All that Glitters is not Gold

by Janet Jagan

It has an excellent cover – the Guyana flag, pictures of Burnham, Jagan and Rodney, an interesting title “A Dream Deferred – Guyana’s identity and the shadow of colonialism” by Stephen Spencer, published by Hansib. The back cover describes the author as having researched ethnic relations in the Caribbean and Australia. “He is a senior lecturer in Sociology at Sheffield Hallam University where he has produced several books...”

I believe, but not certain, that it was launched or put out for sale by Hansib during Carifesta. A friend loaned me the book, saying that she read the first few pages and found it “reasonable.”

Yes, the first few pages were interesting, but by page 10 I started to wonder about the accuracy of the contents. The author gives a breakdown in the population of Guyana related to race and then notes the number of Guyanese living abroad. In his words: “Conservative estimates of Guyanese living in other countries (especially US, Canada and UK) could be close to 700,000 (around...”

The ignorant author obviously hasn’t a clue about Guyana. He mixes up Prime Minister Sam Hinds with David Hinds, the wildly extremist, anti-PPP character, a vociferous hate-writer like Freddi Kissoon. Obviously his research and knowledge of Guyana is extremely poor. Aside from the author’s lack of scholarship, what about the rampant corruption and security forces that were able to rob and terrorize Indian citizens with little chance of reprimand or enquiry. I was Minister of Home Affairs when the Wisnus massacre took place. Working with a hostile British Commissioner of Police Peter Owen, and the Governor, I had to have my own sources of information, as they sought to keep me in the dark on all matters.

Has it wrong and didn’t mention the 1985 elections under Hoyte.

Referring to the Wisnus massacre of 1964, his remarks indicate a lack of understanding of the time frame of the attack: “Nevertheless it seems that the government (if indeed not directly responsible for such acts) was reluctant to curb...”

It tented and tell the Commissioner “I just finished reading all of this in the newspaper.” They kept the secret information for themselves. In the case of Wisnus (like the X-13 report which I had to uncover on my own) I reported to the Commissioner that there would be trouble there soon and the lives of the minority East Indian population must be protected. I ordered that re-enforcements be sent to Wisnus immediately, but he refused. Then the horrors began and the entire East Indian population of Mc Kenzie/Wisnus i.e., those still alive after the murders, rapes and mayhem, had to leave.

I was because of the attitude of the British Governor and Police Commissioner in refusing to listen to the truth about Wisnus, that I resigned my Ministry and research centres, if the author had any interest in historical facts and accuracy!

The author further messes up his book by devoting more than five pages trying to establish that the caste system is still an important aspect of life in the Hindu community of Guyana. He’s way off from reality on this score, and his study of race relations is purely anecdotal one after the other. One would presume that a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at a respected University would be analytical, but he just pushes out the usual taxi-driver’s stories of race relations like a hack.

The rush to print is a sickness that is worldwide. I believe, we see it right here in Guyana and especially during Carifesta when so many books were launched. Many, as we know, are valuable contributions to our culture and we can be proud that literature has developed so well in recent years. But unfortunately, like the book examined today, authors are careless not only in their research, but in the writing. There are those books published which are not yet ready; the authors need to be more serious about their works and go...
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