attempt of the workers of Paris to seize power and establish the first workers' government in history. It was obvious the workers had absolutely no experience in government nor were they aware of the consequences of seizing power and the brutal repercussions from the deposed groups comprising the ruling class. After all, they lacked organizational strength and had no theory to guide them at the time. The struggle for social change thus lacked direction on the way forward. This is what made this event so significant in history. The Commune lasted some 72 days before it was brutally crushed by the army who retook the City for the Government



seated in France. Over 20 000 brave Communards were slaughtered in the reprisal by the French authority.

Are there lessons we can learn from the Commune? The famous philosopher George Hegel explain, "We learn from history that we do not learn from history".

The people of France had long been the subject of tyranny and were noted for their resistance to tyrannical rule. The French Revolution of 1789 was the first to challenge the Monarchy. This signaled a change in Europe that has since resulted in the changing face of Europe today. The freedoms enjoyed was won through the blood, sweat and tears of those who resisted the rule of law by what was then regarded as the 'divine rule' of royalty. The years 1815, 1830's and 1848 were years that marked the resistance to the rulers of the day as the workers had dared to challenge the old order of Monarchical rule advancing their demands for social change.

The battle of 1871 is historic as it not only challenged the 'old order' but it marked a time when the workers refused to fight for the rulers who used them as cannon fodder to fight their 'unholy wars'. The demands of the workers for peace were always rebuffed by those who wanted war as a means of keeping the ruling class in power. Together with the ruling class, the bankers and the landlords formed a formidable opposition to the workers demand for 'bread and justice'. The workers were viewed with contempt and seen as a threat to their rule.

The working class with its long tradition of struggle felt the need to organize themselves as a class that will be the class destined to overthrow the 'old order' and build the new society free from exploitation and oppression. This is what made Marx theory of the working class in alliance with the other progressive classes and strata of society so different from the utopian socialists who were mere dreamers and those like the 'Bakunists' who advocated anarchist methods of struggle as the way forward. Marx aggressively condemned such groups led by Bakunin and the 'Blanquists', a group of conspirators led by Louis Auguste Blanqui in France at the time of the storming of the Bastille, the symbol of French royalty as anti-statist and dangerous to the workers' legitimate and just struggle for social change. An extreme group calling themselves the Jacobins even encouraged the rebels to destroy the property of the bourgeoisie. Many considered the bourgeoisie the enemy of the people. Lenin in his work, 'What the Friends of the people are and How they fight the Social Democrats' creatively

developed Marx theories at the turn of the 20th century. These historical experiences have guided workers throughout contemporary history.

But what were the events at the time that led to the workers seizing power in Paris in 1871? It is important to understand that 19th Europe was very much different from Europe and the world today. However as Marx revealed central to all struggles in history is the struggle of classes, that is, class struggle.

In 1860 a severe economic crisis had gripped all of France. The workers responded with strikes, organizing themselves in trade unions and political organizations representing workers interests. Revolutionary and progressive ideas were sweeping all over Europe. The First International defended the idea of workers power and socialism. The French rulers turned to war to divert from the crises at the time. The workers were up in arms demanding an end to the wars. This has been the experience throughout history. The origin of both the First and Second World wars can be traced to the three objectives of 'lebensraum', the Jews as the cause of the crises and the goal of world domination.

It was in 1869 that Louis Bonaparte, the emperor of France led his country to war with Prussia. The French lost war after war. This proved disastrous for France. It is in these circumstances of utter starvation and the great loss of lives that the workers of Paris seized power and established the first workers' commune in history. For the bourgeoisie this was unthinkable. Many of the rich fled to other parts of France. As a consequence of the uprising in Paris the Bonaparte monarchy was deposed and a Republic proclaimed in exile. The parties representing the capitalists came to power in France.

It is in this context that the heroic workers of Paris attempted to govern their daily lives by establishing what has become known as the Paris Commune. Today as we reflect on the events some 150 years ago there are many lessons that we can learn from this historic event that changed politics at the time. In our own struggles for bread, social justice, peace and development such lessons are invaluable.

Many problems and challenges of the present day seem insurmountable as those in the ruling circles do not want the ordinary people to know of the past struggles of workers for challenging the old order. Isn't this why an important and significant event is not highlighted in the mainstream press and even taught in the educational

institutions. People are made to feel that social change is not possible and the rule by the exploiters and oppressors are permanent.

Today many workers feel discouraged at the way society is organized. The gap between the haves and have-nots is widening rather than narrowing in a world of plenty. The economy and the governmental structure seem so complicated to the ordinary people. It's as if social change is impossible. The rich legacy of working class struggles is often distorted and hidden from us by the ruling circles who control the ideas in society.

