

A May Day Review of NEW LABOUR LAWS

Hon. Janet Jagan, Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, delivered a May Day address, in which she reviewed the record of the present Government in relation to labour legislation. The Minister said:

Much has been said and written about the desirability of separating trade unionism from politics. Without prejudice to this point of view, the fact is that in so-called backward territories at any rate political means have proved indispensable in improving the lot of the working man and woman. One need look no further than the activities of the present Government in the field of labour to illustrate the point.

Since the Government took office in August, 1957, the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance has been extended to embrace domestic servants, and the same law has been altered to make it easier for workers to bring legal proceedings to secure compensation.

QUARRY WORKERS

Minimum wages have been prescribed for Quarry workers and an Advisory Committee appointed under the Labour Ordinance is now considering wages in the shirt and garment industry with a view to fixing minimum wages.

It is likely that Advisory Committees will shortly be appointed with a view to fixing minimum wages in two other industries. Other Committees are examining essential services and the conditions of employment of watchmen.

We have just published draft wages orders seeking to permit the employment of workers in Drug Stores, Dry Goods Stores, Groceries and Hardware Stores at a higher daily rate.

PAID HOLIDAYS

Employees of Timber Grants and Quarries now enjoy normal holidays with pay under the law. Quarries

have been declared factories which means that all the health and safety provisions of the Factories Ordinance now apply to Quarries as well.

Bakery workers have just been granted greater protection by an amendment to the Bakeries Ordinance. Two recent disputes in services considered essential to the life and health of the community have been referred to the Arbitration Tribunal constituted according to law.

RECORD SPEAKS

That is the record and it speaks for itself. The greatest problem to me as Minister of Labour is unemployment. I am not yet at liberty to disclose the figures brought to light by the recent survey carried out by the International Labour Organisation expert.

But I am sure that when they are revealed shortly, they will prove a severe shock to the entire community, most of all to the labour movement whose fight for better conditions is always prejudiced by a 'buyers' market', as it were.

Here again, the Government has tried to find solutions in one field of increasing unemployment — the sugar industry. I have just



The Hon. Mrs Janet Jagan

appointed a small Committee to look into this serious problem and to see what can be done to offset it

JOIN THE STRUGGLE

The trade union movement must think in terms of political freedom and join the struggle for self government. This is inevitably tied up with the economic development of the country. The terrible problem of unemployment can only be solved by the establishment of more industries, making available more and more well drained and irrigated lands and by a well planned and concerted drive with the fullest utilization of manpower and other resources

Obituary

The death occurred last Saturday May 3 of Mr G.H. Westmaas, father of David and Rory. Mr. Westmaas was an original signatory to the People's Free Press. The P.P.P. and Thunder extend deepest sympathy to the bereaved relatives

Book Review

A PORK-

KNOCKER'S LIFE

"Black Midas", first full length novel by Guianese writer Jan Carew, gives an excellent portrayal of the life of a pork-knocker.

Written with a deep understanding of life in the bush and containing quite accurate detail, "Black Midas" should prove satisfying reading to many Guianese.

It is perhaps the first novel written by a Guianese that contains the flavour and essence of life here.

There is no doubt that "Black Midas" has its shortcomings. The author's immaturity is apparent; all the rough edges have not been trimmed; the book is superficial in parts. But on the whole Jan Carew reveals his potentialities in this first attempt.

"Black Midas" is the story of "Shark", a Mahaica village boy who gets some education through being sponsored by a white godfather, later becomes apprenticed to a Government Medical Officer and finally follows the footsteps of his father as a porkknocker.

His Midas touch makes him wealthy overnight in the diamond fields. The story of his triumphant return to Georgetown, his attempts to change his pattern of life, the subsequent failure and his return again to the interior are the fabric of the novel.

The romantic element, continued on page 7

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