

Speech by Janet Jagan - 1954 in the court after being arrested

Hitler outraged public opinion 20 years ago by doing what this government is doing today – making it a crime to read certain books. One of the most disastrous wars in the history of this world was fought bringing death of hundreds of thousands – for what! To prevent fascism from spreading its poisonous tentacles over Europe. Have all these lives been lost in vain that fascism and the practices of Herr Hitler should be introduced to British Guiana? Have all the efforts of the post war peace makers been fruitless and a mockery? Was the Declaration of Human Rights nothing more than a sham? In the colonies we are forced to believe – by the hard brutal facts – that we are all the victims of a diabolical joke. What else can we think when the Declaration of Human Rights drafted by the fathers of the United Nations guarantees all people the right to “hold opinions without interference and seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium, regardless of frontiers” – And I am standing before you – a criminal in your eyes. A criminal who has been charged with larceny? No! One charged with murder? No! One charged with black marketing – No. I am charged like a criminal for having some books in my possession.

Future generations will be astounded that such nonsense was allowed in this country.

The Undesirable Publications Ordinance was conceived in the minds of persons for whom the ideas of freedom is foreign. It has been implemented by a government which recognizing might as the only right. The Ordinance is rotten to the core – as is our present puppet government. I can have no regard for either. The corrupt laws and fascist government will stand to the eternal shame of liberty loving Guianese.

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