

Safeguarding People through Community Policing

Recently I wrote an article for this column strongly criticizing a cartoon in an edition of Stabroek News drawn by Mr P Harris which was derisive and degrading of Community Police. It depicted them as being low-down, ignorant, drunken men. I had pointed out that Community Police were Guyana's largest group of volunteers who made very positive contributions to our people, providing them with much-needed and much appreciated protection from bandits, rapists and murderers who haunt our landscape.

Since then, the media has carried some useful information on the role of Community Police in our society. But before I examine that, I wish to record for the benefit of those in our society who continue to have values on morals, integrity and universally accepted behaviour, that Stabroek News continues to lower itself, inch by inch, into the depths of filth, vulgarity and indecency. Another cartoon appeared in its March 12, 2009 edition by the same cartoonist, Mr P Harris. It clearly depicted the personages of the President, Mr B Jagdeo and Cabinet Secretary Roger Luncheon. It appears to be a comment on the "Roger Khan saga" and even though I'm said to be literate. I could not comprehend what the cartoon was attempting to say. If nothing else, the vulgarity of the cartoonist was prominent and easily understood. It showed the two government officials being clutched in their private parts by a crab. This is not the first, second or last time that this cartoonist has sunk to "toilet humour", to get a laugh. I've followed his nasty voyages in S/N and another newspaper where his vulgarity is so obvious and so disgusting. This is part of the wickedness that goes on without any form of decent control. It reduces and marks the behaviour of our youth and others, who now accept such low-down behaviour as "acceptable". Maybe one day, hopefully, good sense and good taste will return!

To return to the matter of Community Policing groups. Recently the Guyana Police Force celebrated the 33 years of community policing in Guyana. Speaking on the occasion, Home Affairs Minister Clement Rohee noted that during those years, members of the voluntary policing and the police were better able to understand and appreciate one another. He urged every citizen of Guyana to be a part of the policing group in his/her community in order to be aware of the basic methods employed to ensure the safety and protection of the communities in which we live.

Commissioner of Police Henry Greene said: "The groups have patrolled their towns and villages and have been a source of information and assistance to the Guyana Police Force."

Information on the workings of the Community Policing Groups are encouraging. Over the last two years the Community Protection Groups have effected over 1000 arrests, initiated over 500 charges and conducted over 300,000 patrols – quite a record, particularly in view of Stabroek News vulgar attempts miniaturize its responsibilities and effects!

Like all community efforts the most important factor in community policing is people. These volunteers need moral support as well as physical support. In association with one community policing groups, I remember that support our group raised funds for torch lights, flasks, snacks for the men on long patrols and even a vehicle!

Since crime is one of the fastest rising, anti-people phenomena of this period, all efforts must be made, by every citizen, to provide maximum safety and protection to its citizens.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY POLICING:

- ** Reporting unusual and unlawful activities.
- ** Recording activities of members of the group.
- ** Responding to reports and requests by police and public.

GROUP FORMATION:

A group should consist of 15 or more members. Each group elects its Executive, which ought to consist of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, An Assistant Secretary/Treasurer and a minimum of 5 Community members.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY POLICING MEMBERS:

- ** To observe and report unusual an unlawful activities to the police.
- ** To patrol their Communities.
- ** To attend training sessions.
- ** To attend group, divisional and national meetings.
- ** To organize meaningful activities for youth/women of their communities.