

# INDIAN OPINION

OFFICIAL WEEKLY ORGAN OF THE BRITISH GUIANA EAST INDIAN ASSOCIATION.

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ONE PENNY

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## -EDITORIAL-

# The Future

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The future outlook for the East Indians in British Guiana is still very gloomy and their progress seems to be strewn with almost unsurmountable obstacles. After over a hundred years of their arrival in this colony the majority of Indians are still resident on the sugar estates and depend almost solely on the proprietors of these properties for their existence. Their conditions of life on these estates have not improved to any appreciable extent and in some cases sanitary and other social conditions have worsened. It is appalling to find entire families consisting sometimes of nine persons living in a room of 144 square feet with mud floor where mother and father lie side by side with son and daughter-in-law and grown up children. There is complete absence of privacy of one from the other, which has led to young people learning about sex with its consequent bad effects.

The wages of these self same people have remained, relative to their nutritional value, the same, during the last 25 years leading to a serious condition of malnutrition almost

everywhere. The average person of forty-five years looks like one of sixty.

The work performed by these people remain as laborious and conditions of employment are as hard as ever. An average energetic young man of say twenty-five years of age after having worked for four days in a week of 12 to 14 hours per day is unable to carry on for the balance of the week because of over exhaustion in the four days of work. Very many cases are reported of workers fainting in the cane fields from over exhaustion and deaths have occurred shortly after.

Indian culture is fast losing ground; and the languages of the people are being gradually lost and rum drinking habits are being formed, the latter being encouraged so to speak by the sugar estate proprietors.

The time has now come when Indians will have to sit up and plan their entire future course to be followed in the colony if they are to preserve themselves as a self-respecting people. The authorities will also have to think carefully and plan for an over-all advancement of the people in British Guiana and give some special consideration to the welfare of East Indians who are lowest down the ladder.

Finally, we are satisfied that the East Indians of British Guiana do not want any special concession which is incompatible with the general development of British Guiana as a whole, but they do aspire to a general betterment of their lot in the colony.

We hope the authorities will do all that lie within their power to foster the future progress of Indians here before it is too late.

\* \* \*

## The General Election

We are reliably informed that our African friends are making a strong effort, headed by the Honourable H. N. Critchlow, Drs. S. I. T. Wills, and C. Deabow, and Messrs A. A. Thorne, J. Barbour James, S. N. Collins, John Carter and others, and assisted by the W. I. N. Party, to capture ten or twelve of the fourteen elected seats at the forthcoming general election. At the present time our African friends have no elected representatives in the Legislative

Council and they realize that the two nominated members cannot be relied upon to adequately represent their point of view at all times.

As is well known the majority of the Elected Seats in the Legislative Council is held by persons other than Africans and Indians, and so far as our community is concerned we welcome a fair number of elected African members in the Legislative Council. May we state clearly that we are not, and have never been, in favour of proportionate representation. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Africans will so organise themselves as to capture at least five of the fourteen seats

It is not realized by a large number of our African friends that it is their duty to apply to the electorate for support, and not depend on the Government, or the Governor, and the majority of the other races for representation in the Legislative and other Councils in the Colony. The sooner the Africans and Indians co-operate in political and administrative matters the better for the majority of the people as they represent thirty eight and forty two percent respectively of the population of British Guiana.

It is abundantly clear to us that if the Africans organise themselves properly they can capture the three elected seats in Georgetown, and the balance of seats in Demerara and Berbice without any great effort.

We wish our African leaders and friends success in their aspirations to take a greater share in the administration of this Crown Colony.

\* \* \*

## Extra-Territorial Rights

We wish to state emphatically that the Hon. A. M. Edun nominated member of the Legislative Council expressed his personal opinion and feeling in the matter of extra-territorial rights and the "humiliation" he suffered by merely having to ask permission to enter the U.S. Military reservation at Hyde Park. He did not in the slightest degree express the opinion of the Indian Community of this colony in this very important matter.

(Continued on page 2)

# Sugar Estate Exploitation In British Guiana

[Appeal from the Industrial Magistrate, Babinda].

(Continued from last Week)

Assuming, however, that he found all facts necessary for his decision, he must also have accepted the estimated cutting rate as sworn to by Dass and by the cane inspector. At a minimum of 3 tons per day each man would earn 31s. 6d. at the rate fixed. This is 5s. 6d. per day over the minimum rate set out in clause 19 (9) (a), but it does not exceed that minimum to the extent of being unreasonable. In finding No. 19, he does not say that he has taken into consideration national emergencies.

There was ample evidence before the Magistrate upon which he could find as he did. In addition, his inspection gave him a further opportunity of correctly deciding the matters in issue. He chose to accept the evidence of the ganger, the cane cutter and the cane inspector where it differed from that given by Rosin. We do not think that he was unreasonable in so doing as the questions involved were entirely ones of fact.

On the evidence, therefore, we are unable to come to the conclusion that the price fixed was not reasonable nor fair and right as between the parties.

