

“For A New Political Culture in Guyana”

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“Changes in moral and cultural consciousness precede changes in political behaviour.”¹

The currency of politics is power, and politics is ultimately concerned with the competition of groups within a given society to capture and secure power to determine “who gets what, when and how”². Within each polity, the competition is informed by the political culture, structures, and institutions present in the society. The composition of the particular competing groups varies with the nature of the cleavages in the society: all societies are split economically, most ethnically and some racially. These categories are not mutually exclusive and may occur in varying combinations: in Guyana for instance, race and ethnicity coincide, and are used synonymously. The nature of the political competition depends on which of the cleavages, if any, emerge as the most salient, which in turn, hinges on various contingencies: structural/economic, historical, political and psychological.

Race, in Guyana, transcends class as the dominant cleavage and suffuses politics as well as most other social interactions. A powerful norm, however, has emerged which militates against the public acknowledgement of this fact. The main purveyors of this convention have been the politicians who, desiring to be “national” leaders, engage in ponderous textual hermeneutics of their imported, unadapted “isms”, to declare that ethnicity has no objective existence. In spite of this, these same politicians, by their mobilization tactics and other activities, demonstrate that they have come to a *modus vivendi* with the ethnic imperative.

It is the contention of this paper that until the politicians and other actors in the public arena openly and publicly confront the racial basis of Guyanese political culture and structures, and deal with its consequences affirmatively, we will remain mired in a Sisyphean paradigm. Doomed to struggle strenuously - perhaps even heroically - but ultimately futilely, for the goal they all claim to share in common - a Guyana in which all groups can have their just share of power: political, economic and social.

This paper will firstly examine the forces, which have made race/ethnicity the primary cleavage in Guyana. Secondly it will consider the political devices, which have mediated inter-group relations from the establishment of the colony to the present - domination and force. And thirdly it will propose specific mechanisms, which may assist in moving the political struggle out of the zero-sum arenas in which it is presently waged.³

¹ Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics; A Conceptual Approach*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981. p. 124

² Harold D Lasswell, “Who gets what, when, how”, McGraw-Hill Book Co. New York, London, Whittlesey House, 1936.

³ Much of the theoretical perspective of this paper is adopted from Donald Howowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press. Berkeley, 1985

ETHNICITY AND CLASS

The norm of not publicly conceding the pre-eminence of ethnicity in Guyana is one result of the ideological blinders imposed by a Eurocentric scholarship to which most of the opinion-shaping elite still subscribes. Modern social science developed in a Europe that had already 'solved' its ethnic problem by transmuting it from a 'national' problem into an international one when they formed more or less ethnically homogenous states. "State" and "nation" were generally synonymous to the early European theorists who focused on economic cleavages rather than ethnic ones, which were peripheral to their reality. The few, who did, such as J.S. Mill, pessimistically concluded that: "Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities".⁴

The dominance of ethnicity over class in most multiethnic societies does not imply that class is negated; they both exist objectively and subjectively. The two interact dynamically and as to which preponderates depends on the situation and context. The transformation of class and ethnicity from analytic categories into social groups is a contingency that involves the same set of actors, and where the class and ethnic motives may either conflict or reinforce each other. In multiethnic, multi-class societies, situation which pose perceived threats to the survival of a group, be it violence or domination by other groups, tend to evoke "ethnic" responses while local economic issues, which pose threats at the individual level, may evoke a "class" reaction. In the Guyanese context, for instance, in terms of "bread and butter" issues, class interests tend to be dominant while on questions of national power, ethnic interests generally supersede. While both class and ethnic interest are embedded in the social and political system, the former does not have latter's nexus with the cultural institutions that provide the emotional impact of ethnicity. Consequently, ethnicity is particularly susceptible to politicisation since it fulfils the instrumental economic demands of "class" while simultaneously satisfying the affective, emotional, cultural and moral needs of its group members (ethnic interests). **In a world of scarce resources and all pervasive governments, ethnic political entrepreneurs do not find it difficult to persuade fellow group members that their economic interests are better served if their group controls the state.** The affirmation of themselves as a people, and the economic interest served, mutually reinforce each other.

Like ethnicity, "class" has been variously defined by different commentators, of whom the two most influential have been Karl Marx and Max Weber who both studied advanced Western society. While both defined classes as economic strata within societies, the former distinguished these strata depending on the relationship to the "means of production". These objective criteria thus differentiated between capitalists, large landowners, professionals, petit bourgeois, peasants and proletarians. Weber postulated a more nuanced definition that combined an economic criterion of the group's relationship to the marketplace with two other markers, status and power. He proposed that a group's objective economic situation does not solely determine its position in society. This was quite apparent in Guyana, where, for instance as late as the 1960's, Coloured store assistants in Georgetown were accepted as being in a higher strata than African store assistants even though they were in the same "economic" class: the former group's closer relationship to "honour and power" commanded their higher position.

⁴ J.S. Mill, *Consideration On Representative Government*, (Edited by Currin V. Shields) Bobbs Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1968. (1861)

Ethnicity is based on the perception by a group that it possesses common traits, primarily cultural and ascriptive, and common origins, which taken together make them distinctive from other groups. Objectively, when as in Guyana the ethnic groups are from different races, the exclusiveness of each group is indisputable as the cultural markers of different religions, language, and social institutions become reinforced by the disparate racial characteristics of skin colour, hair texture, etc... The cultural basis of ethnicity makes it impossible to compartmentalise from other aspects of life - political, social, and economic. **Instead of disappearing as most had postulated, the opposite has occurred with ethnicity, as modern man searches for meaning, struggles against atomisation and seeks transcendence. 'The ethnic group is the only social institution that defines and accepts persons for what they are and not by what they do'.**

Subjectively, the individual's perception of self and identity is formed in the early years of socialization, when typically, the ethnic markers themselves become a part of the individual's identity. Class position, on the other hand, is developed much later when the individual enters the wider world as a young adult. The impact for most individuals is more diffused than and not as intense as ethnicity.

Another reason why class interests have not been as dominant, is that an individual's class position is not inherited and inescapable fate as in ethnicity. Class position is one of the many social roles individuals perform and the greater the perceived possibility of individuals escaping their class position, the lesser is class identification and class conflict.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURES

Political culture consists of the attitudes, beliefs, values and orientations about politics in a given population at any given time, while the structures of a political system refer to the regularized activities, which make up that system. Structures are comprised of roles which are guided by norms; the totality of norms or rules which govern a particular structure would be referred to as an "institution". For example, Parliament is a structure, a set of patterned activities of its members, such as the Speaker, Clerk, etc., fulfilling roles defined by rules. Parliament is then, simultaneously an institution - the total set of rules that delimits its permissible activities. "Structure" is a more inclusive term than "institution", since rules rarely describe the full range of incumbents' activities. Political culture and political structures are two sides of the same coin and they interact continuously to shape, influence and direct each other.