As historical experience has shown reactionary forces and their ideas cannot halt the progress of history in spite of periodic setbacks. Isn't this why the example of

the Paris Commune continue to inspire working people everywhere?

The Paris Commune like so many other workers' victories have become the cause for celebration and serious reflection on the way forward.

Our own experience has shown there are lessons to be learned in our struggles for 'bread, social justice, peace and progress, we dare not squander or forget.

Viva la Commune!

Long live the Parties of the Working People!



Mr. Khame Sharma is the former Deputy Director of Government Analyst – Food and Drug Department (GAFDD) Ministry of Health and former Councilor of the Mayor and City Council of Georgetown.

Historical Anniversaries

During this year (2021) we have had many historical anniversaries. These were events that had a profound impact on nations and the world at large. Below we list some of these significant events.

1. 1871 the Paris Commune

On March 19 1871 the working people of Paris threw up a barricade to defend city. This was during the France - Prussian war. The workers of Paris were defending the city.

It established its own government based on direct democracy and took measures that were considered to be 'communistic'. These include operation of church from state; self-policing; abolition of child labor; the right of workers to take over an enterprise deserted by its owners and the remission of rent during the siege of Paris.

The commune lasted for two months. It was crushed by the French Army with the collaboration of the German occupying force. It was put down in a sea of blood. Some 20,000 citizens of Paris died during the fighting or were executed after work. The slaughter took place on May 21, 1871.

The Paris commune has come to be regarded as the first Worker's Revolution. It made a lasting impact on Karl Marx and on this basis he developed the theory of the need for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. This year marked the 150 anniversary of the commune.

2. The Founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC)

On July 1 1921, one hundred years ago, the CPC was founded. It began as a modest party having to hold its first congress in a boat.

The party grew to lead many great struggles. It began first for freedom and democracy, a struggle that lasted for some twenty eight years when the revolution triumphed in 1949.

During this period, the CPC led the fight against the Japanese invasion and was successful in throwing them out of China.

The CPC established the People's Republic of China (PRC) and has transformed the country with a modern and prosperous state. The PRC is now the second largest economy in the world.

The Communist Party has been the ruling party since 1949 and is the largest worker's and farmer's party in the world.

3. The founding of the South African Communist Party (SACP)

This party was founded on July 31 1921. It was the first multi racial organization in South Africa.

It played a leading role in the fight to end Apartheid in South Africa, in particular and to make the world a better place.

The SACP has provided many great leaders for South Africa and the World Working Class Movement.

4. First man in Space.

On April 12 1961, sixty years ago, Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to have left the earth environs into outer space. He was just twenty seven years old at that time.

Gagarin's flight lasted for 108 minutes, in which time he orbited the earth.

The news was sensational all around the world. Gagarin's flight opened the era of space exploration. It was a truly historic event.

5. The collapse of the Soviet Union

On December 26 1991 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed. It was a most traumatic event for millions of people who shared the original aspiration of the USSR. People who regarded the Soviet Union as a bastion and champion of World Peace.

Thirty years have elapsed since then. The world today is in far greater dangers than when the USSR existed. The dangers of nuclear war have become frightening and more and more countries have weapons of mass destruction.

Inequality has grown with abject poverty and filthy wealth existing side by side.

Even though the USSR is no more its goals of equal opportunity for all; free education; free health; better housings ending inequality and poverty remains a priority for peace loving peoples the world over.

6. The Attack on the United States on September 11 2001

The world was stunned to see, in some cases live on Television the attack on the United States.

The American people were shocked because they never had to fight a war on their soil.

Another distinguishing feature of the attack was the fact that it was not done by another country. It was carried out by a terrorist organization.

That attack on the US led to more wars in Asia and the Middle East. The war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and many others have their origins on September 11, twenty years ago.

7. Local Events

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the beginning of the National Liberation struggle for Independence. On November 6 1964 Cheddi and Janet Jagan, Joslyn Hubbard and Ashton Chase published the first bulletin announcing to the country and the world that they had established an organization called the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) and the bulletin, the PAC Bulletin was its organ.

In it was set out the goals which were in parts to inform and educate the Guyanese people in social, economic and political events in the then colony, British Guiana and the world.

It also stated that it intended to establish a political party to fight for independence and socialism.

On January 1 1950 the PAC came to an end and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) was formed. One aspect of the task fulfilled.

The struggle for socialism continues.

