

APPENDIX II
STATEMENT BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE JANET JAGAN
MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS

On 15th June, 1963, less than a year ago, His Excellency the Governor by instrument under the Public Seal appointed me as Minister of Home Affairs and charged me under the Constitution with, *among other things*, responsibility for certain matters and Departments of Government. Among these were -

the maintenance of public safety and public order and the Police Department.

A few days later I entered this House as a Senator under the Constitution.

2. I did not expect my Ministry to be a bed of roses. I recognised that my Ministry was of supreme importance. The maintenance of law and order is one of the first duties of a Government. I was also not unaware of the problems that had arisen in respect of the Police Force. Indeed, my appointment was heralded by an expression of these problems in a practical form. No one will easily forget the sordid events that took place on 30th May, 1963, at the funeral of my predecessor and friend, the late Senator Claude Christian. I know that you, Mr. President, will remember this only too well. You will recall that you were in charge of the funeral arrangements and had discussions with the Police on the matter. The Police were advised that there would be a large number of people at the funeral and that the burial place should be cordoned off and other security precautions taken for their safety. In spite of all advice, and indeed, in spite of the disorderly behaviour of crowds at the funeral parlour and at the Brickdam Cathedral, the Police took no precautions. In the event, Ministers of the Government and bereaved relatives and friends of the late Minister were viciously attacked at the cemetery, and this in turn resulted in racial outbursts, grievous injury to persons and serious loss to property later the same evening. A report by the Commissioner of Police on these events stated in part -

"In all 50 civilians were injured, 42 of them being East Indians, 6 Africans and 2 Portuguese. 20 of these detained in hospital, 3 of them being considered as seriously hurt. 3 Policemen were injured, none of them seriously. 20 persons were arrested by the Police for varying offences. 3 cars were damaged and 1 shop broken into. There were 20 reports of larceny from the person but most of these involved the injured persons mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Many shops owned by East Indian businessmen were stoned and windows broken."

Later reports indicated that during the night Indians were attacked in their homes and beaten and robbed.

3. These were the events that heralded my appointment as Minister of Home Affairs in succession to Mr. Christian.

4. I mention the incident to show that at the time I was charged with responsibility for the Police, I had no illusions about the difficulties of the problems confronting me. The events of the time and indeed, of February, 1962, had fully shown the gravity of the problem. But I felt that with an earnest and sustained effort and the goodwill of all concerned, the problem would be solved and we would evolve a balanced and impartial Police Force working in co-operation with the Government and the people.

5. It is now almost a year since I have been in office. And I fear that in spite of all my efforts, I have not been able to achieve this objective.

6. But let me recount my efforts in this direction.

7. On 26th June, 1963, soon after I assumed office, I warned the Commissioner of Police at a meeting, that the situation on the East Coast of Demerara would deteriorate unless steps were taken to assure the public of the total impartiality of the Police. I was constrained to say this because certain actions by the Police had given the impression that they were taking sides. At that time, the disturbances were restricted to Georgetown and had not yet spread to the countryside. Two days later, on 28th June, 1963, I wrote the Commissioner naming a number of incidents which smacked of discrimination by the Police and pointed out that the situation was explosive. I showed how persons associated with the People's Progressive Party were being harassed by the Police, and pointed out that this factor, together with events in Georgetown, would intensify and spread the area of disturbances. On 2nd July, 1963, I again wrote to the Commissioner of Police and advised him to "put an officer reputed for fairness and not tagged with a political bias" on the East Coast because the presence of the Officer in Charge "who was a firm partisan of the People's National Congress and had openly demonstrated his alliance" was a threat to peace in the area. All my warnings and advice were ignored. Police discrimination continued and the result was that the conflict spread to the East Coast.

8. You will remember, Mr. President, that the 1963 disturbances which occurred in the rural areas did not, in any way, approach in intensity or

scale those which occurred in Georgetown, where they started. Yet the Police showed much more activity in the rural areas. I pointed this out in a letter to the Commissioner of Police dated 28th June, 1963. I wrote -

"The incidents of violence in the rural areas were not in any way on a par with what has taken place in the urban areas. Yet there appears to be more Police action in the former resulting in more arrests than in the latter."