Political culture, structures and institutions are typically shaped by a nation's history and evolve out of the interaction, disagreements and conflicts among social forces, as they attempt to resolve their common problems. *In Guyana however, the political culture, structures and institutions were imposed by a colonial power whose concerns were not to solve the contradictions of the society but to rule and extract resources most efficiently for its benefit.*

FORMATION OF A FRAGMENTED SOCIETY

Historical Factors

The indigenous Amerindians of Guyana, soon after the beginning of colonization (early 1600's) were peripheralized to the interior jungles and retain, to the present, an anthropological culture distinct from all other groups in the society. (a) Africans were brought as slaves to provide labour on sugar plantations, which were the *raison de'tre* for the colony's existence. The miscegenation between the white male colonists and the African female slaves introduced a fourth group into society – the “Coloureds”, who were usually given preferential treatment and in many instances, their freedom by their fathers. With the abolition of slavery in 1838, the ex-slaves left the plantation *en masse* and indentured labourers were brought in, undercutting, as planned by the British, the bargaining power of the former group to negotiate higher wages. Portuguese, Chinese, Africans from the West Indies and Africa were introduced but by far the largest source was India. At the abolition of Indian indentureship in 1917, Indians constituted forty-one percent of the population of the colony.

STRUCTURAL

Colonial society was held together by the Whites who utilized the Aristotelian triad of force, education and reward in “governing” the population. The force was used to brutally quash any disagreement with the colonial order – first slave rebellions then later strikes. However, it was the “education” that provided the British with their strongest chains. Through their schools, churches, media and other institutions, they imposed a cultural hegemony over some sections of the population – the Portuguese, Chinese, Coloureds, Africans and some sections of Indians – especially in urban areas. This hegemony, the institutionalisation and idealization of a ‘white – bias’ Creole culture - was accepted as common sense and provided the basis for the “reward”. Those individuals who most rejected their own cultural and ethnic roots and most imitated the whites would be “accepted” but just outside the charmed circle of the white elite. To be second-class was the ultimate reward.

The cultural hegemony was differentially inculcated in the various groups as a consequence of history; the resistance of some groups and conscious British policy. African culture was brutally grounded out of the slaves during the two hundred years of slavery so that only vestiges survived in Creole culture. The Indians retained theirs to a greater extent because of their own high valuation of their heritage and because it suited British Colonial policy. Following the Indian “Mutiny” of 1857, the British Government initiated and pursued a deliberate policy of “divide and rule” in the administration of their colonies; it was most effective. By pitting one “native” group against another they deflected concerted attacks against themselves and consequently minimised the resources they had to deploy in order to maintain control. One popular device they utilised was to selectively recruit various minority groups into the bureaucracy, army and other institutions of British rule. In Uganda for instance, the Baganda was chosen to rule while the Nubians were encouraged into the army.

In colonial Guyana, the Coloureds, and later the Portuguese and Chinese, were given preference to enter the civil service -albeit in the lower ranks - while Africans were favoured for the Police Force. The Portuguese and Chinese were assisted in joining the merchant community through the availability of credit facilities, which were denied to other groups. Coloureds, Portuguese and Chinese became primarily urban dwellers; Africans were channelled into becoming urban workers, subsistence farmers or itinerant miners. Laws effectively precluded the majority of

them from purchasing land, and further for the few, who could, encouraged the subdivision of purchased land into even smaller, non-sustainable plots. The Indians, under the vagrancy laws, exemption from compulsory primary education, and exchange of their contracted return passage to India, for small plots of marginal lands, were retained as a cheap labour force for the sugar plantations. The Amerindians, as previously mentioned, were isolated in the interior of the country where they eked out a subsistence existence.

The segregation of the various ethnic groups into separate economic niches had enduring consequences for their future relationships. It further reinforced the initial cleavages of race, language, religion and culture to demarcate social boundaries that were very distinct, and have proven long lasting. The society was now vertically stratified, with ethnicity and class coinciding in a given stratum. By 1917, ranked in their relationships to the marketplace, power and status (Weberian “Class”) and in their relationship to the means of production, [Marxist “Class”] the Whites were at the apex of society, followed in descending order by the Coloureds, Portuguese, Chinese, Africans, Indians and Amerindians. It was almost the paradigmatic structural hierarchical plural society.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

Groups placed in the same environment share a universal tendency to compare themselves against each other. Even uniethnic or other homogenous societies will subdivide themselves using such neutral criteria, for instance, as domicile – “rural-urban”, coastlanders/hinterlanders - and carry out this comparison process. All Guyanese should be familiar with ethnically homogenous villages or streets, subdividing into “East-Side, West-Side”....etc.

When, as in Guyana, groups with reinforcing cleavages of culture, attitudes, race, religion, etc., are thrown into the same society, comparison is inevitable and inescapable. The intractability of ethnicity lies in this fact: social groups can only be evaluated comparatively. Each category of individuals with similar traits evaluates itself positively and others with dissimilar traits, negatively.

Over the course of time, the process results in stereotypical attitudes being formed as the cultural or physical or other trait is given a social meaning, which is applied, to the whole group. This group comparison is of great significance because of its stress on the “worth” of its members to whom this evaluation becomes an integral part of his/her identity and self esteem. Some individuals may be impoverished but as members of a powerful group, they still have some pride of self worth *vis a vis* members of less “powerful” groups. It is for this reason that lower class members of ethnic groups can be mobilized by their elites: the reward is not only the promise of economic gain which class identification could have provided, but the more powerful psychic gratification of belonging and identifying with a “power group”.

At the abolition of slavery the society was culturally uniform in the anthropological sense but culturally diverse in the sociological sense, with the Whites, Coloureds and Africans forming distinct social strata in descending order of status, power and economic worth. While, for instance, all accepted the values of Creole culture, the Coloureds had different speech patterns, foods habits, dress, etc. from the African masses and considered the latter their social inferiors.

The introduction of Indians into Guyana - with their acceptance of “slave work”, “heathen” religion, unfamiliarity with Creole culture and values - gave the society and especially the Africans, the opportunity to further compare and afterwards designate a new low man on the totem pole. He was the ‘coolie’, whose typical immigrant’s focus on economic advancement was labelled as “mean and stingy”, and stoic acceptance of hardships, “docile”.

