

**COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED  
CITIZENS**

**A  
REPORT  
ON THE  
REFERENDUM  
HELD  
IN GUYANA  
JULY 10th 1978**

**GEORGETOWN GUYANA SOUTH AMERICA**

## ORGANIZATIONS OPPOSED TO THE BILL

*Citizens' Committee*

Lawyers Committee

Architects

Committee of Medical  
Practitioners

Committee of Concerned  
Educators

University of Guyana  
Staff Association

Clerical & Commercial  
Workers Union

National Association of  
Agriculture, Commercial  
& Industrial Employees

*Observer*

Guyana Council of Churches

*Committee in Defence of  
Democracy*

Civil Liberties Action Council

Committee of Concerned Educators

Democratic Teachers' Movement

Guyana Agricultural Producers  
Association

Guyana Hindu D'Harmic Sabha

Guyana Peace Council

Liberator Party

Organization of Working People

People's Democratic Movement

People's Progressive Party

Progressive Youth Organization

Rice Producers' Association

United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman

Working People Alliance

Women's Progressive Organization

# FOREWORD

The purpose of this report is to give an account of the Referendum which took place in Guyana on July 10th, 1978. Rather than concentrate solely on the statistical results, which in themselves are remarkable in comparison with the official claims, we have preferred to present a picture of the complete Referendum exercise from its inception. In this manner the systematic and extensive nature of the operation can be appreciated.

The Guyanese people were asked the following question: "Do you approve of the Constitutional (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 which was passed by the National Assembly on April 10th, 1978 and published in the *Official Gazette* of May 13th, 1978?"

After a campaign in which there were repeated allegations of violations of the legal norms governing voting procedures; in which the symbols assigned to the positions were a house for the YES vote and mouse for the NO vote; in which opinion opposed to the Bill was repeatedly denied access to the national media; and which ended with unanimous declaration of a boycott by all opposition forces, an independent and plausible calculation of the vote estimated a maximum possible turn-out of 14.01%. The official result claimed a turn-out of 71.45%, of which 97.7% voted in favour of the proposal.

One week after the Referendum on Monday, July 17th, the Government utilized the change "approved" by the Referendum to amend Article 82 of the Constitution and prolong the life of Parliament beyond its previous constitutional limit, thus avoiding the need for elections.

COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED CITIZENS  
Georgetown, Guyana  
South America

September 1978

The Citizens' Committee took the decision to mount an independent monitoring of the voting process on Referendum Day. The manner in which the monitoring was organised was as follows:

Each group of the Citizens' Committee identified relatives, colleagues, acquaintances, fellow church members and others whose homes enjoyed an unrestricted view of a polling station. Having identified the persons, an approach was made to ascertain their willingness to participate in the monitoring exercise. This having been confirmed, the persons to be involved were issued with a sheet of simple instructions and guidelines of what to look for and a verbal explanation reinforced the contents of the sheets. Other stations were monitored from churches, schools, clubs, and buildings by persons whose homes were not suitable bases for monitoring but who expressed willingness to participate.

The same sheet which contained the instructions was used to record irregularities and subsequently was returned to the person who had organised that monitoring unit and then back to the Citizens' Committee for analysis. Each sheet was numbered to allow for further verification.

The persons who participated in the monitoring exercise were drawn from all walks of life; they included farmers, students, businessmen, clergymen, professionals, housewives, and retired persons. Utilising people who lived in the building from which the monitoring was carried out had the additional advantage that movement in and out of the building was reduced, thus preserving the unobtrusive character of the monitoring exercise.

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# 1. THE BILL

## **Purpose of the Referendum**

On April 1st, 1978, Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 was introduced in Parliament with a proposal to change Article 73 of the Constitution. In the Explanatory Memorandum to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 the Prime Minister, L.F.S. Burnham, summarized the proposed change:

*Under Article 73 of the Constitution the procedures for amending certain provisions of the Constitution include the holding of a referendum. This Bill seeks to amend that Article so as to remove the requirement for holding a referendum and to enable provisions of that kind to be amended by a Bill which has been supported by not less than two-thirds of all elected members of the National Assembly. After the Constitution has been so amended, it will be competent for Parliament to repeal the existing Constitution and to replace it by another without the necessity of a referendum.*

Put more simply the Bill sought to hold a referendum which would abolish the requirement for any further referendum to be held before changes in the entrenched provisions of the Constitution could be made. The power to make such changes would be vested in a two-thirds majority of Parliament which the present government already enjoys.

## **Explanation of the Bill**

The entrenched provisions of the Constitution govern such matters as the State and its



Harry! Is wha he sellin' dis time? Tell he we nah buyin' nuffin' black market!



Is de "BILL" Murriel

**BILL!**  
we na wahn no mo bill, we gat plenty aready.

Territories, the Exercise of the President's Powers, the Composition, Sessions and Dissolution of Parliament, and the Electoral System.

No indication was given by the government of which clauses it wished to change. No pressing issues had arisen over any of these matters save the Dissolution of Parliament (Art. 82). The life of the present Parliament should have ended on July 25th, followed by elections not later than October 25th.

That the interests of the Government centred on this clause was confirmed when the proposal to resolve the present Parliament into a Constituent Assembly was introduced into the Referendum campaign at a later stage. One week after the Referendum, Article 82 was changed and the life of Parliament prolonged.

**Bill Rushed  
through  
Parliament**

The Bill was first published on April 1st, had its First Reading on April 3rd, and was passed in Parliament on April 10th. Thus there was little understanding and no discussion of the Bill before its passage through Parliament. A later procedural Bill provided that the Referendum should be held on the 10th of July 1978 on the basis of the current Electoral Roll.

Introduced during a time of total breakdown of the electricity and water services, the Bill became known as the 'Black-out' Bill. People were distracted from the implications of what was happening in Parliament by the need to cope with shortages and the lack of essential services.



## 2.

# ADMINISTRATION OF THE REFERENDUM

### Elections Commission

In spite of the provisions of Article 69(1) of the Constitution of Guyana, which provided that an independent Elections Commission should "exercise general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of elections", legislation passed in 1967 and 1968 effectively placed such control in the Minister of Home Affairs. A resident and overseas voters list was compiled in 1968, originally under the guise of a National Registration exercise, without any reference to the Elections Commission, to the disquiet of its Chairman, who wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs on the 30th of October, 1967 that "doubts have arisen whether for all practical purposes the Commission shall be enabled to exercise that supervision over the registration of electors as is contemplated by the Constitution".

Elections were held in 1968 and 1973 on the basis of this list and were accompanied by widespread allegations of fraud and rigging.

#### *Irregularities*

*Specific irregularities* concerning the registration of voters and the preparation of the lists included:

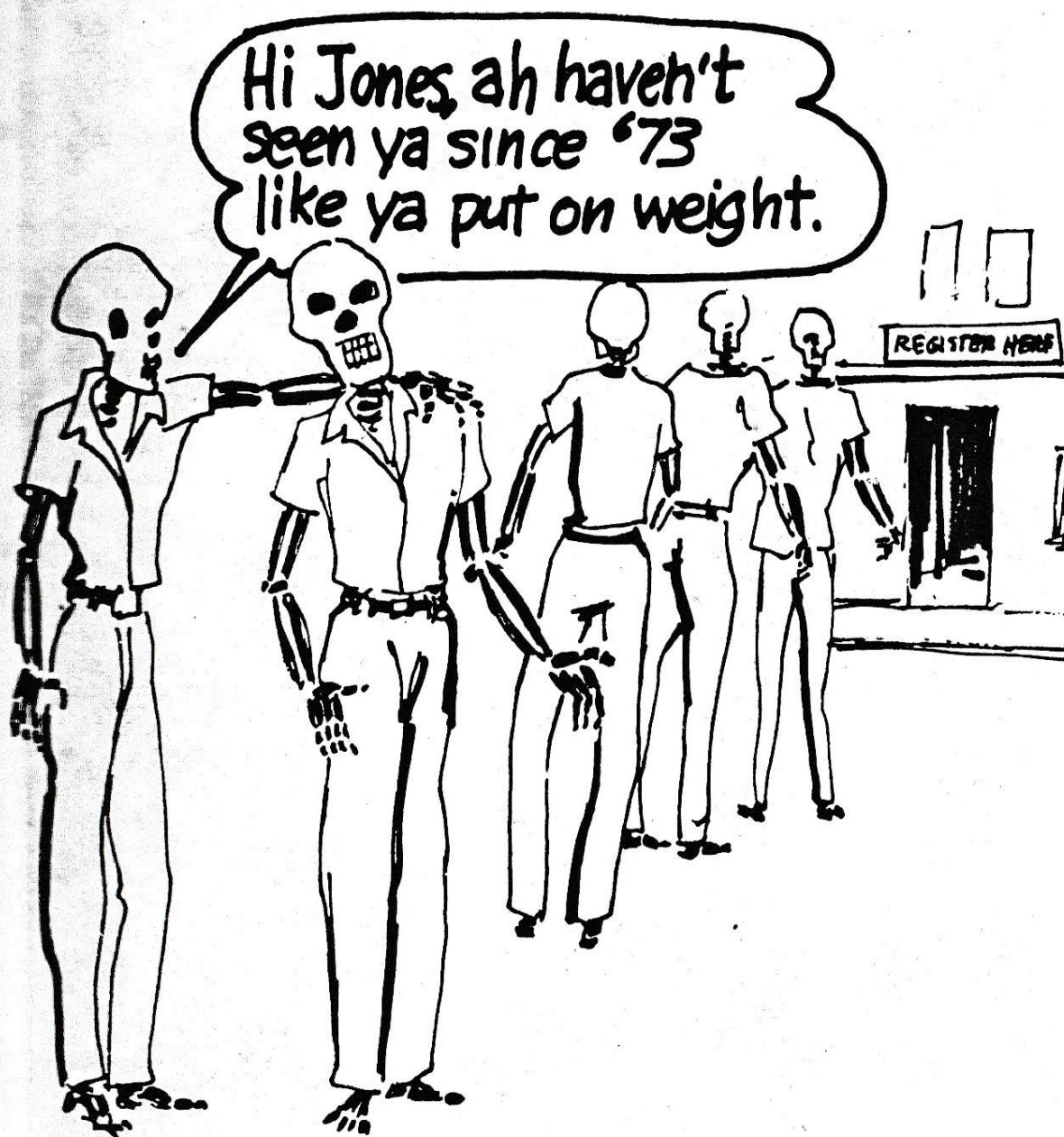
#### *Dead Persons*

The official lists contained the names of many dead people. One hundred and ninety-five names on the list from No. 67 Village Corentyne were of persons who had died.