On 15th August, 1963, the Commissioner replied saying that he was conscious of the country's need for a completely impartial Police Force and he sought to brush aside reports of partiality as "false or grossly exaggerated". He stated also that "the number of persons charged in connection with offences attributable to the Emergency is 1647 - of these only 651 were of East Indian origin". This means that 39% of the people charged were East Indians. This is a high percentage; for the strike and disturbances were practically confined to the urban areas. But these figures, taken in conjunction with others, are even more significant. The record of police searches for the period from the end of the strike to December, 1963, reveal that 61% of the searches done by the Police were on East Indians. Yet, by the Commissioner's own figures, only 39% of those charged during the disturbances were East Indians. Indeed, even this does not give the full measure of the discrimination. The figure of 61% does not include persons other than East Indians who were searched because they were supporters of the Governing Party. This would bring the percentage up to well over 70%. These statistics were not available to the people but the evidence of Police partiality was abundantly clear to them.

9. The result of all this is that thousands and thousands of law-abiding citizens have lost all confidence in the Police Force, will not put themselves under their protection even when exposed to attack and are, indeed, demanding their removal from their respective areas.

10. The chronicle of instances of Police discrimination would fill several volumes. It is necessary to give only a few instances taken at random. On 25th October, 1963, the Ministry of Home Affairs received information that certain persons at Ann's Grove were reported to have firearms and explosives. This information was passed on to the Police. Nothing more was heard until 9th December, 1963, when the Commissioner of Police replied to the report. He wrote -

"The information received at the Ministry is far from reliable, and the informant was prompted by political leanings to accuse persons named therein

of secreting arms."

The Commissioner appended to his letter a report from the Superintendent of the Division as follows -

"I have made discreet enquiries into the background and present activities of the persons named and formed the opinion that they are not concerned in any way whatsoever with the trafficking of illegal weapons and do not possess them. I do not consider that it will serve any useful purpose to carry out searches on the premises of these persons as from information obtained they have never been known to do any act which would create the belief that they possess firearms."

The same Police Officer who refused to search the houses of five known P.N.C. members after he had made "discreet enquiries" searched the houses of 83 persons, mostly P.P.P. supporters, and found nothing except two licensed shot-guns and one person with 50 rounds of ammunition in excess of what he was permitted to have. Did he make "discreet enquiries" about the 83 persons searched? The question is asked, "Why does the Commissioner of Police condone such brazen discrimination?" Is it not this attitude which leads to such incidents as that which took place at Ann's Grove when an armed policeman stood by while a man was beaten to death?

11. Let us look at another incident during the 1963 disturbances. It is well-known that the perpetrators of the disturbances used explosives to destroy a number of Government buildings. Among those buildings was the Ministry of Home Affairs which was dynamited on 23rd June, 1963. Shortly after the explosion, the Police dog, Rio, was brought to the Ministry. When set loose, he immediately went to the Chambers of Mr. L.F.S. Burnham, Leader of the People's National Congress, nearby, and there held on to a man. The man, a resident of Ann's Grove, who had been brought to Georgetown with others for such activities, was apprehended by the Police. Did the Police then make any serious searches? Did they, for example, go immediately to Ann's Grove and search premises associated with this man? Did the Police then search Mr. Burnham and other P.N.C. leaders? No! As is public knowledge, no one is convicted of this offence - the dynamiting of the Ministry of Home Affairs. In reply to the report that certain persons at Ann's Grove had firearms and explosives, the Commissioner of Police had written that the informant was "prompted by political leanings". Perhaps the Commissioner would say that the dog, Rio, who traced the Ann's Grove saboteur to Mr. Burnham's office was also "prompted by political leanings!"

12. Indeed, Mr. President, Rio would appear to be thoroughly brainwashed. For when another public building was dynamited - the Department of Housing - Rio ended up at the home of Mr. Richard Ishmael! I would remind the Commissioner of Police of the saying that there are none so blind as those who *will* not see!

