

**REPORT OF THE  
BRITISH GUIANA  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
COMMISSION  
1954**

(The Robertson Commission Report)

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COLONIAL OFFICE

REPORT OF THE  
BRITISH GUIANA  
CONSTITUTIONAL  
COMMISSION  
1954

**Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament**

*by Command of Her Majesty  
September 1954*

***LONDON***

**HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE**

***THREE SHILLINGS NET***

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**MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

SIR JAMES ROBERTSON, K.C.M.G., K.B.E. (Chairman).

SIR DONALD JACKSON.

MR. GEORGE WOODCOCK, C.B.E.

MR. R. E. RADFORD, Colonial Office (Secretary).

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

In the light of the circumstances which made it necessary to suspend the Constitution of British Guiana to consider and to recommend what changes are required in it.

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## INTRODUCTION

To The Right Honourable A. T. LENNOX-BOYD, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies.

SIR,

The composition of the Constitutional Commission appointed to visit British Guiana following the suspension of the Constitution was announced by your predecessor in the House of Commons on the 2nd December, 1953, and at the same time he made public the following terms of reference for the Commission:

"In the light of the circumstances which made it necessary to suspend the Constitution of British Guiana to consider and to recommend what changes are required in it."

2. Two members of the Commission, the Chairman, Sir James Robertson, and Mr. George Woodcock, accompanied by the Secretary, Mr. R. E. Radford of the Colonial Office, left London by air on the 4th January, 1954, and reached Georgetown, British Guiana, on the 6th January. Meanwhile the third member, Sir Donald Jackson, had made his own way from Grenada to British Guiana, arriving at Georgetown on the 5th January.

3. The Commission held their first meeting on the 7th January to plan the programme for their work and to consider the situation which had arisen with regard to their appointment and terms of reference. The Commission found on arrival in British Guiana that an influential local Committee representative of 15 citizens' organizations had been formed under the chairmanship of Mr. W. 3. Raatgever and had already communicated with the Secretary of State stating that in their opinion the Commission's terms of reference were too limited in scope and suggesting their extension to include matters concerning the economic, educational and political development of the Colony. Furthermore this Committee thought that the membership of the Commission should be increased to five.

4. The Commission determined not to be delayed by the action taken by this committee and decided to hold a Press conference at which they should give their interpretation of the terms of reference. This was done on the 9th January and the criticisms regarding the terms of reference were dealt with by the Chairman in that part of his statement which reads as follows: —

"Another criticism has been made that we should have been asked to consider other than purely constitutional matters. It is true that the Commission is only charged with making recommendations about the constitution, and that we are now required to make recommendations on social, educational and economic matters. But we consider that in order to appreciate the circumstances which made it necessary to suspend the constitution

we must acquaint ourselves with all aspects of the country's life. The constitution in our view must be related to the general conditions of the country and is not a thing existing *in vacuo* quite unrelated to the social, economic and educational environment in which it has to function. It is in this sense that we interpret our terms of reference and we propose to try to get as clear a picture of the general background as we can. We visualise the possibility that in our report we may have to make observations upon these aspects of the situation, while not making specific recommendations about them."

The statement was repeated in a broadcast on the following day. In the event, large numbers of people came forward and several of these, who had been leaders in setting up the Committee and making representations, informed the Commission that their doubts had been completely dispelled and that they were satisfied with the way the Commission were setting about their task.

5. We were faced at the outset with the decision of the Executive of the People's Progressive Party (P.P.P.) to boycott the Commission. The Party leaders by coming forward would have rendered themselves liable to public questioning on matters of some difficulty, but the reasons for their decision declared publicly were: —

- (a) that the Commission were, by their terms of reference, precluded from enquiring into the circumstances which led to the suspension of the constitution and were committed to recommending some curtailment of it;
- (b) that the Commission were weak, uninspiring and unlikely to report objectively,

6. We tried in a number of ways to show that these objections were not valid. For example, in the statement made to the Press and broadcast the Chairman said: —

"We propose to make enquiries both as to what happened before the constitution was suspended, and also to see what people here think should be done for the future.

We have been told that some people wish to boycott us, because they fear that our recommendations will not be free and unbiased.

I should like to make it absolutely clear that the Commission is a perfectly free body — we have been given no directions regarding our recommendations — we are not committed to any solution — nor are we bound to accept any suggestions made by anyone. We would not have agreed to come if such conditions had been imposed. We intend to follow our terms of reference honestly and impartially, and to make recommendations based not only on our own experience and common-sense but also on advice and information given us here both by members of the public and by members of the Government.

There also seems to me to have been some misunderstanding of our terms of reference. I should like to give you one or two examples. It has been stated in the Press here that the terms of reference which we have been given do not allow us to recommend that the

constitution should remain unchanged. We consider that if on full consideration of all the facts we believe that the suspended constitution should be re-introduced just as it was, we are entitled to say so, and it may be of interest if I repeat a quotation from the official record of the House of Commons in London to show that we are not unsupported in this belief.

On the 2nd December, 1953, when the Commission's personnel and terms of reference were announced, Mr. James Griffiths, the previous Colonial Secretary, asked the following question: —

‘It is difficult to follow these terms of reference. Will they leave the matter in this way? That if the Commission having enquired into all the circumstances come to the conclusion that no basic fundamental change is required in the constitution, it will be at liberty so to report?’

Mr. Lyttelton the present Colonial Secretary replied: —

‘The Commission is asked to recommend what changes are required. If it ends that no changes are required, I imagine that it will say so.’ ”

The Chairman also wrote later to Mr. Ashton Chase, then Acting Leader of the P.P.P., referring to a pamphlet —" Why we boycott the Commission "— issued by him and trying to persuade him to call off the boycott; but the reply was that the Party Executive had decided to adhere to its previous Decision.

7. We do not believe that we were materially handicapped by this attitude on the part of the Executive of the P.P.P. We were able to read the Hansard Reports of all proceedings of the State Council and the House of Assembly; we obtained a complete series of the Party newspaper *Thunder* from its start up to the most recent number; and in addition we heard recordings of broadcast speeches by P.P.P. Ministers. Moreover, the boycott of our Commission by the official P.P.P. Executive did not extend to a boycott by all Party members and sympathisers. Many of the witnesses who came forward spoke as members of the Party and made it quite clear that their sympathies were with the Ministers and that they did not believe the criticisms levelled against them. We have, therefore, had an opportunity of reading and hearing so much of what the P.P.P. leaders said that we think it safe to make certain assumptions about the way in which their minds were working, and we have obtained a good understanding of the feelings of the Party rank and file. We set out with no preconceived ideas, and much of our examination of witnesses hostile to the P.P.P. took the form of giving the most generous interpretation possible to P.P.P. Ministerial action, in order to see how they reacted to such versions. On these occasions it must be confessed that some of our witnesses appeared to be most suspicious of us, and of the ideas which we were ostensibly putting forward.

8. By courtesy of the Chief Justice, Sir Peter Bell, excellent office accommodation was made available to us in his Chambers at the Victoria Law Courts, and it was there in the No. 1 Court



Room that our public sessions in Georgetown were held. In addition we held meetings to take evidence at Bartica, Winiperu, Lethem, Suddie, Anna Regina, Charity, Christianburg, Mackenzie and New Amsterdam.

9. Before our arrival in British Guiana a notice was issued locally inviting persons or organizations proposing to give evidence to the Commission to submit written memoranda beforehand, but it was made clear that this was in no sense intended to preclude witnesses from tendering oral evidence only if they so desired. Some 220 memoranda were received from individuals and associations, of whom 160 were examined orally upon their submissions. In addition about 80 witnesses, who sent us no memoranda, gave evidence orally. Our meetings were held in public whenever possible, though we acceded to requests for private sittings in some cases in view of the natural hesitation of some to make statements in public. Many well written and sensible memoranda were submitted, and many witnesses had obviously given the whole matter anxious and careful thought. We had also to provide the audience for a number of cranks and seekers of publicity and to listen to a great deal which was not apropos to our enquiry. Perhaps the highlights were a gentleman who claimed that the sun, planets, and stars went round the earth and another who was greatly interested in Pope Joan. On the whole, however, we were impressed by the interest taken in the constitutional problem by all classes of the people, and by the knowledge shown by many who appeared to have little education or political experience. We are submitting to you, Sir, a verbatim record of the evidence received in public session. A list of the names of those who gave oral evidence or submitted written memoranda are given in Appendix IV.

10. During our stay in British Guiana, from the 6th January until the 10th March, we travelled widely in the Colony\* in order to obtain as clear an impression as possible of its geography, its economy and its social conditions. Before beginning our hearings we travelled by road to New Amsterdam and visited, a number of sugar estates on the Corentyne coast; we also met members of the local government authorities, inspected the Jute Research Station at Rose Hall, Canje, and generally learned what we could of the conditions and problems of the coastal belt. On a further preliminary visit we saw the Demerara Bauxite Company's mine workings and bauxite processing plant at Ituni and Mackenzie, and were shown the housing, medical and social amenities provided for their workers. Later, during intervals between public sessions in Georgetown, we were able to take advantage of the excellent facilities provided by British Guiana Airways to pay two visits to the Interior. We visited Tumatumari, where the British Guiana Consolidated Goldfields are dredging for alluvial gold, and flew from there to see the impressive and beautiful Kaieteur Falls. At Kamarang Mouth, on the Upper Mazaruni River, we had our first glimpse of the Amerindian peoples and were able to appreciate the difficulties of communication with the Interior. While at Bartica we went to see the latest equipment for timber extraction in use in the forest concession of British Guiana Timbers at Winiperu. Some of us also visited the sawmill operated by Williams Timber and Trading Company on Kaow Island and, later, the large new sawmill of British Guiana Timbers at Houston on the outskirts of Georgetown. We were given facilities to inspect H.M. Penal Settlement on the Mazaruni River opposite Bartica and saw the historical remains at Kijk-over-al of early Dutch settlement of the Colony. During our visit to the Rupununi savannahs we learnt at first hand of the difficulties of cattle ranching and saw more of the Amerindians. While visiting the Essequibo coast to hold

public sessions we were able to inspect the Essequibo Boys' School and to see several farms along the banks of the Pomeroon River. Finally, we were given facilities to visit the important Rice Development Scheme at Mahaicony/Abary, where is situated one of the large Government owned rice mills. [\* *The itinerary of the Commission is given in detail in Appendix V.*]

11. It will be apparent that we could not have fitted so comprehensive a series of visits into our programme without the ready co-operation and assistance of many individuals and we are very conscious of the debt of gratitude which we owe. Despite the unhappy circumstances which had occasioned our visit to the Colony, we were received with kindness by all sections of the people and we have derived a warm understanding of them and of the problems which face their country.

12. We left British Guiana by air on the 10th March and after a brief stay in Trinidad, where we had the opportunity of discussions with His Excellency the Governor and with the Colonial Secretary, we continued to Barbados. There we were provided with office accommodation and facilities by the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies and began work on our report. On the 3rd April we left Barbados by air for London and, since our return, we have held a number of meetings and completed our report, which we now, Sir, submit for your consideration.

## CHAPTER 1. THE GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. The political and constitutional history of British Guiana was described fully and carefully in the Waddington Commission's Report, Chapters I and II, and we need not attempt to improve upon the excellent account given there. It is, however, necessary for us to describe the outstanding characteristics of the country, economic, social and political, as we found them, in order to understand the political events in the light of which the Commission were appointed to report.

### I. ECONOMIC FACTORS

#### Geographical Setting

2. The country, like Caesar's Gaul, can be divided into three parts, the coastal plain, the marshy and thickly forested "backlands" and the savannahs lying behind the north-eastern coastal lands and in the remote south-western interior.

3. It is on the coastal plain, formed of rich alluvial mud and lying four to five feet below sea level, that the sugar and rice crops are grown and the bulk of the people live. The difficulties of securing the land for cultivation and of wresting a livelihood from it are vividly described in the following quotation from Rodway's *History of British Guiana*:

"Every acre at present under cultivation has been the scene of a struggle with the sea in front and the flood behind. As a result of this arduous labour through two centuries a narrow strip of land along the coast has been rescued from the mangrove swamp, by an elaborate system of dams and dykes. Centred along the rivers and creeks lie a thousand abandoned plantations most of them indistinguishable from the surrounding forest: these represent the failures of the early settlers. At first sight the narrow line of sugar estates seems but a very poor showing for such a long struggle with nature, but when all the circumstances are taken into consideration, it is almost a wonder that the Colony has not been abandoned altogether."

There is no end to this struggle and year by year money must be spent to maintain the elaborate system of sea-defences and the polders which protect the agricultural and residential areas against flooding from inland during periods of extensive rain.

4. Nor is this all, since, after protection against sea and flood has been provided, there are problems of irrigation and drainage to be overcome. The supply of irrigation water comes mainly from large shallow reservoirs, or conservancies, situated behind the cultivated lands, and is brought to these cultivated lands by gravity through systems of canals. The upkeep of these reservoirs is costly, and a very considerable proportion of the water conserved is lost by evaporation and absorption; on this account they are often found to be unreliable in periods of prolonged droughts. The cultivated lands having been irrigated, drainage by gravity into the sea

is possible only when the tide is low, and even this is dependent to a large extent on the ever changing levels of the foreshore outside the sea defences; as a result in many areas the far more expensive method of drainage entirely by pumps has to be adopted. It is only in some suitably situated areas, where outlet is obtained into the lower reaches of the rivers, that easy and satisfactory drainage is possible at all times.

5. Behind the alluvial coastal plain lie great stretches of dense forest which cover about four-fifths of the country. These are largely uninhabited and undeveloped except for a few agricultural settlements along the river banks, scattered mining and timber operations and Amerindian settlements.

6. In the Rupununi District of the far south-western interior, and also in Berbice behind the north-eastern coastlands, the equatorial forests give way to fine open savannahs; but here again Nature has been far from prodigal in her gifts. The soil is sandy and deficient in minerals, particularly in the Berbice savannahs; in the Rupununi District there is heavy flooding in the rainy season and drought in the dry weather. Consequently, the pasturage is poor and unsuited to cattle raising on an intensive scale.

## **Communications**

7. The inhospitable and infertile nature of the Rupununi savannahs and the forest areas and the problems of the coastal belt are further accentuated by the special difficulties of transport. The "mighty rivers" of British Guiana, which traverse the country from the interior to the sea, are obstructed by rapids and falls at distances varying from about 30 miles upstream in the Pomeroon River to 110 miles in the Berbice River, and thus cannot provide cheap and easy water transport to the interior. Nature, too, has impeded the passage of large seagoing ships into the rivers by silt bars offshore at their mouths. Roads in the interior are practically non-existent except in the Rupununi, where a good system of communications is being constructed. This system, however, does not link up with the coast and the only speedy form of inter-communication is by costly air services.

8. The coastal belt is cut into four distinct sections by the broad estuaries of the Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice Rivers, which are formidable obstacles to easy movement east and west. There are two short stretches of railway: from Georgetown eastwards for 60 miles to Rosignol on the Berbice River, and from Vreed-en-Hoop on the West Bank of the Demerara opposite Georgetown to Parika on the Essequibo, a distance of 18 miles. Further communication is by ferry and road, and the roads with one or two exceptions can by no means be considered good. The Government, besides running these two stretches of railway, also operates steamer and launch services on the rivers, but all these services are run at a loss [\$1,111,987\* (231,663 pounds Sterling) in 1952], and are not readily capable of economic performance on account of the natural conditions which render their operation expensive. Real improvements in communications are bound to involve immense initial capital expenditure and considerable annual costs. [\* All dollar figures used in this Report are British West Indian dollars. \$1 B.W.I. = 4s. 2d.]

## **Productive Resources:**

### (i) *Agriculture*

9. The economy of the country is principally dependent upon agriculture, which provides about two-thirds of the exports and employment for 40 per cent. of the working population. Almost all the land at present cultivated is in the narrow coastal strip.

10. By far the most important crop is sugar which, with its by-products, accounts for more than half the Colony's exports. All about 2 per cent. of the cane is grown on 17 large plantations owned by limited companies, one of which has a controlling interest in the majority of the plantations. The incidence of two dry and two wet seasons in British Guiana gives the industry the advantage of being able to reap twice a year, and *cane* yield per acre is comparable or superior to that of the estates in other parts of the West Indies which have only one harvest period. But the climate favours growth rather than maturity, so that sucrose content is inferior and it takes 102 to 12 tons of cane to make a ton of sugar in British Guiana, as compared with 7 to 9 tons in other areas. We understand that the cost to the companies of maintaining drainage and irrigation systems amounts, on some estates, to as much as ,1. 15s. for each ton of sugar produced and with this further handicap it is not surprising that production costs are high. The industry is, however, assured of a market at prices fixed under the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement signed in 1951. Under this Agreement, which will remain in force until at least 1961, British Guiana is guaranteed a market for about 75 per cent. of her sugar exports at a price negotiated in 1950 and reviewed annually in the light of changes in production costs. The total production of raw sugar in 1952 was 242,692 tons, of which about 167,000 tons were exported under the Agreement at a negotiated price substantially higher than that prevailing in the world market. The remainder was either sold locally or exported to the United Kingdom and Canada at world market prices plus preference. In their Report on the Economic Development of British Guiana the International Bank Mission endorsed the general view of the sugar producers that expansion of production in the Colony beyond 275,000 tons per annum would, for a number of reasons, be uneconomic.

11. Rice has been grown in British Guiana for over a century and is now second only to sugar in annual cash value. For the most part it is a peasant industry, and holdings average no more than about six acres. Some rice lands are on abandoned sugar estates which were bought up by private individuals and let out in small units to tenants who had in the majority of cases to bear the cost of breaking the land in for rice cultivation. There are other lands in the villages let for rice cultivation. Some owners and lessees of the front lands are allowed to lease from Government the second and third depths which they then sublet, but although these lands require no breaking in they generally have poor drainage and irrigation facilities. Tenancies of rice lands are from year to year and protection against unfair eviction is provided by the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Ordinance, 1945, which also restricts rents. The Ordinance does not, however, solve the problem of the landlord who is unwilling or unable to provide adequate drainage and irrigation for his tenants. This problem of ensuring that the available rice lands are properly maintained and cultivated, and that the landlord and tenant alike have a fair deal, is a difficult and complex one

and in September, 1953, a Committee which had been appointed to enquire into the matter presented a Report which included the draft of a new Ordinance. This Report is now under consideration. The rice mills were at one time wholly in the hands of a large number of small millers, some of whom were also landlords, but there are now three large Government owned mills as well. All milled rice has to be sold to the Rice Marketing Board which fixes buying and selling prices within the Colony and negotiates export contracts with other West Indian territories. There is a strong Rice Producers Association which maintains liaison between the farmers and the Rice Marketing Board.

12. Beef cattle are raised on the Rupununi savannahs by the Rupununi Development Company, which has leased 2,600 square miles, and by a small number of private ranchers. Grazing is so poor that no more than 15 head can be raised to the square mile and transport to the coast is costly and difficult. Some improvements may be possible, both in the herds, by selective breeding and the importation of new stock, and in the pasturage in limited areas, but there would seem to be no scope in this region for the settlement of any number of small farmers. Smallholders would hardly be able to undertake the measures necessary to improve stock or pasturage and would tend inevitably to overgraze their land in an attempt to eke out a living, The dangers of this need no emphasis, and it is clear that except on the basis of large scale ranching the Rupununi savannahs offer little scope for development.

13. Cattle, kept mainly by small farmers for meat or dairying, are grazed on the poorly drained areas in the coast lands and in the rice fields after harvest. The return per acre for animal husbandry is, however, very low and cannot carry the heavy overhead costs of drainage and irrigation. Experience shows in fact that as soon as land is sufficiently drained the farmers prefer to plant rice, of which even a poor yield will bring a far better return.

14. There is great need in the Colony for more land to absorb the growing population and we are glad to see that provision for this is included in the new Development Programme. But it must be emphasized that expansion of the cultivable area in the coastal belt will require initial expenditure on both drainage and water conservation, for all the lands contiguous to existing cultivation are liable at certain periods of the year to flooding by rain water coming down from the interior, and at others to drought unless adequate supplies of water can be stored. Moreover, the maintenance of agricultural lands in the coastal belt needs heavy expenditure, and any produce grown there has, directly or indirectly, to bear its share of the high overhead costs of sea defence, drainage and irrigation. It may be that soil surveys in the interior will discover areas in which agricultural development is possible, but again the cost of clearing the land and opening up communications will be heavy.

*(ii) Forestry*

15. The thick equatorial forests grow quantities of fine timber, amongst which are found woods of excellent quality. Again, however, there are snags. Only two or three species have an established local or export market so that the marketable timber is usually widely scattered on any concession area, and extraction, therefore, requires considerable expenditure on tracks and access roads. Transport difficulties and this dispersion of valuable trees among less marketable

species have led to a tendency to cut out the best and most accessible timber and move on to new areas. Such "creaming" operations have already seriously denuded forests along the lower river reaches, and the exploitation of the upper reaches involves the negotiation of rapids which increases the capital outlay required for intensive working of forest areas. The value of timber exports in 1952, nearly all greenheart, was about \$2 million (416,000 pounds Sterling); but to maintain and promote full use of the Colony's forest resources it is recognised that special efforts will be needed to introduce to the United Kingdom, the Caribbean and the United States markets other useful timber of which a sustained supply can be assured. Since greenheart is the prime export timber there is much to be said for the view that its use locally should be discouraged where other timbers can serve.

(iii) *Minerals*

16. Bauxite is by far the most important of the minerals at present known to occur in British Guiana. Exports in 1952, totalling 2.3 million tons, were valued at \$22.2 million (4.6 million pounds Sterling) — one-fifth in volume of world production and nearly 30 per cent. in value of the Colony's exports — and the royalties, income tax and export duty payable accounted for 15 per cent. Of the Government's total revenue. Over 90 per cent. of the output is produced by the Demerara Bauxite Company, which operates mines at Mackenzie 65 miles up the Demerara River and at Ituni some 36 miles further south. Ore from the latter mine is conveyed by rail to Mackenzie where the drying and calcining plant is situated. The Company is a subsidiary of the Aluminium Company of Canada to which most of the dried ore is shipped for conversion to aluminium. The remainder of the Colony's output of bauxite is mined at Kwakwani, 100 miles up the Berbice River, by an American company. There is no present indication that production of bauxite will be increased, and there is little likelihood that processing beyond drying or calcining will ever be undertaken in the Colony.

17. The only other minerals in appreciable production are gold and diamonds. The gold is mined by dredging or washing in alluvial sands and over 80 per cent. is produced by the British Guiana Consolidated Goldfields, Limited, which has financial backing from the Colonial Development Corporation. Total production in 1952 was about 24,000 ounces, and this will be substantially increased when the company mentioned brings into operation a new dredge. Diamonds are mined mainly by individual prospectors and production is not expected to increase much beyond the present output of about 40,000 carats.

18. Knowledge of the Colony's mineral resources is very incomplete; but a good deal of prospecting is going on in the interior, and the Government's Geological Survey aims to produce a series of maps and reports which will eventually cover the whole territory. The Survey has concentrated on areas of economic importance — to assist the present exploitation of valuable minerals — and on the investigation of areas which are virtually unexplored. The Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation of the United States has recently applied for a lease in the North-West District to mine extensive deposits of manganese ore, the existence of which was first reported by the staff of the Survey, and the production of columbite-tantalite on a small scale was begun in 1952. The exploitation of minerals is hampered by the natural difficulties of transport, but

experience shows that these can be overcome if deposits are sufficiently valuable to make extraction worthwhile.

(iv) *Industry*

19. Industry in British Guiana is mainly engaged in processing local agricultural and forest products, and is almost wholly confined to the coastal zone. The local market for manufactured products is limited and skilled labour is scarce. To quote from the Report of the International Bank Mission:

"While there is scope for expansion of secondary industries, it is unlikely that there will be any major industrial development in the foreseeable future. The internal market is too small to give much scope for industries in which efficiency depends upon large-scale production. Moreover, there is a lack of raw materials and power for major industries and, although there are hydroelectric possibilities in the interior, technical, economic and financial factors make their large-scale exploitation in the near future highly problematical."

### **Appreciation of Economic Factors**

20. The general economic picture, therefore, is one of an unremitting and costly struggle against geographical and physical difficulties: of man pitting his energy and strength against unfriendly natural surroundings: of much success and some failure. In our enquiries in British Guiana we have found two very different accounts of the result of this struggle. According to one set of witnesses the present economic and social position shows triumphant success "in the achievement of very real progress in the last 20 years and particularly during the past 10 years";\* sea defences have been provided and large-scale drainage and irrigation works undertaken; Georgetown, the capital, has been transformed into a fine city with good roads, some noble streets and buildings, and reasonably high standards of amenity; rural areas have been provided with good potable water supplies through a system of artesian wells; and health conditions have been immensely improved by the complete eradication of malaria. On the other side of the picture many brought to our notice the struggle for livelihood in conditions of unemployment and under-employment: the squalor of much of the housing: the scarcity of agricultural land: and the apparent delays in dealing with these and other problems. [\* *Sir Frank McDavid in a speech in Legislative Council on 18th March, 1954.*]

21. It is, however, clear from its physical make-up that British Guiana can hardly be much more economically than a comparatively poor country (unless, of course, further mineral resources of really important proportions are discovered) and that only by heavy expenditure of capital and by continued hard work by the community as a whole will conditions generally be improved. Surveys designed to discover the true potentialities of the interior must be vigorously pursued, but we believe that the immediate need is for more farm land for the growing population on the coast. It must, however, be repeated that this means undertaking expensive flood protection, drainage and irrigation works, and that these are by their very nature long term and will only make a slow and partial contribution towards solving present economic problems, which impinge



so heavily upon the political atmosphere. We are, however, in general convinced that the establishment of a class of peasant proprietors will be well worth while, if it is successful in giving more people the feeling of having a real stake in the country, and the proposals for extending the areas under vegetable and dairy farming on the banks of the rivers seem to us admirably suited for this purpose. When we were in British Guiana we heard that the possibility of gradually converting part of the sugar estates from direct plantation management to co-operative farming on the lines of the Sudan Gezira Scheme was being investigated. We have since learned that a pilot scheme is actually being launched and, provided the discipline necessary to maintain efficient production can be secure, without friction, this policy should turn irresponsible labourers into responsible contented partners.

## II. SOCIAL FACTORS

### The People

22. At the end of 1952 the population of British Guiana was estimated at about 450,000, of whom 45 per cent. were East Indian, 36 per cent. African, 11 per cent. mixed, 4 per cent. Amerindian and the remainder European or Chinese. Since 1945, when control of malaria by D.D.T. was started, the annual rate of growth of population has increased from 1.5 per cent. To 2.8 per cent., The elimination of malaria has had the greatest effect among the East Indian population, whose natural increment was estimated in 1952 at 5 per cent. per annum.

23. In their Report the Waddington Commission spoke of the people of the country as follows:

"The British Guiana Commission of 1927 found the Colony to be 'a congerie of races from all parts of the world with different instincts, different standards and different interests'. All came to British Guiana while sugar was King; and the human problems of the Colony spring almost exclusively from this root. The European, few in numbers, but economically powerful, is at a political disadvantage as the legatee of the old sugar plantocracy. In his Caribbean environment, the African, who as until recently formed the largest racial group in the country, has absorbed the traditions of a European civilisation., Finally, emancipation, by threatening a shortage of labour on the sugar estates, brought further races to British Guiana, first in small numbers from China and Madeira, and then in a large flow from India. between 1844 and the first world war, some 239,00 Indians came to British Guiana, of whom 65,000 were later repatriated to India under the terms of their indentures. Those who remained to make their permanent home in the Colony decreased in numbers, but under the stimulus of improved conditions of health, the Indian population has recently risen to about 195,000."

"The field workers on the sugar estates are still largely recruited from the Indian population, although many of them have become rice growers or small subsistence farmers. They are a valuable element in the life of the country, but their occupations, the exercises of their religion, which led them to eschew education provided by denominational schools, and for a long time the professedly temporary nature of their residence, and the special protection afforded them by the terms of their indentures, have

all reinforced their inclination to resist assimilation. They therefore remained a community within a community with an allegiance to their motherland of India, while, for their part, the Africans have won their way by effort and education to professional and public appointments."

"Indian aloofness has now given place to a realisation of their permanent place in Guianese life and to a demand for equal participation in it. This claim, reinforced by their growing literacy, leads them to compete for positions which they have not hitherto sought. This challenge from an able and energetic people has stimulated the other races into closing their ranks. Race is a patent difference and is a powerful slogan ready to the hand of unscrupulous men who can use it as a stepping stone to political power. Race, too, is easily identifiable with nationalism, which in recent years has been emergent among all colonial peoples."

24. We agree with this description by the Waddington Commission, and confirm from our experience that the Indian element in the population has now shaken off its previous lethargy and is beginning to play a major part in the life of the Colony. Education is now eagerly sought by Indian parents for their children; many Indians have important shares in the economic and commercial life of the Colony; the rice trade is largely in their hands from production to marketing. Their very success in these spheres has begun to awaken the fears of the African section of the population, and it cannot be denied that since India received her independence in 1947 there has been a marked self-assertiveness amongst Indians in British Guiana. Guianese of African extraction were not afraid to tell us that many Indians in British Guiana looked forward to the day when British Guiana would be a part not of the British Commonwealth but of an East Indian Empire. The result has been a tendency for racial tension to increase, and we have reluctantly reached the conclusion that the amity "with which", as the Waddington Report said, "people of all races live side by side in the villages" existed more in the past; today the relationships are strained; they present an outward appearance which masks feelings of suspicion and distrust. We do not altogether share the confidence of the Waddington Commission that a comprehensive loyalty to British Guiana can be stimulated among peoples of such diverse origins. There is little evidence of any coalescing process of inter-marriage between the Indian and African components of the population.

