

We have capable women candidates

by Janet Jagan

Only a few weeks away and we'll know the results of the general elections. We are fortunate to be part of a democracy that insists on having elections every five years, within the constitutional requirements, with free and fair nominations, voting procedures and guarantees for fair counts. We are also fortunate to have observers, both local and foreign, to judge the conduct and fairness of the electoral system.

Need I remind our readers that we didn't have that before? Twice, the five-year period was well over-run plus all the horrors of electoral fraud during the PNC regime.

And unlike some countries, even those who claim to be democracies, we have no evidence of any move to extend the two five-year terms to three. Of course, the PNC did that with impunity.

What is inspiring about the 2006 elections is an examination of the candidates of the several parties contesting. There is no doubt about it, the PPP/Civic has come out with the best names listed, giving the confidence a voter needs when he/she marks the ballot paper.

As a woman, I am exceedingly proud of the quantity and quality of the names of women candidates, the number of which exceeds the one-third requirement.

The PPP/C list has women from all walks of life, from women who work in factories, in field, as teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, scientists, researchers, trade unionists, journalists and so on.

And let us give credit where credit is due.

It didn't happen by chance that Guyanese women have literally galloped into freedom and equality. It wasn't always like that. Before the advent of women's organizations like the Women's Political and Economic Organization (1946) and the Womens' Progressive Organization (WPO) (1953), women were strictly limited in the work place. They were:

- ** Domestics
- ** Sugar workers
- ** Shirt factory workers
- ** Nurses
- ** Teachers
- ** Civil servants

and a few other vocations. Even women who were lucky enough to get jobs in the public service, had to resign when they got married (an earlier PPP government corrected that).

In the earlier days, when illiteracy was fairly high, many girl children did not receive an education – all efforts were made to give the boy child the benefits. The WPO worked tirelessly to close this education gap, urging parents to send all their children to school.

When the PPP in 1963 founded the University of Guyana, possibilities for both boys and girls to obtain a university education were opened. It was with these early openings of opportunities and encouragement that women started the upward march to better jobs and greater opportunities to advance themselves.

Today, statistics show, both here and in other countries, that women are more in number in schools and universities than are men. Through the past decades, women have moved forward and now have achieved remarkable successes in the many fields of endeavour that they have entered.

That is why it is so important that the PPP/C, which has made through its women and youth arms, great strides, is today showing Guyana and the whole world that we have women of achievement and ability in the ranks of the People's Progressive Party.

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