

Providing Skills to Reduce Unemployment

by Janet Jagan

One of the chief goals of the PPP/Civic is to reduce poverty with the final objective of completely eliminating poverty. When the PPP/C took the reins of government in 1992, poverty was at a dangerously high level, 85%. By 2006, this had been reduced to 30%. This is no small matter, in fact, so far, it is a major achievement of the PPP/C.

The methods of reducing poverty are many – the provision of lands to farmers, house lots to build houses for families who have lived in slums, or crowded up in their parent's homes, or paying rentals that reduce the money for life's essentials. Better and free education and health care are other means of reducing poverty as are the provision of pure water, sanitation and services such as free legal aid, low interest loans to farmers, small businesses and housing.

Of course, one of the most important means of reducing poverty is the provision of jobs leading to a lowering of the unemployment

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rate. In Guyana, there are jobs available that cannot be filled because of lack of the required skills. To tackle this problem the PPP/C has introduced a National Training Project to provide the training of skills so that unemployed can be better equipped to find jobs.

In a full page advertisement in all the newspapers, the Government of Guyana has advertised for weeks the beginning of a

Skills Training Programme. It is interesting to note the types of training available. These include training to be a driver/salesman; heavy duty equipment driver, mechanic, fitter machinist, outboard engine repairs, auto body repairs, refrigerator repairs, welder/fabricator, all

aspects of construction including mason, plumber, carpenter, joiner, upholsterer, land surveyor assistant, electrical including electronics, T&D lineman, industrial electrician and a number of aspects of medical care – physiotherapist assistant, nurses' aide, pharmacist assistant, dental assistant, as well as aspects of hospitality and home care and information technology which includes clerical, data entry, accounts clerk, sales clerk, receptionist, library assistant and others.

These skills are cited in full to give an idea of how broad is the spectrum of the training. These wide ranged skills, when achieved, greatly increase the possibilities of obtaining jobs and reducing unemployment and, subsequently, greatly reducing poverty.

One reads in the press and hears on television so many harsh criticisms of the PPP/C that one must wonder if Guyanese are fully aware of the remarkable



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achievements that have been made in all areas of life since 1992. Poverty reduction is one of the important victories of the government and what has helped this has been the radical reduction of the debt burden that the PPP/C inherited from the former PNC regime. This debt burden sucked away most of the nation's revenue which had to go to debt repayment. As the debt burden was reduced, more and more funds were available for the social services – to improve education, health, housing, water, roads and other in-

frastructures. That is how poverty has been reduced, but of course, it still exists and that is why more and more ways and means are being provided to lower the unemployment rate as quickly as possible.

In recent days we have seen more and more Guyanese finishing their training. For example, in Regions Five and Six, 217 young people have finished their skills training programme. In Essequibo, 180 young people completed their training recently. And not to be overlooked are the 1000 students now being trained in Cuba.

Never before have such opportunities existed outside of the traditional Technical Institutes in all three counties. If anyone had any doubts about the aims and the successes of the PPP/C, they have only to look at the ongoing programmes which provide our youths with the skills they need to enter a secure adult life.