



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
to the
National Assembly

Monday, 29th October, 1973

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Mr. Speaker,

May I offer you congratulations on your re-election to this high office? Your choice is ample proof of your sterling service in the past and I wish you further success in the conduct of your duties and the performance of your tasks.

The First Session of the Third Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana finds my Government returned with an increased majority. It has thus been given a mandate by the electorate not only to pursue to finality previous policies, but also to carry out certain fundamental changes and to embark upon new policies.

Two such changes have already been approved by this House: the reduction of the age of majority to eighteen years and the institution of the Guyana Court of Appeal as the final court of appeal for all matters arising in the Courts of Guyana.

Another, to facilitate the unimpeded operation of the Agency Shop, will be shortly introduced. This will represent the honouring of an undertaking given to the Trade Union Movement.

The co-operative ideology has been well set and the spirit of self-reliance informs and inspires many of our communities throughout the country. New ways and methods are being constantly devised to tackle old inherited problems and difficulties, and it is my Government's intention to advance further these activities by positive assistance and programmes.

The system of Regional Ministers under which Cabinet Ministers live in, and are responsible to the Central Government for, specific geographic regions, has already been established. The object is to bring government closer to the people, to co-ordinate various Government activities within the respective regions, and to ensure the most meaningful intercommunication between the Administration and the People.

It may well be at an experimental stage, and new techniques will have to be adopted, but the objectives cannot be called into question. My Government looks forward to this new institution being an effective mechanism, contributing to greater efficiency, springing from wider and more purposeful involvement of the citizens, in what in the past have been considered "far off places" because of their relative remoteness from the Capital.

It will have been noted that a new Ministry of Co-operatives and National Mobilisation has been created, bringing together under a single portfolio the responsibilities for Youth, Local Government, Co-operatives and Community Development. This new arrangement is aimed at achieving greater efficiency, the elimination of unnecessary duplication of effort, and at inspiring these several areas with one central direction and purpose.

During the forthcoming period, my Government proposes to place special emphasis on the mobilisation of *people* for the achievement of the Development Plan and the translation of the co-operative philosophy and way of life into practical and material schemes.

In this context and as publicly stated several months ago, there will shortly be introduced, legislative proposals for a system of National Service. This will be aimed at tapping and canalising human resources which at the moment lie idle, minimally employed and disoriented.

If approved by Parliament, the scheme in its early phases will encompass primarily young persons, in and out of formal educational and training institutions at the moment; though eventually the concept of National Service will embrace *all* Guyanese not precluded or exempt from participation by mental or physical incapacity or overriding national considerations.

Though in several cases, for the purpose of inculcating habits of discipline, military and para-military training will be compulsory, the concept of National Service will be much larger and wider than, and is not to be confused with, that of Compulsory Military Service

One of the early objectives, will be the provision of training and orientation for unemployed youth, who because of poor training, or no

training at all, are not equipped to serve the nation to the maximum of their potential.

It must not be assumed, however, that the scheme so far as youth are concerned is only for the unemployed, for many who might have had formal training, might still be disoriented and not sufficiently committed to service to the nation. Many too, might conceive that the nation owes them everything, and they owe the nation nothing.

Our society has tended in the past to treat ex-prisoners as social outcasts. They are potentially useful and productive citizens and their training, retraining and rehabilitation will be another of the objectives of the scheme. Guyana cannot afford to let any of its human resources go to waste, rack and ruin, creating social problems and disfiguring our society.

All young persons untrained and unemployed will, when the scheme comes into being, have unlimited horizons so far as training opportunities available to Guyanese are concerned, and in keeping with their aptitudes and the needs and demands of the nation. In appropriate circumstances they will enter the University and other post secondary institutions.

A State Paper will shortly be presented to this House setting out more fully the aims, objectives and schematic arrangements for the Guyana National Service. And soon thereafter the legislative proposals will be introduced.

During this Session, my Government proposes to take steps to ensure the maximum beneficial utilisation of our land resources. Within the context of our Constitution, land unbeneficially owned or occupied will be brought into use by one means or another, for the service of the nation. Agricultural land will be transferred to the tillers and an end put to the exploitative practices which go with the grasping primitive landlordism which still exists in many parts of the country.

For achieving the maximum productivity of such and other agricultural lands, not only will the programme of infrastructural works proceed apace, but also the facilities of such institutions as the Co-operative Agricultural Development Bank will be readily available.

In the meantime the thrust into the hinterland will continue, and the objectives of feeding, clothing and housing the nation by the nation relentlessly pursued. All must be involved in this great national cause.

