

# Guyana General and Regional Elections

19 March 2001

The Report of the  
Commonwealth Observer Group

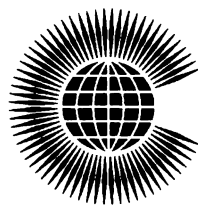


COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

# **Guyana General and Regional Elections**

19 March 2001

The Report of the  
Commonwealth Observer Group



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
United Kingdom

© Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001

*Other publications in the Commonwealth Observer Report series:*

The General Elections in Malaysia, 1990  
Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, 1991  
Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Zambia, 1991  
Elections to the Constitutional Commission in Seychelles, 1992  
The General and Regional Elections in Guyana, 1992  
The Presidential Election in Ghana, 1992  
Referendum on the Draft Constitution in Seychelles, 1992  
The Presidential, Parliamentary and Civic Elections in Kenya, 1992  
Violence in South Africa, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa, Phase I, October 1992–January 1993  
Violence in South Africa, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa, Phase II, February–May 1993  
South Africa in Transition, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa, Phase III, August–December 1993  
The General Election in Lesotho, March 1993  
The Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Seychelles, July 1993  
The National Assembly Election in Pakistan, October 1993  
The End of Apartheid: The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group to the South Africa Elections, April 1994  
*ISBN 0 85092 410 3, £9.95*  
The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Malawi, May 1994 *ISBN 0 85092 409 X, £6.95*  
The Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Namibia, December 1994 *ISBN 0 85092 417 0, £5.95*  
The General Election in St Kitts and Nevis, July 1995 *ISBN 0 85092 466 9, £5.95*  
The Union Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Tanzania, October 1995 *ISBN 0 85092 467 7, £5.95*  
The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, February 1996 *ISBN 0 85092 462 6, £5.95*  
The Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, June 1996 *ISBN 0 85092 492 8, £5.95*  
The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ghana, December 1996 *ISBN 0 85092 497 9, £5.95*  
The General Election in Pakistan, February 1997 *ISBN 0 85092 500 2, £5.95*  
The Parliamentary Elections in Cameroon, May 1997 *ISBN 0 85092 513 4, £5.95*  
The General Election in Papua New Guinea, June 1997 *ISBN 0 85092 514 2, £5.95*  
The General and Regional Elections in Guyana, December 1997 *ISBN 0 85092 537 1, £6.85*  
The Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Seychelles, March 1998 *ISBN 0 85092 554 1, £6.85*  
The Lesotho National Assembly Elections, May 1998 *ISBN 0 85092 560 6, £7.50*  
The National Assembly and Presidential Elections in Nigeria, February 1999 *ISBN 0 85092 612 2, £9.50*  
The General Election in Antigua and Barbuda, March 1999 *ISBN 0 85092 613 0, £7.50*  
The National and Provincial Elections in South Africa, June 1999 *ISBN 0 85092 626 2, £7.95*  
The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Mozambique, December 1999 *ISBN 0 85092 638 6, £7.95*  
The Parliamentary Elections in Zimbabwe, June 2000 *ISBN 0 85092 652 1, £9.95*  
The Elections in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, October 2000 *ISBN 0 85092 679 3, £9.95*  
The Trinidad and Tobago General Election, December 2000 *ISBN 0 85092 680 7, £9.95*

*Pictures by Lady Carol Kidu, Brian Pearson, Cheryl Dorall and Christopher Child*

Designed by Khoi Kieu  
Printed by Direct Image

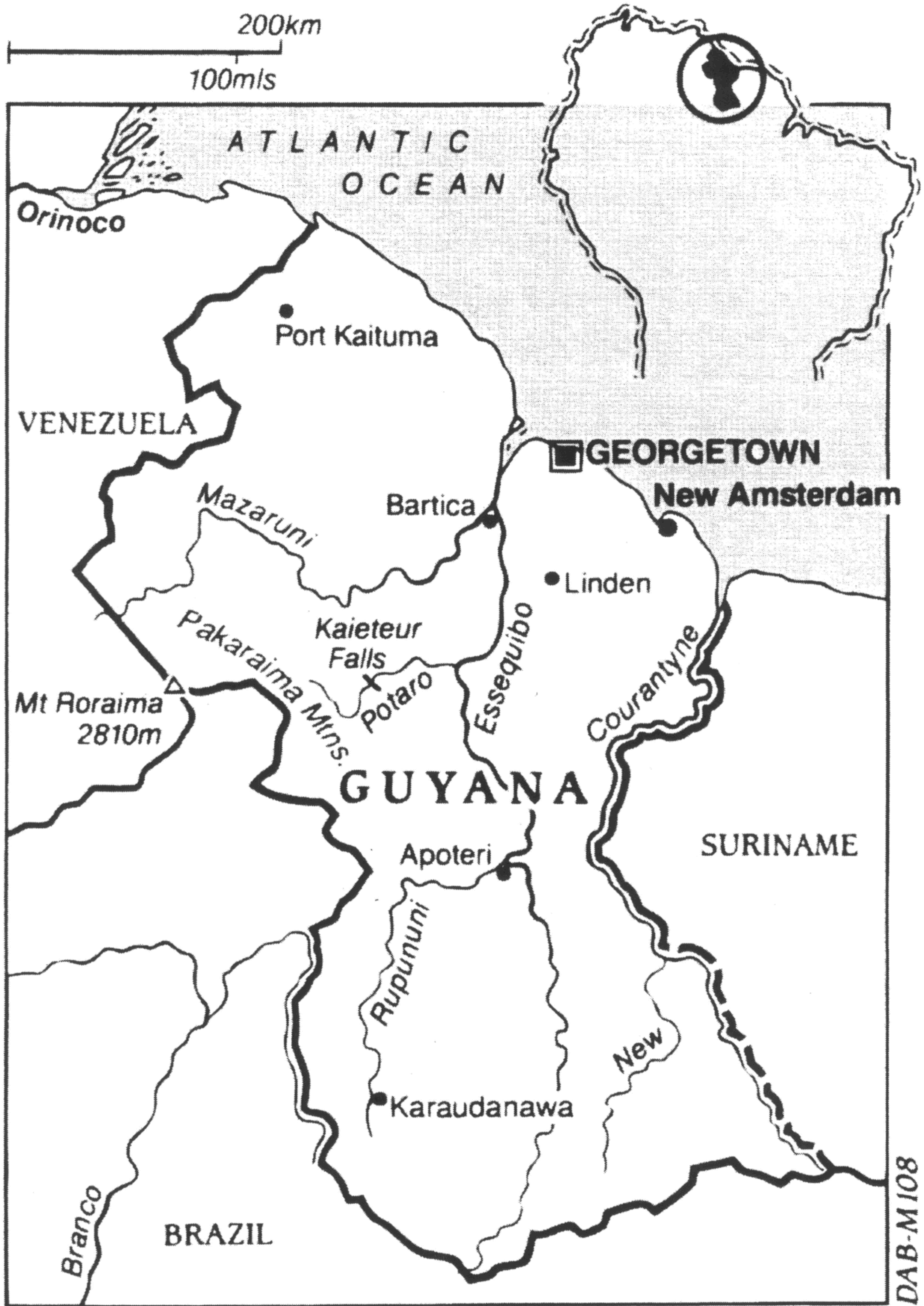
ISBN: 0 85092 684 X

# Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Map of Guyana	v
Letter of Transmittal	vi
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Invitation	1
Terms of Reference	1
Activities of the Group	2
<b>Chapter 1: Political Background</b>	<b>4</b>
Historical Overview	4
Recent Elections	5
Political Developments 1998-2001	6
Political Parties	8
<b>Chapter 2: The Electoral Framework and Preparations for the Elections</b>	<b>10</b>
The Constitution	10
Election Laws and Regulations	10
Elections Commission	10
Electoral System	11
Voter Registration	12
National Identification Card Process	12
Voter Education	13
Selection and Training of Officials	13
Materials	14
Nominations	15
Observers	15
Issues Prior to the Poll	15
<b>Chapter 3: The Campaign and the Media</b>	<b>17</b>
Campaign Issues	17
Violence	19
Presidential Debates	19
The Role of the Media	20
Code of Conduct and Media Monitoring	20
The Print Media	21
Television and Radio	22
The Talk Shows	22
Political Advertising	23
Opinion Polls	23
Impact of the Media	23
<b>Chapter 4: Poll, Count and Results Process</b>	<b>25</b>
Introduction	25
Disciplined Forces Voting – 12 March 2001	26
Voting – 19 March 2001	27
The Counting of Votes	35
The Results Process	36
Observers	37

<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>		<b>39</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>		<b>42</b>
<b>Annexes</b>		
Annex I	Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group	43
Annex II	Arrival Statement, 12 March 2001	46
Annex III	Schedule of Engagements	48
Annex IV	Deployment of Commonwealth Observers	50
Annex V	Observation Notes and Check List for Polling Station Visits	51
Annex VI	Interim Statement, 20 March 2001	56
Annex VII	Departure Statement, 24 March 2001	57
Annex VIII	Media Code of Conduct	58
Annex IX	Code of Conduct for Political Parties	63
Annex X	Party Newspaper Advertisements	65
Annex XI	Elections Commission Voter Information	67
Annex XII	Information from the Domestic Election Observers	68

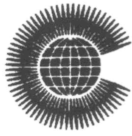
# Map of Guyana



□ international airport

Source: The Commonwealth Yearbook 1997 © Hanson Cooke Ltd

# Letter of Transmittal



## Commonwealth Observer Group

Guyana General and Regional Elections, 19 March 2001

Tel: 00 592 22 57775  
Fax: 00 592 22 57666

Main Street Plaza Hotel  
45 Main Street  
Georgetown  
Guyana

24 March 2001

Dear Secretary-General,

We have now completed our report to you on Guyana's 2001 General and Regional Elections and forward it with this letter, for your consideration.

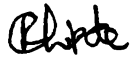
We wish to record our appreciation to the people of Guyana for the welcome and co-operation afforded us and to the Elections Commission for their assistance in facilitating our work and thank you for inviting us to observe these elections. Most of all we thank you for having assigned to us caring and professional staff support. Without their help and guidance our work would not have been possible.

As you will see from the report, there was much that was good in these elections, despite the shortcomings. Overall, while there is a great deal of work to be done to improve election arrangements for the future, we believe that these elections provide a basis for Guyana to go forward. The key ingredient in the weeks and months to come will be a constructive approach from all sides and commitment to a future of inclusiveness, harmony and mutual trust and confidence. Guyana can have a bright future: it is in the hands of the people of Guyana to bring that about.

We leave Guyana with vivid memories of young people committed to the democratic process. We feel this augurs well for the future. Please be assured, Excellency, of our highest consideration.

  
**Jeremia Tabai**  
Chairperson

HE Rt Hon Don McKinnon  
Secretary-General  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
Pall Mall  
London SW1Y 5HX  
UNITED KINGDOM



Ms Rindai Chipfunde



Ms France Demianenko



Mr Dayananda Dissanayake



Lady Carol Kidu MP



Mrs Leela Dookun Luchoomun MP



Hon Simon G. Mwila MP



Ms Florizelle O'Connor



Mr Brian Pearson



Mr Cecil Ryan



Mr Phil Whelan



**THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP . . .** (back row from left) Simon Mwila, Rindai Chiptunde, Cecil Ryan, Phil Whelan, Leela Dookun Luchoomun, Brian Pearson, (front row from left) Lady Carol Kidu, Florizelle O'Connor, Jeremia Tabai (Chairperson), France Demianenko, Dayananda Dissanayake

# Introduction

## Invitation

Following receipt of a request from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, the Hon Clement Rohee, on 10 October 2000 inviting the Commonwealth Secretary-General to constitute a Commonwealth Observer Group for the 2001 General and Regional Elections, the Secretary-General decided – in line with established practice – to send an Assessment Mission to Guyana,



### **OBSERVERS DEPLOY . . .**

Commonwealth Observers Phil Whelan and Leela Dookun Luchoomun prepare for their flight to the interior. Members of the Group were deployed in seven of the ten electoral districts and on polling day saw voting at 205 of the 1,894 polling stations . . .

comprising three Commonwealth Secretariat officials. The mandate of the Mission, which was in Guyana from Thursday, 16 to Thursday, 23 November 2000, was to establish whether there was broad support for the presence of Commonwealth Observers, prior to, during and immediately after the elections, in particular from the main political parties. On the basis of meetings with political parties and civil society groupings the Assessment Mission concluded that there was broad support for the presence of a Commonwealth Observer Group for Guyana's elections. A Commonwealth Observer Group of 11 Observers, supported by seven staff from the Commonwealth Secretariat, was subsequently constituted by the Secretary-General in accordance with the Commonwealth Guidelines for the Establishment of Observer Groups. The composition of the Group, which was led by Mr Ieremia Tabai, is set out in *Annex I*.

## Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for the Observer Group were incorporated in the Secretary-General's letter inviting each of us to participate in this mission. They were as follows:

*The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Government of Guyana. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the General Election in accordance with the laws*

of Guyana. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgement accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Guyana, the Guyana Elections Commission, the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments.

## Activities of the Group

An Advance Group, comprising an Observer and one member of the Secretariat staff, arrived in Georgetown on 26 February to assess conditions in

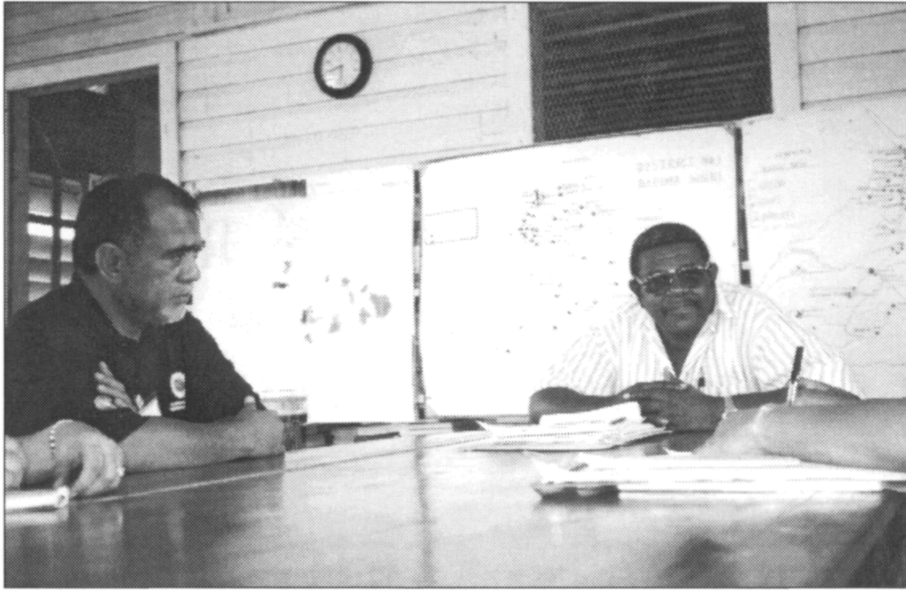
the run-up to the elections. They met with political parties and election officials and travelled extensively throughout Guyana to speak to officials and aspirant electors. The rest of the Group assembled in Georgetown, Guyana on 11 March 2001 and was briefed by the leader of the Secretariat team, Ms Judith Pestaina, other Secretariat staff members and the Advance Group. The following day, Monday, 12 March, an Arrival Statement was issued at a press conference (see *Annex II*). During Monday, part of the Group observed the Disciplined Forces Poll in the Georgetown area. We all attended a briefing with the Chairperson of the Guyana Elections Commission, Major-General (Rtd) Joseph Singh.

On 13 and 14 March we held a series of meetings in Georgetown with representatives of the main political parties contesting the elections, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), representatives of the Amerindian community, media organisations, women's groups, Commonwealth High Commissioners accredited to Guyana and other international observers. We also met with the Commissioner of Police and his Deputies at the Police Headquarters in Georgetown. Some members of the Group had a further meeting with an Elections Commission official on Thursday, 15 March. Our schedule of engagements is at *Annex III*.

From 15 to 20 March Observers and Secretariat team members were deployed in Regions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10 to assess first hand the state of electoral preparedness throughout the country. (Details of our deployment are given at *Annex IV*.) During this time our Chairperson travelled widely in Georgetown and its environs. In addition, on 16 March our Chairperson undertook visits to a number of regions and met with election officials and electors.



**... AND GET TO KNOW THEIR AREA . . .** the Observers spent the four days before election day familiarising themselves with their area and meeting community leaders, as here: Lady Carol Kidu meets the captain of the Red Hill Amerindian community . . .



. . . Meanwhile, Chairperson Jeremia Tabai (*on the left*) visited a number of the electoral districts: here he learns about polling day arrangements from a Returning Officer

On polling day we observed voting at 205 polling stations across the country. We observed the count at 12 stations. On our return to Georgetown a number of us were able to observe the tallying process at the Elections Commission Headquarters.

During our visits to polling stations we spoke to election officials, party representatives, international and local observers, security personnel and voters themselves. During our deployment we were assisted by observation notes and check lists (see examples at *Annex V*). On the basis of our reports during deployment, our Chairperson issued an Interim Statement at 7.30 p.m. on 20 March 2001. A copy of this statement appears at *Annex VI*.

Our Group reassembled in Georgetown on 20 March for a debriefing and to finalise our Report. We departed from Guyana on 24 March 2001 (see *Departure Statement at Annex VII*).

