

Cheddi Jagan - A True

by Hydar Ally

Son of the Soil

March 6 marks the seventh anniversary since the passing of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. Quite a number of activities are planned nationwide to commemorate the death (and birth) anniversaries of one of the most beloved leader and friend of the Guyanese people including a Memorial Service on Friday, March 5 at Babu John where his body was cremated.

But why is Dr. Jagan so much loved and respected? The answer can be found in his unwavering loyalty to the cause of the Guyanese people, in particular the poor and the oppressed. From the day he entered into the political arena, he introduced a new dimension to politics, one that was firmly rooted in the struggle for social justice and human dignity. He never allowed status or educational attainment to gain the better of him. Unlike others who used their edu-

cation and intellect for personal aggrandizement, Dr. Jagan made use of his enormous powers of intellect to advance the cause of the ordinary people. "I am the son of sugar workers who hasn't forgotten his roots" Dr. Jagan once said. "Many politicians like me have forgotten where they came from but Jagan will never forget and you can be sure of that."

He never did. That fire to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the oppressed burned throughout his political life. It was that fire that led to the formation of the Political Affairs Committee in 1946 and four years later, the People's Progressive Party which he led until his death. At the time of his death, he was Executive President and had the honour of being the longest serving member of the National Assembly.

Dr. Jagan was undoubtedly a fighter and revolutionary. But he was also a great humanist. He loved people and would stop at nothing to represent their cause. His was truly a "grassroots" leader, always approachable and finding time to speak with people, regardless of their status or station in life. His simplicity and humility, coupled with his high sense of integrity and morality rendered him a politician of unmatched qualities.

It is said that the difference between great personalities and lesser beings lie in the extent to which one is able to sacrifice individual interests for the greater good of humanity. Dr. Jagan was able to do so not only with convincing ease but also in the most unpretentious of manner. His lifestyle bore no evidence of grandeur

despite his enormous stature. He was not interested in making money for himself or his family. As he himself said, "He didn't want to be merely a specialist and craftsman and cure individual aches and ills. He wanted to cure the ills of society. He would like, when he would have passed away, to go on record as having done his bit in the service of humanity."

One outstanding attribute of Dr. Jagan was his tremendous capacity for hard work. He was a prolific writer and had a great appetite for reading. He once said that the "tonic" that kept him going and provided him with high energy levels were derived from his interaction with people.

Life for Dr. Jagan was by no means easy. His was a tough, challenging but rewarding life, one that he

would gladly relive, were that possible. As Dr. Jagan himself wrote and I quote "If I could relive my life, basically I would not want to change the journey, the route I went through, and the course I charted; no doubt it was tough but it was all a learning experience; and looking back, with the experience I acquired, maybe some of the things I did with a lot of youthful exuberance could have been done more delicately with the experience I now have, but there is nothing I regret in any way that I did, and I will do it all over again".

Dr. Jagan was endowed with visionary abilities. He was as much a nationalist as he was an internationalist. His advocacy for the poor knew no bounds as manifested in his call for a New Global Human Order and debt relief. He was con-

vinced that there was enough food in the world for everyone, if only there was a more equitable distribution. He fought relentlessly for debt relief and debt write-off, showing that it was impossible for sustainable development to take place given the high debt burdens which countries such as Guyana were saddled with.

Dr. Jagan also strived for unity and repeatedly gave assurance that under the PPP there was no place for racial intolerance. The PPP, according to Dr. Jagan, has always been, and would always be a multi-racial party where there is room for all. Its leaders came from every racial group.

As we pay homage to the Father of this nation, let us recommit ourselves to continue with the rich legacy to which he bequeathed us. Let us in the true spirit of Dr. Jagan eschew petty thinking and put the interest of the nation above narrow self-interest.

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