WORLD IN ACTION

P.568/79

THE TRAIL OF THE VANISHING VOTERS

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163 Radnor Street, Manchester doesn't exist any more and these two horses certainly don't answer to the names of Lily and Olga Barton.

And if Harry Porter is alive and well he's not in this Balham funeral parlour.

In Cecil Street, Manchester, there's just a gap in the wall where the Angloys and Barkers should be. A couple of peculiar coincidences surround the Barkers, the Angloys, the Bartons and Mr Harry Porter. First, they are all registered to vote in a general election next Monday. And second, none of them seem to exist. Tonight

WORLD IN ACTION sets out on

THE TRAIL OF THE VANISHING VOTERS

The Barkers, the Angloys, the Bartons and Mr Harry Porter are apparently fictitious characters in a bizarre exercise which could affect the outcome of a South American election.

The former British colony of Guyana is perched on the shoulder of South America. Next Monday it holds its first Independent Election, an election of international importance. The strong Opposition is led by a Marxist. If he won, America could have another Cuba on her doorstep.

Guyana has a bitter past. Nearly two hundred people died in a violent struggle between the parties before independence.

There are two main racial groups. Guyanese of African origin are concentrated in the towns and dominate the police, army and civil service. Most of them will vote for the existing largely Negro Government.
But the majority of Guyanese are of Indian origin. Their ancestors were shipped from India to labour in the sugar fields.

They are likely to vote massively for the Opposition - and it's Indian Marxist leader. To win, the Government needs every vote it can lay its hands on, and it's taking no chances. A thousand troops patrolled the plantations when Indian sugar workers went on strike last month.

All the old bitterness between Indian and Negro, between left and right, still simmers. But we did find one floating voter in the cane fields.

INTERVIEWER

Who are you going to vote for in this election?

SUGAR CUTTER: SYNC

Well as to now I can't say yet. Because I did not consider in my mind yet who I'm going to vote for. Later on when I feel whoever in my mind, choose to vote for.

COMMENTATOR

Forbes Burnham has been Prime Minister of Guyana since 1964. He leads the ruling Peoples National Congress Party.

BURNHAM

You can't vote for PPP because you can't vote for terrorism. You can't vote UF because they're fighting a big party...Therefore you've got to vote for the People's National Congress Party.

Thank you comrades, I really got to go now...

I hope to Christ you're sober on the 16th.
But the receptions are less enthusiastic when the Prime Minister is not among his own people.

All right, clear your throat properly because if I don't hear this hooray coming forward loudly there ain't going to be no holiday tomorrow - hip, hip, hip, hooray. That's not good enough, like you're sick, hip, hip, hip, hooray. All right, therefore you will get the holiday tomorrow, thank you very much.

Marxist Cheddi Jagan leads the People's Progressive Party. He was once Premier but agents of the American C.I.A. secretly financed a general strike to bring him down.

Comrades, this is no time for us to be divided. Guyana unfortunately has too many races and too many religions which is a hunting ground for the sharks. But there are only two classes, the exploiters and the exploited. The capitalist and the workers.

Big businessman Peter D'aguilar is leader of the Third Party, the Right Wing Force. Two months ago he broke his Party's coalition with Burnham. Now he campaigns among the Amerindians of the interior.
This time I would not join any coalition except on these terms, and these terms are, that the land question be settled before that the rights of the Amerindians to their land be granted.

I think communism can be defeated fairly in Guyana as it has been in the past, and I'm all for a fair honest election and we're not getting it and it augurs very ill for the future.

I think we had a bill called a Representation of the Peoples Bill which had better been called a Bill to rig the elections in favour of the ruling party.

