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## 1968 AND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS AND IMPACT OF THE “NEW POLITICS” IN GUYANA

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*Nigel Westmaas*

### ABSTRACT

Guyana, like other countries in the Anglophone Caribbean, did not experience the full impact of the world wide revolt of 1968. Guyana went through its own turbulence which by the late 1960s had attained a critical mass. While international events were influential a more quiet revolt took place in Guyana. The political and social divisions that had emerged under colonial rule continued after Guyana's independence in 1966. Reflected in political parties grounded in ethnic allegiances these divisions caused considerable disillusionment, which by 1968-69 had laid the objective foundations for shifts away from the 'old politics' symbolised by the struggle against ethnic division, authoritarian rule and orthodox political organization of both the left and the right.

This paper examines the activism and collective action of groups and individuals in Guyana between 1968-1978, and argues that the emergence and convergence of these forces and politics changed the equation and brought into being the 'new politics' dramatized in the birth and activity of the Working People's Alliance (WPA).

**Keywords:** Guyana, ethnicity, multi-racialism, authoritarian, socialism, Rodneyism

### RESUMEN

Guyana, al igual que otros países en el Caribe anglófono, no experimentó todo el impacto de la revuelta mundial de 1968. Fue para la década de 1960 que Guyana, a través de su propia turbulencia, alcanzó una masa crítica. Mientras los eventos internacionales influían, una revuelta más tranquila se desarrollaba en Guyana. Las divisiones políticas y sociales que surgieron bajo el gobierno colonial continuaron después de la independencia de Guyana en 1966. Reflejadas en los partidos políticos de alianzas étnicas, estas divisiones causaron una gran desilusión que ya para 1968-69 había establecido las bases para alejarse de la “vieja política” simbolizada por la lucha contra la división étnica, el régimen autoritario y la ortodoxa organización política tanto de la izquierda como de la derecha. Este artículo examina el activismo y la acción colectiva de los grupos e individuos en Guyana entre 1968-1978 y argumenta que el surgimiento y convergencia de estas fuerzas

y política cambiaron la ecuación y dieron paso a la “nueva política” dramatizada por el nacimiento y la actividad de la Alianza del Pueblo Trabajador (WPA).

**Palabras clave:** Guyana, origen étnico, multi-racialismo, autoritario, socialismo, Rodneyism

#### RÉSUMÉ

La Guyana, comme bien d'autres pays dans les Caraïbes anglophones, n'a pas connu le plein impact que la révolte de 1968 eut dans le monde entier. La Guyana a traversé ses propres turbulences qui, à la fin des années 1960, avaient atteint un poids significatif. Alors que les événements internationaux eurent sans doute des conséquences, une révolte plus calme y a eu lieu. Les divisions politiques et sociales qui ont surgi pendant la période coloniale ont continué après l'indépendance de ce pays en 1966. Manifestes dans les partis politiques ancrés sur des alliances ethniques, ces divisions ont provoqué de considérables déceptions. Déjà en 1968-69, ces dernières avaient jeté les bases d'un éloignement progressif par rapport aux «anciennes politiques», caractérisé par la lutte contre la division ethnique, l'autoritarisme et l'organisation politique orthodoxe de la gauche ainsi que de la droite. Cet article examine le militantisme et l'action collective des groupes et des individus à Guyana entre 1968 et 1978 et affirme que l'émergence et la convergence de ces forces et politiques y ont changé la donne et donné naissance à la «nouvelle politique», évidente dans la conception et les activités de l'Alliance des Travailleurs (WPA).

**Mots-clés:** Guyana, origine ethnique, multi-racialisme, autoritaire, socialisme, Rodneyisme

In November 1974, the Working People's Alliance (WPA) was formally launched in Guyana as a fresh political organization. Its founding statement was representative of the new politics of the era, and it took a stand against race based election politics, violent political repression, the worsening economic conditions of the masses, cancerous corruption and denial of academic and press freedom. The coalition that comprised the WPA<sup>1</sup> also addressed regional and international concerns. It pledged to strengthen the unity of the Caribbean masses and identified itself with the suffering masses everywhere with the maxim that it stood for the “destruction of imperialism and its neocolonial systems and for the revolutionary unity of all subject and liberated peoples.”<sup>2</sup> More importantly, the critical representation of the “new politics” embodied in the alliance was its multiracial face and programmatic declaration of promoting racial unity. This was not incidental to

its politics. The organizations that constituted the alliance emerged from the late 1960s and were emblematic of the political culture embodied in the 'long sixties'.<sup>3</sup>

Globally, the 'sixties' typified by the symbolic '1968' was a watershed decade. According to M.J. Heale, the sixties was an 'era in which a politics rooted in class and economics was displaced by politics rooted in race and culture...and an era in which the personal became the political, dissolving the distinction between politics and culture.'<sup>4</sup> It included the upsurge in the civil rights movement in America, the development of culture of non-violent resistance, political assassinations, the Cuban missile crisis, the Cold War, the Prague spring uprising in Czechoslovakia and revolts against orthodox socialism, working class uprisings, the women's liberation movement, black power movement, the Vietnam war and the Tet offensive, the rise of the progressive world, counter-culture, and other manifestations of world turbulence. Most noticeable in Western countries were not new political formations as much as new cultural and social groupings that expressed a vigorous personal politics of change and liberation, but in some Third World contexts the 60s saw the formation of political and revolutionary organizations.

Within the Anglophone Caribbean New Left and creative forms of organizing were evident in proto Pan-Africanism, Indian Power and the Black Power movement. Movements also developed in Surinam and Cayenne (French Guiana) saw the rise of significant grassroots movement led by the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC). Guyana was still caught in the transition from colonialism to independence amid ethnic strife and violent elections. While two-party domination of state and society was a constant from the 1950s through independence and beyond, it too became increasingly subject to assaults on its rigid flanks. Many Guyanese 'voted with their feet' and left for Europe and North America as the surface tension and cracks were beginning to appear in the body politic. Even the Roman Catholic Church traditionally hostile to socialism in Guyana in the 1950s and early 60s, began to embrace the Left and democratic ideals by the end of the decade. Otherwise known as "liberation theology" this was also the era of the Christian-Marxist dialogue which materialized in several countries including Guyana.<sup>5</sup>

The "new politics" is a specific description of a political and social motion in the Caribbean and Guyana—a narrative of political behavior that breaks from or is independent of the formal ideologies and movement structures. For the purpose of this paper, I will engage the "new politics" under the following areas/themes: First, I will reflect on the historical basis for the "new politics" in Guyana and its linkage with activism and ideas of the rise of the New Left in the Caribbean (as under the auspices of the New World grouping) and the active consideration of

democratic avenues to socialism at the time, especially in Guyana.

Secondly, I assess the birth and development of multi-racial challenges to the existing order when by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s newer groups began to challenge old hierarchies—accentuated with the work of organisations like the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA) and the Indian Political Revolutionary Associates (IPRA) and greatly augmented by Walter Rodney's return to Guyana. Many of these groups and the individuals also offered creative responses to cultural, electoral, constitutional and political deficiencies in the post independence state machines in the region and Guyana.