25. To appreciate the attitude of these two groups to their conditions today it must be remembered that in the past both the original slave owners and the employers of indentured labour had, as a matter of economic self interest, if no more, to take responsibility for providing housing, medical care, land for the cultivation of ground provisions and other necessities for their people. The slaves and labourers understood that those in authority would provide these things and no one expected them, nor indeed was it open to them, to take any initiative to improve their lot. It appeared to us that this historical background has left its mark on the subsequent generations. There seems today to be a common — almost arrogant — presumption that from some fathomless source all things desirable should as of right be provided. People are more ready to demand from Government the living conditions which they think they should have than to set about achieving them for themselves. There is, of course, some justification for this attitude, because large schemes of improvement and economic development are, by the very

nature of the country, bound to depend upon the introduction of capital resources which are far beyond the capacity of the people. But we did get the impression that there is a marked lack of self-reliance and of realisation of the part that all must play in the development of their country,

26. The other elements in the community — of Portuguese, Chinese and United Kingdom origin — are much smaller in numbers, though their influence is great. Members of the last-named community are anxious at the way in which the Indian and African sections have now obtained virtual domination through universal adult suffrage. In common with the Portuguese and Chinese they have no particular enthusiasm for socialist policies, but many members of all three communities have a real understanding of the aspirations of the poorer people. They realise the folly of trying to resist the trend of the times, but they are not unnaturally fearful of the more extreme policies of the People's Progressive Party. We are convinced that, in a country where leaders are needed, they could play a more valuable part than they do.

## **Education**

27. The educational system, by which primary education is practically entirely in the hands of the Christian churches, requires some description. The churches are justifiably proud of the work that they have done and are still doing in this sphere. But for them most of the schools in use today would not exist. They provided the land and the money to build: theirs was the pioneering effort. Even today the churches are bearing the heaviest burden, and we would refer especially to the responsibility for school management which the priests and clergy undertake as part of this service to the community. The churches have upheld faithfully the trust reposed in them and their record is an outstanding one.

28. There are in the Colony 297 primary schools, with a total enrolment of about 89,000 pupils. Of this total 19 are Government schools and nine Government aided undenominational schools; the remaining 269 are denominational schools controlled by the churches under a system whereby Government pays all teachers' salaries and makes annual grants for the provision of equipment and the maintenance of buildings. Many schools belonging to the churches have been rebuilt or renovated in recent years with the aid of grants from Colonial Development and Welfare funds. Government maintains educational standards by annual inspections and by calling the attention of the governing bodies to deficiencies. In the last resort cuts may be made in the grants, but this is seldom, if ever, done. In fact, the Director assured us, and his assurance was borne out by the churches' representatives, co-operation and co-ordination between the Department and the governing bodies are very good, and there is little friction.

29. Many of the 2,000 teachers in these primary schools are products of a pupil teacher-training scheme. Others were trained at the Government Training College, which provides a two year course and now turns out 30 teachers a year. Entrants to the Training College are either pupil teachers or direct recruits from the secondary schools. Although all teachers are paid for by the Education Department, under the dual control system, appointments and promotions are made by denominational committees with the approval of the Director of Education. Unless there is

something known against a teacher's efficiency or moral character the Director does not usually interfere with the proposals of the denominational committee.

30. It is, however, unlikely that this system, whereby the bulk of Government expenditure on education is necessarily disbursed to denominational schools, can continue much longer. With the rapid increase of the school population classes are becoming more crowded, and it is not unknown for some teachers to have 90 or 100 pupils in a class. An increase of educational facilities at the primary level is urgently required and this offers an opportunity of establishing further Government schools in the most populous areas. These would supplement the denominational schools and would also form the nucleus of a state system of primary education.

31. Such a system must inevitably come, but more will be involved than just money to build schools. It did not seem to us that those who most strongly advocated the end of dual control quite realised the effect that their proposal would have. In the absence of suitable local authorities and voluntary associations the effect of this proposal would be to throw an increasingly heavy burden of administration and school management on Government.

32. Primary education has been compulsory since 1876, but the overall illiteracy figure is still estimated at about 20 per cent. of the population by the Director of Education. The highest percentages are to be found in the rural areas and among the Amerindians. Many adult East Indians are illiterate, because when they were children facilities in their areas were scanty or their parents were uninterested in educating them. In Georgetown the percentage is extremely small, and in general there is less illiteracy among the youth than among the adult population.

33. Children complete their primary education at the age of 14 and may go on to secondary or other post primary education. In practice the great majority are unable to do so, and they leave school at the age of 14. Many go back to the land or to their parents' occupation, but numbers are left unsettled and without congenial employment. Many spend several years looking for work, and we ourselves interviewed a number of young men in their early twenties who had already spent several years in search of work. This gap between the end of primary education and the beginning of a career or even of any sort of employment must have the most damaging effects upon the character and outlook of the adolescent.

34. About 10,000 children are receiving post primary instruction. We had no opportunity of assessing the methods of selection for secondary education or the standards reached. We did, however, get the impression that technical, and especially agricultural, education is behindhand, though efforts are now being made to catch up; too much attention has been paid to academic education and not enough to the training which is more necessary to meet the needs of the country. For this Government is not wholly to blame; though many parents want their children to have an academic education few are willing to keep them at school for technical training even when facilities are offered.

## **Employment and Wages Generally**

35. The difficulties facing young people leaving school in search of employment have already been mentioned, and they raise the whole question of employment in British Guiana. Many of the population are of course engaged in peasant farming of one kind or another, mainly rice. But among those who may be classed as wage earners there is undoubtedly substantial unemployment and under-employment, particularly among sugar workers. Accurate figures are unobtainable and we hesitate to quote estimates which might be misleading. It is, however, safe to say that the total number of unemployed at any one time cannot be less than about 8,000-12,000, and may be more: this apart from under-employment.

36. One of the results of under-employment is that a wage scale which would be adequate for the fully employed worker does not suffice for a worker and his family on half-time employment, unless it is supplemented by other income, from agriculture or elsewhere. The wage indices show that over the last few years there has been an improvement in real wages for all classes of labour. For instance, unskilled male workers in Government employment, in the sugar fields, in the sugar factories and in the bauxite industry have since 1946 obtained increases in real wages of 36 per cent., 26 per cent., 55 per cent. and 21 per cent. respectively. Average figures are of course dangerous; but those given us of the average minimum earnings from piece-work in various fields of employment did not strike us as exceptionally low at 3.38 dollars or 14s. a day in the period of high earnings (i.e., during harvest periods) and 2.39 dollars or 10s. a day in the period of low earnings. It is only when it is remembered that employment may consist of 4 or even fewer days work in the week, and that the above daily wage only means 56s. or 40s. or less a week, that the inadequacy of this for the subsistence of a family is realised, unless there are other sources of livelihood. These are of course minimum averages (and skilled labour is much better paid) but unless full time is worked they are low.

37. The employment position is thus by no means bright even at this time when sugar, rice and the other principal products are finding reasonable markets. There is not sufficient work all the year round for those who seek it and some wages are very low. The poor conditions derive from the basic fact that the country has not the resources to support a high standard of living and the increase in population due to the eradication of malaria will make improvement even more difficult. From 1960 onwards the growing child population will enter the labour market or swell the ranks of those peasant farmers who need more land. As we have said, the drainage and irrigation schemes necessary to provide this are costly and take time, and new opportunities for employment will depend upon development. Prospects for any marked improvement in the employment position or in the level of real wages are, therefore, not encouraging: indeed we believe that the difficulties which lie ahead are even more serious than those which have yet had to be faced.

### **Conditions of employment on sugar estates**

38. Much was said to us about the conditions of labour and housing on the sugar estates, and we tried to get as clear a picture as possible. It is here that the population is thickest and the discontent greatest, but it must be remembered that probably more than one fifth of the population residing on the estates — many in rent free ranges and estate houses — have no connection whatever with the sugar industry.

39. Employment in the industry is seasonal and is at its peak during harvest time. The average number of days worked per week per person in the field during 1952 was 3.99. Some workers augment their wages by small rice cultivation or vegetable growing, often on land leased either by the estates or by the Crown, but many are definitely under-employed. We gained the impression that often this under-employment was accepted by the management of the sugar estates, out of a desire to spread work amongst a growing population; but it has the unfortunate result that no one is pleased, and few labourers employed on the sugar estates really have continuous profitable employment. The view was put to us that the proper course for the industry would be to try to limit its labour force to the number it can fully employ, perhaps by some kind of registration or "tally" system such as was at one time operated for dock labour in the United Kingdom. The industry would then be in a better position to undertake responsibility for improving conditions for its employees. The practical difficulties of any step of this kind are obviously very great, and it would face Government with the enormous problem of dealing with those who would be surplus to the industry's requirements.

40. Apart from this problem, many of the labour difficulties with which the industry has been beset are implicit in the nature of the work. In the fields the piece-work system is normal and disputes over rates, about the weighing of cane, the provision of punts, and so on, inevitably arise and can readily be exploited to make trouble between, workers and management.

41. Considerable credit is due to the sugar producers for their strenuous efforts in recent years to improve the conditions of their workers. Earnings would of course be much higher if employment was continuous, and much money has been spent by the companies in building new houses for their labour, on the provision of welfare and recreational amenities and, more recently, on medical, dispensary and ambulance services. The Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, which was established in 1947 by a statutory levy of 10s. 0d. per ton on all sugar exported, had by the end of 1953 approved interest free loans totalling \$2,200,333 (457,670 pounds Sterling) to 3,755 workers to assist them to build their own houses. During recent years the industry has built at its own expense about 340 houses for junior staff and "key workers". Furthermore, the Sugar Producers' Association agreed in November last, at the suggestion of the Governor, to the diversion to the Welfare Fund of \$2.5 million (520,000 pounds Sterling) from the Sugar Industry Price Stabilization Fund in order to expedite the rehousing of sugar workers living in obsolete ranges. The difficulties which the industry has to face are, however, intensified by the incidence of under-employment which has already been mentioned; for this perhaps doubles the number of those to be provided for. Moreover, the very success of the public health measures adopted on the estates in the last few years — especially by the spectacular eradication of malaria through the efforts of Dr. Giglioli, Medical Adviser to the Sugar Producers' Association — is annually increasing the population, and making the task more insoluble as the years pass.

42. We did not get the impression that the sugar producers, who are the largest employers of labour, are making large profits. In fact, with the heavy expenditure on the upkeep of drainage and irrigation works described earlier, the charges for maintenance of plant and renewals and the assistance now being given to labour and other staff for housing and in other welfare schemes,

we were not surprised to learn that additional capital has had to be found, either by passing dividends or by new investment, to keep the industry going on a sound basis; and that over the past ten years the average dividends paid by the sugar companies were no more than about 32 per cent. on the total capital employed. That this is the case is confirmed by the way in which the small private sugar estate has practically disappeared and the number of sugar plantations has fallen so greatly in the last twenty or thirty years. We therefore see no justification for the view, so often expressed in some quarters, that the sugar companies are exploiting their labour and taking vast sums out of the country.

### **III. POLITICAL FACTORS**

#### **Local Government**

43. The people of British Guiana live in the towns of Georgetown (population 82,268) and New Amsterdam (population 9,567) and in many village communities and hamlets. Georgetown is a city administered by its own Mayor and Town Council, which is mainly elected. Revenue and expenditure balance at about 390,000 pounds Sterling annually. New Amsterdam too has its autonomous administration with Mayor and Town Council, two-thirds of which is elected. In 1952 its revenue and expenditure were 66,000 pounds Sterling and 65,000 pounds Sterling respectively.

44. The Colony's rural population, amounting to approximately 360,000

"is resident in villages scattered along the coastlands and for some distance up the principal rivers. Here, in the first instance, the freed African slaves settled after emancipation. Forming themselves into companies, they bought, with savings accumulated during slavery and the apprenticeship period, the estates of their former masters who were anxious to quit the Colony, or they purchased the front lands of plantations, the proprietors of which wished to establish a resident population.

These rural communities have since then been greatly enlarged by the settlement of ex-indentured East Indians and their descendants, and they now range in importance from the hamlet with a population of 100 to the large village with 5,000 to 6,000 inhabitants. It should be noted that several of these areas, while called villages are really potential towns from the point of view of both area and population.

The history of these village communities is a record firstly, of unsuccessful efforts of some villagers left to their own devices to manage their affairs, and later of the endeavours of the Government to provide an efficient system of village organisation. Numerous legislative enactments aiming at providing and perfecting the machinery needed for efficient village administration have from time to time been passed. The affairs of these rural districts, i.e., communities declared to be either "village" or "country" districts, under the Local Government Ordinance, are under the immediate direction of local authorities. In the case of village districts, the village council consists of elected and appointed councillors in the proportion of two to one, and in the case of

country districts membership is wholly appointed. In both instances appointment is made by the central authority — the Local Government Board. Both these local authorities have powers of rating and borrowing and of appointing officers subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. The chief services local authorities provide are the drainage of the local authority area and the maintenance of roads, bridges and other amenities. At the end of 1952 there were 43 Village Districts and 49 Country Districts under the control of the Local Government Board." \* [*British Guiana Annual Report, 1952.*]

45. The revenue of these 92 "village" and "country" districts amounted in 1952 to approximately 126,000 pounds Sterling and expenditure to 121,000 pounds Sterling.

46. In contradiction of the impression made upon the Waddington Commission by the system of local government we do not think that local government bodies play an important part in the affairs of British Guiana, and indeed we were not convinced that in local affairs the village and country district councils were popular or influential amongst the people. Their ineffectiveness seems to be mainly due to the facts that local government has little financial power and that its statutory functions are severely limited. A few councils, blessed with Chairmen of personality or energetic overseers, appear to play a part in community life, but in the great majority of cases the councils lack drive and influence; and even had they these qualities, it is doubtful if they could play a great part in affairs. Their only powers amount to their having some (but not all) responsibility for local drainage and irrigation and for maintaining local roads, for which they are authorised to raise local rates. It is true that there is voluntary association of local authorities into "Unions ", but these depend very much on individual enthusiasm and personality, and they lack any formal basis. The whole scope of local government, therefore, appears to be very limited.

## **Central Administration**

47. We were disturbed by the frequent complaints made to us about the dilatoriness of Government machinery generally and, while we can discount some of this as based on personal grievances, we have been forced to the conclusion that the administration in British Guiana has for many years been slow and ill adapted to the needs of the territory. It is not easy to determine all the causes of this, but the most important is perhaps the growing complexity of the functions which have fallen to government within recent times. In the past the administration of colonial territories was very largely a matter of preserving law and order and had little to do positively with securing the development of resources and the improvement of social and economic conditions. In a comparatively short time, however, all this has changed. Governments have assumed more and more responsibility for the provision of medical and welfare services, for housing and education and generally for the economic and social development of the territories. In British Guiana, as elsewhere, this has thrown new and heavy burdens on the administration, and it is perhaps not surprising that without the spur of experienced ministers responsible to the electorate the machine has laboured under the strain. There are of course contributory factors, one of which is that British Guiana, a relatively poor territory, has for many years been unable to offer attractive remuneration to specialist officers recruited from abroad. This has led to good men who have come to the territory leaving as soon as better paid openings altered elsewhere; if



the work involved in the Development Programme, which is far the most part specialised, is to be carried through successfully, adequate remuneration must be provided for men possessing the necessary skill.

48. A feature of the administration which we particularly noticed is its centralisation. All authority tends to be concentrated in Georgetown, and little responsibility is delegated to local government bodies or to the departmental representatives in the country districts. As a result, a great deal has to be referred to the centre, and with the serious difficulties in communication this leads to delays and misunderstanding. The District Commissioners to whom we talked appeared to have little real authority, and to be functionaries of very different type from District Commissioners in other Colonial territories. It is, therefore, reassuring to note that some responsibility for development planning in the country districts is being delegated to local development committees appointed by the District Commissioners, and if this policy is extended to cover other governmental responsibilities, it may be possible to interest more people in local government and thereby reduce complaints at the delays and red tape of bureaucracy. Politically this change should also have a beneficial result in lifting much of the burden of government from the civil service to representatives of the people, and training the people in their local councils for the more important field of central government.

## **Trade Unions**

49. There have been trade unions in British Guiana for many years, the first having been started by Mr. Hubert Critchlow in 1921. We were informed that there are now 27 trade unions, whose membership varies from time to time and whose financial membership is often far lower than their reputed total membership. There has been a tendency for unions to grow up, disintegrate, and then reform in the same or other guise. The trade union movement has been too much used by would be politicians as a means for obtaining power, and not as a way of improving the conditions of labour; too many presidents and officials of trade unions even today are mere politicians; many of them are not and never have been "workers". Among the rank and file of the unions there does not seem to be that sense of "belonging" and of owing constant loyalty and support to the organizations which they have formed to protect their interests which is fundamental to the trade unionism and characterises the movement in the United Kingdom.

50. It is therefore easy for unscrupulous individuals to form a rival union and to seek to undermine an established one which is recognised by employers and is doing good work. This has happened in the sugar industry where the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (G.I.W.U.) has been endeavouring, since its first registration as a trade union in 1948, to oust the Man Power Citizens' Association (M.P.C.A.) which negotiated its first agreement with the Sugar Producers' Association (S.P.A.) in 1939 and is the recognised union for general labour on the sugar estates. We describe the course of this dispute in greater detail later in this Report (paragraphs 171—181) and need record here only that the struggle culminated in September, 1953, in the Colony-wide sugar strike, the failure of which was the signal for the introduction by the P.P.P. of a bill to secure the compulsory recognition of trade unions.

51. We believe that if trade unionism in British Guiana is to climb out of the rut in which it now finds itself two things are needed; firstly, for trade unionists to develop a healthy mistrust of the motives behind the patronage of personally ambitious politicians, and secondly, for union executives to pursue their industrial objectives by industrial and not by political means. Frankly we see little immediate prospect of such a revolution, but something might be accomplished if the trade union movement in the United Kingdom could take upon itself to send out someone knowledgeable of trade union practice to be guide and adviser. Only a man who had himself graduated through the trade union mill could hope to gain the confidence and respect of Guianese trade unionists. He could stand closer to the unions than it is possible for the Department of Labour to do, having regard to its statutory duties and its role in arbitration between trade unions and employers.

## **Political Parties**

### **(i) The People's Progressive Party**

52. Up to about 1947 there was little promise in British Guiana of the development of stable political parties. As in the trade union field, individuals would come together to form an organisation, but few organizations continued for long before dissensions and jealous rivalries developed; the process was one of parties springing up, dividing and then either fading away or reforming with other components. It was true, of course, that the constitution offered political parties little incentive to stability. But after the war Her Majesty's Government's policy of constitutional development in the Colonial territories was reaffirmed and by 1947 it was clear enough to those who could look ahead that there would be real opportunities of political empower for a party sufficiently organised to exploit universal adult suffrage.

53. It was about this time that Dr. and Mrs. Jagan began working to build up a left wing party and that the Political Affairs Committee was formed. In 1950 they founded the People's Progressive Party and it was largely by their efforts that it was built up and kept united. Local branches were formed, annual congresses held and the party spirit and discipline fostered by means of the party paper *Thunder*, edited by Mrs. Jagan and distributed free to all members who paid their annual subscription of 50 cents (2s. 6d.). The Party assured itself of popular support by concentrating upon and excessively simplifying those issues upon which most of the people were agreed — the demand for self government, an end to colonialism and improvement of conditions. In this way racial dissension between African and East Indian elements was minimised and by the time of the election campaign in 1953 a useful political instrument had been forged.

54. The represent structure of the P.P.P. consists of a General Council of 22 members of whom 15 are elected annually by the Party Congress to which branches send delegates in the proportion of one delegate to every 12 members. The remaining seven members are the Party Executive. The Executive consists of a Chairman, two Vice Chairmen, a General Secretary and Assistant Secretary, a Treasurer, and the Leader of the Parliamentary Group. These seven with five members elected by the General Council comprise the Executive Committee.

55. The Party Executive, once having been elected, have, therefore, great authority over the direction of the Party. In addition, individual Party leaders occupy important executive positions in a number of trade unions and in other organisations, such as the British Guiana Peace Committee, which are mainly intended as propaganda and recruiting agencies.

#### **(ii) Other Political Parties**

56. Other political groups contested the elections — the National Democratic Party with 15 candidates, the People's National Party with eight, the United Guiana Party with four, and the United Farmers' and Workers' Party with two. In the various manifestos of their candidates which we have seen, the general appeal for social betterment did not differ greatly from the approach of the People's Progressive Party, but the parties lacked the organisation, cohesion and energy of the P.P.P. On all electoral platforms the appeal was to the newly enfranchised classes and to their desires for better standards of living. These parties had been rapidly formed for the elections; they did not represent coherent groups, and had little or no party spirit. Since the elections they have combined to form the United Democratic Party but it remains to be seen whether the need to unite forces to fight the P.P.P. for political power will provide the necessary incentive to weld the various units into a single effective organisation.

57. In addition to the party candidates numbering 51 who contested the elections for 24 seats, no fewer than 79 independent candidates were nominated, as many as eight coming forward in one constituency. Some of these were men with previous experience of political work in the old Legislative Council and of standing in the country. Together they polled over 45,000 votes, 30 per cent. of those cast.

#### **Appreciation of Political Factors**

58. That British Guiana is "politically precocious" was stated by the British Guiana Commission of 1927, and the Waddington Commission commented "if this is taken to mean that there is a wide interest in political discussion we would agree". At the present time this is undoubtedly even truer than it was in 1951 when the Waddington Report was written, but while we were impressed by the obvious interest displayed by unlikely witnesses in political and constitutional matters we were discouraged by the lack of knowledge and appreciation of the underlying issues. The rise of the People's Progressive Party to power, its career as a Government, and the suspension of the Constitution have greatly increased the awareness of the common man of his political environment. We are however inclined to think that such widespread political consciousness is a recent growth and that the "precocity" noticed in 1927 was largely confined to the better off people, who alone at that time were enfranchised. In 1927 the question was briefly whether the Legislative Council, of which the elected members came from a very restricted section of the community, should be permitted to delay the advancement of the country. In 1954 the question is how to reconcile the popular demand for social and economic improvement with the hard economic facts of the situation.

59. It is for this reason that we have emphasised so particularly the natural physical difficulties of the territory and have tried to show that the improvements demanded almost as a right by the

people cannot be achieved by enthusiasm alone but only if it is allied to intelligent planning, and by great expenditure of capital and continued hard work. We feel that a great deal requires to be done to educate the people as a whole to these facts, and that all classes must be ready — the richer as well as the poorer — to co-operate in the efforts by which alone better general standards of living can be obtained. We do not believe that there can ever be built up in British Guiana the El Dorado which the masses seem to believe can easily be obtained by a re-distribution of wealth; a country can only reach that standard of living which it can support by its own labour and its own natural resources. British Guiana today is deficient in the latter, and it must therefore depend all the more on hard work. Too many people in British Guiana seem to shy from this prospect, and they content themselves with a belief either that new and fabulous mineral wealth will be found or that the beneficent metropolitan power will provide.

60. This attitude, which lies at the back of political thought in British Guiana at the present day, can only be altered by a long uphill campaign to bring the broad mass of the people to a true understanding of the position of their country. The gradual improvement of economic conditions will also help, but it cannot be expected that the present development Program will effect all the desired changes.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

61. To sum up, in trying to convey a general picture of the present position in British Guiana, as we have seen it during our enquiries, we cannot but stress as main features the difficult and unpromising nature of the country: the undoubted dissatisfaction and "frustration" of the people generally at their social and economic environment: and their strong desire for speedy changes and improvements. We must couple with this the past attempts, some successful and some unsuccessful, to develop the country and to safeguard its assets. We were impressed by the friendliness and cheerfulness of people we met, but also by their naivete and lack of appreciation of the economic realities of the situation.

62. It is not within our terms of reference to make recommendations about matters other than the Constitution, but, if we are right in thinking that the economic and social environment in which a constitution is to work is of relevance, the observations which we have made on these matters will not be considered out of place.

## CHAPTER 2. THE WADDINGTON CONSTITUTION

63. Before we come to our examination of the events which led to the suspension of the 1953 Constitution we propose to describe its main features and to consider whether it might reasonably have been held by the People's Progressive Party, fresh from success at the polls, to place undue restrictions upon the fulfilment of the policies for which it stood.

64. To enable the Waddington Constitution to be seen in proper perspective it is necessary to recall briefly the main features of the previous constitution\*. There was a Legislative Council, with a majority of members elected on a restricted franchise, over which the Governor presided. The Executive Council comprised three *ex-officio* members and one nominated and four elected members of the Legislative Council; the Governor, who presided, was not bound to accept the advice of his Executive Council. There was no Ministerial system, though its absence was in some degree mitigated by the existence of Advisory Committees of the Legislative Council dealing with various aspects of Government, on which elected members sat with the heads of appropriate departments. All legislation was submitted to the Legislative Council, but the Governor had the usual reserved legislative powers and discretionary power of assent or dissent upon all bills. [\* *For greater detail see Appendix III of the Waddington Commission's Report.*]

65. With certain minor exceptions, the recommendations of the Waddington Commission were adopted, and the Secretary of State accepted the proposals in Codicil II of their Report which favoured a bi-cameral legislature. The main provisions of the new Constitution may be summarised as follows:

- (1) Universal adult suffrage.
- (2) A bi-cameral legislature with a life of four years consisting of: —
  - (a) a House of Assembly composed of 24 elected representatives and three *ex-officio* members — the Chief Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Financial Secretary — and presided over by a Speaker appointed by the Governor from outside the Legislature and with neither an original nor a casting vote;

(b) a State Council composed of nine members appointed by the Governor (one of whom must be elected President of the Council); six of these members to be appointed by the Governor in his discretion, two appointed on the recommendations of the six Ministers elected from the House of Assembly and one appointed after consultation with the independent and minority party members of the House of Assembly.

(3) An Executive Council consisting of the Governor as President, with a casting vote only, the three *ex-officio* members of the House of Assembly, six Ministers chosen by ballot from among the elected members of the House of Assembly and vested by the Governor (on the basis of individual ministerial responsibility) with the charge of Government departments and subjects which fall within their respective portfolios, and a member of the State Council, elected by that Council to be Minister without Portfolio. One of the Ministers with Portfolio to be chosen by his colleagues to be Leader of the House of Assembly.

(4) The Governor to retain the usual reserved powers for use at his discretion in the interests of "public order, public faith or good government ", but to be bound customarily to act in accordance with the advice of the Executive Council.

It was provided that Money Bills passed by the House of Assembly might be delayed by the State Council for a period of three months and other Bills for a period of one year. There was also provision for the Governor, acting in his discretion, to summon a joint sitting of the House of Assembly and the State Council to consider any Bill on which the two Chambers were opposed and which in his opinion was of major concern for the well-being of the Colony; and, if requested by both Chambers, he could at his discretion summon a joint sitting to deliberate and vote on any matter.

66. In the General Election for the House of Assembly following the introduction of the Constitution, the P.P.P. gained 18 of the 24 seats. It thus had a clear majority of the membership of the House of Assembly and, being bound together by a strong party discipline, could exercise to the full the powers available under the Constitution.

67. These powers reposed essentially in the Executive Council which comprised a majority of elected ministers. The Governor was bound, in the normal exercise of his duties, to consult with the Council and to act in accordance with its advice, and the Constitution provided that it should be the "principal instrument of policy". The Council was thus the forum in which policy and all matters of importance in the executive and legislative fields were discussed and settled. The P.P.P., having a clear majority in the House of Assembly, was able to elect six of its number to the ministerial posts in the Council and to dominate its proceedings. The three official members and the Minister without Portfolio chosen by the State Council could, of course, seek to influence matters in discussion, but their advice could be ignored by the elected Ministers who by their voting strength could decide every issue as they wished. In executive matters such decisions were final and, as we shall see, the enactment of any legislative measure decided upon in Council could be checked finally only by the interposition of the Governor's veto after passage

through both houses. Thus, unless the Governor used the powers reserved to him, the Ministers were in control of the effective policy-making body and were virtually the Government. Under the Constitution Ministers could be removed from the Executive Council only by resolution of the Council itself upon the proposal of the Governor\* or by resolution of the House of Assembly supported by at least two-thirds of the members. The elected ministers were, therefore, in an impregnable position so long as party solidarity continued. [\* *This is the view upon which Her Majesty's Government acted and to which they adhered in the debate in the House of Commons on the 7th December, 1953, when some Members suggested that under Section 11 of the British Guiana Constitution Order in Council, 1953, the Governor could have removed a Member of the Executive Council at his discretion without the approval of the Council. In any case, even if the Governor had been able to remove a Minister, the House of Assembly acting in accordance with Section 12 of the Order in Council could at once have re-elected him.*]

68. The allocation of Portfolios to the Ministers (and their withdrawal) was a matter for the Governor in his discretion, but in fact Dr. Jagan, the Leader of the House, was consulted beforehand. It follows from the previous paragraph that Ministers could secure the endorsement of the Executive Council for such policies as they proposed for the departments under their charge. Their power to secure the observance of any directions they might give to the heads of departments for the execution of their policies was circumscribed only by the provision in the Constitution which laid down that any disagreement between a Minister and a head of department should be considered in Executive Council and disposed of as the Governor might direct. No such disagreement was referred to the Executive Council.

