

Indian Opinion

OFFICIAL WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE BRITISH GUIANA EAST INDIAN ASSOCIATION

VOL. 1. No. 25 GEORGETOWN, B.G. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21. 1944 ONE PENNY

INDIAN OPINION: Items of current interests and Literary contributions must be addressed to P.O. BOX 43, Georgetown, B.G. Features and other items appearing in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board. The editorial column reflects the policy of the British Guiana East Indian Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Copies—one penny.

LOCAL

Annual Subscription—(Posted) \$1.50

FOREIGN

Annual Subscription—(Posted) \$2.00

— EDITORIAL —

Rumshops are Breeding Places for Lawlessness and Crime

The West Indian Conference which was held under the auspices of both the British and United States Governments have recommended that immediate steps be taken in the Caribbean Colonies to improve the health of the population.

We, the British Guiana East Indian Association, as an organisation representing the largest number of any racial group endorse that decision.

It is now no secret to anyone, anywhere in the world, that the people of this country are in the majority a mass of victims to malnutrition. The situation becomes more emphatic when quite recently a responsible officer of the Government mentioned the regrettable statement that the prevalent "inferiority complex" is attributable to malnutrition.

(Will any-one dare say that there is no "inferiority complex", among the masses of this colony?)

It is in keeping in a line with the recommendations of the West Indian Conference, that we have moved the following resolution in connection with *Rumshops*, at our recent Annual Conference.

RUMSHOPS

WHEREAS rum drinking with its trail of evils, moral deprivations, dis-

B. G. East Indian Association Ask a Square Deal for Indians

The British Guiana East Indian Association has cabled the Government of India, the Mayor Calcutta, the Muslim League the I. N. Congress and the Servants of India Society, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Prime Minister of England, the Indian League London and the Fabian Colonial Bureau pointing out that the franchise which is being offered British Guiana is wholly unsuited as it excludes the masses, especially the Indian masses. The Association submits that this constitutes a breach of faith on the part of the Local and Imperial Governments as under the new franchise a great disability would be experienced among Indians. Indians request a declaration of policy of equal

status. On the Indian population depends the entire economic structure of the Colony.

Indian labour sustains the Sugar, Rice, coconut, cattle industries and the home grown food products. These and other smaller industries have been built and sustained at enormous sacrifices by Indians. Indians sustain this country at the supreme sacrifice of losing their lives in the task. They live and have lived under conditions described by an authoritative writer as "wretched and miserable, unbelievably filthy and unbelievably poor. Certainly Indians cannot allow the matter to remain where it is at the moment. The Indian courage and strength is bound to lead towards freedom."

orderly behaviour etc. is on an increase in the entire Colony;

AND WHEREAS rum drinking is causing the breaking up of homes and malnutrition, by the family's earnings being spent in this direction, especially in the Sugar Estates and adjoining villages;

AND WHEREAS rum drinking would not be as prevalent if the rumshops were not readily available;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Conference respectfully requests Government to eliminate all rumshops within Sugar Estates by not granting the renewal of existing licences after the end of 1944 and not to grant any new licences within the boundaries of all Sugar Plantations.

Mover: Mr. Jenarine Singh

Seconder: Mr. A. A. Rangela.

Unanimously carried.

The health of the masses can in no way be safeguarded when RUM which may well be defined as the "Thief of Health" is allowed to find its way into thousands of half-living—half-dead human bodies.

It is not good enough for Govern-

ment to say (and we do not believe they will) that the people purchase rum of their own free will and the Administration cannot interfere.

The Administration is rightly preventing several acts which in ordinary course of life the population will not hesitate to indulge in or commit. Such preventions and prohibitions are calculated to be (in Government's opinion) in the interest of the people.

Is any one prepared to stifle his conscience and say that the way rum is consumed is in any measure conducive towards health or general physical conditions? No reasonable citizen will ever have the timidity to make such a statement. Rumshops are breeding places of drunkenness which in turn ends up in lawlessness that eventually lead to a variety of crimes.

