

WE HAVE A GOOD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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by Janet Jagan

There was a recent report in the Guyana Chronicle, that over 40 million Americans cannot afford health care. As a result they have to go without drugs, eyeglasses and dental care. Statistics provided said that in 2005

to be one of the richest countries in the world. However, statistics from the same year, 2005, show that the top one percent of all Americans, some 3 million people, received the largest share of the national income since 1928; that is 21.8%, up from 19.8% only the year before. That is a 10% increase

population had nearly as much income in 2005 as the bottom 150 million Americans. In fact, while total reported incomes rose about 9% in the US during 2005, average incomes for the lower 90% of the population actually dropped by 0.6%.

We can now better understand, with this

widening of the income gap between the haves and have-nots is nothing-new – it has been going on steadily since the 1970s. What is new, though, is the rapid increase in numbers at the bottom of the socio-economic pile. The number of severely poor have increased faster than any other segment of the population.”

Those who hate the PPP/C government and decry its continued gains at free and fair elections, fail to realize or admit that these electoral results have a lot to do with the massive improvements taking place in our society. The housing programme speaks for itself and very few can find valid criticisms to “belly-ache” about. Even the hardened racists have a hard time picking holes in the allocation of house lots!

In health care we are well ahead of many countries. Our health care reaches the poorest, who are not required to pay for hospitalization, surgery, tests, medicine and regular medical supervision, a factor that 40 million Americans can't find.

Sometimes I get annoyed with people who have the disease I diagnose as “gripitis.” They gripe and complain about everything – even things that help them. I've had people in need of health care telling me that



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they go to private doctors or hospitals, which they cannot afford and have to go into borrowing for it, when similar and better services are obtainable at public institutions. Major complaint is they have to wait too long to be attended to. Well, if they have to wait and the medical personnel are heavily engaged, they'll have to wait and be patient.

I've had my own experiences. My grand daughter, a student and superb athlete who lives in Canada, broke her ankle on the basketball court of her school. It was not a simple fracture but a complete severance of the bone. Her mother, my daughter, took her to the neighbouring hospital but was referred to a more specialized one. Upon arriving there, they had to wait more than eight hours to be cared for. And in those long hours – there was no nursing care or any form of medication for pain. They had to wait! If that happened

here, it would be a front page attack on the government's health care.

Guyanese have to learn to appreciate what they have, and they have an awful lot going in their favour for their welfare. When I visit the Georgetown Public Hospital, I see a clean floor, I see nurses and doctors going about their business in a professional manner, I see the Pharmacy section with people taking their turn to fill prescriptions and a big sign saying that all drugs are free and no one must pay.

The PPP/C has provided health facilities in all parts of the country – urban, rural, riverain and interior – not an easy task. The University of Guyana is training doctors and medical technicians. The Health Ministry has dramatically lowered the incidence of the killer disease Malaria and Filaria is under control and our children are inoculated against diseases that once kept infant and child mortality rates high. There is free dental care for our children, and eye glasses too!

We can and we must be proud of these achievements which many in other countries do not enjoy – particularly as a free gift from the State and its People – all aimed at having a healthy population!

According to the “Independent” (UK): “The widening of the income gap between the haves and have-nots is nothing-new – it has been going on steadily since the 1970s. What is new, though, is the rapid increase in numbers at the bottom of the socio-economic pile. The number of severely poor have increased faster than any other segment of the population.”

“more than 40 million adults did not receive needed services because they could not afford them.” Also, nearly 15 million adults did not receive eyeglasses and 25 million had no dental care. Also, 19 million Americans did not get needed prescribed medicine and 15 million did not get medical care – all due to cost.

This certainly gives a grim picture and one that reinforces the information about high poverty rates in the USA, which is supposed

in one year. The income of this group, those making more than \$348,000 (US) per year, rose to an average of more than \$1.1 million each or about 14%.

Further, the top 10% of the population took some 48.5% of all reported income in the US in 2005. And, even further, the top tenth of one percent, that is, 300,000 people and the top 100th of a percent had the average income of \$25.7 million a year. Thus, the top one tenth of one percent of the US

information why it is that over 40 million Americans cannot afford health care. The number of Americans living in poverty has expanded dramatically under the Bush Administration; with nearly 16 million people now living on an individual income of less than \$5000 (US) per year or a family income of less than \$10,000. These figures come from a 2005 official census data analysis.

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