69. It was true that a number of important departments and subjects were the responsibility of the three official members and thus not susceptible to day-to-day control by the elected Ministers. These subjects were not however "reserved" in the constitutional sense; that is to say, they were not the exclusive responsibility of the official members, or subject to special control by the Governor — except that control of the Public Service was vested in the Governor, acting in his discretion. It appeared from what happened that matters affecting official members' portfolios could be raised by elected Ministers, discussed and decided as they wished. For example, although immigration and internal security were the responsibility of the Chief Secretary, the P.P.P. Ministers insisted on the removal of the ban on the entry into the Colony of certain well-known West Indian communists.

70. In the Legislature it was provided, as the Waddington Commission had recommended, that the elective chamber — the House of Assembly — should have the primacy. Here, as we have seen, the P.P.P. had control by virtue of its majority and the elected Ministers could rely on the passage by the House of such legislation as they might introduce in pursuance of decisions reached in Executive Council. The presence in the House of the three *ex-officio* members, and the appointment by the Governor in his discretion of a Speaker from outside it, were objected to by the Party but cannot properly be said to have constituted an impediment to its will.

71. It was true that the State Council could impose scheme check on measures coming forward from the lower house. This is, however, the normal and proper function of the upper house in any

bi-cameral legislature and is not peculiar to colonial constitutions. The delaying powers of the State Council were in fact no greater than those usually accorded to the upper chamber of a bi-cameral legislature in a fully developed democratic community. Moreover, no money bill could be originated in the State Council, and the Council could not proceed upon any measure affecting public funds without the consent of the Governor, who in this matter was constitutionally bound to consult with the Executive Council.

72. The provision in the Constitution whereby the Governor in his discretion could summon joint sessions of both houses to consider measures of major concern which had been passed by one chamber but rejected by the other was not used. It is clear, however, that it could have imposed no check on the P.P.P., so far as votes go, since, with the assistance of its two nominees in the State Council, it would have commanded a majority in joint session. Indeed, the device would have operated to the Party's advantage since in joint session it could have insisted upon the passage of any measure which had been rejected by the State Council and thus have obviated the delay of three months or a year which might otherwise have been imposed. There can be no doubt that the P.P.P. Ministers would have pressed the Governor very strongly to summon a joint session to consider any important Government measure rejected by the State Council, and on crucial issues his refusal to do so would probably have precipitated a constitutional crisis.

73. In the above examination of the Constitution we have not thought it necessary to refer at each point to the powers reserved to the Governor, in both the executive and legislative fields, and the overriding powers of the Crown. These powers, admittedly incompatible with fully responsible self-government, are nevertheless necessary so long as that goal has still to be reached and ultimate responsibility for the welfare of a territory and its people remains with Her Majesty's Government. In point of fact in British Guiana during the period up to the suspension of the Constitution no recourse was made to the Governor's reserved powers and there can, therefore, be no suggestion that the P.P.P. was goaded by their use into extreme paths.

74. On close examination of the Constitution, therefore, we do not find its provisions, taken single or in combination, irksome or such as would in practice render them unworkable. "Checks and balances" — a much over-worked phrase in British Guiana — were certainly included in, it, but none of these were in themselves so severe as to prevent a party, which was prepared to work the Constitution constructively, from carrying out a programme of radical social reform.



### **CHAPTER 3. THE ELECTIONS**

75. The elections for the House of Assembly took place on the 27th April, 1953. As we have noted above (paragraph 57), the 24 seats were contested by 130 candidates: 22 P.P.P., 29 from other parties and 79 independents.

76. As a result of the introduction of universal adult suffrage the electorate had been greatly enlarged. The new electoral roll, prepared with considerable haste, comprised 208,939 persons, about 150,000 of whom were newly enfranchised as a result of the removal of the income, property and literacy qualifications. If the estimate of 20 per cent. for illiteracy was accurate, some 40,000 electors were illiterate and special arrangements had been made to facilitate their voting.

77. The electoral roll had been compiled — in accordance with the recommendations of the Waddington Commission — by enumerators who made house-to-house visits to obtain the names and ages of those who were entitled to be enrolled. We heard complaints that persons below the statutory age had been enrolled, and that others entitled to vote had been omitted. It was said that the enumerators sometimes did not see the householder, but accepted the statements of others about members of the household. On the whole, however, we do not think that the roll was unduly inaccurate, and we believe that in the present circumstances of British Guiana this method of compiling the electoral roll is essential. We do not think that a reasonably full roll could be compiled or maintained merely by inviting those entitled to vote to register. Before the next election it will be essential to revise the present roll, to bring it up to date and to correct previous errors; and for this purpose the method of enumeration by officials should again be employed.

78. We would here note that we were told by the officer who was in charge of the electoral arrangements in April, 1953, that even if revision of the existing roll were based on voluntary registration of those newly entitled, without a fresh house-to-house enumeration, the work involved and printing difficulties would be such that in his opinion no less than two years would have to be allowed before an election could be held. If revision were to be more thorough he thought that three years would be required.

79. As a result of the extension of the franchise and the abolition of any literacy test, it was thought essential to introduce special voting procedure to assist illiterates to exercise their right to vote. For this reason a system of symbols for party groups and independent candidates, and separate ballot boxes for each candidate, were introduced. The procedure was for the voter after confirming his registration with the presiding officer to be given a ballot ticket, torn from a book of tickets, his number on the electoral roll being noted on the stub. He then voted by leaning over

a screen in a corner of the polling place. Behind this screen were placed the ballot boxes of the various candidates, marked with their names, photographs and symbols, and the elector voted by placing his ballot ticket in the box of his chosen candidate. The screen was waist high and the boxes were fairly close behind it, and close together. It was intended that the position of the boxes should be changed from time to time during the hours of voting — so that the individual voter's choice of box might not be known from his position when voting. We were told that this was not done in many polling places and that it was, therefore, possible for the officials and party agents at the back of the room to guess by the movement of the voter's arm into which box he placed his ballot paper.

80. We heard a good deal of evidence about this method of voting — and clearly there were grave doubts about the secrecy of the ballot in several districts. We had the advantage of reading the Chief Justice's judgement in the election petition filed against the return of a candidate in one of the Georgetown constituencies, and of considering the various points made therein. It seems dear that before another election is held, this method of voting will have to be reconsidered and the Registration Officer did in fact submit to us a memorandum incorporating a number of recommendations for the improvement and elaboration of the system.

81 We are of the opinion, however, that the elaborate arrangements which were made to facilitate voting by illiterates are unnecessary; certainly we see no reason why the secrecy and reliability of the entire ballot should be jeopardised on their account. In British Guiana it would be wrong to assume that illiteracy is generally associated with less than average intelligence. It does not seem to us unreasonable, therefore, to expect an illiterate voter to be able, with a little effort and perhaps coaching, to recognise the printed name of the candidate for whom he wishes to vote and to mark a cross against it. If it were thought necessary and practicable, some assistance could be given by printing symbols of party groups and candidates against names on the ballot papers. This would, of course, encourage the tendency, noticeable in the last election, for voters to pay more heed to party symbols than to the merits of the individual candidates and we would hope that the use of symbols would be discarded as people became familiar with the voting system and as the percentage of illiteracy decreased. We have therefore no hesitation in suggesting that the system used in the last election should be discarded, and that instead voting should be carried out on broadly the same lines as in the United Kingdom. That is to say, a voter, having received his ballot paper printed with the names of the candidates for the constituency, should retire to a screened booth, there mark a cross in pencil on the paper against the name of the candidate of his choice and then, in the presence of the presiding officer, deposit it in a single ballot box.

82. With regard to the method of election, it was held by many witnesses that the system whereby a party supported by 51 per cent. of those who actually voted, and by only 37 per cent. of the whole electorate, obtained 75 per cent. of the seats in the House of Assembly was far from satisfactory, and it was suggested that some form of proportional representation should be adopted in future. We would not pretend to have studied in any detail the many different electoral systems which exist elsewhere, such as the second ballot, the alternative vote and the various forms of proportional representation. The merits and demerits of these systems may be argued extensively on both theoretical and practical grounds. So far as we are aware, however,

until the 1953 elections there was no substantial body of opinion in British Guiana in favour of a change in the present system — of the simple election of a single member for each constituency — on the ground that that system is unsuited to the circumstances of the country; and we ourselves would hesitate to support a proposal based on an assumption of that kind. Certainly no convincing case for a change can be argued from the results of a single general election and if some system of proportional representation were now introduced it could hardly be represented as other than a device to mitigate the present dominance of the P.P.P. To enshrine in the constitution such a device would in our view be wrong and we, therefore, recommend no change in the present electoral system.

83. For similar reasons we reject various suggestions made to us about the number and demarcation of constituencies which appear to have as their chief purpose the prevention of any party from obtaining a clear majority. The only change which we would suggest is the separation of the Rupununi (Census District No. 27) from the Bartica and Interior constituency. This on grounds of remoteness might reasonably be made a new constituency. It would seem necessary, however, that the boundaries of all constituencies should be more clearly defined than they were at the last election.

84. We should not conclude this chapter without paying tribute to the electoral authorities who had the difficult task of organizing the first general election under universal adult suffrage. We gained the impression that in some respects procedures could be improved next time and we have indicated our views as to the voting system. Nonetheless, in view of the haste in which preparations were made and the elections hurried on, it was a noteworthy achievement to carry them out so successfully. We are satisfied that such deficiencies as there were did not materially affect the results of the elections.

85. For the future, however, we would endorse the suggestion, put to us by the Registration Officer himself, that there should be established an Electoral Commission, with an independent expert Chairman, which would be responsible to the Governor-in-Council for all arrangements for elections. The Commission should, we suggest, supervise the lengthy task of revising the electoral roll, to which we have already referred, and also undertake the demarcation of constituency boundaries and advise as necessary on such matters as the revision of legislation and regulations governing elections.

## **CHAPTER 4. THE SUSPENSION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

86. We have now to consider how in this period from late April to early October, 1953, the People's Progressive Party with a substantial majority of the seats in the House of Assembly used its wider opportunities and faced up to its newer responsibilities; to consider if the six of its leaders selected by the P.P.P. to become elected Ministers were collectively capable of performing ministerial duties; and to consider if they were willing to make an honest attempt at least to ascertain the extent to which the new Constitution, despite its (to them) objectionable features, might nevertheless prove capable in practice of working reasonably.

87. It must be remembered that the 1953 Constitution also conferred authority and responsibility upon the *ex-officio* Ministers and upon the Governor. They and the elected Ministers were all in the full sense of their constitutional duty bound sincerely to endeavour to work amicably with each other and to co-operate in the business of Government. We have, therefore, to consider if there was any reluctance or inability on the part of the Governor and of the official Ministers to face up to their individual and collective responsibilities under the 1953 Constitution.

88. The position of the State Council was rather different. Though the State Council could initiate measures and by the device of a joint sitting of the two legislative chambers be brought into use as a balance, its main purpose was to act, where necessary, as a check on the House of Assembly. The State Council's powers to seek a revision of legislation or to impose a period of delay before the legislation became effective did not necessarily require close co-operation between the State Council on the one hand and either the House of Assembly or the Executive Council or the Governor on the other. Nevertheless, it was to be expected that no one of these elements of government would attempt unreasonably to hamper or to provoke any other. We have, therefore, also to consider if the State Council abused its powers.

### **II. THE P.P.P. AND THE CONSTITUTION**

#### **Evidence to the Waddington Commission**

89. All political parties in British Guiana aim at full self-government. The distinctive views of the P.P.P. on the immediate steps to be taken to this end were first set out in a written memorandum submitted by the party to Waddington Commission in February, 1951. In that memorandum the party insisted that the people of British Guiana alone were capable of determining a constitution for British Guiana and proposed that a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage should be entrusted with the task of drafting an acceptable constitution. Even so, the party had views of its own as to the kind of constitution

which would be acceptable to the people of British Guiana and the memorandum went on to propose a wholly elected single chamber legislature and an Executive elected by and wholly and directly responsible to that legislature with the Governor substantially "in the position of a constitutional monarch" possessing reserve powers solely "in relation to defence and external relations".

90. Five of the leaders of the P.P.P., including its Chairman, Mr. Burnham, and its then Vice-Chairman, Dr. Jagan, appeared before the Waddington Commission to be examined orally on the views set out in the written memorandum. On the plane of generalities the witnesses maintained the view of the Party that all checks and all attempts to ensure a balance were unnecessary and offensive. Under more detailed examination the witnesses were prepared to admit the desirability of some specific provision in the Constitution (other than dependent upon a majority of a wholly elected legislative assembly) to enable or to require a Minister to have a "second thought"—i.e. a second opinion. Asked about the constitutional means of providing for a "second thought" the witnesses were vague and uncertain and even ludicrous. One suggestion they made was for an "advisory" committee to be attached to each Minister; another was for a referendum on the insistence of at least one-third (or one-half) of the elected legislature supported by at least one-twentieth of the electors. Having asserted the broad principle that "sovereignty rests with the people" the witnesses then seemed quite incapable of the effort needed to reconcile with that principle any proposal seriously intended to impose some check upon an elected majority.

### **Attacks on the Waddington Report and Constitution**

91. The inability of its witnesses before the Waddington Commission wholly to justify the complete absence of constitutional checks or to produce some check acceptable to the Party did not lead to any modification of the Party's attitude towards a new constitution. On the contrary the issue of the Party's official journal *Thunder* published shortly after the appearance of the Party's witnesses before the Commission described the Waddington Commission as a "camouflage" whose task was "merely to give a new form or appearance to the old reality" and British Governments (the British Government at that time being a Labour Government) as "most clever in devising forms which serve to keep power in their own hands and at the same time give a semblance of democracy". During 1951 and 1952 the Party and its leaders used even stronger language to condemn the report and the recommendations of the Waddington Commission. For example:

The Chairman of the Party (Mr. Burnham) writing in the November, 1951, issue of *Thunder* and adapting the language of Karl Marx said that the Waddington Report succeeds "*in illustrating that indeed the State is an instrument designed to maintain the dominance and power of the ruling class and that there is no advance to be gained except by relentless and determined struggle*".

Of a speech by the Vice-Chairman of the Party (Dr. Jagan) in the Legislative Council in January, 1952, the February, 1952, issue of *Thunder* said that he had "*attacked the Constitution as being merely a fake and a trap and another tactic of British imperialism to perpetuate exploitation and to maintain the old order. He urged the struggle for*

*immediate self-government and the setting up of a People's Government". Thunder went on to say that the praise given to the Constitutional proposals by "the agents of vested interests and their stooges is a real indication of the worthlessness of the Constitution".*

In a foreword to a pamphlet in which Dr. Jagan published the text of his speech in the Legislative Council, Mr. Sydney King said *"the British will write any constitution for a colony except a free constitution. For a free constitution never descends from an Imperialist overlord into the arms of an exploited people but is won and written by the people themselves in the face of battle. We have seen that it is more likely for a dog to surrender a bone, more likely for a crow to relinquish carrion than for an imperialist power voluntarily to hand over control to the people of the colonies"*.

An official statement of the aims and programme of the P.P.P. issued in January, 1952, described the Waddington Constitution as *"a new formula for the continued subjection of our people"*.

The September, 1952, issue of *Thunder* said that the dictatorial use of veto powers *"is anticipated under the new Constitution. Our Party will never rest content until these checks and veto powers are completely removed"*.

In the May, 1953, issue of *Thunder* Mr. Sydney King described the newly elected P.P.P. majority in the Assembly and the six P.P.P. Ministers not as the Government but as the *"People's Opposition"* which he wrote *"has moved into positions of strategic advantage in the House of Assembly and in the Executive Council"*.

92. We were denied an opportunity of asking official representatives of the P.P.P. about the more exact meaning of these and of other similar statements. As they stand they must be taken as strongly supporting the belief of some of our witnesses that by the time of the elections the P.P.P. and its leaders were already irretrievably committed to direct their efforts principally towards disrupting the new constitution; and that the success of the P.P.P. at the election, far from inducing the Party to reconsider its attitude in the light of its newer and greater responsibilities, simply inspired and enabled the Party leaders to set about the planning of the more direct and critical attacks which they were now in a position to make on the new constitution.

93. There is some evidence which points rather the other way. For example:

The P.P.P. 1953 election manifesto, whilst urging the people of British Guiana *"to fight for independence, striking blow after blow at the Imperialist stronghold"* described the task of any Party securing a majority in the Legislative Assembly as that of *"formulating a policy which can work under these conditions of dependence. Such a policy will be able to cater only for reforms. . . These statements of policy . . . are the reforms which will be attempted by the Party in the next four years when, of course, the Party is returned as a majority Party"*.

The third Congress of the P.P.P. held in March, 1953, decided *"that immediately after the general elections a special meeting of the General Council be called to*

*determine. . . the advisability of the Party participating in the Executive Council and if so the choice and Ministers".*

Mr. Ashton Chase, on his appointment as Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, wrote to the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (9th June, 1953) to assure its members that "*all matters affecting the mercantile community will receive my sincere consideration*". The letter continued "*I approach this difficult task in the spirit of co-operation and good will and pledge my support to any move which has for its object the benefit of the colony as a whole. I sincerely trust that I can look forward to the co-operation of your members in making my task as pleasant as possible and look forward to cordial relations during my term of office*".

## **As the Majority Party**

94. We do not doubt the sincerity of this letter nor do we think that Chase, a loyal Party member, would wilfully adopt an attitude at variance with official Party policy. But Mr. Chase was only one of six P.P.P. Ministers and of twelve members of the Party's Executive Committee. The attitude of other prominent Party officials was ambiguous. After the appointment of the P.P.P. Ministers and in view of the uncertainty in British Guiana and abroad created in part by the P.P.P.'s energetic criticisms of the constitution and in part by local newspaper accusations of communist influence within the Party, the Governor sought several times to impress upon Mr. Burnham, the Chairman of the Party, and upon Dr. Jagan, now the Leader of the P.P.P. Group in the House of Assembly, the desirability of making some public statement of the immediate objectives of the Party and of the intentions of the Ministers. Although both seemed at one time inclined to agree that this ought to be done no such statement was ever made.

95. We have no direct knowledge of anything that went on in the inner councils of the P.P.P. On the evidence we have we think it most likely that up to the time of the appointment of the six Ministers and for at least some little time after that, the P.P.P. as a Party was officially undecided whether its majority in the House of Assembly and in the Executive Council should set out to invite or should seek to avoid serious conflict with the State Council, the *ex officio* Ministers and the Governor.

96. We do not, however, go further and conclude from the absence of a decision on this issue that with the Party representatives now securely established in positions of great authority within the Government the P.P.P. leaders as a whole were disposed to take a more reasonable attitude towards the new Constitution. If the P.P.P. leaders had had any disposition to reconsider the Party's attitude to the Constitution there had been ample opportunity and much encouragement to do so long before the elections. By the autumn of 1951 the recommendations of the Waddington Commission were out and it was then known that elections would soon be held in British Guiana on the basis of universal adult suffrage. By that time the P.P.P. was already a well established political party, much stronger and better organised than any of the other political associations in British Guiana which in fact were little more than loose and uneasy groupings of a few prominent individuals. The P.P.P. leaders as individuals were themselves by no means politically negligible. Some of them could have remained independent of any party and have still counted on large personal followings. Collectively, and backed by an energetic and comparatively well

organised party, they were a formidable group able to look forward to the expected elections with some confidence.

97. In fact, from the time it became known that the next elections in British Guiana would be held on a basis of universal adult suffrage the P.P.P. leaders were extremely confident, even cocky, about the outcome. The strongly anti-British attitude of the Party leaders had, of course, made it certain that the P.P.P. would find no supporters at all among those inhabitants of British Guiana who are of United Kingdom origin and few (if any) among those of other European origin. Apart from the Europeans, quite a number of people — by no means exclusively to be found among the better-off — were somewhat disturbed at the extent to which the Party policy and propaganda seemed to reflect the more violently anti-British views of its most extreme leaders. But, except for the Europeans, the P.P.P. could count on a substantial number of supporters among all races and all classes in British Guiana, with the bulk of its supporters naturally to be found among the ordinary working people. As a whole the supporters of the P.P.P., whilst not entirely indifferent to constitutional issues and indeed very much inclined to attribute the many disabilities and disadvantages of life in the territory to the weaknesses and the limitations inherent in past systems of government in the colony, were simply extremely dissatisfied with their comparatively low standards of living and with the limited opportunities they have for personal advancement and improvement. They were eager to give their support to any Party which seemed to them to be determined to transform the Government of British Guiana into an instrument of swift and sweeping economic and social reforms. No one could fail to be impressed by the determination and the organizing ability of the P.P.P. and in the absence of any equally impressive alternative party the P.P.P. leaders had no possible reason to believe that the Party would lose any of its support if it adopted a less aggressive attitude and proceeded to draw up a practical and constructive legislative programme.

98. The P.P.P. leaders may have reasoned that electorally the Party had nothing to gain by adopting a more moderate attitude and more detailed and practical policies. We believe, however, that the explanation of the Party's failure to do those things is largely to be found in the related facts that the P.P.P. had not a sufficient body of settled principles on which it could base a practical legislative programme and no influential personalities within its ranks who had the courage to oppose their more extreme colleagues and to risk dividing the Party and thereby jeopardising its electoral prospects by attempting to induce their colleagues to take a constructive view of the Party's probable future responsibilities. Mr. Sydney King, its Assistant Secretary, described the Party as "nothing but a broad democratic alliance against Imperialism". If that statement meant anything at all it meant that the Party was indeed a mere temporary alliance having no object other than to secure complete self-government for British Guiana. No doubt Mr. King did not intend that his words should be taken quite as literally as all that. But apart from Mr. King's testimony there is reason to doubt if the P.P.P. leaders, commonly obsessed with a bitter dislike of British colonial rule, ever made any serious attempt before the elections to discover the extent to which they might be in agreement on any issue other than that of immediate and complete self-government for British Guiana. Even on that issue, as the Party's evidence to the Waddington Commission and the subsequent statements of the Party and its leaders show, they stuck to generalities; if they avoided dissension they also avoided all the



practical difficulties involved in framing a democratic constitution for a country as politically immature as British Guiana.

### **Communist Influence in the P.P.P.**

99. In addition to or as a corollary of being "against Imperialism" some of the P.P.P. leaders declared themselves as socialists and some others were distinguishable from communists. There has never been an avowedly communist party in British Guiana and a communist in the P.P.P. had therefore no particular inducement to declare himself as such. Indeed, all the party leaders were more anxious to dismiss any distinction between socialists and communists as irrelevant to the situation in British Guiana than specifically to declare themselves as one or other. For our purpose too it was perhaps, less important for us to know what the P.P.P. leaders were than to discover what they did. In public at any rate they spoke and acted in concert and in conformity with Party decisions and must, therefore, be held collectively responsible for their actions. Nevertheless since it was certain that when the P.P.P. obtained a majority in the House of Assembly it would then have to determine its future policies or at least the immediate steps to be taken to implement its policies, we think it very relevant to our purpose to consider the more individual attitudes of those in a position to influence Party decisions.

100. We heard a good deal from our witnesses in public and in private about the individual attitudes of many of the P.P.P. leaders; we read carefully through all the material published or circulated by the Party and through all the writings and reported speeches of the Party leaders; and we had evidence of the extent to which some of the P.P.P. leaders were directly associated with international communist or communist controlled organisations or with local branches of such organisations.\*

[\* *We have set out in Appendix I to this Report extracts from official P.P.P. publications and from the writings and speeches of its leaders, and in Appendix II a list of some of the propaganda material circulated by the Party. Most of the evidence we had of the extent to which P.P.P. leaders were associated with international communist or communist controlled organisations was set out in Appendix A of the British Government White Paper Cmd. 8980.*]

101. On the evidence as a whole, we have no doubt that there was a very powerful communist influence within the P.P.P. At the time of the elections at least six of the Party's most prominent leaders — specifically Dr. Jagan (Leader of the Legislative Group), Mrs. Jagan (General Secretary and Editor of *Thunder*), Mr. Sydney King (Assistant Secretary), Mr. Rory Westmaas (Junior Vice-Chairman), Mr. B. H. Benn (Executive Committee member and Secretary of the Pioneer Youth League) and Mr. Martin Carter (Executive Committee member) — accepted unreservedly the "classical" communist doctrines of Marx and of Lenin: were enthusiastic supporters of the policies and practices of modern communist movements: and were contemptuous of European social democratic parties, including the British Labour Party.

102. Though we gathered that the leader of this group, Dr. Jagan, did not become a convinced communist until his visit to Europe in the summer of 1951 — some eighteen months after the formation of the P.P.P.— we are convinced that these people had been restrained by expediency

rather than by principle from forming and leading an openly communist party. They had decided on balance that they could more speedily achieve their most important and immediate objectives — that of ridding British Guiana of British rule and influence — by remaining associated with others who had a similar objective in a party with a wide popular appeal. Except for some signs of hesitancy for a short time immediately after the elections, there is no evidence to show that they were ever prepared even temporarily to abandon or to modify their firm convictions that all British Governments are essentially, if not equally, imperialist and capitalist and that no British Government will ever voluntarily concede full self-government to a dependent territory whose population is largely of non-European origin. They did *not* believe that self-government for British Guiana could be earned in successive steps by revealed capacity for responsible government. On the contrary they believed that a dependent territory can normally expect to win self-government only by violent action little short of revolution. But they thought that, with Great Britain still economically weak and weary of conflict and, as a great colonial power, morally on the defensive, a determined threat of sustained disruption with a strong hint of violence might well be enough to compel a British Government to concede self-government to British Guiana as the only alternative to repression by force.

103. We do not doubt that these were genuine beliefs and that Dr. and Mrs. Jagan, Mr. King and Mr. Westmaas in particular were willing to stake their own and the Party's political existence upon them. Indeed we are convinced that from the moment the P.P.P. secured its majority it was at most only a question of time before these people made a concerted effort to get the Party embarked on a course of action which was deliberately intended to lead to a serious constitutional crisis as a means of forcing the British Government to capitulate to the demands of the P.P.P.

104. On the evidence available to us we would not be justified in coming to positive conclusions about the personal attitudes of all of the leaders of the P.P.P. We know that Dr. Jagan and Mr. King each had great personal influence over some of their colleagues. For example, it was known that Mr. Ramkarran (Party Treasurer), Mr. Bowman (Executive Committee Member) and Mr. Mohamed Khan (General Council Member) were blind and uncritical followers of the Jagans. One or two of the leaders, such as Dr. Lachhmansingh, seemed to us to be mere political opportunists. Mr. Burnham (Chairman of the Party) was generally recognised as the leader of the socialists in the P.P.P. and as such to be in rivalry with Dr. Jagan for the moral leadership of the Party as a whole. He had, however, succeeded by the wildness of many of his speeches and by the irresponsibility of some of his actions in creating doubts in the minds of some of our witnesses as to whether his differences with Dr. Jagan were not more personal and racial than political. Even among those of our witnesses who were keen supporters of the P.P.P, there were many who thought that as the recognised leader of the socialists in the Party Mr. Burnham ought to have taken a much stronger line than he did in opposition to the more blatantly communist activities of the Jagans and their supporters. We came to the conclusion that, besides the ambiguous Mr. Burnham, at least two of the more prominent leaders of the Party — specifically Mr. Ashton Chase (Executive Committee Member) and Mr. Clinton Wong (Senior Vice-Chairman) — and a number of its less prominent leaders were socialists. They were as bitterly opposed as their communist colleagues to British colonial rule, but they were not communists. They too were familiar with and approved many of the orthodox theories of communist writers

on imperialism and capitalism. But their dislike of imperialism and capitalism was based less upon Marxist interpretations of history than upon their own understanding of the history of colonial rule and the interpretations which they placed upon their own experiences of capitalist enterprise in British Guiana. They were certainly extremists even by colonial standards, and we are not surprised that many of our witnesses were unable to distinguish between their socialism and the communism of some of their colleagues. Yet we had no doubt that the socialists in the P.P.P. were essentially democrats and that left to themselves their preference at all times would have been that the Party should pursue its constitutional objectives by straightforward, and peaceful means. We doubt however if they had the wit to see the essential difference between themselves and their communist colleagues or the ability to avoid being outmanoeuvred by them.\* [*A minor but revealing instance of the way in which Mrs. Jagan used her influence as Editor of Thunder is contained in the September 1951 issue of that periodical where Mr. Hubert Critchlow, Secretary of the British Guiana Labour Union, was described as a "scab". Mr. Chase, who at that time was assistant to Mr. Critchlow and later described him as a "stalwart", did not resign his office in the Union or so far as we know make any protest against this attack on his chief.*]

105. On our reckoning, therefore, four of the seven principal officers of the Party were communists; the Editor of *Thunder* (Mrs. Jagan) was a communist; the membership of the Executive Committee of the Party were about equally shared between communists and socialists; and though on the General Council of the Party the communists were in a minority they had probably the greater personal influence and followings among the Party membership.