Thirdly, the early 70s became marked with active challenges and interventions from the working class from inside and outside organized trade unions and their formal structures, political ties and restrictions. In some cases this defiance led to emergence of new trade unions.

Fourthly, the new political culture can also be defined by what it failed to do adequately, namely, among other things, a failure with or inattention to the woman question/women's rights/feminism which, a key issue in Western New Left politics.

In focusing on what is deemed the "new politics", a cautionary note should be sounded in characterizing 'agency' in the new politics. There were multiple actors and agencies of change, some external, the more significant internal, but Guyanese politics was greatly influenced by the colonial past and regional and international events and influences, such as the Cold War. Whatever the limitations in assessing the defining moment of 1968 and the period it represented, the bustle inspired by events and new movements cumulatively and creatively allowed for the realization of the new politics.

### **New World Group**

The first open challenge to 'formal politics' and signpost of the new criticism and ideas was exemplified by the activities of the New World grouping in the early 1960s. Established in 1963, the New World group became an alternative vision to the ideological and racial inflexibility in existence (in the form of established political parties) in Guyana and English-speaking Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> The late academic activist, Lloyd Best of Trinidad, was an integral foot-soldier of the New World. Together with its publication, the New World journal, this pan West Indian left-wing grouping typified the more holistic and even-handed approach that challenged the ideological mantras (Marxist Leninism) and cultural inflexibility of parties on the left such as the PPP in the Guyana. In one of its statements, the New World claimed there "is not one of the political parties now in being which is equipped with any fragment of an idea

carrying even the faintest promise of some day approaching political integration, economic development and social democracy in these parts.”<sup>7</sup> The *New World* zeroed in on a key weakness of the Left when it noted: “unable creatively to apply theoretically acquired terminology to local reality they hovered between revolutionary Marxist utterances and unimaginative action.”<sup>8</sup> The *New World* would later address the social and political fallout associated with the racial divide between Indians and Africans, rigged elections, and the PNC’s propensity for corruption and subversion of the democratic system. Its publication open to a critique of the existing status quo the *New World* journal encouraged ‘defectors’ from both political ‘camps’ (PPP and PNC) to contribute to the group’s publication. Moses Bhagwan, an independent MP who had fallen out with the PPP in the early 1960s, utilized *New World* publications for his own dissenting perspective and contributed regularly to the journal.

After independence the struggle for a successor to the British colonists took a two party, two-race course—amounting to some extent in the separation of ‘class’ and ideological boundaries from race.<sup>9</sup> Donald Horowitz (1985:326) highlights the Commonwealth Observer team visit to the 1964 elections and their comment on its outcome as a “racial census.” In practical terms this meant that a political party was supported almost exclusively on the basis of ethnic considerations and the electoral data supports this conclusion. This may account for the enduring electoral strength of the PPP and its leader Cheddi Jagan over an extended period. The end product of this at the organizational level for the PPP was a curious amalgam of a labor and business base drawn from the Indian population. Similarly, the Burnham government found large-scale support across class in the black population. In any event the leaders that emerged under the British Westminster electoral system continued to rely on the imperial power to manage claims to electoral supremacy. Where unity was proposed, as from the *New World* in March 1963 for a “coalition and a national programme of reform” (DeCaires and Fitzpatrick 1966:44) it was rejected by “one or both the leaders of the two mass parties.” (DeCaires and Fitzpatrick 1966:44). This situation led a Guyanese poet to depict this state of affairs as producing “leaders who follow from in front.”<sup>10</sup> *New World* thinking, certainly in the case of Guyana must have been affected by the reality of divisive national elections under colonial rule in 1957, 1961, and 1964 and in independent Guyana in 1968. Collectively, these elections served to sustain the ethnic divide.

For American and British policymakers the matter of ideology was of utmost importance in the Cold War era. And it was evident that this informed the CIA’s involvement in assisting the trade unions to undermine the PPP government. By the end of 1964 when the dust had settled,

scores of people had been killed and injured. The intervention of the Americans and the British in these disturbances and the participation of local politicians in that division had the effect of driving a concurrent racial and ideological wedge into society. Shortly after the American and British intervention that propelled critical changes in the electoral system, the PNC regime, facilitated by an alliance with the conservative United Force political party procured power in the 1964 elections. Independence for Guyana followed in 1966. To assume there was fundamental and swift change after independence was to seriously exaggerate. As Gordon Lewis, (1996:511) argues that independence, “unlike emancipation, is merely a redefinition of the legal status of the society not necessarily bringing in its wake a profound social metamorphosis.”

In the period 1966-1970, Burnham and the PNC's foreign and domestic policy positions were for the most part tailored to maintain the ideological and foreign policy orthodoxy favorable to the West. However, despite the diplomatic radicalization of the PNC's foreign policy in the 1970s, it was true that Guyana's United Nations voting record between “1966-69 was identical to the US position. But by 1969 there was a subtle evolution in its position on the issue”<sup>11</sup> (Ferguson 1999:107).

Nonetheless, the PNC, the more identifiably moderate of the two political parties, was deemed ‘socialist’ while the PPP held its reputation as a ‘communist’ organisation until the 1980s. While the motivation behind Burnham's increasingly radical foreign policy is a matter of contention, critics on the Left have deemed the PNC adjustments “opportunistic” and largely fueled by domestic concerns and tactics. That this thrust had local implications is unquestionable. Clive Thomas, a Guyanese economist (who was also active in New World, Ratoon and the WPA) placed the tendency to describe these moves as ‘left-wing’ to more rigorous examination. He contends, for example, that the pattern of nationalisation undertaken by Burnham and the PNC in this period was of the “state capitalist type.” Thomas maintained that those (many in the third world leftist regimes) who wished to establish a dichotomy between socialism and the struggle for democracy and social justice were wrong: “to socialist, bread, or what can be more correctly termed the promise of bread, cannot be traded for freedom and social justice”<sup>12</sup> (Thomas 1976:7).

### **1968, Guyana and elections**

One of the defining moments in Guyana's local politics was the 1968 election. A contest mainly between the ruling Peoples National Congress and the main opposition Peoples Progressive Party, this election was deemed fraudulent largely based upon an inflated and flawed

'overseas vote.' It became a symbolic prelude to the several 'agencies' or movements that heralded the birth of the new politics in post-colonial Guyana. For the most part, compared to later elections, the 1968 poll passed under the radar. In the aftermath of the elections, the Peoples Progressive Party was vociferous in its condemnation while a tame response and uplifted eyebrows were raised in other locales. Even activists of the 'newer movements' maintain they were unaware of the overseas rigging and only received proof of its extent in the form of a discerning British camera crew that unearthed the extent of the electoral misdeed. The crew in question, from Granada Television of England, produced a three-part investigative documentary on the elections.<sup>13</sup> (Spinner 1984:126) One section, titled "Trail of the Vanishing Voters," unveiled path breaking evidence of a rigged poll.