My Government considers it its duty in this new period ahead, to involve the people fully in the execution of the Development Plan, to inform them in understandable terms of this Plan and also to learn from them and their practical experiences. It has to be a truly national co-operative effort and there *must* be a cross fertilisation of ideas.

There will be a conscious effort to ensure that all Guyanese are aware of the revolution upon which we are embarked, what has been achieved, and what remains to be achieved. In this effort our cultural experiences, the

Performing and Visual arts, for example, purposefully organised, will be called in aid and used as instruments in the mobilisation of human resources, and the achievement of national unity, and a Guyanese spirit.

An Institute of Creative Arts with sections of Dance, Music, Drama, Literature, Painting and Sculpture will be established. This will have its roots firmly in the folk culture of the nation, and will be serviced initially by five centres located in various rural areas. Of course, the National Cultural Centre will have a pivotal role in this exercise.

There will be facilities at the National and rural centres for research into culture, and studies will be made of the various forms native to Guyana and its peoples, peculiarly Guyanese, and arising out of the *total* experiences of our people from all communities and walks of life. Our art forms must and will mirror and represent our national history, victories and aspirations and goals.

The work of the Institute, like that of the National Service, will be closely linked with our school system so that also the new generation of Guyanese emerging from that system, will have the opportunity of expressing itself in art forms, and have the requisite guidance in the use of the necessary techniques.

CARIFESTA and the experience of recent years, especially since Independence, have revealed that there are a wealth of talent and great potential among our people. These must be harnessed. Our music and dance must portray our past and point to our future; so must also our literature, our painting and our sculpture. In fact all of our art forms must contribute to Guyana's total development.

Special attention will be paid by my Government to the field of sport. A strong and determined effort will be made to involve the mass of our people in sporting activities of their choice. The imbalance which has made many of our sports an elitist exercise will be corrected. Facilities, equipment and expert training, will be made available throughout the country, urban and rural, for young people and adult citizens.

Such a programme will bring together in national exercises, all Guyanese, emancipating them from the divisive and unproductive influence of differences of race and alleged social status. By this means, through school, home and community, *in field and office factory*, we shall be creating a healthy, well oriented nation adapted to making a success of national development.

A nation without cultural and sporting activities seriously emphasised, and nationally supported, is not a real nation. In the field of culture and sport Guyana must keep pace with its own high international political reputation, and match and accelerate economic progress at home.

My Government's education programme is, also, of course, of vital consequence to the eventual and successful implementation of development priorities.

Both the nation's teachers and pupils will be trained to serve their country's needs. To this end, programmes for our schools, programmes for youth and for technical education are being radically changed to reduce the numbers of citizens who remain unprepared for and uncommitted to service to the nation.

Supplementary reading material, with content and meaning pertinent to our own, as distinct from other people's history, and relevant to our future commitments and priorities, is now available to all our schools.

The Advisory Board of Technical Education will not co-ordinate technical training at all levels. An important innovation, will be the provision, primarily within the National Service Scheme, of experience designed to equip our youth with technical skills, and patterns of behaviour, that will support the development of the nation.

The spirit of self-reliance, which has pervaded the nation and caught the imagination of the people, the tremendous efforts in community self-help projects, the increasing commitment to the co-operative way of life, are all fundamental to our reaching our development goals which we have set ourselves.

We are, as a result, at a point in our history now, where we can look forward with renewed confidence to the disappearance of unemployment, and full participation, in every sense, of the people in the economic life and destiny of the nation. My Government is fully conscious of the fact that our way ahead is founded on the will and co-operation of the people.

It has been the magnificent response of the people which has led us so far, and so rapidly, along the road to economic independence, and full scale national development. The foundations have been laid, the promise of economic independence is real, but we must, as a people, understand that the fulfilment of the promise, is dependent upon our determination, and our willingness to sacrifice in the interest of development, and for the improvement of the quality of life of the nation.

Every individual, every organisation, every sector of the economy will have a role. An extraordinary effort will have to be made if the targets we have set for ourselves, are to be achieved. The responsibility for development is not merely that of Government, but of all.

We must determine to root out by one means or another, the social ills which in the majority of cases are traceable to neglect, absence of opportunity, unsuitable or no training, and the problems faced by the economically disadvantaged. These ills are a severe impediment to true development of the nation and people.

As we move to feed, clothe and house ourselves, as we move to abolish unemployment, as we move to the goal of economic prosperity, my Government's commitment is to ensure a vibrant, healthy, proud Guyanese nation whose citizens are all involved in the national tasks and who know, not only how to make a living, but also how to live together.

October, 1973