# Political Background

## Historical Overview

Since the end of the Second World War, Guyana's history has been dominated by two charismatic leaders: the lawyer Forbes Burnham and an American-educated dentist, Cheddi Jagan. Trade unions developed in the early 20th century, but the first major popular political organisations of the modern period were the Political Affairs Committee founded by Dr Jagan and the British Guiana Labour Party, led from 1949 by Mr Burnham. Both were established in 1946 and combined in 1950 to create the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which pressed for universal suffrage and later for independence from the United Kingdom.

The PPP dominated most of the 13 years prior to independence, even after a serious split in 1955 and the subsequent formation under Mr Burnham of the People's National Congress (PNC). The PPP won the elections of April 1953, although the administration it formed was dismissed by the UK (which claimed that it was engaged in "communist subversion") after 135 days. It won again in August 1957 and August 1961 and Dr Jagan became Prime Minister in the first internal self-government administration. The PPP emerged from the 1964 elections – held under a British-imposed proportional representation system and following riots, strikes and disturbances allegedly fomented by the CIA – as the largest single party, but lost office because the other two parties – the PNC and The United Force (TUF) – were able to form a coalition. It was consequently a Burnham-headed PNC-TUF coalition government that led the country to independence two years later, on 26 May 1966.

There have been six elections since independence (1968, 1973, 1981, 1985, 1992 and 1997), however it is only the latter two that the international community consider to have been credible. All four of the elections prior to 1992 (1968, 1973, 1981 and 1985) were won by the PNC, on each occasion with a large majority, and amid opposition allegations of electoral malpractice. Forbes Burnham was Prime Minister from 1964 and President from 1980 (when constitutional amendments created an executive presidency) until his death in August 1985. Mr Burnham's leadership was characterised by authoritarian rule. In June 1980 Dr Walter Rodney, leader of the Working People's Alliance (WPA), which had been formed in 1979 as an independent multiracial Marxist political party in opposition to PNC domination, was assassinated. Dr Rodney's assassination, which was widely believed to have been carried out by government forces, heralded an era of political repression that only ended with the 1992 elections.

Mr Burnham was succeeded by Desmond Hoyte, hitherto the First Vice-President and Prime Minister, who as President redirected policy away from the "socialist co-operatism" of the Burnham years and was lauded by *The Economist* as realising a "considerable achievement". None the less, Mr Hoyte's period in power aroused considerable domestic opposition and the period 1985-90 was dominated by further economic deterioration, food shortages,

currency devaluation, political instability, social unrest, industrial disruption, and the breakdown of public services. Mounting pressure for political reform resulted in the formation of a movement for legal and constitutional change – Guyanese Action for Reform and Democracy (GUARD) – in January 1990, and culminated in the holding of the General and Regional Elections under relatively democratic conditions in October 1992.

Against a backdrop of political unrest, the October 1992 elections were narrowly won by the PPP in alliance with a political movement of business people and professionals known as ‘Civic’, with Dr Jagan taking office as President. When Dr Jagan died from heart failure in March 1997, he was succeeded as President by the then Prime Minister, Samuel Hinds, who subsequently appointed the former President’s widow, Janet Jagan, as Prime Minister and Vice-President.

Following the PPP/Civic’s victory in the December 1997 elections, Mrs Jagan was declared President. However, on 11 August 1999, after Mrs Jagan resigned on grounds of ill health, Bharrat Jagdeo (the erstwhile Minister of Finance) was appointed as President.

## **Recent Elections**

### **The 1992 General and Regional Elections**

The 1992 elections, held on 5 October after being postponed from 1991 following problems with the register, occurred against a backdrop of civil protest and a State of Emergency, which was declared by President Hoyte on 28 November 1991 and lasted until June 1992.

The elections resulted in a narrow victory for the PPP, in alliance with the ‘Civic’ movement, ending 28 years of PNC rule. The election results provoked riots in Georgetown in which two people were killed and many injured. However, international observers were satisfied that the elections had been fairly conducted, and on 9 October Dr Jagan took office as President, promising to continue the economic liberalisation begun by Mr Hoyte.

Despite noting problems relating to printing errors on the ballot papers, about which voters were informed, persistent discrepancies about the Voters’ Lists, along with various minor irregularities, the Commonwealth Observer Group concluded that “taking the country as a whole, the organisation and conduct of the poll were properly and impartially carried out”. On balance, the voters had had the opportunity “to freely choose the political party of their choice” and the results reflected “the genuine will of the Guyanese people”.

### **The 1997 General and Regional Elections**

The 1997 General and Regional Elections in Guyana – held on 15 December 1997 – were overshadowed by protests and violent disruptions following polling. Rising tensions over the probable outcome were exacerbated by delays in the verification of votes and various legal injunctions, which were taken out at the High Court against the continuation of the tally. On 19 December, with some 90 per cent of the votes counted, the Chairman of the Elections Commission – Doodnauth Singh – announced that Janet Jagan had established an unassailable lead and she was inaugurated as President. Mr Singh’s actions

.....  
*The 1997 General and Regional Elections in Guyana – held on 15 December 1997 – were overshadowed by protests and violent disruptions following polling*  
.....

---

*In November 2000 it was announced by the Elections Commission that the elections would not be held on 17 January 2001 as had been agreed following the Herdmanston Accord. The postponement was, in the main, due to an initial lack of agreement on the crucial issue of the proportional allocation of Regional seats in the National Assembly*

---

were strongly criticised by opposition parties as being premature. On 31 December the final election results were declared, returning a PPP/Civic coalition majority in the National Assembly. This result was disputed by the PNC, resulting in rioting and violence in Georgetown.

The biggest problems in the 1997 elections seem to have related to the tallying and declaration of results. A significant number of Statements of Poll were unsigned or were absent, or they had not been sent in the designated envelopes provided separately. There was consequently a severe delay in the declaration of results. It should also be noted that communication systems between the regions and the centre were poor, resulting in verification remaining incomplete as late as three days after polling.

The role of Voter Identification Cards in the 1997 elections later received much attention as a consequence of a legal challenge to the Elections Law (Amendment) Act No. 22 of 1997 (exercise of the franchise was dependent on possession of a Voter Identification Card), with dramatic consequences for the 2001 elections, discussed below.

The conclusion of the Commonwealth Observer Group report was that “whilst there were shortcomings, most were not significant enough to affect the integrity of the electoral process on polling day”. Apart from “the poor state of the computer database for processing the tallying and the results” shortcomings noted by the Group included:

- the inadequacy of the tallying process;
- failure of some Presiding Officers to sign their returns and also to post their results returns in envelopes to be delivered separately to the Deputy Returning Officers (some posted their results returns in ballot boxes); and
- inadequacies in the Elections Commission’s communication mechanisms.

Furthermore, the Group noted in its report that it hoped that electoral reform would be forthcoming, that the issue of Voter Identification would be clarified, and that improved mechanisms for tallying votes and communication would be devised for future elections.

## **Political Developments 1998-2001**

In early January 1998, in the light of continued unrest over the 1997 election results, the Government accepted a proposal by private-sector leaders for an international audit of the elections. The PNC, however, rejected the proposal and demanded instead the holding of fresh elections. The resulting protests prompted the Government to introduce a one-month ban on public assemblies and demonstrations in the capital. Nevertheless, public protests by PNC supporters continued in defiance of the ban. In mid-January, the Herdmanston Accord, signed by Mrs Jagan and Mr Hoyte, was agreed as a means of ending the months of political impasse following the 1997 elections.

### **The Herdmanston Accord**

The Herdmanston Accord, brokered by a three-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Commission, was signed on 17 January 1998. Most importantly, the Accord established an agenda of reforms to be implemented –

through the establishment of a Constitutional Reform Commission (CRC) – before the next elections, which, in terms of the Accord, were to be held within 36 months, on 17 January 2001. The Accord also stipulated an immediate moratorium on public demonstrations and marches. Finally, the Accord made provision for an independent audit of the December 1997 elections, to be carried out under CARICOM auspices, after consultation with the leaders of the political parties that participated in the elections.

### **The CARICOM Audit**

In February 1998, following the signing of the Herdmanston Accord, the PPP/Civic alliance and the PNC agreed to a CARICOM audit of the election results, which took place between 19 March 1998 and the end of May 1998. In early June the CARICOM Commission's report was released, upholding the published results of the December poll and declaring that there had been only minor procedural irregularities. Although bound to abide by the findings of the Commission, the PNC continued to publicly dispute the outcome, leading to violent demonstrations in Georgetown towards the end of the month.

### **The St Lucia Statement**

Renewed CARICOM mediation between the PPP/Civic and the PNC at the CARICOM annual summit in St Lucia in early July 1998 produced fresh commitments from both sides to restore peaceful political dialogue and to renew discussions on constitutional reform with a view to normalising the situation prior to the forthcoming elections.

### **Postponement of Elections**

In November 2000 it was announced by the Elections Commission that the elections would not be held on 17 January 2001 as had been agreed following the Herdmanston Accord. The postponement was, in the main, due to an initial lack of agreement on the crucial issue of the proportional allocation of Regional seats in the National Assembly, which held up the progress on constitutional reform on which the holding of the elections was premised. The late passage of the Election Bill, along with delays in the processes of voter registration and the provision of National Identification Cards, left the Elections Commission with insufficient time to prepare for the poll for the 17 January deadline.

The postponement of the elections sparked a political predicament over how Guyana was to be governed in the interregnum period. Debates – which ranged from PNC/Reform (renamed as such at the end of 2000) demands for the Government to vacate office, to PPP/Civic determination to remain in power – were *de facto* overtaken by a controversial judgment delivered by High Court judge Justice Claudia Singh in the 'elections petition case'.

### **The 'Elections Petition' Case**

The 'Elections Petition' case, brought by PNC supporter Esther Perreira on 25 February 1998, questioned the legality of the General and Regional Elections held in Guyana on 15 December 1997 and the validity of the declaration of

the results on 19 December 1997. The petition sought to have the 1997 elections declared null and void on two main grounds – (a) there were many irregularities that materially affected the results, and (b) specifically, that the presentation of a Voter Identification Card was a prerequisite for voting in the 1997 elections. The ruling, on Monday, 15 January by Justice Singh, brought to an end an almost three-year court battle related to the PNC’s rejection of the 1997 election results.

Addressing the first ground of the petition, Justice Singh’s conclusion began by stating that “there is no doubt that the evidence reveals that after the count there were several flaws, some of which involved breaches of the Representation of the People’s Act and others involving administrative arrangements which aroused suspicion”, but that “having considered the evidence in relation to the massive irregularities which have occurred I am unable to make a positive finding whether those unlawful acts or omissions *per se* might have affected the results”.

However, addressing the second ground for the petition, Justice Singh found that the Elections Law (Amendment) Act No. 22 of 1997 (which required voters to have a Voter Identification Card) was *ultra vires* in terms of Articles 59 and 159 of the Guyana Constitution, rendering the Act null and void. The consequence of this, according to Justice Singh’s judgment, was that the 1997 elections were unlawful, and therefore null and void.

The effect of the judgment was profound. Opposition parties, already mobilised over the issue of the PPP/Civic continuing in power between 17 January and 19 March, latched onto the first part of the judgment. A frenzied process of accusations, counter-accusations and calls for dismissal of the President and the Government followed this judgment, unprecedented in modern Commonwealth parliamentary history. On 26 January Justice Singh delivered ‘Consequential Orders’ ruling that she had no power to order President Jagdeo nor the Government to leave office and that the Government should remain in office until the 19 March elections, “under and by virtue of the Order of this Court”. The ‘Consequential Orders’ clarified that in terms of this ruling, “no legislation shall be introduced in Parliament except those required for the proper and timely holding of fresh National and Regional Elections and/or in compliance with the terms of the Herdmanston Accord”.

## Political Parties

Originally 26 parties said that they intended to contest the elections. At the time of nominations 13 parties were still involved in the process, although two of these were disqualified. When the final results were declared following the 2001 General and Regional Elections, National Assembly seats were allocated to the following parties:

- **Guyana Action Party/Working People’s Alliance (GAP-WPA)** This political coalition was formed in late 2000. The presidential candidate was Paul Hardy. The party contested the General and Regional Elections in all ten Regions.
- **Rise Organise And Rebuild (ROAR)** A new party, led by Ravindra Dev, its presidential candidate in these elections. The party contested the General Election in six Regions and Regional Elections in five.

- **People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R)** The PNC (recently renamed PNC/Reform) was the ruling party from independence until 1992, losing the elections of that year to its main rival, the PPP/Civic. For the 2001 elections its presidential candidate was former President Hugh Desmond Hoyte. The PNC/Reform contested the General and Regional Elections in all ten Regions.
- **People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C)** The PPP/Civic was the dominant political force in Guyana and held the reins of government from the introduction of universal suffrage in 1953 until it lost power in 1964 to the combined forces of the PNC and TUF. It remained out of power for 28 years until it regained power in the 1992 General and Regional Elections. The party's presidential candidate was President Bharrat Jagdeo. The party contested the General and Regional Elections in all ten Regions.

The other political parties were: Guyana Democratic Party (GDP), Guyana National Congress (GNC), Justice For All Party (JFAP), National Democratic Front (NDF), National Front Alliance (NFA), People's Republic Party (PRP) and The United Force (TUF).

# The Electoral Framework and Preparations for the Elections

## The Constitution

Following the Herdmanston Accord, a comprehensive review of the Constitution was undertaken, culminating in the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2000. Among other things, the Act provided for the establishment of a permanent Elections Commission to be responsible for the conduct and management of elections. It also validated the use of the new National Identification Card to replace the Voter Identification Card. Other provisions included:

- an 'overhanging seat' in the event, during the national count of the votes, that it is found that the votes for a seat in the geographical constituency are less than required for the quota for a seat on the national top-up list;
- that the Representative and Deputy Representative of the national top-up list may serve as Representative and Deputy Representative for each of the lists in geographical constituencies and Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs);
- for the votes of non-residents and the Disciplined Forces to be counted at one or two polling stations in each polling district mixed with votes of the same;
- to remove references that can easily identify the votes cast by the Disciplined Forces.

## Election Laws and Regulations

The Elections Laws (Amendment) Act 2000, provide for the regional allocation of seats for each of the ten regions. In all, the ten geographical constituencies were allocated 25 of the 65 seats. Seats were allocated to the parties by the application of the Remainder Principle of the PR system to the valid votes cast in the individual constituencies. The 40 seats not filled by the geographical constituencies were allocated to the parties in a manner to ensure that, together with the seats they won at the regional level, their representation in the National Assembly would reflect the overall percentage of the votes they won nationally. Each party put up a National Top-Up list of 40 headed by a presidential candidate and names were taken off the top-up list of each party according to the percentage of national votes won. A qualifying party had to contest at least six of the constituencies and at least 50 per cent of the seats; it was mandated that women should constitute one-third of the names on the list.

## Elections Commission

Responsibility for the management and conduct of elections, including voter registration, were vested in the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM).

Following the passing of the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2000 (which abolished the previous three-man temporary Elections Commission), the Elections Commission is now permanent. The Commission comprises seven members, all appointed by the President. The Chairman is appointed from a list submitted by the minority leader in the National Assembly. Of the other six members, three are appointed by the President acting in his own deliberate judgement and three in accordance with the advice of the Minority Leader. In practice this means three Commissioners from the governing party and three from the opposition parties.

The composition of the Elections Commission, and the appointments process, though intended to foster confidence, in practice subjects it to interference and suspicion. This was most obvious during the period from the conclusion of nominations to the time of declaration of the official results. In our view the appointment and the management process of the Elections Commission should be completely reviewed so as to ensure its unfettered independence. The appointment of the Chairman and other members should be vested in Parliament. The provision of National Identification Cards, which have wider application beyond the electoral process, should not be the responsibility of the Elections Commission.

We found also that all election related work is highly centralised and is only activated at election time. It would be desirable in our view to decentralise the functions of the Commission, including the registration of electors.

## Electoral System

Guyana follows the Single List Proportional Representation (PR) system for electing its National Assembly of 65 seats. The 2001 elections were the first to be held under a new electoral system based on geographical representation and the Remainder Principle of PR, with a mandatory quota of women on the nomination list. The new system therefore has three components:

1. Geographical Constituencies: There are ten geographical constituencies, which coincide with the ten regions of Guyana and constitute the ten Electoral Districts. Twenty-five of the 65 seats in the National Assembly are allocated to the geographical constituencies, and are elected directly by PR. As previously for the national component, under this system voters cast their ballot for a party's list of candidates and seats are then allocated to parties on the basis of PR, a 'closed list' system which neither tells the voter whom she/he may vote for nor gives scope for the expression of a voter's preference.
2. The National Top-Up: The remaining 40 seats are allocated to the parties in proportion to the votes they receive in the entire country. These members do not represent a geographical region, but rather the whole country.
3. Mandatory Gender Representation: At least a third of the candidates on the lists representing the various political parties must be women.

It was brought to our attention that under the List system electors usually did not know who would represent them in Parliament, as these persons were chosen by the party leader. We urge that the system be reviewed in this regard.

.....  
*The 2001 elections were the first to be held under a new electoral system based on geographical representation and the Remainder Principle of PR, with a mandatory quota of women on the nomination list*  
 .....

## Voter Registration

The Voters List 2000 was based on the database of 1996 which was used for the 1997 elections, and formed the basis for the National Register of Registrants (NRR) from which the Preliminary Voters List (PVL) was derived. On 31 January the Elections Commission published a Revised Voters List (RVL). Following a 21-day period, which was subsequently extended, for corrections to be made, the Final Voters List (FVL) was published on 5 March.