Ralph Premdas (1992:14) established the way the PNC proceeded to convert the "state into an instrument of its own middle class interests acting ostensibly on behalf of its communal section. The police, army, secret services, judiciary, public service etc were purged of political enemies who usually were also mainly from the opposing political group."<sup>14</sup> Responses to this state of affairs were multifarious but at the political level, the reaction came to represent the new politics. One sign of this was the assault on ideological and racial dogmas mostly via a challenge to formal politics. The international force of events, personalities and ideology was also felt. What 1968 globally represented filtered into the Guyanese psyche through press reports, *Time* magazine, and radio at the international level.

### Politics of the University

An important agency of change and the new politics concerned politics at the local university. The University of Guyana, established in 1963 by the Cheddi Jagan regime (then still under limited self-government of British rule), and deemed the 'Jagan night school', was cautiously supported by the Forbes Burnham regime. One of Prime Minister Burnham's statements, conveyed at the opening of a new campus location in 1969, shed light on his wariness toward academia. In a barely disguised reference to the university's potential for unrest he said, "I will not be so vulgar as to suggest that he who pays the piper must call the tune, but I do suggest that the nation of Guyana is entitled to expect from the university of Guyana a contribution to our national goal."<sup>15</sup> Burnham's concern at unrest at the university was not entirely unfounded, especially if one had an eye on the Caribbean. The impact of university politics on regional campuses was apparent in the activity and publicity given leading Guyanese academics, Walter Rodney and Clive Thomas, both of



whom had been banned from Jamaica for “subversion.” Rodney’s more celebrated ban followed upon his work among the Rastafarian community, and ancillary ‘political’ activity on the University of the West Indies Mona campus among other things.

Issues like the Rodney ban at the University attracted the attention and support of several of organisations and in 1969, there was a slight crack in the monolithic hegemony in the PNC and PPP’s organizational dominance on the University of Guyana campus when Ratoon, a radical group composed of academics and students, was established. The birth of this grouping led to a more multi-racial dynamic presence among students and faculty.<sup>16</sup> Apart from its absorption in the university, Ratoon challenged, with a strident anti-imperial voice, foreign penetration of the economy while providing support for labour struggles in which ASCRIA was also quite influential. Like ASCRIA and IPRA, Ratoon had its own limits but while some of its intellectual ideals overlapped with that of the New World it exceeded the latter in political activism. Where the New World was intellectually driven, the Ratoon endeavoured a more activist approach to Guyana’s problems.<sup>17</sup> Clive Thomas clarified its activist hub and limit, advising that Ratoon was a

cultural group, yes, but also a politically ideological group, in the most basic sense, in that we feel that we are fighting against centuries of the mystique, effects and wrong headedness of an alien ideology...we are not a political party, in our sense of the definition, We are no Office seekers...”<sup>18</sup> (Thomas, 1972:397-398)

In other words, this was a multiracial composition of students and faculty in one organization representing a new dimension in university politics. This multiracial composition and unity was tested, not long afterwards, with the visit of famed black power leader, Stokeley Carmichael (later Kwame Ture). On his visit to Guyana in 1970 as a guest of Ratoon, Carmichael told a Queens’s College audience that Black power was only for people of African descent.<sup>19</sup> This provoked strains in Ratoon and among campus groups. According to an Indo-Guyanese Ratoon activist, “Indian students generally did not embrace Black Power from the inception” and “Clive (Thomas) tried to convince the campus that Ratoon’s position differed from Stokeley’s but the damage was done.”<sup>20</sup> It has been suggested that the fallout over the Carmichael affair was mitigated when Walter Rodney entered the picture and “gave a brilliant perspective of the struggles of Guyanese of all races and discussed the similarities and differences of our struggles and those of Blacks and other peoples elsewhere”<sup>21</sup> (Bacchus 2006). Black power, like Marxism-Leninism later, had clashed with the local imperatives of the ‘new politics’ in Guyana and the black power movement in Guyana. In the final analysis

perspectives on black power were either toned down or re-calibrated to suit local imperatives of local multi-racial harmony.

While Burnham and the PNC were experimenting with its foreign policy, the PPP had moved even further 'left' with its formal induction into the Communist International in July 1969. This was undertaken after Dr. Jagan returned from a Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow in the same year. Thereafter, the PPP became a disciplined adherent of doctrinaire Marxism and continued its participation on committees of the Communist International ranging from the World Peace Council to the World Federation of Free Trade Unions (WFTU) and acquired easy access to resources from the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union).<sup>22</sup> To complicate matters the PPP, orthodox Marxist-Leninism very much in place, led that party, even while a protesting victim of election rigging, to provide active support of Burnham's foreign policy initiatives and ties with the global leftist movement. This was very confusing to the observer, and it certainly was for the Americans at the time in their search for a 'conservative' entity in Guyana upon which to rely.

### **ASCRIA, IPRA, the Ramsammy Shooting and new challenges**

The ASCRIA, founded in 1964, came to represent an older but very significant example of an agent of change and the development of the new politics. ASCRIA's significance may be expressed in two central ways. First, the fact of its association with and support of the ruling PNC from the early 1960s. As David Hinds (1996:36) indicates, "between 1964 and 1971, the society supported the PNC on the basis of African solidarity."<sup>23</sup> Secondly, ASCRIA's cultural emphasis, independence, and early promotion, at critical moments, of sometimes controversial and unorthodox proposals and decisions on national and racial unity. In 1970, for example, ASCRIA quietly angered the ruling party in establishing what it termed a 'watchdog committee' to 'investigate reports of corruption in both the public and private sectors of the economy.'<sup>24</sup> Later the same year, an ASCRIA statement hinted at the emergent contradiction with the PNC on the corruption issue when it demanded the head of government "draw up and publish the ...code of behaviour for ministers of the government."<sup>25</sup> ASCRIA made good on its anti-corruption mantra with its significant and highly publicized charges of corruption against two high-ranking ministers in the ruling PNC.<sup>26</sup> This was accompanied by ASCRIA's criticism of the government response to striking workers in the bauxite industry.