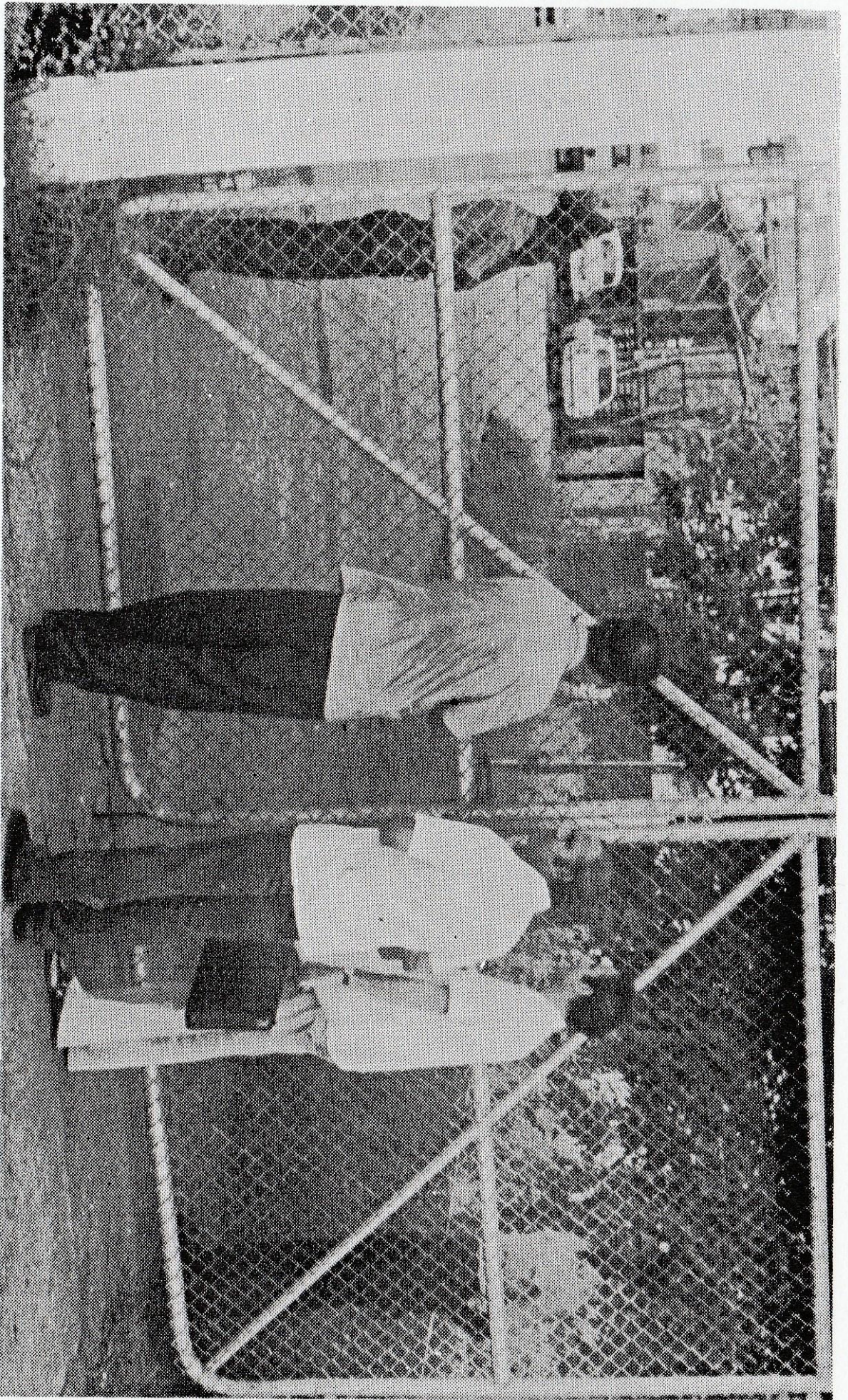
Similarly, forty-four persons from Villages 65 and 66 appeared on the list although they had been dead for some time. A number of these names had been challenged in the 1973 election voters list.

**Emigrants**

On the voters list for Village No. 67, 156 persons were resident overseas, similarly 94 persons were resident abroad from Villages No. 65 and 66. Finally, 156 persons on the No. 67 Village list were fictitious.



**REGISTRATION OF VOTERS**



*A delegation from Committee in Defence of Democracy seeks a meeting, in vain, with the Chief Election Officer.*  
*DAVID WEGMAAS, SURESH KUMAR, MALCOLM RODRIGUES*

### **Objections**

Large numbers of persons, all of whom had Portuguese or Indian names, received Notices of the hearing of Objections to their names on the electoral list after the date for hearing the Objections had passed. Postmarks revealed that the notices had been posted on the day of the hearing. The Commissioner of Registration refused to state who had lodged these Objections when requested by a lawyer for some of the aggrieved electors, and it was widely believed that these "objections" were invented, thus revealing the complete control by the ruling party of the registration process.

### **Scrutiny**

Voters lists were available for scrutiny for only a few days. During much of this time the officers in charge of the Districts were not on duty. The legal requirements pertaining to the publishing of lists were not adhered to, and it was extremely difficult to get hold of lists, even though representatives of the ruling party had lists in their possession.

### **Meeting refused**

A formal request from the Committee in Defence of Democracy for a meeting with the Chief Elections Officer to discuss urgent procedural matters relating to registration was refused. There was no procedure for objecting overseas to lists of overseas voters. Accordingly, if someone in London or New York wanted to object to a name on the list there, they had to write and appoint someone in Guyana to lodge an objection in Guyana on their behalf. They also had to appoint that person to appear at the hearing of the objection on their behalf and presumably to furnish that person with all the relevant evidence. The time limit for this was two weeks. In any

event, lists were not displayed overseas but had to be inspected at the embassies. It would be a great surprise if any objections were in fact lodged to the overseas list in view of these impossible conditions.

### Proxy Votes

The procedures for proxy voting are set out in Articles 30, 31 and 32 of the *Representation of the Peoples Act*. As in most countries, those entitled to vote by proxy are restricted by law to the Police Force, the Special Service Unit, rural constables, election officers and staff, Transport and Harbours personnel manning vessels, the disabled, and the blind. Lists of proxies must be available for inspection at least four days before polling day. No person may vote by proxy for more than two persons and the proxy votes must be cast at the same time and place where the voter casts his own vote.

### *Violations*

All of these conditions were violated in the Referendum. Lists were not available for public scrutiny. Statistically, it is evident that the turn-out claimed by the government on polling day could only have been achieved by massive abuse of proxy voting. The turn-out of persons estimated by monitors of the Citizens' Committee, allowing every possible benefit of doubt, could not have exceeded 15%. If we supposed everyone who voted also cast two proxy votes (the legal maximum), this still does not exceed a 45% turn-out; furthermore they would have been nullified by the comprehensive violations of procedures and eligibility qualifications.

### **Postal Voters**

The procedures for postal voters suffered similar violations as those for proxies. No list of postal voters was made public.

### **Overseas Voters**

As with the previous two categories, the non-resident category of voters is a source of considerable dissatisfaction.

### **Padded Lists**

The *Opinion Research Centre*, a reputable institution of Albany Buildings, 47 Victoria Street, London, SW 1, undertook a survey in 1968 to check the accuracy of the voting registers in the United Kingdom. With a possible sampling error of 3% the conclusion of the survey was that no more than 15% of the entries on the registers were correct. The remaining were either completely fictitious or unqualified. The same register was updated and utilized for the 1973 General Elections and for the Referendum.

Since the United Kingdom register alone contained over 43,100 names, the impact of this number of voters in an election in Guyana is considerable.

### **Legal Action**

A writ has been filed in the High Court by three representatives of opposition parties challenging the constitutionality of the voters lists and asking for an order declaring them to be invalid. Similarly, the provisions dealing with the overseas voters list have been challenged as unconstitutional. What is beyond contention is the violation of the spirit of the Constitution which says that an elector must be a citizen of Guyana who is domiciled here.

No test was administered abroad to ascertain domicile. In fact, the report of the Opinion Research Centre shows that there were Jamaicans, Trinidadians, and Barbadians on the list.

REGARDIN' DIS OVERSEAS VOTE,  
COMRADE - ALTHOUGH' YUH BEEN  
AWAY FROM GEORGETOWN ('DATS  
OUR CAPITAL) IN GUYANA (YES,  
IT'S STILL IN SOUTH AMERICA)  
FOR A MERE SEVENTEEN YEARS..



..WE KNOW YOU STILL PASSION-  
ATELY PATRIOTIC, AN' SO....

# THE MAGIC TRICK

\* Triple Voting  
Dead Voters  
Paddded Voters List  
Proxy Votes. Overseas Votes

\*To know what  
he is saying  
hold in front  
of mirror.







*Referendum demonstration outside Parliament Building.*

### 3.

## CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN

#### Political Parties Unite

When the apparent intent of the Bill became clear, generalized opposition to the Bill mounted. All Opposition political parties united (with the exception of the United Force) to form the Committee in Defence of Democracy (CDD).