We want to do away with such behaviourism and criminal acts.

We must say that anyone who opposes the closing down of these rumshops are openly encouraging lawlessness and crime. We are not prepared to associate with any such individuals or authority.

[To be continued next week]

Letters to the Editor

THE COMING OF AMERICANS TO B.G.

The Editor;
Indian Opinion

Dear Sir,

Very few persons realize to what extent the population of British Guiana have been benefited economically, politically educationally and culturally by the coming of Americans to this Colony.

Few realize that nearly twenty million dollars were paid to Guianese in some form or the other by the Americans; this has been responsible to a great degree for the prosperity of the Colony during the past few years; this has undoubtedly contributed considerably to the surplus in our treasury.

The Association of Guianese with Americans have added the touch of liberty so apparent among Americans. I certainly feel that Americans coming to British Guiana has made the equality among men come home in the true sense of the word. I wish the Englishmen would treat us Colonials with the same degree of fraternity and equality.

The American Culture is fast taking hold of the city and sooner or later things are bound to change from the old traditional white collar system. I wish to God it comes soon. Thanking you for space Mr. Editor.

Yours faithfully,
"GUAINESE"

The Editor
Indian Opinion

Dear Sir,

Certain very distressing things are happening to the people of British Guiana.

Government using its powers under the Defence Regulations has established a Commodity Control Board which is continually making a mess of things, everywhere you can find dissatisfaction of its operation. Among importers, exporters, consumers and producers. I shall give a few instances. A little while ago due to its mismanagement onions and potatoes rotted everywhere. Right at this moment salt-fish with an obnoxious smell and unfit for human consumption can be seen in all the stores. I understand there is going to be a loss by the Commodity Control Board of nearly a hundred thousand dollars on flour if this latter is true then people should demand that Government jail those responsible using the same the same Defence Regulation to institute the penalty. Car tyres is a striking scandal. It is alleged that the very Controller of Supplies bought a new car cheaper than he sold his second hand one for. It is unfortunate that the people are losing faith with Government's action in this matter. It is more unfortunate that there is not a legislature enjoying the confidence of the people, so they could, then have, appealed for a legislative Council investigation into this matter.

Yours faithfully,
MISERABLE.

Disappointments of West Indians

BY THE WATCHDOG

The Anglo-American Caribbean Conference held in Barbados in April of this year has failed to organize and put into practice any of the several matters discussed. The Conference lasted ten days and delegates from nearly all the Caribbean were present.

The Chairman Sir Frank Stockdale is not putting his shoulders to the wheel as was expected; he has done a lot of talk but little or nothing otherwise. It is being hinted in some quarters that all this talk of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act is so much hot air and that behind it all lies the protection and extension of vested British interest. If this is true, then most certainly there is cause among West Indians for uneasiness.

Quite recently Mr. Charles Taussig the American co-chairman of the Caribbean Commission made some statements over the air, it is hoped that he would have his views put into practice. There is reason to believe that Mr. Taussig is sincere in his statements but it is found that in actual practice little or nothing has been done. Is it possible that there is some obstacle in the way?

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Mr. Parsram Tarachand Returns From India

G'TOWN, Wed., Oct. 18 - Mr. Parsram Tarachand, Principal of Messrs. Parsram and Sons, Water Street, Georgetown, returned to the Colony yesterday morning after an absence of nearly five years.

Mr. Parsram left Georgetown in February 1940 for Curacao via Trinidad. Then on to Colon and the U.S.A; visiting Hollywood and Los Angeles. From the U. S. A. he moved on to Japan, visiting Yokohama, Tokyo, and other ports, then to Hong Kong and Singapore and Penang, and eventually reaching Calcutta in mid-June, 1940 and his home in Hyderabad towards the end of June, the same year.