**'I'VE GOT A LITTLE LIST' . . .**  
copies of the Voters' List on display outside an election office in Georgetown: some of the pages were easily separated, causing frustration for people who wanted to check that their names were there. The voters' register was the subject of controversy throughout the process



The PNC/Reform, which disputed the validity of some 3,000 names, questioned the size of the PVL as well as the RVL. The Elections Commission said that their field tests showed that the National Register of Registrants was 93 per cent accurate and, as such, constituted a sound basis on which to formulate the PVL. The RVL contained 433,491 names, which were the names of those who appeared on the NRR and consequently on the PVL and subsequently had their particulars checked and their photographs taken for the National Identification Card process. It also included those persons whose names were not on the NRR and PVL, but who were of voting age, were not registered in 1996 and were registered during the Claims and Objections period, which included two extra periods for photography and registration.

The Final Voters List, which was published on 5 March, at the beginning of the mandatory 14-day period before election day, contained 438,940 names – a reduction of 99,293 names compared to the original list. An Addendum was published on 16 March, three days before the elections. It contained the names of 3,000 people to be added to the Official List of Electors (OLE).

## National Identification Card Process

A National Identification Card, used to facilitate voting and for wider applications, was introduced for the first time in the 2001 elections as the main form of identification. The main parties complained about different aspects of the process, including the production and distribution of the cards and the fact that, because they had no divisional number, regional distribution had been held up. The PNC/Reform also complained that production was

largely based on the RVL, the total number of which they believed was in excess of the actual voting population and to be inconsistent with the demographics of the country. The Elections Commission had initially stated that it would base production of the card on the FVL. However, the party argued that basing the production on the FVL would leave the production of the cards too late for its timely distribution – which proved to be the case eventually. To avoid disenfranchisement on this account, other acceptable forms of identification were later announced, including a valid passport or a recently expired passport (of not more than five years), special identity cards, the Master Registration Card (MRC) or an oath of identity.

## **Voter Education**

With the introduction of the new system of voting the Elections Commission made every effort to educate the voters, with the assistance of foreign experts. The Elections Commission produced an educational television advertisement about the voting mechanism which outlined the process that voters would go through when casting their votes at the polling station. The advertisement appeared on television screens frequently in the lead up to election day. On 19 March voters certainly appeared to understand the process.

The voter education road show appeared to have been well received as it toured the main population areas of Guyana, in particular by the young as it used dance and song to communicate the key messages about voting. This education process could be extended to the curriculum of the schools and also with the help of NGOs and other voluntary organisations as an ongoing exercise with the direct involvement of the Elections Commission. It was evident that the Commission had taken pains to educate the voters through electronic and print media. Yet there are areas, especially in the hinterland, where people do not have access to any of these.

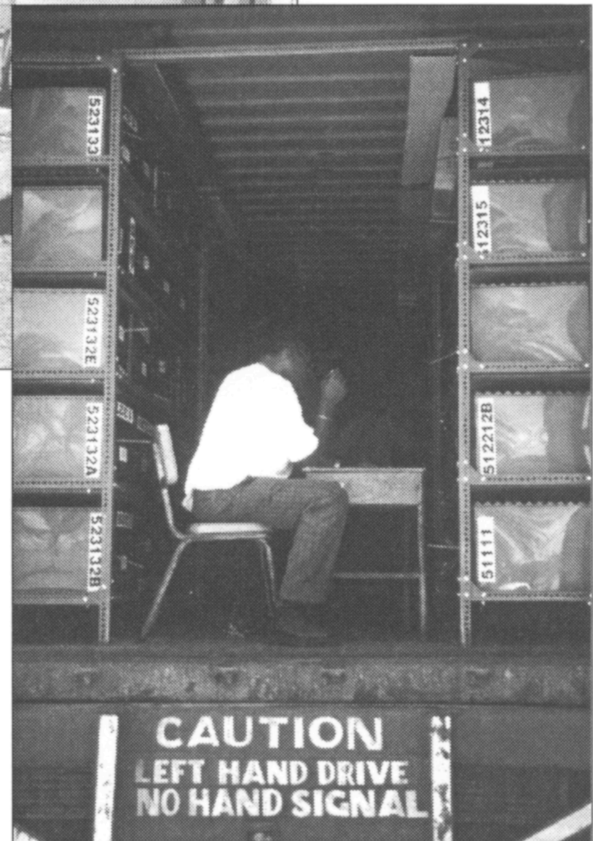
## **Selection and Training of Officials**

The recruitment and selection of election staff was done through advertising and screening. The Elections Commission conducted training for about 10,000 officials between 4 and 14 January, in Georgetown and at centres in each of the other nine administrative regions. The training of polling day staff continued until well into the election process. Although the quality of training was never in doubt some concern was expressed about the quality of those selected for training and the apparent lack of transparency in the process. In particular we were told that the process suffered frequently from political interference and influence, which sometimes resulted in less able polling staff being appointed. This often resulted in frustration among staff of the Commission's secretariat.

We found that the public service in Guyana has a reserve of educated people – a vital resource who can gain from ongoing training and should be readily available to work during the election period, as a national duty. We hope that this course of action would enable the Elections Commission to meet its obligations within the required time frame and free it from the enormous financial constraints which would otherwise apply.



**SIGNED, SEALED AND . . .** an Elections Commission container truck delivers ballot boxes to a Returning Officer in District Five. The Observers noted that elections in Guyana present a formidable logistical challenge, but that “generally the necessary items were present”



## Materials

The materials for the elections were distributed to the regions in such a manner that those furthest from Georgetown received their supplies first, with delivery to Georgetown and the rest of Region 4 being left until last. The delivery of the non-sensitive materials took place first with the delivery of the sensitive materials being delayed until the last possible moment. The police were present at all stages.

Regional Returning Officers were responsible for the allocation of supplies to the individual polling stations and for the security of all materials delivered to them. Except for the remote areas, Presiding Officers collected the ballot boxes, supplies and equipment from the Returning Officer in the early hours of 19 March.

There were some reports of the non-delivery of some materials to polling stations. Where deficiencies were found, remedial action was taken either before the poll opened or shortly after.

## **Nominations**

The nomination of candidates took place on 15 February. Thirteen political parties registered to contest the elections. However, following scrutiny by the Elections Commission, two of the smallest parties – God Bless Guyana and Horizon and Star – were disqualified and failed in their legal action seeking reinstatement. (The 11 parties which contested the elections are listed on pages 8 and 9.)

The GAP-WPA, PNC/Reform, PPP/Civic and TUF contested the national and regional elections in all the regions of Guyana. No adverse comments were made about the nomination process.

## **Observers**

In addition to the Commonwealth Observers, there were about 130 other international observers from the European Union, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Carter Center and a Long-Term Observer Group. International observers were deployed in all the regions of Guyana, with the strongest presence in Georgetown and the rest of Region 4. It is estimated that international observers attended over half of the polling stations on polling day. Several meetings were held with the other groups to exchange information.

Many Guyanese saw value in the presence of international observers. People knew that we were there not to interfere but to observe and help engender a climate of confidence in the process. However some people expected the observers to intervene on their behalf. Against the background of the published Electoral Code of Conduct (see *Annex IX*) others, including sections of the media, felt that observers had a duty to speak out against any unacceptable conduct that came to their notice during the election period. While we do not see any reason to change Commonwealth practice – which is held in high regard, including in Guyana – we note the need for better public education on the role of observers both in Guyana and other countries of the Commonwealth.

## **Issues Prior to the Poll**

The Final Voters List was published on 5 March 2001 with 438,940 on the roll. There was dismay as some failed to find their names on the list. The PNC/R called it a national disappointment and called for an emergency measure to improve the level of accuracy. The two main political parties complained that corrections which were listed by the Commission to be done on the Revised Voters List (RVL) had not been included in the OLE. They also complained about the allocation of electors to the wrong sub-divisions, incomplete transfers, and about the absence from the OLE of some names which had appeared in the RVL but had not been listed for any corrections.

As election day approached the inaccuracies in the Official List of Electors and the corresponding lag in the production and distribution of the National Identification Cards became even more evident as some feared they might be disenfranchised. Although the Elections Commission was confident that it had achieved 95 per cent accuracy, and had promised that any valid omissions

would be reflected in the supplementary Addendum, in such a small voting population and in such a deeply polarised country, all this was of little comfort. The arrest of a recently bailed talk show host who had urged his listeners to go to the Elections Commission headquarters and protest about their identity cards, and the rough handling of his wife who was also arrested – for incitement and breach of public peace – raised the political temperature.

However passions cooled somewhat as the Commission announced alternative forms of identification and gave the assurance that no one would be disenfranchised whose name appeared on the official register of electors. The Disciplined Forces vote on 12 March – a dry run for the extensively revised system – strengthened some of the fears about disenfranchisement. And though the Elections Commission appeared to retain much of its public goodwill, the process it had managed and supervised came under increasing criticism. There were growing calls for an independent audit of the Commission's database system. Some called for the postponement of the elections to enable the Commission to sort out the outstanding difficulties and the President said that if the Elections Commission tabled such a request the parties would have to adjust accordingly. The PNC/R and some of its allies among the smaller parties contemplated a boycott but decided against it. Most importantly, the Guyanese people began to see signs of a repeat of the post-election riots of 1997 and feared the worst. In view of these fears, the idea of moving away from winner-takes-all politics concentrated the mind and many, including the political parties, espoused different degrees of a new inclusive politics.

## CHAPTER 3

---

### The Campaign and the Media

The campaign for the 2001 General and Regional Elections had been, in a sense, a long one. It began with the political upheaval after the 1997 elections, and continued through the negotiations leading to the Herdmanston Accord in 1998, the constitutional reform process of 1999-2000 and the postponement in late 2000 of elections from mid-January to 19 March 2001.

When we arrived in Georgetown, it was clear to us that all the parties were able to campaign freely anywhere in the country and that anyone could participate.

The parties sought support through hundreds of public rallies and meetings. Campaigning was particularly intense in the high population coastal areas and in the media. Billboards and posters, though not as numerous as we have seen in other countries, projected presidential candidates. The parties made strenuous efforts to ensure that people remembered their party symbols.

We observed some political rallies and meetings, notably the PPP/C's final rally at Good Hope, East Coast Demerara, on 17 March and the PNC/R's final rally later that evening in the centre of Georgetown. Both were energetic, colourful affairs, with PPP/C supporters holding balloons in the party colours, and PNC/R supporters waving branches, signifying the palm tree symbol of the party.

In parts of the hinterland, campaigning was more low key, especially where people had no access to television or radio. In these areas, our Observers met many people who stressed that they disliked the confrontational politics of the major parties, especially in the Georgetown campaign, and wanted to disassociate themselves from it.

We understood that an Electoral Code of Conduct had been issued just before the elections by the Elections Commission but that it was voluntary and that political parties had not signed up to it. In any case, it was hardly referred to in the course of the campaign and parties more or less campaigned as they saw fit.

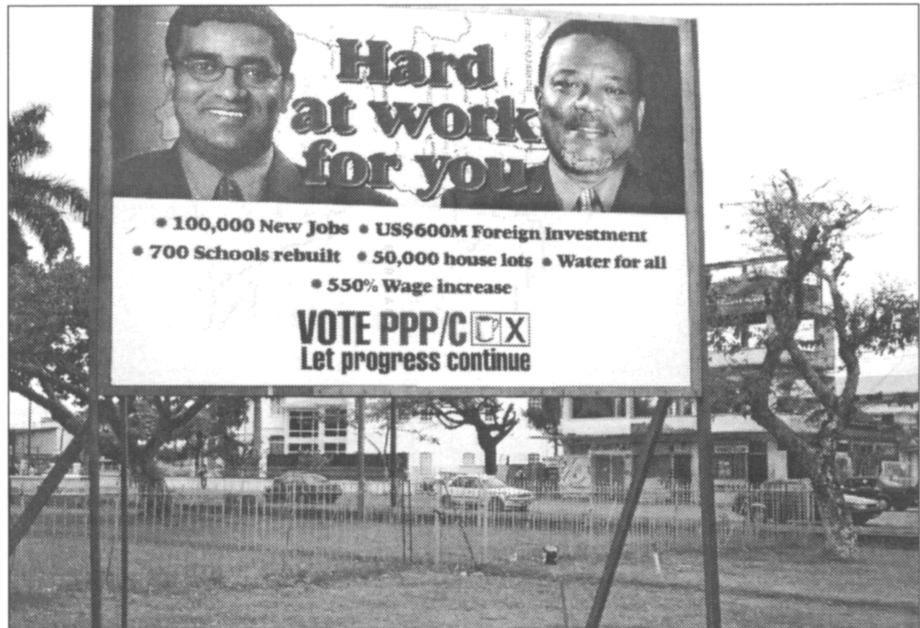
.....  
*We understood that an Electoral Code of Conduct had been issued just before the elections by the Elections Commission but that it was voluntary and that political parties had not signed up to it*  
.....

### Campaign Issues

We noted an increase in negative campaigning as the date for the elections drew near. Comments, speeches, party statements and political advertising took on a more personal tone. In addition, both the major parties spent some time looking back on and condemning each other's records in office. The PPP/C described the 28 years the PNC was in power as years of economic waste. The PNC/R countered that the PPP/C had done nothing to improve the lives of ordinary Guyanese since it came into power in 1992.

The many ordinary Guyanese we spoke to told us that securing education, jobs, water, health, housing and transportation were among their top priorities. Parties therefore did make an effort to make election pledges in these areas. In the presidential "debates" (see below), candidates spoke of the

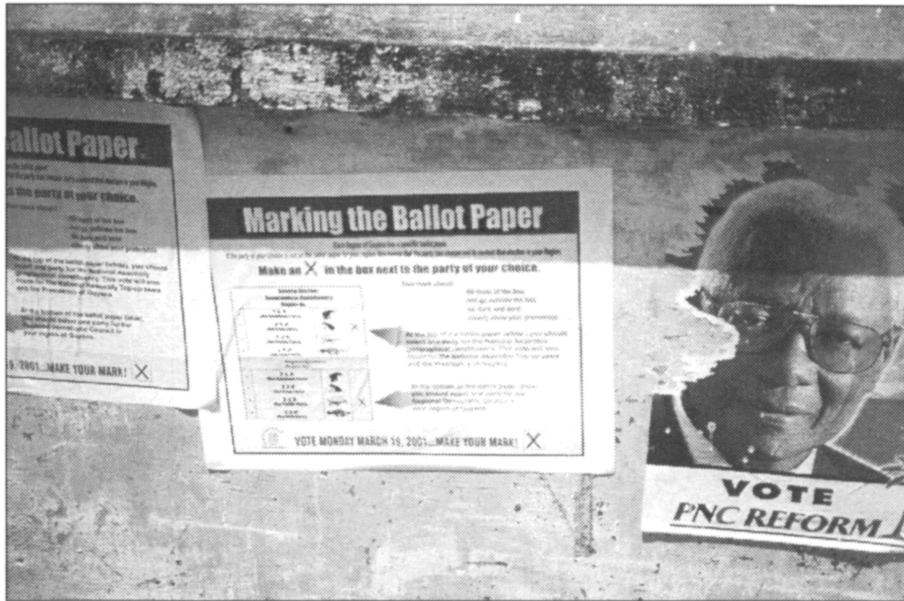
**POSTER POWER . . .** both parties used posters: shown here, (*right*) a PPP/C site in central Georgetown and (*below*) a PNC/R hoarding in the north-east



need for a more sound social and economic structure. It is a pity that there was no platform for a more informed debate on issues so obviously close to the hearts of the electorate.

Parties seized on the poor distribution of National Identification Cards and errors on the voters' list to whip up public dissatisfaction where it suited them. In a climate of suspicion this was not difficult and in the last week before the elections, concerns grew about the Elections Commission's ability to deliver a fair election.

This was highlighted in Georgetown where the campaigning took on a sharper, more aggressive tone. The frustrations of one community or another were openly expressed, often playing to the prejudices of different sections of society. The hectoring tone of some television talk show hosts fuelled these frustrations (see below).



**ADVICE ON VOTING . . .** this PNC/R poster showed exactly how the party wanted its supporters to mark the ballot paper

## Violence

The campaign period was relatively peaceful. There were two incidents of stones being thrown at other party supporters and candidates, one shooting and some minor assaults. Five days before polling day, a small demonstration outside the Elections Commission led to one of the talk show hosts being briefly arrested and several people detained. In separate incidents in Georgetown street scuffles resulted in injury to two policemen.

Five days before the elections, the Returning Officer of Region Four was investigating a report of new ID cards being found on a rubbish dump in South Georgetown when he was assaulted. He subsequently stepped down as a result of injuries received and had to be replaced two days before the elections.

## Presidential Debates

The Elections Commission proposed a series of televised debates among combinations of presidential candidates to encourage a serious examination of campaign issues and political pledges. Negotiations between the parties never brought the presidential candidates of the PPP/C and PNC/R to the same table.

In the end, the PNC/R's Desmond Hoyte, GDP's Asgar Ally, ROAR's Ravi Dev, TUF's Manzoor Nadir and GAP-WPA's prime ministerial candidate Dr Rupert Roopnaraine spoke at a "debate" organised by the University of Guyana on 13 March. Two days later, President Bharrat Jagdeo appeared on the GTV show 'The Big Question' on what was also billed as a "debate" with Mr Hoyte, with an empty chair placed for Mr Hoyte to emphasise his "absence".