An event that acted as a pointer of the "new politics" came with the 1971 shooting of a prominent university lecturer and member of Ratoon,

Joshua Ramsammy.<sup>27</sup> The assumption in Guyana was that agents of the ruling party (acting with or without the consent of the leadership) were involved in the shooting. What was significant about the reaction in Guyanese society to the murder attempt on Ramsammy was the outrage even in the sections of the press sympathetic to the regime, and the remarkable cohesion and solidarity of many opposition groups, some of whom who did not see eye to eye, but found it necessary to join in solidarity over the Ramsammy case. Eusi Kwayana and ASCRIA, in condemning the Ramsammy shooting said that it could

“in no way help African people who need good doctrine and economic assistance. If the shooting is political, whoever directed it is politically bankrupt.”<sup>28</sup> Kwayana advised that those “political leaders on both sides, who directed or permitted gun terror, and the killing of individuals, have started a political culture which is destructive, anti-revolutionary, fascist, insane. It shows contempt for the people.”<sup>29</sup>

In sum, there was a significant civic theme to the arguments and debate in the aftermath of the shooting. In other terms the backlash to the Ramsammy shooting event exemplified a distinctive trend away from ‘old politics.’<sup>30</sup> Among the movements that joined the fray over the Ramsammy affair was the Movement against Oppression (MAO), an organization established to challenge police brutality and other human rights issues. One of MAO’s original causes was its public criticism of the police shooting of a fifteen year old unprivileged youth, Keith Caesar in a working class district of the city in 1972. MAO enjoyed a membership that included a cross section of opposition groups including the PPP. The MAO, now faced with this new assault on freedom, invited “24 organizations in the wake of the assassination attempt to a public discussion to ‘formulate plans on how best to ‘bring an end to the terror which threatens to destroy the very fabric of our society.’”<sup>31</sup> After the MAO call, a diverse spectrum of Guyanese gathered at the organization’s headquarters in Georgetown to condemn the Ramsammy shooting.<sup>32</sup> Clive Thomas, a close friend of Ramsammy, was said to be among the ‘most vocal’ at the “heated protest session.” Directing his words to the police officers present in the audience, Thomas said “They can go and tell the Prime Minister (Burnham) what I said. I can get a job anywhere.”<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile by 1972, the breach between the PNC and ASCRIA became so pronounced that policemen searched the home of Kwayana for “guns, ammunition and explosives.”<sup>34</sup> In sum then, the actions of Eusi Kwayana and ASCRIA are not to be underestimated as a crucial break with the old politics. This fallout culminated in the formal split between ASCRIA and the PNC which was announced in April 1973 by ASCRIA.

Like its counterpart in the fight against two-party politics, the Indian

Political Revolutionary Associates (IPRA) along with its founder and central activist, Moses Bhagwan, was an important player in attempting to mitigate if not resolve the racial hostility and the push for cooperation that defined the new politics.<sup>35</sup> IPRA possessed no official membership but constituted an informal collection of activists, all of whom were Indo-Guyanese, in a few villages in Demerara county.<sup>36</sup>



WALTER RODNEY

### Enter Walter Rodney

Walter Rodney was a significant element in the development of the new politics. As indicated earlier Rodney was also a lightning rod in other parts of the Caribbean. In October 1968, after he attended the Black Writers Conference in Montreal the Jamaican government refused him re-entry to his teaching job at the University of the West Indies, sending him back to Canada on the same plane on which he had arrived. The ban resulted in major disturbances on and off campus and protests throughout the region which one scholar deemed “the first major attempt to cohere Black Power transnationally.”<sup>37</sup> Students marched on government offices and ordinary people in Kingston, angry at the expulsion of the beloved “Brother Wally,” joined the demonstration, which eventually turned into a riot. The event, which became known as the “Rodney affair,” resounded throughout the Caribbean. Indeed, Jamaican security authorities and their foreign backers and counterparts had previously

assessed Rodney as a risk factor. This is now obvious from a number of declassified security reports. One report, entitled Internal Security Review, provided a number of warnings on Rodney's prior work on the island. While chronicling the effect Rodney's banning from Jamaica had on consequent student and mass unrest, the report concluded there was "no evidence of organization or planned action before the students met on the night of Monday...when the students decided to make a demonstration protest. While it is known that Mrs. Rodney visited the slum areas of West Kingston that night, the Special Branch feels, but has no proof, that she advised Rodney followers of his exclusion and urged them to protest. However, there was no known action by dissident or subversive organizations, such as the Nation of Islam, the Rastafarians...or others..."<sup>38</sup> The overall 'record' of Rodney in Jamaica with his work among Rastafari, students and working class Jamaicans obviously made the rounds and was shared by intelligence forces in the region. After his expulsion from Jamaica, Rodney spent time in Toronto, Canada and in this period also traveled to Cuba. In early 1969, he returned to Tanzania, where he resumed teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam. At this time, The University of Dar es Salaam was a magnet for all of those in Africa thinking through the issues of liberation and freedom and it was in that African state where Rodney published his best-known work, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

It was in this context that Walter Rodney made his re-appearance on the Guyana stage. Lewis (1998) recounted the historian's application to the University of Guyana for a place as Director of Caribbean Studies from Tanzania. Lewis cites the assistant registrar's 1972 response to Rodney in the famously terse memo:

No suitable vacancy in the Dept of History for someone with your qualifications and experience. Your letter is on file and as soon as there is a suitable opening it will be given due consideration. The post, Director of Caribbean Studies, was offered to another candidate."<sup>39</sup>

This was obviously a politically calculated rejection but more was to come. In normal circumstances, Walter Rodney, internationally famous historian, would be accepted and welcomed at his home university, the University of Guyana. However, the nervous Guyanese government anticipated that Rodney's influence would result in a radical transformation of the campus to their discomfort. The PNC regime most likely felt unease at Rodney's track record as a militant and his banning from Jamaica in 1968. A position of professor in the History Department of the University was on offer by 1974 and the department had voted for Rodney's enrollment. Rodney applied but was again turned down, As Lewis notes, "the Burnhamites on the Board of Governors of the

University of Guyana had overturned the decision of the academic appointment committee.”<sup>40</sup> Rodney’s own version differs with that of the Academic council:

My professional training was carried out at the expense of the people of Guyana and the British Caribbean. To be denied the opportunity to pursue my profession at home is tantamount to being condemned to exile and hence to be cut off from direct access to the community which was my sponsor. I shall not be intimidated. But, once more it is necessary to emphasize that it is not a matter of mere personal predicament or personal resolve.”<sup>41</sup>

As indicated in his letter from afar, Rodney returned in 1974 job or no job, but was then asked to meet with the Prime Minister Burnham to discuss his (Rodney’s) position at the university. Rodney wrote back indicating that Prime Ministers did not interview for jobs at the university.

After a period of assessment and reintegration into Guyana’s social and political climate Rodney joined the solidarity campaign for Arnold Rampersaud, a taxi driver from the Berbice region who was accused of the 1973 toll gate shooting of a police constable, John Henry.<sup>42</sup> This is an underestimated, signal event in Rodney’s re-entry and impact on Guyana’s politics. Along with Eusi Kwayana, Miles Fitzpatrick (a Guyanese lawyer) and the late Maurice Bishop (later to become Prime Minister of Grenada), their efforts allowed for publicity of Rampersaud’s defence across the racial lines that had previously fragmented Guyanese society. In a public open air speech on the Arnold Rampersaud trial Rodney famously stated (Rodney, 1976):

No ordinary Afro-Guyanese, no ordinary Indo Guyanese can today afford to be misled by the myth of race. Time and time again it has been our undoing... Those who manipulated in the 1960s, on both sides, were not the sufferers. They were not the losers. The losers were those who participated, who shared blows and got blows. And they are the losers today.