The campaign against the Bill united a wide spectrum of political views and ideology on a common platform. Membership of the CDD included the:

- Peoples' Progressive Party
- Liberator Party
- Working Peoples' Alliance
- Peoples' Democratic Movement
- Guyana Agricultural Workers' Union
- Civil Liberties Action Council
- Guyana Peace Council
- Organisation of Working People

#### Professional and Civic Bodies

A civic organization known as the Concerned Citizens' Committee was formed to coordinate the efforts of a number of non-party groups opposed to the Bill.

Composition of the Citizens' Committee included the:

- Lawyers' Committee
- Architects' Committee
- Committee of Medical Practitioners
- Committee of Concerned Educators
- University of Guyana Staff Association
- Clerical and Commercial Workers Union

– National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees

The Guyana Council of Churches was represented by an Observer on the Committee.

The professional bodies independently issued statements calling for the withdrawal of the Bill and nominated representatives to the Committee of Concerned Citizens.



## **Opposition from Lawyers**

Opposition to the substance of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill was summarized in a Memorandum, produced by the Lawyers Committee, which called for the withdrawal of the Bill. The summarized arguments centred on the following points:

1. The Bill seeks to deprive the people of Guyana of their rights to approve or disapprove any new Constitution in the future.
2. The requirement of the direct approval of the people to substantial alteration is one of the backbones of a democratic Constitution.
3. In effect, the Bill is an attempt to get the electorate to place a blank cheque on the national future in the hands of a spent parliament.

## **Widespread Opposition**

With varying degrees of emphasis and nuance the fears expressed in this Memorandum were reiterated by a wide variety of professional, confessional, political, and social organizations. (See Appendix 2 for complete list of dissenting bodies.) A common theme of many protests was phrased in the Guyana Council of Churches' statement in the following manner:

The Bill places too much power in the hands of any parliament and too great a temptation for this, or future parliaments, to assume more power than is just.

## **Catholic Newspaper 'Miniaturised'**

The week before the Referendum the *Catholic Standard*, a weekly newspaper and outspoken critic of the Bill, was refused its normal facility for printing by the state-owned



*'KILL THE BILL' was the theme of the early attempts to stop the Referendum from taking place.*

publishing company. Since government controls the importation of newsprint the newspaper has subsequently been reduced to appearing through a photo-stenciled form of production.

### **Legal Action**

The Chairman of the Liberator Party, Dr. Makepeace Richmond, has filed a writ against the *Chronicle*, claiming that its refusal to accept advertisements of opposition political meetings is a violation of the Constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.

### **VIOLENCE**

**May 17th**

*National Poet Assaulted* A peaceful picket exercise outside of the Parliament Buildings was violently attacked by thugs. Identification of individuals and vehicles leaves no doubt that the violence was organized by the ruling party. The leader of the Liberator Party, Dr. Kumar, and the National Poet, Martin Carter, were singled out for particularly severe beatings.

*Public Meeting Broken Up* Later the same afternoon a meeting of the Committee in Defence of Democracy (CDD) was violently broken up by stick-wielding thugs transported in government-owned vehicles. Several persons were hospitalized.

**June 24th**

*Students Flogged* Four university students studying late in the evening on campus were forced into a vehicle and taken to the sea-wall. After being individually flogged with a webbed belt before a crowd of some thirty people, they were forced to paint pro-government slogans on the sea-wall for



*Guyana Council of Churches march for peace led by Chairman of the GCC, Bishop Randolph George.*

over an hour. No arrests were made relating to any of these incidents.

**Referendum  
Symbols**

*House and Mouse* The government unilaterally assigned the symbols of a house to the YES vote and a mouse to the NO vote. The symbol of the mouse was repudiated by opposition groups as intimidatory, prejudicial, and inimical to the fair and impartial conduct of the Referendum.

**Peace  
March**

A March for Peace, followed by a Service for Peace in the Anglican Cathedral, was organised by the Guyana Council of Churches to draw attention to the dangers of violence during the Referendum campaign.





## 4. ACTS OF REPRESSION

### **State- controlled Media**

It should be noted that in Guyana the two national daily newspapers (one morning and one evening) are state-owned and government-controlled. An Opposition party newspaper, the *Mirror*, is published five times per week, as an evening and Sunday newspaper. Of the two radio stations, the *Guyana Broadcasting Service* (GBS), is state-owned, and the other, *Radio Demerara*, is private and foreign-owned.

### **Black-out of Opposition Views**

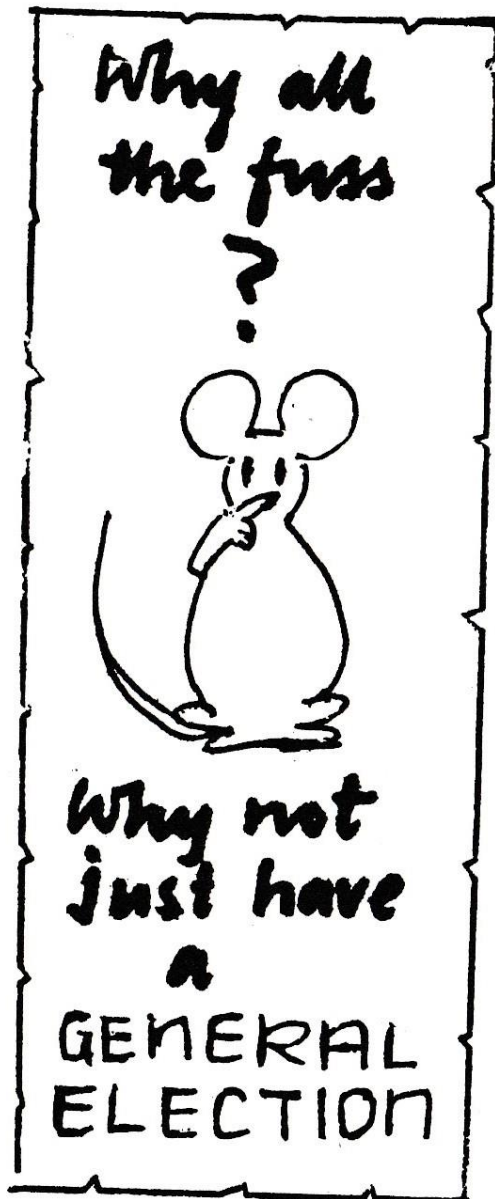
At no time during the Referendum campaign was any time or space made available to groups opposed to the referendum. The opposition viewpoint was systematically distorted. Both the Guyana Council of Churches and the Lawyers' Committee were refused the facility of publishing statements as paid advertisements, after their press releases had been ignored by the national press. The Prime Minister justified this action on the grounds that 'paid advertisements were inconsistent with socialism as they gave the wealthier groups in society an advantage the poorer ones do not enjoy'.

### **Radio Discussion Refused**

Similarly the weekly 'Catholic Broadcast', a radio programme of the Catholic Church, because it had scheduled a discussion of the Referendum, was refused on Sunday, May 21st, by Radio Demerara on the excuse that the 'Prime Minister announced that 'paid advertisements will not be allowed in connection with this matter but that provision will be made in due course for full discussion by all

sections of the radio and in the press'. The 'due course' never arrived.

While maintaining a total censorship of opposition opinions, the government allowed its spokesmen to freely ridicule and distort these views.



## 5. BOYCOTT

After a request for a meeting by the Concerned Citizens' Committee and the Committee in Defence of Democracy (CDD) with the Minister of Home Affairs was not granted, a letter was sent to the Minister setting out minimum demands considered essential for a free and fair Referendum. These were:

1. Final counting must be done in the divisions where votes are cast.
2. Para-military forces must not be given access to ballot boxes before, during or after voting.
3. Agents appointed by Opposition parties must be permitted to:
  - examine the ballot boxes prior to voting
  - be present throughout voting
  - stay with the boxes from closure until completion of counting.
4. The boxes must be properly sealed in the presence of agents after a preliminary count.
5. Lists of proxy and postal voters must be available for inspection by recognised Opposition parties at least a week before polling day.
6. Counting must be continuous and done in the presence of the above-mentioned agents.
7. The announcement of results must be

**MINIMUM  
DEMANDS**

made as soon as they become available and be continuous.

8. A Report on the Referendum must be published within a reasonable time showing the numbers of postal, proxy and overseas votes separately.

The Minister did not even reply to this letter from all the Opposition groups despite reminders.

*Further considerations were given by the CDD to the fact that*

1. Voters have no right of appeal to the Courts after this Referendum.

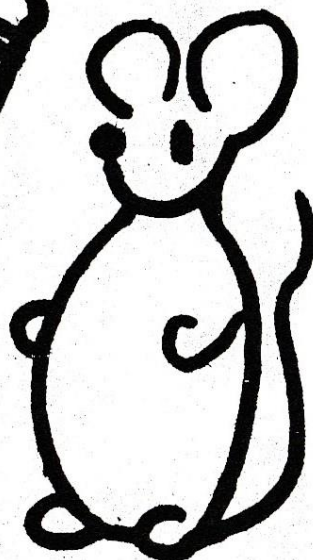
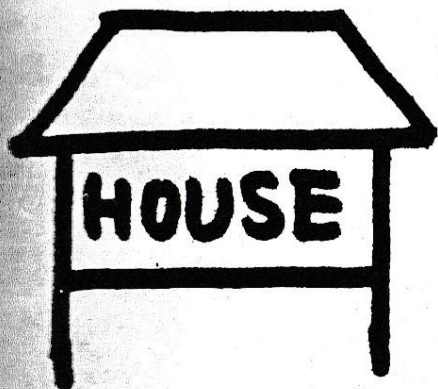
2. Choosing of symbols unfair and discriminatory. "The mouse is a symbol that the average human being finds offensive."

3. Government refused to discuss with Opposition the inviting of a team of observers from the Caribbean to witness the Referendum.