We were sorry that the leaders of the two major parties were not able to have a face-to-face debate. It would have been an excellent opportunity to put before viewers a discussion of issues that Guyanese people as a whole are concerned about. It might also have helped to lower the political temperature whipped up by party activists and the media. It certainly would have provided better and more concrete matter for the talk show hosts to consider and discuss with their callers.

## The Role of the Media

In Guyana, there are two main newspapers, state-owned broadcasting stations and in the last decade or so a proliferation of private, independent television stations, many of which only reach local communities. The media generally operates freely, unfettered by regulations that in many other countries usually govern broadcasting standards. This led to the development of a freewheeling, outspoken style whose tone contributed to the media becoming an even more than usually influential player in the 2001 election campaign.

This led to concern over the potential capability of the media to disrupt the Elections Commission's attempt to hold democratic elections in accordance with international standards.

## Code of Conduct and Media Monitoring

.....  
*We were told that 36 media persons signed a Media Code of Conduct in which they agreed to comply with the code and that in return the Government, its agencies or the Elections Commission would not impose restraints on or censor them*  
.....

The Elections Commission, together with the Canadian International Development Agency, hosted a Roundtable discussion among media organisations in Georgetown on 9 October 2000 on reporting and coverage of the elections. We were told that 36 media persons signed a Media Code of Conduct (see Annex VIII) in which they agreed to comply with the code and that in return the Government, its agencies or the Elections Commission would not impose restraints on or censor them. Among the signatories were state-owned Guyana Television (GTV) and Guyana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC).

Media representatives also discussed Guidelines to the Code at a further meeting of the Roundtable on 1 November 2000. Among other things, they agreed:

- not to publish or broadcast any reports which would incite ethnic hatred or political disorder without having the accuracy and authenticity of the report confirmed by at least two independent sources;
- to make available to contesting political parties equal space or time so as to be even-handed;
- to provide equal access and opportunity to all parties for paid political advertising in newspapers and on prime time television and radio;
- to subscribe to the highest principles of impartiality, fairness and integrity in news reports and current affairs programmes;
- that media owners and practitioners who are candidates or hold office in political parties refrain from using their programmes to promote their political objectives;
- to publish or broadcast corrections to errors of fact;
- not to cover activities by political parties beginning 24 hours prior to the opening of polling stations and continuing until the close of polling; and
- to the establishment of an Independent Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel where complaints about reporting and coverage could be directed.

A third Roundtable meeting on 8 November 2000 set the Panel's terms of reference which included monitoring, reviewing and analysing the output of newspapers and radio and television stations, receiving and investigating complaints, and determining whether the Code of Conduct had been breached.

In order to assist the Panel with statistical and technical information, a Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) was set up within the Elections Commission in mid-December 2000 to track, monitor and catalogue media output.

Two eminent Caribbean journalists – Dwight Whyllie of Jamaica and Harry Mayers of Barbados – arrived in Guyana in February 2001 as Panel members. They issued two reports before the elections. The MMU issued four detailed technical reports before the elections.

This monitoring structure ensured that the performance of the media was one of the most intensively scrutinised.

## The Print Media

There are several newspapers in Guyana. The only dailies are the state-owned *Guyana Chronicle* and the private *Stabroek News*. Other newspapers include the *New Nation* and *Mirror* (which are published by or for political parties), *Kaitaur News* and the *Catholic Standard*. They all circulate mainly in urban areas, especially along the heavily populated coast. The *Guyana Chronicle* and *Stabroek News* maintain excellent Internet sites where their news and other articles are uploaded daily, often before the newspapers hit the streets.

The newspapers extensively covered preparations for the elections and the campaign. They ran voter education articles and advertisements on the regional allocation of seats and how to vote. They agreed with the Elections Commission that parties would be offered free space – up to 350 words daily for statements. The editors told us that their offer was not taken up initially. In the last days of the campaign, however, parties submitted lengthy statements, some of which were edited down to the agreed limit.

The newspapers also carried political advertising. There were no reports that such advertising from political parties was rejected. One newspaper insisted on changes to two advertisements, removing some statements and a photograph, though this was apparently on the grounds that they were allegedly misleading and that the newspaper could have been sued.

We noted that in its first report, the MMU observed that the *Guyana Chronicle* consistently gave more coverage to news about the Government and PPP/C, most of it positive, than it did to the PNC/R although it did try to redress this as the campaign wore on. *Stabroek News*, on the other hand, covered a wider range of parties and was more balanced.

The political leanings of the *Guyana Chronicle* were obvious, but on the whole, both newspapers dealt with individual news stories professionally, though through their own perspectives. There was evidence that they generally responded to the observations of the MMU on adhering to the Media Code of Conduct.

The MMU, in its reports, dwelt less on the performance of the newspapers than it did on broadcasting. In its fourth report, however, it said that a lack of investigative reporting (in both newspapers and broadcasting) left readers “with a lack of depth of information that makes intelligent voting more difficult”. The Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel made two relatively mild remarks on newspaper coverage.

## Television and Radio

Broadcasting is by far the most influential medium of communication in Guyana. The state-owned GTV remains the sole national television broadcaster. With technologies becoming cheaper and more easily available, there has been a proliferation of independent television stations over the last decade. These stations operate in an environment that is free from the regulations in place in many countries to ensure responsible use of a powerful, influential medium.

The Media Code of Conduct stated that all media should “hold themselves independent and free of any or all government and political opposition control and direction; and any or all control or direction from any of the political parties registered to contest the elections; or any individual group or organisation representing or promoting the special interests of any of these political parties.”

All television and radio broadcasters agreed to offer 10 minutes of free airtime daily to political parties. It gave all parties access to the airwaves.

During the campaign period, GTV, however, devoted over three-quarters of relevant time on its main newscast at 6 p.m. to the Government and PPP/C. Most of it was positive. The PNC/R on the other hand had less and mostly negative coverage. GTV often inserted editorial opinion into newscasts.

In addition, there was a marked increase in the programming dedicated to government ministries, activities and plans during this period. A number of special programmes and interviews with government ministers were introduced, in effect giving “free space” to the party which formed the Government.

More balanced coverage was offered by the newscasts of private broadcasters: Prime News, Capitol News and Evening News. Channel 65's prime news, however, showed a bias towards the PPP/C.

For radio, which reaches far more people than either television or newspapers, there are no private stations to compete with state-owned GBC. Two stations, Radio Roraima and the Voice of Guyana (VOG) are run by GBC. VOG has a nationwide reach although the more remote regions receive it only sporadically, if at all, due to difficulties of terrain.

As a monopoly, its responsibilities should have been all the greater to present more balanced coverage of the campaign and the issues. We were disappointed therefore to learn that VOG devoted over 80 per cent of its news coverage to the Government and PPP/C and that the PNC/R's activities rated very little mention.

## The Talk Shows

Of all the programmes on television, those of a handful of talk show hosts on private broadcasting stations were the most controversial. Daily, they invited carefully selected guests on to the shows and took calls from the public. The talk show hosts repeated rumours, indulged in innuendo, character assassination, and used inflammatory language. All, except one, were anti-government.

None felt that they had an obligation to investigate any rumours they might have heard. We were told that they felt their responsibility was to inform

people of what they heard and that it was up to the police to investigate. None attempted to provide balance to their shows. One was a presidential candidate and used his own show as a campaigning tool.

We heard it being said that these talk show hosts were able to flourish because the tight government controls on the state-owned media meant that opposing or dissenting views had to find some other outlet. The Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel described it as a “scary free-for-all”. On the day after election day, one called for people to invade the home of a party official to see if he was hiding ballot boxes. He frequently used the word “bloodbath” and we had several phone calls from concerned Guyanese complaining that he was whipping up a mob to a frenzy.

We felt that they breached the Media Code of Conduct in a number of places and contributed greatly to the raising of tensions and fear.

---

*We felt that the talk shows breached the Media Code of Conduct in a number of places and contributed greatly to the raising of tensions and fear*

---

## **Political Advertising**

Many of the parties used sophisticated, snappy advertising with catchy jingles and witty words to project their campaigns on television and radio. For the most part, they were well within the bounds of acceptability in a robust political campaign. Others, however, were deeply personal, offensive or negative. Smaller, less well-funded parties, especially relied on them to project themselves nationally.

We note too the overuse of these advertisements, especially on GTV where a member of the Monitoring and Refereeing Panel timed “wall to wall” advertising for one party at 35 minutes. Parties also used other forms of advertising – the PPP/C, for example, sponsored a segment during the live telecast of a cricket Test match between the West Indies and South Africa.

We also noted with some surprise that this political advertising continued well into election day as opposed to the convention that campaigning should cease 24 hours before polls open.

## **Opinion Polls**

There were only two opinion polls on the public’s views on the political parties, the Elections Commission and democracy. The first, ‘Hopes and Aspirations: Political Attitudes and Party Choices in Contemporary Guyana’, was conducted in August-September 2000 by the respected St Augustine Research Associates. It said, among other things, that only 37 per cent of the people were either satisfied or very satisfied with the way democracy was practised in Guyana. The second, conducted by an American pollster, was published just before the elections.

## **Impact of the Media**

The media was one of the key players in the campaign. We were impressed with the level of commitment to voter education by the media whose frequent publishing or airing of the Elections Commission voter education information led to a high awareness level among voters on how to vote.

We agree, however, with the view of the Monitoring and Refereeing Panel that the Media Code of Conduct was breached many times. The balance of coverage fell short of desired standards and in the end it was the voter who was the poorer without it. We also believe that it was unhelpful for the development of democracy in Guyana.

- We hope that after the elections, the media will evaluate its performance, and its wider responsibilities to Guyanese society by informing and educating people on various issues;
- we think that a framework of regulations should be developed to govern broadcasting standards;
- media organisations should agree to a binding, self-regulatory Code of Conduct with an independent body created for dealing with complaints – such self-regulation would head off any temptation to impose rules on the media;
- state-owned media should be freed to become more independent and truly serve the interests of the entire population of Guyana and not just that of the government of the day;
- media practitioners should be more professional and adhere to widely accepted media standards and ethics.

## CHAPTER 4

### Poll, Count and Results Process

The majority of voters cast their ballots on election day, Monday, 19 March, at some 1,894 polling stations. Approximately 7,000 members of the 'Disciplined Forces' were entitled to vote a week earlier, on 12 March.

#### Introduction

Polling hours were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., though many of the voters had already cast their ballots by lunchtime. The day was declared a school holiday, alcohol sales were banned, but some shops were open, more so outside Georgetown. The weather was good: queues formed at many of the larger stations, but the fierce sun did not appear to deter voters.



**READY, STEADY . . .** immediately prior to election day polling officials prepare for deployment: *(left)* in Georgetown and *(overleaf)* in District One, at the other end of the coastal strip . . .

When the poll closed officials set about determining the number of votes cast and cross-checking unused Master Registration Cards (MRCs) against those on the list who had not voted. Preparations were then made to open the ballot box, sort the ballot papers and used MRCs, and count the ballot papers. For counting purposes votes cast by the Disciplined Forces would be mixed in with those actually cast at specified polling stations in each district.

The results were then transmitted to Deputy Returning Officers, each of whom covered some 20 or so stations. They sent the results to the Returning Officers at their district centres, who in turn reported on the whole district to the Acting Chief Elections Officer, Mr Gocool Boodoo, in Georgetown.

Prior to election day it was anticipated that most of the preliminary results would be known in Georgetown during the afternoon of Tuesday, 20 March. The Acting Chief Elections Officer was expected to be in a position to formally advise the Elections Commission of the results on the morning of Thursday, 22 March. The official announcement of the results, including the

. . . The Observers noted that “most of the officials had been well trained, were competent and efficient and displayed a high level of commitment”



allocation of seats, was expected to be made later that day. There was provision for the recounting of votes, but only if applications were made before noon on Tuesday, 20 March.

### **Disciplined Forces Voting – 12 March 2001**

The ‘Disciplined Forces’ – the police, defence force and prison service – had submitted to the Elections Commission lists of those of their personnel who should have been able to vote on ‘Disciplined Forces Voting Day’, Monday, 12 March. Those on the lists were entitled to vote at polling stations especially established at selected bases in each district. Members of the Observer Group were present at some of these in District Four.

For the Disciplined Forces new arrangements had been made for these elections. The voter was to be given an envelope marked with her/his name, containing an unmarked ballot. After destroying the outer envelope the voter would cast her/his ballot in the normal way, and the ballot would be placed in a new envelope marked with the appropriate district number. This would then be placed in the ballot box.

After voting, all the ballot boxes would be brought to the Elections Commission Headquarters in Georgetown, where the ballot envelopes would be sorted according to district. The ballots would then be sent out in fresh envelopes to the appropriate District Returning Officers two days prior to the poll. There they would be opened under scrutiny, and after the voting on 19 March they would be mixed and counted with the ballot papers at one specified polling station in each district. The Observer Group welcomed these new arrangements as they avoided the situation that occurred in 1997, when the results of the ‘Disciplined Forces’ voting were declared and published separately.

In order to vote, the names of the members of the ‘Disciplined Forces’ needed to be on the list. To identify themselves they could present their National Identification Card, their ‘service identification card’ identifying them as a member of the appropriate force, or their passport. Those without

these forms of identification could still vote if they were identified by a senior officer and took an oath of identity.

As the press put it in the following day's newspapers, there were some 'hiccups'. Some voters could not find their names on the lists. It emerged later that the names of some police service personnel had not been 'extracted' from the Official List of Electors. Others had a long wait before voting – the polling process took as long as ten minutes for some voters. In some places the 'service card' was initially not accepted as adequate identification. A 'Supplementary List' of voters was delivered in one place only after voting had been under way for several hours, and in another its late delivery delayed the opening of the poll.

Some days later, when the Disciplined Forces ballot boxes were opened at the Elections Commission Headquarters in Georgetown, our Observers noticed that mistakes had sometimes been made when the names of the districts on the envelopes containing the ballots had been written out by hand: pre-printed envelopes would have been better. They also noted that the envelopes were not counted.

Following the Disciplined Forces voting the Chairman of the Elections Commission announced that 5,971 members of the relevant services whose names appeared on the list had voted on 12 March. (The remaining 1,051 who did not vote would not be able to vote on 19 March since their names would not appear on either the Official List of Electors or the Addendum). He expressed concern that two of the forces had provided their lists late and that many of the service personnel did not have service identification cards. Some personnel were also at different locations than had been indicated on the list.

Voting was held the same day for diplomats and their families at Guyana's diplomatic missions abroad. There seem to have been difficulties at two: the Elections Commission explained that the Brussels embassy was closed and materials could not be delivered, while in Beijing due to customs requirements voting materials did not arrive until too late.

The PPP/C protested on 12 March against the Elections Commission's decision to allow the Disciplined Forces to vote without pictorial identification. A week after the Disciplined Forces voting the PNC/R complained that in the process of compiling the Disciplined Forces List the forces had inadvertently listed names of former members, with the effect that they would not be on the list to be used on 19 March and therefore could not vote.

This was not a perfect start, but the numbers affected were small and the parties appeared to concede that the problems were organisational rather than the result of any mischievous or fraudulent intent.

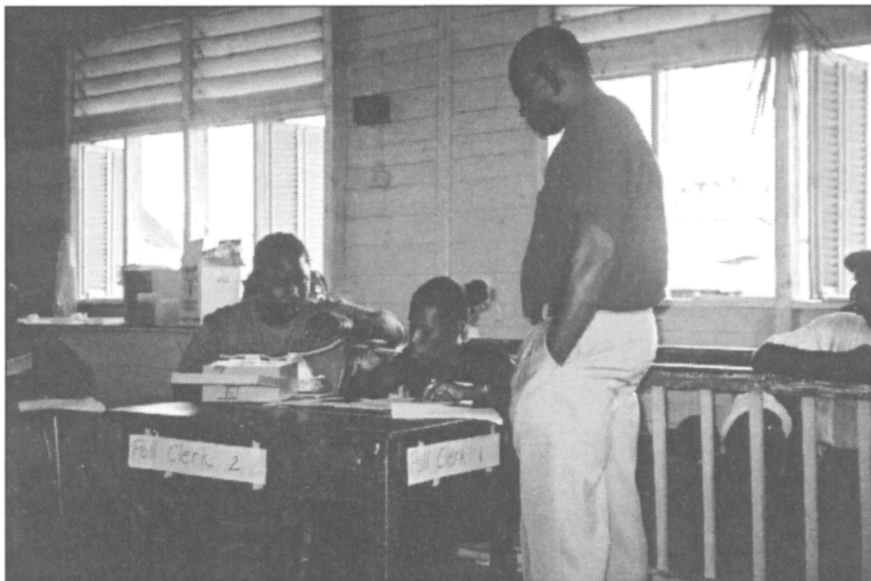
## **Voting – 19 March 2001**

### **Fears About the Process**

Prior to polling day a number of fears had been expressed about aspects of the process:

- **The Register:** During and after the voter registration period several parties, most notably the PNC/R, had expressed concern about the adequacy of the registration arrangements. In particular, they highlighted: the decision to

**JUST CHECKING . . .** polling officials check the register at the opening of the poll. But there were errors, which the Observers said “reduced public confidence in the voting process”



use the 1996/97 register as the basis for these elections' register, rather than starting from scratch; the presence of the names of people who had died or left the country; omissions from the list; inexplicable transfers from one district to another; and 'dislocation', where a person living in one district was listed in a quite different district. Underlying the complaints was concern at the security, adequacy and overall integrity of the computerised process employed in compiling the register.

