



GUYANA

STATE PAPER

ON

NATIONAL SERVICE

FOR THE

CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

by the

PRIME MINISTER

Thursday, 20th December, 1973

**THIRD PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION OF GUYANA
FIRST SESSION
1973
STATE PAPER
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NATIONAL SERVICE
FOR
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

by the Prime Minister

The Hon. L.F.S. Burnham, O.E., S.C., M.P.

Presented to the National Assembly

on Thursday, 20th December, 1973.

INTRODUCTION

A nation's human and natural resources are its greatest and most important assets. In this context Guyana had the good fortune to find itself well endowed when it became Independent on May 26, 1966.

But this inheritance, though rich, had arrived through the processes of colonialism, ill-balanced and unequally developed, and far too unintegrated to support in every respect a viable nation or to sustain the rapid growth which it needed to make in all directions in order to realise for each member of society, the full fruits of Independence and guarantee for itself an honourable place in the affairs of nations.

The immediate need after Independence was to attend to the general character of the economy, to gain true possession for Guyana of her natural resources, and to ensure that all major enterprises served the national interest. To these objectives Government has since Independence been bending the greater part of its energies, but without ever losing sight of the hardly less pressing need to rid the structure of society of the irrelevant shape imposed on it by colonialism. It is to this latter task that Government must now give greater attention.

The primary aim, which will hardly be in disagreement, should be to create a society which is recognisably Guyanese in character. If the society as a whole is to have that character, the character must also adhere to its individual components.

One of the most distinctive features of our society is the variety of racial strains which compose it. Most people happily understand and acknowledge that the accident of ethnic origin is not inconsistent with full consciousness of being Guyanese first and foremost.

It seems to be the clear duty of leaders of society to encourage this awareness and to create a climate in which differences of race serve to unite us into a whole and not divide us into fragments. Racial divisiveness, like differences between social and economic classes, might have been useful to a colonial society geared to satisfy the needs of an alien plantocracy. It has no relevance to the egalitarian ethos which the nation both accepts and wishes to foster.

Another social legacy of colonialism is the want of the true spirit of self-reliance in many quarters. The nation cannot advance unless, at the level of the individual, Guyanese acquire the skills that are necessary to run a modern state effectively; unless they believe that they are capable of doing so; unless they recognise that it should be unnecessary to have automatic recourse to external assistance.

Nor can there be any advance unless, at the level of the State, Guyana can produce enough to satisfy the basic requirements of its people; unless it can itself decide on its trade and other policies; unless it can itself determine the basis and direction of its social and economic development, and can, in particular, ensure that technological changes within the society are under Guyanese control and are directed to fulfil valid social and economic objectives.

Our co-operative socialist philosophy requires that all Guyanese should be given equal opportunities, and that the general system should be so designed as to ensure that this is so. In particular, economic power should be wielded, not by a small group of individuals for their own limited purposes, but by or on behalf of the people for the good of all. Individual awareness of this general responsibility needs to be heightened if all Guyanese are to be involved, as they should be, in the formulation of national policies and in the making of decisions to implement those policies.

The process of awakening the society has already begun with the restructuring of the education system. It is now proposed to add a new dimension to the latter, through the establishment of National Service.

The formal education system as it is at the moment, cannot encompass those who have, over the last years, left and are still leaving the system to enter a society at a level where changing goals have made them unable to make the maximum contribution to their own and the nation's progress. National Service will be set up -

- (i) to ensure that all Guyanese within the formal training system are made aware of the new values of an independent society and understand the relationship between the new society and themselves;
- (ii) to provide in appropriate cases additional training, especially in the development of skills relevant to our development programme and corrective of the results of an education system formerly designed to produce a colonial man;
- (iii) both by itself and through its influence on existing institutions, to put emphasis on the practical approach in training and provide for the opportunity for on-the-job learning;
- (iv) to accelerate the process of additional training, through National Service itself and also through existing institutions and new centres.

These objectives are dramatically relevant to the fact that more than half of Guyana is virgin hinterland with untold resources lying untapped and unused while the rapidly growing population on the narrow coastal belt has to be fed and provided with all the services of an organised community.