We desire to make certain observations on the matters properly to be considered when applying sub-clauses 19 (9) (a) and 19 (24).

Firstly, as between the parties, it is proper to consider any offer that may have been made by the farmer to the cutters for the cutting of the particular cane in dispute.

Secondly, the amount of £1 6s. per day referred to in clause 19 (9) [a] is a minimum and should be regarded as such, but that does not mean that the rate paid to expert and competent cutters should be so reduced that they can only expect to earn the minimum rates, as compared with the rates paid to other less expert and less competent cutters in similar cuts. It is to the benefit of the farmer, in most cases, that the crop should be removed in the shortest possible time, and any incentive to do this would be removed in if cutting rates were fixed so that all cutters, irrespective of skill, would earn approximately the same amount per day. On the other hand, rates fixed for each cut must bear some proper relation to those fixed by the award, taking into consideration all circumstances relating to the crop.

Thirdly, the special circumstances referred to in clause 19 [2] must be circumstances relating to the crop. This sub-clause and sub-clause [9] [a] are not mutually exclusive; special circumstances under sub-clause [24] may arise from damage by flood, wind, grubs or vermin.

Fourthly, it is not part of the cane inspector's functions in fixing cutting rates to consider matters such as have been referred to as national emergencies. They are matters for consideration only by this Court in making the award or any variation thereof. In the result, the appeal is dismissed.

A. J. MANSFIELD J. Acting  
President.  
T. A. FERRY  
W. J. RIORDAN

## Editorial

Continued from Page 1

We are of the opinion that the comments were uncalled for on that occasion.

The President of the East Indian Association has informed us that he procured the necessary passes and that he was treated with respect courtesy and promptness throughout.

As a contrast to what the Hon. Edun said he suffered because he had to ask permission to enter the U.S. Military reservation at Hyde Park and was given a courteous and prompt permission to do so, let us state for the information of all those who are interested in this matter that British Security Authorities refused to permit the six Honourable Indian members of the Legislative Council and six other prominent Indians to enter the Colonial Bond Wharf when they made application to enter that part of the City when it was understood that the Hon. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru would land there. We ask openly of the Hon. A.M. Edun and the Local Government in which of the two incidents lie shame and humiliation. Surely not in the case of the U. S. Military authorities at Hyde Park. We would like Mr. Edun to ventilate his opinion publicly on this question.

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# The Need For Consumers' Cooperatives (Contd).

By C. B. JAGAN B.Sc., D.D.S.

Within the frame-work of capitalism, man to promote his welfare has adopted the cooperative movement so that (1). Consumers will buy only those things which have definite use value. They will not purchase fraudulent articles—patent medicines, adulterated foods etc. By so doing consumers will ultimately be able to take away control of production from those who today, under the capitalistic system, produce chiefly those goods which yield maximum profit rather than maximum group welfare. Consumers' Cooperatives will force production of "plenty" as against the capitalistic production of "plenty" as against the capitalistic production of "scarcity". Surplus coffee and oranges will not be dumped into the sea; excess pigs will not be slaughtered and buried so as to uphold the economic theory of value that prices will be higher as supply diminishes.

(2). Advertising that is useless will be greatly eliminated. In buying soap, a cooperative consumer will not want to support a model who has demonstrated her beautiful face in the soap advertisement. He will want to know whether he is buying the face or the soap. He will desire factual advertising such as, kind of fat used, percentage of fat used, what coloring matter if any, type of base used, etc. In buying a tooth paste or powder, he will not like to know that his meager income is helping to pay a movie star several thousand dollars a week of interest to him would be whether the product is accepted by the Bureau of Standards or the Dental Association. He will like to know what are the ingredients, how coarse the grit, etc.

(3). The real income of low income groups will be greatly increased. This is of great importance to labor organizations, which are always interested in collective bargaining through which better wages, shorter hours and better working conditions might be secured. These labor organizations usually associate an increase in wages with increased buying power. This however is not entirely true. A small increase in wages does not increase the real income of the individual if there is an equal or greater rise in prices. These organizations, therefore, should protect and augment the worker's small increase in wages by teaching them to become intelligent consumers against modern advertising and high pressure salesmanship and to form consumers' cooperatives whereby profits or dividends will be returned to them on basis of goods purchased. Suppose a sugar estate worker was receiving a prewar salary of \$3.00 per week. The labour unions may have been successful in securing for him

an additional 10-20% increase in wages during the war. It is doubtful however, whether this has really increased his standard of living or his buying power because of the rise in cost of consumed goods. Add to this disadvantage also the practice of black-marketing. Recently the control price of peas was 9-11 cents per pint whereas the sugar estate consumer had to pay about 17-18 cents. How can this small increase in salary compensate for the great loss in purchasing consumer goods? It can be achieved by labour organizations urging their members to augment their wages by forming consumer and producer cooperatives.

(4) Consumers will become better citizens. The very act of being a member in consumer's cooperatives is an education in business an appreciation of the value of group welfare as against rugged individual welfare; a beginning of real democracy, both political and economic.