### **The Dilemma of the Non-Communists**

106. But apart from the number and the personal influence of the communists in the P.P.P., the more moderate leaders were hardly a match for the extremists. It is most unlikely that those who might otherwise have preferred that the P.P.P. Ministers should make a genuine attempt to govern constructively were able to produce confident answers to the arguments of those who intended to direct the efforts of the Party principally towards exposing the limitations of the new constitution. It could be argued, for example, that it would be foolish to lose the opportunity of making an immediate and critical issue of the Party's demand for full self-government: that it would be dangerous for the P.P.P. Ministers to become too closely associated with the more experienced official Ministers and departmental officials who would most certainly attempt to intimidate or to cajole the Ministers into adopting unnecessarily moderate policies and a too cautious administrative attitude: and that, in any case, there was no advantage of any kind to be gained from any efforts the P.P.P. Ministers could possibly make to govern "constructively" since it was obvious that the nominated majority in the State Council had been put there for the specific purpose of preventing the P.P.P. from applying a genuinely socialist programme. In short, as the Party had always argued, nothing really effective could be done to implement P.P.P. policy until "all cheeks on the people's will" had been removed. The Party must therefore concentrate on sustaining the enthusiasm of its supporters by intensifying the agitation for self-government whilst the P.P.P. Ministers and the Party majority in the Assembly sought and created opportunities to expose and to challenge the "undemocratic" power of the "reactionary" elements in the Government.

107. The conclusions are no more valid than the assumptions upon which they are based. Unfortunately for British Guiana the assumptions are those upon which the Party had so far based the bulk of its propaganda and of its opposition to the new constitution. By the time the P.P.P. had secured its majority even the most moderate of its leaders had already allowed themselves to become deeply committed to the view that the new Constitution was "a fake and a trap". Faced with the responsibilities of Government the more reasonable of them may have instinctively wished to reject these conclusions, but they could not do so without at the same time rejecting everything for which the Party had so far stood. And we know of no one of the leaders of the P.P.P. who had both the gumption and the courage to go as far as that in contradicting the arguments of his colleagues.

### III. THE ATTITUDES OF OTHERS

108. With the reputation that the P.P.P. had created for itself it would have been surprising if the Party's success at the elections had not created some alarm and despondency among the better-off sections of the population of British Guiana. But some of our witnesses went very much further and urged us to believe that there were many — particularly among those who were concerned with the management of the larger agricultural and commercial undertakings of the colony — who had been determined from the beginning that the elected Ministers should not be allowed to implement the P.P.P.'s election promises; and who were influential enough and quite prepared, if necessary, to provoke a constitutional crisis in order to get rid not only of the P.P.P. Government but also of the Waddington Constitution to which they had always objected as being mush too liberal for a country like British Guiana.

109. Unlike the P.P.P. leaders many of those against whom these charges were made appeared before us to be examined. They were opposed to the P.P.P. and all had very much hoped that the P.P.P. would be defeated at the elections. It was popularly supposed that the bitterest of the attacks made on the P.P.P. in the local Press represented their views as exactly as *Thunder* represented the views of the leaders of the P.P.P. Indeed some of those engaged in the sugar industry were known to have provided money which had enabled the Man Poorer Citizens' Association to issue with every newspaper printed on the Sunday eight days before the elections a free four-page supplement in which the P.P.P. leaders were accused of being entirely subservient to Soviet Russia. But apart from their dislike of the P.P.P. these people did not appear to us to be politically all of the same mind. A few of them were undoubtedly "die-hards", resentful of any changes being made in the political, economic or social structure of British Guiana. On the other hand, a slightly larger number of them looked forward with some cordiality to the gradual extension of political rights, knowing full well that this would bring about other far-reaching changes in the colony. The majority, however, simply recognised without any particular enthusiasm or revulsion that changes were both necessary and inevitable and they were prepared for them. As the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce said in their reply to the letter of the 9th June, 1953, from the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce (see paragraph 93 above), they hoped that the Government would seek their "advice or assistance in matters concerning commerce and industry" and that the Chamber would in turn "be very glad to give all possible assistance to the Government and to your Ministry in particular in an atmosphere of

mutual co-operation." This we think was representative of the attitude of the great majority of these people towards the new Government. They fully expected that the P.P.P. as the Government would pursue a vigorous socialist policy. They certainly thought that the Waddington Constitution had gone too far in providing that a Party able to obtain, on the basis of universal adult suffrage, 14 out of the 24 elected seats in the House of Assembly should thereby assume virtually complete control of the government. They were certainly not convinced that the power of the State Council to delay legislation or the Governor's ultimate power of complete veto were in themselves sufficient checks against irresponsibility. They rather hoped that with responsibility and experience the Ministers might ultimately prove to be not too unreasonable.

110. In asserting that there were people capable of creating a constitutional crisis in order to get rid of the P.P.P. Government some of our witnesses simply meant that a majority of the nominated State Council, being politically opposed to the P.P.P., would use their power to prevent the passing of socialist legislation. But there were others who quite deliberately asserted that the Governor, the *ex-officio* Ministers and most of the higher administrative officers of the Civil Service also were so violently prejudiced against the P.P.P. and were in any case such "imperialist and capitalist stooges"— i.e., were so much under the control of the British Government or under the influence of local representatives of the capitalist undertakings in the colony — as to be incapable of impartiality and of independent judgement in the exercise of their constitutional responsibilities.

111. If our witnesses had said that substantial disagreement was bound to arise between the P.P.P. majority in the Assembly and a majority of the nominated members of the State Council and that the fault would not necessarily or invariably lie with the P.P.P. majority we would have accepted that as a reasonable assumption to make, looking forward from the date of the elections. But there was no justification at all for the assumption that the Governor or the *ex-officio* Ministers were predisposed to act unreasonably in checking the P.P.P. Ministers. The Governor had only arrived in the colony a fortnight before the elections from Barbados where he had got on very well indeed with the socialist majority. He had the reputation of being more than ordinarily knowledgeable about and in sympathy with the aims of Colonial political movements. We are convinced that when the P.P.P. Minister took office he believed that he could be of real help to them and that he intended to take their part against many of their critics. The *ex-officio* Ministers, imbued with the somewhat cautious traditions and standards of the British Colonial Service, no doubt had their misgivings about the P.P.P. Ministers, but it is inconceivable to us that anyone should have thought that these officials would act otherwise than with a full sense of their high constitutional responsibilities.

112. But it is by their actions during the period of the P.P.P. Government, rather than by their intentions and predispositions, that all of the people concerned — the Governor, the *ex-officio* Ministers, the elected Ministers and the State Council — must be judged as to their respective responsibility for the October crisis. We turn therefore to a description of the ways in which conflict arose between the various elements in the Government and of the events which led up to the suspension of the constitution.

#### **IV. THE WORKING OF THE CONSTITUTION**

113. The elections were held on the 27th April, 1953. In accordance with a decision of the Party Congress the General Council of the P.P.P. had then to decide if representatives of the Party should take office in the new Government and, if so, to decide who should be put forward for various offices. The discussion of these matters revealed some differences of opinion within the Party mainly, we understand, about the choice of the persons to be elected or appointed to positions in the Executive Council, the House of Assembly and the State Council. We did not hear of any differences of opinion about the wisdom of Party representatives joining the Government and by the 6th May such differences as there were had been sufficiently resolved to enable the Party to indicate its intention to assume the responsibilities of office by announcing the names of the proposed Ministers. At the same time Mr. Burnham (Chairman of the Party) thought it necessary to issue a personal statement assuring his supporters that though he had on this occasion agreed to accept certain decisions of the General Council he did not in general intend to be subject to dictation — presumably by the Jagans and their supporters.

### **The Executive Council**

114. In accordance with the provisions of the British Guiana (Constitution) Order in Council, 1953, the executive Council consisted of the Governor as President (with a casting vote only), the three *ex-officio* Ministers, the six Ministers elected by the P.P.P. majority in the House of Assembly, and the Minister without Portfolio elected by the State Council. It was thus clearly provided by the Order in Council — and as clearly understood by the other members of the Council — that the P.P.P. Ministers could by their votes alone determine any issue which came before the Executive Council.

115. Nevertheless, the *ex-officio* Ministers did not think that this disposition of the seats in the Executive Council meant that their constitutional rights and responsibilities as members of the Council were less firmly secured than those of the elected ministers. All held their offices by virtue of the same legal instrument. The *ex-officio* Ministers fully understood that it would be their duty in the Executive Council to give to the P.P.P. Ministers information on matters of fact and advice on points of detail uncoloured by their own personal views about the advisability of the policies for which the information or advice was sought. But the duties of the *ex-officio* Ministers in the Executive Council were not limited merely to the giving of advice and information. Under the Order in Council the Executive Council was to be the principal instrument of Government policy. Within very broad limits the Governor himself was required to consult with the Council and to act in accordance with its advice. The P.P.P. as a political party might quite properly continue strongly to object to the checks and balances of the new constitution and to take particular exception to those provisions of the Order in Council which were deliberately designed to ensure that in the making of government policy the comparatively inexperienced elected Ministers would be constantly exposed to the positive guidance and, where necessary, to the restraining influence of the appointed Ministers. But the P.P.P. Ministers having accepted office under the Order in Council were thereby constitutionally bound, as were the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers, to recognise that the formulation of Government policy

was a function of the Executive Council as a whole and that every member of the Council was entitled to participate fully in its work.

116. No one will, we think, deny that the Executive Council conspicuously failed to become a body capable of assuming collective responsibility for Government policy. Each side, however, contends that the unmistakable failure of the Council is attributable to the attitude adopted by the other. It is said that the P.P.P. Ministers, having convinced themselves that the other members of the Council were their implacable political opponents, repulsed all the efforts of the Governor and of the *ex-officio* Ministers to make the Council a genuinely co-operative policy-making body; that after the first few meetings they became increasingly intolerant of the comments and even of the presence of the *ex-officio* Ministers in the Executive Council; that they sought quite deliberately to transform the Executive Council from a policy-making body into a mere device for the purely formal endorsement of decisions arrived at in meetings and discussions held privately among themselves; and that whilst consistently refusing to co-operate with the other members of the Executive Council they nevertheless utterly failed to produce any genuinely constructive proposals of their own.

117. Almost identical charges are made against the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers. It is said that the *ex-officio* Ministers never showed any signs in the Executive Council of being able to set aside their political prejudices and to overcome their personal dislike of the P.P.P. Ministers: that they acted as though their primary function in the Executive Council was to prevent the P.P.P. Ministers from implementing any of that Party's policies: that they even went so far as to attempt to bluff the P.P.P. Ministers into believing that certain proposals were administratively impracticable and constitutionally improper: and that the Governor prevented the Executive Council from adopting proposals to which he was opposed by insisting, as President, on deferring further discussion of a subject, at first in the hope that differences would arise among the elected Ministers which would enable him to obtain a decision acceptable to himself at a subsequent meeting, and later with the deliberate intention of ensuring that the issue would not come up again for Executive Council decision before the life of the existing Council had been brought to an abrupt end by the suspension of the constitution.

118. The proceedings of the Executive Council are secret and in trying to find out what substance there was in these various charges and counter charges we could not be given details of discussions which took place in the Council's meetings. We were, however, given information and observations of a more general nature about some of the matters dealt with by the Executive Council, and we had detailed information about public statements and activities of Ministers from which it was possible to judge their attitude as Ministers towards the Executive Council and its proceedings.

### **The Council of People's Ministers**

119. It is common knowledge that the P.P.P. Ministers formed themselves into a body which they first described as the Council of Ministers. The name of this body was changed to the Council of People's Ministers when the Governor pointed out that the name was misleading in that the Council did not include all of the Ministers. The Governor and the other Ministers had

no objection to the P.P.P. Ministers meeting by themselves to discuss Executive Council business. They realised that it was perfectly natural and indeed inevitable for Ministers belonging to one Party to discuss first among themselves many of the matters which they would later have to discuss and to decide in association with the other Ministers at full meetings of the Executive Council. The Governor did, however, ask the P.P.P. Ministers to cease referring in official correspondence and in the House of Assembly to the Council of People's Ministers as though it were a body of equal or even of superior constitutional standing to the Executive Council itself. Moreover, the Council of People's Ministers was not a mere consultative body. It met on the day before each meeting of the Executive Council to decide upon the attitude which the P.P.P. Ministers would adopt to each item of the Executive Council agenda and its decisions were binding upon its members. No P.P.P. Minister either cared or dared to invite reproof from his Party by speaking or voting in the Executive Council except in accordance with the decisions of this body.

120. The P.P.P. Ministers do not deny that the purpose and the effect of the Council of People's Ministers were to limit discussion and the possibilities of compromise and agreement in the full Executive Council. Mr. Ashton Chase (Minister for Labour in the P.P.P. Government) described the position quite clearly in a booklet\* issued after the suspension of the constitution in which he wrote:

"Another irksome matter to the officials but one on which the success of our Party depended was the unbreakable unity that existed among the Ministers. We always presented a united front at meetings of Her Majesty's Executive Council. At all times we met privately in our Council of People's Ministers (a system and term which they despised and entreated us to change) and hammered out our differences sinking personal opinions in the interest of a common and united front."

They did more. On more than one occasion they publicly announced or put into effect an important change in Government policy without having first bothered even to tell the Governor and the other members of the Executive Council of their intentions. In some cases — as for example when on a renewal of an exclusive permission to prospect for minerals over a defined area the amount of the rent payable was increased — it may have been that the Minister concerned (Dr. Jagan) genuinely thought that the matter was not of sufficient importance to merit the detailed consideration of the Executive Council. Yet, even taking an increase in the rent payable under an exclusive permission on renewal as a typical example, it is fairly clear from the number and similarity of the instances in which that happened that the Minister was following a general policy of which the Council of People's Ministers must have known and approved but which was certainly never properly disclosed to the full Executive Council. Moreover, a lack of importance in the subject can certainly not be held to explain why the Minister of Education (Mr. Burnham) publicly announced the intention of the P.P.P. Ministers to abolish the system of dual control in the primary schools without having first submitted the matter for consideration in the Executive Council. The only explanation offered to us by supporters of the P.P.P. was that a Minister was under no obligation to secure the approval of the Executive Council before making a public statement of a general intention. and that Mr. Burnham would no doubt have brought his detailed proposals before the Executive Council in due course — which is the equivalent of



saying that the Executive Council might be consulted about the details but not otherwise, except at the discretion of the Minister, about the essential objectives of Government policy. [\* 133 *Days Towards Freedom in Guiana, page 49.*]

121. In our view the Governor and the remaining members of the Executive Council were entitled to object as they repeatedly did that the procedure and the attitude adopted by the P.P.P. Ministers amounted to dictation by the Council of People's Ministers of the policy of the Executive Council. The only observation which the P.P.P. Ministers have so far made on this charge is that, since they alone of the Executive Council members were elected by popular vote and they alone could, therefore, claim to represent the "will of the people", they were fully entitled if they so chose, to dictate policy to the others. We find it hard to believe that even the P.P.P. Ministers were able genuinely to convince themselves that this view was in accordance with the intentions of the Constitutional Order in Council.

### **P.P.P. Criticisms of the Governor and other Members**

122. If we had found any real substance in the P.P.P. charges of political prejudice and deceit on the part of the Governor and of the other members of the Executive Council we might also have found in them an explanation, if not a justification, for the non-co-operative attitude of the P.P.P. Ministers. But we did not. Indeed, it was here that we regretted most the refusal of the leaders of the P.P.P. to give evidence to the Commission since, left to ourselves, we had some difficulty in deciding which were the particular incidents that the P.P.P. leaders thought of as supporting the general accusations made against the Governor and the other Ministers. For example, Mr. Ashton Chase, writing after the suspension of the constitution, made something of a point against the Chief Secretary that "it was not until July 1st, i.e., one month after we were in office that our records and files were moved into the Ministerial Building." Yet, when the Chief Secretary informed the Ministers on the 30th June that in future the incoming Colonial Office mail would be sent direct to the Ministers concerned, Mr. King (Minister for Communications and Works) thanked the Chief Secretary for the speed with which arrangements for setting up ministerial registries had been made.

123. Again Mr. Chase says that when the Minister for Communications and Works (Mr. King) proposed to appoint "a few committees to examine and report on certain aspects of the Public Works Department and on the competition between 'bus, taxi and coach services on certain routes" he was never advised, despite several requests, "on the legal position of these committees and his own position as regards making the appointments." We can readily believe that in view of Mr. King's reputation and of his public references to the intention of the P.P.P. Ministers to use their "position of strategic advantage" in the Executive Council to expose "departmental rackets" and to agitate for "ultimate democratic control in the public service" the Governor and the other Ministers would be unable to conceal their apprehension at the prospect of Mr. King appointing a committee to go into any aspect of the work of his department. But apart from Mr. Chase's brief reference we have no information about the particular committees proposed by Mr. King. It may be that Mr. Chase's complaint of delay in this instance is part of a general complaint concerning a disagreement in the Executive Council about the transfer to individual Ministers of the power to appoint various boards and committees, which Mr. Chase says led to an "important

constitutional crisis." In that case we ought, perhaps, to set out what we learned of the cause and the nature of this disagreement.

## **Appointments to Boards and Committees**

124. The P.P.P. Ministers were obviously very anxious to proceed to appoint their own nominees to various boards and committees. At the very first meeting of the Executive Council they asked about the procedure for appointing members to statutory boards and to committees. Early in July the Executive Council considered a memorandum submitted by the Attorney-General which proposed that at that stage and pending a more thorough review of the situation only minor changes should be made in the past practice whereby boards and committees were appointed by the Governor or by the Governor-in-Council. The P.P.P. Ministers pointed out that the Waddington Commission had recommended that none of the statutory boards or committees existing at the time of the change-over should be allowed to continue under the new constitution if their activities could be construed as derogating from the real responsibility of a Minister. They ignored an offer by the Governor to consult the appropriate Minister before making any appointment in those cases where the right of appointment was vested in him under the existing law, and insisted that the power to appoint a committee to deal with any matter coming within the departmental responsibilities of a Minister should be transferred immediately to that Minister. The Executive Council, therefore, agreed that a draft order submitted by the Attorney-General should be amended to provide for the appointment by the appropriate Minister of the members of certain named boards and committees. The Governor had some doubts if it was constitutionally proper to use his powers under Section 4 of the Constitutional Order in Council for the purpose of issuing the amended Order but he agreed to do so on the understanding, to which the P.P.P. Ministers freely assented, that he would be consulted by the Minister concerned before appointments were made.

125. The question of appointments to boards and to committees was again discussed by the Executive Council towards the end of August. The Attorney-General advised the Executive Council that the only amendments to an ordinance which could be made by way of an Order of the Governor under Section 4 of the Constitutional Order in Council were those which it might be necessary to make to bring the ordinance into accord with the provisions of the Constitutional Order in Council and that if it was desired to alter the provisions of an ordinance in order to transfer the power of appointment of a board or a committee from the Governor to a Minister or to change its functions, that should be done by legislation.

126. The PPP Ministers strongly disagreed with the Attorney-General's view and insisted that Section 4 of the Order in Council could and should straightaway be used by the Governor to transfer to the appropriate Ministers his power to make appointments to the Rice Marketing Board and to certain other named boards and committees. The Governor, however, told the Executive Council that in the circumstances he proposed to inform the Secretary of State of the differences of opinion in the Executive Council and to ask for the advice of the Colonial Office about the use which might properly be made of the powers conferred on the Governor by Section 4 of the Order in Council. The P.P.P. Ministers repeatedly pressed for a decision on this issue which the Governor, not having received a reply from the Colonial Office to his request for

advice, was unable to give. In September the Governor tried to resolve the deadlock by renewing an offer he had already made to consider straightaway any recommendations the P.P.P. Ministers cared to make about the composition of any particular body the PPP had in mind. The P.P.P. Ministers again rejected this offer and refused to advise on the new crop prices for padi and rice unless the Governor would first transfer to the Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce the power in his sole discretion to appoint a new Rice Marketing Board. The deadlock in the Executive Council on this issue had not been resolved by the time the constitution was suspended.

127. It is no part of our duty to give an opinion about what could or could not have been done under the provisions of the Constitutional Order in Council. We understand that the advice received from the Colonial Office Legal Advisers supported the views of the Attorney-General about the impropriety of using Section 4 of the Constitutional Order in Council in the manner proposed by the P.P.P. Ministers. But it is clear to us that there was much more in the disagreement in the Executive Council about the appointments of boards and committees than a simple difference of opinions about the interpretation of a section of the Constitutional Order in Council. With their substantial majority in the Assembly the P.P.P. Ministers could have ignored the Order in Council and have proceeded, as the Attorney-General had advised, to achieve their objective by way of legislation. Mr. Chase says that "this was a cumbersome process and would have entailed a year's delay where the State Council thought it fit to exercise its powers of delay". But if the P.P.P. Ministers had been concerned only with delay, whether in general or by the State Council, they would surely have at least tried out the Governor's repeated offer to give immediate consideration to their recommendations about the composition of any particular body and would not have sulkily (again quoting Mr. Chase) "declined to appoint further boards until the situation could be clarified".

128. We have no doubt that what was really at issue in the Executive Council was the actual composition and the functions of boards and committees rather than the method of their appointment. The P.P.P. Ministers knew that the recommendations they would make would not be acceptable to the Governor. Some of them may prefer to put it that they knew the Governor was too susceptible to the advice of the prejudiced official Ministers and to the influence of other interests equally hostile to the P.P.P. to be trusted to deal impartially with the recommendations of a P.P.P. Minister. But here again Mr. Chase is quite frank about their own attitude and intention. "The appointments to Boards and Committees in every country," he says "are made by the dominant class of the day. While the capitalist class is in power — as they have been in British Guiana from the beginning of our colonial history — appointments were made to suit their interests. A working class party in power with the power to make appointments would appoint Committees with a bias in favour of the working class".

129. This cannot be dismissed as mere rhetoric. Indeed when the issue was before the Executive Council the P.P.P. Ministers had already given actual proof of their deliberate intention (whatever the intention of the Order in Council) to avoid the possibility of being restrained by the Governor or the other members of the Executive Council in the appointment of Boards and Committees. Early in June the Governor had made an Order transferring to the Ministers concerned the power to make appointments to the Central Board of Health, the Central Housing

and Planning Authority, the Education Committee, the Sea Defence Board, the Transport and Harbours Advisory Council and the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Advisory Board. In all of these instances the P.P.P. Ministers had undertaken in the Executive Council that the Minister concerned would consult with the Governor before making appointments. But in the four of the six instances in which appointments were made the Ministers concerned acted without any consultation with the Governor or any reference to the Executive Council.

130. Moreover the appointments they made in most of these instances were bound to create even in the most tolerant and the least acute mind a suspicion that the purpose of the P.P.P. Ministers in demanding the right to appoint boards and committees was as the British Government White Paper (Cmd. 8980) says "to put these committees under Party control without regard for members' suitability and experience" According to the White Paper (and we have not seen any contradiction of these statements) "they appointed four P.P.P. supporters, three of whom were primary school teachers, to the Education Committee, while the representatives previously on the Committee of the denominational governing bodies which control 260 out of 277 primary schools in British Guiana were excluded. They also proposed to fill five out of seven seats on the Transport Advisory Council by P.P.P. supporters. Two of these were junior members of the Transport and Harbours Department itself and one was a tailor who earns his living by selling P.P.P. literature". It seemed to be to attitude of the Party towards any organisation that it should either be made subservient to the Party or got rid of. Trade unions such as the M.P.C.A. and trade union leaders such as the President of the Transport Workers' Union., over whom the Party had no control, became the subject of persistent and virulent attacks. We had evidence of the intention of the P.P.P. majority in the Assembly to eliminate the Rice Producers' Association if they could not bring it under Party control. The Association was a body set up by statute to protect the interests of rice producers generally — growers and landlords. It was almost wholly financed by an annual grant from the Rice Marketing Board; but otherwise it was independent of the Government and its officers were elected by and responsible to its members. The first intention of the P.P.P. was to do away with the Association altogether on the pretext that it was unnecessary to spend \$40,000 (8,333 pounds sterling) annually to keep in being an organisation to protect the interests of rice producers when that job could be done so much better by the Party representatives in the Executive Council and in the House of Assembly. However, some members of the Party, themselves rice producers questioned the advisability of abolishing the Association, and it was decided not to adopt that particular proposal at that stage. Nevertheless, officers of the Association were warned that the Association would be abolished if its policies and activities failed to fit in with those of the Party.

131. The Governor and the other Ministers had, therefore, reason to be apprehensive about the refusal of the P.P.P. Ministers to be satisfied with anything less than the immediate transfer to them of the unqualified power to appoint boards and committees. In the circumstances they were perhaps not at all sorry to be able to point to the legal and constitutional difficulties in the way of doing what the P.P.P. Ministers wanted. Even so the difficulties were not simply conjured up by the Attorney-General out of political prejudice, and there is no reason to think that the advice which he gave to the Executive Council was in any way coloured by dislike of the P.P.P. Ministers' obvious intentions. There is no justification either for the assumption that the Governor misused his position as President to prevent the Executive Council from coming to an

early decision. on this issue. Indeed, until. the point about the power vested in the Governor under Section 4 of the Constitution Order in Council had been cleared up — and more particularly in the light of the appointments already made by P.P.P. Ministers — the Governor and the other Ministers would have been failing in their duty as members of the Executive Council if they had not insisted on maintaining a direct interest in the appointment of boards and committees.

## **Economic Policy and Development Planning**

132. In the P.P.P.'s election. manifesto and in the speeches made by P.P.P. members of the House of Assembly during the debate on the reply to the Governor's Address, there were frequent references to the Party's determination to proceed with extensive measures of economic and financial reform. Early in the life of the Government the Governor advised Dr Jagan and Mr. Burnham to issue a public statement about. their financial policy in order to establish confidence in the stability of the colony and to reassure investors. This they never did. In fact the P.P.P. Ministers proved to be ambiguous and dilatory in these matters. Whilst the P.P.P. majority in the House of Assembly had said on the 17th June that they were "fully conscious of the role which private capital is playing and will play in the development of British Guiana" and that they would "take such steps as will encourage and attract private capital," the issue of *Thunder* for that month, harping on its familiar theme of imperialist exploitation, was complaining of the profit made by British Guiana Consolidated Goldfields Limited the previous year. *Thunder* demanded "for how long more will imperialist concerns drain away the riches of our land so as to enrich a foreign country?" — and this because the company were able for 1952 to distribute 12,960 pounds sterling on a total investment of nearly \$300.000.

133. Whatever may have been discussed or decided in the Council. Of People's Ministers, the P.P.P. Ministers brought little or nothing in the way of economic or fiscal reform to the notice of the Executive Council. Apart from vague references to replacement of customs duties by a turnover tax and to discrimination in favour of manufacturing as against extractive enterprises, at no time did the Ministers make any public effort to describe more precisely what it was they had in mind. In his defence of the P.P.P. Government Mr. Chase is able to refer under the heading of Commerce and Industry to only three items as having been dealt with by the P.P.P. Government during its period of office, viz., the removal of restrictions on trade, the World Bank Report and the price of rice.

134. Speaking of the removal of restrictions on trade, Mr. Chase says that "notwithstanding the objections of the Chamber of Commerce, I got the Government's approval for the opening of trade with Japan". In fact what was done in relaxing restrictions on. trade with Japan — and with countries within the European Payments Union — during the lifetime of the P.P.P. Government was done on the initiative of the United Kingdom Government. The P.P.P. had said in its election manifesto that the Party would work for free trade in the exchange of goods and, though we have no doubt that the P.P.P. Ministers were in favour of the proposals, the fact remains that the proposals actually adopted by the Executive Council did not come from Mr. Chase or originate with any of the P.P.P. Ministers. In any case, the proposals were not opposed

by any member of the Executive Council. There is, therefore, no evidence here either of obstructive action by the official Ministers or of constructive activity initiated by the P.P.P. Ministers.

135. As regards the report of the Mission to British Guiana organised by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, here again the initiative in trying to get the Mission's recommendations discussed in the Executive Council was taken by the Governor. Indeed, the Governor was most anxious from the start that the Executive Council should proceed as quickly as possible to the production and the application of development plans. As early as the 9th June he asked the P.P.P. Ministers about the procedure they proposed to adopt for preparing a four year development and taxation plan in implementation of the P.P.P.'s election manifesto. The Ministers said that they had arranged for a meeting to discuss these matters to be held on the 11th June. By the 14th July draft copies of the recommendations of the International Bank Mission were available, and the Governor asked the P.P.P. Ministers to study the recommendations and to be ready to consider them at a special meeting of the Executive Council to be held on the 22nd July. As a result of a preliminary discussion at that meeting the Executive Council agreed on the 28th July to the despatch by telegram of a number of general observations to the Mission. The Governor suggested that having sent these general observations the Executive Council should not wait for the actual publication of the Mission's Report before going ahead with the more detailed consideration of its recommendations. Though Mr. Chase says that it was they who "directed that copies of the report be sent to the heads of departments concerned for their comments and attention", in fact it was the Governor who suggested that heads of departments should be asked to consider the Mission's recommendations *against a background of the Government's wishes*. The Government, however, never formulated its wishes and when the Governor again raised this matter on the 29th September. Dr. Jagan admitted that they had not yet discussed it among themselves. Mr. Chase says that the heads of Departments had done nothing by the 9th October. If that was so then it was a reflection upon the Ministers themselves since they should have insisted upon action by their departments. Moreover, before this the Governor had asked (on the 11th August) if the P.P.P. Ministers yet made any progress in their discussion of a development and taxation plan in implementation of the Party's election manifesto. On this, too, Dr. Jagan could say no more than that the Ministers proposed to discuss the question of forming an economic committee on the following Wednesday. Nothing further was heard in the Executive Council of the P.P.P. Ministers' plans for economic development and they had not even begun to prepare for their first budget by the time they were relieved of their Portfolios on the 9th October.

