

For A Balanced and Honest Media!

by Janet Jagan

It's a sad reflection on our media that, in too many areas, it is far off from reality. Of course, it is the right of the media owners to push what they believe in. This is almost as old as the earliest days of the press when it was the sole form of media. In the English-speaking press, we have seen the London-newspapers and the US press back their presidential and prime ministerial favourites as well as their special interests; nothing new.

The state-owned media represents its interests, which is the government of the day. This is so in many countries, not only Guyana. But here, like in many things, there is a strong criticism by the very media which backs its own parties and causes.

Well, all is generally understood by one simple fact in the world of the media – that is truth and balance. Balance implies that news reports and opinions are reasonable and not too way out. I give as an example of what I mean by not too

way out. What editor with even the minimum of good sense, balance, responsibility and love of country would allow to be printed in his (her) newspaper a letter such as the one appearing in the Stabroek News of September 5, 2008 written by Tacuma Ogunseye and

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headlined "Rawlins' group was engaged in a political struggle."

In the letter, Ogunseye makes the treacherous assertion that Fineman (Rawlins) and his "comrades were engaged in a political struggle. They were not criminals in the ordinary sense even though they may have committed crimes for both political and personal reasons. Fineman and his comrades were African Resistance Fighters..."

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Stabroek News (SN) nurtures that kind of thinking and helps those who would propagate such madness, by its own opinions, which are influenced by its extraordinary dislike, or hatred, of the PPP/C government. In its opinion, the present government can do nothing good, nothing S/N likes.

In a recent editorial, which is, after all, the expression of the views of the

newspaper, it makes this astounding remark about "our woeful social services." "Woeful" indeed! I can sit and watch US Television and see American citizens queuing up for long hours, even overnight, to get free medical attention from voluntary doctors and other medical

personnel. Why? Clearly because lower and middle income Americans aren't provided with them.

I invite the Stabroek News Editor to pay a visit to the Georgetown Public Hospital or one of the rural or interior hospitals and see what goes on. Patients are seen by doctors, provided with a variety of tests, receive free medications, plus dental and eye care, and pay nothing. What is



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"woeful" about that?

Maybe the S/N is unaware that from the advent of the PPP/C in 1992, tens of thousands of Guyanese now have pure water supplies that they never before enjoyed. In 2003, a Water Poverty Index developed by Britain's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology listed Guyana 5th among 147 countries, including the USA, in the provision of fresh drinking water! Or that tens of thousands of Guyanese now own their own houses, whereas before they either rented, lived crowded with extensive families or were in unhealthy slums.

Maybe S/N isn't aware that education has improved extensively since 1992, so much so that coun-

try and hinterland students are now doing even better than their city counterparts who previously had the best in whatever was provided educationally. Now most of Guyana's school children have equally the benefits of improved education, both primary and secondary.

Health wise, we are far better off under the PPP/C and one could hardly call it "woeful" that malaria has been drastically reduced, our vaccination programme is the admiration of international health agencies, our infant, child and maternal mortality rates have lowered considerably and, also, due to better health facilities and other social services, our Amerindian population is growing – unlike many developed countries with indigenous people.

Journalism is a highly rated profession. It must not be degraded by owners and managers of the media who want their sometimes perverse views to overshadow truths and realities. It's about time Guyana had a media that serves its people and reflects its reality and goals!