Resulting from this imbalance in development are problems of some variety and severity. National Service will prepare citizens to utilise their energies profitably and productively, equipping them both with the knowledge and experience for opening up, developing and living on the rich lands available in the hinterland.

The Service will mobilise and motivate support for the drive to "Feed, Clothe and House" the people and will develop the necessary skills and attitudes which go with and into nation building.

It will alert citizens to the need to have a working knowledge of the Development Plans of the nation and to understand the philosophy and direction of these plans in order to sustain the desire to work together to achieve the national goals.

It will heighten the pride which should be so natural to every Guyanese to be happily involved in making his contribution to the common weal. With the help of existing agencies it will seek to transform individuals geared for dependency into self-reliant and productive nationals.

National Service will encourage the physical and mental discipline necessary for satisfactory and satisfying development.

Guyana is committed to the development of all its resources within the shortest possible time; hence the need to ensure cohesion and unity as between the various ethnic, religious, social and economic groups.

National Service will provide an opportunity for all people, from whatever background they may come, to get to know each other in the course of training together in work and sport. Its aim will be to produce a truly productive Guyanese citizen equipped with both the skills and attitudes needed to contribute positively to the economic, social, cultural and political revolution that has already been embarked upon - a citizen who places nation above self.

Guyanese in National Service

The National Service will comprise a series of units catering for the different categories of people in Guyana:-

- (i) Guyanese within the education system;
- (ii) Guyanese who have had all the available formal training appropriate to their ability and aptitude and who are employed;
- (iii) Guyanese as at (ii) but who are unemployed;

- (iv) Guyanese who have not been exposed to as much formal education as was available and appropriate to their ability and aptitude, and who are employed;
- (v) Guyanese as at (iv) who are unemployed;
- (vi) Guyanese as at (iv) and (v) who would like to go on to a university or other institution of further training;
- (vii) Guyanese who have completed university entrance requirements and wish to go to university;
- (viii) Guyanese who are in prison or otherwise in detention in accordance with the law.

The formal education system is being geared to meet national objectives within school hours. Therefore, so far as school and similar institutions are concerned, National Service will serve particularly to emphasise those aspects of the revised curriculum which are immediately relevant to the objectives of the Service. It will, in addition, provide opportunities for further learning in situations of work and leisure, particularly during weekends and long holidays.

In the case, however, of those persons who have already left these institutions or who have never completed a course of study within them, but are now on the labour market, National Service will need to provide a programme of retraining in skills and values.

National Service will therefore aim at providing over a period of time an intensive training programme for all Guyanese students and for as many Guyanese of working age as the logistics of the scheme make possible. In addition, training will be provided for those Guyanese who, whether or not employed, have neither the skills nor the orientation to function at their maximum in an independent Co-operative Republic.

In order to achieve the objectives of National Service, it is clear that some areas of training must be given special emphasis. Agriculture, for example, which is at the base of our national economy, must be the subject of particular attention. National Service must be able to provide appropriate experience in actual farming, in regions including the hinterland, under conditions designed to achieve the discipline necessary for a successful thrust of this nature and to provide healthy exercise, widening of perspective and understanding of the real life situations that affect the implementation of our policies - social, economic and political - at both national and international levels. The syllabus for National Service would accordingly include:-

- (i) Training in Co-operativism;
- (ii) Agricultural Training - theoretical and practical;

- (iii) Industrial Skill Training;
- (iv) Craft Training;
- (v) Cultural Training;
- (vi) Training to understand the values of the Co-operative Republic;
- (vii) Pioneer Training;
- (viii) Para-military Training and Callisthenics.

All of this will be taught with a full understanding of the need to encourage our people to acquire functional literacy and to make co-operativism a way of life.

Care will be taken to ensure that within every unit in each corps members are grouped in such a way that they can derive maximum benefit by working with each other. The programme of training will be closely related to the needs of each group.

With a view to convenience in implementation, National Service will be introduced according to a phased programme beginning with two categories of Guyanese:-

- (i) Those who are at present within the formal education and training system (including those in reform schools); and
- (ii) Guyanese between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five who are at present unemployed.

The operation of the Service will be programmed to mesh with the Development Programme and will, as a result, be guided by the assessment of the manpower needs of the economy as identified and notified by the Ministries concerned, namely, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of National Development and Agriculture.

