

PARTY LIFE

Essence Of Party Democracy

By JANET JAGAN

An example of the way the People's Progressive Party functions can be seen in the calling of county conferences this year. The Central Committee at a meeting held in July 1983 discussed a proposal from one of its members to hold county conferences during 1984 as a means of keeping in closer touch with the Party bodies in-between Congresses.

The tradition of the Party has been, until recent years, to hold a Party Congress annually. This practice lasted for 20 years. From 1970, the PPP began holding its Congresses biennially. The Party's 19th Congress held in 1976 amended the Constitution from biennial Congresses to triennial. This was also incorporated in the newly framed and adopted Constitution presented to the 20th Congress in 1979, part of the changes of the transformation process.

It was felt that there should be a means of closer contact during the three-year break between Congresses. The proposals of holding County Conferences was associated with the idea of holding 'mini' Congresses. A further development of the County Conference idea was that it should be fairly close to the structure of a congress, with delegates being sent by groups, registration of delegates and a paper from the Central Committee.

The Central Committee sent the proposal for County Conferences to the Executive Committee for implementation. In this process, the Organising Committee and the Party Secretariat were involved.

Although the Party has on previous occasions consulted its membership on vital issues by holding membership meetings in all the regions, the County Conferences were, initially, of a different character. The aim was to invigorate Party bodies, get them functioning at a higher key with the responsibilities of holding such conferences which involved additional organisation. Delegates would be overnighing for the 2-day conferences, the same as for Party Congresses. This would be a good preparation for the 22nd Congress to be held in August 1985.

Thus, with all Party bodies involved, the three County



Conferences were held in Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara in September 1984. The regional and district committees in the three counties were in charge of all physical arrangements, finding a suitable building, decoration, registration, feeding and housing delegates.

To ensure good participation from Party Groups, visits were paid to each group by a Central Committee member about two months before the dates of the conferences. At these meetings, many aspects of the Central Committee document were discussed. The full document was later distributed to all delegates attending the conferences, and was the basis of vigorous discussions that took place.

Of interest in this democratic process of involving all party bodies and members at the highest level of discussion and consultation was the degree of actual participation.

At the Demerara County Conference, held at the newly opened wing of Freedom House, headquarters of the PPP, discussions on Party tactics were so intense and lively that the meeting had to be prolonged by several hours. In fact, so many delegates wished to speak that eventually there were time limitations put on speakers (which was not done before) and finally, the chairman had to request members to voluntarily remove their names from the long list of speakers. Even then, the General Secretary did not begin his reply and winding up of discussions until about 6 p.m on the second day of the conference.

In the Party's paper on democratic centralism printed in the 'PPP Handbook for Groups and Party Bodies' it is stated that 'the common will of the Party cannot be created otherwise than democratically, that is, jointly, collectively, by comparing the different opinions and proposals and then adopting decisions binding for all. The common will thus elaborated has the advantage that it gives the fullest and therefore truest expression to the needs of the working class struggle'.

The paper which was adopted by the Executive Committee in June 1982, states further: 'The internal life of the Party must be organised in such a way as to allow the maximum participation of members in its practical work. This is the essence of party democracy. All necessary conditions must be established for giving members the opportunity to discuss all questions, to check the fulfilment of adopted decisions, to elect leaders and to know

and check their activities Thus Party democracy is a highly important condition for the proper formation, selection and education of leading personnel. At the same time democracy is a guarantee that the leadership will rely on collective experience rather than merely reflect the personal views of some particular Party member. Broad discussion of all fundamental issues and collective elaboration of all decisions form one of the most important methods of Party work. This is essential for generalising the experience gained and for disclosing shortcomings in order that everyone may be convinced of the correctness of the decisions adopted.'

Thus, in theory and in practice, the People's Progressive Party fulfills the objectives of democratic centralism. Its recent County Conferences demonstrated the essence of party democracy.

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PARTY NEWS

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bourgeoisie and the financial oligarchy in Colombia.

A new Central Committee was elected and Comrade Eduardo Vieira was re-elected General Secretary of the Party.

In the message of greetings delivered to the Congress, the PPP delegate assured the Colombian comrades that the PPP will strive to do its utmost to step up its militant solidarity with the just cause of the Colombian working class and the entire working people of Colombia as well as with the Marxist-Leninist Vanguard; the Colombian Communist Party. Best wishes for successful deliberations during the Congress were also expressed.

The PPP expressed full confidence that the resolutions and guide-lines adopted at the Congress will help to further enhance the democratic process now underway in the country and to foil the plans being hatched by local reaction aimed at reversing the hard-won gains of the progressive, democratic forces of Colombia of which the Communists constitute an unquestionable part.