

Protecting Our Environment

by Janet Jagan

Generally speaking, the various threats against the environment come mainly from the developed nations, their massive industries which belch poisonous chemicals into the atmosphere and the millions and millions of vehicles which pollute the planet.

Global warming, the climate changes resulting from uncontrolled pollution are the results of years of neglect of these major issues. At last, it appears that some attention is being paid to this problem which adversely affects the lives of those living on this earth. Unfortunately, the biggest offenders are the slowest to move in the direction of reducing pollution and while all peoples all over the world suffer from the results of this neglect, the poorer ones take the heaviest damage and suffering.

In Guyana, even though we do not contribute in any positive way to the world's environmental problems, on the contrary, we are part of those countries which help contain the growing threat to humankind. Our largely untouched forests provide a breather to the noxious gases being emitted by so many larger and wealthy



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nations. For this, we can be proud not to be the sinners in the rapidly growing hazards of the world's environment.

But within Guyana, we face another form of environmental problem which is extremely harmful to the nation. That is the almost uncontrollable wanton and careless soiling of our environment by waste and garbage.

One peaceful, beautiful Guyanese Sunday morning a friend took me for a ride in the Botanical Gardens, once the pride and joy of our country, known for its beauty and wide range of Guyana's flowers and plants. No more!

It was shocking to see what has happened there. I am not exaggerating, when I say I saw more than 15 areas of refuse, scattered all over, despite the presence of refuse bins. It was a disgrace! However, it was a reflection of what one sees

in many parts of the capital city and elsewhere. However, credit must be given where it is due and many rural and interior communities can take pride in the cleanliness of their villages and settlements.

Besides the fouling-up of the Botanical Gardens, there is no longer the quality and beauty that once existed, under, I suspect, expert botanists or landscape specialists who once had the Gardens in great shape. I can remember years ago, walking in the Gardens with my son in a pram, looking at the gorgeous plants, flowering which made the Gardens full of colour and beauty. I used to walk from our home in Queenstown to the Gardens about twice a week, one of the days, I think Thursdays, to hear the Police Band play.

The zoo, too, is no longer resplendent with examples of Guyana's rich wild life. Many of the children's stories I wrote – mostly about animals and birds were inspired by those in the zoo. Now it is pitiful!

But, of course, all of this is not limited to the Botanical Gardens. The whole city is like a dump site. I pass almost daily, the seawall from Bel Air to Subryanville and it is shocking to see! The area is littered, one can barely see the grass, by bottles, boxes

and all sorts of scraps from the night before where a mostly car-crowd enjoy the Atlantic breeze and throw everything they use to the ground – and despite a large number of refuse bins at

the user to keep in mind that others will be making use of the same facility and to behave in a responsible manner.

What has happened to the psyche of the

to the disposable item until he/he reaches one. I learned that lesson as a child in school and to this day cannot throw away, even a small candy wrapper, but put it in my purse or

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What has happened to the psyche of the average Guyanese who until fairly recently, had respect for his/her community, and kept it clean and free from waste and garbage? I have often advised that a part of the school curriculum should be devoted to teaching children their various responsibilities as citizens when they grow up. Many countries begin this process early so that a child knows that he/she cannot and should not throw ANYTHING anywhere except in a place for waste disposal – a refuse bin, a waste basket, whatever and to hold on to the disposable item until he/he reaches one.

frequent intervals. I often wonder if they do the same in their houses.

One of the daily newspapers published a photograph of the state of the washroom facilities at the Providence stadium. Looking at it, I'm not inclined to blame those responsible for keeping it clean. I think the blame lies with the users of this facility who have no regard for their responsibility to use the facilities in a clean and careful manner. Public facilities such as toilets are not to be abused, but for

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pocket until I find a disposal object. But it takes years of repetition to pound that idea into a child's head. But isn't it worth it, to have a clean environment?

Guyana is a beautiful country and our city used to be splendid in its cleanliness and beauty with clean canals and streets. Not so today. I remember a period when we had an interim management committee made up of prominent and dedicated citizens who kept the city working and clean. Maybe it's time for that now and replace those who are unfit and unable for the task.