

Jagan

history, been measured by the pigment of their skins.

It would be idle to pretend that there are not thousands of English landlords, who are equally willing to take every possible advantage to evict their English tenants with the hope of getting higher rents. And it is also known that a large number of coloured landlords in London and the country, derive a large and excessive income by unscrupulously letting their rooms at exorbitant rents to their own fellow countrymen. And yet, to the knowledge of the civic authorities, there are coloured landlords who are decent and reasonable to their English tenants, and English landlords who are equally good to their coloured tenants.

The Rent Restriction Acts and the other laws of the country are adequate enough in punishing greedy landlords and protecting the tenants. The suggestion of the learned Magistrate would only be manifestation of trying to prove that two wrongs can make a right. On the contrary, there are progressive, religious and civic organisations, like the Racial Unity supported by a large number of organisations, who are now considering asking Her Majesty's Government in this country to enact legislation to prohibit definitely, any discriminatory legislature and even to go further and make it illegal to have any covenants in the ordinary leases of the properties, where any restrictive clauses against the coloured people are contained.

In the remote possibility of any discriminatory legislation against the coloured people, as suggested by the London Magistrate, coming into operation, there is the horrible prospect of reciprocity of similar legislature in the Colonies, and particularly in Jamaica, with its obvious consequences.

Let it suffice to say that the white and the coloured landlords and tenants should continue to have their actions governed according to the laws of the country which seem at the moment quite adequate to deal with the matter, and let us not have justice and laws influenced by race, colour and religion.

GUIANA — THE ROAD BACKWARDS

By Dr. Cheddi Jagan

(Deposed Premier of British Guiana)

After nearly a year of pent-up anxieties and expectations, the Report of the Robertson Constitution Commission was finally released on November 2nd, 1954. Its recommendations came as no surprise. Actually from the inception of the appointment of the Commission, they were a foregone conclusion.

The whole thing was no more than a farce. The British, of course, in their attempts at deceiving and throwing dust in the eyes of colonial peoples, delight in indulging in such farces, in parading such ever-recurring commissions of enquiry.

Firstly, the Commission completely justified and white-washed the British Government's action in destroying the constitution and removing my ministers and myself from office. In its own words: "We are satisfied that the setback to orderly constitutional progress in British Guiana was due not to defects in the Constitution, but to the fact that those in control of the People's Progressive Party proved themselves unscrupulous in their determination to pervert the authority of Government to their own disruptive and undemocratic ends."

The "disruptive and undemocratic ends" refers, needless to say, to the "sinister" extremists, the communists. But while the red herring of communism has been given as the major reason for the rape of our constitution, the burden of argument is that the constitution was lost because of our previous attitude to it. Extracts of our speeches and writings criticising the constitution provide a full documentation.

It is true that we were severely critical of the limitation of the Waddington Constitution—its Governor-nominated Upper House with delaying powers; its retention of the portfolios of finance, defence, foreign affairs, police, information and justice in the hands of Government officials appointed from London; and finally the veto and reserve powers of the Governor. But it is equally true that our views on the constitution and for

that matter on communism were well known to Whitehall before the elections and the assignment of our portfolios in April and May respectively of 1953.

The destruction of the constitution was caused not by our refusal to work it because of preconceived views. The fact is we were working it. The snag came about because we were working it not according to the plans carefully laid down. The constitutional structure was not designed to accommodate six P.P.P. ministers in a policy-making Executive Council of ten. But once having got control of the Executive Council our working of the constitution could have led and was leading to only one inevitable conclusion—the exposure of the Governor and the limited constitution. It was really to forestall this exposure that the troops marched in on October, 1953, and not because of our "disruptive and undemocratic ends."

A Period of Marking Time

And what of the future? "We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion," said the Commission, "that so long as the P.P.P. retains its present leadership and policies there is no way in which any real measure of responsible government can be restored without the certainty that the country will again be subjected to constitutional crisis."

"We have no doubt that British Guiana, with its precarious economy, cannot afford another crisis of the kind that developed in 1953, and we can, therefore, see no alternative but to recommend a period of marking time in the advance towards self-government."

But it isn't the "present leadership and policies" which was really bothering the Commission. That was there all the time. It was there at the time of the visit of the Waddington Constitution Commission in 1950-51. The only difference is the assessment of public confidence in the People's Progressive Party.