The Indian on the other hand, sequestered in the rural plantations came primarily into contact only with rural Africans. The Indians defensively valuing their culture and heritage highly, rejected the “coolie” categorization and when in social comparison, utilized their own criteria to stereotype the African. They were lazy (for rejecting their despised “slave’s” work), hedonistic (for his emphasis on fancy clothes and weekend revelry), licentious (for their serial polygamy) and lacking their own culture (for imitating the British).

One armament used by some groups in the competition over relative group worth, is the notion of ‘legitimacy’ where one group is convinced that it has a greater right than other groups to the national patrimony. In Guyana, as in the West Indies as a whole, because of their prior arrival, greater acculturation to White values, earlier entry into governmental services and politics, Africans and Coloureds viewed themselves as having greater claims to legitimacy than Indians, Amerindians and other groups. The latter groups however rejected this claims and countered that their contribution to the development of the country and the international norms of equality conferred on them as much rights as other groups to all that the country offered.

This assertion of group worth and negative stereotyping of other groups do not ineluctably lead to conflict, nor is it racism as some have asserted. Racism (or ethnocentrism for what matter) is not simply a question of attitudes, but is the coupling of the negative stereotyping with domination of the target group. Racism, then, implies the possession of the power by one group to dominate another group that is identified by racial or ethnic criteria. To deal with racism only at the attitudinal level is to ignore the society’s structural, social, economic, and political relations, which may be infused by the principle of domination.

Africans and Indians had co-existed in Guyana for over one hundred and twenty-four years (1838-1962) without any major confrontation. Groups resort to violence either when they seek to conquer other groups or they are threatened by other groups. The British policy of segregating the groups in different ecological and economic niches mitigated competition. In addition, the Indians deliberately avoided entry into Creole society until they were in a position of strength economically, when they could compete without being overwhelmed. It was in the latter phase that conflict was engendered.

The potential for ethnic conflict in Guyana, or elsewhere, is stimulated therefore, when there are changes that cause one or more ethnic groups in a given society to feel threatened by other groups. Changes that affect the groups’ self worth, especially if they are structural and thus self-perpetuating and widespread, create the greatest potential for conflict. As in all group activities, the strategies employed by the leaders are key elements in determining the course of the conflict and these should also be examined. Political groups become politically functional only when individuals make them so.

CHANGES IN THE STATUS QUO.

Indians began to enter the “open” society in the 1920’s following the end of indenture-ship. By this time they had ideologized their cultural markers and were ready to use them as mobilization tools to end their peripherization in the society. From the independent economic

base they had constructed on rice and petty retailing, they entered the educational, professional, business and civil service fields in ever increasing numbers. Changes, consequently was being generated in the upper stratum, where by the 1930's, the nascent Indian elite were competing with the African and Coloured elite. This competition for the same valued resources [high status jobs] might then explain conflict between the Indian and African elites, but cannot do so for the lower strata. Yet the latter have been most enthusiastic in support of their elites, contrary to their supposedly more rational and rewarding class interests, which would have dictated that they act in concert.

The point however, is that when Indians begun moving into the middle class, the effect was to change the stratification pattern from one where class and ethnicity were coincident, to a cross reticulated one where some East Indians could have had the opportunity of occupying higher strata. However, the unintended consequence was to challenge long-held notions of group worth, especially amongst the Coloureds and Africans. The Coloureds, because of their preferential recruitment into the junior bureaucratic positions of the civil service and their greater emulation of "English culture" had conferred legitimacy upon themselves, as the inheritors of the colonial mantle. This conclusion was now threatened by the arrival of the Indian middle class, the political mobilization of the East Indian masses by Cheddi Jagan in 1950, and the arrival of the universal franchise in 1953,.

Even by 1965, as documented by the International Commission of Jurists, Indians were still greatly under-represented in most key areas of the state sector, in relation to their proportion of the population. Relative to where they were just thirty years before, however, they had made tremendous progress - and at the expense of the Coloured and Africans. Africans had long been pacified by the relative openness of the class closure between them and the Coloured elite: they could enter the coloured ranks through education, life style and money, which state jobs provided, while those who did not, could still aspire to it. Openness of class position kept the lower strata in line.

The "reticulated" stratification system created by the fifties, remains more or less in place to the present. In this situation, while within each ethnic segment there are class differences, the individuals occupying identical, objective class positions in different ethnic categories do not subjectively identify with each other - especially in relation to national power. In Marxist terminology, "classes in themselves" have not become "classes for themselves". To declare that the latter process has not occurred due to "false consciousness", as Marxists do, only serves to move the discussion one step backwards. Why ethnic "false consciousness"?

The discovery that the Indians were mastering the very skills long associated with the ruling class and in a manner more completely that themselves compounded the indignities of the African slave heritage. The final insult was their elites advising them that they had to imitate the very qualities they had derided in the Indians, if they wanted to compete in the modern dispensation. Their group worth, and consequently the individual's self worth, was threatened.

Compounding this psychological insecurity was the demographic factor: the Indians had a much greater birth rate than the African. **Combining their newly acquired skills with an imminent majority of voters, in a political arena governed by majoritarian rules and universal suffrage, it was quite conceivable that the Indians could subordinate the Africans in perpetuity**⁵. Groups in this situation are overwhelmingly initiators of ethnic violence, as they project their anxiety and insecurity onto the other group who are seen as threats to their survival. From this perspective, the response of the African Guyanese is not cultural; the same response

⁵ This is the Ethnic Security Dilemma of African Guyanese

has been elicited in culturally dissimilar groups such as the Malays who are in a structurally similar position economically in Malaysian society. Thus while Burnham, and the C.I.A. might have midwived ethnic conflict in Guyana, they certainly did not create it. **Any proposed solution to Guyana's problem must address this fundamental fear of the African Guyanese; the fear of being swamped and subordinated.**

The Indians and Amerindians, on the other hand, under the international norms of equality assert their right to participate in the body politic in proportion to their share of the population and their contribution to the country. For Indian-Guyanese, even though they may win elections in a free and fair elections it is unlikely they will be allowed to govern since the coercive arms of the state, the bureaucracy and the strategic control of Georgetown are in the hands of their political opponents.⁶ **Any proposal solution to Guyana's problems must also address this integral experience of Indian and Amerindian Guyanese; the experience of being excluded from the corridors of power especially political power.**

This, then, was the situation when the post World War II wave of decolonisation swept the Third World, including Guyana. Decolonisation meant control of the state by internal groups; the rules under which a particular group; could obtain power were set by the British; the arena was political.

