

The Dialogue Should Continue

by Janet Jagan

The crime situation in Guyana has been commented upon by representatives of two embassies in Guyana, the United States Ambassador Mr Ronald Godard and the Canadian High Commissioner Mr Serge Marcoux. Both have decried the crime wave and the fact that it has not been condemned by all sectors of our society. Mr Godard remarked that this has been treated almost like a "legitimate subject for debate."

Both envoys pointed to the obvious fact that Guyana is a democratic society that depends on the rule of law for its existence. And both promised assistance if requested.

All of what they had to say is true and a lot depends on restoring balance and good sense to the awful happenings at the crime level. Can there be any justification for the horrendous escape by the five prisoners and the subsequent deaths that have taken place? The politicisation of all these happenings since the Mashramani breakout from the Georgetown Prison has poisoned the atmosphere and prevented some thinking and reasonable attitudes. Surely the whole of Guyanese society should be backing the Police in their efforts to apprehend the criminals. These are no "Robin Hood" bandits, but those hardened in the criminal world of guns, drugs and robbery.

Maybe the US Ambassador and the Canadian High Commissioner should urge their governments to stop sending highly-trained and hardened criminals back to Guyana because they were born here. Maybe there should be a limit to the time they have lived in North America and learned their trade so well. Most went abroad as children or adolescents, innocent when they left, but something else when deported to Guyana. That might ease our problems.

But I agree with the US Ambassador that the dialogue should continue. When we examine the reasons used by Mr Hoyte and his party for refusing to continue the dialogue, it is really difficult to find a rational excuse. Everyone knows that this "pause in the dialogue" and the boycott of Parliament, as well as all the other distasteful things going on are part of a political game that hasn't changed very much in the last 40 years.

It happens whenever the PPP is in office. There was a dialogue initiated by Dr Jagan when he was Premier in the 1961-64 period, but it was not continued. Instead, violence was used as the best means of ousting the PPP and hoisting the PNC into office. That game of violence resurged after the PPP won office legitimately in 1992, 1997 and 2001. For those who like to say "plague on both houses," historical records tell the truth.