Georgetown, Capital of Guyana. This is the Centre where the Government compiled the disputed registers of voters. 300,000 people in Guyana have now been photographed, registered and deemed eligible to vote by this office. And despite opposition protests the office has also registered 67,000 voters outside Guyana for the first time. These overseas voters don't have to be photographed. They make up no less than one sixth of the total electorate. The office staff are overwhelmingly drawn from the pro-Government negro block. We asked Chief Elections Officer Reg Butler why.
It is a normal thing. It happened in the last Government, when they were preparing the registers they have to see that they put the person in to look after their own interests. They wouldn't like to know that they're putting in anybody who would embarrass them in any way. This is a normal thing that they do appoint persons whom they can trust and carry out their functions.

Lancelot Ferreira is Commissioner of Registration. His office approved the overseas list.

How many did you find about in London?

About 38 thousand.

And outside London?

Remaining 7 thousand.

WORLD IN ACTION did its own arithmetic. Mr Ferreira's final lists name 43,423 Guyanese voters in Britain. We checked British census and immigration statistics but we could not find many more than 20,000. There are certainly not 43,423 Guyanese voters.
Well I asked to see a number of registration cards of cases which looked odd to me in looking over the revised voters list, for overseas, and in examining the cards that I asked for, it was very clear, there's no doubt, that these were forged cards.

Commentator

Janet Jagan is the wife of the Opposition leader, Cheddi Jagan, and Secretary of his Party.

- a William Hockley and a Florence Hockley living at one address and then a William Hockley and a Florence Hockley at another address, all four having separate registration numbers and each entitled to a ballot. I found that all four when you examine them together bore similar signatures so in fact the four were manufactured.

Commentator

Back in London we checked both the Hockley addresses listed.

First Woman

There's no William or Florence Hockley here, my family's lived here for more than 15 years.

Second Woman

No.

Interviewer

They don't live here? How long have you lived here?
SECOND WOMAN
About a year and six months.

INTERVIEWER
About a year and six months. What is your name?

SECOND WOMAN
Mrs Bacchus.

INTERVIEWER
Mrs Bacchus. I see, you're quite sure they don't live here. Do you know of anyone of that name living near here.

SECOND WOMAN
No.

INTERVIEWER
They don't live next door?

SECOND WOMAN
No.

COMMENTATOR
Intrigued by the inconsistencies in the overseas voting list WORLD IN ACTION set out to test its accuracy. Two dozen researchers checked a random sample of 550 listed addresses of voters in London. The result was startling.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
How long have you lived here yourself?

WOMAN
Over 25 years.
SECOND WOMAN AT DOOR SYNC

No, we haven't got any Mr Dalton, never. Never heard of him.

INTERVIEWER SYNC

How long have you been here?

SECOND WOMAN SYNC

I've been here ten years now.

LANCELOT FERREIRA SYNC

Are you absolutely sure that the number of Guyanese living in Great Britain is correct.

FERREIRA SYNC

I think the figure is correct.

INTERVIEWER SYNC

You're 100% sure about this?

FERREIRA SYNC

Well I feel it's correct because there are quite a lot of Guyanese who are living here from a very long way back.

THIRD INTERVIEW WITH WOMAN SYNC

No, Mr John Collins has never lived here, I've lived here for 30 years. I've never heard of him.

FOURTH INTERVIEW WITH WOMAN SYNC

No, not as far as I know, we've lived here 9 years and nobody by that name has ever lived here.

LANCELOT FERREIRA SYNC

But you still are a 100% sure that the figures on the foreign lists are correct?

FERREIRA SYNC

Yes.
INTERVIEWER SYNC
You have no doubt at all?

FERREIRA SYNC
I have no doubt at all.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
I see.

BUTCHER SYNC INTERVIEW
I've got on my list a Barbara Curtis who gives this address as her address.

BUTCHER SYNC
Never heard of a woman by that name.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
How long have you been here?

BUTCHER SYNC
About 15 years.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Anyone live upstairs?

BUTCHER SYNC
No, nobody.

MAN SYNC: STREET INTERVIEW
James Bentley

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Bentley.

