

Thunder - Alive And Kicking At 37

— JANET JAGAN

Thirty-seven years ago, **Thunder**, always designated the official organ of the People's Progressive Party was first printed. The first issue was published as a monthly in January 1950, priced at two cents. The very first issue stated: "**PAC has now become the Thunder. Thunder is the organ of the People's Progressive Party. We need your help so we can realise our aim to reach at least 10,000 readers . . .**"

PAC, the abbreviation for Political Affairs Committee, was first published November 6, 1946, continued as a mimeographed 4-page publication and then merged into **Thunder**.

The name **Thunder** originated from the William Morris poem that has always been on the masthead of **Thunder** — "Hark the rolling of the thunder! Lo the sun! and lo thereunder. Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder". As the 37 years have gone by, this section of Morris' poem still seems green and applicable.

Thunder has been taken for granted for so long in the PPP, that unfortunately, its anniversaries are generally overlooked — including the even numbers like 10th, 20th or 30th. For that reason, at a recent **Thunder** Editorial Board meeting it was suggested that on the occasion of **Thunder's** 37th anniversary (not a number usually commemorated) we print a bit about our publication in this issue.

I was the first editor of **Thunder** and kept the post, while also functioning as PPP General Secretary, from 1950 to mid-1956. At that time, Brindley Benn then became editor and held the post until Ranji Chandisingh became editor in late 1957, being brought home from the UK for the job. At that time both Brindley Benn and myself were Ministers in the PPP government of 1957-61.

Later H. J. M. Hubbard, who had been one of the founder-members of PAC (but who dropped out for ten years from 1947-57) became editor. By that time, **Thunder** was back to a monthly after having moved to a weekly in the fifties and early sixties — that is, until **Mirror** began in 1962.

Finally, **Thunder** became a quarterly publication in July 1969 under the editorship of Dr. Charles Jacob. At

that time, **Thunder** was described as a "Quarterly Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the People's Progressive Party." Dr. Jacob held the post until his death in June 1973. Ranji Chandisingh then became editor again and continued until August 1975. Then Clinton Collymore was elected editor by the Party's Central Committee, remaining in this position to this day.

One of the few occasions in which **Thunder** gave itself some self-praise took place in the weekly issue of January 7, 1956 when the editorial, under the title "Six Years of Service" noted that during this period:

"**Thunder** has played an important role in the political life of the country. It has clearly, faithfully and courageously championed the rights of Guianese, has led the movement for national liberation and has expressed the aspirations of all Guianese for freedom from colonial rule. No one can deny that the mouthpiece of the People's Progressive Party, **Thunder**, greatly furthered the people's movement."

The editorial mentioned that **Thunder** led the struggle against all infringements on the civil liberties of the people:

"It set the pace for constitutional reform; it gave voice to the working masses and peasantry in their struggle for a better life. For the first time in the history of British Guiana, a strong anti-imperialist voice was heard. Unifying the people of Guiana, cementing the racial difference and the moulding of a militant movement were the outcome of its many years of activity."

Reference was made to the many difficulties faced "which would have closed down any other newspaper". This included police raids in the fifties, the closure of the printery in 1954, the posting of police at the printery, seizure of type set for the paper and the introduction of the reactionary law entitled **Control of Propaganda Order of 1954**, aimed at suffocating **Thunder**. To these troubles were added the "inevitable" financial problems.

The editorial closed with these words — "**Thunder** has become a necessary part of the people's movement. As such it shall continue as the organ of the only party in Guiana which seeks to lead the people in the correct path to national liberation."

Looking at a few old issues, one cannot help but be impressed by the publication. For example the issue of

July 28, 1962, carried the banner "**Guiana Clamours for Independence — 75,000 Demonstrate**". Fabulous photos of the marches remind us of the part the PPP played in the independence struggle. (note the use then of the spelling of "Guiana" instead of "Guyana").

Over the years articles have dealt in depth with fundamental issues, foreign and domestic and ideological. Leading Party members contributed, along with other competent writers in their specific fields. Many back issues of **Thunder** are still available on order from Michael Forde Bookshop. A short bibliography of the more important articles follows:

- The Trade Disputes Bill by Ashton Chase (No. 1, 1969); Capitalism's Monetary Crisis by Dr. Charles Jacob (No. 1, 1969); Erosion of Civil Liberties by Ranji Chandisingh (No. 2, 1969); Local Government Elections: A National Scandal by D. Westmaas (No. 1, 1971); The February Revolt in Trinidad by Dr. C. Jagan (No. 1, 1971); The Terrorism of the CIA by C. Rohee (No. 4, 1976); Nationalisation and the New Imperialist Strategy by G. Teixeira (No. 2, 1976); National Service: An Act of Coercion by Janet Jagan (No. 1, 1974); The Alienated Minority (Amerindians) by Dr. Paul Singh (No. 1, 1974);

- The New Constitution of Guyana by R. Ramkarran (No. 1, 1980); 30th anniversary of the Vanguard Party by C. Collymore (No. 1, 1980); 110th Birth Anniversary of V. I. Lenin by F. Mohamed (No. 1, 1980) Campaign for Living Wage & Democracy by M. Nagamootoo (No. 3, 1981); Virtual Army Coup Keeps PNC In Power by W. Hameed (No. 1, 1981); The Mass Media in Guyana by Dr. C. Jagan (No. 1, 1973); Caribbean Integration by C. Collymore (No. 1, 1972); PPP Blazed Freedom Trail by B. Ramkarran (No. 3, 1975); Plight of Guyana's Children by W. Hameed (No. 2, 1984);

Students and academics make regular use of **Thunder** for research purposes. There is no other local periodical in Guyana like **Thunder**. It is always informative. It has a wealth of facts, and statistics and is a must in any serious library, bookshop or research cabinet file.

As we look back on all these years, it is surely an historical fact that **Thunder** has, and continues to be, a publication of significance and worth, making its important contributions to the life of our country and to the cause for which the PPP stands.