The Elections Commission had assured the parties that their representations would be taken into account in the preparation of the Revised and Final Voters Lists and the Addendum, published on 16 March. The Elections Commission stated that in their view the list to be used on polling day would be at least 95 per cent accurate. However, we noted that even after the publication of the Addendum the parties did not express satisfaction with the list as it then stood.

Following the publication of the Official List of Electors (OLE) and then, on Friday, 16 March, an Addendum (whose effect was to increase the size of the final list by 1,245 names) 440,185 people were on the register by election day, 19 March. On the eve of poll the Elections Commission made clear again that only those whose names were on the list would be able to vote: it said it was unable to accede to representations by political parties to include on the Official List of Electors the names of people in possession of 'stubs' from the taking of official photographs, but whose names were not on the list.

- **National Identification Cards:** As election day drew near the parties and elements in the media continuously voiced concern at the possibility that electors would not receive their National Identification Cards in time for voting. On 16 March, three days before voting, the Chairman of the Elections Commission said that as of the previous morning the Commission's staff had printed 426,809 cards and had distributed 378,322. On election day there would be 440,185 people on the register. Clearly, some people on the register would be without their cards on election day, though it was not clear exactly how many since there was no way of

knowing how many cards would have been 'uplifted' by then. There was a subsidiary concern: that the information on the lists and the cards might not always coincide.

- **Master Registration Cards:** The Commission announced on 16 March that voters without either a National Identification Card, a Special ID card or a valid or recently expired passport (of not more than five years), would be able to vote as long as they were on the list and there was a Master Registration Card (MRC) for them at the polling station, bearing their photograph and other details. This aroused concern in some quarters that the MRCs might not themselves be at every polling station. Observers saw the MRC canisters being distributed from the Elections Commission Headquarters as late as mid-afternoon the day before the poll.
- **Oaths:** In the case of those who were on the register, but without the three forms of identification referred to above and where there was no MRC for them at the polling station, the elector would be allowed to vote on the swearing of an Oath of Identity. However, at least one political party believed that in light of past experience the oath-taking process would be open to abuse on the day. And there was concern that in some places oath-taking might be on such a large scale as to provoke challenges, or non-acceptance of the results after the elections.



**VOTING DAY . . .** where several polling stations were housed in one building the queues were often long: in some cases the (alphabetical) sub-division had been done only that morning and there was sometimes confusion. But the voters cast their votes freely and the secrecy of the ballot was assured

- **District Four:** 50 per cent of the electorate are to be found in District Four, which includes the capital Georgetown. It is therefore a key electoral battleground and probably the most volatile part of the country. This region was at the centre of allegations of serious electoral malpractice at the 1997 General and Regional Elections. This time Elections Commission strategy had from the very beginning been to ensure that election preparations in Region 4 were thorough. However, doubts persisted to the end in some quarters about whether the Commission would be ready in this crucial region. On 17 March the District Returning Officer was replaced with an officer from the Elections Commission Headquarters: his predecessor had

been involved in an incident some days earlier and it appeared that he had not been able fully to resume his duties.

- **Staffing:** Following an Elections Commission decision to increase the number of polling stations for these elections there were fears that there would be too few properly trained staff for the expanded number of stations. These fears were enhanced when party objections sometimes eliminated relatively large numbers of staff and the Elections Commission promoted officials upwards. On election-eve one region had only five spare staff to deploy in case those attached to polling stations did not turn up on the day itself.
- **General Organisational Preparations:** There was a fear that there might be a number of organisational problems on the day, including with the result-reporting procedures.

This was the background as our teams set out to observe the opening of polling stations at 6 a.m.

### Opening of the Polls

Polling stations were scheduled to be open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Our two-person teams were present for the opening by 5.45 a.m. at polling stations in seven of Guyana's ten regions. All the polling stations we observed opened on time and the correct procedures were followed, although we did hear of other stations which opened late because staff were not present at the appointed hour and/or because some materials were missing. Everywhere there was an adequate complement of staff. Queues were often long and sometimes noisy, with voters eager to complete the process. At several of the polling places we visited there was more than one station and some confusion as to exactly where each voter should go. Information desks established to assist the voters before they got to their polling station were overwhelmed. We observed this more often in District Four than elsewhere. However, we noted that these problems were resolved as the day went on. We did not observe any violence at the opening anywhere.

### Procedures

The voting method was straightforward. If a person had a National Identification Card the voter presented this to the first polling station official, who then checked the voter's name against the list and called out both the serial number and the voter's name to the officials and party agents. If everything was in order, the second official checked the voter's fingers for electoral ink, verified the ID and matched the voter with her/his Master Registration Card, which bore a photograph and other details recorded at the time of registration. The voter then took the card and MRC to a third official who, after checking on the list one more time, issued a ballot paper and gave directions on how it should be marked and folded. The paper was in each case stamped at both ends with a rubber stamp bearing an official six-digit number which had been randomly selected at the opening of the polling station.

We noted that the voter's number was written on the counterfoil of the ballot paper, which was retained. (The used part of the ballot paper, however, was not numbered, so voters could not be traced.)

The voter was entitled to make two marks: one at the top in the white section for the General Election and one at the bottom on the blue section for the Regional Election. These were made in secret at a screened polling booth. After marking the paper the voter folded it so that the official marks were visible but her/his mark could not be seen, and took it to the ballot clerk. She/he showed the official marks, then had her/his right index finger dipped in indelible electoral ink. The ballot box clerk then allowed the voter to drop the ballot paper into the box, while the Presiding Officer put the voter's MRC into the ballot box. The voter then left the polling station.

The voting mechanism – and other procedures – seemed to be well understood by the voters.<sup>1</sup> The repeated checking of the register by officials to ensure that the voter was listed there and the checking of the MRC in the case of every voter was a cumbersome process, but it was commendably thorough.

### Arrangements at the Polling Station

We were impressed with the calibre and commitment of polling station staff, many of whom were women. Our teams observed only one irregularity (a case of attempted personation) and were told of only a few at the stations we visited – for instance, one case of attempted double-voting. Nowhere did we come across evidence of organised election fraud. Everywhere we went the secrecy of the ballot was assured. Facilities were sometimes rudimentary but generally adequate: there was sufficient space and the layout of and signage at the stations was clear. Those with disabilities were assisted by the Presiding Officer. We noted, however, that the 200 yard limit (within which there was supposed to be no party campaigning) was not always fully observed and that, given the location of polling stations right on the street or at a riverbank, it was difficult to enforce.

In a number of polling stations visited by our teams, we noticed photographs of the President and Prime Minister inside those polling stations, which were mostly public buildings, sometimes near the screened area in which the voter marked her/his ballot paper.

There was often a problem at larger polling places, where the polling stations had been sub-divided. In some cases the (alphabetical) sub-division had only been made on the morning of the poll and the voters did not realise and were not adequately informed in advance. Voters reached the head of the queue only to find that they were not in the right place. In some Georgetown polling stations this led to noisy protests, which raised the tension to a point where in one instance the Presiding Officer threatened to close the station.

### Agents, Domestic Observers and Police

Party agents for the two main parties were present at all stations we visited, and at many there were representatives of several of the others too. We received few complaints from these agents. We also met representatives of the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), a domestic observer group which fielded about 1,000 observers. They were well informed and clearly identifiable as EAB observers; some of their observers complained that they had not been given copies of the Addendum. Security was unintrusive: when we met the Police Commissioner

.....  
*The voting mechanism – and other procedures – seemed to be well understood by the voters*  
.....

<sup>1</sup> See page 13 on voter education.

he had told us that the police on duty at the polling stations would not be armed and everywhere we went this was the case. The police presence was either welcomed or attracted no comment. At several places, however, we noted that the police presence was insufficient to maintain order. Especially where there were several stations at one polling place and confusion or anger about arrangements one policeman was not enough. Although allegations were made by the two major parties on the one hand that voters and officials at polling stations had been intimidated and, on the other, that inducements had been offered to voters, we did not observe any instances of either.

## The Voters

There appeared to have been a high voter turnout, with people of all ages (but particularly the young) eager to vote early. As a result of this queues formed outside a number of polling places we visited, but in the majority of places we visited voters were processed reasonably quickly.

We were impressed with how well informed voters were about the process. They were also familiar with the location of the stations, which were mostly in schools. There were 500 or fewer electors on the list at each polling station so, in towns at least, voters did not have to travel far to exercise their franchise: in rural areas the journey was longer, in parts of District Nine as long as 45 minutes by car.

Voter behaviour was generally good and we witnessed no violence. Outside Georgetown, and often in the capital itself too, the atmosphere was cordial at the stations we visited, although there were exceptions in Georgetown with some tension as the day wore on (see below). The Elections Commission had claimed in advance that it would take around three minutes for each voter to be processed; at most polling stations we visited this was confirmed by the experience on the day. Many of the voters were women: we did not detect any impediments to their freedom to vote as they wished.

## Pre-Election Fears

So far as the five main pre-election fears were concerned:

- **Adequacy of the Register:** Everywhere we went polling stations had both the OLE and the Addendum. However, there were clearly errors in the Voters' List. In contrast to the rural areas, in District Four – Georgetown in particular – the number of people protesting (that their names were missing from the register being used at the polling station, even when they had been on earlier versions) suggests that mistakes had been made. Numbers of people with either National Identification Cards or the stubs from the photographic process, but who were not on the register, turned up at polling stations anyway and in several cases stayed either to complain or in the hope that the Elections Commission would reverse its earlier decision that only those on the register could vote.

At a press briefing after the closure of the polls the Chairman of the Elections Commission was questioned about the register. He said that he regarded 5 per cent as a reasonable percentage of error in the list which, he said, would suggest that there might be up to 9,000 errors in the list for District Four. In his view such an error rate did not put the integrity of the

.....  
*The Chairman of the Elections Commission said that he regarded 5 per cent as a reasonable percentage of error in the list, which would suggest that there might be up to 9,000 errors in the list for District Four*  
.....

list in jeopardy. It was the best that could be done in the circumstances, reflecting the limitations of human beings and equipment. He said that the Commission needed to look at its information systems arrangements and that he preferred a 'sustained' voter registration arrangement, rather than registration immediately prior to elections.

- **Identification Process:** National Identification Cards which had not been distributed by election day were available from special centres near clusters of polling stations. Most of those we saw voting had their Cards, except in one sub-district where no cards appeared to have been issued. Since the Master Registration Certificates were generally present there was relatively little recourse to the swearing of oaths for identification purposes. Voters appeared to be aware of the appropriate forms of identification.
- **District Four:** The election seemed to us to have gone very smoothly outside Georgetown. But in Georgetown itself there was some tension in parts of the city when people who thought they should have been able to vote found that because they were not on the register in use at the polling stations they would not be able to do so. Frustrated and upset individuals protested and shouted. Crowds gathered outside some polling stations and in the centre of the city. There were some disturbances.

There also seems to have been a problem in Georgetown with the proxy voting system, with claims that even on voting day itself 'hundreds' of proxy forms had not been signed by the appropriate Elections Commission officials.

- **Staffing:** On the day there were sufficient staff for the number of polling stations, with some Returning Officers shifting staff from place to place according to the pressure on particular stations. However, there was a shortage of information clerks at some polling places with more than one polling station, resulting in a certain amount of confusion. Most of the officials had been well trained, were competent and efficient and displayed a high level of commitment. We were impressed by their professionalism, good humour and dignity. Procedures were implemented in a relatively uniform way.
- **Organisational Preparations:** Elections in Guyana present a formidable logistical challenge, with long distances, difficult terrain and outside the coastal strip a relatively undeveloped infrastructure. Materials often have to be carried on foot or by river, and in some places the journey is so difficult and long that the movement of some ballot boxes from the District Returning Officer's office had to begin on the Friday or Saturday in readiness for Monday's elections. To hold these elections at all represented something of a logistical triumph. Generally the necessary items were present.<sup>2</sup> At some stations in District Four there were shortages of materials – for instance, of indelible ink, or the six-digit stamp – but these were generally dealt with fairly quickly after the opening.

## Extension of Hours

Although several of the pre-election fears were not fulfilled, the perception that people in District Four had been 'disenfranchised' did lead to a dramatic and confusing situation at the end of the day.

<sup>2</sup> We should note, however, that while in some Districts the Elections Commission's provision of food for its staff was good, in others lunch and dinner was not provided.

Renewed representations were made to the Elections Commission after 5 p.m. on election day by the PNC/Reform, which drew attention to three categories: persons with National Identification Cards whose names were not on the OLE or Addendum; those who were 'displaced' (i.e. on the list but for areas other than those where they lived); those who had been photographed and had the stubs to prove it, but whose names were not on the register.

The Chairman of the Elections Commission decided that even though the Commission had discussed this issue into the early morning on election day itself (and decided that only those on the register would be able to vote) there should be a further special meeting of the Commission. To allow time for the meeting to take place it was decided that the polls should remain open. An announcement was made from the Elections Commission Media Centre in Georgetown at 6 p.m. – the exact moment at which the polling stations were due to close – that the polls would stay open until a time to be determined by the Commission. By the time this directive reached polling stations many had already stopped voting, broken the seals on their ballot boxes and begun their counts.

As darkness fell there was uncertainty, and no public explanation from the Commission centrally. Communications were not improved by the sudden and complete congestion of the mobile telephone network. Media outlets took time to catch up with events, with some reporting the extension and others not. Meanwhile, at least one major party machine was in action ensuring that its supporters knew of the Commission's decision to keep the polls open. Although no public announcement was made to this effect by the Commission, in some places people believed that they could now vote even if they were not on the list, so long as they had their National Identification Cards or the stub from the Identification Card photographic process.

In the event, the Commission confirmed its earlier decisions that only those on the OLE or the Addendum could vote, and that those who were not on either could not do so, even if they had their National Identification Cards and stubs from the photographic process. A further announcement was made at the Elections Commission Media Centre at 6.45 p.m. stating that the polls would close "at the specified time", with the proviso that those waiting to vote would be able to do so. From the public announcements it was not clear as to what the specified time was. However, it seems that the instructions provided to the Returning Officers, and through them to the Presiding Officers, were that the polls should close at 7 p.m. The instructions from the Commission to Returning Officers and in turn from them to Presiding Officers took some time to get to the polling stations. In Georgetown one polling station was still open as late as 9.30 p.m. We cannot say how many people voted in the 'extended voting period'.

It was dark, staff were tired, communications were poor, the situation was confused and at some polling stations there was a suspicious, vigorous and volatile crowd outside the polling station. However justifiable the reasons for extending the voting hours it created difficulties and uncertainty at the polling stations. The public announcements were not sufficiently informative. The whole episode was unfortunate.

## The Counting of Votes

At the end of the day, wherever we were present, the closure procedures were scrupulously followed, although there were sometimes delays because of shortages of the correct forms. The unfolding, sorting, separation and counting of votes followed, in the presence of party agents.

It was slow, but transparent. Officials followed the procedures to the letter, and there was no cutting of corners: each ballot paper was held up for the officials, party agents and observers to see. The percentage of rejected ballots seemed to us to be relatively low. The voting and counting was generally done in schools, where facilities were reasonable.



**ALL DONE . . .** after the count: ballot boxes being transferred to the Returning Officer's office. The Observers were impressed by the counting process, but the long delay in issuing the district and constituency results in Georgetown resulted in public concern and rising tension

After the completion of the count the Statement of Poll was signed by the officials and party agents present – except in one place, where the Presiding Officer forgot to do so. There were some shortages of printed envelopes. There were also some small errors, but given the tiredness all round we were impressed by how few these were. A copy of the Statement of Poll was posted at the polling station itself and all the materials packed. Sometimes there was some confusion as to procedures at this stage, which were very bureaucratic.

The materials – ballot boxes, envelopes, papers, etc. – were then taken to a safe location under police escort, usually to the District Elections Commission headquarters, where the ballot boxes were stored overnight in containers under the protection of the police. Party agents were allowed to be present for this transfer process. Although it was time-consuming we were impressed by the counting process and the security arrangements for the transfer of materials to a safe location, all the more so in view of the long hours that had been put in by the officials and the resulting tiredness.

## The Results Process

In addition to the various pre-election fears concerning the voting process which were listed earlier, there had been concern prior to election day regarding the transmission of results. In 1997 this had not gone well and the Elections Commission stated in advance of these elections that considerable efforts would be made this time to ensure that the procedures worked effectively. It was always clear that, for logistical reasons, in some places some delay would be inevitable. But it was hoped that with thorough training, clear instructions, additional land telephone lines, fax machines, mobile telephones, UHF and VHF radios and – in one region – a full dress rehearsal beforehand, the results would be transmitted accurately and as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

The method – changed shortly before the elections, after the rehearsal revealed shortcomings – was for the Deputy Returning Officer to contact the polling station Presiding Officers in her/his area to obtain the results of the individual polling station counts. The Deputy Returning Officer would then pass these on in batches to the Returning Officer at the Elections Commission's district headquarters, who would in turn fax the batches of results to the Elections Commission's Georgetown Headquarters. As Statements of Poll became available these too would be passed on.