MODERN POLITICS IN GUYANA

Guyanese political history exemplifies the axiom that political institutions can provide incentives towards the shaping of political culture and political activity. For instance, before the introduction of universal franchise in 1953, political activism was confined to the middle and primarily urban upper-middle class, who qualified for the franchise. Non-white members were represented by the League of Coloured People [L.C.P.], the B.G. East Indian Association and other ethnic organisations. While ethnically based, their political mobilization was confined to their middle class constituencies, since there was no incentive for them to act otherwise.

The potential for ethnic mass mobilization was recognised by the first mass-based political party in Guyana, the People's Progressive Party (P.P.P.), from its launching in 1950. Despite its leftist orientation, the founders carefully constructed an executive that was ethnically representative of the country's population. Forbes Burnham, for instance was recruited for the Party's Chairmanship, because of his supposedly greater popularity among the Africans than Ashton Chase, another African who was initially selected for the position. The P.P.P. of 1950-55 was not so much a "unitary party" as a coalition of ethnic forces banded together for the anti-colonial struggle. The leadership of Jagan and Burnham, both for ideological [socialist] and personal [each wanted to be leader] reasons insisted that an organic unity between the groups had been struck and that they were "national" not "communal", leaders. Burnham's struggle for control of the P.P.P., the split of the P.P.P. in 1955, and the formation of the People's National Congress [P.N.C.], no doubt reflected Burnham's personal ambitions, but played out as it was against the background of the "challenge" by the Indians, it also was symptomatic of the deep-seated concerns aroused in the African Guyanese population about their future.

⁶ This is the Indian-Guyanese Ethnic Security Dilemma.

The results of the 1953 General Elections marked an important turning point in political mobilization in Guyana. For the first time, it became clear that Guyana would soon be independent and that the question of which group would succeed the British was becoming muddled: the Coloured elite had lost the initiative. Burnham was now beleaguered both internally by the League of Coloured People and the African middle class, and externally by African West Indian leaders, who together raised the threat of Jagan forming an “Indian State” in Guyana.

Among other actions, Jagan’s stand on the proposed West Indian Federation (negative) and his 1956 speech to the P.P.P. Congress (to mobilize Indians he now defined as “progressive”) convinced other Africans leaders that Jagan was pandering to Indians, to the detriment of Africans. In 1958, the coalescence of the Burnhamite faction of the P.P.P., with the United Democratic Party [representing the L.C.P.] and Eusi Kwayana [then Sydney King] to form the P.N.C. can be understood as a reaction to the success of the Jaganite P.P.P. in retaining the Indian vote in the 1957 election, despite the presence of two prominent Indians in the Burnham’s faction. The shift in the P.N.C.’s racial orientation was complete when one of the two Indians died and the other departed the P.N.C. in disagreement with the shift. The P.N.C., though claiming to be a socialist party, was now dominated by the middle-class Coloured and African elite and the strategy and tactics of the party reflected their concerns. The party retained the loyalty of the lower class Africans by evoking racial fears of domination by Indians in the latter group.

Jagan’s developmental plans between; 1957 – 1964, whether rational or not, since they favoured agricultural, were interpreted by Africans as pro-Indian since the latter group were the primarily beneficiaries, as occupiers of the agricultural niche. Even at this early stage of Guyana’s history, the importance of understanding the cleavages in the society before proposing and implementing policy initiatives were clearly demonstrated. The P.N.C.’s mobilization program between 1958 and 1964 emphasised the “threats” to African interests by a “coolie” Government. The “victory march” by the P.P.P. from Berbice into Georgetown after the 1961 P.P.P. electoral victory and the numerous assertions of Indians resurgence, gave credence to such “fears”. Eusi Kwayana was one of the few politicians who understood the bases of African apprehensions in Guyana: structural changes in the society, which precipitated a threatened sense of group worth and fears of being overwhelmed and subordinated. He formed the Association for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa [ASCRIA] to address the needs of the African Guyanese population, in attempting to remove those fears.

THE P.N.C. 1964 – PRESENT

By the early 1960’s Burnham, as the leader of a “dominated” group, had three strategies he could have used, either singly or in combination, to obtain or share power. Firstly, he could have used coercion (riots and revolt), utilitarian trade (bargaining votes for favours etc,) or normative devices (persuading the P.P.P. to observe its own rules so as not to exclude African Guyanese). Burnham chose the first option and precipitated the riots of 1962 – 1963. He undoubtedly received assistance from the C.I.A. of the U.S.A.; but while this may have helped him to select the particular strategy, the primarily lower-class African participated because he was responding to deeply felt fears regarding the East Indians *vis a vis* his future, and projected

those insecurities onto the Indians. A group which views itself as having greater legitimacy is more prone towards violence, when its claims are threatened as we have seen also in Fiji. The situation is even more incendiary when, again as in Fiji, the group which claims greater legitimacy also feels it is about to be dominated.

The P.N.C inherited the colonial state with all its apparatus intact in 1964 and has since then not only maintained the structural pattern of domination established by the British but has successfully increased the extent and reach of that domination. The important difference is that an African and Coloured middle-class elite replaced the departed Whites as the mediating minority group in control.

The armed forces were expanded tenfold, with a ninety percent African membership to provide the coercive basis for the P.N.C.'s rule. Eighty percent of the economy was nationalised and provided rewards far in excess of the "Guyanisation", which the middle class P.N.C. elite had hoped for. Not only was their class expanded but also they obtained a powerful device to keep dissent in line. Party membership and support for the Party's position became prerequisites for maintaining a job. In Burnham's words those who were fired, stayed fired. The Co-operative was to be the vehicle for rewarding the lower class African Guyanese and was to be the cornerstone of the economy. However it was never the top priority of the P.N.C. brass even though they had persuade their supporters it was. When the economy faltered the co-op. concept was the first to be jettisoned.

Indian organisations were co-opted through the opportunism of their leadership, to rubber stamp P.N.C.'s policies. These leaders were placed in highly visible, but essentially powerless positions, to create a façade of a non-racial Government. Those organisations which refused to "cooperate" were denied the same privileges accorded to the other and ultimately the former were miniaturized while the latter became paper organisations with only sycophantic P.N.C. shell "executives".

The Government nationalized the media (radio and news papers), removed the schools from church control, and used these institutions to impose its vision of society, a new hegemony, on the population. Organisations, such as the Cuffy Ideological Institute and the Guyana National Service were created to create the "new" Guyanese.

Indians responded to the pressure by mass migration; joining the earlier wave of migrants who had fled the P.P.P. initiatives during 1957-1964. For those who remained, corruption was institutionalised, as it became the avenue of relating and dealing with the system.