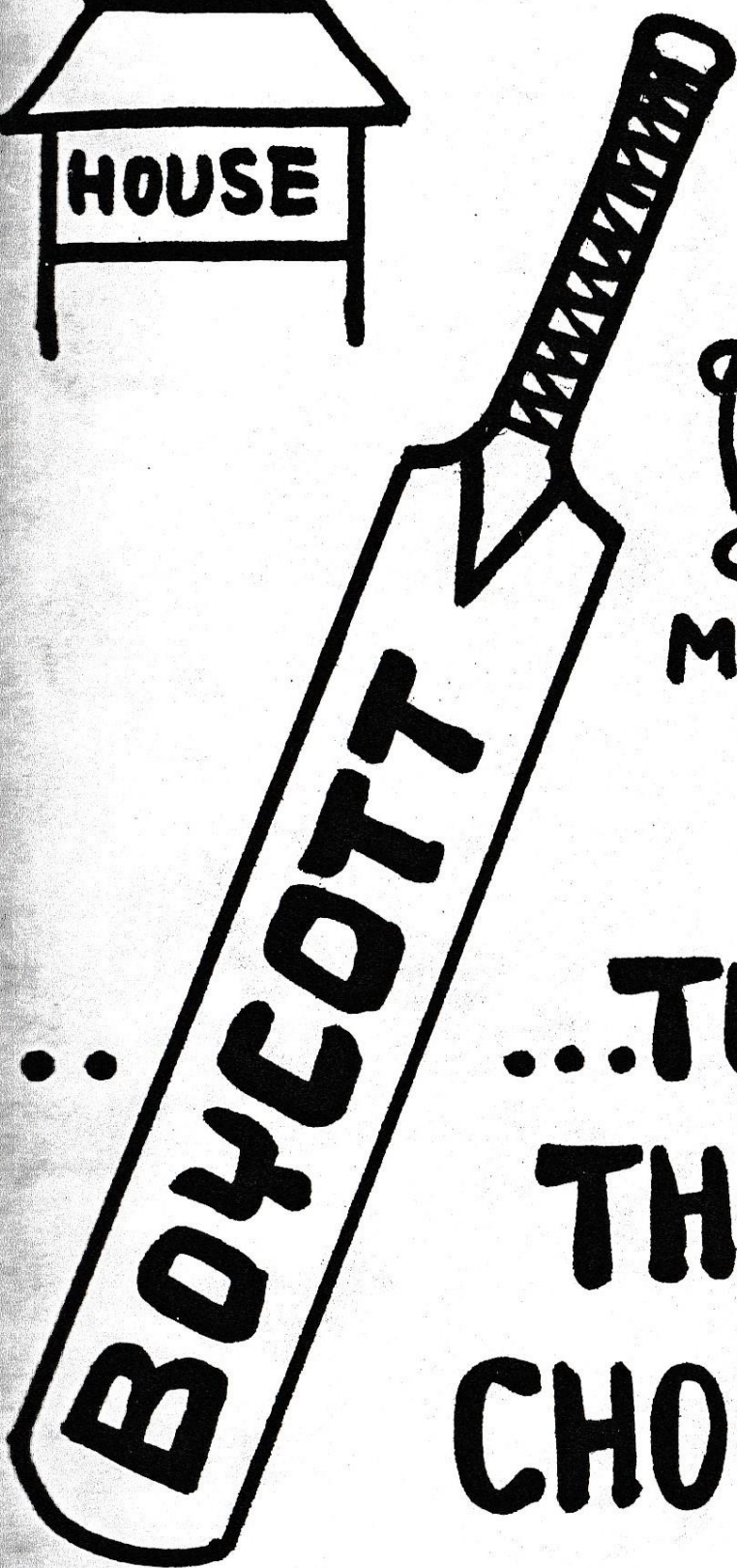
4. Many public employees, including soldiers, police, and the Guyana Defence Force, were forced to sign proxies, but not allowed to name the person who should vote for them.

**Total  
Boycott**

Given the unwillingness of the Minister to guarantee these minimum demands, both the Committee of Concerned Citizens and the Committee in Defence of Democracy advised the Guyanese people to boycott the Referendum. The United Force, the only Opposition political party outside of the CDD, also called for a boycott.



MOUSE



...THE  
THIRD  
CHOICE



*The decision to Boycott was adopted by all political and civic groups.*

**PART II**  
**RESULTS**  
**OF THE REFERENDUM**



# MONITORING

## 6. BY THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE

### No International Observers

In the absence of minimal assurances concerning the fairness and legality of the Referendum exercise, and given the failure of International Observers who had been requested to come, the Citizens' Committee organized an external monitoring exercise of polling stations. In view of the recent legislation removing the right to appeal against Referendum results, such an exercise became especially necessary.

### Polling Stations Unknown

Systematic organization of a monitoring system was obstructed by the shortness of time and the lack of information on the numbers and addresses of polling stations. The number and location of polling stations were not made public until two days before Referendum Day, thus posing serious difficulties for placing external Monitors and for the Opposition parties to name polling agents.

### Limitation of Monitoring System

Coverage of polling stations was heavily concentrated in Greater Georgetown and to a lesser extent, on the East Coast and East Bank, Demerara. Beyond these areas, with the exception of two Corentyne Districts and isolated observations from the Linden area, the Citizens' Committee was unable to organize monitoring of polls. Thus the Districts monitored by the Citizens' Committee were disproportionately urban and included a dispropor-

tionately large number of areas of traditional support for the ruling party.

### Voting Sample

The thirty-eight polling Districts may be divided in terms of their traditional voting patterns into 14 as areas of support for the ruling party (PNC) and 21 as strongholds of the different Opposition parties. However, the sample of Districts monitored by the Citizens' Committee contained nine PNC and three Opposition areas. In the compilation of the statistical summary of the monitoring process, six areas of traditional PPP support monitored



by the PPP were included to give a more balanced picture of the national voting pattern. This procedure is justified by the fact that the Districts selected were monitored 100% internally by PPP polling agents or by an almost 100% external monitoring. This inclusion still leaves the sample weighted in favour of the PNC, a contention which is borne out by the official results which claim a turn-out of the electorate in 8 of the 13 Districts monitored which is higher than the national average.

### **Open Irregularities**

The limitations of organization of the monitoring exercise were offset by the unexpectedly blatant and crude fashion with which irregularities were committed. Little or no attempt was made to conceal such activities which facilitated the monitor's task considerably. Particularly after 5 p.m., a generalized panic appears to have seized the ruling party, triggering off intensive re-cycling of voters.

Extract from REF: C10, 100 - E...  
A QUESTION OF...

## 7. THE ELECTORATE

### Population 18 Years

A population projection exercise undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (U.N.D.P.) office in Guyana projected a total population for 1975 of 819,522 of which 495,061 constituted the 15-85+ age group. This age group in 1978 would constitute the number of Guyanese over 18 years and thus eligible to vote. If one, therefore, assumes no deaths and no migration, the figure 495,601 constitutes the total number of Guyanese resident and eligible to vote in 1978. If to this figure is added the 40,274 officially given as the number of registered overseas voters, the total possible electorate in 1978 would be 535,335.

### Inflated Electorate

The official figure for registered voters is given for the Referendum purposes as 609,522. This discrepancy of 74,187 is very strong support for the basic contention of the Opposition groups that in 1967 with a view to rigging future elections, the Government, with the guidance of Shoup Registration Systems International, an American organization which later "disappeared", created a new electoral list which contained massive numbers of totally fictitious voters, both in Guyana and overseas, who would "vote" by proxy in future elections. The proxy regulations were dramatically widened in 1968. It would seem, then, that there have been about 75,000 names on the electoral list since 1967 representing non-existing voters. That list governed the elections in 1968 and 1973 and the 1978

Referendum. This is a further refinement of the "dead soul" idea, a tried tool in corrupt elections.

It should be pointed out that the latest official government figure for the total population in 1975 is 780,000. If the above calculation were made based on this figure rather than the U.N.D.P. figure of 819,522 the total electorate in 1978 would be correspondingly lower and the fictitious vote even higher.