Regional totals of these 'official preliminary results' (*not* individual polling station results) and the distribution of votes between the parties were then displayed at the Elections Commission's Media Centre and broadcast on a dedicated television channel. Later in the process the results from individual polling stations were displayed.

The Elections Commission had assembled at its Georgetown headquarters an impressive computerised results system, with several checks and balances to prevent manipulation of the figures by those inputting the data. However, while international observers were present in the Commission's 'Special Operations Room' we noted that no party agents were present while we were there.

There were some problems with the transmission of results. For instance, the telephone reporting system in District Four did not work as expected. Results from that district were also delayed because of the extension in polling hours and the closure of some polling stations even later than had been decided. There were relatively few reports from the Returning Officers until breakfast-time on the day after the elections. However, even after the results had been received in the 'Special Operations Room' there was sometimes a considerable delay in 'publishing' them via the Commission's Media Centre. Relatively few results had been published by lunchtime on the day after polling.

Delays in the announcement of results can stimulate concern among a suspicious and tense electorate, and there were fears that there might be trouble on the streets of Georgetown if – however good the reason – delays continued. The PNC/Reform did indeed protest at the slowness of the results process.

The results started to come through in significant numbers on the afternoon and evening of 20 March and at an Elections Commission press conference at

8 p.m. that night partial preliminary figures were announced for most of the districts. Additional information was released thereafter on the Elections Commission's dedicated television channel. By 10.35 a.m. on 21 March the preliminary results which had been produced accounted for 295,264 of the votes cast, 67 per cent of the registered voters. By 1.04 p.m. the preliminary results available accounted for 325,200 voters (70 per cent). At 3.22 p.m. the figure was 325,977 (74 per cent). At 8 p.m. that evening, the Chief Elections Officer announced the preliminary results that were then available, which he said were for all Districts except part of District Four. These indicated an 88 per cent turnout for the General Election.

Up to the afternoon of Wednesday, 21 March the results were being entered into the Elections Commission Special Operations Room computers directly, first from phone calls and later from Statements of Poll. However, following a meeting of the Elections Commission that afternoon it was decided to reconcile the figures manually from the Statements of Poll and then compare them with the figures previously entered into the computer. This followed representations from one of the political parties, which said that it did not have confidence in the computer system. All the Returning Officers were brought in to the Elections Commission's headquarters, apart from the Returning Officer for District Four. It emerged during the course of the day that four Statements of Poll were missing.

On Thursday, 22 March it was reported that a number of Statements of Poll had been mislaid in the Elections Commission headquarters overnight. The figures had already been entered into the computer system.

The manual reconciliation process continued through the day. By 3 p.m. it had been completed for all Districts except 4, 6 and 10. At 4 p.m. the Returning Officer and staff from Region 4 were brought to the Elections Commission headquarters to assist in the reconciliation process.

According to earlier statements by the Elections Commission, the Acting Chief Elections Officer had been due to advise the Elections Commission of the results on the morning of Thursday, 22 March. The official announcement of the results, including the allocation of seats, had been expected later that day. Neither took place that day. The official announcement was eventually made at 4.20 a.m. on the morning of Friday, 23 March. The figures showed that 393,709 valid votes had been cast in the General Election.

We paid visits to the Operations Room at various times throughout each day of the results process in order to observe the process of entering the results into the computer system. Although the delay was regrettable, we saw no evidence of malpractice.

In parallel there were developments on the outskirts of Georgetown. After a Statement of Poll was reportedly removed from outside a polling station in Buxton a crowd gathered and clashed with police. There was increased tension in Georgetown.

## Observers

Earlier in this chapter, we noted that we encountered EAB domestic observers at polling stations. We also saw international observers from the Carter

.....  
*We paid visits to the Operations Room at various times throughout each day of the results process in order to observe the process of entering the results into the computer system. Although the delay was regrettable, we saw no evidence of malpractice*  
.....

Center, Organisation of American States (OAS), CARICOM, the Long-Term and the European Union observer groups. Indeed, while maintaining our separate identity we worked closely with other international observers to ensure that there was no unnecessary duplication of effort. Commonwealth Observers appeared to be welcome wherever we went. Once accredited, we were allowed to go wherever and see whatever we wanted.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

In our Departure Statement we highlighted the need for Guyana to transcend its still largely ethnic politics and find a way to build inclusiveness and unity. We believe that these are the pre-eminent challenges before the people and institutions of this country. We hope that the Commonwealth and all other friends of Guyana will stand ready to help in that effort, but recognise that the major responsibility lies with the people themselves.

So far as these elections are concerned, our main conclusions are as follows:

- the people of Guyana embraced these elections with enthusiasm and commitment to the democratic process;
- the Elections Commission should be congratulated for its efforts to ensure that the elections were held on the appointed day;
- the people were able to express their will, but the shortcomings in the election arrangements detracted from otherwise praiseworthy arrangements: the errors in the Voters' List reduced public confidence in the voting process, while the long delay in producing the results resulted in public concern and rising tension.

On polling day:

- in the places where we observed, there was no evidence of intimidation or abuse of the electoral process; the parties campaigned openly; the voters cast their votes freely; the secrecy of the ballot was assured;
- the polling was properly and impartially carried out in all regions and the count was thorough and transparent;
- party agents showed confidence in the electoral process and co-operated with polling staff in ensuring that voting procedures were efficiently carried out;
- the process was generally peaceful and security arrangements for polling and counting were good;
- in most instances, polling materials were adequate, polling staff were well trained and helpful;
- we noted with approval that women had an important role in the electoral process, although we regret that the electoral system is not as positive from a gender point of view as at first appears.

We also noted:

- that Observers were welcomed by the people, political parties, the Commission, and polling staff, who treated them with courtesy and facilitated their observation of all aspects of the electoral process;
- the decision to integrate the results of the Disciplined Forces Poll with those of the rest of the electorate – a measure recommended by the 1997 Commonwealth Observer Group – was a positive development and ensured that the secrecy of the Disciplined Forces Poll was maintained.

## Recommendations

In our Interim Statement we proposed that before the next elections the Elections Commission should review all aspects of its election management arrangements, ensuring that the lessons of 1997 and 2001 are learnt and that the appropriate action is taken. In addition, we recommend that:

- in view of the errors in the Voters' List, a complete audit of the Elections Commission computer systems be undertaken and a new, continuous system of voter registration be introduced;
- the Elections Commission should make more efficient arrangements for the speedy and accurate transmission of the results from the polling stations after the count, and more effective computer processing by the Elections Commission, so that the figures can be released to the public as early and with as little confusion as possible;
- in general, better mechanisms be put in place within the Elections Commission for more effective communication of its decisions to the public and its own staff;
- the Guyana Elections Commission be constituted in a manner which ensures its independence and neutrality;
- Elections Commission staff be made permanent so that the Commission no longer relies on secondees or other staff from state bodies, the process of the recruitment of polling station staff be reviewed with a view to further enhancement of standards in future elections, there also be clear criteria for recruitment, and that there should be a permanent training programme;
- the National Identification Card should be issued by a public authority other than the Elections Commission and its use in the electoral process should be reviewed;
- the Chairman of the Elections Commission or the Chief Elections Officer should have the power to extend polling station hours, within a reasonable limit and with adequate notice;
- consideration should be given to ways in which the electoral process in District Four can be more effectively managed;
- all candidates and parties should be required to sign up to an enforceable Code of Conduct regarding behaviour during the campaign and election period as a prerequisite of nomination;
- media organisations should agree to a self-regulatory Code of Conduct with an independent body to deal with complaints, a regulatory framework should be developed for broadcasting standards, and state-owned media should be more independent and serve the interests of the whole population rather than just the government of the day;
- mechanisms be introduced to ensure that campaign financing arrangements are transparent;
- a regular, collective forum be created for all the parties, at national and regional level, and a mechanism be created for collective consultation between the political parties and the Elections Commission;
- the Voter Education programme be evaluated to see how it can be improved; for future elections consideration might be given to the

inclusion of information about the objectives and functions of international election observers.

So far as the mechanics of the polling and counting process are concerned:

- consideration should be given to the possible use of mobile polling stations in remote areas;
- photographs of the President and Prime Minister and material carrying a party symbol should not be displayed during voting in buildings used for polling;
- less bureaucratic procedures should be adopted after the completion of the count to make it more user-friendly;
- consideration should be given to further ways of assisting disabled voters in exercising their franchise;
- the ballot box seal should be redesigned so that when the ballot boxes are opened the number is not cut through;
- the Disciplined Forces envelopes should be counted when the ballot boxes are opened, to ensure that no extra envelopes are inserted after the close of the poll; the envelopes should also be pre-printed.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to record our appreciation to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, for constituting this Observer Group and to acknowledge and thank the many people who helped us during the course of our time in Guyana.

We are especially grateful for the assistance of the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission, Major-General (Rtd) Joseph Singh, and the staff of the Commission. We appreciate the co-operation of the Commissioner of Police, Mr Laurie Lewis, and his officers. We thank the political parties, non-governmental organisations and others who briefed us in Georgetown and during our deployment, and the domestic and other international observers with whom we worked closely in the field. They were all generous with their time. Without our drivers we would not have been able to accomplish this mission and we are grateful to them for their help.

We also wish to place on record our appreciation for the help and support from the dedicated staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat, without whom we could not have fulfilled our mandate.

Above all, we thank the people of Guyana for their kindness. They are a wonderful people, they deserve a bright future in a vibrant democracy.

## ANNEX I

---

### **Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group**

#### **Mr Ieremia Tabai (Kiribati – Chairperson)**

Mr Ieremia Tabai was Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum from 1992 to 1997 and President of his country, Kiribati, from 1979 to 1990. He is now Member of Parliament for the island of Nonouti, Kiribati. Mr Tabai was first elected to the National Parliament in 1974 and was re-elected in 1977, 1982, 1983, 1987 and 1991 when he had to resign his office as Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Development to take up his position as Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum.

#### **Ms Rindai Chipfunde (Zimbabwe)**

Ms Rindai Chipfunde is the National Co-ordinator, and one of the founder members, of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN), a network of 36 NGOs, which organised the domestic observers at the Zimbabwe general election in June 2000. She is the co-author of an election monitors' and trainers' manual produced for the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Ms Chipfunde was formerly the Country Co-ordinator for the Southern Africa Human Rights NGO Network (SAHRINGON) and the Programmes Co-ordinator for ZimRights, both human rights NGOs. In 1999 Ms Chipfunde was a delegate to the Malawi General Elections Study Mission under the National Democratic Institute. Prior to this she was an Assistant Director in Zimbabwe's Public Service Commission.

#### **Ms France Demianenko (Canada)**

Ms France Demianenko has been Deputy Director, International Services, Elections Canada since 1993. She is responsible for managing observation and evaluations of international elections as well as providing expert assistance, advice and co-ordination. In 2000, Ms Demianenko was Senior Adviser to the Chief Electoral Officer, and co-ordinated all activities relating to the 27 November 2000 federal elections in Canada. Before her appointment as Deputy Director, International Services, she held a variety of positions, including, from 1992 to 1993, Executive Assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada and between 1987 and 1992 Auditor with the Department of Transport Canada.

#### **Mr Dayananda Dissanayake (Sri Lanka)**

Mr Dayananda Dissanayake has been Commissioner of Elections in Sri Lanka since 1995 and has been responsible for conducting three island-wide national elections during this time. He has served 26 years in Sri Lanka's Department of Elections, having joined in 1975 after five years in the Provincial Administration Service. Mr Dissanayake has been a member of the Executive Board of the Association of Asian Election Authorities since 1998 and was a Commonwealth Observer in South Africa in 1994.

**Mrs Leela Dookun Luchoomun, MP (Mauritius)**

Mrs Leela Dookun Luchoomun has been a Member of Parliament in Mauritius since the general election in 2000 and is Parliamentary Private Secretary attached to the National Development Unit of the Ministry of Local Government. Mrs Dookun Luchoomun is the only female among the 10 Parliamentary Private Secretaries. She is responsible for all infrastructural and social development in two of the 21 constituencies in Mauritius.

**Lady Carol Kidu, MP (Papua New Guinea)**

Lady Carol Kidu is Member of Parliament for Moresby South, Papua New Guinea. She is also the Chairperson of a Special Parliamentary Committee on Urbanisation and Social Development, which has undertaken the task of devising policies and strategies to address the negative impact of rapid urbanisation and to ensure a better future for dispossessed urban indigenous landowners. She was previously Shadow Minister for Human Resources. Before entering politics in 1997, Lady Kidu was a secondary school teacher and textbook writer and then a Research Officer on Ministerial staff.

**Hon Simon Mwila, MP (Zambia)**

Mr Simon Mwila is Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia and has been Member of Parliament for the Kasama constituency since November 1991. Prior to entering politics in 1991 Mr Mwila, a Member of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy, was Personnel Manager for the then Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines Ltd (1978-86). He has significant election observation experience, all sponsored by the Association of Western European Parliamentarians Against Apartheid, in Malawi (1993), Mozambique (1994), South Africa (1994) and the United Republic of Tanzania (1995).

**Ms Florizelle O'Connor (Jamaica)**

Ms Florizelle O'Connor is an independent human rights consultant focusing on human rights practices in the developing world. She is currently on a two-year assignment as human rights consultant to the Ministry of National Security and Justice. Ms O'Connor was the Co-ordinator of the Jamaica Council for Human Rights for 17 years, in which capacity she campaigned against capital punishment and was responsible for forming Caribbean Lifelines, a group that lobbies against the death penalty in Jamaica, and the formation of the London Panel of Solicitors, a group of over 40 law firms in the UK that provides *pro bono* legal representation for Jamaican cases taken to the Privy Council in London. She also facilitated the formation of Caribbean Rights, a group that works to raise awareness of human rights violations in the Caribbean region.

**Mr Brian Pearson (United Kingdom)**

Mr Brian Pearson is Administrator of the United Kingdom Association of Election Administrators and former Election Officer for Leicester, UK. In the latter capacity he was responsible for preparing the register of electors for three parliamentary constituencies and 28 local government areas, and for organising all national and local elections in the City and for the Leicester

European Parliamentary Constituency. Mr Pearson has observed elections in Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Romania and South Africa.

#### **Mr Cecil Ryan (St Vincent and the Grenadines)**

Mr Cecil Ryan is the Co-ordinator of the National Alliance of Development Organisations, Managing Director of Projects Promotion Ltd, President of the Caribbean People's Development Agency and President of the Government Employees' Co-operative Credit Union Ltd. He was a candidate for the United People's Movement (UPM) in the St Vincent and the Grenadines general election in 1984, and has been observing his country's electoral processes since then. Mr Ryan conducted an opinion poll during the 1998 general election campaign in St Vincent and the Grenadines. He has been observing the electoral process this year and conducted an opinion poll prior to the 2001 general election.

#### **Mr Phil Whelan (New Zealand)**

Mr Phil Whelan was Chief Electoral Officer in New Zealand, in which capacity he was responsible for the management of the 1993, 1996 and 1999 general elections and a number of referendums in New Zealand. His tenure saw a period of significant electoral reform, with 1996 being the first elections conducted under a proportional voting system (MMP). Mr Whelan also served two terms as a member of the Representative Commission, which sets electoral boundaries in New Zealand, and he has represented New Zealand at many international conferences.

#### **Secretariat Support Staff**

Ms Judith Pestaina	<i>Team Leader</i>
Ms Cheryl Dorall	<i>Media Adviser</i>
Mr Christopher Child	<i>Assistant to Observers</i>
Mr Chuks Ihekaibeya	<i>Assistant to Observers</i>
Mr Guy Hewitt	<i>Assistant to Observers</i>
Dr Jackie Dugard	<i>Assistant to Observers</i>
Ms Zippy Ojago	<i>Administrative Assistant</i>

## Arrival Statement, 12 March 2001



### Commonwealth Observer Group

Guyana General and Regional Elections, 19 March 2001

Tel: 00 592 22 57775  
Fax: 00 592 22 57666

Main Street Plaza Hotel  
45 Main Street  
Georgetown  
Guyana

#### *News Release*

#### **ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY MR IEREMIA TABAI CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

It is only right that my first task as Chairperson of this Commonwealth Observer Group should be to explain to the people of Guyana the purpose of our visit here and the way we intend to go about our work.

I say that because this is your country, these are your elections, and we are here because your political parties want us to be here. The Commonwealth Secretary-General established our Group because your Government invited him to constitute such a Group and your political parties agreed that we should come. An Assessment Mission was sent to Guyana by the Secretary-General specifically to consult them on this. In short, we are here because your process wants us to be here. We will abide by your law. And, above all, we will respect your people. We hope to meet many of you. We will certainly travel extensively, consult widely and take every opportunity to see the process for ourselves.

We will not interfere in the process. At every stage we will act with neutrality, impartiality, objectivity and independence. Each of us participates in our individual capacities. We represent the whole Commonwealth, rather than the countries from which we have come. We are independent of our governments, independent of any organisations to which we belong, independent of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, and most certainly independent of any political force in this country.

Our concern is purely with the electoral process. We have no interest in who wins. Our mandate is to:

- consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole;
- determine in our own judgement whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors; and
- determine if the results of the elections reflect the wishes of the people.

In order to make that judgement, we will aim to arrive at a broad overview of the process. We will not be able to be present at every polling station or counting centre, but we hope that we will be able to take a representative sample.