### **Labor – New Directions**

Labor was not excluded from the ferment and new directions in Guyana. Historically critical as an agent for change in Guyana it had become a subordinate and suppressed player beneath the weight of racialized partisan politics. Hence, when African bauxite workers<sup>43</sup> went on strike in 1970 in Linden, which was a PNC bastion, they were conveying the message of their own emerging voice and interests. In 1970, striking bauxite workers observed a chasm developing between their interests as workers in opposing a foreign company. The support that they expected from the political party they had always supported

had failed to materialize. ASCRIA played an active role in supporting the strikers, exacerbating the already fragile relations which now existed between itself and the PNC. The strike terrified the PNC because strikes suggested losing workers to 'other side' in the dominant partisan politics.<sup>44</sup> The workers' independent organizing at this time, led partly by ASCRIA activists within the work force, would later result in the rise of the Organization of Working People (OWP) at Linden (formerly Mackenzie). This self organized, strictly collectivist group from which Rodney and the WPA admit learning much of value about workers' political culture (including worker's savings and family hardship financing) would wage many serious strikes through the decade and be an active part of the multiracial labor organizing that was to peak in the late 1970s and again in the mid-1980s. Sara Abraham (2007:123) recalls the activities of other unions with significant African Guyanese membership that broke ranks with the strong political party-trade union. Among these were the urban and rural sugar unions in addition to the bauxite based OWP.

The January 1973 land rebellion was an event that stimulated multi-racial hopes and pushed various opposition groupings together. The land rebellion on the sugar belt on the East Coast of Demerara was a key factor in stimulating the growth of cooperation among groups and individuals that eventually shaped the WPA. Encouraged by ASCRIA, and supported by Ratoon, IPRA and the WPVP, the mass squatting on the land on the East Coast of Demerara in 1973 was multi-racial in its support and participation and further facilitated the growing collaboration on economic and social grouses.<sup>45</sup> Given the wide multi-racial support given to the land rebellion a frightened state intervened with full force and armed policemen acted to expel the squatters. The stand taken by ASCRIA in calling for an insurrection of the "landless across race", the key language of the appeal had awoken public interest and was the first mass political protest action at least since independence. It led to villagers of different races fighting together over land and against foreign and local oppressors. ASCRIA and other organizations also discussed with the people their views on division and unity, corruption and livelihood. These other political and civic groups and individuals, previously wary of ASCRIA, contrived to engage in dialogue with the organization on these and other issues.

The land rebellion came in tandem with a deteriorating domestic situation and an increase in diplomatic and economic relations with other third world and socialist countries. The rigging<sup>46</sup> of the 1973 general elections with the assistance of the Guyana army further increased the ethnic divide and deterioration in democracy.

Things began to deteriorate democratically. From 1974, the doctrine of "paramountcy of the party" was formally introduced and included the



elevation of the party over the state, strengthening the power held by the Prime Minister (later President) Forbes Burnham. One researcher dramatized Burnham's control over the state thus:

As leader of the ruling PNC party, Prime Minister Burnham has the power to appoint the Deputy Leader, Party Chairman, general secretary and the Editor of the party's newspapers. His total dominance over the ruling party is matched by his total dominance over key state institutions. Burnham is Prime Minister, Minister of Defence in charge of all security forces, chairman of the Defence Board, Minister of Education, President of GUYSTAC—the governing body of Public corporations and Public Enterprises. He is also President on Leave of the Guyana Labor union—the oldest union in the Caribbean...all in all, he is the most powerful individual ever in the history of Guyana and perhaps the entire commonwealth Caribbean.<sup>47</sup>

In the same year the PNC formally announced its policy of cooperative socialism, manifested in certain policy measures. These included the nationalization of foreign property and the institutionalization of a policy of “paramouncy of the party” over the state<sup>48</sup> and other parties. This inflamed the rebellion and further deepened resistance to the state. This need to out compete in ‘socialist construction’ and ideology plus the need to secure its power led the regime in efforts to control what the government deemed the “commanding heights of the economy.” Paramouncy of the party over the state increased in intensity only to be formalized by 1974. Premdas (1992:23) noted that both the PPP and the PNC had each

developed a sophisticated party manifesto with a clear definition of programmes justified in non-ethnic terms towards building a socialist society. While each did this, at the same time the grassroots party organizations surreptitiously peddled a different line of ethnic solidarity and loyalty. It was the intention of each party to first consolidate its ethnic support and then attempt cross-communal conversions. Where both parties did this simultaneously the result was a stalemate in the erection of rigid ethnic rules.<sup>48</sup>

The deformations of the state were challenged directly by organisations and strands that evolved and emerged out of the 1960s. These decided that the imperative of a multi-racial front was of dire necessity given the two-party history of racial division. This is the area of the single greatest contribution to the new political culture in Guyana. Clive Thomas identified what he termed the ‘repressive escalator’ signified in the production crises and Burnham’s international leftist tilt which Thomas argued was informed by the PNC’s “need to use the state to transform itself into a national bourgeois class which meant it had to adopt a popular socialist rhetoric if this was to be made acceptable to the masses.”<sup>49</sup>



### The WPA is formed

All of these events and the subsequent rise of smaller, newer organizations brought new opportunities for collective action. Subsequently, the ASCRIA, the IPRA, GADM,<sup>50</sup> the WPVP (Working Peoples Vanguard Party)<sup>51</sup> and RATOON, in addition to individuals who joined as the 'independent' component, began meeting in the halls of a friendly labor union in 1972 to discuss the state of the society and to establish principles and programmes for a solution to Guyana's political and social problems.<sup>52</sup> In 1972, the IPRA took the initiative to implement a joint approach to the extant politics and social divide. Contact between activists of IPRA and ASCRIA led to the establishment of the Race Commission, and this Commission began visiting African and Indian Guyanese villages in several districts of Guyana discussing with people their views on division and unity, corruption and livelihood.