MAN SYNC
No, I've never heard of him.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
How long have you been living here?

MAN SYNC
Fifteen years now.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Are you sure, James Bentley.
Don't know the name at all.

I See.

Got a fellow here from Ceylon.

Do you think that any of your agents registered anyone at all without their actually producing a passport?

I cannot say that for certain because I am not living abroad but I would feel that they would carry the instructions as I had given them in the correct manner.

In fact, nearly half the 550 addresses we visited had never heard of the Guyanese voters who should have been there. And our researchers found even more extraordinary examples.

In London's East End, voters, Yearwood, Howard and Nedd should have been living at 16, 20 & 22 Rendlesham Road. Demolition began here a year ago and a school is being built on the site.

14 Homer Road, 15 & 16, more voters should live here but the three houses were council padlocked two years ago. Examples like this cropped up all over London. Using the A to Z street guide, we set off for South London to find 15 Vant Road, Tooting. We found numbers 19 and 17 but there was an old established builders yard where number
We checked the correctness of the addresses to ensure that if an address has been given, it actually exists. That's the reason for checking the A-Z...particular address, we check the address to ensure that it exists.

Well I actually didn't do the checking myself but my staff did and I have confidence in them and I'm sure that they've done a good job.

And it is also unlikely that Gladys Foster ever lived at 32 Arvon Road, Islington. The houses here made way for the railway in 1874.

And you feel there are absolutely no flaws?

Where I'm concerned there's none. No flaws at all because everything is done in accordance with the regulations or in accordance with an Act or Legislation which was passed by the House of Assembly with both sides present and so long as it is passed I'm just merely carrying out the functions or the requirements of that particular legislation which was discussed by the government.

The conclusions of our London survey were emphatic. Most of the overseas voters on the Guyanese electoral list were not at the addresses given.
Seventy five of the houses were derelict or non-existent. In fact of the 550 names we checked in London little more than a hundred were genuine Guyanese voters. For conclusive proof we sent out researchers in Manchester. Soo they found the proof we needed.

In Cecil Street Manchester. Here there should be sixty Guyanese voters. We looked very hard but we couldn't find a single one.

And where Radnor Street, Pinder Street and 30 Guyanese were supposed to be, only a pub survived the bulldozers.

In Manchester we checked 350 addresses, one house in every six listed. 50 per cent, a full half of these houses didn't even exist. We found only one genuine voter for every 20 listed. Our total survey in London and Manchester proves beyond doubt that the list of overseas voters in the Guyana election is a massive fabrication.

COMMENTATOR

When the British left Guyana in 1966, a special Election Commission had been set up in Guyana to supervise voting and guard against corruption. But in recent months the Burnham Government has whittled away the Commission's power. Although the three major parties each appoint a member, the chairman also has a vote and the Election Commission is now deadlocked. The Chairman, Sir Donald Jackson, is a former High Court Judge.
It is not for me to enquire and in point of fact I do not go about looking for faults, I try to find out the best in everyone so that I may improve my own imperfections.

I would start out - I would start out by presuming that they are correct and if information comes to me which I am sure about that there is something wrong and it has been proved to me then I would say I am so very sorry that this is so, I never expected it. But I don't start out by presuming that a person would perform this act without impartiality or without good judgement. I don't assume that at all. Otherwise one would get the wrong conclusions.

With this government the poor class of people get poorer and the rich class of people get richer.

In the ricefields around Georgetown the Indian peasants are frustrated and angry.

Hard, hard, look very hard, look how hard he is working in the mud, we hardly seeing anything at all. Some of us hardly get any getting food, lot of people suffering bad. Working from 7 to 7 in mud day and night.
In the peasant villages Cheddi Jagan's orators are whipping up indignation.