13. Before completing my observations on events of 1963, I should like to pay a passing tribute to the delicacy of the Police towards a leading P.N.C. activist, Dr. P.A. Reid, in whose yard occurred a great explosion and in which was found buried detonators. The polite and apologetic interrogation of the activist at his home was a nice study in decorum. And, of course, no charge was preferred. Compare this with the treatment of Ministers whose persons were searched and one of whose homes was ransacked by Police and a husband and wife on the East Bank, Demerara, in whose yard, the Police, acting on information, found some explosive material. The couple were dragged to Police Headquarters in the usual Police manner. And yet the Commissioner of Police insists that there is no partiality, no partisanship, no discrimination.

14. We come now to the events of 1964. The partiality of the Police in 1963, the loss of confidence it created, and the resulting precipitation of violence in rural areas had made a deep impression on me. I was determined to do my best to help establish a Police Force which had the confidence of the community. Examinations for recruits were different and of varying standards depending upon the areas from which they came and I sought to ensure that the entrance examination into the Force was fairly conducted, and that all recruits be given just and fair treatment by being made to take one and the same examination at any given time. At the very beginning of the present unrest, on 13th March, 1964, I wrote the Commissioner of Police reminding him of my letter of 2nd July, last year, and pointing out that "the situation can worsen if any of the groups involved in the dispute feel that the Police are taking sides". I pointed out that these charges were already being made and mentioned that the Police were firing tear gas shells at people at short range, using the shells as weapons rather than for the effect of the gas. I wrote -

"You admitted that this was unfortunately the case and informed me that you had issued warnings that gas shells must not be aimed at people The fact that you had to remind (your officers) about the correct use of gas shells plus the unnecessary use of bayonets at Non Pareil is sufficient indication that my fears may be justified"

I asked the Commissioner why he had permitted the use of tear gas shells and bayonets on peaceful squatters on the East Coast, when he did not take similar action last year even when squatters invaded Government offices. I wrote -

"Your task is to see that law and order are maintained as impartially as possible. You have to expect a comparison of Police action now with such action last year. If squatters in 1963 could invade Government offices without receiving bayonet wounds it is not too much to expect that squatters should be allowed to sit on roads without being injured."

As was to be expected, the partiality of the Police soon led to further deterioration in relations between the Police and the public. The use of Police to escort scabs to work on the Sugar Estates further exacerbated the situation as did the clouded picture of events leading to the death of Kousilia at Plantation Leonora.

15. In the case of the recent disturbances, as in 1963, there are countless examples of Police partiality. I shall draw attention to one or two of these. Let us take the case of Bachelor's Adventure, for example. On 21st and 22nd May, delegations from Bachelor's Adventure came to my Ministry and drew attention to the dangers to which the people are constantly exposed. A man had been knifed and killed while trying to move his house. I spoke to the Commissioner on both occasions and requested that more attention be paid to the Village, as it was evident that the residents were in danger. All the signs of further violence were there. After these warnings, a pregnant woman was beaten to death. I have had repeated reports from Bachelor's Adventure that even with Police on the scene at the time of violence, nothing is done. One might tend to doubt these reports if events, particularly at Wismar, were not so glaringly apparent.

16. At Buxton, also, the behaviour of the Police followed the now familiar pattern. On 25th May, a man in Buxton was moving his furniture out of his house. When he returned to his house, he found that a number of hostile people had already invaded it. He went for his licensed firearm to protect himself and his family and then the Police arrived. They took him to the Police Station and while there, his house was destroyed by fire. Persons allege that houses in Buxton have been set on fire in full view of the Police. This too would be hard to believe if there were not Wismar to remember.

17. At Meten-meer-Zorg, fire was set to the homes of Inshan Boodram and Rasheed. The Police refused to allow neighbours to help extinguish the fires. They themselves gave no help. And it was not until a British soldier interceded that the fires could be put out.

