

A Consister Better Life for

by Janet Jagan

I was reminded, in a letter in Stabroek News, by a prominent civil servant in Premier Cheddi Jagan's office in the 1960's, Mr Tiwari (which put an end to all the fuss about Mr Abraham), about a publication he was involved in – "Patterns of Progress."

Upon getting hold of this rare publication, I found it of great interest today although it was described as "The Story of Achievement 1957-60."

I am particularly reminded of some of the recent snide remarks in the letter columns of prominently anti-government media, that because of racial preferences, the PPP/C focuses in agriculture, mainly on rice and sugar. However, the facts tell a different story.

The PPP government of 1957-61 introduced an incentive programme of providing bonuses to farmers for special crops cultivated on a new land; "Patterns of Progress" explains: "Government is now paying bonuses to farmers for new lands put under the following crops – onions, cabbages, dhol, peanuts, sesame and other oil seeds, cocoa and coconuts. Farmers are also being assisted with seed and planting material. For certain of these crops there are guaranteed prices and steps will



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also be taken to restrict importation of similar products when the crops are in sufficient supply, credit facilities are available to farmers."

This was not words or propoganda – but a reality. I remember that I sat in Parliament in a seat won in the Essequibo – Pomeroon Constituency. I visited my constituency regularly, although I was also a Minister, and in the Pomeroon River, hundreds of thousands of coconut plants were freely distributed and bonuses given to farmers who made the area fruitful in the production of copra. Also, the government placed a high tax on imported coffee to protect the Pomeroon coffee producers, who at that time produced the best coffee in Guyana.

During that period, some 90,000 acres of land were given out to farmers, of which about 11,500 were given to Co-op Land and Producers' Societies. Another 23,000 acres were

given to settlers in main land settlement shemes at Black Bush Polder, Garden of Eden, Mara and Onverwagt.

What is of historical significance is the fact that the Co-op Movement at that period made considerable strides "both in number of societies and volume of business." It was during this period that co-ops grew and were strongly encouraged by the PPP and its leader Dr Cheddi Jagan. There are numerous records of writings and speeches he made encouraging the Co-op Movement.

The pity of it all is that Co-ops were blooming during the PPP period in office 1957-61 and 1961-64. But with the manipulation (by the US and UK governments) of the PNC/UF into government in 1964, the Co-op Movement met a slow death. This, in spite of Mr Burnham and his PNC naming this country "The Cooperative Republic of Guyana" – a name we do not deserve, since the Co-op Movement died long before the restoration of democracy in 1992.

I can remember how strong the Co-op Movement was in those days. I recall being invited to declare open a machinery co-op on the East Bank Berbice in the 60's when, instead of the proverbial champagne at such events, we poured coconut water over the farm machines.

It Aim for a all Guyanese

The PPP government at that period in the fifties and sixties set the programme to open Industrial Estates (the first at Ruimveldt), improvement of

million lbs compared to 1.6 million in 1959.

In fact the Marketing Division was so popular that it went to all areas where farmers

Division was so helpful and popular among farmers and consumers. He took my remarks seriously and re-invigorated the Marketing Division, but it never reached the top levels of the 50's and 60's.

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"Patterns of Progress" also deals with the PPP's programmes in health, education, housing, water, transport, sea defences and other aspects of the government at that time.

Of interest today is the foresight of the earlier PPP government on the subject of a road to the Brazil border: "In the years to come it might very well turn out that the builders of the interior road was the most important item in the current Development Programme. Not only will this road help to develop the areas through which it passes, but it will also stimulate trade with the neighbouring territories of the Rio Bravo and Amazonas and provide them with much needed outlets through Port Georgetown."

livestock and the growth of the poultry industry, the expansion of the rice industry, assistance of fishermen with bonuses and help in building trawlers, greater attention and expenditure on drainage and irrigation and the setting up of the Marketing Division.

The Marketing Division afforded producers an assured market at fair prices. Export of plantains, for example, to the Caribbean rose in 1960 to 3 ½

brought their produce which was purchased and paid on-the-spot and paid higher prices than the middle men offered. It was even extended to trucks carrying produce to the urban consumers at prices well below what was going in the markets.

During the PNC years, this process, like so many, failed and fell apart. I remember talking to our dear departed Minister of Agriculture Sash Sawh about the days when the Marketing

What is of significance in "Patterns of Progress" is to understand the consistency of the PPP's endeavours to improve the lives and welfare of the Guyanese people. These clarify the unbroken chain in our history from the earliest days of the PPP in government to the present – that of the unchanging aim for a better Guyana and a better life for all those living here.