

Owning the Dogs: PNC and Anti-Indian Violence

by Rakesh Rampertab

"Those who call off the dogs own the dogs."

—Forbes Burnham paraphrased here, refusing to admit his supporters were the agent provocateurs during the 1962 disturbances in British Guiana.

"What of this so-called link between PNCR public events and upsurges in crime. This argument brings to mind an image of several fully-armed young men sitting around idly with a political thermometer in hand. "

—Sherwood Lowe, PNC member, in a letter titled "The PNCR does not benefit from crime-induced racial tension," in *Stabroek News*, March 30th, 2004.

Mr. Sherwood Lowe attempts the impossible in denying that PNC benefits from what he skillfully called crime-induced racial tension (*Stabroek News*, 3/30/2004) or, to say it for what it is: anti-Indian violence. While I agree that the PPP gains heavily from crimes committed against its supports, it is the greatest asset the PNC has. It will be used as the PNC moves in now for the kill. But first, it is busy creating a supposedly new public image to offset our view on things (a march without incidents, improved, positive language being used in their letters etc.). This should not make us complacent with what is happening behind closed doors, and what is coming.

The PNC has no other option because it knows Indians will not vote PNC. Knowing this, they have to hum "power sharing." If the PNC could win elections outright, it would be stupid to talk power sharing with anyone. So, how does it get to share power? Answer: make the country unstable and to do this, Indians have to be attacked one way or another. Industrial action by the GPSU cannot alone lead to power sharing. Anti-Indian violence is the trick that worked before.

First, the Herdmanston "Peace" Accord. I remind Mr. Lowe that despite a ban on demonstrations after the January 12th 1998 travesty against Indians, Mr. Hoyte led his supporters in defiance of the Rule of Law, transforming the Bourda area into "into a war zone." If violence did not lead to this Accord, then Mr. Lowe can tell us what did? Say why an elected government would come to terms with any losing party? This "peace" Accord or peace discord, as I see it, was electoral blackmail, concocted by the PNC and the PPP. It has been and is a grave disregard for the constitutional rights of the electorate. No

political party could lawfully reduce a 5-year mandate sanctioned by the ballot to 3 years. (Even CARICOM had the decency to admit they erred to support the Hermanston Accord.) Not even the UN could do this. This is "people's power." Have we forgotten that the "voice of the people" is still the "voice of God"?

Now 2001. Again, what the PNC could not get via ballot or courtroom, they acquired in the streets by setting one set of Guyanese against their countrymen, under a "no fire" mantra. So the fire spread and Indians like Ms. Phagoo from Enmore were firebombed as they passed through Buxton. Perhaps Mr. Lowe forgot the hallmark of anti-Indian violence in the executions of three Indians including a little boy (Merv Barran). This was not banditry; the execution of a 10-year-old Guyanese civilian is a political statement.

Out of this atmosphere, the PPP again (yes, again) crumbled, simultaneously accommodating the bully tactics of the PNC, while squandering the legitimacy of its mandate once more. This time, the trade off is worse than in 1997-8. Guyana is the only nation that exited a clean election with a government of commissions and committees. Mr. Lowe will remember that some PNC agent provocateurs who were angry with Mr. Hoyte for the meetings, and instead wanted "no fire," had to be appeased by the leader who boasted of bargaining from a "position of strength." Maybe Mr. Lowe will explain to us what "position of strength" means if not strength from street violence? What legal strength did the PNC possess, having lost the elections?

The "Dialogue" or what I call "Monologue" (since one party did the talking) saw the PPP agreeing to a staggering 15-17 PNC demands. The PNC agreed to one PPP demand (because they only came with one!): to send home its supporters. Would Mr. Lowe doubt this? After all, didn't the street violence stop after the Dialogue got under way? If the PNC was not linked in some way, why and how did it stop? Was it coincidence? If, as Burnham said, "Those who call off the dogs own the dogs," then it follows that if the dogs are called off, they heard the call of their owner. This is not up for debate on the street or in court; this is fact as life is.

And what is this Dialogue if not the sole property of the PNC? The PNC dictated its terms and motion; e.g., when it didn't get its way, Mr. Hoyte simply said it's time for a "pause." This entire thing is a piece of political bribery and cunning; one must admit that, politically speaking, the PNC has outfoxed the PPP at every juncture of the journey from 1997. Sadly, the Hermanston Accord and the Dialogue are not evidence of reconciliation, but fragments born in our trampled city streets. And like our dirty city streets, they can only be (as they are) filthy relics. The Dialogue was never the final goal of the PNC, but a stepping-stone to a greater final goal, a prelude to the great big push of Burnham's party...power



sharing.