The formal launch of the Working People's Alliance in 1974 brought together the moral and organizational strands consecrating the vision of the new politics in Guyana. The founding organizations did not surrender their identities and held veto power until some time afterwards, when the unitary organization was consecrated. The new politics, with its threads was ensconced in the form of a multi-racial alliance; a development not seen since the 1950s. At its launch the new organization issued a statement explaining it would "set up a workers and farmers' advisory service to give workers expert advice."<sup>53</sup> The alliance's main charge however was that its formation was the outcome of

"nearly 2 years of active discussion and working together on the part of these groups. Members of the alliance struggled with the Landless People against the foreign sugar companies and have taken a stand against election politics, violent political repression here and other parts of the Caribbean; the worsening economic conditions of the masses, cancerous corruption in the government, political victimization and the denial of press freedom and academic freedom in Guyana..<sup>54</sup>

The founding statement, representing what the organisation conceived as the new politics, cited the stand against race based elections, violent political repression, worsening economic conditions of the masses, cancerous corruption and denial of academic and press freedom, as factors in its formation.<sup>55</sup> The coalition also addressed regional and international concerns. It pledged to strengthen the unity of the Caribbean masses and identified itself with the suffering masses everywhere with the maxim that it stood for the "destruction of imperialism and its neocolonial systems and for the revolutionary unity of all subject and liberated peoples."<sup>56</sup>

Some of the key policies in the new organisation was carried in its founding statement. They included:

- *The Working People's Alliance will teach and fight to bring about the unity of the working people – workers, employees, farmers, landless peasants, the unemployed, housewives, students, progressive professionals, working producers, small traders, craftsmen, and self-employed toilers.*
- *The Working People's Alliance will fight for an economy which will be controlled by the working people for their own benefit, in which every citizen has the right to work and in which exploitation and exploiting classes are abolished.*
- *The alliance stands for the genuine multiracial power of the working people, expressed in organizational forms which guarantee the nature of this power. The Alliance hopes to benefit from the work being done in this respect by its member organizations. The Alliance will address itself to the contradiction between the Indian and African sections of the population and to the historical exclusion of Amerindians from the political process.*
- *The Alliance shall hope to strengthen and deepen the unity of the Caribbean masses through solidarity with the emergent people's organizations. We oppose the official integration movement, which is neo-colonialist, with the growing unity of the people's liberation movements of the Caribbean.*<sup>57</sup>

What the WPA, and the preceding actions of its constituents along with other sectors in Guyana accomplished, was the visible representation of Guyana's multi-racial society in its ranks, a feat very important in the Guyana context. It ought to be noted that none of this multi-racial enthusiasm was tested at the ballot box, which in 1974 was far from the radar of the WPA. Further, like the WPA at its inauguration in 1974, the organizations and 'agency' associated with the new politics were not power-driven, electoral groups, but a contrasting collective that sought change through social action and moral suasion. Simply put, their activity was limited to the politics of criticism of the existing political process and the exposure of corruption in public life. It can be defined as a conception of politics where activists work through the medium of public criticism to promote change. This is distinct from the politics of winning state power, customarily measured as the traditional role of political parties in Guyana and other Caribbean societies. The WPA's entry unto the Guyanese political scene also promoted a new moral code on two other fronts. Firstly, Kwayana (1978) equally made his mark in substantially developing a philosophy of multiracialism peculiar to Guyana's needs. His celebrated published speech "*Racial Insecurity and the Political System*" is notable for its invocation of public self-criticism of political party and individual politics.

The WPA's decision to refuse to identify a single leader but opt for collective leadership in a multi-racial society was another measure of the new politics. Although lonely in its implementation at the local and regional levels with a population unaccustomed to the non-identification of a single leader, it underpinned the moral/political thrust of the new politics as represented by WPA. The principle was even enshrined in the party's constitution. The specific constitutional reference stated in part, "no responsibility or authority vested in any official of the executive organ of the party shall be carried out or exercised in opposition to, or without the support of the collective will of the executive organs of the party..." and "The co-leaders shall as far as practicable reflect the outlook of the party regarding equality of status of race and gender."<sup>58</sup>

But how far did the new politics reach in Guyana? How was it possible to fight for a democratic society amidst all the confusion of the outside world, where the Soviet Union and its allies, although supportive of liberation movements around the world, did not endorse local struggles for democracy; and played *realpolitik* with small countries? The Guyanese state had also by this time, with its critical role in the non-aligned movement, its anti-apartheid stand, and increasing ties with socialist countries benefited from the fact that most of the international left-wing state allies of the opposition Marxist-Leninist PPP welcomed Guyana's support as a state. While the PPP was caught in this quagmire the WPA managed to avoid some of the pitfalls of the conundrum that pitted democracy against socialism. It achieved this by its concentration on local issues, its vigorous defence of democratic struggle and its programmatic-ideological positions which fused Marxism with democratic ideals, what is commonly deemed the 'new left.' Perhaps this contradiction led an alert Guyanese middle-class lawyer to ask a provocative question at the height of the PNC's repression of the WPA and the PPP, in a context where all three contenders were self-identified Leftist organisations. De Caires (1974) enquired:

What does a party mean in the Caribbean today when it describes itself as Marxist-Leninist? Clearly the bare label is not enough (the three main political parties in Guyana, the PPP, PNC and WPA all described themselves as Marxist-Leninist at one time or another) and at the very least it is incumbent on each party to spell out its position on certain basic issues like a democratic constitution, free elections, the multiparty system and so on.<sup>59</sup>

Clive Thomas, himself an active founding member of WPA, dealt quite early with the connection between democracy and socialism at a time when dogma ruled the roost and any departure from the canon was greeted with derision. Thomas anticipated modern criticism of the left on the problems of socialism in the Caribbean and even further afield. In 1976 Thomas asked, "can a socialist society be constructed without

political democracy?”<sup>60</sup> Immediately, he answered his own question: “regrettably, an unfortunate attitude has grown (which is not supported by Marxist-Leninist theory), of counterposing socialism and political democracy, an attitude which is based on the argument that socialism does not require political democracy...”<sup>61</sup>

This tension was noticeable. The response from the WPA to the authoritarian state and the maximum leader principle was creative and direct. While Walter Rodney publicly ridiculed and punctured the idea of all powerful Forbes Burnham, the WPA offered forms of struggle against, not only the Westminster system but also the manipulation of the system. As Perry Mars (1998:56) notes, the WPA put up the idea of “People Assemblies” that offered more “scope for more direct popular participation.” These ideas were not only exclusive to Guyana. Regionally, a number of opposition grounds at the time were fighting various forms of misrule and attacks on the democratic system they equally creative means. Mars (1998:69) details these as existing in Antigua, Dominica and Trinidad at various junctures.

Many other issues that came to represent the ‘new politics’ arose during the heyday of the WPA. Some were unobtrusive and quiet while others like the approach to race relations in political practice, was open and innovative. But there were still other issues that haunted the left and parties like the WPA at this and later stages. One of these is the often ignored or downgraded in this specific period was gender/women rights. The WPA, PPP and the Burnham state, with all of its leftist pronouncements all failed to adequately address gender and women’s issues. The ‘priorities’ of the movement, including the WPA at that time established a definite attentiveness to the urgent overthrow of the state and social revolution, but there was little active consideration of women’s rights inside and outside the organization. When press releases and handbills emerged that spoke to gender equality while obviously meant well, they were in an overall sense, ‘cliches’ and there was on offer no fundamental, revolutionary change to the issue of gender and/or women’s rights. Moreover, in the party structures women were not very well represented numerically and there was little discussion of gender equality except for a general ‘wordy’ way in the occasional press release and in the WPA’s single sheet Dayclean. In this instance the “new politics” had not caught up with the need to incorporate individual and communal responsibility for gender equality except at the level of pronouncement. When one of the WPA’s leading activists was asked whether gender did emerge as a “visible, significant category” in the early organization of the WPA—she replied empathically: “no, unequivocally, no.”<sup>62</sup> But even in the case of the WPA, as weak as it was on the issue, did not challenge women activists who as Eusi Kwayana put it, “refused to be ‘arm’” of a political party and “declared their independence”<sup>63</sup> (Kwayana 2004:17).