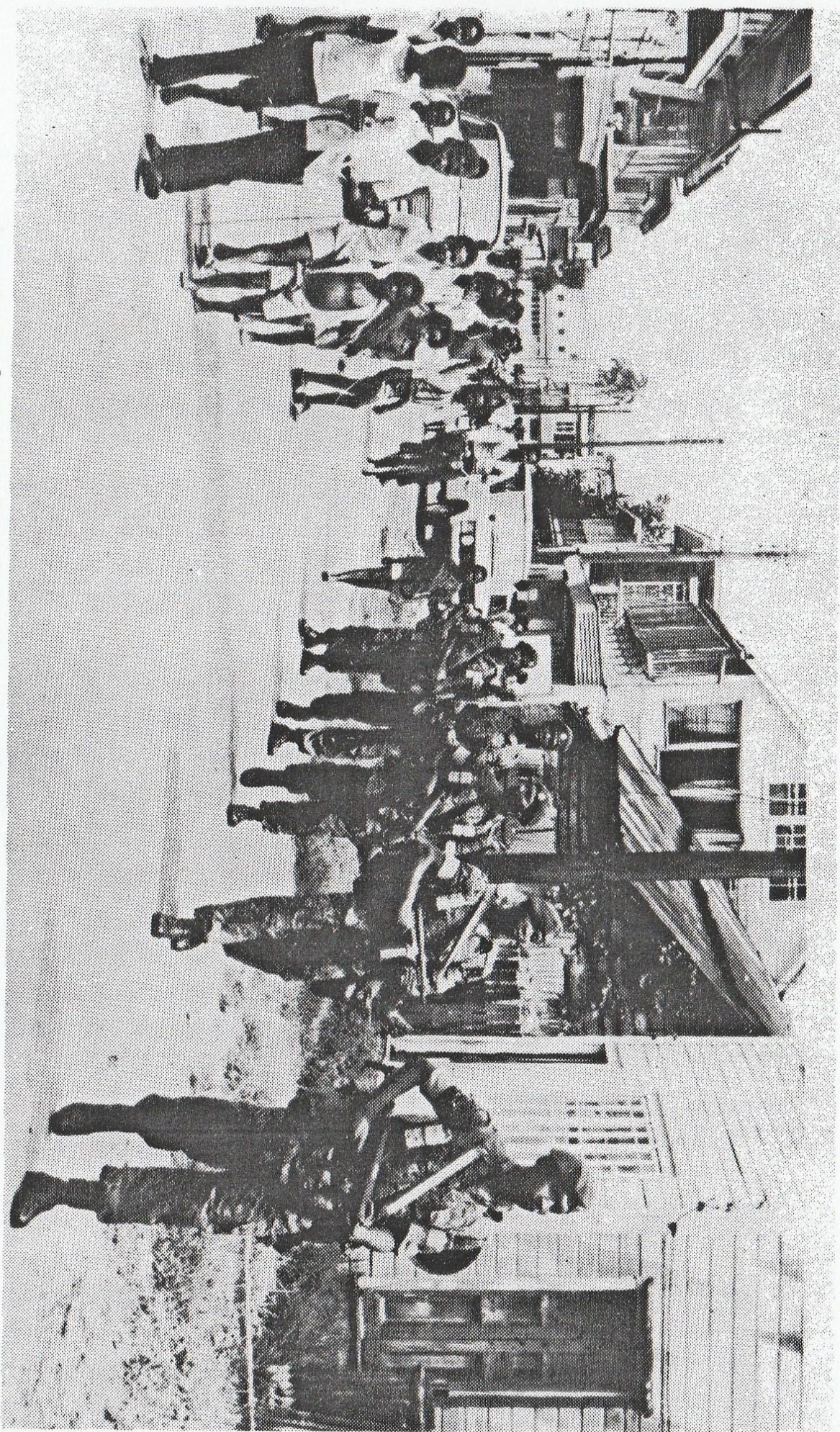
The pattern of racial voting may therefore have been reversed (the East Indians are now a clear majority of the population) by the simple expedient of inverting at least 75,000 voters.

**Increased  
Number of  
Polling  
Stations**

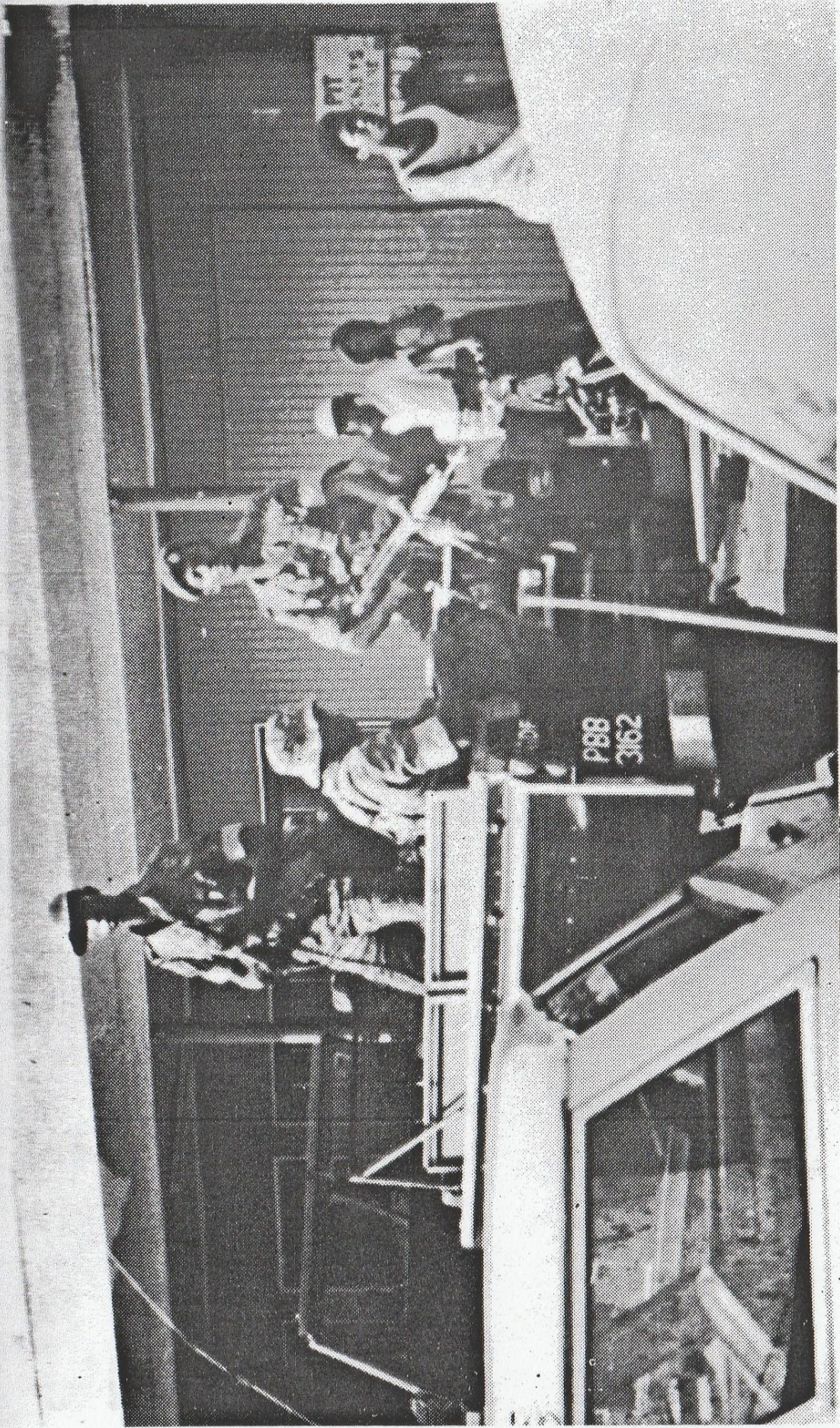
The country was divided into 38 Electoral Districts, which in turn were sub-divided into 1,170 polling divisions. One hundred and seven of these Districts, or polling stations, were located in the private residences, in many cases, of ruling party supporters. The Opposition PPP claimed to have located a total of no more than 829 polling stations. In previous elections no more than 835 polling divisions were used.

**Army  
Presence**

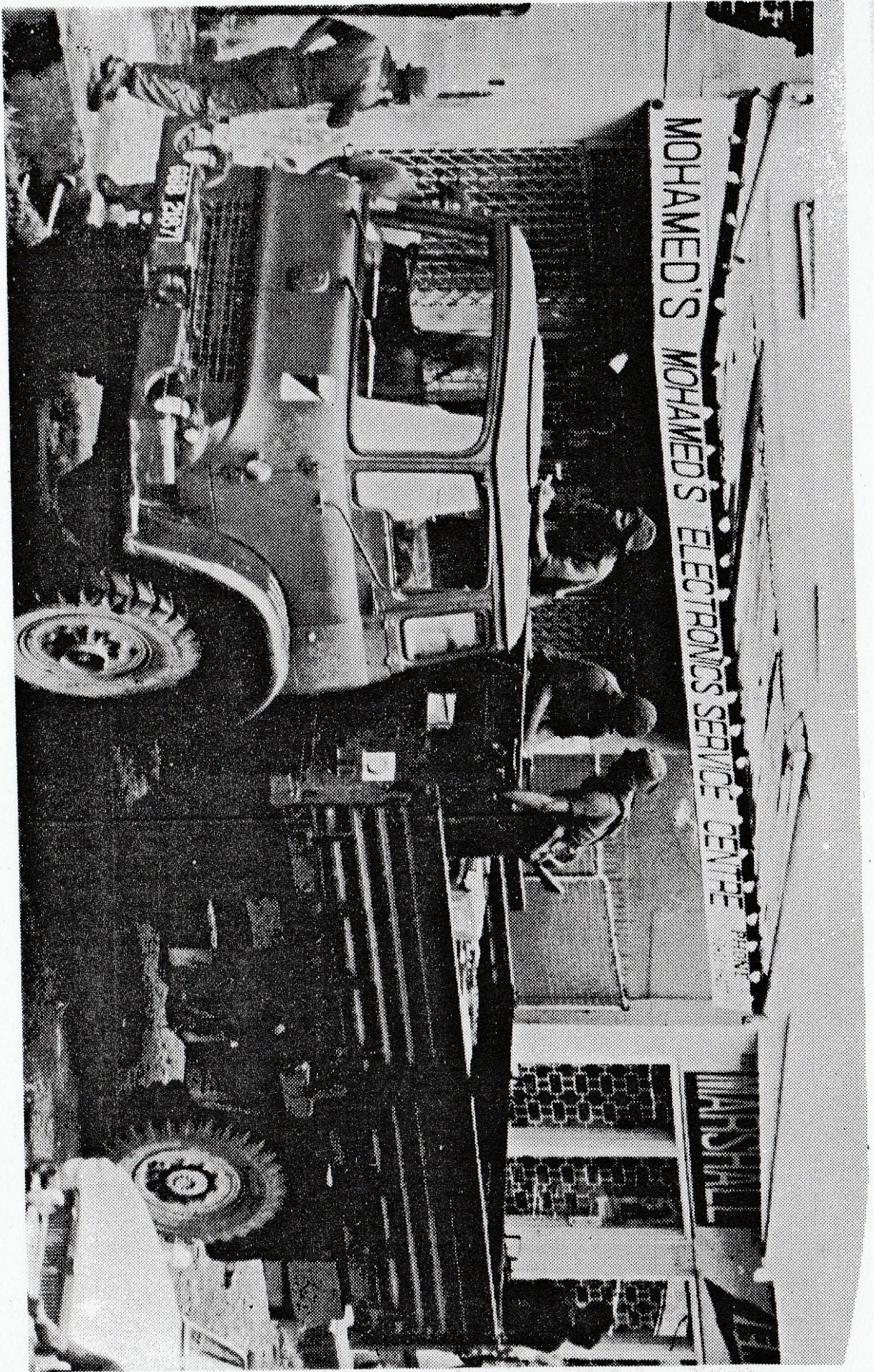
Referendum Day was characterized by relatively little movement in Georgetown. Commercial activity was lower than usual and few people were on the streets. The absence of the usual throng of shoppers and business people served to underline the heavy military presence. Armed patrols in full battle dress moved about the city in single file as if in a theatre of war.



