

## **PPP/C Ministers Should Follow The Example Of Cheddi Jagan To Avoid Corruption And Arrogant Behaviour**

Congratulations to President Mohamed Irfaan Ali and to all the PPP/C Ministers. Your Cabinet promises to be one of the best ever in the history of Guyana.

It is very inspiring to see a team with such a large number of new and young Ministers who want to make a difference on the way forward for Guyana.

People do not expect Ministers to be perfect, and they really want to be proud and trustful of this Cabinet. That will depend on how well the Government successfully addresses the concerns, expectations and needs of Guyanese in all classes and in the Indian, African, Mixed, Indigenous, Portuguese, Chinese and European communities.

For Ministers, one of the best guides is the greatest Guyanese leader and patriot Dr. Cheddi Jagan who longed to return to the spirit of 1953 because he wanted all Guyanese “to collaborate and progress at the same time”. He believed that “without racial harmony, there will be no national unity”. Cheddi fought for justice and a level playing field to change the system of unfair ethnic and class competition that has resulted in persistent poverty in all ethnic communities.

In 1997, at the funeral and celebration of Dr. Jagan’s life, hundreds of thousands of Guyanese, from all the seven ethnic communities and from all classes, demonstrated their deepest respect and appreciation for his unparalleled service to the nation because of the following principles and values he practiced.

**Zero Tolerance for Corruption** - Fenton Ramsahoye, Attorney General in the 1961 to 1964 PPP Government, emphasized Cheddi Jagan’s legacy was that “it is possible to constitute and administer a government wholly devoid of corruption”.

C.V. Nunes, the PPP Education Minister from 1961 to 1964, who played a major role in transforming the educational system (University of Guyana, technical education and more secondary spaces), confirmed that “Cheddi advised Ministers to never put their hands in the till, and he led by personal example”. When handling public funds, Jagan took the utmost care and he was accountable for his expenses to public finance officials.

Jagan never practiced politics for personal gain. In all his governments, he fostered an anti-corruption culture.

For 14 years as a Minister and as a Head of Government, spanning the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1990s, he emphasized that PPP governments “set our face sternly against corruption and extravagance” to establish “a clean and lean government and an efficient administration”, so that there would be improvement in the lives of “working people, the unemployed, the under-employed, the dispossessed, the marginalized, the poor and the hungry”.

For Dr. Jagan, his anti-corruption policy was not just a moral position nor was it a demonstration of cheapness. Rather, his frugality was about the careful and economical management of the peoples' financial and material resources. He understood that corruption was one of the main causes of instability, inequality and poverty, because it retarded the development of a nation by eroding the rule of law, by undermining good governance, by hampering economic growth, by impinging upon competitive and fair business conditions, and by undermining democracy and human rights.

Cheddi's stern and courageous position against corruption resulted in success. Under the governments he led, from 1957 to 1964 and from 1993 to 1997, Guyana experienced the best economic growth rates, and social and economic development.

Throughout his life, he was committed to ending grand and petty corruption. As a Minister and a Head of State, he never met alone with lobbyists and investors. He knew that corruption came in all shapes, sizes, colours, political stripes, ethnicities, and classes. In the 1950s and after 1992 when a few cases of corruption arose in his governments, Jagan efficiently dismissed a number of Ministers and top officials.

How did Cheddi Jagan obtain information on corruption? He was confidentially informed by whistle blowers who were colleagues, public servants and ordinary people. They told him about the corrupt practices of a Minister or a public official including their theft of state assets, their diversion of state revenues, their hiring of family members, relatives and friends, and about the unexplained increase of their personal assets. Cheddi ensured that the information was investigated, and he protected the whistle blowers from reprisals.

Dr. Jagan never appointed his children to any position. He believed in helping his children, brothers and sisters, not by appointing them to any government position, but by encouraging and supporting them morally to uplift themselves professionally which they did very successfully.

When he hired political appointees, the appointments had to be based on merit (ability, talent, effort and achievements), and not only party loyalty. He always criticized the PNC for putting "square pegs in round holes".

He followed the rules and regulations for the hiring of public servants that were based on the merit principle and inclusiveness. He consciously promoted the principle that a Ministry's staff should reflect the diversity of Guyana with regard to women, youth and ethnicity.

Cheddi expected and accepted that there will be close public scrutiny of his public duties and his private life. Therefore, he understood that he could not just simply act within the law, but he had to also practice good principles and values.

For him, integrity and accountability were a way of life.

**Avoid Arrogant Behavior – Be Humble, Listen and Debate** - Jagan never displayed any self-importance. He was a humble leader who honestly admitted and acknowledged mistakes and shortcomings, and he apologized when necessary. He was modest and never acted like a know-it-all because he understood that the best strategies have flaws.

Cheddi was accessible, approachable and informal. He always remarked that his regular “groundings” with all ethnic communities and classes (walks among the people), in all of the ten regions of Guyana, were “like a tonic” for him. He practiced leadership as a dialogue, not a monologue.

He loved engaging with civil society organizations. Dr. Jagan respected workers, farmers and the poor. He enjoyed listening to their concerns and their wisdom. He showed empathy by understanding and sharing feelings with people.

Within Guyana and in the Diaspora, he loved communicating and testing ideas with people, including university students and media workers who he regarded as “partners in the search for solutions to Guyana’s problems”. He appreciated their proposals and gave credit to persons for their insights. He loved to debate with friends and with opposition politicians.

Cheddi was never complacent about the PPP’s electoral victories. Today, he would have cautioned against self-deception about the 2020 election results where the PPP/C won by a margin of 1.38% of all the votes and by one Parliamentary seat.

Over many decades, he motivated people to do extraordinary things for the return and strengthening of democracy.

In spite of all the failed attempts by national and international forces to defeat him, in victory Jagan never practiced recrimination. He bore no grudges and no bitterness.

**Work Hard and Learn** - Cheddi was always working and learning. In addition to his “groundings” with people, he enjoyed studying, reading and writing at the office and at home. He had a remarkable ability to remember facts and figures and to explain in clear language the essence of an issue.

Cheddi Jagan understood that principled leadership is a learned skill. He keenly supported innovations that would strengthen the struggle for democracy and deepen policies for social and economic development. Many times he had to adapt or adjust, in a principled way. He consistently advised his colleagues to learn how “to walk between the raindrops”. He understood that there is not only one approach to solve a problem.

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