Our immediate priority is to be briefed on arrangements for the elections. We will therefore be meeting with the Elections Commission this morning, before we see anyone else. Tomorrow we will meet political parties and on Wednesday non-governmental organisations and others. On Thursday we will deploy around the country to begin our observation on the ground. After we have witnessed the immediate pre-election period, the campaigning and the media, we will observe the polling itself and the counting of votes. We will then return to Georgetown to consider our report, which we will write here and sign before we depart, which is due to be on 23 or 24 March. Two representatives of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat staff, will remain here for a short period after we have left.

When we leave we will submit our report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn forward it to the Government of Guyana, the Elections Commission, the leadership of all the political parties taking part in the elections and then to all Commonwealth governments. The report will be made publicly available, here and throughout the Commonwealth.

12 March 2001

## ANNEX III

---

### Schedule of Engagements

#### Monday, 12 March

1000	Arrival Press Conference, Main Street Plaza Hotel
1100	Briefing by Guyana Elections Commission: Mr J G Singh (Chairman) and Mr Gocool Boodoo (Chief Elections Officer)
1430	Briefing by Advance Group: Mr Dayananda Dissanayake and Mr Chuks Ihekaibeya
1545	Initial deployment discussion
1700	Commonwealth Youth Programme Reception for Commonwealth Day, Tower Hotel

*During the day members of the Group also observed voting by the 'Disciplined Forces'*

#### Tuesday, 13 March

0900	People's Progressive Party/Civic: Mr Donald Ramotar (General Secretary), Dr Bheri S Ramsaran (PPP/C Elections Agent), Mr Henry Jeffrey, Dr Lesley Ramsammy, Ms Gail Teixeira
1000	People's National Congress/Reform: Mr Oscar Clarke (General Secretary), Ms Deborah Backer (member, PNC Central Executive), Mr Joseph Hamilton (PNC/R candidate), Mr Jerome Khan (Chairman, Reform) and Mr Eric Phillips (Deputy Leader, Reform)
1100	Working People's Alliance/Guyana Action Party: Dr Rupert Roopnaraine (GAP-WPA Prime Ministerial candidate, Co-Leader WPA), Mr Desmond Trotman (WPA Election Agent), Ms Sheila Holder (GAP-WPA candidate) and Ms Jocelyn Dow (former member of Guyana Elections Commission)
1200	Guyana Democratic Party: Mr Asgar Ally (Leader) and Mr Hilbert Archer (Campaign Manager)
1400	Justice for All Party: Mr Sherwood Kendall (Executive Member)
1515	Rise Organise And Rebuild (ROAR): Mr Ravi Dev (Leader), Mr Malcolm Harripant (Elections Agent), Mr Charles Sugrim (Executive Member), Mr S Nausrudeen (Campaign Manager) and Mr Naresh Raghubeer (Adviser)
1700	Deployment Briefing: Christopher Child and Dr Jackie Dugard

*The United Force was also invited to send a representative. It declined the invitation, but said that it would be prepared to meet Commonwealth Observers at its office*

## Wednesday, 14 March

- 0900 Non-Governmental Organisations: Mr David Yhann, Ms Fazeel Ferouz and Mr Sultan Rahaman (NGO Forum), Mr Lincoln Lewis (General Secretary, Trades Union Congress), Mr Andrew Garnett (Principal Assistant Secretary, TUC) and Ms Maureen Walcott-Fortune (TUC), Mr Michael McCormack (Co-President, Human Rights Association) and Mr Salim October (Board Member, Youth Challenge Guyana)
- 1045 Commonwealth High Commissioners: HE Mr Jacques Crete (High Commissioner, Canada) and HE Mr Edward Glover (High Commissioner, United Kingdom)
- 1200 Other Observers: Mr Simon Osborn (Co-ordinator, Long-Term Observer Group), Ms Melene Scipio (CARICOM Observer Group), Ms Sue Nelson (Co-ordinator, Carter Centre Observer Group) and Father Malcolm Rodrigues (Chairman, Electoral Assistance Bureau)
- 1415 Media Briefing: Mr Sharief Khan (Editor, Chronicle), Mr David De Caires (Managing Director, Stabroek News), Mr Dwight Whyllie and Mr Harry Myers (Independent Media Monitoring Panel), Mr Martin Gulsaram (Guyana TV) and Mr Adam Harris (Editor, Prime News)
- 1515 Amerindian Organisations: Mr Peter Persaud (President, The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana), Ms Pamela Mendonca (Secretary, TAAMOG), Ms Jean La Rose (Programme Administrator, Amerindian People's Association), Mr Allan Leow (Secretary, Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples) and Ms Marie Greene (Women Across Differences)
- 1615 Women's Organisations: Ms Jocelyn Dow (Red Thread and Women's Millennium Caucus), Ms Vanda Radzik (Red Thread), Ms Hazel Halley-Burnet (Women's Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security), Ms Marie Greene, Ms Magda Pollard and Ms Helen Amsterdam (Women Across Differences), Ms Sheila Chapman (Women's Millennium Caucus/Guyana Association of Women Lawyers), Ms Carol Innis-Baptiste, Ms Pamela Northe and Ms Isha Hussain-Singh (Help and Shelter), Ms Roxanne George (Guyana Association of Women Lawyers) and Ms Bibi Andrews (Rural Women's Network)
- 1730 Police: Mr Laurie Lewis (Commissioner of Police), Mr Floyd McDonald (Deputy Commissioner), Mr Winston Felix (Acting Deputy Commissioner), Mr Eddington Tappin (Assistant Commissioner), Mr Asmanalli (Assistant Commissioner), Mr David Ramosius (Assistant Superintendent)
- 1900 Chairperson's Reception

### Deployment of Commonwealth Observers

Team	Base Location
Mr Tabai Ms Pestaina	Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown
Ms Demianenko Ms Dorall	Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown
Mr Pearson Mr Ihekaibeya	Main Street Plaza Hotel Georgetown
Ms O'Connor Mr Dissanayake	Barrow Hotel Linden
Mr Ryan Ms Chipfunde	Savannah Inn Lethem
Lady Carol Kidu Mr Hewitt	Government Guest House Mabaruma
Mrs Dookun Luchoomun Mr Whelan	Riverton Suites Skeldon
Mr Mwila Dr Dugard	Arabian Atlantic Hotel Anna Regina

## Observation Notes and Check List for Polling Station Visits

### **OBSERVATION NOTES FOR POLL AND COUNT**

#### **PART A**

The Observers may focus particular attention on the following aspects of the conduct of the election:

#### **THE CAMPAIGN**

1. Balance of TV/radio election coverage and extent and nature of access by party and other candidates.
2. Print media: nature of coverage and extent of access by the political parties
3. The tone and content of material put out by the candidates, access to printing facilities
4. The conduct of political meetings/rallies (permits for public meetings?)
5. The conduct of house-to-house canvassing of voters.
6. Nature, scale and effectiveness of voter education on radio and television, in the print media and by other methods.
7. Activities/measures to encourage the participation of women
8. Access to funds and sources of funds

#### **THE POLL**

1. The location of polling stations
2. Distances travelled by voters to polling booths, particularly in rural areas.
3. The procedure followed at the opening of the poll, including voter identification.
4. The length of time voters wait to cast their votes.
5. The adequacy or otherwise of facilities at polling stations and their state of readiness.
6. Availability of adequate supplies, e.g. ballot papers, official stamps and stamp pads etc
7. The performance of electoral officials at the polling stations visited

8. The procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals
9. Arrangements to facilitate voting by women
10. The steps taken to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is assured.
11. The general atmosphere at the polling stations visited.
12. Access of party agents and domestic observers to polling stations
13. Whether illiterate voters are assured of a vote in secret
14. Whether the security of ballot boxes in transit is assured.

#### **THE COUNT**

1. Inspection of seals
2. The process of reconciling the number of people who voted with the number of ballots in the boxes
3. The determination of invalid ballots
4. The facilities for party agents and their representatives to witness and verify the count and overall transparency
5. Access by domestic and international observers
6. The conduct of election officers.

## **PART B**

Questions that may be put and which you may ask yourself:

1. Was the Voters' Register compiled in a satisfactory way? Were people missed out? Were the names of dead people or "phantom voters" included?
2. Who are the election officials? How were they chosen? Are voters confident that they will be impartial?
3. Is the person in the street satisfied with arrangements? Will he/she vote? If not, is he/she afraid to do so? Were there any attempts to discourage/encourage the participation of women and were they effective?
4. Have all parties been able to campaign freely? Has the campaign been free of intimidation etc? Have all parties had full access to the mass media?
5. Is there freedom to advertise and distribute posters, leaflets etc?

### **ON POLLING DAY**

1. Before polling starts, are the ballot boxes empty? Are they properly sealed? Are all procedures being adhered to?
2. Are all the parties/candidates represented at polling stations? Are they satisfied with the process?
3. Are the voters apparently voting freely? Are they enthusiastic? Do they talk freely? Do they exhibit signs of fear or intimidation?
4. Do voters understand the procedures properly? If not, are the procedures being explained fully and impartially? Are attempts being made to suggest how voters should vote?
5. Does the turnout indicate that women have been deterred from attending to vote?
6. Is only one person at a time being allowed into the voting compartment?
7. How long are voters waiting to vote? If a long time, are some being put off?
8. Will all parties be represented at the polling centres throughout voting and the count? Are agents adequately trained and vigilant?

9. Will domestic and foreign observers have free access to all stages of the process?
10. Is the security presence effective/oppressive?
11. Were the proper procedures followed at the end of day one? Were they properly followed at the start of day two?

#### **THE COUNT**

1. Are the boxes kept safe until opened? Are all parties present at the opening?
2. Does the number of used ballot papers tally with the record of those who voted?
3. Are the papers counted properly? Are counting agents present? Are they satisfied with the procedures of the count?
4. Are the proper procedures followed for declaring votes as invalid?
5. Is the result of the count posted on the wall of the polling station?

**GUYANA GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS**  
19 March 2001

**CHECKLIST FOR POLLING STATION VISITS**

Team Member(s): .....

District: .....

Polling Station: .....

Time of Arrival: .....

Time of Departure: .....

Voters in Queue: ..... Rate of Processing: .....

1. **Opening of Poll**

	On time? No/Yes	Procedures followed? No/Yes	All materials? No/yes?
	Details:		
2. **Register**

	State of the register? Are voters on it? Are parties complaining?
	Details:
3. **Layout and Facilities**

Voter ID	What forms of ID are being accepted? What is impact on numbers voting? What do participants in the process say? Details?
	Good? Adequate? Poor?
4. **Polling Staff**

Efficient? Satisfactory? Poor?	Discreet? Intrusive? Oppressive?
--------------------------------	----------------------------------

6. **Complaints by Party Agents**

	Are Party Agents present? Any complaints?	No/Yes	Which parties? Details:
--	--	--------	----------------------------
7. **Complaints by Voters**

	No/Yes	Details:
--	--------	----------
8. **Presence of unauthorised persons**

	No/Yes	Details:
--	--------	----------
9. **Atmosphere at Station?**

	Orderly?	Tense?	Chaotic?
--	----------	--------	----------
10. **Secrecy of Ballot**

	Assured?	Poor?	Uncertain
--	----------	-------	-----------
11. **Voting**

(a) Personation attempts alleged: Details:	No/Yes
(b) Multiple voting attempts alleged: Details:	No/Yes
(c) Women deterred from voting: Details:	No/Yes
(d) Is the voting procedure (dye, stamping ballots etc) being followed?	No/Yes
12. **200 Yard Limit – is it being observed**

	No/Yes
--	--------
13. **Closing of Poll**

	On time?	Numbers still in queue?	Procedure followed?	No/Yes
--	----------	-------------------------	---------------------	--------
13. **The Count**

	Are procedures being observed? Detail:
--	---
14. **Post Count**

	Procedures followed? No/Yes
--	-----------------------------
15. **Apparent fairness overall**

	Good? Acceptable? Questionable?
--	---------------------------------
16. **Other Comments**

## Interim Statement, 20 March 2001

### **COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP** **Guyana General and Regional Elections - 19 March 2001**

#### **INTERIM STATEMENT BY CHAIRPERSON MR IEREMIA TABAI MP**

We are issuing the following statement to indicate our preliminary view of the process we have been observing.

In many ways this was a good election:

- the turnout was high and the voters themselves, especially the young people, were eager to exercise their democratic rights; strenuous efforts were made to ensure that those who were on the register were able to vote, even if they did not receive their National Identification Cards in time; the process was peaceful and security arrangements were good;
- the secrecy of the ballot was assured; the polling stations were well-organised, the voting system was relatively straightforward, the polling station staff were well trained, displayed a high level of commitment and were present in adequate numbers; there were some problems with the delivery of materials in some places early on election day, but generally the necessary items were present – a feat which required a massive logistical effort;
- the count was both thorough and transparent.

We also acknowledge the great efforts by the Elections Commission to ensure that the elections were held within the designated timeframe. However:

- there were clearly errors in the Voter's List and shortcomings in the system which produced it; as a result people who should have been able to vote were not able to do so; it remains to be seen how extensive the errors and shortcomings were;
- we note the confusing sequence of events which began with the announcement at 6.00 pm on election day - the exact moment at which the polling stations were due to close - that the stations would remain open until a time to be determined by the Commission; exacerbated by communications difficulties it created uncertainty and inconsistencies as darkness fell and the count was due to begin;
- we note that the shortcomings of the process were by no means confined to the events of polling day itself. We wish to highlight in particular the performance of elements of the media in the run up to these elections, which in several cases left a great deal to be desired.

We have yet to observe the completion of the results process: we note how slow it has been.

We believe that before the next election the Commission should review all aspects of its election management arrangements, ensuring that the lessons of 1997 and 2001 are learnt and that the appropriate action is taken. At the same time, the shortcomings to which we have referred are regrettable in that they have obscured the positive and praiseworthy aspects of the process. We will now prepare our report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, including our final conclusions on the process. We wish the people of Guyana well in the days to come.

Georgetown  
20 March 2001

*Media inquiries to Cheryl Dorall (624 2445)*

## Departure Statement, 24 March 2001

### **COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP** **Guyana General and Regional Elections - 19 March 2001**

---

#### **DEPARTURE STATEMENT BY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP, MR IEREMIA TABAI**

We leave Guyana today, having observed the campaign, the preparations for the election, the polling, the counting of votes and the results process. Part of our Observer Group has been here since 26 February; one member of the Group and two Commonwealth Secretariat staff members will remain here for a short period as representatives of the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

We hope that our report will make a small but positive contribution to what we trust will be a bright future for this country. We are sure that the Commonwealth will continue to take a keen and constructive interest in that future and that it will continue to respond to any requests for assistance.

As we said in our Interim Statement, in many ways this was a good election. Since we made that Statement we have seen more of the results process. It has been very slow. Together with the errors in the Voters' List that has detracted from otherwise praiseworthy arrangements. We hope that before the next election better arrangements can be put in place. However, we have no reason to change the overall assessment we made in our Interim Report. While there is clearly a great deal of work to be done to improve election arrangements for the future, we believe that these elections provide a basis for Guyana to go forward.

At the same time, we are acutely conscious that however important elections are they are only part of a much deeper process. We believe that Guyana will only be able to go forward if it can transcend its still largely ethnic politics and find a way to build inclusiveness and unity. That is the pre-eminent challenge before the people and institutions of this country. We wish the people of Guyana well as they face this central challenge.

Media enquiries: Christopher Child  
Mobile 624 2443

Georgetown  
24 March 2001

## Media Code of Conduct

### **A MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT**

*for reporting and coverage of  
Elections in Guyana in 2001*

*Agreed to on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2000 at the "Media Code of Conduct Roundtable" at Le Meridien Pegasus, Old Seawall Road, Georgetown, and signed by: Andaiye, Mark Bhagwandin, Anthony Calder, Hugh Cholmondeley, Rockliff Christie, Karen Davis, David De Caires, David De Groot, Patrick Denny, Omar Farouk, Martin Goolsaran, Alex Graham, David Granger, Albert Henry, Catherine Hughes, Julia Johnson, Sharief Khan, Prem Misir, Kit Nascimento, Compton Peters, Abraham Poole, Khrishna Ramdhani, Rudy Saul, Lalan Shewcharan, Savitree Singh, Henry Skerret and Colin Smith.*

#### **I. PREAMBLE**

Given the desirability for a fair, peaceful and well-regulated election and the avoidance of the aggravation of ethnic tension and unnecessary political discord,

*We agree and accept that a Code of Conduct for the Media - taken to mean newspapers and radio and television stations - generally respected and observed, will contribute to the holding of a free and fair election.*

*We agree to accept, to subscribe to, and, to the very best of our ability, to comply with this Code of Conduct and to take all reasonable steps to ensure its observance.*

*We accept and subscribe to this Code of Conduct on the clear and unqualified understanding that the government or any of its agencies and the Elections Commission, will not impose nor seek to impose any prior restraint or censorship on any publication by the media.*

#### **II. THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. The Media in its coverage and reporting of the elections during the period of campaigning agree:
  - i. to refrain from the publishing or broadcasting of any matter with the potential for, or likely to promote or incite racial hatred, bias or contempt or any matter with the potential for, or likely to, promote or cause public disorder, pose or become a threat to the security of the nation;
  - ii. to refrain from ridiculing, stigmatising or demonising people on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and physical or mental ability;
  - iii. to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, government and political opposition control and direction;
  - iv. to hold themselves independent and free of any, or all, control and direction from any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections;
  - v. to hold themselves free of any, or all, control and direction from any individual, group, or organisation representing or promoting the special interests of any of the political parties officially registered to contest the elections.