The P.N.C. broadened and institutionalised its control over society as a whole, especially as the economy deteriorated after the late 1970's and the largess to be distributed vanished. The end result was that while the lower-class Africans now became excluded, Indians as a group, whether for political or other reasons, were now discriminated against doubly, first as a race then as a class, by the P.N.C. It is for this reason that the racial exclusiveness of Indians has been reinforced over the past twenty-five years. Exclusion of lower class blacks from the perks of power precipitated the departure of ASCRIA as a supporter of the P.N.C. as far back as 1973. African Guyanese now joined the exodus. Desmond Hoyte, who succeeded Burnham in 1985, has attempted to institute economic reforms while maintaining the authoritarian political

structure he helped construct: he wants Perestroika without Glastnost. The politics of domination continues.

GUYANESE POLITICS and POLITICAL CULTURE

Guyana, throughout its history, has been subjected to only one type of political order - the rule of superior force. The present political culture, which promotes an adversarial form of politics, is an outgrowth of that order: groups constantly manoeuvring to seize control of the state using tactics and a vocabulary very reminiscent of war. The rules of the political warfare, however, break down in divided societies as “victors” subjugate “defeated” adversaries.

The other type of political order, the politics of consensus and cooperation has never been tried in Guyana. This new vision of politics must be inculcated in society, a vision which stresses links rather than cleavages, cooperation rather than competition, bargaining rather than conflict. This new political culture will only be accepted when all, especially the elites share a minimum consensus on goals and values. Changes must begin simultaneously at the top and at the bottom, for it is here that respectively, strategies are formed and followers are mobilized.

*Guyana is not unique with its brand of politics ethnopolitics. In fact, it is the most prevalent form of politics in the modern world. With the phenomenal growth and power of the modern state, especially in the third world where private institutions have not had the opportunity to counteract it, capture of the state apparatus becomes the ultimate prize. Not only for the distributive and allocative powers which the victor has at its disposal, but just as importantly, for the symbolic significance in reinforcing the successful groups' perception of supremacy and worth. Power can thus be an end to itself. "The politicisation of ethnicity translates the personal quest for meaning, belonging and self esteem into a group demand for respect and power."*⁷ *Ethnopolitics respects no boundaries be they ideological or religious, as is witnessed by the travails of the U.S.S.R. Northern Ireland, India etc.*

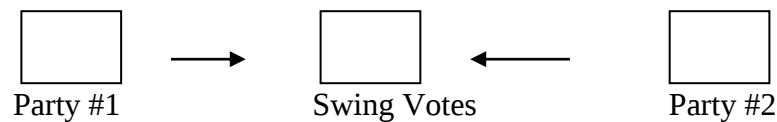
The problems politicised ethnicity spawns are so pervasive, and so intransigent primarily because very few countries have addressed them on their merits. Guyana for instance, again mimicking the Eurocentric bias for equating nation and state, proclaimed its motto “One People, One Nation, One Destiny”, and blithely assumed it had solved the problem. However, the intractability of the problem does not imply that progress is not possible; a small number of countries have implemented several initiatives with varying degrees of success. While there are no guarantees of success it is vital that a new vision imbue our efforts in going forward.

INAPPROPRIATE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND DEMOCRACY IN A PLURAL SOCIETY

Guyanese political culture and structures, with their philosophy and institutions are an inheritance from the British and as discussed previously, had evolved to address the needs of a society, which was more or less ethnically homogenous. The premises of the system reflected the biases of Liberalism, where the supposedly rational individual engages in a variety of roles and belong to a multitude of organisations and groups whose several interests are cross cutting. The

⁷ Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics; A Conceptual Approach*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981. p.

individual, in his political role as a voter, therefore makes a “rational” choice based on the position a given party takes on the issues before the electorate. Even if all voters do not conform to this ideal there are enough who do, to constitute a pool of “swing” votes for which all parties compete. This situation creates a centripetal moderating effect and the parties line up on a continuum on the issues. Since these swing voters may always change their minds, the majority is always careful to be respectful to the minority. The essential principle is “*audiatur et altera pars*” – the other side must also be heard.

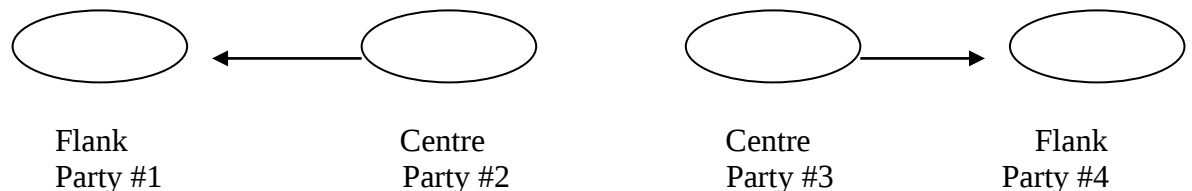


The party system in a divided society operates on totally different basis. Here the individual is a member of groups, which instead of diffusing the cleavages, act to reinforce them. For example, Indians in Guyana will generally attend different places of worship, work in different occupations, have different modes of recreation etc than Africans. The “broker institutions” that each group participates in, and which represents him in the larger society, are also ethnically based trade unions, political parties etc. Affiliation, is thus not based on the party’s position on a variety of issues but generally on one issue: which groups’ interest does the particular party represents? Party membership is generally ascriptive, where individuals perceive their fate in ethnic, rather than individual or class terms. Party competition, in general, reflects ethnic competition. While this situation is less stark than it was in 1964, the ethnic fears are still persistent. Hoyte has been labelled “Desmond Persaud” by some African Guyanese for his supposed encouragement of Indian participation in the economic realm, in the last few years.

Working against parties that attempt to be multiethnic is the existence of “flank” parties or groups. These are found within every ethnic group and take positions which can be considered extreme in favour of their given group. The major “multiethnic” party are forced to respond to their demands so as not to lose support. Since the demands of these flank parties are invariably particularistic and in opposition to the “out” group, the major parties move away from the center as they respond. In Guyana for instance Indian supporters forced the P.P.P. during its term of office, to take such “Indian” positions as control of Christian Church-run schools etc. Between 1964 and 1972, ASCRIA played a similar role with the P.N.C. In the years following, as it institutionalised its dictatorship, the P.N.C. imposed total control over the political system to prevent the survival of other organized flank groups. But based on the experience of other similar societies, in a more open atmosphere, the latent interests can once again be mobilised.

Multiethnic parties have attempted to bridge the ethnic chasm through various mechanisms. In Guyana, the P.P.P. and P.N.C. adopted “socialism”, with its focus on working class unity, transcending race, which had no “socialist content”. The Working Peoples Alliance (WPA), in addition to its socialist ethos (in the early days), introduced a leadership structure where there is no maximum leader but a dual Indian-African leadership. Other parties, and the ones mentioned before, emphasise a non-racial orientation and elect “multi-racial” executives.

