

## **PPP/Civic kept it's promise to the Guyana's Children**

by Janet Jagan

"'Children First' is the motto of the PPP/Civic government. In all our decisions and actions, the PPP/Civic takes the position that the welfare and future of Guyana's children is foremost in all considerations. That is so because of the realisation that without healthy, well-educated and happy children, the nation cannot enter the 21st century with hope that we will progress and have real development."

When we examine the meaning of "children first" and the PPP/Civic's strong and real commitment to this motto, we can understand better why it is that the PPP/Civic stands high in its determination to wipe out all racial and religious divisions in our society. When we concentrate on the betterment of the nation's children, it is clear and certain that there is no favouritism or discrimination, because children are children of all races, religion, of both genders and from all walks of life. There may be two sets of children who require special attention; these are special children with particular difficulties, with disabilities, both physical and mental, and those children whose parents are suffering from poverty.

Thus the very concept of "children first" eliminates any prejudices, any form of discrimination, any form of favouritism or any religious or racial bias.

The PPP/Civic government can be proud of what it is doing to better the lives of Guyana's children. The greatest emphasis has been placed on education and health.

A special and very successful programme of vaccination has been carried out throughout the length and breadth of Guyana to ensure that children are protected from some very dangerous childhood diseases. Guyana has one of the best records of vaccination in this hemisphere and stands high in the international bodies that monitor this vaccination programme.

Guyana has been able to reduce by half the infant mortality rate (the number of infants per 100 births who die) since coming into office. It has reduced the death rate of pregnant women at the time of birth. It has reduced the rate of malnutrition and has provided health care for children in the urban and coastal areas of Guyana and riverain and interior areas, which were formerly grossly neglected by the previous regime.

In the sphere of education, the PPP/Civic government has tackled with vigour the serious task of restoring our educational system that once stood solid. It has rebuilt the dilapidated school buildings, so shockingly ignored by the Burnham-Hoyte regime which helped wreck our educational system during its disastrous 28 years in office.

The opponents of this government say that the state of school buildings is not of much significance in establishing a high educational level, but this is not true. Children have greater difficulties learning under poor physical conditions. Soon to reach the 200 mark, schools have been renewed and new schools built.

The other aspects of upgrading our education system, which, before the PNC took over rated the highest in the Caribbean, are the stepping-up training of teachers, so necessary for good education, the equipping of schools to enhance studies, particularly in sciences, the introduction of new school books, specially designed for Guyana, the introduction of a school feeding programme for those who are in need, and as well, the provision of free school uniforms to those whose parents cannot afford. The school curriculum,

distance education (broadcast to schools) and other aspects of improving education have not been ignored.

Greater attention has been given to our children living in the interior, mainly Amerindians. President's College has enrolled a substantial number of Amerindian children who are housed at its dormitories while similar dormitory provision is made available at some interior locations.

The results of all these changes and improvements are now being seen with higher attendance at school (95%), better results at examinations and other qualitative results which indicate that the emphasis on good education is now paying off.

It is also rewarding to know that the Ministry of Education is seeking to meet expectations brought about by the rapid growth of technology. In schools, there is a gradual introduction of computers so that our children can keep up with the growing technology of this period.

Yes, our children come first and will always receive the highest consideration and attention from the PPP/Civic.

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