## Conclusion

In retrospect 1968 and the period it activated held up a lot for a society like Guyana. While the internal dynamic might have been a little different from the liberation struggles on a global scale there were enough influences to force radical change at the home base. In 1979 the WPA became a formal, fully fledged political party. And even after the assassination of its stellar figure Walter Rodney in 1980 it expanded as force, challenged the authoritarian state with increasing vigor and, more significantly, from a substantial multiracial support base and imaginative and inspired political action.

The arrival of WPA embodied a number of new strands in Guyana's political dialectic: the fight for multi-racialism; the connection between democracy and a radical, Marxist agenda; the recognition of less strait-jacketed approach to politics through the application of cultural appreciation and local historical idiom and history; the principles of collective leadership in a multi-racial state; the politics of coalition building; the offer of solidarity to all peoples struggling against tyranny and for social justice were all components of the fundamental principles of the new politics that would later be enshrined as "Rodneyite."<sup>64</sup>

Yet more than a decade after its formation the WPA's electoral impact was limited to two parliamentary seats at its strongest point organizationally (the 1985 general elections) in a society where voting patterns continued to occur along strictly racial lines. But race, though important was not the lone complication in the period. Walter Rodney's assassination in 1980 must also be factored into the reasons leading to that party's eventual decline as a parliamentary and social force. There were also extant regional and international reasons for the decline of the WPA and other social and political forces in the Caribbean. Mars (1998:1) scrutinised the origins of what he calls the "marginalisation" of the Caribbean in the face of "cataclysmic world events".<sup>65</sup> These cataclysmic world events were however only a part of the problem. The left, as he acknowledges, also faced other serious deficiencies internal to itself.

If 1968 and the changes it wrought came to represent, as one critic put it the "expansion of the political public" (Fuecks 2008:12 ) then the rise and impact of the "new politics " and what it represented in Guyana, was the local expression of a period of considerable change.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Several independent Guyanese organizations including WPVP (Working Peoples Vanguard Party), IPRA (Indian Political Revolutionary Associates), RATOON, the ASCRIA (African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa), and independent people constituted the 'alliance'.
- <sup>2</sup> WPA founding statement, *Dayclean*, November 1974.
- <sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this essay 'the sixties' is an operational definition that includes the symbolic year of 1968.
- <sup>4</sup> M. J. Heale, "The Sixties as History: A Review of the Political Historiography" *Reviews in American History* 33 (2005).
- <sup>5</sup> See Fr Andrew Morrison, *Justice*, p. 63. This development in the Catholic Church was partly influenced by the conclusions of the 1968 meeting of the bishops of Latin American in Medellín, Colombia where there was an "important shift of emphasis from economics to politics."
- <sup>6</sup> Among the participants in the New World movement were Lloyd Best, Clive Thomas, George Beckford, Norman Girvan, David de Caires, Miles Fitzpatrick, James Millette, Roy Augier, Alister McIntyre, Vaughn Lewis, Havelock Brewster, Sylvia Wynter—all of whom would go on to become regionally and internationally recognized academics, economists and lawyers.
- <sup>7</sup> *New World*, 12.11.1965.11.
- <sup>8</sup> David de Caires and Miles Fitzpatrick, "Twenty Years of Politics in Our Land." *New World* Guyana Independence Issue, 1966, 42.
- <sup>9</sup> Guyana attained political independence from Great Britain on May 26, 1966.
- <sup>10</sup> Martin Carter (1927-1997), the late national poet of Guyana.
- <sup>11</sup> Tyrone Ferguson, *To Survive Sensibly or to Court Heroic Death*, 107.
- <sup>12</sup> Clive Thomas, *Bread and Justice*. 1976, 7.
- <sup>13</sup> A documentary film, *Trail of the Vanishing Voters*, December 9, 1968, showed that most of the overseas voters registered in the United Kingdom for the Guyana elections were fictitious. According to the film, a sample of 550 'overseas voters' registered in London, only 100 were genuine. Thomas Spinner, *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983*, 126.

- <sup>14</sup> Ralph Premdas, "Ethnic Conflict and Development: The Case of Guyana." 1992, 14.
- <sup>15</sup> Forbes Burnham, "Extracts from speech at the University of Guyana, Turkeyen, Guyana, February 24, 1970" in *Birth of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*. Compiled and edited by C.A. Nascimento, Ministry of Information and Culture, 1970.
- <sup>16</sup> Professors Clive Thomas, Josh Ramsammy and Omawale, and students Bonita Harris and Zinul Bacchus were prominent in this group and were all later associated with the Working People's Alliance, WPA.
- <sup>17</sup> Ratoon, like the ASCRIA possessed its own monthly publication. At its organizational height, it published and circulated an estimated 3,000 copies of its newspaper.
- <sup>18</sup> Interview with Clive Thomas in *Georgetown Journal*. 397-398
- <sup>19</sup> Queens College, one of the premier secondary schools in Guyana.
- <sup>20</sup> Zinul Bacchus, e-mail, December 2006. There is an additional note to Bacchus's' recount of the events. It is reported that Paul Nehru Tennessee, Indian rights activist and academic, as a counter to Carmichael's statements, led a group out of the audience shouting, "coolie power, coolie power."
- <sup>21</sup> Zinul Bacchus Interview, 2006. It is useful to note that in 1969, amidst regional controversy over the US and Caribbean black power tide Eusi Kwayana said : "we do not regard the ideas of Malcolm X, Stokeley Carmichael, Glijan Oh Mohamed or Walter Rodney or Muhammad Ali as subversive to our cause." *Sunday Chronicle*, March 16, 1969.
- <sup>22</sup> Trade unions had a connection with the WFTU in 1953. During the Congress of the People's for Peace in Vienna in 1952 Eusi Kwayana (then Sidney King) visited the WFTU headquarters as a PPP delegate.
- <sup>23</sup> ASCRIA at its height as an organization consisted of thirty-two 'compounds' or groups and was active in most of the major black communities. See David Hinds, "The African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa(ASCRIA): A Short History." *Emancipation* magazine, No. 4. 1996-97. 36.
- <sup>24</sup> *Weekend Post & Sunday Argosy*, Dec. 6, 1970.
- <sup>25</sup> *Weekend Post & Sunday Argosy*, June 27, 1971.



