

The New Sugar Agreement

By CHEDDI JAGAN.

On all sides—the Sugar Producers Association, the M.P.C.A. and the "Daily Argosy"—there is great jubilation about the new sugar agreement signed between the sugar planters and the Man Power Citizens Association. We are told that it is going to mean an additional sum of \$3 million for sugar workers. There is to be a flat increase of 13 per cent in the cost of living allowance of field workers making a total of 70 per cent. It is interesting to note that the cost of living index for sugar estate workers reached 299 points in 1931. For the factory workers there is to be an increase of 21c. per hour making a total of 4c. since last September. These increases have to be considered in relation to wages earned. Department of Labour statistics reveal that the average wage of time workers is as follows:

Basic wage rate (time workers)

- (Field Basic)—
- Male - 50—72c. per day
- Female - 36c.—40c. per day
- Factory
- Unskilled Males—18c. per hour
- Females—10.5c. per hour.
- Semi Skilled and skilled—19.5 to 57
- Watchmen (factory) 72c. per day
- Watchmen (house and casual) 24c. per day
- In addition to above 70% cost of living on field and watchmen with exception of Barrage Factory.

to the Argosy "have to be earned". These will take the form of bonuses—for annual holidays, for work done on Mondays and Saturdays, for reaching weekly and half-yearly targets. But—are these really concessions? Is the Argosy right when it states that "the money is there but the workers have got to come and get it" The money is really not there. What actually happens is that the workers who produce the sugar and reach target figures are the ones who produce the money (when the sugar is sold) but get paid for only part of what they have produced. The rest goes to the planters.

In the Sugar industry the rate of exploitation is extremely high—over 100 percent. The sugar worker actually gets less than half of the amount he produces in any single day or week. In this light all bonuses must be viewed.

Take the case of a cut and loader. Everytime he received \$1.16 per ton for cut and loading he is producing as much for the planter. When he works on Saturdays and Mondays, he is given an incentive bonus of 38c. per ton which simply means 38c. less in profits for every ton of sugar produced on Saturdays and Mondays. The thing to remember is that should the worker not work on Saturdays and Mondays, the planters would get no profits at all—so that in the end they prefer to surrender a part of their profits as bonuses. This

uses.

While all these increases and bonuses are expected to reach \$3 million it is to be remembered that if B.G. was a socialist country, and the sugar industry was publicly owned, not only the estimated \$3 million, but the whole of \$4 to \$6 million would have gone to the workers. The export price of sugar from Jan. 1952 is to be £38/10 per ton, an increase of £5/12 6. An annual target of 200,000 tons would bring about \$5½ million extra, whereas an increase to 220,000 tons would net about \$6 million.

Time has come for a complete reorganisation of the sugar industry.

IRON CURTAIN IN TRINIDAD.

Letter received on Feb. 5th, 1952 by Dr. JAGAN from the Colonial Secretary.

"Col. Secretary's Office
Br. Guiana.

February 4, 1952.

"Sir

I am directed to enclose the accompanying copy of a letter received by His Excellency the Governor from the Governor of Trinidad in which the latter requests that you should be informed that you and your wife have been deemed by the Governor-in-Council of Trinidad to be undesirable inhabitants of or visitors to the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago and will, therefore, be allowed to land in the colony.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant