

c/o Dr. K. Kumria,
12, Kennington Park Road,
London, S.E.11.
England.

November 6th 1951.

President,
Human Rights Commission,
New York, City, N.Y.

Dear Sir,

On October 20th, 1951, was released the Report of the British Guiana "Constitution Commission, 1950-51 and Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of British Guiana dated 6th October 1951" (Colonial No.280.

Certain formal changes are:

1. Granting of universal adult suffrage, and the abolition of all income and property qualifications for members of the Legislative Council.
2. Sir John Waddington, Chairman, prefers a unicameral Legislative Council, (18 elected, 6 nominated and 3 official members).
3. Prof. V. Harlow and Dr. R. Hindon, recommend a bicameral Legislative, with a lower Legislative Council (24 elected and 3 official members) and an upper State Council (9 nominated members).
4. Executive Council, the policy making body, will include the Governor, 3 officials and 7 ministers (6 elected and 1 nominated).
5. James Griffiths, late Colonial Secretary, in his dispatch to the Governor of British Guiana recommends the bi-cameral legislature, but with 5 instead of 6 elected ministers.

Checks and Balances have been studiously put in at various stages to perpetuate the old colonial-imperialist order. These will operate at various levels:

1. In the unicameral Legislative Council the majority party will have to secure 14 out of the 18; in the bicameral, 13 out of 24 (14 according to James Griffiths who would allow the 3 officials also to vote), to capture the 6 (or 5) elected seats in the Court of Policy.
2. The key positions in the Court of Policy, will be held by the 3 officials, the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General. They will be responsible for "foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, defence, which should include the police force, and information matters"; finance; law and order.

The 6 (or 5) ministers will head departments, but in cases of dispute between a minister and Head of Department, "the disagreement should be resolved after discussion in the Court of Policy as the Governor may direct."

3. In the Court of Policy, there will be a delicate balance of elected ministers versus the Governor (with a casting vote), the official and nominated ministers.

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4. The State Council will have a suspensory veto of one year on all bills passed by the Legislative Council, other than money bills, upon which it shall have a suspensory veto of three months.
5. The Governor will retain his usual powers of suspension, veto and certification.

The new Constitution will not put real powers in the hands of the people's representatives. The Governor's dictatorial powers can virtually kill any legislation.

This is contrary to the principle laid down in Article 21 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of Government". British Guiana has a typical colonial economy dominated by imperialism - the import of a few crops (sugar, and to some extent rice) and raw material and minerals (timber, bauxite, gold, diamond) while the imports include not only practically all manufactured goods, but also much of the food needs of the people (cheese, butter, jams and jellies, tin and salted meat and fish, tinned and powdered milk, peas and lentils, etc.); the annual drain overseas of profits and capital accumulated in plantations, mines banks and insurance companies; the almost perpetual adverse balance of trade and the traditional policy of buying dear and selling cheap.

Enclosed please find the following: (i) a copy of a Resolution moved by me at the Fourth West Indian Conference of the Caribbean Commission in December 1950, and ruled out of order by the chairman, (ii) A copy of a memorandum submitted to the British Guiana Constitution Commission by the People's Progressive Party, of which I have the honour to be Leader in the Legislative Council.

I wish to appeal to the Human Rights Commission to use its good offices to see that the principles of the Declaration of Human Rights are upheld, and to persuade the British Government to grant immediate self-government to British Guiana.

I beg to request an interview with the Commission to put forward further evidence in support of our demand for self-government. I am prepared to come to New York at your convenience, preferably between November 22nd and December 4th.

Hoping this matter will receive your immediate and kind consideration.

I remain,

Yours very truly,

Cheddi Jagan.