

The Accuser Stands Accused!

by Janet Jagan - June 21, 2008

Far too often our media jumps to the tune of one or another US report on an aspect of human rights that highlights Guyana as a chief offender. Whichever report it may be – on police brutality, high rates of corruption, violations of human rights, violence against children, abuse of child labour, trafficking or what have you, the media grabs on like a tick and won't loosen.

However, when we examine the so-called violations, we generally discover that most are over-done, not based on genuine research and, strangely enough, more strongly reflect what is actually going on in the USA, in one form or another.

I recall my own anger at charges that our police have killed civilians instead of arresting them and then remembering numerous instances where policemen, usually in New York City, kill innocent men, usually Black Americans, under horrific circumstances – like dozens of bullets into the victim's body, only to find out later that the dead men did nothing at all to breach the law. Those interested in researching that point would not find it hard to find plenty of evidence.

A recent Reuters report indicates that the global labour union grouping known as ITUC accused the USA of violating a wide range of workers' rights, and permitting the existence of a "huge union-busting industry".

The report of the Brussels based International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) declared that many US workers were denied the right to organize into unions. It also reported that child labour was not being tackled effectively. So much for their various reports that Guyana is not tackling its child labour and child trafficking problems!

According to the Reuters report, the US administration is denying workers the freedom to join a union and bargain collectively to "millions of workers." Imagine this happening in little Guyana! If something like that did happen, it would never be allowed to continue for even a few days!

In more specific terms the ITUC report said that "there exists a huge union busting industry which aims at undermining trade union organizing."

The US is also accused in this report of not ending child labour, mainly from under-age migrants from Latin America and forced labour, especially from migrant workers in agriculture and garment manufacturing.

This is happening in the 21st century, but look at what went on way back in 1973, another example of US attitudes to wrong doing and illegal behaviour right here in Guyana.

A declassified US document marked "confidential" by the US Ambassador to Guyana re the 1973 elections stated:

“In attempting its forecast of this election, Embassy had not really expected PNC to abandon all pretense of honest election. However, this is what appears to have happened, whether out of fear, confusion, inefficiency, exuberance or sheer lack of coordination, rigging does seem to have gotten out of hand. From all reports, ballot boxes were delivered by variety of means Monday night to Guyana Defence Force (GDF) Headquarters in Georgetown where they remained under armed guard for upwards of 10 hours before vote counting began. PPP evidently succeeded only too well in alarming PNC by its last minute exhortations to its followers to prevent removal of ballot boxes to three central county locations. Evidently, plans to engage in ballot-box stuffing and switching while boxes being delivered, as had apparently been the original intention, were abandoned and stuffing and switching seems to have taken place while the boxes were held at GDF Headquarters before delivery to three county locations.

“Announced results district by district (which will be reported by airgram) so clearly padded that little can be learned by comparison with 1968 results which themselves suspect. We will really never know what true votes was in any of the districts, how successful PNC campaign might have been, or how great Liberation Party’s appeal was. About all that can be said at this point is that Burnham has retained power and that he will be able to amend the constitution as he sees fit. As US had in past devoted much time, effort and treasure to keeping Jagan out, we should perhaps not be too disturbed at results this election. Jagan is still out and Burnham still in.”

The meaning of that contemptible letter from the US Ambassador tells the whole story of the USA’s fork-tongued attitude that has created so many enemies. It will tolerate and go along with the most terrible transgressions of human rights once it suits its policy, as in the case of Guyana – note the use of “treasure” meaning money poured into the coffers of the PNC to keep Jagan out of office by all means – and in its use of torture and imprisonment without trial and abuse of Iraqi prisoners, just to state a few of its double standards.

The accuser stands accused!

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