Organisation and Administration of the National Service

The administration of the National Service will be the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister or such other Minister designated by him but, subject to this, the Service will operate within its own independent framework provided by legislation.

There will be a National Service Board incorporated by Act of Parliament with the Prime Minister as Chairman and comprising other Ministers and

persons nominated by him. The Board will formulate policy at national level for the Service and give policy directions to a National Service Secretariat which will function under the direction of a Director-General.

The Director-General of National Service will himself be a member of the Board and will be the principal executive officer and chief adviser to the Prime Minister in respect of National Service matters. He will be assisted by the National Service Secretariat, the members of which, including the Director-General, will be uniformed members of the National Service.

Subject to the general policy direction of the National Service Board, the Secretariat will discharge all the day-to-day administrative functions of the National Service, both administrative and financial. It will also be responsible for the compilation and analyses of data, statistics and planning relevant to the National Service.

The National Service will be divided into two Divisions under the Director-General and serviced by the Secretariat. The first Division will comprise all the various field units and will be administered by a National Service Officer. This officer will have the status of Assistant Director-General of the National Service. He will be in charge of the following corps within the National Service:-

- (a) The Young Brigade;
- (b) The National Cadet Corps;
- (c) The New Opportunity Corps;
- (d) The Pioneer Corps;
- (e) The Special Service Corps.

Each corps will comprise several field units.

The second Division will be serviced by the Secretariat and will also be headed by a National Service Officer of the status of Assistant Director-General of the National Service. This Division will be responsible, *inter alia*, for planning the logistics of the National Service Operation, for recruitment and for the preparation of settlement schemes. It will also ensure that the National Service complements the activities of existing agencies and of new agencies set up to advance the development thrust. It will also ensure the availability of all necessary inputs into the education of National Service men.

Division 1

Within Division 1 there will be five corps, separate but complementary in their activities. The corps will be:-

- (a) **The Young Brigade**

Children between the ages of eight and fourteen within primary schools. These children will go through the formal school system,

but National Service will ensure that the agricultural and co-operative training received at school is fully understood as being relevant to day-to-day life, and will complement the school experience by practical exercises at weekends and during the long holidays in a series of in-the-field training activities. National Service, at this level, will be voluntary and will emphasise the values of the schools system - Unity, Self-determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Co-operative Economics, Purpose, Creativity and Faith, as well as those of discipline, efficiency and productivity.

(b) The National Cadet Corps

Young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen at post-primary educational institutions (secondary, technical, apprenticeship, agricultural) will, in addition to formal schooling, receive training in basically the same areas as the Young Brigade but at a higher level. Here, again, National Service training will be integrated into the general schools curriculum, but it will be the subject of special emphasis within the National Cadet Corps. **The National Cadet Corps will be a voluntary organisation.** Each unit of the Corps will be attached to an institution of learning. Some of the experiences of the National Cadet Corps will be shared with members of the New Opportunity Corps and, where possible and desirable, training will be inter-changed.

(c) The New Opportunity Corps

Guyanese up to the age of sixteen in reform schools will, in addition to their formal schooling and special correctional training, receive appropriate National Service training. A determined attempt will be made to rehabilitate young members of this Corps, to emphasise their worth and value as citizens, and to inculcate in them an understanding of the values of our society, to develop in them a love for their country and the full appreciation of the need for productivity and contribution by each member of society. National Service training will be an integral part of the training and discipline at reform school.

(d) The Pioneer Corps

The most important branch of the National Service Scheme will be the Pioneer Corps which will offer a one-year period of training with the Guyana Defence Force to all Guyanese between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Those between the ages of fourteen and eighteen will also be eligible if not in school or other training institution.

Service in this Corps is intended to be compulsory. In the initial stage, however, and for some time thereafter, since the

National Service will not be able to accommodate all those eligible, the intake will be on a voluntary basis. At the end of their year of service, members of the Corps may, at their option, continue in the Corps for a further period not exceeding five years.

During this period they may become members, through the Corps, of educational institutions such as the University of Guyana and the Technical Institutes, or new training centres such as at Tumatumari which will be concerned with the teaching of technical and settlers' skills.