Mr. Parsram left Bombay on June 16, last, and proceeded to Goa in Portuguese India. Then to the Suez and Port Said and through the Mediterranean to Liverpool. He spent some time in England visiting London and other towns, eventually leaving for New York on September 13, where he spent two and a half days, before coming on to British Guiana.

City Council Lowers Municipal Qualifications

\$8—A MONTH-TENNANT
MAY VOTE

The City Council of Georgetown has made certain important changes in the Georgetown Town Council Ordinance. New qualifications for Town Councillors and voters have been recommended.

The qualification for a Councillor has been assessed at \$300 a year for tenants and \$240 for property-owners.

The qualification for a voter has been suggested at \$96 a year for tenants and \$72 for lessees.

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Indians The Economic Fabric Of The Country And The Present Governor Of British Guiana

BY LIBERTY

Indians of British Guiana have laboured under miserable conditions for more than a century to keep the country afloat.

Almost the entire economic structure of the colony depended and today depends on Indians. It is by the perseverance and determination of Indians that the Sugar Industry is still alive; it is entirely because of Indians that there exist a Rice Industry today. The same may be said of the coconut and cattle industries. Indians own by far the greater portion of the bank and post office deposits.

It is by Indian labour that the country is able to balance its budget.

Taking these facts into consideration can any Government with a scrap of self respect for an honest square deal between man and man, embark on a policy of deliberately keeping a large section of Indians from the franchise, a people on whom depends the very economic existence of the country? Yet this is exactly what the Secretary of the State for the Colonies has done to Indians on the top sided advice of Sir Gordon Lethem, Governor of British Guiana.

It is difficult to assess an individual easily and that has been the case with the present Governor; but like everything else, Governors come and go but the country goes on forever. When the time comes Sir Gordon Lethem will go, and like all others, he would have done nothing for history to record. He missed his chance with the Franchise. It is hoped the same fate does not await the Drainage and Irrigation Schemes.

The masses have lost confidence in purely academic talks. They want

practical demonstrations. They wonder if capital has done the trick again. Time has told part of the tale, the other part is being anxiously awaited.

The consequences of such action are far reaching, and seriously imperil the loyalty and cooperation of Indians and hopelessly shatter the moral basis of faith between rulers and ruled.

Under the circumstances Indians are organizing in the city and rural areas in order that the whole country shall act together in carrying out any measure that may be considered advisable.

Closer co-operation of Indians in Caribbean Urged

(CORRESPONDENCE FROM JAMAICA)

At this time when we look toward a future of great cultural advancement; when before our eyes is held the vision of a unified West Indies, the advocated slogan seems to be West Indians first, race after! But however essential it is that as many as possible should be able to visualize our islands as one co-operate group, it is natural that racial groups should think of individual communities and the part which these must play in the post war world. Our West Indian Islands may not for a long time be able to embrace this unity with broad-mindedness and vision; but as a step towards it, or any other ideal, we must develop better units to start with. Communities which are sound in mind and body and capable of working together. This circular is sent in an effort to secure better co-operation among the East Indian Communities in the Caribbean Area.

Since my arrival in Jamaica about a month ago, I have been privileged to visit the East Indian Progressive Society's offices in Kingston on several occasions. After speaking with the Society's members. I am strengthened in my convictions that now more than ever before, the East Indians scattered throughout the Guiana's Trinidad and Jamaica need to know more about each other, to create a better understanding of each others' aims and needs.

While in Br. Guiana and Trinidad the Indians have contributed largely towards the cultural development of those colonies, with many proud achievements on record, the same cannot be said of their brothers here, of

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whom, the vast majority are illiterate farmer-labourers, who have lost all vestiges of their national spirit and culture, even who have preserved something of their racial identity, fewer still have had the courage and foresight to come together to work for Community. These form the nucleus of the East Indian Progressive Society.