136. As regards the price of rice, the position was that when this question came before the Executive Council the P.P.P. Ministers refused to advise about the prices of rice and padi unless and until they were given the right to appoint their own nominees to the Rice Marketing Board. In the result it was left to the Governor to decide entirely on his own responsibility whether or not to accept the proposals put up by the existing Rice Marketing Board.

137. The Governor decided that he ought to approve the Board's recommendations for an increase of twelve cents per gallon and it, therefore, fell to him to bring before the Executive Council a proposal to offset the consequent increase in the cost of living by an increase in the

subsidy on flour. The P.P.P. Ministers agreed with the increase in the price paid by the Rice Marketing Board to rice farmers and were prepared to agree to an increase in the selling price of rice to consumers of four cents per gallon. They suggested that the difference in the yield from the increase of four cents which they had proposed and from the increase of twelve cents as proposed by the Rice Marketing Board should be met by a direct subsidy to the Board instead of being offset by an increase in the subsidy in flour. Far from ignoring the P.P.P. Ministers and insisting on applying his own proposals, the Governor agreed to defer further action in order to consider these and other proposals put to him by the P.P.P. Ministers. This matter did not however come up again in the Executive Council until after the 9th October.

138. We have not thought it necessary to set out the details of every issue on which there was some disagreement in the Executive Council. We deal in later paragraphs of this Report with the more substantial of the difficulties and differences which first showed themselves in the Executive Council and which were later and more fully disclosed in the course of debates in the House of Assembly or the State Council or in public meetings. But apart from the fact that the number of separate instances of disagreement in the Executive Council can be taken as showing the extent and the constancy of the rift between the two sides, many of the particular issues could not in themselves have had any substantial bearing upon the development of a constitutional crisis. For example, one of the first acts of the P.P.P. Ministers in the Executive Council was to call for the removal of the ban on the entry into British Guiana of certain persons known to be engaged in spreading Communist propaganda throughout the Caribbean area. The Governor argued strongly against this move on the grounds that it was ill-advised in itself and especially ill-timed in view of the existing and fairly widespread belief in the colony and outside that the P.P.P. was subject to considerable Communist influence. We cannot, however, see how the P.P.P. Ministers could object to the Governor's attitude in this matter for, much as he disagreed with their decision and argued against it, he nevertheless agreed to act according to the advice which they insisted on giving. Similarly we cannot see why anyone should imagine that the Governor had any reasons other than those which he gave for asking, as he did on several occasions, for a decision on some particular matter to be deferred until the various interests concerned had been consulted or until he had had a chance of going through the relevant papers or until decisions had been made on related proposals. In some instances there may have been some delay in producing the memoranda needed for further discussion. But so far as we could gather there were only a few cases, and those of no immediate urgency, in which the matter was still outstanding by the time the constitution was suspended: — for example, on the request of the Federation of Government Employees for the deletion from the History Sheets of the persons concerned of the record of their participation in a strike of Government employees in 1950; the P.P.P. Ministers' proposals for reform of the local government franchise; and for an alteration in policy concerning the retirement of public officers. Generally the P.P.P. Ministers had their own way despite the objections of the others. In fact for all that Mr. Chase complains that theirs was a "subordinate position", there were no means by which the P.P.P. Ministers could have been prevented from having all their own way in the Executive Council — as Mr. Chase himself proved when he refused to give further consideration to his labour Relations Bill in the light of the suggestions made by the Governor and the other Ministers for its improvement.

## The State Council

139. The State Council consisted of nine persons, of whom six were appointed by the Governor acting in his discretion, two by the Governor on the recommendation of the six P.P.P. Ministers, and one by the Governor acting in his discretion but after consultation with the minority in the House of Assembly. The State Council elected one of its members, Sir Frank McDavid, to be its President and he was also elected Minister without Portfolio with a seat in the Executive Council.

140. The members of the State Council were appointed by the Governor after the result of the elections were known. We have no doubt that if the results of the election had been different the Governor would have made a different choice in the appointment of the six members of the State Council whom he was entitled to appoint at his discretion. These six persons were all well known public men and most of them had had previous experience of public affairs; each of them could be considered representative of a special interest, but none of them supported the P.P.P. Indeed, some of them, as for example Mr. Lionel Luckhoo, were known to be vigorous opponents of P.P.P. policies. The State Councillor appointed by the Governor after consultation with the minority in the House of Assembly had been a candidate in the elections for that House in opposition to a successful P.P.P. candidate. As a defeated candidate he could not have been appointed to the State Council except as representing either the majority or the minority of the House of Assembly.

141. Long before the State Council was appointed, and indeed in evidence to the Waddington Commission, the P.P.P. had most strongly objected to a bi-cameral legislature unless the second Chamber was a wholly elected body. In the circumstances of British Guiana the P.P.P. saw no basis for an elected second Chamber and, therefore, no reason for a second Chamber at all. From the time the recommendations of the Waddington Commission were published the P.P.P. made something of a dead set against the proposed State Council and after the Council was actually constituted continued to make the State Council a special target of their criticisms. For example, in reply to the Governor's Message at the opening of the Legislature the Ministers insisted on including the following passage: —

"We, however, harbour no illusions about the nominated State Council which can only serve the purpose of curbing the will of the people — a reactionary and undemocratic purpose."

142. During the period of office of the P.P.P. Government the State Council met on nine separate occasions in the course of which they adopted a number of motions and dealt with various bills which had already been passed by the House of Assembly. Of the motions the only ones that could be described as in conflict with the views or decisions of the P.P.P. Ministers were those concerning the remuneration of State Councillors, The Queen's visit to Jamaica and the conduct of Ministers during the sugar strike. Of the bills debated by the State Council the two controversial ones were the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) (Amendment) Bill and the Undesirable Publications (Prohibition of Importation) (Repeal) Bill. We deal with each of these matters under separate headings in later paragraphs of this Report.



## The House of Assembly

143. We have already described the composition of the House of Assembly in paragraph 65. Of the 24 elected seats the P.P.P. won 18 at the elections on the 27th April, 1953, and thus obtained an effective majority over any opposition. Furthermore it could in all normal circumstances expect the support of the *ex-officio* Ministers for measures approved by the Executive Council. So long as discipline was maintained the Party had therefore no need to fear any difficulty in getting its own way in the House of Assembly. In fact the record shows that apart from two occasions when Dr. Hanoman Singh showed some independence of view the party vote was solid and the outcome of all debates was a foregone conclusion. Interest, therefore, lies more in what was said and in the attitude shown by the P.P.P. members to constitutional matters than in the results. Especially were we interested in the criticisms of the presence of the *ex-officio* Ministers in the House and in the later attacks on the Speaker.

144. The Party started off extremely awkwardly in the House of Assembly by refusing to follow the normal tradition of moving a gracious though formal reply to The Queen's Message on the occasion of the opening of the new Legislature, and in the event the motion had to be introduced by the leader of the opposition. In the case of the Governor's Address, the Reply by the House of Assembly was prepared by the P.P.P. Ministers and introduced by Dr. Jagan on the 17th June. In the Reply the *ex-officio* Ministers' presence in the House was described as "Anomaly and contrary to the professed democratic principles of Her Majesty's Government", and in the course of the debate a P.P.P. member (Mr. Ramkarran) asked the official section in the House to "tell us what section of the Electorate they represent" and he went on to suggest very offensively that they probably represented the convicts and the lunatics.

145. A careful scrutiny of the record of Assembly debates shows that little or nothing in the way of constructive legislation was passed in the 42 months of P.P.P. government. We have no evidence in the record of these debates which would in any way support the view that the *ex-officio* ministers showed implacable hostility to P.P.P. proposals in the House. The action they took on the more controversial issues which arose is described in later paragraphs of this Report.

146. The Constitution provided for the appointment of the Speaker of the House of Assembly by the Governor acting in his discretion. He appointed Sir Eustace Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C., an elder statesman with long experience of the old Legislative Council, with legal training and high reputation. To begin with the P.P.P. representatives in the House conformed to normal procedure and showed real respect for the authority of the Speaker although they were all, except Dr. Jagan, unfamiliar with Parliamentary procedure. The Party's strong opposition to the Speaker was, however, made clear later, particularly on the 24th September when the Minister of Labour attempted to move the suspension of Standing Rules and Orders so that the Labour Relations Bill could be taken through all its stages that day although it had not been published for the requisite period of seven days. The Speaker held that as the Bill was important and controversial proper time should be allowed the Members, and public opinion outside, to consider its implications. Mr. Burnham challenged his ruling and, when it was maintained, all the P.P.P. Members save one left the Chamber in rowdy protest. There is quite convincing evidence that the party leaders

most improperly imputed the Speaker's action to partiality X at a Public Meeting the same evening when Mr. Chase said "I want to believe that the Speaker did this through certain information given him by the big shots" and Mr. Burnham asserted "The Governor has the power to nominate the Speaker, and Mr. Woolford was put there by the Governor. The Governor is against the Bill, therefore Woolford had to take instructions from him".

147. The proceedings of the House of Assembly were normally attended by large and interested audiences. The public gallery was small, and those who failed to obtain admission to the Chamber filled the verandas and crowded the streets around the Legislative building. When tension was high in the latter days of the Assembly they clapped the P.P.P. Members and booed the *ex-officio* and opposition Members. On the 24th September, when the P.P.P. Members walked out, disorderly and excited mobs swept through the Chamber. Such conduct could not but tend to intimidate the Party's opponents, who seem to have displayed great moral courage in attending the Assembly in such circumstances.

### The Public Service

148. Until 1953 there had been no ministerial system in British Guiana and the administrative functions of government had been carried out under the Governor alone. We do not think that the introduction of a ministerial system into the organisation and the development of ministerial responsibility and initiatives for policy could have been effected even in the most favourable circumstances without some friction and disorganisation.

149. The British conception of the Civil Service as a body of state officials outside politics, carrying out the policy decided by political ministers, but themselves free of all political influences, is obviously an ideal to be arrived at rather than a conclusion which can be automatically achieved. In order to assist the Colonial territories in working towards this ideal, it has become customary to appoint a Public Service Commission in each territory to ensure against political influence in appointments, promotions, dismissals and discipline in the Public Service. In British Guiana the Constitutional Order in Council of the 1st April, 1953, gave the Governor discretionary powers in all matters concerning the Public Service and set up a Public Service Commission to advise him on them.

150. This provision was the subject of sustained criticisms by the elected Ministers who saw in it a formidable brake upon their power and attacked it publicly. Mr. King (Minister of Communications and Works) in *Thunder* (May issue, 1953) advocated "agitation for ultimate democratic control of the Public Service"; Mr. Martin Carter (a P.P.P. Executive Committee member), writing in the June issue of the same periodical, said:

"This Public Service Commission is nothing but the body which controls the State. This Public Service Commission is not controlled by the representatives of the people. . . . Although the P.P.P. has won the majority of the seats at the last General Elections, and, allegedly controls the Government yet staff and state power still remain in the hands of these who have ruled us for centuries,"

and Dr. Jagan in a speech on the 26th July said:

“They appointed a Civil Service Commission because they do not want us to have anything to do with the appointment of civil servants. We would like to have power to appoint our own people, who would be able to do our work.”

151. It is clear to us that the P.P.P. Ministers either intentionally or in ignorance quite failed to appreciate the purpose of the Commission and had they remained longer in power, these threats against the Public Service Commission would have become more insistent. Indeed the Ministers made clear their intention of refusing to vote the necessary financial provision.

152. It may well be that some senior officials were unsympathetic to the policies of the Party and there is no doubt that the Ministers genuinely suspected the loyalty of some officials working in close association with them. In the atmosphere of mutual suspicion which arose in the Executive Council between the *ex-officio* Ministers and the elected Ministers it became impossible for what otherwise would have been treated as ordinary staff difficulties to be adjusted in friendly discussion between the Chief Secretary and the individual Minister concerned. The Chief Secretary and Heads of Departments were suspicious of the interest which P.P.P. Ministers were showing in civil service matters and of the reason why they did not always work through the proper departmental channels. The P.P.P. Ministers were inclined to take action without any departmental consultation, and indeed we had evidence of occasions when they completely ignored the heads of departments or without their knowledge took junior officials into consultation on matters of departmental policy. The Minister of Education, for example, decided, and announced his intention, to abolish the system of dual control of denominational schools without prior consultation or discussion with the Director of Education, and the Minister of Labour gave the Commissioner of Labour only a few hours notice of his intention to introduce the Labour Relations Bill in the Executive Council.

## V. MAIN ISSUES WHICH AROSE

### **Payment of Salaries to Members of the State Council**

153. The Waddington Commission had recommended that members of the State Council should not receive salaries as such but only expenses. As against this the former Governor, in his comments on the Waddington Report, had said that members of the State Council should be remunerated on the same scale as members of the House of Assembly. The Secretary of State for the Colonies (then Mr. James Griffiths) had agreed with the former Governor's view. The previous Legislative Council had accordingly voted a sufficient sum in the 1953 Estimates to cover payment of salaries to members of both Houses, but since no specific authority for the payment had been included in the Constitution Order in Council it was necessary for special legislation to be enacted by the new Legislature. In this way the issue came up for decision. In the Executive Council the Minister without Portfolio urged that salaries should be paid to State

Council members (of which he was one, though as Minister he was not financially affected by the proposal), but the P.P.P. Ministers would not agree to this. Their views were sustained by the Executive Council, and the Minister without Portfolio was alone in dissenting from the proposal not to include provision for the payment of salaries to State Council members in a Bill dealing with the payment of remuneration and subsistence allowances, etc., to members of the legislative bodies.

154. When this Bill came before the House of Assembly the three official Ministers voted with the P.P.P. majority. The State Council never dealt with the Bill as such: it did, however, debate a motion moved by the Minister without Portfolio, who was also President of the Council, recommending that Government should introduce legislation authorising the payment of remuneration to State Councillors on the same scale as Members of the House of Assembly. This was the only way in which the State Council could directly attempt to secure the payment of remuneration to State Councillors since the Bill had been quite properly certified by the Speaker of the House of Assembly as a Money Bill. This meant that although the State Council could delay the operation of the Bill for a period of not more than three months it could not introduce, by way of amendment to the Bill, any provision which would either enlarge or increase the extent or the scope of the charge to the public revenue. The most the State Council could do was to pass the motion proposed by its President and hope that the Government would act on the recommendation contained in it.

155. The President pointed out in moving the motion that although the P.P.P. objected in principle to a State Council and, therefore, disliked the idea of payment to State Councillors, the fact of the matter was that the State Council was part of the constitution. Until the constitution was altered in that respect the members of the State Council would have to fulfil the constitutional duties laid upon them. In that sense, therefore, the issue had to be decided on its more particular merits. It was not sufficient to say that the State Councillors ought to be glad of the privilege of sitting in the State Council and should not require to be paid for doing so. Since it should not be assumed that a person capable of performing the duties of a State Councillor would necessarily be able to afford to do so, it was essential to the proper operation of the State Council X as the State Council itself was essential to the operation of the constitution X that members should be entitled to payment for their services. Whether or not they chose to take the remuneration to which they were entitled was an individual matter.

156. As a result of this debate the motion was carried by five votes to four. The minority included the two representatives appointed by the P.P.P. Ministers and two of the members appointed by the Governor acting in his discretion. We cannot, therefore, see, either in the debate or in the actual vote on this motion, any evidence of political hostility to the P.P.P. The P.P.P. Ministers claimed that the Minister without Portfolio had no right to move the motion in the State Council after the policy had been approved by the Executive Council of which he was a member, but having been elected President of the State Council by his fellow members, the Minister had in fact a dual responsibility. At any rate there was no constitutional obligation on him not to move such a motion.

157. The motion was passed by the State Council on the 10th August. The Bill from the House of Assembly was to have been introduced in the State Council the same day, but the Council decided to defer consideration of it pending a reply to its motion. The reply to the motion was not received by the State Council until the 6th October, the last day on which it sat, and so the Bill itself was never debated.

### **The Visit of Her Majesty The Queen to Jamaica**

158. On the 27th June the Legislature of Jamaica invited the Legislature of British Guiana to send two representatives to Jamaica to participate in the welcome to Her Majesty who was due to visit that territory from the 24th to 28th November. In the Executive Council the P.P.P. Ministers had decided that the invitation could not be accepted, giving as their principal reason that the Government could not afford to spend the amount of money involved in sending representatives to Jamaica for this purpose. As a result of this decision in the Executive Council it was left to the leader of the opposition in the House of Assembly to move that the invitation should be accepted. This motion was defeated by votes of all the P.P.P. members of the Assembly with the exception of Dr. Hanoman Singh. The *ex-officio* Ministers voted for the motion.

159. We can well imagine that the *ex-officio* Ministers, in common with many other people in British Guiana, would think it shocking that the P.P.P. Ministers should publicly parade the general attitude adopted by their Party towards Britain and the British Crown. But we can see in this incident taken by itself nothing more than evidence of the extraordinary tactlessness of the P.P.P. Ministers; they were not even honest in giving as the principal reason for their action that the money could not be spared for a trip to Jamaica.

160. The invitation was brought to the notice of the State Council by its President who moved a motion recording the Council's thanks for the invitation and requesting the British Guiana Government to provide the funds necessary to cover the expenses of the delegates and their wives. Again there was no other action the State Council could take since the Council was not entitled to commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. The motion of the President was carried with little comment and with no opposition even from the P.P.P. representatives. Although the decision of the Government was generally known as a result of the debate in the House of Assembly, no reply was ever sent to the State Council.

### **Undesirable Publications (Prohibition of Importation) (Repeal) Bill**

161. The old Legislative Council had passed a law which enabled the Governor-in-Council, i.e., the Executive Council, to forbid the importation into British Guiana of any literature which the Governor in Council declared to be undesirable. This measure had arisen from a motion in the old Council, moved by Mr. Lionel Luckhoo who had been worried at the extent to which communist literature imported by the P.P.P. was being circulated in British Guiana.\* [\* See Appendix II]

162. The measure obviously was directed against that type of literature, and there was no doubt in anybody's mind that the P.P.P. leaders would do away with this law once they had power to do so. Repeal as such was hardly an urgent and immediate necessity on practical grounds since the P.P.P. majority in the Executive Council could quite simply refuse to operate the measure or could decide that it would operate as they wished. Nevertheless the P.P.P. Ministers decided on immediate and formal repeal of the law, and there was no opposition from the official Ministers when the proposal was brought before the Executive Council. In the repeal Bill that was introduced the P.P.P. Ministers included a clause to the effect that certain acts declared valid by a section in the original law were now declared never to have been validated. The acts in question were those of the Comptroller of Customs in confiscating certain literature which Dr. Jagan had attempted to bring into the colony before the law was passed and which the Comptroller had confiscated on the grounds that Dr. Jagan had not declared the literature to the customs as he ought to have done. Apparently there was some doubt as to whether the confiscation had been legally justified and the old legislature therefore included a section in the original Ordinance validating the Comptroller's action. The object of the particular clause inserted in the repeal Bill by the P.P.P. Ministers was to remove the immunity, or rather to declare that the Comptroller had never had the immunity, which the original measure had sought to provide. The *ex-officio* Ministers did not oppose the Bill. They had no enthusiasm for it and said so, but they were not prepared to oppose it. The Attorney-General did, however, say that the particular clause to which we have referred was constitutionally and legally improper. Mr. Burnham, who is a lawyer, refused to accept this view and it may be that this incident is held by the P.P.P. Ministers to be an example of an attempt by an *ex-officio* Minister to mislead them. They insisted on retaining the clause in the Bill and it was for the reason that this particular clause was objectionable in law that the *ex-officio* Ministers voted for a motion in the Assembly to delete it. They did not vote against the other clauses of the Bill.

163. The Bill came before the State Council on the 10th August. Though on the second reading some members of the Council indicated their dislike of the Bill's intentions they also said that they did not propose to vote against the Bill as a whole. The Archbishop of the West Indies, a nominated Member, expressed his keen support of the Bill's intentions. When the Council resolved itself into Committee a motion was made to amend the Bill by deletion of the clause relating to the action of the Comptroller of Customs, on the ground that it was legally and constitutionally improper. When this amendment was put to the vote it was agreed to without a division and the Bill, as amended, was read a third time and passed. When the Bill was returned to the House of Assembly the P.P.P. majority refused to accept this amendment, despite the fact that it did not defeat their ostensible object of repealing the Ordinance. They preferred to use the State Council's amendment as evidence of conflict between the two chambers.

### **Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) (Amendment) Bill**

164. A situation very similar to that which developed in connection with the Undesirable Publications (Repeal) Bill arose about the Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) (Amendment) Bill. For some years there had been in force a law designed to give security of tenure to rice farmers

and to prevent the landlords of rice farms from increasing rents. Even before the elections it had been recognised that this measure was inadequate and out-of-date and indeed a Committee had been set up by the old Legislature to go into the whole question of security of tenure for rice farmers. Dr. Jagan was a member of this Committee until his appointment as a Minister. Without waiting for the Committee's report and without any consultation with the Rice Producers' Association the P.P.P. Ministers decided to introduce to the legislature a bill to amend the old measure in certain respects. According to the P.P.P. Ministers the need for an immediate amendment to the law was made urgent during August by a prolonged drought; and, so far as we know, there was no opposition in the Executive Council to a proposal to make an immediate amendment to the existing law without waiting for a full-scale review in the light of the Committee's report.

165. The P.P.P. Ministers wanted to include in the amending Bill authority for a District Commissioner to enter upon rice lands and to order the landlord to make improvements, failing which the District Commissioner was himself to see that improvements were made as he thought necessary. The object of this clause was ostensibly to enable District Commissioners to take immediate steps to get landlord's irrigation ditches cleaned so that water could flow freely to the rice fields. The Ministers also proposed to include in the bill a provision that the costs due from the landlord in respect of work done under the directions of the District Commissioner should be recoverable if necessary by a procedure known as "parate execution". This swift and drastic procedure, a remnant in British Guiana of the Roman-Dutch system and unknown to English law, is one whereby on a certificate by a public officer that money is due to the Government the Court issues summary execution against the property of the debtor, which may then be sold to discharge the debt.

166. Though the official Ministers did not oppose the general intention of the P.P.P. Ministers to introduce a bill they did object to the clause giving authority to District Commissioners to decide what work was necessary and, on the failure of the landlord to do the work, to carry it out themselves and finally to the adoption of the procedure known as "parate execution" if the landlord failed to meet the cost. It was for these reasons that they opposed the bill in the Executive Council and that subsequently in the House of Assembly the Attorney-General spoke against the provision for parate execution. The clause to which the official Ministers objected undoubtedly conferred wide and arbitrary powers on the Minister and his officials, and it is clear that drought was not the only or even the principal reason why this particular clause was retained in the measure because by the time the bill came up for consideration in the State Council the drought was at an end. Anyone knowing the P.P.P. Ministers and realising the possible implications of various provisions in this bill was bound to wonder what were the real objectives of the measure. As introduced, and as passed by the P.P.P. majority in the House of Assembly, it could have been used by a Minister unreasonably to dispossess landlords of rice-lands. Even so the *ex-officio* Ministers voted with the Majority Party for the second reading of the Bill as a whole, and when the sub-clauses to which they had objections came up for discussion during the committee stage they abstained from voting. We cannot, therefore, see in the attitude of the official Ministers towards this measure any evidence of political hostility; rather does it seem to us that in endeavouring in the Executive Council to guide the P.P.P. Ministers in these directions

they were doing exactly what they were intended to do, i.e., to try to stop the inexperienced elected Ministers from making serious blunders.

167. The Bill as passed by the House of Assembly was brought before the State Council on the 21st September. The President of the Council moved that it be read a first time and after a short discussion further debate was deferred to the 23rd September in order to enable the Rice Producers' Association to make representations as to the amendments that the Association would wish to be made to the Bill. During the debate on the second reading the Bill was heavily criticised by several members of the State Council, on account of the provisions in the Bill enabling District Commissioners to undertake work on rice lands and to recover the costs by the method ofparate execution. Furthermore it was acknowledged by the P.P.P. representatives in the State Council that by this time the drought which had been given as the main justification for the Bill had passed. On the second reading the Bill was rejected by six votes to two, only the P.P.P. Members voting for the Bill.

### **Trades Disputes (Essential Services) (Repeal) Bill**

168. The official Ministers opposed in the Executive Council the proposal of the P.P.P. Ministers to repeal a law passed by a previous legislature during the war restricting the right of workers engaged in essential services to come out on strike. The P.P.P. Ministers argued that this law was exclusively concerned with the war-time emergency and that it was therefore redundant and offensive in peace-time. The official Ministers would not have disagreed with proposals designed to amend the law and to bring it more into line with the post-war situation, but they thought that its simple repeal would be going too far. Clearly the *ex-officio* Ministers had in mind the need for a measure substantially like that in effect in Great Britain where the workers in specified public services such as gas, water, sanitation and so on, are required to give 10 days' notice before coming out on strike. We have no doubt that the official Ministers were the more inclined to maintain this view by reason of the situation which had developed in the colony during the months of August and September as a consequence of the dispute on the sugar states. But we do not see in that evidence of political hostility to the P.P.P. Rather did the Bill provide evidence of the recklessness of the P.P.P. Ministers. The attitude of the official Ministers is to us evidence only of their determination to do their duty as responsible officials and members of the Executive Council even in the face of the tremendous pressure that was being exerted upon them in the Executive Council and in public at that time. The Bill was introduced and read a first time in the House of Assembly but no further action was taken on it before the suspension of the Constitution.

### **Labour Relations Bill**

169. In July, 1952, Dr. Jagan tabled a motion in the old Legislative Council calling attention to a "multiplicity of trade unions and in recent years an increase in the incidence of jurisdictional disputes among trade unions" in British Guiana and inviting the Legislative Council to



recommend the then Government to enact legislation similar to that in force in the U.S.A. and in Canada for the avoidance of such disputes. The motion was not carried and the P.P.P. election manifesto spoke of the intention of the Party, if elected, to adopt legislation based upon the American Labor Relations Act to require employers to recognise and to bargain with trade unions "which have the confidence of the majority of workers in an industry or service". The P.P.P. Ministers point to these facts as proof of a long standing intention and as evidence that their decision to introduce a Labour Relations Bill, and to have the Bill carried through all its stages in the House of Assembly in one day, was not made in retaliation on the sugar producers for the failure of the strike on the sugar estates, or in a determination to exploit the opportunity offered to them by the excitement and the antagonisms created by the strike and its collapse to make an immediate and serious issue of their constitutional conflict with the Governor, the *ex-officio* Ministers and the State Council.

170. It is, therefore, necessary for us to describe the nature of the inter-union disputes which lay behind the strike on the sugar estates, and which are put forward by the P.P.P. as the main reason for the Labour Relations Bill, before we deal with the contents of the Bill and with the manner in which it was hurried through the Executive Council and introduced to the House of Assembly on the 24th September.

171. There are many very small unions in British Guiana most of which could, with advantage to their members, allow themselves to become absorbed by a larger existing union or amalgamated with each other to form one reasonably strong union in place of several weak ones. It is also true that a large percentage of the workpeople of British Guiana is employed seasonally or casually as unskilled labourers and that the interest of these workpeople in trade unions tends to alternate between enthusiasm and apathy. Having little or no opportunity of forming a constant attachment to one craft or industry they readily in their moments of enthusiasm transfer their allegiance from one general union to another. But there is not a "multiplicity" of unions in British Guiana in the sense of a considerable number of instances of unions regularly and actively competing with each other for members. Nor, despite the inability of all but a very few of the unions to show by their figures of membership that they "have the confidence of a majority of the workers in an industry or service", is there any general reluctance on the part of employers in British Guiana to recognise and to negotiate with trade unions. The inter-union disputes that have most seriously troubled British Guiana in recent years are not strictly demarcational or jurisdictional disputes at all. They are nothing more than quite deliberate and regular attempts by the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union to undermine the Man Power Citizens' Association. Nor has the demand of the G.I.W.U. for recognition on the sugar estates ever been a demand that the Sugar Producers' Association should begin to recognise trade unions but simply that it should transfer recognition from the older established M.P.C.A. to the newer G.I.W.U.

172. The G.I.W.U. was formed during a period of industrial unrest on the sugar estates early in 1948 and was registered as a trade union in April of that year. It was founded by Dr. Lachhmansingh, a medical practitioner, and a Mr. Amos Rangela, a merchant (then President and Vice-President respectively of the British Guiana East Indian Association) with the connivance and the support of other officials and members of that Association and of Dr. Jagan, a dentist, and of Mrs. Jagan. None of these people worked in the sugar industry and their interest

in the industrial organisation of sugar workers could only have been purely personal or racial or political, or a mixture of the three.

173. At the time of the registration of the G.I.W.U. there were already five Unions in existence X the M.P.C.A., the British Guiana Workers' League and three specialist Unions X which between them catered for all the workers on the sugar estates. The M.P.C.A. and the Workers' League were both recognised by the Sugar Producers' Association and had entered into agreements with that Association for the avoidance and the settlement of disputes. Indeed, the Man Power Citizens' Association had signed its first agreement with the Sugar Producers' Association as early as February, 1939. Though none of the three specialist Unions was at that time recognised by the S.P.A. as such each of them was recognised by one or more of the larger separate sugar companies. The formation of the G.I.W.U. was therefore an attempt to set up what in Great Britain would be called a "breakaway" union and in the United States of America a "dual" organisation. Its activities were and still are frankly disruptive and directed principally against the M.P.C.A.

