

## Notes from Canada

by Janet Jagan

I am writing from the home of my daughter Nadira. Looking at her library the other day, I came across a beautifully illustrated book "India – a Wealth of Diversity" edited by Arif Ali, published in 1997. In the selection on the Indian Diaspora (Indians living in other parts of the world), attention is given to what Indians have done in various parts of the world. It focused on South Africa where Indian immigrants including Mahatma Gandhi and many others led the struggle against apartheid. The text reads - "This is equally the story of Indians everywhere in the diaspora, invariably identifying themselves with the struggles of their nations for freedom and justice."

What follows is a statement that all Guyanese should cherish and feel pride in – "However, history and circumstances singled out Guyana to produce the diaspora's greatest son. Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the President of Guyana, who died in 1997, was a statesman of world stature, a socialist, anti-racist and anti-colonial warrior of the noblest kind."

These few words place in perspective, in the global view, the relevance of Cheddi Jagan's life. There are those who for whatever reason, would not want to accept this evaluation. However it is foolish to reject the hero stature of Cheddi Jagan and not feel the pride of having had in our midst a person of international recognition, a man who selflessly served his country and its people.

Most truly great leaders have had to live through endless persecution, vile attacks and hatred. Witness the travails of Nehru, Gandhi, Mandela, Bolivar, Allende, Nyerere and others, who were finally revered and respected by history and their people.

I have been following the media closely while in Canada and find that there are many similarities as well as differences, to that which exists in Guyana. Some of the newspapers are carrying out what I would term strident attacks on the Prime Minister Jean Chretien, demanding his resignation. Some of the comments and attacks are downright petty and unreasonable. The differences to what we experience in Guyana in the anti-PPP/Civic campaign are a matter of quality or decency. While the Canadian anti-government attacks are frequently vicious, they are not vile, degrading and vulgar as are those we hear and read in Guyana.

So the PPP/Civic is not alone in being the pivot of media attacks. It exists in many countries and is part of what is tolerated in democracies. What many seem to forget is that it was only in 1992 when the PNC lost office in free and fair elections that the right to speak out and voice opinions without fear of reprisals began to exist again. I wonder if those who accuse the PPP/Civic of denying human rights have lost their memories.