Comrades, we in the country must realize that in so far as people overseas are going to have a preponderating voice in the choice of candidates at the next election, the people of Guyana must be fighting for the electoral suffrage all over again,... We must therefore call upon the Government, call upon the elections commission, call upon freedom loving people everywhere... we must call upon the international commission of jurists to investigate what is going on here to witness the trial on the two writs which have been filed.

They have no right to vote in this country while we here in this country suffer and they making their money outside and we in this country punishing so I don't see why they should vote from that side to this country. They have no interest in this country, why they vote from there to here. We the people live here, we see what happens here, we know why the problems for we, they can't know why the problems here.

It's not fair to us. I don't see what kind of interest they've got in this country that they must vote for this country and they got no interest in this country. We the people who live in this country we must vote for the country not them.
people outside.

Well the whole thing is completely immoral in the sense that never in the history of any country has there been such a big slice of the electorate coming from the outside, I think in the UK and the United States where this is allowed it's done to a very small extent, maybe 1% of the votes.

The Opposition leader Cheddi Jagan

They have no connection with Guyana save they may have been born here, they don't live here, they don't pay any taxes here, they don't even know what's going on in Guyana and the fact of the matter is, the foreign vote is likely to decide the electoral results of this election. In other words who will be the government of Guyana. This whole thing is immoral.

This is just another gimmick being used by the Opposition. At first they said we would not hold elections, then secondly -

Forbes Burnham, Prime Minister.

- they said we would use voting machines. Now voting machines have not been used. They've got to find another gimmick and the gimmick now is the overseas vote which is something that is provided for under the constitution. I am not in
any way concerned about that and I give politicians who are losing the right to find gimmicks.

INTERVIEWER
This is a pretty serious gimmick in one sense because unless I'm wrong there are 67 thousand foreign voters.

BURNHAM SING
Not foreign voters. Guyanese resident overseas entitled to vote under the constitution.

INTERVIEWER
Okay, fair enough, 67 thousand people have been registered overseas, they are eligible to vote in this election. This forms 1/6th of your electorate. Now is it fair that 1/6th of your possible total electorate should be living overseas?

BURNHAM SING
There's no question of fairness. In the last American elections, over three million people overseas voted. It's a question of your constitution. If your constitution permits your residents overseas to vote, they are entitled to vote. What is all this nonsense about fairness. Can the constitution be unfair?

CHEDDI JAGAN SING
If the government cannot win a fair election at home - have to resort to fraud, overseas voting for instance - another time comes around it cannot even win by that kind of fraud and therefore it has to impose a military dictatorship.
FORRES BURNHAM SYNC

Elections aren't elections unless they're free. As a matter of fact perhaps it's somewhat tautologous to speak of free elections.

INTERVIEWER SYNC

Many people have told me though that this election is completely rigged.

BURNHAM SYNC

Sure they will say that. Didn't they say that we were going to use voting machines, didn't they say that we weren't going to have elections, well you must pull a rabbit out of the hat every time.

INTERVIEWER SYNC

Is this really just a rabbit?

BURNHAM

It is a rabbit so far as I am concerned.

CHEDDI JAGAN

Burnham has the making of another Hitler in Guyana and under American backing they have put him there and they are going to prop him up. And this is dangerous for Guyana, for the people of Guyana, not only the people. We see the same kind of thing what it has lead to in Vietnam.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of Dr Jagan?

BURNHAM

A communist. More of a communist even than Tito because while Tito objected to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia as also did the Western Communist parties, he justified it.
INTERVIEWER
Can you give me any idea of what you think about him personally?

BURNHAM
A very charming person but the most incompetent administrator.

INTERVIEWER
Do you think he's fit to rule his country, to govern his country?

BURNHAM
The electorate didn't think so in '64, and I have good reason to believe they wouldn't think so in '68 either.

COMMENTATOR
British housewives were surprised by the thought of non-existent Guyanese at their addresses. But in Guyana the Opposition parties are afraid. They say the election is not properly safeguarded against manipulation and fear the missing voters might pop up in the ballot box next Monday.