Through this scheme late developers will have another chance to acquire the skills relevant to our society. As part of their general training, corpsmen will have the opportunity of learning to work on development projects of high national priority. It is hoped to create within the Pioneer Corps and through its influence on society, a sharing of experience whereby the student could learn from the worker and the technician from the farmer, where social status, class distinction, racial groupings and religious persuasion cease to retard the thrust for developing self and country. Service with the Pioneer Corps will be a prerequisite for the settlement of young people on State-owned or Government-owned lands in the hinterland.

All who have served satisfactorily in the Pioneer Corps will be awarded special credits.

(e) The Special Service Corps

Persons who have qualified as professionals or possess special skills may be recruited for service in the Special Service Corps. Members of the Corps would take up short assignments of an urgent nature. The period of assignment would not normally exceed eight weeks. After undertaking an assignment members would be exempt from further assignments for a period of five years unless they volunteer for another assignment or other assignments earlier.

Members will continue to receive their salaries during assignments if employed by Government, public corporations, or the larger groupings within the private sector. In other cases they will receive an allowance to enable the normal living expenses of their dependents to be met while they are on assignment.

The Corps will provide many ancillary services to complement the work of the various branches of National Service. In the years immediately ahead and, in particular, until the National Reserve Corps is established, the Special Service Corps will represent an important aspect of National Service.

(f) The National Reserve Corps

This will be the last Corps to come into operation. It is envisaged that all groups of the Pioneer Corps will be given an opportunity to sign up as reservists to be on call for work in any area vital to the stability, security and productivity of the country.

Initial Intake into the National Service

In the first phase, it is proposed to put on an operational basis

(i) The Young Brigade

Initially, recruits to the Young Brigade will be accepted from within the age group ten to fourteen years old. Before this section becomes operational, the National Service will launch an intensive programme of teacher training to ensure that the work of the National Service would be effectively integrated with the teaching curriculum and that the values of the Co-operative Republic are thoroughly understood by those who will be responsible for moulding the lives of young Guyanese.

(ii) The National Cadet Corps

Here, again, the establishment of this Corps will be preceded by an intensive course of teacher education.

(iii) The New Opportunity Corps

National Service will, here, use the same techniques as for the Young Brigade and for the National Cadet Corps.

(iv) The Pioneer Corps

It is envisaged that during the first year of operation there will be an intake of approximately 2,000. A period of basic training will be followed by training on various agricultural and productive projects.

Establishment of Townships After National Service

New agricultural townships in the Hinterland are expected to be established as a necessary and complementary part of National Service Training. Field training will be an essential part of the experience and benefit which National Service will provide. Field training areas and projects will need to be carefully selected, planned and administered in conformity with national policies and plans for agricultural settlements. Each project will be designed that it will become the centre of an agricultural settlement with a township. It will become self-sufficient as soon as possible and be serviced by successive batches of Pioneer Corpsmen as a normal part of their training.

Hinterland settlement will be a fundamental feature of National Development. Such settlement, though based on agriculture, will not be confined to agricultural pursuits. It will have to be provided with health and educational facilities. Among the settlers there will, therefore, be health officers, teachers, technicians of various types, administrators at various levels, clerical personnel, agricultural and other specialists, managers of business enterprises, forest workers and other personnel.

The programme of providing for the establishment of townships for groups of the Pioneer Corps and other hinterland settlers will be a challenge to Guyanese of foresight who appreciate the demands of today and are determined enough to rise from the historical past to go south, to go west, to go east, to go resolutely to the future, fashioning for themselves new communities where the topography, climate, potential for living, and sheer scenic beauty are by themselves a reminder of the real meaning of life.

Conclusion

National Service, as indicated above, is intended to be the principal instrument to ensure the emergence and the development of the type of Guyanese men, women and youths essential to the prosperity and furtherance, and indeed, the survival of the Nation, and without whom there seems little, if any, hope of transforming our country and our nation into a great people: patriotic, self-disciplined, self-reliant, productive of goods and services, and enjoying everywhere in the country a reasonably high standard of living and a worthwhile life. It is obvious that in today's world, Guyanese must of necessity rise to new and higher levels of awareness, new and higher standards of performance, and new and higher achievements in terms of national cohesion, national self-reliance, and national efficiency.

Design & Layout by Design & Graphics