2. The Media in the exercise of their constitutional right of free expression, and in recognition of their consequential social responsibility to the society which they serve, will at all times endeavour to:

- i. provide a truthful, comprehensive, accurate, balanced and fair account of events in a context which gives them meaning;
- ii. serve as a forum for the exchange of public comment, opinion, discussion and criticism in a balanced and reasonable manner;
- iii. offer an accurate picture of the constituent groups, organisations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general;
- iv. present and clarify, as far as possible, the goals and values of the constituent groups, organisations and parties contesting the elections and of the society in general.

3. The Media, in accepting the principle of "fair and balanced" reporting, recognise that:

- i. No story is fair, if it omits facts of major importance or significance and is therefore incomplete;
- ii. No story is fair, if it includes essentially irrelevant information, rumour or unsubstantiated statements at the expense of significant facts;
- iii. No story is fair, if it consciously or unconsciously misleads or even deceives the reader, listener or viewer.

4. The Media, in accepting the principle of "accuracy and balance" in reporting, particularly during periods of campaigning for elections, acknowledge that these two main characteristics, accuracy and balance, seek to distinguish good journalism from bad, and journalism from propaganda. From this perspective, we accept that:

- **Accuracy** requires the verification (to the fullest extent possible) and presentation of all facts that are pertinent and necessary to understand a particular event or issue, even if some of the facts conflict with a journalist's, or a broadcaster's particular beliefs and feelings;
- **Balance**, or impartiality, requires the presentation of all the main points of view or interpretations of an event or an issue, regardless of whether the journalist, reporter, broadcaster, editor or the audience agrees with these views.

5. The Media further acknowledge that both these ingredients - accuracy and balance - are necessary for citizens to gain a full and realistic picture of the issues during election campaigns, as well as of the world around them. Democracy, which requires the active participation of informed citizens, depends on journalists and broadcasters to keep citizens informed about major issues.

6. The Media accept that omitting relevant facts and points of view from the reporting of major issues of public interest inevitably distorts the view of reality a journalist, reporter or broadcaster presents and so misleads and misinforms the public.

7. The Media acknowledge that the deliberate distortion of reality so as to lead the public to a particular understanding of events and issues, without regard for reality can poison the processes of democracy.

8. The Media support the establishing of an independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel with the requisite resources empowered to monitor and receive complaints and pronounce on the performance of the media. The Media agree to publish the findings of the panel on all complaints received by it.

### **III. GUIDELINES**

*These GUIDELINES were examined on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2000 at the "Draft Guidelines: Media Code of Conduct Roundtable" at Le Meridien Pegasus, Old Seawall Road, Georgetown. This Roundtable was attended by Mark Benschop, Anthony Calder, Andrew Carmichael, Hugh Cholmondéley, Rockliff Christie, Dennis Cuffy, Karen Davis, David de Caires, David DeGroot, Patrick Denny, Omar Farouk, Martin Goolsarran, Alex Graham, David Granger, Nicole Griffith, Adam Harris, Catherine Hughes, Mike James, Glenn Lall, Margaret Lawrence, Marie Maltais, Prem Misir, Roger Moore, Kit Nascimento, Rawle Nelson, Abraham Poole, Christopher Ram, Lalan Shewcharan, Savitree Singh, Colin Smith, Oneidge Waldron, Bert Wilkinson, Vivian Williams and Enrico Woolford.*

#### **1. "Inciting Racial Hatred and Promoting Public Disorder."**

Media organisations may not censor, or edit any material or materials submitted by political parties, or their agents, for either free, or paid for, publication in newspapers or broadcast on radio or television stations.

However, media organisations observing the law and exercising editorial judgment in favour of good taste and a respect for public safety and decency, should refuse any material submitted by political parties, or their agents, likely to be hateful, ethnically offensive, to promote public disorder or threaten the security of the State.

In all cases of such refusal, the concerned political party must be immediately informed of the reasons for rejection, and, assuming that time permits, the concerned party, or its agent, must be given the opportunity to modify the rejected material in order to conform to acceptable legal, moral and other standards.

The media shall not publish or broadcast any report, which, by its content, carries a clear risk of inciting ethnic hatred or political disorder without having the accuracy and authenticity of the report confirmed by at least 2 (two) independent sources.

**2. "Free space and time for political parties AFTER Nomination Day."**

In the period *after* Nomination Day, and in the interest of even-handed treatment for all political parties, the media agree to make available an equal amount of free space and time for all political parties that have met the legal criteria for contesting the election.

Print and broadcast media will make available, free of charge, their technical facilities such as layout and printing, basic studio, audio and video recordings for the production and presentation of articles and programmes, but not including the provision of editing, talent, or outside production or broadcast facilities, or reproduction and distribution for use by any other media organisation.

**3. "Equal access to Paid Political Advertising."**

Media organisations acknowledge their obligation to provide equal access and opportunity to all political parties without discrimination, to purchase space in newspapers and prime time on radio and television stations to promote their respective views during the period of electioneering.

In this regard, the media will make available to contesting political parties full information about space and time availability for advertising and their published advertising rates to be available to all public relations firms, advertising agencies and the proposed Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel to be established for the purpose of monitoring adherence to the Code of Conduct and these Guidelines.

**4. "News Reports and Current Affairs programmes."**

All media organisations agree that news reports and current affairs programmes may, at any time, subject to the Media Code of Conduct, deal with any issue, cause, organisation or individual. However, given the large number of contesting parties, coverage of election campaign events and other related issues will be limited by the capacity of media organisations to assign staff for these activities. The allocation of free and paid-for time and space for political parties to present their views in the media is a response to this constraint.

Editorial judgments therefore continue to rest solely with the respective organisations. These judgments aim to subscribe to the highest principles of impartiality, fairness and integrity, always separating fact from inference in matters of political and other controversy and supported by eye-witnessed and attributable official statements and other sources to corroborate facts in particular stories.

**5. "Political activities of media functionaries and the likelihood of charges of bias."**

Media organisations agree that individual owners, full-time staff members, part-time employees or other individuals contracted to write, produce or present articles, scripts, programmes, commentaries or other material intended for public dissemination and who (a) **are publicly identified as candidates for election to Parliament**; or, (b) **hold office in a political party**, are likely to be open to charges of bias. Accordingly, media organisations agree that such individuals will, in the performance of their functions, refrain from using their programmes for the purpose of promoting political objectives during the period beginning with the date of signature of the Media Code of Conduct and its accompanying Guidelines, and ending the day after the results of elections will have been declared.

**6. "Errors of Fact."**

The media undertakes to deal responsibly with any complaints received in respect to reports published or broadcast and containing errors of fact, and where, in their opinion, these are justified to publish or broadcast appropriate corrections.

**7. "Coverage on the day of Polling."**

Media organisations agree that no coverage of any activity by the political parties shall take place for a period to begin 24 (twenty-four) hours prior to the opening of Polling Stations on the day of Polling and continue to the close of Polling Stations.

**8. "The Monitoring of Media Performance."**

Media organisations agree to the establishment of an Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel for the overall purpose of being a point of reference for the submission of complaints about performance in the reporting and coverage of events during the election campaign.

Media organisations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Guyana Elections Commission and other donors to identify and secure resources to support this work.

Media organisations however agreed that the terms of reference, functions and structure as well as the articulation of sanctions and other measures aimed at improving performance should be formulated by those media organisations which have signed the Media Code of Conduct and its accompanying Guidelines and stand ready to work collaboratively with the Guyana Elections Commission to achieve the objective of a functional Independent Elections Media Monitoring and Refereeing Panel.

## Code of Conduct for Political Parties

### GUYANA ELECTIONS COMMISSION (GECOM)

## THE ELECTORAL CODE OF CONDUCT

### For Political Parties

### Contesting the 2001 General and Regional Elections

In the belief that the manner in which elections are conducted is crucial to the well-being of Guyana and to its functioning as a democracy, the leadership of the political parties contesting the 2001 General and Regional Elections, will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to contribute positively to a peaceful political atmosphere in which our respective policies and programmes for Guyana's future development will be the dominant feature of our campaigns. In this regard, we solemnly declare that:

#### I. LAWS, RULES AND PROCEDURES

We will act in accordance with all existing laws, rules and procedures governing the electoral process.

We, our candidates, agents, members and supporters will eschew all illegal and corrupt practices.

We will insist that our candidates, agents and members avoid making speeches or statements that promote racial or ethnic tension by using stereotypes and other language to denigrate citizens or groups through derogatory references to race, gender, religious belief or cultural practices.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to respect the rights of others and, in particular, the right of freedom of speech and the right to hold and express contrary views.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters to respect the presence of observers approved and accordingly identified by GECOM and, in so doing to be courteous and helpful to them.

#### II. A PEACEFUL CAMPAIGN AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS

We will contribute in every way to the goal of a peaceful electoral process and hereby undertake to:

- i. forbid the use of threats, harassment or incitement to violence that might cause disruption whether at political rallies or elsewhere, or any other form of intimidatory behaviour;
- ii. forbid the use of abusive, slanderous or threatening language, or language likely to incite persons of one group to violence against any person, member or members of any other group of persons.
- iii. forbid the publication of any pamphlet, poster or other material containing matters which can offend or incite people to cause public disorder;
- iv. forbid our candidates, agents, members and supporters from engaging in acts of interference with rallies, meetings, gatherings or processions of other parties.
- v. forbid all acts aimed at defacing, destroying or damaging any poster, notice or other campaign materials of other political parties.
- vi. avoid indulging in personal attacks based on defamatory comments referring to individuals, their families, other relatives, or associates, or on remarks calculated to cause personal embarrassment.

### **III. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

We, together with our candidates, agents, members and supporters will cooperate with, and give support to, the Elections Commission and its officials in the proper execution of their functions and duties and we will refrain from attacks, threats or other improper treatment of these persons during the campaign

We will ensure that our candidates, agents, members and supporters refrain from interfering in any way with the conduct of the poll and the counting process and avoid all attempts to spread false rumours about electoral activities.

We will urge our candidates, agents, members and supporters not to damage in any way any premises in which polling places are located or to remove, deface or damage any electoral materials.

### **IV. COOPERATION WITH POLICE, MILITARY AND SECURITY AUTHORITIES**

We will show respect for, and give support to, the law enforcement, military and security authorities in the proper discharge of their duties during the campaign period. We agree that unhelpful behaviour by parties and candidates towards these authorities should be avoided.

### **V. COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION**

We agree that effective implementation of this Code by all political parties contesting the General and Regional Elections will significantly enhance the prospects for a free and fair election and we pledge ourselves to undertake, abide by and act according to its text, spirit and intent.

Accordingly, we will issue instructions to our candidates, agents, members and supporters directing them to observe this Code of Conduct and we pledge to take such other action as may be necessary to ensure that its principles are widely disseminated and followed.

### **VI. ACCEPTANCE OF ELECTION RESULTS**

It is our understanding and expectation that the Elections Commission will manage the electoral process and declare the results in accordance with the statutory procedures and other requirements. In these circumstances, we undertake to accept the results with graciousness and magnanimity and to studiously refrain from statements or actions calculated to encourage dissatisfaction with the results, without prejudice, however, to the right conferred by law to resort to the legal processes at the instance of any person or political party.

**Party Newspaper Advertisements**

# GUYANA NEEDS...

# ...Big minds with Big plans

**Have you heard any vision from the PPP/C?**

**Guyana's Annual Growth Rate has dropped:**

- from +7.7% in 1992
- to -1.5% in 2001

**This is serious!**

**You feel the effects everyday.**

**We don't need more decay in our economy.**

**We need REAL Growth!**

**We don't need Vishnu Bisram's cooked up poll numbers from Freedom House.**

**We don't need a Government who claims life in Guyana is a picnic.**


**We need a Government with a REAL plan!**

**PNC REFORM is ready:**

- to implement a REAL development plan
- to create 100,000 new jobs
- to make Guyana economically and socially successful

**Vote for REAL economic growth:**

PNC/R



X

***Our Plan for Wealth Creation***

The grand vision of the PNC REFORM is to move Guyana from an agriculture-based society to an economy based more on manufacturing, industry and services. The PNC REFORM can achieve this over the next 10 years.

The PNC REFORM has found and will continue to find strategic partners to assist in transforming Guyana's economy. These partners will bring to Guyana the economic synergies, capital, skills, distribution networks, advanced technologies and, most crucial, access to overseas market. In all this, Guyanese will share equally in the wealth created.

This transformation, both economic and social, can only occur by creating a non-racial society. Such a society must also focus on high economic growth through good governance, nation building policies and competent management of our international affairs.

PNC REFORM will make Guyana into a transshipment hub. As a transshipment hub, Guyana's economy will be linked as the English-speaking doorway to the rest of South America, which will revitalise Guyana's existing communities and spawn the development of new ones.

PNC REFORM will fully involve in these processes the Guyanese-born expatriate population who also have skills, knowledge, experience, capital, technology, contacts and market access. Inclusiveness is critical to Guyana's success.

Transport infrastructure is fundamental to growth because without adequate and efficient infrastructure there can be no trade, economic development and no improvement in quality of life.

Our GUYANA 21 programme will open up our country for diversified development. The infrastructure elements of this programme will be implemented within strict environmental guidelines and impact assessments.

**With our strategy, Guyana will:**

- Achieve a 10-12% annual economic growth rate
- Create 20-25 thousand jobs annually
- Attract US\$300—US\$500 million investment annually
- Forge Guyanese ownership through private partnerships
- Convert Guyana's natural resources into exports
- Make Guyana a transshipment hub and create an export-driven economy, while encouraging food sufficiency.

Both main parties took out advertisements in the two national daily newspapers. This advertisement was placed by the PNC/R, overleaf a double-page spread placed by PPP/C

# This is what the Future holds for you.

- Restructure traditional industries such as rice, sugar, bauxite and forestry to make them internationally competitive.
- An unprecedented surge of export growth in non-traditional industries.
- Promote a sound macro-economy for a positive business and investment environment, a stable exchange rate & lower interest rates.
- An expansion of eco-tourism, agro processing sectors and the emergence of information technology.

- Encourage and facilitate the Private Sector to lead economic expansion.
- The establishment of a Stock Market and a Private Sector Development Bank.
- New Roads, Bridges, Highways, Industrial Estates will be fast-tracked.
- Up-grade and extend communications and transportation network.
- Completion of the Guyana / Brazil Road.
- A Deep-Water Harbour, which will create a new economic sector in the transshipment of goods to and from Brazil.
- Urban Development Plan - Transforming the city, towns and creating new townships.
- Promotion of economic diversification and more, better paying jobs.

- Emphasis on social inclusion.
- Programme targeted at Poverty Reduction.
- Taking care of the Elderly - improving pensions and retirement funds, social and nursing centres.
- Promotion of the Welfare of vulnerable groups - Women and Children.
- Better education - provision of more Technical, Vocational and Tertiary Education.
- More house lots and easy financing to deliver affordable housing for all.
- Water for all.
- Improved telephone and electricity services.
- Special Development programme for Hinterland and Amerindian Development.
- A stronger better equipped Police Force and Army.
- Emphasis on Accountability, Ethics and Morality.

**VOTE PPP/C**   
**Let progress continue**

PAID ADVERTISEMENT





## Information from the Domestic Election Observers

# *Electoral Assistance Bureau*

## **GENERAL & REGIONAL ELECTIONS 2001**

### **OBSERVERS:**

EAB will have in excess of 1000 observers at polling places throughout Guyana on Election Day, March 19, 2001.

### **REGIONAL COORDINATORS**

EAB has coordinators in all ten regions of Guyana and they are responsible for the monitoring and observation of the electoral process.

- |                      |                        |                   |                     |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Abraham, Jude      | • Mahase, Gerald       | • Noble, Maurice  | • Singh, David      |
| • Bacchus, Syed      | • Mingo, Linda         | • Paul, Karen     | • Solomon, Dr Cyril |
| • Coates, Ivor       | • Moonsammy, Elizabeth | • Peters, Tobias  | • Torreza, Angela   |
| • Cummings, Lunsford | • Muslim, S.M.M.       | • Pierre, Bernice |                     |
| • Ferreira, Victor   | • Namdar, Goolzar      | • Saul, Gladwin   |                     |

### **SUPERVISORS:**

The supervisors will assist the coordinators and observers, at polling places on Election Day.

*All EAB Coordinators, Observers and Supervisors have been trained in the task of electoral observation, and have each signed a pledge committing themselves to performing their duties in a professional, objective and non-partisan manner.*

***The EAB urges all Guyanese to exercise their democratic right to vote in our general and regional elections and also to ensure that peace and tranquility will be maintained before, during, and after the elections.***

### **THE EAB COUNCIL MEMBERS ARE:**

- Fr. Malcolm Rodrigues - Chairman • Paul Geer - Secretary  
• Mona Bynoe • David King • Dr. Kenneth King.

**For more information contact EAB at: 127 Carmichael & Quamina Streets, Georgetown, Guyana Tel: 223-9814 to 17 Fax: 227-3028**

The domestic election observers of the Electoral Assistance Bureau also provided information on their activities by means of newspaper advertisements such as this, which appeared two days before election day

Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX

ISBN: 0 85092 684 X

