

# Cheddi Jagan's status as a freedom fighter on behalf of the people can never be diminished

By [Stabroek News](#)

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Dear Editor,

On the eve of the annual Babu Jaan rally organized by the PPP/C in honour of Cheddi Jagan, the PNC once again sought to besmirch the good name of the former democratically elected President of Guy-ana and deny him the honour, Father of the Nation.

The bee in the PNC's bonnet is the billboard mounted at Houston with a portrait of Cheddi Jagan proclaiming him 'Father of the Nation.'

The PNC is livid about this billboard and the public message it conveys. They want it removed.

At a PNC press conference held on Thursday March 23, 2023, in the presence of Opposition Leader Mr Aubrey Norton, Mr Hamilton Green said; "As an Elder, I call on the Leader of the PNC and Leader of the Opposition to respectfully ask that that sign be torn down."

Green went on to say; "I hope we get national support to remove that abomination, that obnoxious sign describing Jagan as 'Father of the Nation.'

And in answer to a question as to who he (Green) thinks should be named 'Father of the Nation' his response was; "If there is someone that should be named 'Father of the Nation' it is Forbes Burnham."

This is not the first time spokespersons of the PNC have sought to stir controversy on this matter. But it is not so much the billboard that matters, it is the individual to whom the title has been bestowed that bothers the PNC.

In the course of his ranting and raving during the press conference, Mr Green conveniently overlooked the fact that nation building started way back in the late 1940's when Cheddi Jagan was elected to the Legislative Council after fighting a brilliant contest against John D'Aguiar a staunch supporter of colonial rule.

Jagan's entry to the Legco as it was then called, marked the beginning of a new era; the era of politics of protest and politics of exposure. Jagan had emerged as a national leader. The shooting to death of five sugar workers at Enmore in June of 1948 and the pledge he made at their burial solidified the emerging stature as Father of the Nation.

His call in April 1950 before the Waddington Commission for constitutional reform and internal self-government; his travels abroad to whip up solidarity and international support following the suspension of the constitution by the colonial power and his imprisonment by its local lackeys only helped to strengthen the popular view of him being Father of the Nation

With Jagan at the helm, nation building continued with the victory of the PPP at the election in 1953, winning 18 out of 24 seats albeit in a government that did its level best, lasting just 133 days in office. Four years later, Jagan was returned to office as Premier of British Guiana from 1957 to 1964.

Mr Green sought to rubbish Dr Jagan's role as Father of the Nation by belittling his contributions to national development. Here are a few examples of actions that could be attributed to him as an emerging Father of the Nation.

The records show Jagan's fight in early 1948, eighteen years before independence, against an export tax of 30 cents per ton of bauxite in place of 1 1/2 percent tax on the value of bauxite exported. The budget debate in that matter gave Jagan the opportunity to expose the monopolies of bauxite-alumina by the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa), the company's huge profits, its connections with the Aluminum Company of Canada (Alcan) and the Demerara Bauxite Company Ltd.(Demba) and the exploitation of countries such as British Guiana.

Secondly, there was a huge fight by Jagan concerning the purchase by the colonial government in 1951, fifteen years before independence, of 262 acres of land at

Campbellville and 301/2 acres at La Penitence which formed part of an estate owned by the Corentyne Sugar Estates Ltd; a Bookers subsidiary. The price paid was 96 times more than the purchase price in 1937. The company was thus in a position to earn from interest alone on the agreed price for part of the estate nearly three times what it was earning as income from its operations on the whole of the estate – Jagan described this as “ a classic example of nationalization aiding the capitalist class.”

Another example of Jagan’s deep and abiding interest in securing the well being of Guianese was demonstrated in his fight for a comprehensive scheme of water control for drainage and irrigation. That pursuit resulted in the establishment of the Boeraserie Extension Project, designed to help farmers on the West Coast of Demerara and the East Bank of Essequibo; the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary and the Greater Canje Scheme.

Continuing his ossified account of history, Mr Green claimed that Dr Jagan “payed scant regard for Amerindians.”

In November 1949, long before Mr Green entered the political arena, Cheddi Jagan was in the Legco extending his full support to a motion on Amerindian Policy. He is on record stating; “I think the time is certainly ripe when we should give such protection as is necessary to the people who contributed so much to the early development of this Colony, and who can contribute more to its greater development.” He referred to reports which revealed ‘the experiences the Amerindian people had acquired in the industries of timber, balata, cattle rearing, gums, resins, wax, incense, medicinal barks, perfumes, dyes, poisons and nuts.’

Cheddi Jagan lived on the front lines of history and his status as a freedom fighter on behalf of the Guyanese people can never be diminished by the ramblings of those who seek to deny his rightful place in our country’s history as the Father of the Nation.

Yours faithfully,

Clement J. Rohee