

Wanted: A United Trade Union Movement

by Janet Jagan



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This cooperation between the advanced guard in the workers' political struggle and the trade unions paid dividends. The union movement was strengthened, its militancy sharpened. Greater respect and more purposeful recognition were accorded the movement.

That two facets of the same movement were moving in the same direction and with perfect understanding was a situation that alarmed the capitalists and the Imperial Government.

The energies of the reactionaries were henceforth to be directed to breaking this amalgam.

Came 1953, and notwithstanding the vicious propaganda including the infamous Luckhoo "Communism supplement" in the "Argosy", the PPP wholeheartedly supported by the progressive trade union movement won a significant victory at the polls. The efforts of the reactionaries were rewarded, first by direct British intervention in

but also in dividing the working class along racial lines. Only the working class has suffered from this division. And finally, through the intervention of the Americans the basis for corrupting the trade union movement was well and

The colonial power deliberately destroyed the unified trade union movement because it was the backbone of the PPP. Due to the Cold War tactics of Britain, always under the heavy influence of the USA (even in this

facing certain problems. Also when we study the period of violence and ethnic divisions of the sixties, we can then understand, again, the divisive hands of the colonial rulers influencing events that

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This period therefore starts off on a high note of expectancy and hope springing from a firm unity that was being built up in the ranks of the working class. It ends on the low note of such high hopes having been dashed asunder."

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period of the Iraq invasion, the same submission of Britain to the USA is obvious), the PPP had to be destroyed and one of the methods used by the colonial office in London was the wreckage of the trade union movement, militant at that period, as never before!

Today, what we have in the fractured trade union movement of this period is a direct result of

we still suffer from today. That is why the hopeful signs now being seen of the emergence and growth of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) is so important. The re-unification of the trade union movement and the return to genuine trade union principles is a 'must' for the welfare of the workers of this nation. FITUG today represents the majority of workers in

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Our education system does not yet provide for a full and balanced and fully accurate account of Guyana's rich history. More text books are required to deal with this subject, written specifically for the different age groups of the students.

One of the books that has been neglected in the past and should be used in our educational system is Ashton Chase's "A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana: 1900 to 1961." It also contains an epilogue which carries the history to 1964. Chase's history book was written in 1964 and by the 70's was out of print. Fortunately, through the perseverance of progressive trade unions it was reprinted in 2006 and launched at the NAACIE trade union hall last year.

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Guyanese the opportunity to know more about this exceedingly important book.

Having another read of it recently, this section which I quote below, struck me as being extremely important to the understanding of what has taken place and is still taking place in the trade union movement and the 'body politic' of this country. Read it carefully.

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This significant event, although largely attended by many trade unionists and others, was generally ignored by the media, which paid scant attention to this important event, thus denying students and interested



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The result was that the PPP and the trade unions worked together, planned together and struggled together to uproot privilege and a decadent political and economic system. For the first time the ideals enshrined in the preface of

the first set of rules of the BG Labour Union began to be translated into reality.

This cooperation between the advanced guard in the workers' political struggle and the trade unions paid dividends. The union movement was strengthened, its militancy sharpened. Greater respect and more purposeful recognition were accorded the movement.

That two facets of the same movement were moving in the same direction and with perfect understanding was a situation that alarmed the capitalists and the Imperial Government.

The energies of the reactionaries were henceforth to be directed to breaking this amalgam.

Came 1953, and notwithstanding the vicious propaganda including the infamous Luckhoo "Communism supplement" in the "Argosy", the PPP wholeheartedly supported by the progressive trade union movement won a significant victory at the polls. The efforts of the reactionaries were

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It was during the Interim Government of hand-picked members by the British Governor, after the suspension of the constitution in 1953, that a new TUC leadership was picked and the former TUC thrown in the trash can.

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period of the Iraq invasion, the same submission of Britain to the USA is obvious), the PPP had to be destroyed and one of the methods used by the colonial office in London was the wreckage of the trade union movement, militant at that period, as never before!

Today, what we have in the fractured trade union movement of this period is a direct result of malicious and destructive intervention by the British colonial system way back in the fifties. That's why it's important to know our history and why we are

we still suffer from today.

That is why the hopeful signs now being seen of the emergence and growth of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) is so important. The re-unification of the trade union movement and the return to genuine trade union principles is a 'must' for the welfare of the workers of this nation. FITUG today represents the majority of workers in Guyana. It is time for this to be recognized. The fractured trade union movement has to be welded together. This is a task for all of us who want to see, again, a united Guyana.