In addition to flank pressures, the failure of multi-ethnic parties has been due to the unwillingness of most leaders to accept strong and authentic ethnic leaders from other groups within their parties. The parties invariably end up being dominated by one or the other ethnic group or is perceived by the electorate as such. **Divided societies, after severe setbacks due to ethnic hostilities, are more amenable to accommodative measures.** In Guyana, political parties with the strength to include effective multi-ethnic leadership, and programs to address ethnic fears could probably convert the two older parties into “flank” parties.



In the absence of the true multi-ethnic parties, the party system is ethnically-based and the politics is of a different kind from that of homogenous societies. Leaders become very important since the leader has such deep symbolic meaning for the followers. Demographics are also important. In a country such as Guyana with Indians forming over 50 percent of the population, if in free and fair election Indians vote as a bloc, there is no incentive for them to consider the interests of Africans.⁸ The minority, by their numbers alone, after all, could never become the majority. A minority group in such a situation faces the possibility of permanent exclusion from Governmental power. Its future existence depends on the benevolence of the majority - the latter condition, which flank groups from the majority will ensure, is always precarious. **The politics of “in and out” becomes the politics of “over and under”; submission and domination. Majoritarian politics, while it may be suitable for homogenous societies, pose grave dangers for divided societies.**

Before the P.N.C. captured the power in 1964 and maintained it afterwards by electoral rigging, Arthur Lewis in considering the uniraical, but multiethnic societies of West Africa made some comments which are quite apropos to Guyana.

“The word ‘democracy’ has two meanings”. Its primary meaning is that all who are affected by a decision should have the chance to participate in making that decision, either directly or through chosen representatives. Its secondary meaning is that the will of the majority shall prevail. (In the latter) Politics is what the mathematicians call a zero-sum game.

‘Translated from a class to plural society, this view of politics is not just irrelevant: it is totally immoral, inconsistent with the primary meaning of democracy, and destructive of any prospect of building a nation in which different people might live together in harmony. Are we, on counting heads, to conclude that...The Indians of British Guyana may liquidate the Negroes?’⁹

It is an interesting footnote that even future Nobel Prize winning academics have their ethnic biases. After so poignantly and lucidly capturing the predicament of the African minority

⁸ This is the “African Security Dilemma”. On the other hand, since Africans control the bureaucracy and the coercive arms of the state, the Indian majority governs at their sufferance. This is the “Indian Security Dilemma”.

⁹ W. Arthur Lewis, *Politics in West Africa*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1965. p.64 – 66. This would later be described as the “politics of presence”.

in Guyana, Lewis was never to raise these concerns of participation when the African-dominated minority Government of Forbes Burnham peripheralized the majority Indian segment from power.

In making a distinction between, the procedural and substantive aspects of democracy, Lewis however, highlights the dilemma free and fair elections pose for a minority group in a divided society. Free and fair elections under the present arrangements, to many African Guyanese, imply a much different scenario than to the Indian Guyanese. For many in the former group, in the words of Arthur Lewis, it connotes “liquidation”. It is for this reason that the P.N.C. did not receive much opposition from African Guyanese when they initially rigged elections. The P.N.C. was seen as protecting African interests and if they had to use illegal means to accomplish it, at the worse while unfortunate, it was necessary.

Even after the façade of the P.N.C. as the protector of “African” interests was destroyed in the late 1970’s, the overriding security concerns of this community remain. At present, even with the undeniable hardship faced by African Guyanese, while they agree that the P.N.C. must be removed they are rationally concerned with what will replace it. They certainly do not regard the P.P.P. as their protector. The W.P.A., with the legitimacy conferred by Walter Rodney and its continued strong African Guyanese representation in the leadership, might play this role as might other multiethnic parties with strong, legitimate representatives of the African Guyanese community.

Arthur Lewis however, to his credit, did not only criticise present arrangements but suggested possible avenues out of the ethnic dilemma.

“The democratic problem in a plural society is to create political institutions which give all the various groups the opportunity to participate in decision making... Each group wants to be represented by its own party and no single party is accepted every where... the solution is not the single party but Coalition and Federalism.”¹⁰

OUT OF THE SISYPHEAN PARADIGM

“Democracy” and “plural societies” are not mutually exclusive but on the other hand, one must recognise the obstacles the latter condition poses to the former ideal. The initiatives suggested below may be neither necessary nor sufficient - and are certainly not exhaustive - to institutionalise democracy, but at a minimum they do not shy away from the genesis of the problems. The relationship between political culture and political structures has been delineated: incentives must be given for the political entrepreneurs to channel their activities into more functional paths. While other efforts such as “consciousness raising” at the individual level, are also necessary, they would be much more successful if they were being promulgated in a society where the political system is not opposed, but actually facilitates the process.

Over the last twenty-five years, Guyana has experienced one “solution” to the problem of a plural society: an authoritarian de-facto one party state that attempted to impose unity by militarising the society under a purported non-ethnic ideology. It was a complete failure: new approaches are necessary.

¹⁰ W. Arthur Lewis, *Politics in West Africa*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1965. p..

The proposals attempt to address conflicts in a plural society and this is an essential aspect of the process of integration. The incentives that groups would be given to negotiate and bargain, over time should provide the basis for these groups to recognise their mutual interdependence and unity. The proposals also attempt to address some of the contradictions inherent in the “control” form of governance, utilised by the PNC.

Approaches towards ameliorating the intensity of ethnic politics and moving it away from a zero-sum position fall under two broad approaches: structural and distributive. The two strategies are not mutually exclusive and in fact can be tailored to complement each other. They incorporate five mechanisms to reduce conflict and encourage cooperation.¹¹

1. Dispersal of power from away from the center, towards the periphery where each ethnic group may have a share.
2. Creating incentives for intra ethnic rather than inter-ethnic rivalries.
3. Creating incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation.
4. Initiating policies, which emphasize interests other than ethnic ones.
5. Reducing the gap between the various groups in contested areas.

One important caveat is that innovations should not be frozen in perpetuity; there must be mechanism for incorporating changes as the society inevitably progresses and evolves and as the consequences of the initiatives are greater appreciated.

STRUCTURAL TECHNIQUES

Political structures and institutions provide the framework and incentives through which the moral links essential for encouraging the necessary accommodation and cooperation between parties, to develop. There are two major structural initiatives – Electoral Innovation and Political Devolution.

1. Electoral Innovations

In societies such as Guyana, where there are two major blocks, there are three major proposals (a) Alternation Scheme (b) National Government and (c) Party Fragmentation.