*Armed patrols moving through the streets of Georgetown during Referendum day.*



*Army vehicles with heavily armed soldiers.*



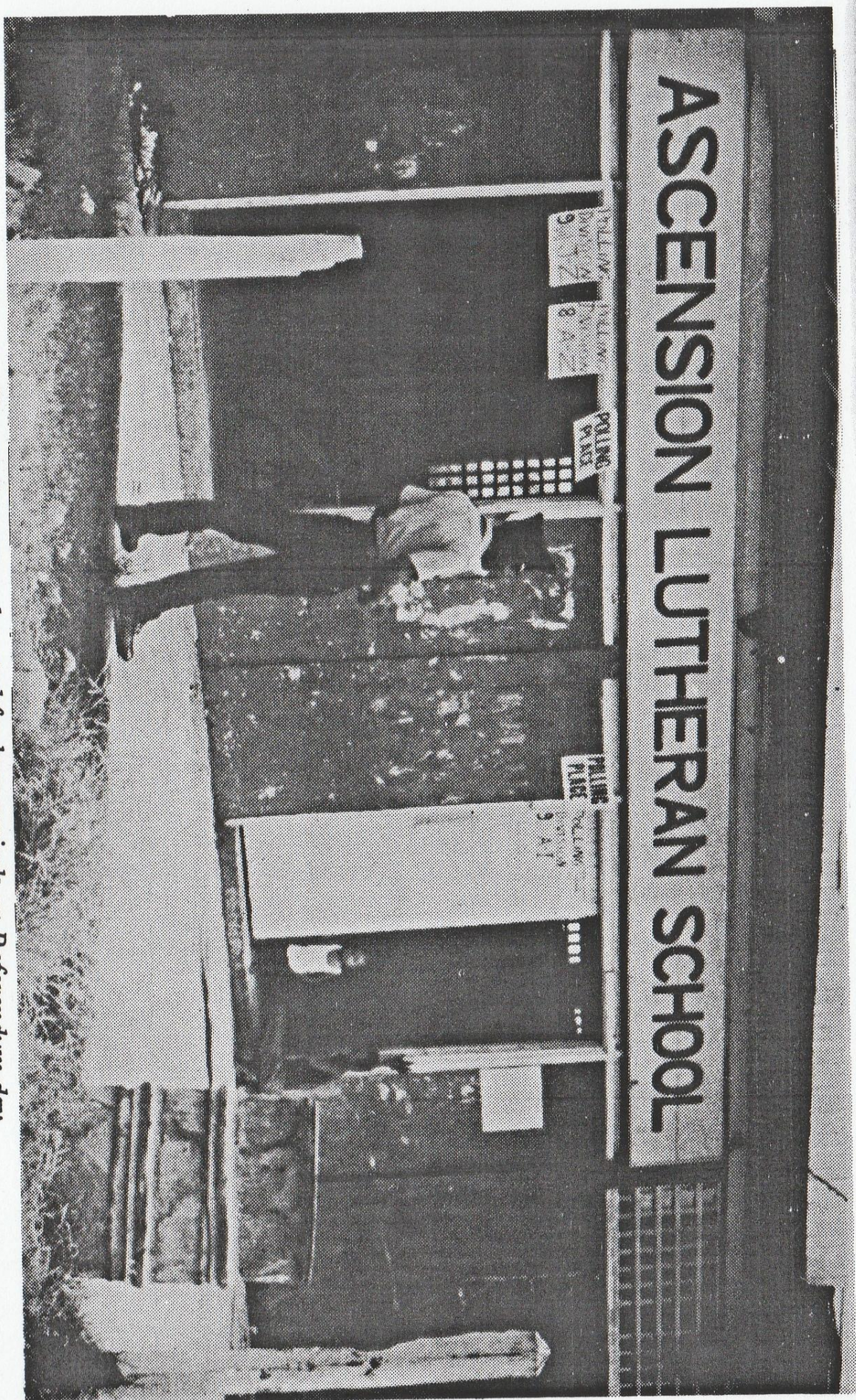


Several incidents of violence were reported, arising from attempts by Opposition party politicians to photograph vehicles used to recycle voters. The Chairman of the Liberator Party, Dr. Makepeace Richmond, and Cyril Belgrave, M.P., were involved in these incidents, the latter needing hospital treatment following a beating from thugs.

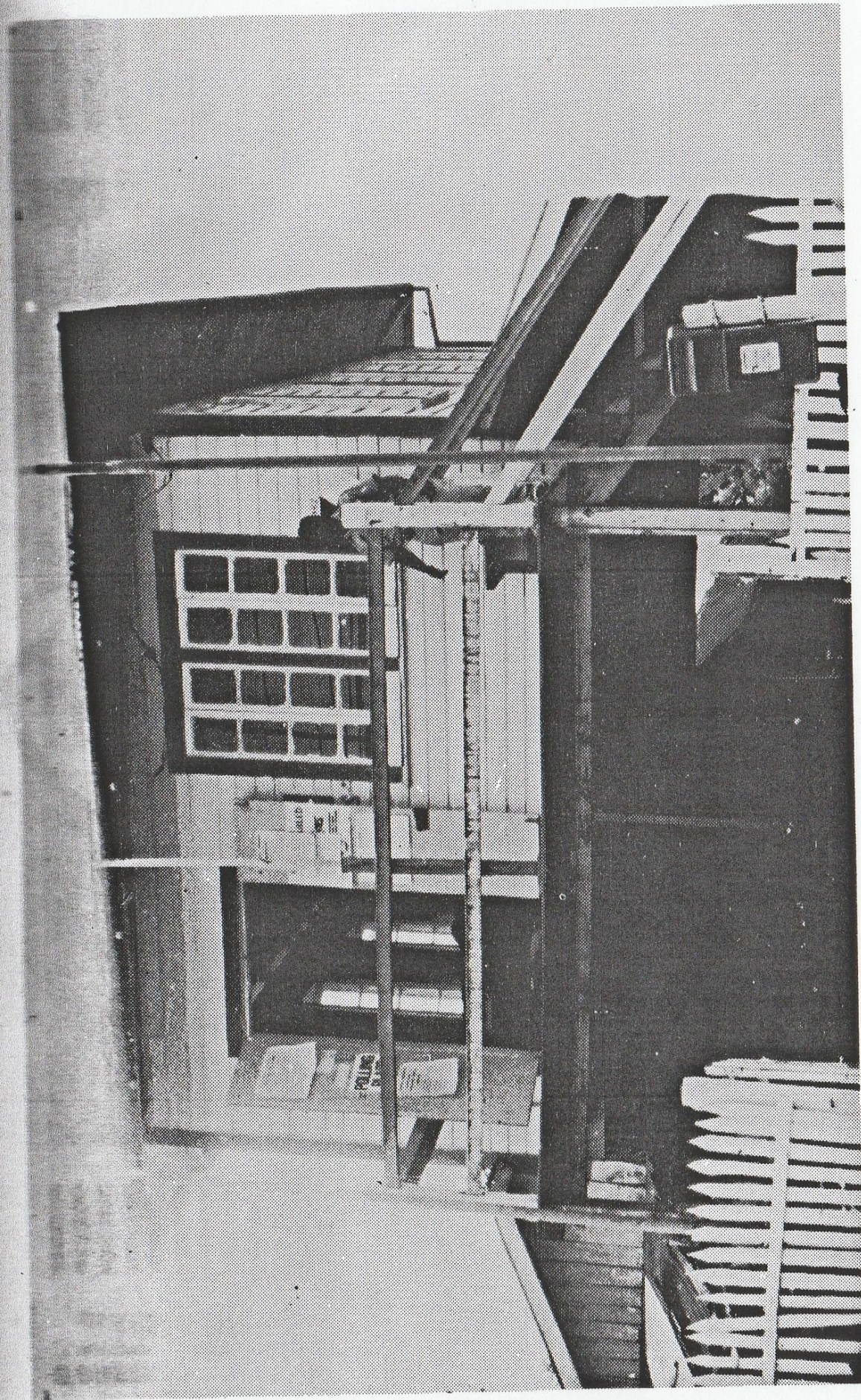
A number of PPP polling agents were ordered to leave their posts in the stations; others were violently rejected. There was no explanation given for allowing the presence of agents in some stations and not in others.

**Deserted  
Polling  
Stations**

Many polling stations were deserted for long periods of the day, including those buildings which housed several stations. (For reasons which are unclear, a number of polling places were often clustered in one place; for example, Campbellville Government School compound housed 10 polling stations.)