The Waddington Commission did not have its nose to the ground

(The African & Colonial World, January 1955)

GUIANA

Assured that no party system would be fully developed in less than five to ten years, and assured that we would not win a majority at the General Elections, it dared to give us a "liberal" constitution with a policy making Executive Council of 6-4 in favour of the elected members. Our phenomenal success at the April, 1953, elections of eighteen out of twenty-four seats clearly upset their timetable. That was their mistake and cause for their exposure.



Dr. Cheddi Jagan

The Robertson Commission, on the other hand, is not to be caught in the same trap. They have "sounded" the people. In this they have no doubt been helped by the advice of many "liberal" and "impartial" observers who have visited our shores since October, 1953.

P.P.P.—Only Organised Party

A "London Times" correspondent observed that we were "deeply entrenched" and our "influence has in no way diminished." He added: "There is little doubt what the result of another general election would be. The P.P.P. remains the only organised political body in the sugar estates and the villages. The new Party, the National Democratic Party, has made little impact and is almost unknown in many places."

Thus having found that the people's confidence is still 100 per cent behind the P.P.P., the Commission could come to only two conclusions.

One, the proscription of the Party and the disenfranchisement of some of the "extremist" leaders. The other, postponement of the elections and "marking time."

The latter was accepted in preference to the former, for proscription doesn't really destroy. The Indian National Congress, for instance, was banned, but it finally led the Indian people to independence.

Disenfranchisement of the "extremist" leaders, however desirable (from the Commission's viewpoint), was dangerous. There is world public opinion to be reckoned with. It would have meant importing here the fascist methods of Dr. Maian, of South Africa, whose government after "naming" individuals as communists, prohibits them from either sitting in Parliament or holding official posts in trade unions.

But why the period of marking time? The Commission realistically, but quite unashamedly, considered "what the outcome would be of an immediate attempt to restore a measure of power to elected representatives, by which we mean a representative legislature and a retention of some form of ministerial system."

In paragraph 211, they said that we should more likely contest rather than boycott any elections; and after such elections, either

- (1) refuse to take our seats; or
- (2) with a majority, refuse to elect Ministers and thus be obstructive; or
- (3) elect Ministers and again provoke a constitutional crisis.

The Commission, no doubt, had in mind the background of the Indian struggle with boycott of elections, resignations of Congress ministers, etc. But the obvious answer to this is, "So what?" Isn't that strictly constitutional? Since October, 1953, Governor Savage has been persistently saying that all talk of non-co-operation is stupid. And now the commission comes out with no constitution, no voting, no elections. What is there left to the people? Are they to follow their imperialist masters and put guns in their own hands?

Quite indefinite will be "this period of marking time," this period of stale-

mate and retrogression. The Commission lays it down: "We cannot estimate the length of the period which should elapse before the advance towards self-government is resumed. Everything will depend upon the extent to which the people of British Guiana, including the leaders of the P.P.P. themselves, can be brought to the realisation that the futile and deliberate disruptive policies for which the P.P.P. at present stand are no basis for the future constitutional progress of their country."

The Robertson Commission is an exposure. But the exposure is of Britain's hypocrisy about leading colonial peoples to self-government. Britain's democracy for colonial peoples can have only one meaning—colonists have a right to vote, but they must only vote for those whom their masters designate. Otherwise their right to vote will be suspended—suspended until such time as they change their mind, throw out their militant leaders, and sacrifice their anti-imperialist policy.

Let me end this first article with this pertinent commentary. Mr. Richard Crossman, M.P., writing for the "Sunday Pictorial," said that Britain can no longer point an accusing finger at the Russians about free elections in East Germany when she denied these in British Guiana: "The moral is obvious; so long as we forbid free elections in our colonies whenever people want to get rid of us, we cannot blame the Russians for doing the same in East Germany."

DR. JAGAN RESTRICTION ORDER

Dr. Cheddi Jagan is no longer required to report his movements in Georgetown to the police at Albert-town police station.

Released from the Georgetown Prison on Monday, September 13th, Dr. Jagan was served with a notice reminding him that he was still restricted to the Georgetown area.

He was also ordered to report his movements to the police at Albert-town police station between the hours of 8 and 10 a.m. each Wednesday and Saturday.

Dr. Jagan reported at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, September 15th, but was served the same day with a notice maintaining the restriction order, but relieving him of the necessity of reporting.