174. The excuse of the supporters of the G.I.W.U. for its activities is that the M.P.C.A. is weak and inefficient and entirely subservient to the employers. These are charges easily made against any trade union anywhere which carries the day-to-day responsibility for trade union policy and administration. The M.P.C.A. has always found it difficult to rebut the charges of weakness and of inefficiency. Its tasks of organising and of dealing speedily with the complaints of sugar workers employed on estates spread thinly along a long and broken coast line are undoubtedly far beyond its meagre resources. It has, we believe, on occasion accepted money from sugar companies for some special purpose. But whatever its faults the M.P.C.A. will not be made stronger or more efficient or less short of money by the constant and vicious attacks made upon it. Moreover, the M.P.C.A. is subject by its rules to the control of its members. Its officers are elected at an annual Congress by delegates appointed by the members of the Union except that the General Secretary is elected once and thereafter holds that once without further election at the will of an elected executive committee. Anyone who is sincere in his desire to improve the organisation of sugar workers can do much more to that end by helping the M.P.C.A. from within than by attacking it from outside.

175. In every year since its foundation in 1948 the G.I.W.U. has called for a strike on the sugar estates in support of its demand for recognition. The Sugar Producers' Association have just as consistently refused recognition to the G.I.W.U. on the ground that they already recognise and have agreements with the M.P.C.A. in respect of the workpeople whom the G.I.W.U. claims to represent.

176. On the 21st July, 1953, after the P.P.P. Ministers had taken up their Portfolios, the Minister of Labour wrote to the Sugar Producers' Association asking if the Association would reconsider its attitude towards the recognition of the G.I.W.U. The Minister said he was concerned at the number of people and deputations coming from the sugar estates to Ministers with complaints of their wages or working conditions. The Minister thought that if some degree of recognition could be given to the G.I.W.U. the Ministers and members of the House of Assembly would then be able to direct many of the complainants to the Unions in the sugar industry. The Minister

referred in this letter to the intention of the Party to pass legislation to permit “workers to elect by poll the unions to bargain on their behalf” and said that “there should hardly be need for this to apply to the sugar industry if the situation is approached realistically”.

177. The letter from the Minister merely repeated substantially what the Minister had said to the Managing Director of the Sugar Producers’ Association when he had called to see the Minister at his request on the 13th June. On the 13th August Dr. Lachhmansingh, the P.P.P. Minister of Health and President of the G.I.W.U., had an informal talk with the Managing Director of the Sugar Producers’ Association about the possibility of an agreed settlement of the G.I.W.U.’s claim for recognition in the course of which Dr. Lachhmansingh said that though some of his Party colleagues preferred to obtain recognition of the G.I.W.U. by fighting for it he, personally, preferred to obtain recognition by negotiation.

178. The Sugar Producers’ Association wrote to the Minister of Labour on the 20th August on the Minister’s return from Barbados in reply to his letter of the 21st July. The Association said that they found it “impossible to recognise both the G.I.W.U. and the M.P.C.A. as representing the general workers in the sugar industry” but that it might be possible “for an arrangement to be made under which, in the first instance, the G.I.W.U. would represent the field workers and the M.P.C.A. the factory workers”. The Sugar Producers’ Association had already learned from Dr. Lachhmansingh in the course of the informal discussion on the 13th August mentioned above, that this proposal would probably not be acceptable to those in control of the G.I.W.U. As an alternative therefore the Association offered to consider recognising the G.I.W.U. in addition to the M.P.C.A, on condition that the two Unions would agree to work jointly with each other with the ultimate object of amalgamating the two bodies; that the G.I.W.U. would accept the existing agreements between the Association and the M.P.C.A. for the avoidance and settlement of disputes on wages and working conditions of employment; and would undertake to enter into written agreements on its own account with the Association covering those matters. The Ministry acknowledged this letter on the 28th August.

179. There is no doubt that the Minister sent a copy of the Association’s letter to the G.I.W.U. and that he brought its contents to the notice of his Ministerial colleagues. On the 30th August there was a meeting of the Executive Committee and delegates of the G.I.W.U. This meeting was attended by Mr. Sydney King, the P.P.P. Minister for Communications and Works, who is by profession a teacher and who was not a member or an official of the G.I.W.U. or in any way directly concerned with the organisation of sugar workers. We were told that as a result of King's intervention at this meeting the Union decided to call for a strike on the sugar estates to begin on the following day. Not until the strike had been in existence for five days, i.e., until the 5th September, did the Union make any public announcement of the reasons for the strike. On that day the Union wrote to the Sugar Producers’ Association setting out a list of demands for improvements in the wages and working conditions of various categories of sugar workers. The letter made no mention of recognition and indeed the Union would obviously have found it difficult to justify a strike in support of recognition since discussions on the question of recognition had already been initiated by the Minister of Labour and might very well have lead to a settlement of that particular issue.

180. On the evidence, including the evidence we had of Mr. King's intervention in the G.I.W.U. meeting on the 30th August, we find it impossible to resist the conclusion that the hot-heads in the P.P.P., knowing of the discussions that had taken place and fearing that they might lead to an agreed settlement, became anxious to precipitate an immediate industrial conflict which they intended to exploit for their own political purposes.

181. We cannot believe that Mr. Ashton Chase and Dr. Lachhmansingh, for example, were fully in sympathy with this intention. However, once the strike was called it secured the full support of the P.P.P. No leader of the P.P.P. publicly condemned the strike or advocated moderation in its prosecution. Several P.P.P. Ministers (notably Mr. King) who, as members of the Executive Council, were responsible for peace and order and the economic development of the country, together with many P.P.P. Members of the House of Assembly, toured the sugar estates calling upon workpeople to support the strike and using language which was bound to encourage the strikers to acts of intimidation and of violence against those who refused to observe the strike call. The strike spread gradually throughout the estates and by the 8th September the industry was at a standstill. Altogether the strike lasted for 23 days and in that period strenuous efforts were made by the leaders of the P.P.P., including several Ministers, to get the strike extended into a general strike covering the whole country. The President of the Transport Workers' Union appeared before us and told us of the extraordinary pressure exerted upon him and other officers of his Union to call their members out in sympathy with the strikes on the sugar estates. By the 23rd September, however, it was clear that the strike had failed and it was called off on that day. On the following day, the 24th September, the Labour Relations Bill was introduced to the House of Assembly.

182. A draft of the Bill had been brought by the Minister of Labour to the notice of the Executive Council for the first time on the 15th September. At 4.30 p.m. on the previous day a copy had been handed to the Commissioner for Labour for his comments. Despite the shortness of the time allowed to him the Commissioner set out his comments and suggestions on various clauses of the Bill which seemed to him to be at variance with certain I.L.O. Conventions and gave them to the Minister in time for the meeting of the Executive Council. In the discussion of the Bill in the Executive Council the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers raised objection to the Bill in principle and made suggestions for the amendment of several of its clauses. The Governor also suggested that the Minister should ask the trade unions and the employers' associations for their views on his proposals before the Bill was published. This the Minister declined to do on the ground that these organisations would have *sufficient opportunity to express their views after the Bill was published.*

183. At a later meeting of the Executive Council there was some dispute as to what decision the Council had come to at the end of this first discussion of the Bill. The Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers said that it had been agreed by the Executive Council that the Bill should be redrafted by the Minister of Labour and the Attorney-General in the light of the observations made on the first draft and that a revised draft would be brought before the Council for further consideration before publication. The Minister of Labour was quite certain (knowing no doubt that the matter had already been decided by the Council of People's Ministers before the Executive Council met) that the Executive Council had agreed that the Bill redrafted by him with

the assistance of the Attorney-General could be published after a revised copy had been sent to the Governor.

184. Whatever had been the decision of the Executive Council the Bill was published in the official Gazette on the 19th September without any further discussion in the Executive Council. Five days later Mr. Ashton Chase, who had refused to ask the trade unions and the employers' organisations for their views on the Bill and had assured the Executive Council that these organisations would have sufficient opportunity to express their views on the Bill after it was published, introduced the Bill to the House of Assembly and asked leave of the Speaker to move a motion for the suspension of the Rules and Standing Orders to enable the Bill to be taken through all its stages in the Assembly on that same day. The Speaker quite properly refused and after several days debate the Bill was finally passed by the House of Assembly on the 8th October. As the Legislature was prorogued the next day the Bill never reached the State Council.

185. Though supposed to have been based upon the U.S. Labor Relations Act the Bill as passed by the House of Assembly bears hardly any resemblance to that Act. Trade unions in Great Britain would find the Bill objectionable in principle and the trade unions of any democratic country would find most of its details totally unacceptable. For example, the Bill specifically empowers the Minister to decide in his unfettered discretion who shall be classed as a worker for the purpose of taking part in a ballot in any "industry, trade, or undertaking". The Bill does not specifically define an "industry, trade or undertaking" but authorises the Minister to make regulations "prescribing the manner of holding any ballot . . . and generally for the due carrying out" of the Bill's provisions. In other words the Act would have enabled the Minister to decide by himself whether any particular ballot should cover a whole industry or service or merely a section of it or simply a single undertaking or only a part of an undertaking, and to decide also whether all the separate categories of workers in any particular industry, etc., should be lumped together for the purpose of the ballot or should vote strictly according to some division related to craft or status as determined by him. Any trade unionist will see at once that with such powers a Minister would be able, if he was so minded, to ensure in the great majority of cases that the result of a ballot was a foregone conclusion. Again, the Bill provides for the appointment *by the Minister* of *ad hoc* committees to consider applications from trade unions or employers for an enquiry to be held under its provisions. But, in addition to the power of the Minister to select the members of the committees, the Bill also empowers him to dispense with a committee in any particular case and without a formal enquiry to direct that a ballot shall be taken. Yet again, though the Bill provides that generally no ballot shall be held in respect of "the workers in any trade, industry or undertaking" more often than once in any period of two years, it also empowers the Minister to direct that a ballot shall be held "notwithstanding that the period of twenty-four months has not elapsed". This power together with a further provision that when a ballot has been held for one category of workers in a trade, etc., the twenty-four months limitation shall not be applied so as to prevent a second ballot "in respect of any other category of workers" in that trade, etc., from being held at any time, means that the Minister could, if he chose, quite lawfully subject any employer or trade union to a constant succession of ballots. The Bill's omissions are as startling as its contents.

186. We may have thought it possible to suspend judgment about the motive behind the other measures and actions of the P.P.P. Government. But we are compelled to take this Bill and the manner of its passing as proof that by the 24th September the extremists in the P.P.P. had managed completely to outmanoeuvre their more reasonable colleagues and had taken complete control of the Party. We find it impossible to believe that for all their youth, their inexperience of Government and their considerable conceit in their own infallibility, the P.P.P. Ministers could ever have thought of this Bill as a normal piece of legislation capable of being administered in a reasonable and practical manner. Quite clearly the intention behind the Bill was to face the Governor, the *ex-officio* Ministers and the State Council with the choice of capitulating to the P.P.P., by accepting a measure which was unmistakably offensive and undemocratic and which could and would undoubtedly have been used by the Party to intimidate trade unions and employers, or of maintaining their opposition to the measure in the certain knowledge that the P.P.P. would treat any such opposition as constituting a major constitutional crisis and use it as a means of fomenting excitement among the population.

## VI. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS

187. There can be no doubt whatever that before the end of September the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers had become subject to terrific pressure. Indeed the whole territory was in a state of turmoil. Relations in the Executive Council had become entirely impossible, not only on account of the disagreements as to government policy, but because of the attitude which the P.P.P. Ministers were adopting in public towards the official Ministers and towards anybody who seemed in any way to be opposed to them.

188. A by-election was pending as a result of a successful appeal to the courts that the election in the Georgetown North constituency had been invalid, but no writ had been issued. Ministers and other members of the P.P.P. were holding nightly meetings in Georgetown in connection with the possible by-election. Meetings were also held regularly in connection with the dispute on the sugar estates.

189. In the course of these meetings the P.P.P. Ministers frequently made most insolent and insulting references to the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers. For example, on the 30th August, Mr. Burnham, speaking at a meeting at Kitty, referred to the Attorney-General and the Chief Secretary as follows: X

“There is another fellow the Attorney-General, he is the one who is to legislate the laws and he can do as he likes. We will also have to get rid of him too. The next person is the Chief Secretary. . . . Yes, I am referring to Gutch. I am sorry that one of his security police is not here to report to him in the morning what I have to say now.”

On the same day at a meeting at Bourda Green, Mr. Burnham described the Governor as “a most charming person . . . who had too much power and was the servant of the British Imperialists” and on the 24th September at another meeting said:

“As for Gutch, his post can be filled from here. Holder (Attorney-General), that Barbadian boy . . . . we will pack him up and chase him back to Barbados. . . . As for Fraser (Financial Secretary), poor boy, we will also get rid of him. Who is Savage to be vested with all this power? Why can't our boys be given these powers? Poor boy, Savage, we will soon make him pack his bundle and take the boat”.

190. Mr. Burnham was not the only one who referred in this way to the people with whom he was supposed to work in reasonable co-operation in the Executive Council. Obviously the position in the Executive Council was fast becoming, if it had not become already, intolerable to both sides. The P.P.P. Ministers were convinced, or at least they acted as though they were convinced, that nothing could be done with the Governor or with the *ex-officio* Ministers. As Mr. Chase writes:

“It is because of constitutional differences with the Governor the Party launched a Patriotic Appeal in September for Amendments to the Waddington Constitution to bring us to the level of responsible Government or self-government in internal affairs”.

This Appeal in effect proposed the abolition of all constitutional checks. By this time too the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers had come to the conclusion that they could not work effectively with the P.P.P. Ministers. If for no other reason than that the Executive Council did not, in fact, come anywhere near fulfilling its constitutional duties, something had to be done to resolve the impossible situation.

191. There were signs of growing nervousness in the Colony in the run of withdrawals from the Post Office Savings Bank which developed during August and September. This may have begun in the belief that the Government intended to use the money deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank to help in financing the Development programme; but the run on the Bank could hardly have gathered the momentum it did if the rumour had not been accompanied by a lack of confidence in the Government. Between the 19th August and the 30th September withdrawals exceeded deposits by about 1,700,000 dollars and in order to meet the demands upon it the Bank had to borrow.

192. Dr. Jagan made two attempts to restore confidence by public statements, one on 20th August and the other on 10th September. Neither was effective; the ambiguity of the former X “until we have developed something as a matter of policy any such rumour is incorrect” X did more harm than good, and withdrawals did not cease until after the suspension of the constitution.

193. The actions of the Ministers in the country were also giving most responsible people cause for worry and apprehension as to what might happen at any time. During the strikes on the sugar estates Ministers toured the countryside calling upon people to support the strike X telling them, in fact, that it was a Government strike which they must support if they wanted to show their continued support for the party for which they had voted during the election. In the course of the sugar strike violence shown towards those who were reluctant to strike was carried to the length of killing or maiming their cattle and flooding or burning their rice X and not in a few isolated instances only, for the rice lost was estimated at 4,000 bags of padi, valued at \$28,000 (5,833 pounds Sterling). There was also extensive burning of sugar cane.

194. On the 21st September when the strike had been going on for some weeks the Archbishop of the West Indies secured the consent of the State Council to the suspension of the relevant Standing Rules and Orders to enable him to move a motion condemning the activities of Ministers of the Crown in promoting and sustaining the strike and requesting the Governor to ask the Secretary of State “after due enquiry to take such action as he may deem fit to ensure confidence in the Government and the proper and efficient working of the constitution”.

195. The motion was thus in effect an expression of no confidence in the P.P.P. Government. But it had its roots not in political prejudice against the P.P.P. or in a desire to thwart its legitimate aspirations but in the belief that recent actions of Ministers, especially in the sugar strike, had brought danger to the economy of the country and had gravely affected the peaceful life of its people. The Archbishop was careful to point out that the motion did not ask the Secretary of State to interfere “with the constitution” but, on the contrary, “to secure that the constitution which we now have shall be preserved and made workable.”

196. The P.P.P. Ministers certainly did nothing to attempt to reduce the tension which mounted to a peak in the Colony during the debates on the Labour Relations Rill. As we have said, they had made up their minds to exploit to the full any opposition they met in any quarter to the Labour Relations Rill, They had even gone so far as to ask the Governor beforehand to promise that the Bill should go to a joint session of the House of Assembly and State Council if the latter should refuse to pass the Bill in the ordinary way. The P.P.P. made it clear that the intention of this request was not simply to get the Bill passed: if the Governor had refused “as he no doubt would, then we would have exposed him to the people.”

197. The Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers were extremely alarmed not only by the mounting excitement and the evidence of violence, but also by the possibility that the police would not be able to deal with any serious outbreaks of disorder and, indeed, in some cases might not prove reliable. The P.P.P. Ministers had shown great concern to get control of the police from the Chief Secretary into their own hands. They had proposed the establishment of an auxiliary police force which would not be within the portfolio of the Chief Secretary or under the control of the Commissioner of Police, but which would be organised by and under the orders of the local authorities, whom they were certain they would be able to control once they had passed their proposed new Local Government Ordinance providing for universal adult suffrage in local elections. Many individual policemen were in a position of peculiar difficulty in that they and their families lived among the ordinary population and were, therefore, exposed to insults and



pressure from P.P.P. supporters. If the P.P.P. Ministers were as determined as they seemed to be to put no limits to the extent to which they would go to force the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers to become entirely subservient to them, then the position with regard to the police was bound to cause the Governor a great deal of anxiety.

198. Our evidence revealed conflicting views about the seriousness of the general situation in the colony during the latter part of September and the early days of October. Supporters of the P.P.P. who appeared before us insisted that the territory was perfectly calm and that the only excitement was the purely verbal excitement of the election meetings. Even these witnesses, however, did not deny that it was quite impossible for any opponents of the P.P.P. to hold meetings and that anyone with the temerity to heckle a P.P.P. speaker was extremely roughly handled. We were given direct evidence of several instances of stone throwing and of steps taken by shopkeepers to protect their property. Moreover it is impossible to discount the evidence of witnesses who told us of ugly incidents in which they themselves had been concerned with P.P.P. supporters and of remarks made to them or in their hearing about what would soon happen to the “whites”; all this goes to show that the general situation was deteriorating very rapidly and that it might at any time have got completely out of hand.

199. We have no doubt that the insolence shown by P.P.P. Ministers towards the Governor and the *ex-officio* Ministers had a bad effect upon the general position in the colony. Whatever the real intentions of the P.P.P. leaders, if they did not deliberately incite the people to violence they were certainly not willing to go out of their way to discourage violence if it should develop more or less spontaneously. In our view it had become necessary to resolve the impossible position that had developed in the Executive Council, to put an end to the general anxiety and uncertainty in the Colony and in one way or another to remove the distinct danger of real trouble.\* The question as to whether this could have been done by measures short of suspension of the Constitution is one that was fully debated in the British House of Commons. Insofar as the answer to the question involves consideration of the various powers open to the Governor under the Constitution Order in Council, we do not think that we can add much to the Commons' debate. What we can say is that the fear of violence was real enough, that the Executive Council had come nowhere near to fulfilling its constitutional role and that if there was no certain way of resolving the situation short of suspension of the Constitution, then there was no option but to suspend the Constitution. [\* *We have dealt with the arson plot in a separate note at Appendix III.*]

## CHAPTER 5. THE FUTURE

200. We have described the economic, social and political factors operating in British Guiana, examined the main features of the Waddington Constitution and given an account of the first

elections held under it. We have set out as fully and impartially as we can all that we learned during our enquiries of the events which led to the suspension of that constitution. As charged by our terms of reference we now come “to consider and recommend what changes are required in it.” This we do with no illusions as to the magnitude of the difficulties, considerable in any case and made greater by the setback of 1953, of devising steps whereby British Guiana's progress towards self government can be assured.

201. We begin by considering some implications of Her Majesty's Government's colonial policy and the circumstances in which it must operate in British Guiana. That policy is to advance the peoples in the Colonial Territories to the goal of democratic self government as speedily as their political development and economic viability will allow. It is a policy involving an orderly advance from the completely authoritarian Crown Colony type of constitution; and the interim stages, combining varied elements of authoritarian rule and democratic government, are not logically defensible except as transitional measures. Step by step power is transferred, but until a territory reaches full self government ultimate responsibility for its affairs must remain with Her Majesty's Government. To quote the words used by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in his speech in the debate on British Guiana in the House of Commons on the 22nd October, 1953: X

“So long as Her Majesty's Government have a responsibility to this House for the affairs of Colonial Territories, that is to say, before those territories gain complete independence . . . there are no means by which they can lay aside their responsibilities for peace and order. Self-Government up to that point is, to some extent, a delegation by Her Majesty's Government of their responsibilities, but delegation does not enable them to escape or to avoid the ultimate responsibility. Having given the rider the reins, we are not absolved from responsibility for the horse.”

In the same debate, Mr. Attlee said:

**“It is the essence of a limited Constitution that there should be checks,”**

and in the further debate on the 7th December Mr. Chuter Ede opening for the Labour Opposition endorsed the view expressed by the Secretary of State. It is thus agreed on both sides of the House of Commons that at every stage of constitutional development in the Colonial Territories short of the ultimate grant of full self-government some powers must be reserved to Her Majesty's Government and some restrictions placed upon the elected representatives of the people. If the leaders of a Colonial territory are not prepared to accept in principle some such limitations the whole basis for progress along the lines of this policy is lacking,

202. As a territory progresses constitutionally the powers reserved to Her Majesty's Government are gradually reduced, and it is, therefore, necessary that the more advanced constitutions should incorporate safeguards of a different kind X the checks and balances which are an integral feature of democratic government. Not less important is the need for a healthy political environment so that democratic forms may not sooner or later be perverted to totalitarian ends.

Such an environment presupposes more than the sound growth of political parties; strong independent trade unions and other voluntary associations and an informed articulate public opinion all have a vital role to play in defending free institutions.

203. It is our considered opinion that these conditions for sound constitutional advance do not exist in British Guiana today. In our view the circumstances which favoured the rapid growth of the People's Progressive Party and opened the way to one party rule are at the root of the problem. There is not in British Guiana that diversity in the electorate which in Great Britain inevitably provides for the existence of at least two parties of differing outlook with distinctive programmes appealing to different sections of the community and each with a reasonable prospect of power. Nor is there any general understanding that democratic values require that a government elected by the majority of the people should nevertheless consult the interests of all and respect the rights of minorities. As we have tried to show in our opening chapter the great majority of the ordinary people in British Guiana have for the moment a common outlook in that they are dissatisfied with their conditions and are anxious for swift and sweeping improvements which they believe can only be achieved when they have an increasing say in the management of their affairs. Only a very small minority have any understanding of the economic realities of their country or of the difficulties which must be overcome before there can be any substantial betterment of the general standard of living. There is, therefore, no basis for the emergence of two or more parties, each appealing primarily to a different section of the community and yet all bound to some extent to adapt their programmes so as to win over those not firmly committed to a particular party. In these circumstances the alternatives seem to be either that rival parties of comparable strength will compete for the homogeneous popular vote by simply vying with each other in the design of programmes which will promise the voter what he wants rather than attempt serious treatment of the country's problems; or, as events have shown, that a single party will command such support among the immature and indiscriminating electorate that having no immediate and effective rivals for office it may safely ignore the rights of minorities and, by abuse of its powers, so consolidate its position that the risk of eventual defeat by the democratic process is eliminated.

204. Such was the position of the People's Progressive Party after the election in 1953, and there is no doubt that its leaders were well aware of their hold on the electorate. The implications of communist influence in the present leadership of the Party are not yet fully understood by the ordinary people in British Guiana, and although some of the more discerning may have withdrawn their support it is the general belief that the P.P.P. could retain all the characteristics which make it incapable of intelligent government and yet still rely on securing a majority if elections were held in the near future on a similar franchise. We share this view and believe too that the internal stresses which were developing in the F.P.P. during its period of office have now temporarily disappeared and may not recur so long as the more detailed and difficult issues of policy can be avoided and the leaders can remain united on simple general issues such as opposition to the Interim Government.

205. There is not the slightest sign that the People's Progressive Party has been chastened by the events of last year and is now more likely to accept the limitations of the Waddington or any similar constitution. It would indeed be surprising if this were so since we believe that the

constitutional difficulties were due not to impetuosity or ignorance, such as might be expected in a party new to office, but to a deliberate refusal to believe in the possibility of achieving self government by peaceful means and to a consequent determination to invite rather than to avoid a crisis if that were necessary to obtain its objective.

206. It is, therefore, our conclusion that Her Majesty's Government's Colonial policy failed in British Guiana not because of any defects in the Waddington Constitution but because the party which received the support of the majority of the electorate was unwilling to accept and work anything short of full self government. As Mr. Attlee said in the House of Commons in the debate on the 22nd October, 1953: X

“There are really plenty of powers in this Constitution in the ordinary course of events, provided there is a fairly reasonable Government. I do not think that the Government they had would work anything because, as I say, I think they were under Communist influence.”

This being so, we now consider what courses of action are possible.

207. One solution, of course, would be to accept the demands of the People's Progressive Party, and without further delay to hand over to the people of British Guiana full responsibility for their affairs. We have indeed given careful consideration to this possibility, only to dismiss it. If the territory were rich in resources, had no need of financial assistance and outside capital for social and economic development, and could, even discounting the communist influence in the leadership of the dominant party, be expected to weather a period of government by young and inexperienced politicians, it might be argued that Her Majesty's Government could forthwith divest themselves of their responsibilities. But apart from the fact that there is no reason to believe that the P.P.P. would not again bend all its efforts to eliminate opposition and to establish one party rule, we cannot recommend that Her Majesty's Government should thus abdicate their responsibilities. We believe that Her Majesty's Government still have a moral responsibility to the politically immature peoples of British Guiana, and that it would be wrong to leave them to face alone without economic and political guidance the manifold difficulties which lie before them.

208. We, therefore, turn to consider what the outcome would be of an immediate attempt to restore a measure of power to elected representatives, by which we mean a representative legislature and the retention in some form of the ministerial system. Such a constitution can obviously work satisfactorily only if it is acceptable to the greater number of the people.

209. It would be possible to restore the Waddington Constitution with such modifications that the elected Ministers were not in a majority in the Executive Council or that by electoral devices or other means the dominance of the elective chamber was curtailed. Alternatively, the Waddington Constitution could be restored unaltered. We know, however, from last year's experience of the P.P.P.'s attitude and from its avowed intention, as shown by the “Patriotic Appeal”, of getting rid of all checks upon its power, that both the full Waddington Constitution

and certainly a modified one would be entirely unacceptable to the present leaders of the Party. The opportunities for disruptive action by the P.P.P. would be the same in both cases.

210. The first possibility is that the P.P.P. leaders would decide to call for a boycott of the elections, in the hope that the new legislature would obviously be unable to claim to be a sufficiently representative body. We doubt if they could hope to achieve this object. Though they undoubtedly still have a strong appeal to the electorate we can be fairly certain that the strength of such an appeal would not be sufficient to make them confident of their ability to keep more than a minority of qualified electors from the polls.

211. It is, therefore, much more likely that the Party would contest the elections, with considerable confidence in its ability to secure a majority of the elected seats. In that case the following courses of action would then be open to the Party:

- (i) its elected members could refuse to take their seats in the legislature; this would reduce elections to a farce, meaningless except as a demonstration of the electoral support for the People's Progressive Party;
- (ii) they could take their seats but refuse to elect Ministers thus leaving the minority groups to hold the ministries. It would then be impossible for the Executive Council to get their legislation passed by the House of Assembly, since the majority would be in permanent opposition. The Governor would have to bring all legislation into force by using his reserved power and the proper working of the constitution would be impossible;
- (iii) they could elect People's Progressive Party members to be Ministers with the object, as before, of provoking constitutional crisis.

212. We have subjected this analysis to most careful examination but we can find no escape from the logical conclusion that so long as the present leadership and policies of the People's Progressive Party continue there is no way in which any real measure of self government can be restored in British Guiana without the certainty that the country will again be subjected to constitutional crisis.

213. Some of our witnesses, having perhaps reached the same conclusion, put forward suggestions whereby persons known to be bent on subverting the constitution might be prevented from doing so. Some proposed that candidates for election to the Legislature should be required to make a statutory declaration that they are not Communists, that they have no affiliations with any Communist organisations and that if elected they will endeavour to work within the spirit of the Constitution by law established; it being provided that any breach of this declaration should render a candidate liable to forfeit his seat. Another, more direct, suggestion was that certain named leaders of the People's Progressive Party should be debarred for a period of, say, ten years from standing for election.\* But whatever the merits of such proposals we are doubtful whether it is within our terms of reference even to consider such quasi-constitutional measures for combating Communism; we, therefore, do no more than express the view that such proposals are

difficult of application and would in themselves be insufficient to prevent the People's Progressive Party leaders from subverting a democratic constitution. [*\* The P.P.P. itself was not opposed to extensive proscription. In the Party's Patriotic Appeal for Amendments to the Constitution (paragraph 190 above) it was demanded that persons should be debarred by law from "electing or being elected to any assembly or holding any office of emolument under the Crown or of sitting on any Board of Directors or as manager of any company, or editor of any newspaper" on grounds so widely and speciously drawn as to permit the inclusion without difficulty of opponents of the Party's views on foreign affairs or racial matters.*]

214. We have, therefore, come reluctantly, but quite firmly, to the conclusion that in present circumstances in British Guiana we must recommend a period of marking time in the advance towards self government. We would hope that in this period plans for social and economic development would be energetically pursued and that the gradual improvement of social and economic conditions would help to bring about a change in the political outlook of the electorate. We would also hope that the contrast presented by the rapid progress towards self government elsewhere would lead the people of British Guiana to realise that, notwithstanding the exceptional difficulties of their country, the extremist leaders of the P.P.P. and the policies for which they stand are the sole barriers to constitutional progress.