8. The 60th Anniversary of the 1961 General Elections won by the PPP.

This election was supposed to have been the last elections before Independence. It was agreed at the 1960 Independence conference that the winner of those elections would have led the country to Independence in 1962.

However, through imperialist machinations and the instigation of racial violence Independence was withheld.

9. This year (2021) marks the 55th Anniversary of our Independence.

On May 26 1966 Guyana became an Independent country. This was a result of the epic struggle waged by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

Many party leaders at various stages of the struggle were imprisoned. This was particularly true after the 1953 elections when the PPP swept the polls stunning the British.

After the British through a policy of bribery and corruption split the PPP in 1955, they helped to create the People's National Congress (PNC) and using that party as a tool, divided the population. Racism was the method used.

The PPP fought against great odds. The joint efforts to destroy the Party led by the US, UK, PNC, UF, the mass media at that time and a section of the business community.

Despite the pressures the PPP continued to uphold independence and sovereignty and to champion the cause of the working people.

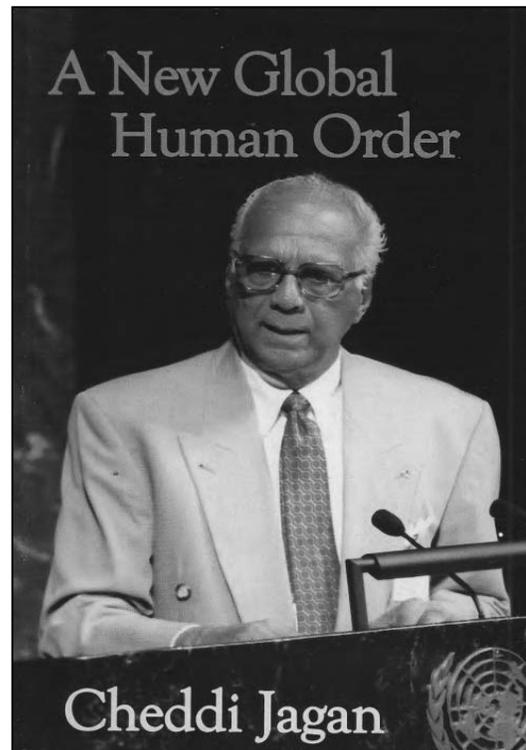
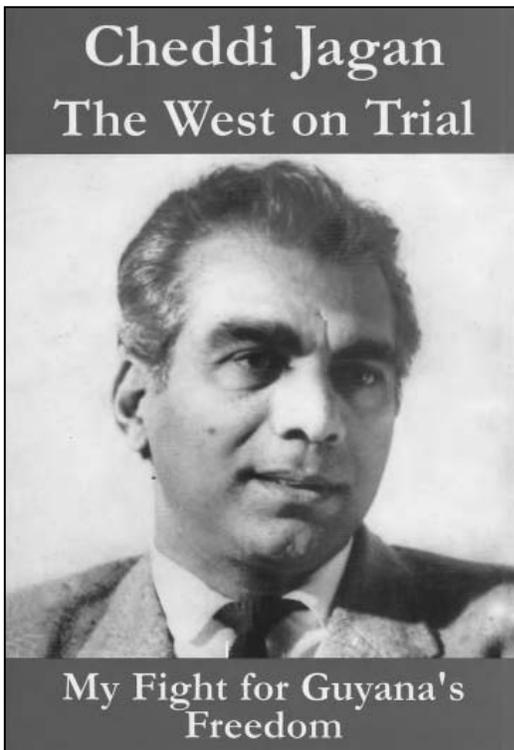
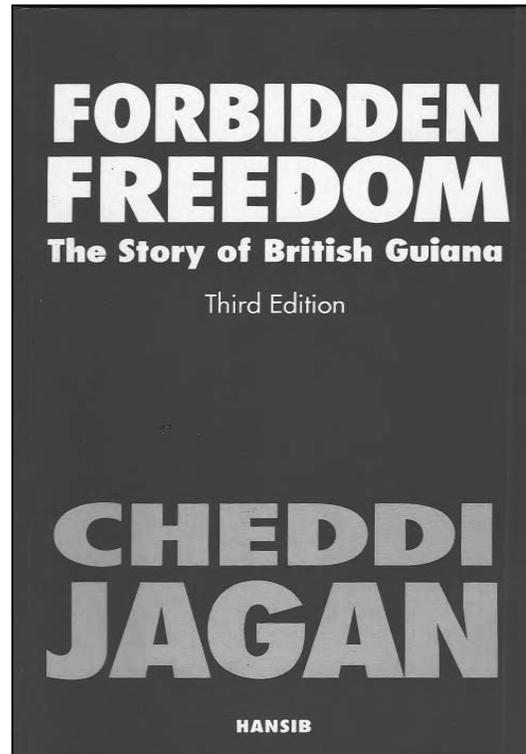
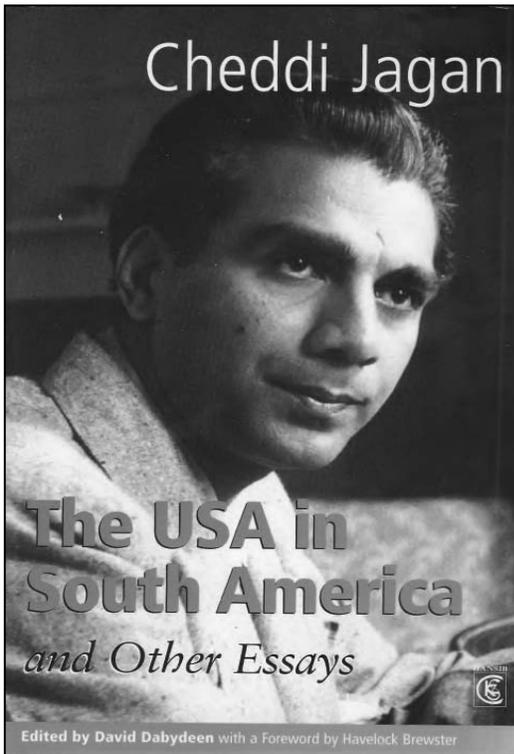
The great opposition failed to destroy the party. However, they did succeed in removing the party from government and at establishing a neo-colonial state in 1966. The PPP continued to fight and was the main force to struggle for democracy and Free and Fair elections. That was won on October 5 1992.