PROPOSAL 1: Alternation Scheme.

That the President of Guyana not succeed himself nor serve for more than two terms. That further, the Presidency should be alternated between the two major races after each term.

The Chief Executive is a very powerful symbolic figure, whose identity, as previously explained, goes directly to two wellsprings of ethnic conflict - group worth and legitimacy. Studies of childhood political socialisation show that the first political role perceived by children tends to

¹¹ Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985. p. 596-600. The elaboration of these policies in the following sections also draw on the treatment by Horowitz, 596-684.

be that of the top executive. By permitting each of the major groups the opportunity of identifying with the occupier of the highest office in the land, the zero-sum aspect of the struggle is reduced.

PROPOSAL 2: National Government

That future Governments of Guyana be comprised of a party or coalition representing a minimum of two thirds of the electorate in Guyana.

While all the major political parties in Guyana, with the exception of the P.N.C., have proposed a Grand Coalition; they appear to view it as temporary “Government of National Reconstruction” that would be disbanded after a set number of years. Politics, after this experiment, would revert to the majoritarian British parliamentary system. This route, of course, ignores the nature of ethno-politics and guarantees a return and perpetuation of the polarization. The two-thirds representational requirement would ensure, in Guyana, that no one ethnic group would dominate and would guarantee accommodative behaviour.

However, for the coalition proposal to be successful there would have to be:

- (a) A commitment from the leaders to form a coalition after each election.
- (b) Bargaining and public agreement on all issues affecting ethnic group members.

It has been the refusal of the P.P.P. and the P.N.C. to acknowledge their uniethnic bases that has led each to claim the legitimacy to represent all Guyanese and has prevented them from working out an equitable power sharing arrangement.

The goals of the coalition would be to:

- (a) Reduce tensions between the supporters of each party.
- (b) Form a government representative of the widest possible cross section of the population.

For the proposal to work the parties would have to support a common presidential candidate and agree on a common program. In the context of Guyanese politics this would be problematic since most parties claim to be multiethnic, leaders have presidential ambitions and there is wide ideological divergence between parties.

The benefits of this arrangement are that:

- (a) Relationships of intimacy develop between leaders as they work together.
- (b) If flank parties develop, as they inevitable will, the ethnic components of the coalition can address their concerns or alternately the flank parties can be brought into the coalition.
- (c) The interests of each group are explicitly represented by their chosen representatives.

PROPOSAL 3: Political Devolution

That Guyana should be reconstituted as a Federal Republic.

In a society where the major ethnic groups each constitute majorities in different areas of the country, political devolution offers the largest number of initiatives towards addressing ethnic insecurity. *There are several variants of devolution ranging from strong Local Government to Federalism.* The latter arrangement offers the most benefits to Guyana.

1. Abolishing winner takes all politics.

In a federal structure, the central government would be concerned with national issues such as defence and foreign policy. There would be substantial autonomy to the separate states, which will guarantee that the inhabitants of each state have real power over their lives. Police functions, local development. Local taxation and spending are only a few of the functions of the State Governments. African Guyanese, for instance, would possess real power in Demerara while the same would be true for Indian Guyanese in Berbice or Amerindian Guyanese in the interior.

2. Removing the struggle for power at the center.

When the center does not possess all power, the struggle to control it is not as intense. The competition will be distributed among the states as groups within attempt to control. National politics will not be a zero sum game; “losers” will still be guaranteed power at the state level.

3. Creating intra-ethnic rivalry

Fragmentation of the electorate leads to a lesser possibility of the majority dominating. East Indian politicians, dominant in Berbice or Essequibo are more likely to see themselves as rivals for power at the center. Additionally, within a state, since one ethnic group will have an overwhelming majority, intra-ethnic rivalry will develop since no threat will be perceived to be coming from ‘out groups’ and there will be no plea for ‘not splitting the vote’.

4. Encouraging coalitions at the center

In a situation where different interests will be represented at the center, there will be incentives for cooperation to ensure the implementation of common programs.

5. Creating a fluidity and multipolar balance rather than the previous bipolar confrontation.

As the various states manoeuvre for the maximum benefit for their citizens, the alliance will shift depending on the issue. This should move the conflict from the more volatile bipolar mode.

6. Furthering the political philosophy of Government being responsive to the people and never overwhelming them.

The closer Government is to the people the more responsive it ought to be. The state government should be the most sensitive to the idiosyncrasies of its citizens and region. Local courts for instance would be most sympathetic to autochthonous needs.

7. Creation of a dual Legislative body

The federal structure facilitates the formation of an upper house comprised of either nominated or elected membership from each state. In the former scenario, those eligible for membership to the upper house would be individuals who have distinguished themselves in their fields of endeavour. In the latter case elections could proceed as with the elections for the assembly. In either case the various groups in the society would have limited vote power over legislation passed by the lower house.

(b) PROPOSAL 4: Distributive policies

That percentage participation targets be established in key sectors of the economy to ensure the equitable representation of all ethnic groups in the society.

Distributive policies are focused towards reducing primarily the gross representational disparities in “valued” areas that are found between groups. In Guyana, for African Guyanese this would be in the areas of business and farming and for Indian Guyanese, in the bureaucracy, police and armed forces.

Distributive policies are the most politically volatile and sensitive. In the long term, if for instance quotas are established in the identified areas to rectify the present imbalances there is the danger of demographic developments later making these same quotas a new area of conflict. Historically, once adopted they are difficult to change. Flexible arrangement of periodic renegotiations of quotas might resolve this objection, if instituted from the inception of the program.

A more substantive objection is that by mandating equitable ethnic participation in all sectors, the ethnic division of labour is broken down and ethnic competition is intensified. In addition care has to be taken that “affirmative action” policies taken do not lead to a dependency syndrome being created in the beneficiaries. Rather than set rigid quotas, participation goals can be targeted within a set time frame.

In areas such as business and agriculture, where it is not simply a matter of affirmative hiring practises, long-term training programs would have to be established to ensure viability of the programs. The dismal failure of the co-op. projects in the 1970’s where land and resources were simply given over to primarily African Guyanese, without the necessary preparatory training and support should be an object lesson.

PROPOSAL 5: Decentralisation of powers of Central Government.

That the executive powers of the Government be separated from the legislative powers and that the independence of the judiciary be further strengthened.

The present system whereby the President is the Head of State, Head of the Executive, then through his Prime Minister, Head of the Legislature and by his powers of appointment very influential over the Judiciary, lends itself to the “commandantist” form of Government. By separating these various Government powers tendencies towards authoritarianism would be dampened while competition for the independent offices would encourage intra ethnic rivalries.