215. We cannot estimate how long it will be before this progress can be resumed. When the time does come it may be necessary to reconsider certain features in the suspended constitution. We have had some doubts whether, being unable to recommend changes in the constitution to meet the present situation, we are entitled to put forward recommendations which might pre-judge future reconsideration in a happier political climate. Nevertheless we think we ought to draw attention to a number of points in the constitution where we believe improvements could be made.

216. The Waddington commission stated in their Report that they were conscious throughout of the need to recommend for British Guiana the greatest, not the least, degree of self-government that could be sustained. There can be few outside the ranks of the P.P.P. who would not admit that their proposals represented a very big step forward. Undoubtedly they involved the risk that difficulties would regularly arise in the Executive Council even if the party in office had not been set on creating difficulties as a means of destroying the Constitution. As we have explained in Chapter 2, the central feature of the Waddington Commission's design was the establishment of a ministerial system conferring a wide measure of responsibility upon ministers chosen by a legislature elected under universal adult suffrage X but it is clear from paragraph 97 of their Report that the Commission did not expect that all elected ministers would be drawn from one party and thus able to assume a decisive role in the Executive Council. Rather was it envisaged that, initially, elected ministers would depend individually upon supporting groups in the legislature, so that a measure of compromise would be necessary. In that case the official members would be able to play an effective part in guiding and restraining inexperienced ministers during the early stages of the new system. The practice of co-operation among ministers was expected to facilitate the eventual development of stable and effective party organisations with distinctive programmes, based upon differing social and economic concepts,

at which stage the practice of collective ministerial responsibility would naturally and properly begin.

217. In the event, the period following the Commission's Report saw the rapid development of a well organised and disciplined party and its assumption, as a result of the elections of April, 1953, of a dominant role under the constitution. All issues could be decided in Executive Council as the P.P.P. wished and unless the Governor's reserved powers were used there was no way in which vicious or ill-advised measures could be stopped. That events went the way they did was due to the policy deliberately adopted by the leaders of the P.P.P.

218. Nevertheless, if the views which we have expressed in paragraph 203 above are correct, the reintroduction of a ministerial system based upon universal adult suffrage with elected ministers in the majority in Executive Council is bound to involve the risk that the impetuosity and inexperience of elected ministers will necessitate frequent recourse to reserved powers. We, therefore, believe that for an initial period there should be some means short of using the Governor's reserved powers, of ensuring that the well-being of the Colony as a whole is not jeopardised and that the basic principles of democratic government are observed. In our opinion such a safeguard would best be secured in the composition of the Executive Council, and we believe that a balance of elected and official and nominated elements with the Governor as President holding a casting vote only might be the most suitable arrangement. We do not overlook that this would involve a departure from the principle, held by the Waddington Commission to be fundamental, that the Council should comprise a majority of elected ministers, nor do we underestimate the responsibility which would be thrown on the Governor when it fell to him to decide issues upon which the Council were evenly divided. But we think that if the arrangement were accepted as temporary and worked in a co-operative spirit, it would prove possible within a short time to restore to the elected ministers the full responsibility accorded to them under the Waddington Constitution.

219. We shall later have some suggestions to offer as to the detailed composition of the Executive Council but it will be convenient if we speak first of certain changes which we think might be made in the State Council.

220. Under the Constitution the State Council had the duty of revising and delaying legislation coming to it from the House of Assembly. It was linked with the Executive Council by the election of one of its members to be Minister without Portfolio; its only link with the lower house was by virtue of the arrangement whereby two members of the State Council were appointed upon the recommendation of the elected Ministers and one after consultation with the minority group of the House of Assembly. The other six members were nominated by the Governor. We are of the opinion that these links with the Executive Council and the House of Assembly were not sufficiently close. The Minister without Portfolio, though a member of Executive Council, might not personally favour party measures passed by the Executive Council which it was his duty to sponsor. In 1953 the party nominees in the State Council were not Ministers or leading members of the majority party, and they could not, therefore, speak authoritatively upon the reasons for any measures. Furthermore the nominated members were

none of them members of the majority party, and in fact came from elements in the community which are not generally sympathetic to the policies of a strongly left wing party.

221. We think that the State Council would be better able to fulfil its functions if it was more closely linked with both the policy-making body and the elected body, and that this weakness could be remedied by providing that the State Council should consist of two official members X the Chief Secretary and the Development Secretary\* X and seven other members, of whom five should be nominated by the Governor at his discretion, and two should be appointed by him upon the recommendation of the Ministers elected by the House of Assembly. The Official members should sit in the Executive Council and in addition the five nominated members of the State Council should elect one of their number to be a Minister without Portfolio with a seat in the Executive Council. One of the two members appointed on the recommendation of the elected Ministers of the lower house should be nominated by them to be a Minister with Portfolio. He also should have a seat in the Executive Council. By these means a full and authoritative exposition of government measures in the State Council will be ensured and it may be expected that one at least of the members appointed upon the recommendation of the elected Ministers will be a person of some standing in the majority party and, therefore, able to represent its viewpoint effectively. [*\* We think that in British Guiana where economic development is so vitally important an authoritative spokesman should be available in each House of the Legislature. The Financial Secretary whose Portfolio is intimately connected with the development of the territory would be able to give to the House of Assembly the same detailed information about development planning as the Development Secretary would give to the State Council. ]*

222. Under this arrangement the Chief Secretary would withdraw from the House of Assembly, which, apart from the Financial Secretary and Attorney-General, would then be wholly elected. Such a change is in our view desirable on general grounds, and if our suggestion in paragraph 83 for a new constituency for the Rupununi District is accepted, the number of elected members will increase from 24 to 25 and the House will, as before, comprise 27 members in all.

223. Turning again to the Executive Council, we suggest that it should consist of the Governor, as President with a casting vote only, and ten other members. These should be the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Attorney-General and the Development Secretary and six Ministers chosen from among the unofficial members of the Legislature. Four of these Ministers should be elected members of the House of Assembly, chosen by the ballot of all the members of that House. The remaining two Ministers would be unofficial members of the State Council: one (without Portfolio) selected by the ballot of the nominated members from among their number, the other chosen by the Ministers elected from the House of Assembly from the two members of the State Council appointed by the Governor on their recommendation. The disposition of members of the Executive Council in the Legislature would thus be as follows: X

*House of Assembly*

Financial Secretary;  
Attorney-General;



4 elected Ministers with Portfolios

*State Council*

Chief Secretary;

Development Secretary;

1 Minister with Portfolio, chosen by the elected Ministers;

1 Minister without Portfolio, chosen by the nominated members.

224. These proposed changes in the Executive Council and State Council have been very carefully considered by us, but we would emphasize that they are put forward only as suggestions which might be considered at the relevant time when it is thought possible to restore a measure of responsibility to elected representatives. We do not pretend that they in any way meet the difficulties presented by a party not prepared to accept a limited constitution, or that had these changes been incorporated in the Waddington Constitution it would have worked more successfully; indeed the reverse may be true since the P.P.P. would certainly have denounced it even more vehemently. Nonetheless we believe that the suggestions which we have made, particularly as regards the Executive Council, may be worthy of consideration.

225. Finally, we think that we should not conclude this chapter without recording the views which we have reached on a number of subsidiary constitutional matters affecting ministerial conduct and the independence of the judiciary and public service generally. This we do in the paragraphs which follow.

226. The code of conduct to be expected from Ministers is hardly susceptible of easy definition. If properly educated in the true conceptions of democracy the Ministers will themselves be able to define the practice to be followed far better than it can be done in a written code. An attempt was made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to describe for the new Ministers in British Guiana the rules of conduct which they should follow. It is clear, however, that the P.P.P. Ministers did not think it incumbent upon them to follow this advice, and some of them disregarded it blatantly in their retention of official positions in trade unions.\* We are, therefore, of the opinion that certain fundamental rules should be included in the Constitution, and that disregard of these rules should be a ground for dismissal from office. Among these the following are suggested: X

- (i) No Minister shall hold office if he is a Director or Executive Official in any commercial company working in British Guiana, nor hold shares in such a company if he is able to influence government policy to the company's benefit.
- (ii) No Minister shall hold office if he is an Executive in any Trade Union functioning in British Guiana or takes an active part in the affairs of any such Union.

We feel sure that a fairly comprehensive code on these lines could be drafted, and that it would be a great help to Ministers. [*\* Dr. Jagan continued as President of the Sawmill Workers' Union, Mr. Burnham as President of the British Guiana Labour Union and Dr. Lachhmansingh as President of the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union.*]

227. We believe that it would be extremely difficult to lay down rules defining or explaining the impartiality required of Ministers in their day-to-day approach to events and to persons. The real and only assurance of such impartiality lies in an active and enlightened public opinion. Ministers should, however, in the early days be subject to restraint in the appointment of Statutory Boards, Committees of Inquiry, etc., where it is the essence of such bodies that they should represent wide interests. The P.P.P. Ministers in the recent Government did not recognize this necessity, and showed themselves determined to make such bodies their creatures. We suggest that all Statutory Boards, Committees of Inquiry and boards with executive functions should be appointed by the Governor, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, but that the Governor in approving or refusing assent should act in his discretion. With regard to committees solely advisory to a Minister the Minister should make the appointments.

228. We consider it advisable that certain services should be outside the scope of the Legislature's financial authority at the present stage. These are: X

- (i) The Governor and his staff. It should not be within the power of the Party in power to bring pressure upon the Governor by withholding approval of the financial provisions required for the holder of this office;
- (ii) The Judiciary. The independence of the judiciary is a fundamental concept of British democracy, and it would be entirely wrong to allow the Party in power authority to withhold the finance required to pay the judiciary;
- (iii) The Auditor and his staff. The Auditor holds an independent position and must have no reason to fear that courageous and firm action on his part can bring him and his staff into conflict with the political party in power to their detriment;
- (iv) The Public Service Commission. This Commission, which safeguards the independence of the Public Service from political interference, should be made independent itself from political interference with its financial support.

The estimates for these services should be prepared in the ordinary way by the officers in charge and, after the usual scrutiny and inquiry by the Financial Secretary, should be certified by the Governor as “excepted expenditure” and should not be submitted for approval by the Legislature.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

229. The Commission's main conclusions are here summarised briefly.

230. We are satisfied that the setback to orderly constitutional progress in British Guiana was due not to defects in the Constitution but to the fact that those in control of the People's Progressive Party proved themselves to be relentless and unscrupulous in their determination to pervert the authority of Government to their own disruptive and undemocratic ends.

231. We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that so long as the P.P.P. retains its present leadership and policies there is no way in which any real measure of responsible government can be restored without the certainty that the country will again be subjected to constitutional crisis.

232. We have no doubt that British Guiana, with its precarious economy cannot afford another crisis of the kind that developed in 1953 and we can, therefore, see no alternative but to recommend a period of marking time in the advance towards self government.

233. We cannot estimate the length of the period which should elapse before the advance towards self government is resumed. Everything will depend upon the extent to which the people of British Guiana, including the leaders of the P.P.P. themselves, can be brought to the realisation that the futile and deliberately disruptive policies for which the P.P.P. at present stands are no basis for the future constitutional progress of their country.

234. In paragraphs 216-224 of our Report we have drawn attention to a number of points in the Constitution where we believe improvements in the 1953 Constitution might be made when the time comes. We have also recorded in paragraphs 226-228 our views on a number of subsidiary constitutional matters affecting ministerial conduct, the judiciary and the public service. In Chapter 3 we have made certain recommendations about the electoral system. In Chapter 1 we have made observations of a general character on the economic and social circumstances of British Guiana which we believe are relevant to the constitutional issue on which we were appointed to report.

## CHAPTER 7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

235. The period before our arrival in British Guiana had been one of mounting tension, culminating in dramatic events and world wide publicity. For most people, and particularly for senior government servants, it must have been a period of great strain and the aftermath itself laid heavy burdens on many of them. It is, therefore, with very real gratitude that we take this opportunity of acknowledging the kindness with which we were received throughout the Colony and the help given unstintingly to us in carrying out our task.

236. We would first express our thanks to His Excellency the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, for the admirable facilities with which we were provided and for the kindness which he and Lady Savage showed us. The heads of departments and other government servants from whom we sought information and advice co-operated most willingly, and we must record especially the valuable assistance afforded by the Chief Secretary, Mr. Gutch. We wish, too, to thank the Chief Justice, Sir Peter Bell, for his kindness in placing at our disposal his own Chambers and the No. 1 Court Room at the Victoria Law Courts.

237. During our extensive travels in the Colony we were given every opportunity of gathering first hand knowledge of social and economic conditions, and to all those who helped us in this way we extend our grateful thanks. We remember the co-operation of the Managers of the sugar estates at Rose Hall, Albion, Skeldon and Port Mourant. We are indebted also to Mr. Mackintosh of the Mahaicony/Abary Rice Scheme for an understanding of the important work being undertaken there and to the management of British Guiana Timbers Limited for the opportunity of inspecting their forest operations at Winiperu and their new mill at Georgetown. We were invited by the Demerara Bauxite Company to visit their mines and installations at Mackenzie. We here record our appreciation of the hospitality which we were afforded. On our visits to the Interior we were accompanied by Mr. Bamford, Commissioner of the Interior, whom we shall long remember for his cheerful companionship and extensive knowledge of the country. During these visits we were received with great kindness by Mr. and Mrs. Seggar at Kamarang Mouth, a remote administrative post in the Mazaruni Amerindian Reservation, and by Mr. and Mrs. Turner of the Rupununi Development Company at Dadanawa. We also recall with pleasure the friendship shown to us by other ranchers in the Rupununi savannahs.

238. We owe special thanks to the District Commissioners throughout the Colony who made arrangements for our local visits and public sessions and also made it possible for us to meet and talk informally with many people. Here too we should record our appreciation of the special facilities provided by British Guiana Airways and of the skill in Captain Wilson who was our pilot and companion on most of our journeys.

239. The Commission were very fortunate to have at their disposal the services of Mr. I. O. Smith as liaison officer. His efforts were untiring and without his assistance and organizing ability we should have been most seriously handicapped. We also wish to express our gratitude to our verbatim reporters, Mr. Grimshaw, Mr. Loubin and Mr. Bunyan, and to our secretarial assistants, Mrs. Yvonne Ford and Miss Hendricks, for the willing and efficient services which they rendered.

240. We wish to thank the Governor of Trinidad for his kindness to us during our brief visit to his territory and we owe a similar debt to the Governor of Barbados for his hospitality. During our stay in Barbados we were provided with office accommodation and facilities for our work by Sir Stephen Luke, the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. We were most grateful to him and would express our thanks especially to Miss Ward and Mrs. Carter of his staff who willingly undertook the typing which we required. We are also much indebted to the typists of the Colonial Office, Miss Cook and her staff, for the onerous work of typing our many drafts.

241. To the many others who helped us in various other ways or entertained us most hospitably we are indebted and would wish to express our thanks for their kindness.

242. We could not sign this report without expressing our gratitude to our Secretary, Mr. R. E. Radford of the Colonial Office. His organising ability, his readiness to work long hours, and his keenness to obtain information assisted us most materially in our work and in our travels.

JAMES W. ROBERTSON,  
Chairman.

DONALD JACKSON,  
GEORGE WOODCOCK.

R. E. RADFORD, Secretary.

1st September, 1954.

## APPENDIX I

### EXTRACTS FROM THE P.P.P. PERIODICAL *THUNDER* AND FROM SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF P.P.P. LEADERS

#### A X Extracts from *Thunder*

The official organ of the People's Progressive Party is the monthly periodical *Thunder*. This periodical is edited by the General Secretary of the Party, Janet Jagan, and regularly carries articles by leading members of the P.P.P.

The views on international affairs expressed in the periodical invariably follow those advanced by the propagandists of the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the world. Considerable space is devoted to adulation of the Soviet Union, other Soviet bloc countries and China. On the other hand there is frequent vilification not only of "capitalist" countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and France, but also of the Labour movements in these countries and of Communists such as Trotsky, Tito and Beria who have incurred Moscow's displeasure. Considerable publicity is given to the activities and pronouncements of the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions, while the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions is referred to only as a subject for abuse. A similar distinction is made between Communist leaders and Communist-sponsored conferences and those of the democratic Socialist parties. The periodical's reviews column is devoted entirely to the praise of current Communist publications (which it is stated can be obtained from the P.P.P. offices). Not one of the many books and pamphlets issued by the democratic Socialist parties and the free labour movements is even mentioned.

The following extracts from articles and news items appearing in *Thunder* during the period January, 1950, to December, 1953, are representative of many similar statements appearing in the paper.

#### *The International Situation*

"The imperialists and their numberless lackeys fear the progressive people's forces of the world. But today the anti-imperialist and progressive forces are unprecedentedly strong. The Chinese People's Republic led by Mao-Tse-Tung is a shining beacon from the East sending hope to the oppressed colonial toilers of the world and lighting the way they must inevitably follow for 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' among men." X (*Thunder* X April, 1950.)

"The U.S. reject a planned economy. American capitalists also dread a peace which makes war equipment superfluous." "American economy is a War economy, as Russia's is a peace economy. . . ." "America's Marshall Plan re-establishes capitalism on the basis of Wall Street monopoly, arresting reconstruction and crippling industrial development. The Marshall Plan rebuilds the Nazi war machine. . . ." "Under the Atlantic Pact the U.S. supply the arms,



Europe the cannon-fodder for fighting Russia." X (*Thunder* X May, 1950 X article "War or Peace" by the Dean of Canterbury.)

"The time has come for the British labour leaders to stop dancing to the tune played by America's war policy. Instead of fighting the Malaysians, give them their freedom." X (*Thunder* X April, 1951.)

"Human beings the world over are today threatened by a modern cannibal X American imperialism. Ever since 1914 when America was in the grip of economic depression, this cannibal has been living and thriving on war munition manufacturing and the rehabilitation of war damage in ravaged countries. Now, in our days even the rehabilitation of war damaged areas cannot fill the maw of this gross imperialist parasite. Today American imperialism can only exist by creating war economy. . . ." (*Thunder* X May, 1951.)

"...the People's Progressive Party has shown itself a staunch fighter for World Peace...." "I ask you to support our appeal for the signing of a Pact of Peace between the Five Great Powers which demands an immediate ending of the Korean War, the banning of the atom bomb and chemical, radio-active and germ warfare, and the condemnation of the use of violence against peoples of Colonial Countries," X (*Thunder* X January, 1953 X article "A Message of Peace" by Rory Westmaas, Secretary of the British Guiana Peace Committee, Vice-President of the P.P.P.)

### ***The War in Korea***

"The present Government of South Korea, subservient to the policy of the American Government, is carrying out a policy which is maintaining the workers in the most terrible poverty and subjecting them to pitiless repression."

"The regime in Southern Korea is one of fascist terror, where human rights are non-existent; it is a daily threat to democracy and peace." X (*Thunder* X August, 1950 X article "Background to the War in Korea" from W.F.T.U. Bulletin.)

"The Americans are using germ warfare on the coloured Korean population just as they used the Atom Bomb on the coloured Japanese. . . . World democratic opinion is opposed to the war. Who in fact wants the war? The American bankers and makers of armaments have time and again hailed the war as 'good business' and 'the best thing that could have happened'. It is such circles in whose benefit the war in Korea is being waged." X (*Thunder* X October, 1952 X article "Not a Man for Korea " by Sydney King, Assistant Secretary of the P.P.P.)

### ***The War in Indo-China***

"Imperialist Plot against Viet-Nam"

"The prospect of complete victory for the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam over the French interventionists is causing no little concern and alarm among the imperialists. Such a victory would undermine all the hopes of the imperialists to convert Indo-China into a bridgehead for military adventures against the democratic movement in Asia, primarily against the Chinese People's Republic." X (*Thunder* X February, 1950.)

### ***British Colonial Policy***

"To us here in British Guiana this book is very useful. It gives ample factual evidence of the American colonisation of Britain, the Colonial Development and Welfare farce, of the new imperialism of the Labour Party, that so-called British Socialism with its callous rapacity for colonial plunder and its hangman methods of intimidating in Malaya and India." X (*Thunder* X October, 1951 X reviewing R. Palme Dutt's book *Britain's Crisis of Empire*. It may be noted that this book says, *inter alia*, "The freedom of the colonial peoples will be won, and is today being won, not through petitions or prayers or good behaviour or magnanimity of the rulers, but only through the strength of the national liberation movement, through the national revolution" (p, 140). This passage is quoted in *Thunder's* review).

### ***The Soviet Union and other Soviet bloc countries***

"In the Soviet Union people work for themselves and not for exploiters. This book comparing conditions in the U.S.A. with those in the U.S.S.R., says that during 1920-1938 'over 31 million farmers were unable to make a living and fled to the cities. During the same period almost 23 million unemployed left the cities to work on the farms.' That is America. And these are only two groups of facts of the many that the author brings forward to prove that the Soviet State with its planned economy is superior to the anarchic economy of the capitalist countries like England and the U.S.A. All conscious workers should read this book so that there will come more definitely in their action a knowledge of what is worth fighting for, and against what the progressive movements of the enslaved world are rebelling." X (*Thunder* X June, 1950 X reviewing *Social and State Structure of the U.S.S.R.* by V. Karpinsky).

### ***"Guaranteed Employment"***

"It is only in the Soviet Union and the New Democracies that the right of employment is guaranteed to the citizen ". X (*Thunder* X October, 1951).

### ***"Message from Comrade Jagan"***

"During my recent trip abroad I have been lucky to travel extensively both in the capitalist sector and the socialist sector of the world. A lot of propaganda and lies have been spread about the eastern People's Democracies X about forced labour, the denial of freedom of religion and what not. I have seen the people at work with my own eyes and on many occasions by myself and not 'led by my nose' as we are made to believe. I have not seen any evidence of

forced labour. Rather, everywhere there was enthusiasm and spiritedness. This was no doubt born of the knowledge that the Government was their Government, that the factories were their factories, that they were building a new and bright future for themselves. I did not witness the same enthusiastic spirit among the British working class.

Having seen the horrors of war and the great enthusiasm with which the people of the Socialist sectors are building, I am fully convinced that these people really and sincerely want peace. Peace has meaning for them X for with peace, every day brings more improvements. I can hardly say the same for the capitalist countries. They are trying to solve their unemployment problems by putting workers in the army. They are increasing their profits by preparing for war. We are feeling the pinch of this policy by the ever increasing rise in the cost of living. We are feeling it because we are not the masters of our own destiny. We will always be underfed, ill-clad and ill-housed so long as we are tied hand and foot and allow ourselves to be delivered as booty to the imperialists. Let us resolve to make every effort to strengthen the P.P.P. and to fight for self government and the establishment in British Guiana of a People's Government." X (*Thunder* X December, 1951).

### ***"P.P.P. Mourns Loss to Mankind of J. V. Stalin"***

"The Third Annual Congress of the P.P.P. observed two minutes silence on the sad occasion of the death of J. V. Stalin, the leader of the Soviet people, the liberator of free Europe and the acknowledged pathfinder of Peace ". X (*Thunder* X May, 1953).

"On the other hand in the U.S.S.R., China, Hungary, in brief in the countries which are not bound with the chains of Colonialism and Imperialism the rights of women are guaranteed by their Governments and written in the law ". X (*Thunder* X June, 1953 -- article "Women and Peace" by Jessica Huntley).

### ***Communism***

"To-day when the word 'War' is heard over the radio and read in the papers innumerable times, the ideas of William Gallacher in the *Case for Communism* are of the utmost importance " X (*Thunder* X September, 1950).

"Q. Why do you sell books published by the Communist Party of Great Britain?

A. We sell any books that are fair and just to (a) the working class (b) the colonial people. It is not the fault of the P.P.P. that to all intents and purposes (it is a matter of history) the other parties believe in the colonial system ". X (*Thunder* X March, 1952 X "What is the P.P.P.?" by Sidney King).

"History has shown such personalities as Trotsky, Tito, Beria as profound opportunists. The workers must be militant, and expose them in their true colours. Long live the theory of

scientific Socialism by Marx and Lenin". X (*Thunder* X September, 1953 X article "The Struggle in a Socialist Party " by H. I. Franklin).

### ***The Free Trade Unions***

"By their treacherous splitting activities in the world trade union movement and the trade union movements in Asian countries, the reactionary leaders of the A.F.L., C.I.O. and British Trade Union Congress are assisting in the realisation of the imperialist plans which aim to intensify the plunder of the working people.

"At the prompting of the employers and of their government, these same leaders, activated by fascist concepts, engineer the creation of so-called 'trade unions' in order to dominate them and further the policy of the imperialists." X (*Thunder* X January, 1950 X quoting from a resolution of the Trade Union Conference of Asian and Australasian countries held under the auspices of the W.F.T.U.)

"The British T.U.C. which faithfully follows the lead of the Labour Government in Colonial matters has laid aside 27,000 pounds Sterling to be spent on the Colonial Trade Unions for buying motor cars, typewriters, duplicating machines and office supplies. Perhaps it is hoped that in this way the colonial unions will become loyal and turn aside from the business of liberating their countries." X (*Thunder* X January, 1951.)

### **"Yellow International Attempts to Split African Labour Movement"**

"The Yellow Trade Union International calling itself the 'International Confederation of Free Trade Unions' (I.C.F.T.U.) which is financed by the United States State Department, has called a so-called 'African Labour Congress' this week in Duala, French Camerons, in an attempt to extend its labour-splitting activities among the militant African proletariat in Central and West Africa." X  
(*Thunder* X April, 1951.)

### ***"Birds of a Feather"***

"Birds of a feather flock together and so the scab leaders of the I.C.F.T.U. with the blessings of the pious American negro-hating and British colonial-shooting Governments found followers in the West Indies. Messrs. Gomes, Solomon, C. P. Alexander (Trinidad), Thomas (Grenada), Critchlow (B.G.), have flocked together at a scab conference. Governor Rance, employee of the Government of Britain, repeated official Government blessings when he opened the conference. Nothing was said about the brutal treatment of the Grenada workers, about the bar on Gairy's movements. No Sir! The I.C.F.T.U. was not formed for that purpose. Divide the workers! Slander the Communists! Long live the British Colonial oppression! Rule Britannia (FREEDOM)." X (*Thunder* X September, 1951.)

"Having failed to turn back the advance of the Caribbean masses by frontal attack, imperialism has now succeeded in introducing into our ranks an agent in the form of the so-called International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U)." X (*Thunder* X May, 1953 X quoting a May Day message issued by Richard Hart, Secretary of the Caribbean Labour Congress.)

***The World Federation of Trade Unions***

"W.F.T.U. 7th Anniversary"

"The P.P.P. cabled the following greetings to the World Federation of Trade Unions on its 7th anniversary X 'P.P.P. British Guiana sends fraternal greetings W.F.T.U. seventh anniversary in struggle for workers rights, peace and socialism'." X (*Thunder* X November, 1952.)

**B X Extracts from Speeches and Writings of P.P.P. Leaders**

The attitude of the P.P.P. towards the Waddington Constitution has been illustrated in Chapter 4 of this Report by extracts from Party publications and speeches. The following extracts have been selected to show the attitudes of some of the leaders of the P.P.P. towards Communism as such.

"Those who know anything about economic theory know that Communism, according to the definition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, is only the advanced stage of Socialism. . . . My idea was to show Members of this Council that in theory Socialism and Communism are the same. According to the people who wrote the text-books, Communism is merely a higher state of society than Socialism. . . . I am not here to dispute what they have written".

"When Communists refer to force they refer to what is known as the repressive force of society. . . . the force of the state which makes the laws. . . . to see that the former exploiters behave themselves, and if they do not, they are apprehended and tried in the People's Courts. . . . It is from that stage that Communism comes in. . . . Just as how in the schools of our country an attempt is made to have certain influences moulding the minds of the youth in order to preserve the *status quo*, the capitalist system, in the Socialist society the children of the exploiters and the exploited are sent to school where their minds are moulded".

"As far as I am concerned, when the Government puts its ban on Communist publications I will X import books which are written and printed by non-Communist organisations X books which propagate the same ideas . . . . If I am prevented from importing or reproducing literature then either I and others like myself would be forced to obtain it surreptitiously, which we do not want to do, or write the books ourselves. That can easily be done. . . . Therefore all the objects of the Government will be thwarted by those of us who want to spread Communist ideas." - (Speech by Dr. Jagan in the debate on the Undesirable Publications Bill in the Legislative Council on the 27th February, 1953.)

"From the Socialist camp rings the echo of Stalin's reassuring pronouncement: 'Export of revolution is nonsense. Every country, if it so desires, will carry out its own revolution, and if it does not so desire, there will be no revolution!'" - ("Peace Shall Walk Among You" by Mr. S. King.)