10. Nationalization of the Bauxite Co. Demba.

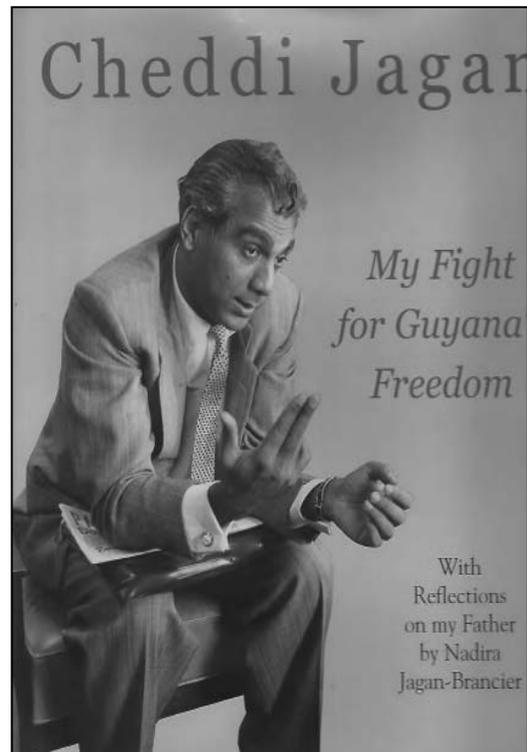
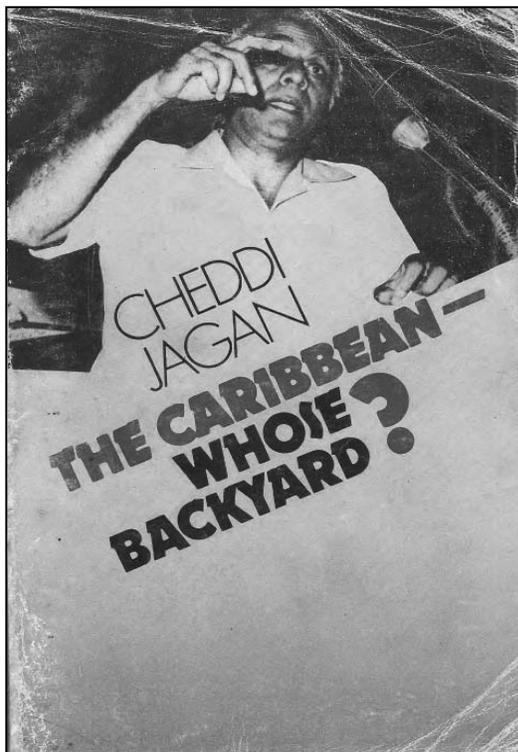
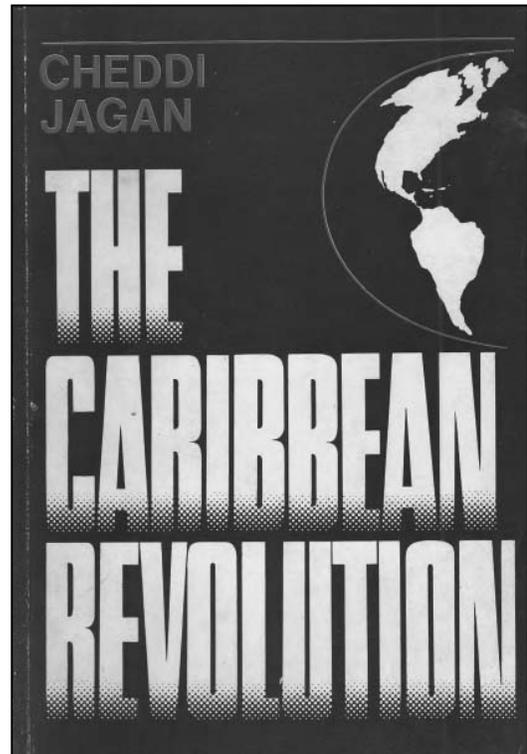
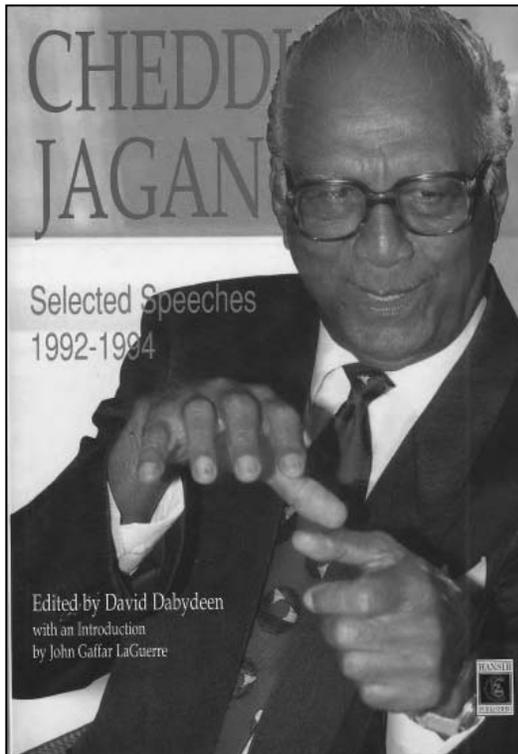
On February 23 1971 the PNC government announced that it was moving to have meaningful participation in Bauxite. However, it was clear that the negotiations were not going well and the PNC nationalized the company on July 15 1971, fifty years ago.