*Most polling stations were deserted for long periods on Referendum day.*







*The operation of government is restricted to the making and administering of laws, but it is to a nation that the right of forming or reforming, generating or regenerating constitutions and governments belongs.*

Thomas Paine, 1792

# 8. STATISTICAL RESULTS OF THE MONITORING EXERCISE

1. The national turn-out of voters estimated by the Citizens' Committee was 14.01%, as compared with the official figure of 71.45%.
2. In 16 of the 18 Districts included in the Survey, the sample of voting stations is over 30% and in most cases well over 50%. The two Districts in which the sample was less than 30% were District 22—Georgetown South (23.3%), and District 13—Demerara East Coast (17.9%). In the former case, Georgetown South, the highest turn-out for any District in the sample was recorded.
3. The sample in comparison with the overall electorate covered:

18 of 38 Districts	(47.36%)
314 of the total 531 polling stations within those 18 Districts	(59.13%)
275,056 out of a total electorate of 609,235	(45.14%)

4. There appears to be a discrepancy between the figure of 14.01% and the figure which emerged from taking the average of the percentage turn-out recorded for each District. This latter figure is 15.20%. Statistically the 14.01% is more relevant and statistically stronger since it is a total figure, not an average. The discrepancy arises because the partial totals in each District were rounded, not weighted. The 14.01% is arrived at by a calculation which makes no assumption of voting patterns within Districts as do the partial totals, which assume a uniform pattern in all stations within a District.

5. The estimated figure for the national turn-out of 14.01% should be considered high due to a particular limitation of the monitoring process. It was not possible in many cases to determine whether totals of voters reported by monitors included, or were net of, multiple and "re-cycled" voters. In all cases, it was assumed that the totals were net. There is, therefore, a distinct possibility in many cases, and a certainty in some, that the total of votes estimated in the Survey includes duplicate votes.
6. In Districts in which monitoring was carried out independently by Opposition parties and by the Citizens' Committee, the closeness of results is encouraging:

	<i>Citizens'</i>	<i>P.P.P.</i>
Corentyne East Central	0.69%	0.71%
Corentyne West Central	2.83%	3.50%
Kitty	20.09%	19.21%
Houston	17.80%	13.10%
Lower Demerara—Soesdyke	13.30%	13.84%

7. As we previously indicated the possibility of the actual turn-out surpassing the figure calculated in this Survey is minimal. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the sample contains eight of the thirteen Districts for which official figures show a turn-out in excess of that claimed for the national turn-out, namely 71.4%. A further two Districts, Demerara West Coast, Plaisance and Vreed-en-Hoop were assigned official turn-out figures within a percentage point of the supposed national turn-out.
8. The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from this Survey is that the official results of the Referendum have no possible basis in the reality of July 10th.

**They are massively fraudulent.**



## 9. EXCERPTS FROM MONITORS' REPORTS

The low poll facilitated the work of observers who were more easily able to identify persons who were returning several times since these were often the only people voting.

The following list of irregularities were observed in many parts of the country.

Although multiple voting may have been more voluminous in Georgetown the phenomenon was universal.

### Irregularities Observed

- *Persons voting more than once.*
- *Recycling of voters to different stations.*
- *Use of government vehicles to carry people to vote.*
- *Persons voting outside of their own electoral district.*
- *Votes opened by the presiding officer.*
- *People refused ballot papers on grounds that they had already voted when this was untrue.*
- *Voting by children and young people under 18 years of age.*
- *Non-staining of voters' fingers.*

- *No verification of voters' identity*
- *Voting after polling station had closed.*
- *Voting (multiple) by polling station officials.*
- *Collection of boxes by armed soldiers.*
- *Polling agents ordered out of stations.*

**Highlighting  
Irregularities**

All of the violations listed in the text have been reported by monitors. A selection of comments from reports highlighting the irregularities is given below. It should be borne in mind that this list is merely illustrative and by no means exhaustive of all the monitors' reported irregularities. Although the incidents have been grouped to emphasize particular violations, there is the ever-present background phenomenon of multiple voting.

*Coercion* from polling station officials and *voting in wrong districts* were common occurrences, as was the *non-staining of fingers*.

*Rogers' Residence, Buxton*

**Votes  
Opened**

✓ "One lady, pressured into voting for herself and her daughter, voted two 'NO's. Her ballots were opened in her presence and destroyed. She was derided and given new ballots."

**Voting in  
Wrong District**

✓  
“A number of persons from other areas of the village were allowed to vote so as to fill the vacancies left by those who boycotted. In order to help this process many fingers were not stained by the Presiding Officer.”

*Transport House, Georgetown*

✓  
“The officers responsible for the station were calling people off Urguhart Street and making them vote irrespective of Area or Registration.”

✓  
“4.45–6.03 p.m.: Persons were observed [under the premises of Farfan and Mendes] using liquid from a bottle to remove stains from their fingers and subsequently voting again and again.”

✓  
In a number of districts *children voted* several times; it became a game in some districts with children going about voting anywhere.

*Black Tulip, Wismar*

✓  
“A child of 10 years was observed with a stained finger outside the Black Tulip.”

✓  
“AB and CD, adults of Half-mile, Wismar, were seen washing the red ink from their fingers. AB actually informed the observer that she had voted several times already and they had to vote a few times more. They claimed that the red ink was easy to wash off with Marvex [bleach]. They encouraged the observer to vote YES.”

### *Shirley Gale's Residence, Wismar*

"Fifteen people voted twice. One boy, 17 years, was coerced to vote. One girl of 12 years was taken by her mother to vote."

### *District 16, Plaisance*

"One girl aged 17 and two friends voted five times each, at Profitt's, at St. Paul's and at the Plaisance Government School. She voted for the house, for the mouse and also spoiled some ballots."

The multiple voting was done on a large scale; in many cases it was clearly organized but in others, appeared to have been spontaneous.

### *Housing Bond, Georgetown*

"The last house on Laing Avenue range was used to organize groups to go backwards and forwards to vote. Organizers were present with lists of voters, taking persons to the entrance of the polling station and shouting into the station. After 5.30 p.m., there was intensive activity and at 5.50 p.m., a queue appeared for the first time. At 6 p.m. more people who had voted before were called to vote, voted and then joined the end of the queue again. The crowd remained in the queue until 6.30 p.m. when on some order given inside the polling station, the door was closed and those still in the queue drifted away [all of whom had previously voted]."

*Tucville Government School, Georgetown*

“5.45 p.m.: A Colt van PBB 3 . . . arrived with nine persons who were sent in one at a time.

6.25 p.m.: Colt GAA 8 . . . brought a number of people who were sent in one at a time. The people from the two Colts created a real hazard. They kept going and coming out and washing their fingers with a solution and going in again.”

*One Mile Government School, Wismar*

“Eight people returned to vote here again after going to vote some place else [or places else]. They were followed from Barr’s One Mile Station to One Mile School and to Blue Velvet Station and back to One Mile Station. Before 5.00 p.m. all rather quiet and dead. The five groups of about 11 and 12 people in each went from station to station voting at four stations in all, 795, 800, 810, 802.”

*St. Paul’s Government School, Plaisance*

“10.00–11.00 a.m.: A, B, C voted three times at St. Paul’s and then proceeded to the Dorcas Club about 100 yards away. D, E, F and G visited St. Paul’s twice and the Dorcas Club once.

(There is an unrestricted view of the Dorcas Club Polling Station from St. Paul’s.)

“5.15 p.m.: A mad rush of about 20 persons into the polling station.”

The phenomenon of *re-cycling of voters* was observed on a number of occasions. This took the form of groups being carried from one polling station to another to vote. Proof of this phenomenon was obtained by independent observers of stations noting the time of arrival and registration numbers of vehicles. On several occasions polling stations in close proximity were visited, within minutes of each other, by the same vehicle with the same number of people. The following illustrations should be taken in pairs and the time noted.

*Diocesan Youth Centre, Subryanville*

“5.20 p.m.: A blue Morris Minor PY4 . . . brought seven people, six women and a man.”

*Roman Catholic Church Hall, Kitty*

“5.57 p.m.: Seven persons; six women and a man arrived in PY 4 . . . a Morris blue Minor and rushed into the hall and the doors were then closed. They were given heaps of yellow forms, already folded. The forms were then stamped and placed in the box. This continued for 28 minutes.”

*Campbellville Government School,  
Georgetown*

“Around 5.00 p.m., PAA 5 . . . arrived.

Driver was seen collecting rough characters; three girls from the bridge and four tough guys (whom we had observed coming into the compound several times to vote); and several other characters of the rougher sort. Then they drove off in a hurry.”

*Campbellville Health Centre, Georgetown*

“5.15 p.m.: PAA 5 . . . arrived for a final visit, carried 12 persons among those who had appeared on its earlier visits. They behaved and acted as a group.”

*Redeemer Lutheran School, Georgetown*

“Vehicle No. PAA . . . arrived after 5.00 p.m.”

After 5.00 p.m., the tempo of re-cycling was stepped up, and *caution thrown entirely to the winds*. The most remarkable example of this was provided by monitors in the Queenstown area (District 19) of Georgetown. Many official vehicles were utilized.

*Queenstown Roman Catholic School,  
Georgetown*

“Voting between 6.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. was low. Rampant rigging started at about 4.00 p.m. Open self-contempt. The people were sardined in and out of land-rovers, mini-buses, etc. Much finger-sucking and wiping. Average voting time per person ten seconds. The voting stamp was heard 30 times for every seven or eight voters who needed no

I.D. cards. Propaganda photographs taken during this "crowded period".

After 6 p.m. seven people turned up in PAA 6 . . . after the top-flat had closed. As they couldn't get in they went downstairs and voted often. A man in a blue car PZ 5 . . . was connected with this I think. One man who mentioned that he had not been registered in his district was merely told by one of the boys to go to the fire-station. Estimated number of repeaters about 200. They were fed and watered too apparently. Organized finger-wiping observed in land-rover PAA 3 . . ."

*St. Gabriel's School, Georgetown*

Three independent observers noted that between 5.15 p.m. and 6 p.m. a total of 22 visits were made by vehicles which brought over 200 voters. The vehicles were eight landrovers, three white trucks, two mini-buses, and three cars. Among them were landrovers PAA 6 . . . and PAA 3 . . . and a car PZ 5 . . .

A number of monitors noted that *private houses* close to polling stations were being *utilized by polling station officials*.

*Moravian Cornelius School, Georgetown*

"10.45 a.m.: A male officer from the polling station went across to X's house with some papers. He returned some minutes later with a bag.