"Only the candidates of the People's Progressive Party are sufficiently advanced politically to be able to put up a persistent battle against all forms of obstruction and veto which will be used against all constructive measures and to detect the tactics of the imperialists and expose them to the people. . . . Only a Party with our record of preparation; and of struggle on behalf of the working class and the masses is capable of making the necessary war. . . . On the lips of every loyal Guianese of every race and in the hearts of the oppressed, this name (Cheddi Jagan) has become a banner behind which tramp the revolutionary and progressive masses of our country - to battle and victory." (Foreword by Mr. S. King to *Fight for Freedom -- Waddington Constitution Exposed*, published by Dr. Jagan.)

"At this stage we are fighting for national independence which leads to Socialism and Communism. We will have to do like the people of Russia. They were once under the same oppression like us and now have their own independence for the past 35 years." X (Speech by Mr. S. M. Latchmansingh, P.P.P. Member of the House of Assembly, to sugar workers at Plantation Blairmont, May, 1953.)

"Fascism and imperialism are only words of the capitalist order, and as such we can put them in one camp for economic and other purposes. Communism and Socialism are in the same camp, so that to all intents and purposes the world is divided into two camps, the Socialist or Communist camp, which is the people's camp, and the camp which today calls itself the Democratic camp, but which is really the capitalist camp. There is great division of opinion as to what is meant by 'Democracy', but I do not want to go into a lengthy discourse on that." (Speech by Dr. Jagan in the House of Assembly on the 24th July, 1953.)

"Capitalism proved itself more efficient than feudalism and slavery and so replaced them. So will the capitalist system in due course be changed into a higher and more efficient socialist system. Likewise socialism itself will evolve into the higher communist stage of society. . . . I am a great admirer of the Soviet Union, the People's China and the People's Democracies." - (Speech by Dr. Jagan broadcast on Radio Demerara on the 9th August, 1953.)

## **APPENDIX II**

### **LIST OF COMMUNIST LITERATURE DISTRIBUTED BY THE P.P.P.**

The following list is representative of communist literature distributed by the P.P.P. in British Guiana. Pamphlets and similar material were circulated at Party meetings and at meetings of the British Guiana Peace Committee, the Pioneer Youth League and other such organisations. Towards the end of January, 1953, the Party leaders opened a bookshop and library in Regent Street, Georgetown and this was extensively stocked with Communist propaganda publications.

2. In February, 1953, the old Legislative Council passed the Undesirable Publications (Prohibition of Importation) Ordinance enabling the Governor-in-Council to make orders banning the entry into the Colony of subversive literature. No orders were made during the period up to May, 1953, when the P.P.P. Ministers took office and they then introduced a Bill to repeal the Ordinance. This had not been enacted by the time the Constitution was suspended and the Ordinance has continued in force.

Communism and Labour, by Harry Pollitt.

I saw the truth in Korea, by Allan Willington, Daily Worker correspondent.

The Colonies the Way Forward, published by the British Communist Party.

Social Insurance in the U.S.S.R., by Z Mokhov.

A Russian looks at reborn Europe, by Boris Polevoy.

The right of Nations to Self-Determination, by V. I. Lenin, published in the U.S.S.R.

Soviet Music, by Boris Yagolim, published in the U.K.

New China New World, by Arthur Clegg, published in the U.K.

The Peaceful Co-Existence, by S. Titarenko, published in the U.K.

Lenin and Britain, published in the U.K.

Socialism and the Individual, by M. D. Karmari, published in the U.S.S.R.

The Deception of the People, by V. I. Lenin, published in the U.K.

The Soviet Union at the Fifth Session of U.N.O., 1950, published in the U.K.

Soviet Weekly, 5th April, 1951, published in the U.K.

Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, published by Soviet News, 3, Rosary Gardens, London, S.W.7.

Patriotism & Internationalism, by S. Titarenko, published by Soviet News, 3, Rosary Gardens, London, S.W.7.

The Labour Movement in Britain, issued by the Communist Party and published by Farleigh Press, Beechwood Rise, Watford, Herts.

Soviet Schools Today, by Deana Levin, published by Illustrated Periodicals, Ltd., London, S.E.1.

They were killed because they were Negroes, published by the West Indies Committee of the Communist Party, 16, King Street, London, W.C.

Russia with our own Eyes, by the British Workers' Delegation to U.S.S.R. X 1950.

The Educational Commentary on Current Affairs, issued by the Daily Worker and published by Educational Commentary, 75, Farringdon Road, London, E.C.1.

Bucharest Organ of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties X For a Lasting Peace and for a People's Democracy, published at 56, Valeria Braniste, Bucharest.

Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, published by Soviet News, 3, Rosary Gardens, London, S.W.7.



New China News Agency X 4th May, 1951, published by Prague Office, 608, Na Marne, Prague, XIX.

For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy, published by the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties, Bucharest, Rumania.

Prague Newsletter X 5th July, 1951, published by Pragopress, Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Pamphlets issued by the World Congress of the Defenders of the Peace.

The truth about Soviet Russia.

J. V. Stalin answers 'Pravda' correspondent's questions.

How Hungarian Children Live (Sinder Simon).

Statement of Foreign Ministry of the U.S.S.R. on North Atlantic Pact (Hr. Schilstad).

Youth in Hungary, by Athenaeum, published by Hungarian Bulletin.

World Trade Union Movement, by T. F. McWhinnie, published by W.F.T.U. Publications Ltd.

The American Aggressors Indicted, by Louis Saillant, published by W.F.T.U. Publications Ltd.

Aid to Economically Backward Countries, by Pavel Cherny-shev, published by Soviet News London.

Federation & Self-Government Now or Colonialism A Slavery For Ever, published by the Caribbean Labour Congress (London Branch).

Hungarian Production Results for 1951, published by The Hungarian News & Information Service, 33, Pembridge Square, London, W.2.

Hungarian News and Information Service; Documents on Foreign Affairs, published by Hungarian News and Information Service, 33, Pembridge Square, London, W.2.

Everyday Life in Hungary, published by The Hungarian News and Information Service, London, W.2.

Terror in Kenya, published by W.F.T.U. Publications Ltd.

Documents of Congress of the Peoples for Peace, Vienna, 12th-19th December, 1952, published by Congress Secretariat.

Egypt and the Sudan X The People on the March, by Ahmed Taha Ahmed, published by W.F.T.U. Ltd., London.

The Progress of Man, published by Young Communist League, 16, King Street, London, W.C.2.

To Every Woman Everywhere, published by Women's International Democratic Federation, Berlin W.8.

The Housing Crisis in Capitalist and Colonial Countries, published by W.F.T.U. Publications Limited.

Fourth World Festival Of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, 2nd-16th August, published by International Festival Committee, Bucharest.

Little Stalin Library No. 5 on the National Question, by J. Stalin, published by Lawrence & Wishart, London.

Kenya X What are the Facts, by P. Bolster, published by The Communist Party, London.

## APPENDIX III

### NOTE ON THE ARSON PLOT

1. The British Government White Paper (Cmd. 8980) says in paragraph 30 that "it was established from reliable sources that . . . a plan was made to set fire to business property and residences of prominent Europeans and Government officials ". The evidence on which this statement is based was not obtained until the 6th October, and it could not, therefore, have had any bearing upon the decision of Her Majesty's Government to suspend the Constitution. We went into this matter as thoroughly as we could. Obviously our general witnesses knew nothing of any plan of this kind. The information upon which the paragraph in the White Paper is based came to the ears of the police from informers. We saw the police reports and we questioned the officers responsible for them. The value of these reports is, of course, no more than the reliability of the informers, and we were not told, indeed we did not ask, who the informers were or if we could see them. But we have not the slightest doubt that information *was* conveyed to the police by informers whose information had always hitherto proved accurate. One was able to give second-hand information and the other third-hand information, of a meeting of several of the most prominent leaders of the P.P.P. at the home of Dr. Jagan on the evening of the 5th October. They reported that the leaders had discussed the strong rumours that troops were on the way to British Guiana and that the Constitution was to be suspended and had argued whether they should put into effect a plan for setting fire to certain properties that had already been devised for some such eventuality. We also saw straightforward police reports and had direct evidence of prominent P.P.P. officials being seen in the neighbourhood of business premises at times when they would not normally have been expected to be there. Finally, we had the evidence mentioned in the White Paper of unusual sales of petrol and kerosene in small quantities to persons who do not possess cars and who do not, as a general rule, use these spirits for heating or lighting. The comment of the P.P.P. witnesses on this latter point was that all the people in Georgetown expected that there would be a strike at the electricity power station and were therefore buying petrol and kerosene for heating or lighting if the strike should take place. That may or may not be the explanation but there is no doubt of the fact that unusual sales of petrol and kerosene did take place.

2. We have no reason to disbelieve the evidence of several persons who told us of telephone warnings they had received that their houses were "on the list ", and we certainly believed the evidence of the Archbishop of the West Indies who described to us preparations which he had discovered to set fire to his house. How far these incidents were merely threats to intimidate and did not correspond with any real intention to act we cannot estimate; but they certainly corroborate the other evidence that the idea of fire raising was in the air.

3. In our opinion the Governor and the police, and all others concerned who knew of the reports received by the police, would have been failing in their duty if they had not taken them seriously. The situation in the colony was very tense, and all responsible people were acutely aware of the acts of violence done recently during the course of the sugar strike. The argument put to us that no one would think of starting a fire in Georgetown itself because of the certainty that it would spread and cause a tremendous amount of damage in a city built mainly of wood is equally valid

in our view as a reason which would compel the Governor to take serious account of any possibility of fire.

## **APPENIDIX IV**

### **LIST OF WITNESSES**

#### *1. Witnesses who submitted written memoranda and gave oral evidence before the Commission.*

Mr. E. A. Aaron (New Amsterdam).

Mrs. T. Aaron and Mr. F. M. Stephenson.

Mr. F. D. Abraham.

Mr. Lloyd Agard.

Mr. L. R. H. Agard (New Amsterdam).

Airy Hall Sports Club (Mr. C. A. Robertson and Mr. J. N. Stephen).

Mr. W. G. G. Alvarez (Mackenzie).

Mr. Arjune.

Mr. U. G. Atherly.

Mr. I. Atkins (Bartica).

Mr. A. A. Bannister, Director of Education.

\*Mr. J. B. Bamford, Commissioner of the Interior.

Bartica Village Council (Mr. G. J. de Freitas, Mr. C. R. Nascimento, Mr. J. I. Pereira, Mr. A. E. Whyatt).

\*Mr. J. H. Bayley.

Mr. H. P. Benn (New Amsterdam).

\*Berbice Chamber of Commerce (Mr. I. C. E. McLean and Mr. Chapman, New Amsterdam).

\*Berbice Ministers Fraternal (Revd. Gordon Dickson and others, New Amsterdam).

\*Mr. C. M. Bernard.

Mr. W. M. Bissell, O.B.E., Commissioner of Labour.

Mr. E. Bourne.

Mr. Lloyd Brathwaite.

Mr. C. C. Bristol (New Amsterdam).

British Guiana Domestic Helpers and Washers Union (Mr. H. A. Bidulph and others).

British Guiana Mineworkers Union (Mr. G. Lovell, President, Christianburg),

\*British Guiana Rice Producers' Association (Mr. R. B. Jailal, M.L.C.).

British Guiana Sugar Industry Joint Trade Union Committee (Mr. J. A. Singh and others).

\*British Guiana Sugar Producers' Association (Mr. R. R. Follett-Smith and others).

British Guiana Teachers' Association (Mr. R. E. Thompson and others).

British Guiana Trades Union Council (Mr. A. T. Gibson and other).

\*British Guiana Village Overseers' Union (Mr. Sultan A. H. Khan and others).

Mr. S. E. Brotherson (Winiperu).

Mr. C. A. Brown and Mrs. H. L. Brown.

\*Mr. H. S. Burrowes, Senior District Commissioner.

Mr. Fitz Caesar (Mackenzie).

\*Mr. C. Cambridge.

Mr. N. E. Cameron.

Mr. R. Cameron.  
 Mr. J. Castello-Edwards.  
 Mr. J. D. Chan.  
 \*Mr. M. H. Chan.  
 Mr. J. Chan-A-Sue.  
 Mr. A. B. Chandarpal (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. B. Charles.  
 Mr. G. T. Chhangur (New Amsterdam).  
 \*Clerical Workers' Union (Mr. S. Munro and others).  
 Colonial Workers' Union (Mr. S. M. Barclay and others).  
 Mr. J. A. Croker.  
 \*Mr. A. I. Crum Ewing, Clerk of the Legislature.  
 Mr. A. P. Das.  
 Mr. J. Da Silva.  
 Mr. Boodwah Dass.  
 Mr. L. C. Davis.  
 Revd. C de Castro (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. F. de Freitas.  
 Mr. J. E. de Freitas.  
 \*Demerara Bauxite Company (Mr. H. V. Echols and Mr. H. C. Humphrys, Q C.)  
 Democratic Youth Organisation (Mr. V. McCalmon and others).  
 Mr. E. G. C. Dookwah.  
 \*Mrs. C. Drayton-Bruce.  
 Mr. H. D. Durant.  
 Eastern Berbice Union of Local Authorities (Mr. B. A. P. Branco and others, New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. Ayube M. Edun.  
 Essequibo Coast Union of Local Authorities (Mr. V. G. Menezes and others, Suddie).  
 Mr. E. W. Estwick and Mr. E. U. Wilson (Mackenzie).  
 Mr. E. J. Farley,  
 Federation of Unions of Government Employees (Mr. J. H. Pollydore and others).  
 Mr. J. Fernandes.  
 \*Mr. J. L. Fletcher, O.B.E., Development Secretary.  
 Mr. G. W. Forsythe.  
 Mr. S. Gangadeen (New Amsterdam).  
 \*Mr. N. O. George.  
 \*Georgetown Chamber of Commerce (Mr. J. St. F. Dare and others).  
 \*Mr. Carlos Gomes.  
 Mr. A. A. Graham (Winiperu).  
 Mr. C. B. Graham.  
 Mr. C. F. Graham.  
 Dr. L. P. Greson.  
 \*Mr. D. Griffith and Mr. R. Tiwari (Suddie).  
 A Group of Guianese (Mr. W. A. Phang, Mr. L. S. Psaila, Mr. C. C. de Freitas and Mr. C. P. Wight).  
 Guiana Times News Magazine (Mr. P. Armstrong).

\*The Hon. J. Gutch, C.M.G., O.B.E., Chief Secretary.  
 Mr. E. A. Hackett.  
 Mr H. R Harewood, M.B.E., Registration Officer,  
 \*Mr. E, B. Hazlewood.  
 Mr. J. Heywood.  
 \*The Hon. F. W. Holder, Q.C., Attorney-General.  
 \*Mr. H. C. Humphrys, Q.C.  
 \*Mr. H. C. B. Humphrys.  
 Mr. G. Hussein.  
 Mr. R. Hutson (Christianburg).  
 Mr. J. H. L. Ifill.  
 Mr. M. Rashad Imam (Charity).  
 Mr. J. M. Isahak and others (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. R. A. Ishmael.  
 \*Mr. C. R. Jacob.  
 \*Mr. J. Jardim.  
 Mr. J. John.  
 Mr. R. J. Jordan (Christianburg).  
 Mrs. B. S. Kalloo.  
 Mr. M. K. Kamall.  
 Mr. H. H. Kendall (Bartica).  
 Mr. Hashim Khan and Mr. Seernaithally (Anna Regina).  
 \*Mr. Sultan Khan and Mr. S. Narain.  
 \*Mr. A. G. King.  
 \*Mr. K. I. R. Kirkpatrick, Postmaster-General.  
 The Most Reverend Dr. Alan J. Knight, Archbishop of the West Indies.  
 Shri. G. S. Kolassar (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. H. S. Kurnar (Anna Regina).  
 \*Mr. Theophilus Lee, M.L.C.  
 \*Mr. N. O. Linton.  
 \*Mr. O. Lucas.  
 \*Mr. L. A. Luckhoo, Q.C., M.L.C.  
 Mr. R. Lyte (Christianburg).  
 \*The Honourable Sir Frank McDavid, C.M.G., C.B.E., Member for Agriculture, Forests, Lands  
 and Mines.  
 \*Mr. E. McDoom.  
 Mr. Mahabeer (New Amsterdam),  
 Mr. A. N. B. Mahadeo.  
 Mr. Manickchand.  
 \*Mr. E. A. Neblett.  
 \*Mrs. E. K. Nobbs.  
 Mr. E. Obermuller (Charity).  
 Mr. G. D. Pahalan (New Amsterdam).  
 "Mr. C. O. Patterson (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. E. A. Pellew.

Mr. K. Persaud (New Amsterdam).  
 Pomeroon Farmers' Association (Mr. W. H. Pilgrim and others, Charity).  
 Mr. M. S. H. Rahaman (Suddie).  
 Mr. M. H. Rahat and Mr. S. M. Yusuf.  
 Mr. L. G. Rajpersaud.  
 Pundit Ramcharan (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. J. Ramdial (New Amsterdam),  
 \*Mr. Ramnarine (Suddie).  
 Mr. D. Ramotar (New Amsterdam).  
 Ranchers of the Rupununi District (Lethem).  
 \*Mr. Vincent Roth, O.B.E.  
 Mr. J. E. R. Samai.  
 Mr. G. A. Sawers.  
 Mr. C. F. Schadde and others (Charity).  
 \*Mr. F. Seal Coon.  
 Mr. B. Sealey and others.  
 \*Shipping Association of Georgetown (Mr. C. M. Bernard, Mr. C. E. Woodward and Mr. F. R. Mittelholzer).  
 Mr. O. P. Sinclair (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. Lall Singh.  
 Mr. R. N. Singh.  
 Mr. A. Sobers.  
 Mr. L. Springer.  
 Mr. E. I. Stewart.  
 Mr. J. Sutherland.  
 Mr. J. A. Sutton.  
 Sword of the Spirit Executive Committee (Mr. J. C. de Freitas and others).  
 Mr. J. Trellis.  
 United Democratic Party (Mr. John Carter, Chairman and others).  
 United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman (Mr. M. A. Nasir and others).  
 Mr. W. M. Verbeke.  
 Mr. E. Wainwright.  
 Mr. D. Webb (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. T. S. Wheating.  
 \*Mr. F. D. Widdup.  
 Miss T. Williams.  
 \*Mr. C. A. Yansen.  
 \*Mr. R. H. Young, Public Relations Adviser.

*2. Witnesses who tendered oral evidence only.*

Afro-American Association and League of Coloured Races (Mr. G. A. Graham).  
 Mrs. H. Andrews.  
 Mr. R. P. Arjune (New Amsterdam).  
 Mr. I. W. W. Austin.



Mr. J. T. Austin.  
Mr. Kingsley Bahadur.  
\*Mr. Barsatti.  
Mr. K. Baux (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. Brehaspat (New Amsterdam).  
\*British Guiana Christian Social Council.  
\*Revd. and Mrs. G. H. Bull.  
Mr. J. Calveira (Charity).  
\*Mr. R. F. Camacho, Acting Deputy Director (Drainage and Irrigation), Public Works Department.  
Mr. J. T. Clarke (New Amsterdam).  
Mrs. V. Coates (Suddie).  
Mr. Albert Critchlow.  
Mr. S. I. Cyrus.  
Mr. D. P. Rattee Das.  
\*Mr. D. P. Debidin.  
\*Mr. M. Diyaljee.  
Mr. E. W. Dodson.  
\*The Hon. W. A. Fraser, O.B.E., Financial Secretary.  
Mr. E. R. Ganpatsingh (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. J. Gaskin.  
Mr. F. Giles (Lethem).  
\*Mr. F. Gobin (Suddie).  
Mr. M. Godfrey.  
Mr. S. J. Gossai (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. S. Grenada.  
Mr. E. Haynes.  
Mr. L. H. Hodge.  
Mr. Housain.  
Mr. Mohamed Hussain (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. Ali Husein Khan.  
Mr. Alli Khan and Mr. Vickram Singh.  
\*Mr. W. A. Knight, Director of Audit.  
Mr. K. Kowchai (New Amsterdam).  
Pandit H. Lall.  
Mr. J. Leach (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. A. Leslie (Anna Regina).  
Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Leung-Walker.  
Mr. J. Martin (Lethem).  
Mr. N. Marcus (Christianburg).  
Mr. T. A. Mentis.  
Mr. J. H. Moore.  
\*Mr. E. F. Moss, Superintendent of Police.  
Mr. B. Nauth.  
Mr. J. C. Parkes.

Mr. C. V. Paul (Lethem).  
Mr. F. Paul (Suddie).  
Mr. F. Phillips.  
Mr. N. Pompey.  
\*Professional and Administrative Officers' Association (Mr. V. J. Sanger Davies and others).  
Mr. C. Ragnauth (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. B. S. Rai.  
Mr. Rajmangal (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. Ramdeo (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. M. C. Ramdyhall (Now Amsterdam).  
Mr. Ramnaught (New Amsterdam).  
\*Mr. F. Sam (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. J. Sam (Suddie).  
Mr. Samsair (Mackenzie).  
Mr. B. R. Seeamber (New Amsterdam).  
Mr. P. N. Simmons.  
Mr. Gordon Singh.  
Mr. Sardar H. S. Singh.  
Mr. S. Tahall.  
Mr. B. Thomas.  
Mr. H. F. Thompson.  
Mr. C. Threlfall.  
Mr. R. Tiwari.  
Revd. A. C. Trotman (Anna Regina).  
\*Mr. M. B. Trotman (Kamarang Mouth).  
\*Colonel C. H. Ward, D.B.E., Commissioner of Police and Mr. D. J. G. Rose, M.B.E.,  
Superintendent of Police.  
Mr. C. Whitney.  
Mr. D. L. B. Wickham, Commissioner of Local Government.  
Mr. L. Williams.  
Mr. J. N. Wilson.  
\*His Honour the Speaker, Sir Eustace Woolford, O.B.E., Q.C.  
Mr. H. D. Wong.

*3. Witnesses who submitted memoranda, but did not give oral evidence.*

All Guiana Youth and Students Supporters of the Patriotic Appeal.  
Mr. A. F. Bennett.  
Berbice River Forest Producers Union.  
Mr. O. Beresford.  
Mr. W. Bissember.  
British Guiana Sanatana Dharma Maha Sabha.  
Mr. J. C. Bruce.  
Mr. E. S. Callender.  
Mr. H. W. Chapman-Edwards.

Mr. D. Chung.  
Mr. S. F. Collymore.  
Mr. J. Creig.  
Mr. B. Damond.  
Mr. C. S. Daniels.  
Mr. J. d'Oliveira.  
Mr. C. C. Douglass.  
Mr. W. Duncan.  
Mr. A. Fernandes.  
Mr. T. Fox.  
Mrs. M. Glen.  
Mr. M. Gonsalves.  
Mr. G. Ingham Goring.  
Mr. O. Hamer.  
Mr. C. W. Hamilton.  
Mr. J. A. Hodge.  
Revd. E. S. Jeffrey.  
Mr. S. Jones.  
Mr. E. M. A. Joseph.  
Miss E. C. Kailan.  
Mr. Ramnauth Khan.  
Mr. J. R. Lachmansingh.  
Mr. H. L. London.  
Mr. E. Lynch.  
Mr. A. McGarrell and others.  
Mr. D. E. Mason.  
Mr. J. K. Merkle.  
Mr. G. Mohamed.  
Mr. R. A. Mortley.  
Mr. H. Nauth.  
Mr. N. Oodit.  
Mr. C. B. L. Osborne.  
Mr. J. J. T. Patterson.  
Peoples Welfare Association (Mr. S. K. Joseph).

Mrs. E. Phillips.  
Mr. R. St. C. Pillai.  
Mr. I. Pollard.  
Mr. A. Prasad.  
Pandit T. B. Prasad.  
The Proportional Representation Society (Mr. J. Fitzgerald, Director and Secretary).  
Mrs. I. Ramdeen.  
Mr. A. A. Ramlochand.  
Mrs. E. Raymond.  
Mr. J. G. Recce.  
Mr. J. Richards.  
Mr. R. H. Rickford.  
Mr. R. Samaroo.  
Mr. W. Shankland.  
Mr. K. Sing.  
Mr. P. J. Singh.  
Mr. R. Sooknanan.  
iMr. A. Stanford.  
Mr. H. A. Stephens.  
Mrs. Mary Stoby.  
Mr. F. Sukra and others.  
Mr. B. P. A. Ting-A-Kee.  
Mrs. I. Whitehead.  
Mr. C. P. Widdup.

*\* Individuals and organisations listed in sections 1 and 2 who are marked with an asterisk gave their evidence in private session.*

## **APPENDIX V**

### **ITINERARY OF CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION**

January 4th, 1954. X The Chairman, Mr. Woodcock, and the Secretary leave United Kingdom by air from London Airport.

January 5th, 1954. X Sir Donald Jackson arrives in Georgetown from Grenada.

January 6th, 1954. X The Chairman, Mr. Woodcock and the Secretary arrive in Georgetown.

January 9th, 1954. X Commission hold Press conference and visit new housing estate at La Penitence, Georgetown.

January 10th, 1954. X Broadcast by the Chairman.

January 11th, 1954. X Commission travel to New Amsterdam and visit the Jute Research Station and Plantation Rose Hall.

January 12th, 1954. X Commission meet Unions of Local Authorities of Lower and Upper Corentyne and visit Plantations Albion, Skeldon and Port Mourant.

January 13th, 1954. X Commission return to Georgetown.

January 14th, 1954. X Commission travel by river steamer to Christianburg and Mackenzie City.

January 15th, 1954. X Commission tour installation of the Demerara Bauxite Company at Mackenzie and Ituni. Commission return to Georgetown by air.

January 18th-30th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in Georgetown.

February 1st, 1954. X Commission fly to Tumatumari, Kaieteur Falls and Kamarang Mouth.

February 2nd, 1954. X Commission fly to Bartica via Tumereng. Public session at Bartica. Commission visit Willems' sawmill on Kaow Island.

February 3rd, 1954. X Commission visit British Guiana Timbers' concession at Winiperu and hold session.

February 4th, 1954. X Commission travel by launch to Kijk-over-al and H.M. Penal Settlement and return to Georgetown by air,

February 5th-8th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in Georgetown.

February 9th, 1954. X Commission fly to Wichabai and drive to Dadanawa.

February 10th, 1954. X Commission drive to Lethem, visiting Amerindian school at Macusi Village en route. Commission visit Manari.

February 11th, 1954. X Commission drive to Karenambo and return via Pirara to Lethem.

February 12th, 1954. X Public session at Lethem. Commission fly to Georgetown.

February 13th, 1954. X Private session in Georgetown.

February 14th, 1954. X Commission fly to Suddie.

February 15th, 1954. X Public and private sessions at Suddie and Anna Regina. Commission visit Essequibo Boys' School.

February 16th, 1954. X Public session at Charity. Commission visit farms on banks of Pomeroon River and then return by air to Georgetown.

February 17th, 1954. X Public session in Georgetown.

February 18th, 1954. X Commission fly to Christianburg. Public sessions at Christianburg and Mackenzie City.

February 19th, 1954. X Commission return by air to Georgetown and hold public and private sessions.

February 20th, 1954. X Private session in Georgetown.

February 21st, 1954. X Commission fly to New Amsterdam.

February 22nd-24th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in New Amsterdam. Commission return to Georgetown by air.

February 25th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in Georgetown.

February 26th-28th, 1954. X In Georgetown.

March 1st-5th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in Georgetown.

March 6th, 1954. X Private session in Georgetown. The Chairman, Mr. Woodcock, and the Secretary visit the Mahaicony/Abary Rice Scheme.

March 8th, 1954. X Public and private sessions in Georgetown. The Chairman and Secretary visit British Guiana Timbers' sawmill at Houston, Georgetown.

March 9th, 1954. X Press conference and broadcast by the Chairman.

March 10th, 1954. X Commission leave British Guiana by air for Trinidad.

March 11th, 1954. X In Port of Spain, Trinidad.

March 12th, 1954. X Commission fly from Trinidad to Barbados.

March 12th, 1954-April 2nd, 1954. X Commission in Barbados.

April 3rd, 1954. X Commission leave Barbados by air for the United Kingdom.

April 4th, 1954. X Commission arrive at London Airport.

**APPENDIX VI**

**BRIEF NOTES ON P.P.P. MINISTERS**



*Dr. C. B. Jagan.* X Leader of the House of Assembly. Minister of Agriculture, Forests, Lands and Mines. Leader of the P.P.P. President of the Sawmill Workers' Union. Dentist. East Indian. Age 36.

*L. F. S. Burnham.* X Minister of Education. Chairman of the P.P.P. President of the British Guiana Labour Union. Barrister. African. Age 31.

*Ashton Chase.* X Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce. Member of the P.P.P. Executive Committee. General Secretary of the British Guiana Labour Union (Mr. Chase relinquished this office while serving as Minister.) African. Age 28.

*Sidney King.* X Minister of Communications and Works. Assistant Secretary, P.P.P. Primary School Teacher. African. Age 29.

*Dr. P. Lachhmansingh.* X Minister of Health and Housing. Senior Vice-Chairman, P.P.P. President of the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union. Medical practitioner. East Indian. Age 58.

*Jai Narine Singh.* X Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare. Member of the P.P.P. Executive Committee. Barrister. East Indian. Age 46.