The Presidency would be elected independently of the members of the Assembly. He would be the Head of State with some Executive Powers such as in the French Presidency. The Prime Minister would be selected by the party commanding the support of a two-thirds majority of the Assembly. The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers would be responsible to the Assembly.

The members of the Judiciary would be nominated by the President but would have to be approved by a majority of the assembly.

PROPOSAL 6: Non-Hegemonic Integration: Unity in /diversity.

That the different cultural strains in the society be encouraged to flourish.

The notion that some groups must reject or discard their cultural heritage to participate in the polity must be rejected. It arises from a barbaric past when nations were forced to “assimilate” by force. Even in these circumstances, ethnic bonds were never completely annihilated – witness Scottish nationalism almost four hundred years after their conquest.

Modern communications facilitates the dissemination and forging of ethnic bonds. Modern international norms of “equality” and “self determinations” of peoples militate against cultural hegemony being accepted by even subordinate groups.

Rather than the “melting pot” ideal of integration, the “salad bowl” model should be encouraged. Let each group discover their roots and shape their cultural practise to suit modern exigencies. As each group recognises its own authentic identity they will view other groups with less defensiveness, and be more open to acceptance of the worth of other cultures and values.

PROPOSAL 7: Uniform Economic Development.

That Economic Development plans take into cognisance the ethnic specialisation in the country.

Because of ethnic groups occupying different economic and ecological niches, economic development must be structured so that each group appreciates that it is obtaining its equitable share of the economic pie.

The present system of “planning” by yearly budgets and five year plans should be worked out jointly by the President, the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, be guided by the above policy and must be approved by both houses of the Parliaments.

PROPOSAL 8: Ethnic Impact statement

That in the formulation of any government programme or policy its ethnic impact be evaluated and made known with the reasons stated if any ethnic group(s) is inordinately affected negatively or positively.

No matter which party forms the Government, we accept its actions have to be conducted on behalf of all the people: the State is our joint venture. Because every initiative, policy, programme of the government will be evaluated through ethnic lens by the populace after it is executed, to wait for this inevitable ethnic post mortems is to ensure there will be resentment. The old cliché still holds: justice must not only be done, it must be seen to be done. An “Ethnic Impact Statement” on Governmental activities would go a long way to introducing the latter happy condition.

PROPOSAL 9: REPRESENTATIVE DISCIPLINED FORCES

Cynthia Enloe, the scholar of ethnic societies and the military, who studied Guyana first hand, concluded after a worldwide survey “The resolution of inter-ethnic conflict demands that armies and police forces be examined not as neutral instruments that cope with problems, but as potential causes of the problems as well.”¹²

¹² Cynthia Enloe, “Police and Military in the resolution of Ethnic Conflict”:

The composition of the Army, police, and all the other coercive arms of the state must reflect the several groups in the population in proportion to their numbers.¹³ This would simultaneously help to professionalise the Disciplined Forces and alleviate the Indian-Guyanese Ethnic Security Dilemma.

CONCLUSION

The “control” form of inter-group relations is a zero sum game: the subordinated group inevitably rebels - whether actively or passively - against its oppressors. The dominant groups gradually undergo a callusing of their moral fibre as they implement over time, their policies of suppression and domination. At the economic level there has to be a continued decline for no system can be productive in the long term under conditions of subjugation. The slave owners discovered this long ago.

Politically, to maintain their rule while simultaneously attempting to convince a sceptical world of their legitimacy becomes increasingly difficult. Socially, even among their own beneficiaries, the paternalistic policies perpetuate the very shortcoming they were attempting to eliminate. For these and other reasons, no dictatorship has ever survived in perpetuity. The political system must be institutionalised with a “variable sum” approach where all groups in Guyana may have their equitable share of political, economic and social power.

While, as emphasized through out this paper, mechanisms of cooperation and bargaining are problematic in their implementation and sustenance, this should not deter policy makers from making a start. As one commentator has said, true reality, is contained not in the ‘how’ but in the ‘not yet’ that is, in the future and in all that can come into being, but has not yet done so because of the restraining forces of the present.¹⁴ Once we have identified and analysed the constraints we must proceed with programs to create the true reality.

In Guyana after twenty-five (25) years of P.N.C. rule, the African Guyanese, as all other Guyanese, are worse off economically than they were in 1964. This has served to create a much greater class consciousness and a greater recognition of the need for cooperation than ever before. The limits of this change, however were demonstrated during the bauxite and sugar workers strikes of 1989 when African workers were more concerned with the economic issues, than the political ones. The fears of domination and extinction still persist. Some have asserted that a denial of ethnicity, and the introduction of ideologies such as socialism, which “transcend” ethnic labels are more fruitful paths to embark on. The ethnic sentiments in the U.S.S.R. after seventy (70) years of socialism and Gorbachev’s admission that ethnicity is his number one problem, should give pause to such complacency.

While ultimately organic unity between all ethnic groups must be forged, in the short term the P.N.C. must be removed from power since their activities militate against all unity initiatives. While the peripheralization of all Guyanese poor has alienated has served to reinforce

¹³ This had been the intent of the British government when the governor formed the ethnically balanced Special Services Unit (SSU) in 1964 before Independence. As a prerequisite for granting independence the British insisted the PNC government in 1965 invited the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to analyse the ethnic composition of the state institutions especially the police. It recommended that 75% of all future recruits be drawn from the Indian community until they reached parity in numbers. As part of the 2000 post-Herdmanson Accord agreement a Disciplined forces Commission was supposed to be constituted to look at the composition of the Disciplined Forces. In 2004, with the present president as one of its members, it recommended that the Forces be made more representative of the country’s population.

their ethnic solidarity, with all the “gains” made in class solidarity, witness the two hundred thousand Guyanese who have fled to New York: Indians settled in the East (Queens) and the Africans in the West (Brooklyn) and never do the twain meet.

Those who wish to engender social changes have to start from the people are - not where they ought to be. The foregoing proposals are meant to do that, not to reify ethnicity, but as an intermediate way station from the authoritarian “control” form of rule to the democratic consensus all Guyanese seek. As the social consciousness change so should all institutions, including political ones.

The initiatives proposed are not meant to be carved in stone; the goal is to create conditions where the various groups in the society may become less suspicious of each other and to eventually see themselves as citizens of Guyana, with equality of opportunity in all spheres of activity. Simultaneously then, with the cooperation of the leadership as the top, programs will have to be implemented to encourage cooperation at the mass level. Equality of integration into the power relations of the society is a very powerful and potent first step toward such cooperation.

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¹ Latin American Bureau, *Guyana, Fraudulent Revolution*, London, 1984..

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