Continued on page 4

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AGENTS

Closer co-operation of Indians in Caribbean Urged

Continued from page 3

from which several important affiliated groups have been organized. The society is recognized by authority as representative in its influence of the entire community. It has been doing admirable work even since its founding by Dr. J.L. Varma in 1940, but its strength is puny in the face of the work before it—to teach, to protect, to guide the people, and to fan to life again the sparks of national consciousness and pride.

I have tried successfully to urge the Society to strengthen its connections with its sister communities, indicating how necessary it is that Indians should know, more about their compatriots abroad. These connections must not be allowed to spring up haphazardly; there should be organized a systematic campaign so that the fullest benefits might accrue with the least possibility of misunderstanding. Individuals have tried through correspondence in the past such as during the brief appearance of Dr. Durai Pal Pandia but the interest fluctuated with inspiration, and all these efforts have resulted in dismal failure—unnecessary failure—failure which leaves only feelings of frustration and emptiness. Yet the first step must be extensive correspondence building up friendliness and a fund of information for reference.

I have not tried to draw any plan, for as Indians, you can better judge how you can work for your ideals; The Society is willing to work, for there lies not only its own strength and hope, perhaps, but good to all East Indians as well; and it has already under consideration a post-war conference of East Indians in the Caribbean.

I am sure that you too will add your efforts to put the project on a sound footing, for the benefits to be derived from such intercourse are easily recognizable—mutual exchange of ideas; the appreciation of common aims and ideals; greater understanding, greater unity and greater vision; and above all a desire for cultural uplift, and urge to national consciousness and pride. Please do your utmost; interest your friends and other groups; spread out the idea that others may grasp the beauty of it and work with you. (There is nothing to lose, and everlasting to gain, and no better time to start but now) so that whenever you can come together—Indian and Indian, you will be at such time, the ideals we cherish today will not seem too big, too far beyond our grasp.

CARLISLE J. CHANG
(Trinidad)

East Indian Progressive Society
42 Duke Street, Kingston,
Jamaica B. W. I.

Saved By Holy Book

How Havildar Escaped Death

How a Havildar narrowly escaped death when a bullet struck him in the breast lodging in his *Gita* (the Hindu Holy book) is described in a despatch from an Indian Army Observer on the Arakan front.

The Havildar, Rama Nandan Singh, of Ghazipur, United Provinces, was second-in-command of the leading platoon and took over when the Jemadar was wounded. He led his men uphill, completely ignoring heavy fire from machine-gun nests and mortars. Earlier in the engagement, he was wounded in the knee. When he got within grenade-throwing distance of a Japanese section post he was again wounded, this time severely, by shrapnel in the face. He went on shouting words of encouragement to his men. When about to lift himself on to the parapet to bayonet the defenders one of them pushed him bodily away. As he rolled downhill a sniper shot him through the hand.

When his Company Commander saw Havildar Rama Nandan Singh lying severely wounded and still exposed to enemy fire he rushed out to the rescue. The officer was wounded in the thigh but managed to pull the Havildar to cover. The officer was later wounded in the stomach.

It was afterwards discovered that but for his *Gita* (Hindu holy book) in a breast-pocket, the Havildar might have been killed. A bullet was lodged in the book, having penetrated through to the last few pages.

In another section, Naik Lakhan Singh, aged 22, whose home is in Aligarh, United Provinces, commanding a section for the first time, was killed after his section had captured an enemy post. He was hit in the stomach by a sniper almost as soon as he came within range. He retired for a few minutes to tie his field dressing on the wound and then returned to lead his men. The section

was constantly under fire during a hundred yards bayonet charge.

His Subedar said "I told Lakhan to take care but he replied that he was going to get the position whatever happened. He was a great example to his men."

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INDIAN OPINION: Published at
61 Hadfield Street, Georgetown, Demerara, by JOSEPH N. BUTLER, for the
British Guiana East Indian Association
of Lot A Croal Street, Georgetown,
Demerara.