2.45 p.m.: Henceforth there was regular



contact between officials from the polling station and X's residence. Bags and papers moving in either direction!"

*Collection of ballot boxes* was typically done by the Guyana Defence Force, although not universally. Occasionally the *boxes were removed by private car* and in one instance the presiding officer "walked around the corner into Thomas Street with the box".

*Grove Government School,  
East Bank, Demerara*

"When the boxes were about to be removed the soldiers surrounded the Grove School with their guns pointing in every direction as if they were at war. The reason for such behaviour is unclear."

In an *attempt to show a large turn-out* officials and activists assembled by-standers into voting queues at a number of polling stations in order to take photographs. This behaviour was noted by monitors.

A well-known PNC supporter collected all the PNC activists to an average of 20 and put them on the school steps in a clustered position, along with the returning officer, and took pictures." (c.f. *Guyana Chronicle*, Tuesday, 11th July, .centre pages showing "voters" in front of St. Ann's School, Agricola).

In conclusion we may adopt the sentiments expressed by the *London Times* editorial on July 13th, which commented on the Referendum results:

“The warnings of bodies such as the G.C.C. and the protests of Mr. Burnham’s opponents are indications that the *results were falsified*, as election results have been falsified in the past in Guyana.”

**PART III**  
**APPENDICES**

16.	Demerara Coast W. Plaisance	13,762	10/23	43.5	1,305	3,002	21.81	9,793	71.0
17.	Kitty	18,108	11/33	33.3	1,213	3,639	20.09	14,395	79.5
18.	Campbellville	18,975	21/38	55.3	1,604	2,902	15.3	17,258	91.0
19.	Georgetown N.	18,722	10/29	34.5	1,515	4,394	23.5	15,662	83.6
20.	Georgetown Central	16,117	14/32	43.8	1,802	4,119	25.6	13,904	86.2
22.	Georgetown South	16,378	7/30	23.3	1,148	4,920	30.0	14,577	89.0
25.	Houston	19,411	12/37	32.4	1,120	3,453	17.8	15,504	79.8
26.	Lower Demerara Soesdyke	19,401	14/42	33.3	859	2,577	13.3	15,132	78.0
30.	Vreed-en-Hoop	13,911	29/29	100.0	1,492	2,492	17.9	9,819	70.6
32.	Boerasirie	14,077	23/28	82.14	754	918	6.6	7,418	52.7
34.	Suddie	16,566	33/34	97.05	2,942	3,031	18.3	11,597	70.0
TOTALS 18 Divisions		275,056	314/531	59.13	22,946			192,491	69.01

No.	DISTRICTS Name	Registered Voters	Divisions No./Total	CITIZENS' AND P.P.P. RETURNS				GOVERNMENT RETURNS	
				Monitored %	Votes Cast	Projected Votes	Turn Out %	Votes Cast	Turn Out %
1.	Corentyne River Skeldon	15,545	31/34	91.1	1,072	1,176	7.6	6,274	40.3
2.	Corentyne East Leeds	8,624	17/17	100.0	999	999	11.6	3,509	65.0
3.	Corentyne East Central Whim	16,507	27/30	90.0	2,569	2,854	17.3	7,726	46.8
4.	Corentyne West Central Tain	9,797	20/20	100.0	60	60	0.61	3,723	38.0
5.	Corentyne West Albion	16,104	19/29	65.51	299	456	2.83	8,414	52.2
13.	Demerara Coast E. Nabacリス	13,822	5/28	17.9	100	560	4.1	12,249	88.6
14.	Demerara Coast E. Friendship	9,229	11/18	61.1	1,093	1,789	19.4	5,527	60.0

**CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS  
OPPOSED TO BILL**

1. *LAWYERS COMMITTEE*

“The Bill seeks to place a blank cheque on the national future in the hands of a spent parliament.”

2. *GUYANA SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS*

“... The Society has therefore urged upon the Prime Minister that further action on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill should be abandoned.”

3. *GUYANA MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS*

“Supports the view that the Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 passed by the National Assembly on April 10th be withdrawn.”

4. *UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA STAFF ASSOCIATION*

“Calls on the Trades Union Congress to take the firmest possible action to prevent this iniquitous Bill from coming into effect.”

5. *GUYANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES*

“The G.C.C. opposes the apparent intent of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 and calls for the matter to be reconsidered after the holding of National Elections.”

6. *ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE  
(ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS)*

“This power to act on fundamental issues without the need to consult the people will restrict the freedom of all future generations of Guyanese.”

7. *NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL,  
COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYEES*

“By the Referendum Guyanese will be asked . . . to give up the main democratic control over one-sided attempts to tamper with the Constitution.”

8. *COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED EDUCATORS*

“The Bill will place intolerable powers in the hands of any government.”

9. *RANDOLPH GEORGE, ANGLICAN BISHOP OF  
GEORGETOWN*

“Our national newspapers have played a disappointing role in giving the distinct impression that non-supporters of the Bill should be shouted down.”

10. *AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE OF JURISTS*

Letter to Prime Minister: “The AAICJ hereby registers its disapproval of your action with regard to the Constitutional Amendment.”

11. *CORENTYNE TEACHERS*

“We as educators have the moral duty to uphold and defend the essential rights of the people. Therefore we call upon government to withdraw the Bill.”

12. *CANADIAN CHURCHMEN FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC  
JUSTICE (GATT-FLY)*

Telegram: “Strongly protest Constitutional Amendment regarding the Referendum as authoritarian mockery of UN Declaration of Human Rights.”



13. *BISHOP SINGH, ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP OF GUYANA*

“The concentration of power over the news media . . . has now led to a situation where there is no real debate on the referendum issue.

. . . The question then arises what will happen when one group is given the same unchecked power over our political institutions.”

14. *JAMAICAN BAR ASSOCIATION*

Telegram: “Commends stand of majority of members of legal profession . . . by opposing measures taken to deprive Guyanese people of any meaningful participation in any further amendment or revision of the Constitution.”

15. *GUYANA HINDU DHARMIC SABHA*

“The Dharmic Sabha is opposed to giving absolute power to any government parliament and in Guyana’s context this means to a single party.”

16. *GUYANA DENTAL PRACTITIONERS*

“Guyanese Dental Practitioners meeting on May 10th, 1978 record their opposition to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill No. 8 of 1978 and the referendum arising out of it.”

17. *UNITED SAD’R ISLAMIC ANJUMAN*

18. *CANADIAN PEACE CONGRESS*

Telegram to Prime Minister: “We call upon you not to take steps to change the Constitution and to hold elections in October . . . Guyanese who have shown loyalty to Canada must not be falsely registered as having voted in Guyanese

elections as was done in the past. It shows contempt for Canada and is a deceitful policy.”

19. *ARCHBISHOP PANTIN, R.C. PRELATE OF  
PORT-OF-SPAIN*

Telegram to Bishop Singh:

“Prayful support, deep admiration your courageous stand re human rights.”

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**LAWYERS' OPPOSITION**

# The Constitutional Amendment

BILL 1978

## Article 73 of the Constitution of Guyana reads as follows :

73. (1) Subject to the provisions of this article, Parliament may alter this Constitution.

(2) A Bill or an Act of Parliament under this article shall not be passed by the National Assembly unless it is supported at the final voting in the Assembly by the votes of a majority of all the elected members of the Assembly.

(3) A Bill to alter any of the following provisions of this Constitution, that is to say-

(a) this article (73)

1. (The State and its territory), 2. (The Constitution), 30. (Establishment of office and election of President), 33. [Executive authority of Guyana], 40. Exercise of President's powers], 57. [Establishment of Parliament), 58. (Composition of National Assembly), 66. Electoral system), 68. (Elections Commission), 69. (Functions of Elections Commission) 71. (Determination by High Court of questions as to membership); of National Assembly and elections) 81. (Sessions of Parliament.

82. (Prorogation and dissolution of Parliament), Article 119 in its application to the Elections Commission and; Article 125 in its application to any of the provisions mentioned in this sub-paragraph.

(b) Chapter II (Protection of fundamental rights and freedoms), etc. etc.

Shall not be submitted to the President for his assent unless the Bill, not less than two nor more than six months after its passage through the National Assembly, has, in such manner as Parliament may prescribe, been submitted to the vote of the electors qualified to vote in an election and has been approved by a majority of the electors who vote on the Bill:

Provided that if the Bill: does not alter any of the provisions mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph and is supported at the final voting in the Assembly by the votes of not less than two thirds of all the elected members of the Assembly, it shall not be necessary to submit the Bill to the vote of the electors.

# The Constitutional Amendment

BILL 1978

## Why The Legal Profession Opposes It.

1. The Constitution is the Supreme Law of the Land Lawyers therefore have a special interest in it, as does every citizen.
2. The referendum seeks to deprive the people of their right to approve or disapprove any new Constitution
3. It takes away the people's right to have a say in the changing of the supreme law of the land.
4. It will put absolute power to alter the Constitution in the two-thirds majority in Parliament.
5. A new Constitution that the people do not like can be imposed on them.
6. The power in the two-thirds majority in Parliament is enough, to enlarge it would be dangerous.
7. Any new Constitution should be approved by the people through national elections.
8. The Bill is an attempt to side track national elections due this year.
9. The Life of Parliament, Elections, the Constitution itself and the Jurisdiction of the High Court in certain matters would be left completely in the hands of a two-thirds majority in Parliament.
10. The Bill is asking us to sign a blank cheque and put our future in the hands of a dying Parliament
11. The referendum will be a referendum to end all referenda.
12. No Nation or People should ever surrender their rights.

**THE BILL AIMS TO DESTROY DEMOCRACY  
AS WE KNOW IT.**

**THE LEGAL PROFESSION OPPOSES IT  
IT INVITES YOU TO DO THE SAME.**