18. I spoke to an old man from Buxton last week, whose house was burned almost to the ground. He wanted me to help him get protection so that he could remove what was left. I said that I would speak to the Commissioner of Police and get him Police protection. The old man refused to accept it. He said that the Police would not protect him and he could not risk what was certain attack. He preferred to lose the rest of his life's savings than have anything to do with the Police. This is the attitude of thousands of Guianese towards the Police. This is the grim consequence of discrimination, of the blind eye being turned by the Police to incidents they do not wish to see, of arrest without cause and unjust prosecution, of merciless beatings by the Police of suspects belonging to the People's Progressive Party and of partiality to the supporters of the People's National Congress. Is it any wonder that half the community has no confidence in the Police?

19. At Vergenoegen, on Sunday, 24th of May, a woman and her daughter were attacked by a group of men at their home which is near the road. The attackers fired a shot at the woman but missed. They then attempted to rape her daughter. The husband however, heard the shot and cries and came to their rescue. He saw a jeep passing on the Public Road. He shouted "Soldiers, come". On hearing this, the attackers ran. But it was a Police jeep and it did not stop. The attackers came back. Fortunately, the daughter had got away during the interval. They then beat up the father and burned the house down. Up to the time I met the mother, she had not seen the Police except for the brief glimpse of the jeep on the road.

20. (a) I shall leave the multitude of instances of Police partiality on the East and West Coasts of Demerara and come to the events of Wismar, 65 miles up the Demerara River, on Monday 25th May, 1964. The events on the Coast pale into insignificance before those of Wismar. The heightened violence leading to riots commenced on the night of Sunday, 24th May. I am called Minister of Home Affairs and I am charged under the Constitution with responsibility for the maintenance of public safety and public order. And yet I never, at any time, received information from the Police that rioting was actually taking place at Wismar. All that I was told was that the situation was tense.
- (b) About mid-day on Monday, I received private information that things were worsening. I spoke to Mr. Puttock at Force Control at 12.50 p.m. after being unable to contact the Commissioner of Police, and I was told that there were sufficient forces there to deal with the situation.
- (c) At 2.00 p.m. I met the Commissioner of Police and the Garrison Commander and asked whether British troops ought not to be sent to the area. I was told that it was not necessary, that

the Volunteer Force had been embodied, and that an Assistant Commissioner had been sent to assess the situation and report. The action to be taken would depend on his report. I told the two officers that in my opinion, the Volunteer Force would be of no use since it was made up of the very same people who were associated with the trouble. The Volunteers could hardly be expected to take firm action against their own neighbours, friends and relations. Needless to say, my advice was not heeded.

- (d) At about 3.00 p.m., just after the conference, I received another private call which indicated that the situation had gone beyond control; a large number of buildings were burning and people were being attacked, raped and murdered. I immediately called the Commissioner of Police who said that he had the same information and was then asking Colonel King to fly up troops. By this time, a section of Wismar had been razed to the ground, the most sordid and unthinkable crimes had been committed, about 172 houses had been burnt and more than fifteen hundred people had become homeless.

21. Certain basic and fundamental questions must be asked. If the situation at Wismar was serious from Sunday evening, why was the Commissioner of Police not aware of this? Why was it only at midday that he recognised the seriousness and sent up the Assistant Commissioner to assess the situation - when most of the damage had been done? Was it that the Officer in Charge at Wismar/Mackenzie did not properly inform the Commissioner of Police, or was it that the Commissioner received information and did not properly assess the situation? Why was no information given to me by the Police that rioting had broken out at Wismar?

22. The accounts of what took place at Wismar are shocking and revealing. Armed Police and Volunteers stood by while looting, arson, rape and murder were committed and made no effort to intervene. Two girls, for instance, were being raped on the Wismar side of the river. Persons on the Mackenzie side who saw the incident asked four armed Volunteers who stood by to rescue the girls. The Volunteers refused. Eventually four men from Mackenzie - a member of Demba staff, an officer of Saguenay Terminals and two others crossed the river and rescued the girls.

Another Wismar resident saw his house pillaged and burned, while two armed Volunteers stood by and watched.

Dozens of such incidents took place in full view of the Police and Volunteers and reports indicate that nothing was done to stop them.