11. This year also marked 45 years since the Sugar Industry was Nationalized

Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



Publications by Dr. Cheddi Jagan



Cheddi Jagan Research Centre

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (CJRC) was officially opened on March 22, 2000 which was the 82nd birthday anniversary of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. The CJRC is dedicated to making available to Guyana and the world, the very rich collection of materials which captures the visionary thoughts and revolutionary ideas of the late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan (1918-1997)

The centre houses a large archival collection of papers, documents, photographs, audio and DVDs related to Dr. Jagan's long and enduring involvement in leading the political struggle in Guyana and at the global level. Dr. Cheddi Jagan is the Father of the Guyanese nation and a renowned and respected statesman. His immense stature in Guyana the Caribbean and the world at large stems from his ground-breaking contributions in numerous stages of the struggle for a better life for the people of Guyana and the world at large.

These include:

1. The struggle against the British to end colonial rule through political independence.
2. Governing for the benefit of the Guyanese people in the colonial period in 1953 and 1957 to 1964 and as the first democratically elected President of independent Guyana from 1992-1997.
3. The international struggle for an end to poverty and inequality through a New Global Human Order.

The CJRC's aims and objectives are to publish material and promote research on the life, work and ideas of Dr. Jagan which is intertwined with the history of Guyana as a whole from the early 1940's to the late 1990's.

Moreover, the collection is indispensable to any analysis of Guyana's post-war social, economic and political development, since Dr. Jagan's work and thoughts have had such a powerful resonance with his country and beyond.

Conference Room Rental

The Conference room is available for rental to host meetings, seminars and workshops

CONTACT US

Cheddi Jagan Research Centre (Red House)

65-67 High Street, Kingston, Georgetown

Tel: (592) 223-7523/4

Website: <http://jagan.org>

Opening hours: Monday – Friday (9:00 am – 4:00pm)

Admission – FREE!

The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre is dedicated to making available to the Guyanese and international communities the Legacy and Work of the Late President of Guyana, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, through research and education.

The Centre is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation located at the Red House.

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