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# The Opposition in Washington on discrimination charges

Oct 01, 2023 Letters

Dear Editor,

The Opposition parties – in and out of Parliament – and several affiliates such as IDPADA-G, went up to Washington last week to attend a two-day “Conference on Guyana” hosted by the Brooklyn-based GCID. Inter alia, the attendees met with members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) where they presented their case that the PPP government was practicing “rampant discrimination and nepotism” against African Guyanese in all sectors of national life but especially in the economic sphere. These accusations had been strenuously made since Aug 2, 2020 when the PPP was finally allowed to take office after five months of high political drama following their victory at the March, 2nd polls.

But during the meeting, when the CBC asked for data to substantiate the claims, the Guyanese supplicants were unable to do so to the former’s satisfaction. This is rather surprising since Mr Nigel Hughes had produced a widely circulated Opposition dossier purporting to demonstrate conclusively with exactly such evidence that the vast majority of state contracts, commercial land transfers and other boondoggles had been given to Indian Guyanese while excluding African Guyanese. It would appear that the CBC agreed with the PPP government that discrimination was not proven since African Guyanese companies had not submitted bids for the awarded contacts. Identical claims on awards of oil blocks would have also demanded “evidence”.

I am asserting that this lack of evidence to buttress claims of discrimination was “surprising” they have been made for decades – starting from 1992 after the free and fair elections of that year saw the PPP acceding to office after two decades of rigged elections by the PNC. After violent street protests following the PPP’s win in 1997, CARICOM-brokered Herdmanston Accord resulted in four bipartisan Parliamentary Sectoral Committees – Economic, Natural Resources, Social Services and Foreign Affairs – created to “scrutinize” governmental activities in real time. The rotating Chairs of the Committees were evenly split between the Government and the Opposition and the Committees had the power to summon any governmental official to answer any question within its purview.

When I represented ROAR in parliament between 2001 to 2006, we were very interested in the Government’s strategic plan for sugar and were able to have the Opposition Chair of the Economic Services Committee convene several meetings to which government and Gusuco officials were summoned to provide hard data on the industry’s performance. I remember that Government members of the Committee Komal Chand, head of GAWU, and Donald Ramotar asking probing questions to the testifying officials. I have often commented on the collegial relations between the members of the government and opposition, unlike on the floor of the National Assembly where the rules almost compelled an adversarial posture.

From another angle, because of our severely divided society was reflected in our politics (or vice versa) we have also persistently called for “Ethnic Impact Statements” (EIS) to be issued by the government as it crafted and embarked on programmes. The rationale being that inevitably there will be accusations hurled of the type we heard in Washington. The EIS could elaborate on steps taken to ensure the widest ethnic participation and identify reasons why certain skewed results might still ensue. Those reasons that militate against wider participation might then be the basis of governmental actions to mitigate same. While in Government, both major parties have stubbornly refused to accept this suggestion which could neutralize much of the extant bitter denunciations.

Another source of surprise to me was the representative of IDPADA-G also bemoaning the lack of statistics on the ethnic participation in governmental programs. Against the aforementioned long-

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THE BLUNT OF THE DAY

**Whither Guyana's meters on the FPSO's**

Since December 2019 when Guyana commenced oil production, the country did not bother to put its own meters on the Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessel to monitor the number of barrels coming up daily.

A second FPSO and now a third have commenced oil production in the Stabroek Block without the country being able to verify the number of barrels being pumped by this known international gangster.

Our leaders are too busy feasting on their corrupt ways to ensure the people of this nation get what belongs to them.

Will a fourth project also startup without us being able to keep watch on our 11 billion barrels of oil already found or will we sit back and rely on Exxon to provide us with their padded reports?

Sports

standing accusations of PPP's anti-African Guyanese bias, I have always assumed this would have been one of their priorities. I believe that they had conducted a survey on cash grants during the COVID-19 break that were allegedly skewed and felt this hard evidence would have been presented. On the other foot, last year PM Phillips broke the PPP's reticence on ethnic impact statements when he addressed anti-African Guyanese discrimination claims by an Opposition affiliated "Institute for Action Against Discrimination" (IAAD) that of 11,000 house lots then allocated, "more than 50%" – went to African Guyanese.

In my estimation, I do believe that we need more hard data from both sides of the aisle on the effects of governmental programmes or else the heat of the accusations might result in societal accusations. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".

Sincerely,

Ravi Dev

Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), discrimination, IDPADA-G, Ravi Dev, strenuously

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### Weekend Cartoon



### Bridge Watch

#### Demerara Harbour Bridge

Today **Wednesday, November 15**

**Wednesday, November 15**

4:00am **04:00**

**Thursday, November 16**

4:00am **04:00**

Events shown in time zone: Guyana Time [Calendar](#)

> Berbice Bridge [...]

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