23. On the West Coast of Demerara, two men were shot and killed by a policeman for moving "under suspicious circumstances." They were two in-

dividuals, unarmed, and not in a group and were crossing a public road when they were shot and killed. At Wismar riotous mobs roamed the streets plundering houses, raping women and carrying on assault and murder, and armed Policemen and Volunteers stood by unmoved. Is it that the rioters were not moving "under suspicious circumstances" like the two unarmed youths who were shot and killed by Police while crossing a public road on the West Coast of Demerara?

24. Is it possible for anyone to believe that with the widespread violence, arson, rape and murder that there could have been no show of force by armed Police and armed volunteers? Since this is impossible to accept, one can only come to the conclusion that planned genocide of a village was carried out with the connivance of all involved.

25(a) It is revealing to look at the events that preceded the rioting at Wismar.

On Thursday, 21st May, a leading P.N.C. activist visited the Wismar district. Two refugees have reported a conversation with this activist who was in a Police jeep along with a Police Sergeant and a Constable. He told them that they were going to take care of the East Indians at Wismar - that they would pay for the deaths of two persons at Buxton. I have no reason to doubt reports that P.N.C. activists not only threatened persons but organised and incited the terrible acts which took place.

(b) In fact, the Police have known since last year that a gang of ten P.N.C. activists had been organised as saboteurs at Mackenzie/Wismar and trained at Congress Place in the use of explosives and in fighting.

26. My efforts to bring partisanship to an end have been of no avail. Take as an example the important post of Security Chief. The last holder of the post was known to have a close personal association with a close relative of Mr. P.S. D'Aguiar, and it is alleged protected members of the United Force from police searches. When the grave impropriety of the Security Chief having a liaison with a member of the family of the leader of the United Force attracted attention, the Security Chief resigned only to be succeeded by an expatriate officer of known anti-Government sentiments. I protested against this appointment on the grounds that the officer had known anti-Government sentiments and that the position of Security Chief should be filled by an officer known for his impartiality. I suggested the appointment of a Guyanese to the post. My advice was not heeded nor did the Governor care to intervene although he indicated that my reasons for doubting the impartiality of the officer were sound.

27. (a) Mr. President, during the year I have been Minister of Home Affairs, I have had to stomach the discriminatory practices of

the Police Force. By their partisanship, the Police have been largely responsible for the suffering that has taken place in the country this year and in 1962 and 1963. By their unfair treatment of a large section of the Guyanese community, they have helped to spread the disturbances in the country. They have failed to maintain law and order for which they are responsible and they have completely lost the confidence of half of the community.

- (b) Let me say, at this stage, that I know that a good section of the Police Force of all ranks are conscientious, fair-minded and loyal. But many of these have had to close their eyes to injustices for fear of disfavour. I know Police Officers of all races who have been harassed and hounded because they have sought to do their duty as they know in conscience it must be done. And I want to pay tribute to those officers and men who have behaved with fairness and impartiality in the face of pressures of all kinds. The tragedy is that the effectiveness of the loyal section of the Police Force is seriously impaired by the misdeeds of their colleagues.
- (c) The blame for the loss of confidence of the community in the Police Force and the loss of respect for the Force, with all the evils to which these give rise, must fall fully on the shoulders of the Commissioner of Police, who has refused to heed my advice and has refused to discipline his officers for their misconduct and has condoned their partisanship and improper behaviour.
- (d) For my part, after a year in office, I see that I have no power to curb or prevent discriminatory practices or correct injustices perpetrated by the Police with increasing frequency and complete immunity. And so I have come to the inescapable conclusion that under existing Constitutional arrangements, and with the Police Force as presently constituted, my hope of having a balanced and impartial Police Force cannot be achieved.

28. In view of all that I have related, and in the existing circumstances, I cannot continue to bear responsibility for the maintenance of public safety and public order and the Police Department. I therefore propose to tender to the Premier at the end of this sitting of the House, my resignation as Minister of Home Affairs. My only hope and prayer is that immediate steps will be made to correct the evils that I have described which are aiding in the destruction of all efforts to have a peaceful Guyana.

1st June, 1964.

JANET JAGAN.