One or more consumer cooperatives can be organized in every village and sugar estate. Fifty, one hundred or more members can get together and collect shares for membership of \$5.00 or \$10.00 per share. Those persons having more money to invest can buy several shares keeping in mind however, that no matter how many shares held they will have only one vote per member. These shares will yield a fixed rate of interest but will not share in dividends. A member will receive profits only on the basis of his purchases from the store. This will necessitate an efficient book-

keeping system with regular reports to members. There may be some persons who are willing to become members but do not have the necessary amount to purchase a share. This can be overcome by letting the dividends of those persons accumulate until the necessary amount is reached. Credit, if needed, can be obtained by cooperative, credit banks or unions.

True cooperation, whether consumer or producer, can enhance the welfare of the group. It embraces the principle of "live and let live". It leads to a fuller and freer life.

## MR. GHANDHI JI ASKS MERCY

Bombay, March 31. Mahatma Gandhi, Indian Nationalist leader, arrived in Bombay on a four or five days' visit to preside at meetings of the Mrs. Gandhi Memorial Fund for which Gandhi's followers collected \$375,000. On his arrival he issued a statement deploring the reported rejection by the King of Mercy Petitions on behalf of seven condemned men convicted of murder and arson in connection with disturbances in the Central Provinces following Mr. Gandhi's arrest in August 1942, known as the August Movement.

Mr. Gandhi said: "I am opposed to State hanging in every case but more so in cases like these. Whatever was done by people on and after August 8 was done under excitement. If these hangings were now carried out it would be cold-blooded calculated murder and worse because it would have been done ceremoniously and under so-called law." Mr. Gandhi added that the hangings might be given up if India unitedly raised her voice against impending sentences and such other contemplated sentences. Reuters.

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# The British Guiana East Indian Association

Sends greetings to Trinidad Indians  
for the Centenary Celebrations.

The following is the text which was read by the President Mr. Jenarine Singh.

My Dear,  
Fellow Indians in Trinidad, I am speaking to you as President of the British Guiana East Indian Association and on behalf of the Indian Community of British Guiana I take this opportunity of sending greetings to the Indians in Trinidad on the occasion of the celebrations of the centenary of the advent of Indians to Trinidad which is scheduled to take place on Wednesday of this week.

We wish to congratulate you for the many achievements and advancements made during a century of stay and the preservation of your identity, individuality and culture in spite of great odds. We hope that these celebrations will further influence and strengthen the innate desire to preserve yourselves as a race and increase the fire of nationalism which burns within your hearts.

We feel proud that you have produced Men of outstanding ability and integrity in every walk of life, men who can hold their own alongside those of other races who live among you, we are particularly proud to mention that among those who are taking part in these celebrations are few prominent members of our race from British Guiana.

East Indians in Trinidad and British Guiana constitute the largest number of our race in the Western Hemisphere. We hope it would be one of your centenary resolutions to make it possible for us to have regular conferences when we can discuss matters of mutual interest and plan together for the general welfare of Indians in these parts. I can assure you that we in this Colony will do every thing in our power to make this possible within the shortest possible time. I have the confidence and hope that you also have been thinking along similar lines and would undoubtedly do everything in your power also to bring about this achievement.

We pray that God's Blessings will continue to be showered upon you, to guide you to your legitimate aspirations and to further progress and prosperity and now I must conclude and wish you every success on your celebrations.

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## HINDUS RECOMMENDED HIGHER MARRIAGE AGE

PORT OF SPAIN, April 9 [By Airmail]  
—Recommending that the marriageable age of a Hindu male should be 18 and that of a female 16 instead of 16 and 12 years as at present, the Select Committee of the Legislative Council reporting on Hindu marriages ordinance is of opinion that increase in the ages would not conflict with Hindu law relating to marriages and would be in conformity with legislation now in force in India.

The Committee also recommended that a Hindu priest desirous of being licensed as a marriage officer must make application in writing to the Colonial Secretary in which he must state the name of the Hindu sect to which he belongs.

## INDIA

### The Wavell Plan

Viscount Wavell, Viceroy of India, did not return to Britain merely to have his head modeled by modernist Sculptor Jacob Epstein. From Indian sources in London, Time was informed last week that the British Government had drafted a new far-reaching administrative plan for India. The chief planner was Viscount Wavell, who brought with him to London Sir Francis Mudie, constitutional expert of the Indian Civil Service, and Rao Bahadur Maron, secretary of the Reforms Committee of the Indian Assembly.

Soon the Viceroy will return to New Delhi. There he will reportedly take three steps: 1) release all Indian political leaders from internment and otherwise restore civil liberties; 2) call a joint session of the Legislative Assembly and Council of State (upper house of the Indian Legislature) and announce London's new proposals for breaking the long-standing deadlocks between Indian nationalists and the British Raj; 3) meet with Indian political leaders of all parties to discuss the proposals.

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(To be Continued Next Week)

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