

Backward or Forward

by Janet Jagan

It's hard to know if one should laugh or cry at the ridiculous, numbing, callous and much too extreme rumblings coming out of an editorial in the Stabroek News of January 3, 2006, headlined: "The Old Politics Won't do." In it, the newspaper continues its unjust attacks on the PPP/Civic, refusing to recognize the positive changes that have taken place since the 1992 elections which ended the subversive, dictatorial regime of the PNC.

Using the oldest and still unfair method of attack - plague on both houses, the Stabroek News (SN) is obliged to admit that by the time the PNC lost power, Guyana was "reduced to poverty, the educational system was in tatters and despair stalked the land." Referring to the 13 years the PPP/C has been in office, SN declares: "the PPP remains in an IMF programme which largely dictates its macroeconomic plans, and with few exceptions has shown a marked reluctance to use the experience and skills that exist outside the narrow confines of the party." The editorial goes on to say that young people are fed up and "resent the continuing obsession with the beggar-my-neighbour backbiting..."

Only last week I wrote in this column about the amazing recovery made in our education system - a result of consistent work to mend all the wreckage committed by the previous government. We have almost recovered from the destruction done to education.

And in an article written in the previous week, I dealt with the PPP/C's achievements in reducing poverty from about 76% in 1992 to below 35%. We are also below the 42% poverty attributed to Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting from a recent survey. These are only two matters arising out of a multitude of improvements since the PPP/C took office in 1992.

The editorial fails to refer to the major achievements of the PPP/C, which include the restoration of democracy and all that it means - free and fair elections, no more gagging of the media, freedom of speech and movement, etc. The Stabroek News editorial conveniently fails to mention the reduction in the foreign debt left by the PNC, the opening up of a real housing programme, the other so obvious improvements in health services, water and so on.

So, whose skills brought about all these changes? Has not the PPP/C used the "experience and skills that exist outside the narrow confines of the party"? Did party members alone bring about all the improvements in the lives of the majority of Guyanese? Come now - let's be realistic and stop the "backbiting" that is encouraged by Stabroek News and the refusal to recognize the positive changes. These are part and parcel of the hostile media that would have been gagged by the former regime for so doing!

Of course, we have gone through difficult times and still are going through difficult times. We were a wrecked nation when we finally ended the 28 years of neglect and destruction. Would Stabroek News expect total recovery in a decade for what took 28 years to destroy? That would be unrealistic. Destruction is much easier and takes less time than rebuilding and recovery! The great exodus of people and their skills began during the Burnham/Hoyte days. It will not end so soon, especially with the harmful and negative, anti-national rantings which emanate from an unreasonable and hostile media.

Great efforts have been made to bring Guyanese closer together. We must not make light of these. In Guyana, we have not only religious freedom, but greater understanding between the religions than in many nations. Our so-called ethnic differences have been mostly man-made, as the several riots so well demonstrate. But Guyanese of all races live comfortably together, house by house, with no segregation in housing or in schools. We need to look at the positive instead of encouraging the negative.

Guyana moves resolutely forward despite such prophets of gloom and doom who, for whatever reason, are determined to blacken the image of the PPP/C and use the powers of the pen to alter the course of elections.

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