- <sup>26</sup> The allegations filed with the Ombudsman and directed against Mr. Hamilton Green, then Minister of Works and Hydraulics and Mr. David Singh, a former Minister of Housing, signaled a serious fall-out with the ruling political party.
- <sup>27</sup> Lecturer in biology at the University of Guyana and founder member of the Working People's Alliance.
- <sup>28</sup> *Guyana Graphic*, October 10, 1971.
- <sup>29</sup> *Guyana Graphic*, October 10, 1971.
- <sup>30</sup> The ruling PNC, in a response intended to mitigate the critique that implied its own responsibility for the deed, defined the attempted assassination as 'shocking': "No one would doubt that this dastardly act is one of the many strategically planned to destroy the harmony which the Guyanese people have come to enjoy over the last seven years through a stable PNC government. *Guyana Graphic*, October 7, 1971.
- <sup>31</sup> *Guyana Graphic*, October 6, 1971.
- <sup>32</sup> Errol Fraser, Omawale, Brian Rodway, Bonita Harris, Maurice Odle, Moses Bhagwan (all later activists of the WPA), and a number of other vigorous opponents of the regime at the time were present.
- <sup>33</sup> Report cited in *Mirror* newspaper, October 1971. Thomas had previously revealed details of kidnapping attempts on his person in June of the same year. One of the attempts, according to Thomas, occurred when he received a fake message claiming that "Ndugu Eusi Kwayana" was expecting him for a meeting in the village of Plaisance.
- <sup>34</sup> *Weekend Post & Sunday Argosy*, Feb 27, 1972. The search carried out on Kwayana's premises was allegedly undertaken in lieu of the search for Trinidadian Abdul Malik (Michael) who was wanted for two murders. The police found nothing at Kwayana's home.
- <sup>35</sup> An organization that blossomed out of its precursor, The Success Movement (TSM).
- <sup>36</sup> These villages were Better Hope, Success, Grove, and Triumph, all located outside of the city.
- <sup>37</sup> Michael West. *Background to 1968: Ideological Origins of the Congress of Black Writers* (paper presented at 39th Annual conference of Caribbean Historians, Jamaica, May 2007).



- <sup>38</sup> US National Archives (USNA) RG, Box 2292, File Jam A: Secret Internal Security Review: Chronology of Events during October Disturbances, 3.
- <sup>39</sup> Rupert Lewis, *Walter Rodney's Intellectual and Political Intellectual and Political Thought*. Kingston: Wayne State University Press, 1998. 184-185.
- <sup>40</sup> Rupert Lewis, 185. There is also the view that Minister of government at the time Hamilton Green and his associates were wary of Rodney and after Green's visit to Tanzania, he claimed Rodney was considered a security threat in Tanzania. In other words, he posed a security threat "here too."
- <sup>41</sup> Statement By Dr. Walter Rodney, 18 September, 1974.
- <sup>42</sup> This trial of Arnold Rampersaud and Rodney's intervention was important for several reasons. Rampersaud, a PPP activist was on trial for allegedly shooting and killing a black policeman at a toll station in a mainly Indo-Guyanese community. Along with the PPP and other international observers, Walter Rodney and Eusi Kwayana were part of the Defense Committee. Rampersaud was eventually acquitted after three trials.
- <sup>43</sup> Bauxite was one of Guyana's most important revenue earners. One study (Odida Quamina (1987) states that "with a little more than 5,000 employees, in 1969 the(bauxite) industry had overtaken sugar to become the country's largest export earner, with earnings of G\$60 million, nearly half the total." (7) The Burnham government nationalized the company that dominated the industry in 1974. Linden is approximately 60 miles from Guyana's capital, Georgetown.
- <sup>44</sup> In fact the workers invited Cheddi Jagan to speak to them in the Union Hall (Abraham 2007:116).
- <sup>45</sup> Estimated 245 acres of land were occupied and two thousand people were involved in the land rebellion.
- <sup>46</sup> Rigging in this instance included the stuffing of ballot boxes by agents of the ruling party and army intervention to secure ballot boxes.
- <sup>47</sup> George K. Danns, "Leadership and Corruption: An Analysis of Emergent Post Colonial Rule in the Caribbean." *Transition* Vol 3, No. 1, 1980. p. 28. Danns also cites *New Nation* (November 17, 1973), organ of the ruling party of the time as quoting Burnham thus "God says before you were, I was. The party says to the government before

you were, we were. The government has got to be in our system a subordinate agency to the Party.”

- <sup>48</sup> Ralph Premdas, *Ethnic Conflict and Development: the Case of Guyana*. Geneva: UNRISD, 1992. 23.
- <sup>49</sup> Clive Thomas, 19. For other perspectives, see Tyrone Ferguson's *To Survive Sensibly or to Court Heroic Death*, 1999.
- <sup>50</sup> The Guyana Anti-Discrimination League (GADM), led by another apostate from a parliamentary party, Makepeace Richmond, was also representative of the break away from the old political order. Richmond, an independent Member of Parliament for a time, supported initiatives against corruption. Richmond resigned from the smaller, conservative United Force that had allied itself with the PNC between 1965 and 1968 and later formed his own faction, the Liberator Party, whose stated intent was to mobilize on a multi-racial basis. Richmond's own independence posture assisted the opening up a front in human rights and democracy.
- <sup>51</sup> The WPVP, a small Marxist-Leninist grouping with Maoist leanings was part of the Alliance that founded the WPA but withdrew in 1976 over a disagreement sparked by the PPP's decision to give 'critical' support to the PNC. The WPVP, led by Brindley Benn and Thelma Reece opposed the stand taken by the other constituents of WPA to continue a working relation with the PPP and had instead urged condemnation. (See *Small Axe* article).
- <sup>52</sup> NAACIE, an independent trade union in the sugar industry, was not part of the WPA but it supported the individuals and organizations that comprised the alliance and provided them with a physical meeting space.
- <sup>53</sup> *Dayclean*, Vol 1. No 2, Nov. 1974.
- <sup>54</sup> *Dayclean*, Vol 1 No 2, Nov. 1974.
- <sup>55</sup> WPA founding statement – *Dayclean*, November 1974.
- <sup>56</sup> *Dayclean*. Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1974.
- <sup>57</sup> *Dayclean*. Vol. 1, No. 2, November 1974.
- <sup>58</sup> Constitution of the Working People's Alliance, 1979. 13.
- <sup>59</sup> David De Caires, "Marxism and Human Rights," *Caribbean Contact*, November 1979.
- <sup>60</sup> Clive Thomas, *Bread and Justice. The Struggle for Socialism in Guyana*. (booklet). February 1976.7

- <sup>61</sup> Clive Thomas, *ibid*, 7.
- <sup>62</sup> *Small Axe*, March 2004. "Counting Women's Caring Work, interview with Andaiye." 159.
- <sup>63</sup> Eusi Kwayana, *Against the Current* 2004: 17.
- <sup>64</sup> Sara Abraham (2007:222) notes that Walter Rodney thought (Rodneyism) was "formalized by WPA in 1983" after Reagan's invasion of Grenada in 1983.
- <sup>65</sup> Perry Mars, *Ideology and Change: The Transformation of the Caribbean Left* (Wayne State University Press, 1998:1).

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