Mr Joe Hughes is one of the Guyanese officials handling the election in Britain. Between April and July he says he was solely responsible for registering the names of all Guyanese living in Wolverhampton. Mr Hughes and officials for other areas were hand-picked by the Guyana High Commission in London. Their job was to find all Guyanese in their areas and get positive proof of their right to vote. The man in charge was the High Commission's First Secretary, Mr Patrick Thierens, Chief Registration Officer for the whole of Britain. To find out just how well the
END OF COMMENTARY BRING UP
JOE HUGHES REMARKS 'I
BELONG TO BURNHAM PARTY'.

operation was controlled, our reporter cross-
examined Mr. Hughes in detail about his work as an
election official in Wolverhampton - and the
results.

JOE HUGHES SYNC
I belong to Burnham party.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Would you consider yourself a party activist.

HUGHES SYNC
I can't be, you see, once I took the oath, you
know, it might be bad for my party. I took an
oath to do a job which I can help the party but
I can't be an activist, you know, I can't be an
activist while I was doing this registration
business.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
How many did you enroll in Wolverhampton?

HUGHES SYNC
41 Guyanese.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
This is the sum total of the Guyanese in
Wolverhampton? As far as you know?

HUGHES SYNC
Yes.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
The official list claims that there are in fact
over 220 people who are eligible to vote in
Wolverhampton.

HUGHES SYNC
This isn't true.
INTERVIEWEE SYNC
I have the official list.

HUGHES SYNC
This isn't true.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
There are 225 people on this list.

HUGHES SYNC
This isn't true. This isn't true. I know that this isn't true.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
I've counted them up personally.

HUGHES SYNC
Who give you that list, you know.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Well this is an official list which is published-

HUGHES SYNC
Given by-

INTERVIEWER SYNC
Given by a party to us.

HUGHES SYNC
A party. Well I don't know of this.

INTERVIEWER SYNC
But these are the official lists which are used by all parties. It's an official government list.

HUGHES SYNC
Yes, I don't know this. Frankly I'd like to know more of this, who give you this information and I'd like to see...you know.
But it is an official printed list which is available to anyone to see and inspect.

And to say there's more than 20 Guyanese in Wolverhampton, well I'd like to look at it, you know, I don't know, I'll have to look at this. If a party tells you that - a party might say that - if an agent does that he's liable to prosecution, you think I would be...you think I would do that and at the time now when trying to finish my exams to do that and finish my own career? I wouldn't be so daft.

Last week WORLD IN ACTION reporters invited the Guyana High Commissioner in London to explain the discrepancies in the lists of voters. The Commissioner is Sir Lionel Luckhoo, QC, CBE. He is ballot officer for Britain. He was unable to appear. But back in Guyana his Prime Minister Forbes Burnham had no qualms about the overseas vote.

Going back to the foreign voters, would you agree with a figure of just over 43,000 foreign registrants in Great Britain?

It is not for me to agree or disagree. It is a matter of what comes out of the register under the processes set up by law.
And you are satisfied that these processes which were set up by law are-

Have been carried out.

and are you satisfied they were carried out accurately, efficiently, and that they are completely valid?

So far as I'm aware, yes.

You are sure about this?

So far as I'm aware - you don't expect me to account for every single person all over the world do you?

Are you 100% satisfied that the electoral process, the setting up of the election, has been completely impartial?

I am.

Could you repeat that and amplify it?

What have I got to amplify as Prime Minister I say that I am satisfied that the electoral process was impartial.
Seven days ago Mr Burnham again reasserted that the lists of Guyanese voters in Britain were genuine. That is not true. Most of them are fakes. And the scale of the discrepancies indicates something more sinister than incompetence.

Voting in Britain ends today and later this week Sir Lionel should fly home and cast the votes of Guyanese in Britain. We wonder whether our vanishing voters will reappear in the ballot boxes of Georgetown.