Why I did it!

In one of the Wednesday Stabroek News columns called "Ramblings," the anonymous writer made a small remark about the video on my life done by my second cousin Suzie Wasserman. He asked why she did not include the episode of my throwing the papers served on me at my inauguration as President, over my shoulder.

The reason it was not included, I believe, is because she and her cameraman could not get to State House due to the violence in the streets engineered by the PNC at their humiliating loss at the polls. Because, my party received the highest number of votes in the 1997 elections than any other Party has ever received in any legitimate elections in Guyana.

Because we did so well, and obviously crossed lines into all areas, including so-called bastions of the PNC, that Party was again venting its rage as it has done so many times in our contemporary history.

But why did I throw the papers that were intended to prevent me from taking the Oath of Office as President over my shoulder? The reason, as I explained twice while I was President, was not disrespect of the legal system, but disgust at the many times my Party has been denied its legal rights to office over and over again. It was an act of protest against the multiple injustices my Party has faced.

It began when the British suspended the Constitution in 1953 and denied the PPP its legitimate right to office. In 1957, when the British revived elections, the constituencies were rigged to defeat us - but we won anyhow. Dr. Jagan received more votes in his one constituency than did 5 other seats combined! These were the seats won by the PNC and other opposition groups. In 1961, when we again had elections, the British had a special commission determine new constituency boundaries, all manipulated diabolically to defeat the PPP. We won, despite all that.

Then in the period 1961 - 64, the British, aided by the USA and local puppets, denied us independence because they did not want Jagan to lead an independent nation. They then changed the whole electoral process to defeat the PPP, and even then, when the PPP got the largest number of votes of any Party, manipulated a coalition between the PNC and the United Force to keep us out of office.

From then on, it was one rigged election after the other. For the doubters and those who foisted rigged elections and later claimed the PPP was doing the same, let me quote from a declassified American document of June 12, 1968, "a memorandum for the Hon. Walt W. Rostow, Special Assistant to the President, Subject - Plans of Guyana Prime Minister Forbes Burnham, Leader of the People's National Congress (PNC) to Rig the Elections Scheduled for Late 1968 or Early 1969."

The memo states that at a high level meeting of the PNC, Forbes Burnham "gave instructions to rig the elections scheduled for late 1968 or early 1969 in order to permit the PNC to win a clear majority. Burnham said that the registration of East Indians, who traditionally vote for the PPP, should be strictly limited in order to keep their number of eligible voters as low as possible. He also gave instructions to his Party leaders to increase the size of the PNC electorate by registering some PNC adherents who are between the ages of 17 and 20 years, although the minimum age for voting is 21 years of age. He said he plans to have written into the electoral law a provision for increasing the use of proxy votes." The
declassified document also noted: "In April 1968 Burnham stated that he will not form a government if he has to depend on his coalition partner Peter D’Aguiar ..."

This document, signed by Thomas H. Karamessines was copied to the Deputy Secretary for Defence, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs and the Director of Intelligence and Research.

It would be a mistake not to recognise Mr. Desmond Hoyte's place in all that took place in the devastating years of PNC rule. Hoyte was the PNC's man in the Election Commission for the 1968 elections. I was also a member, representing my Party, and I was witness to his compliance with all the methods used to rig the first of a series of fraudulent elections during the Burnham/Hoyte regimes.

The irony, or maybe it's just a joke, is that the PNC cannot stop hollering, marching in the streets, using violence and instituting election petitions against the PPP in all the elections since rigging was defeated!

Yes! I threw away the papers that would have prevented me from taking the Oath of Office as President, because I had already taken the Oath of Office, not at a secret ceremony as alleged, (can over 35 people be secret?) but done legally in order that my Party would not again be denied justice!

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