

Ethnicity, Ideology, and Class Struggle in Guyanese Society

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RÉSUMÉ

Pendant toute l'histoire coloniale de la Guyane, deux facteurs principaux ont créé et maintenu des barrières et des conflits ethniques à l'intérieur de la classe ouvrière. La classe dirigeante a appliqué une répartition inéquitable des bénéfices et des charges économiques entre les différents groupes ethniques de la classe ouvrière. Dans cet article, l'auteur tente de montrer que cette répartition inéquitable et cette idéologie raciste se perpétuent actuellement en Guyane et se reflètent dans les barrières et les conflits ethniques qui existent entre les travailleurs Indo-guyanais et Afro-Guyanais. Enfin, pour comprendre ces procédés, il est nécessaire de concevoir l'ethnicité comme une idéologie. Un examen des élections de 1973 dans la région est de la côte du Démerara fournira l'illustration de son point de vue.

In the first part of this paper, it is argued that ethnic boundaries, as defined by Frederik Barth, played a crucial role in the ideology of class and inter-ethnic conflict in former British Guiana. Specifically, it is shown that ruling class policies of disproportionate allocation of economic benefits and burdens led to the growth of social and economic disparities between working class ethnic groups. In this context, Portuguese, Afro-Guyanese, and Indo-Guyanese workers and farmers often used ruling class racial stereotypes to 'explain' their respective social and economic positions, and to blame each other, rather than ruling class exploitation, for their poverty and economic insecurity. In other cases, members of each major working class ethnic group used ruling class racial

stereotypes in attempts to improve their social and economic position at the expense of the others. These conflicts diverted the attention of workers from the actual causes of poverty, economic insecurity, and social and economic disparities between working class ethnic groups (viz., exploitation and differential allocation); also, these conflicts inhibited working class unity in political and economic struggles against the ruling class. At the same time, the ruling class belief in non-white inferiority was consistently used to justify existing power and property relations. Thus, ruling class policies of differential allocation, ruling class racial stereotypes, and the ruling class belief in non-white inferiority served as the basis for the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and conflict within the working class, and played an ideological role in the wider struggle between labour and capital in former British Guiana.

In the second part of this paper, it is argued that disproportionate allocation and racist ideology persist in contemporary Guyana, and are reflected in ethnic boundaries and conflict between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese working people. Specifically, it is argued that L. F. S. Burham's Peoples National Congress (PNC) Party retains the support of a core of Afro-Guyanese constituents by allocating a disproportionately large amount of economic benefits to them, and that this is made possible, to a large extent, by U.S. government support for the PNC regime. Evidence for this view is provided by an examination of the election of 1973.

ETHNICITY AND IDEOLOGY

Despres has distinguished recent approaches to ethnicity according to whether or not they focus on institutional differences, as most pluralist approaches do, or upon self-ascription and ascription-by-others, that is, the ethnic boundaries discussed by Barth (Despres, 1975: 127-129). Barth's approach does not focus on institutions or the cultural patterns exhibited by various ethnic groups, but on the boundaries that define the groups — i.e., the cultural and/or physical features that are used as definitive characteristics by members of interacting groups (see Barth, 1969: 13-14). This approach has the advantage of taking into account the possibility that criteria for self-ascription and ascription-by-others can change. It thus avoids the aura of permanence and immutability that can

result from tying ethnic identity to a list of institutional forms. Barth writes

When defined as an ascriptive and exclusive group, the continuity of an ethnic unit is clear; it depends on the maintenance of a boundary....

The critical focus of investigation.... becomes the *boundary* that defines the groups, not the cultural stuff that it enclosed (1969: 14-15).

The latter point seems properly directed against those who attempt to define ethnic identity in terms of institutions, 'historical identity' (Schermerhorn, 1970: 12), 'peoplehood' (Gordon, 1964: 24), 'primordial identity' (Geertz, 1963), etc.¹ While the latter concepts seem abstract, and raise the problem of historical or generational continuity, Barth's notion of a boundary is concrete in the sense that it can generate research on the factors which determine the maintenance of particular ethnic boundaries over time (see Bartels, 1977: 399). Thus, Barth's concept of an ethnic boundary will be used in this paper, but with one important qualification: at least some of the features of self-ascription and ascription-by-others in an ethnic boundary must involve something that one is born with and cannot acquire or change, such as skin colour, descent through a particular line, etc. This requirement seems necessary in order to characterize the exclusiveness that ethnic identities in Guyana and elsewhere often involve.

An ethnic boundary can be treated as part of ideology of a particular class or ethnic group.² From a class perspective, the

¹ D. R. Aronson also rejects these concepts of ethnicity on the grounds that they do not "...separate ethnic group behavior from other group behavior", and that they do not "...distinguish ETHNIC group consciousness from other consciousnesses and identities" (1976: 11). Aronson also rejects Barth's notion of ethnic identities as "basic":

...individuals maintain a multiplicity of identities which are often only SITUATIONALLY specified as relevant, let alone "basic" (1976: 11).

If Barth claims that ethnic identities are "basic" in the sense that they determine behavior in *all* situations, then Aronson's criticism is correct. However, the fact that ethnic identity may not determine behavior in all situations does not lessen the utility of conceiving ethnicity in terms of "boundaries" in Barth's sense.

² Dolbeare and Dolbeare define 'ideology' as a system of beliefs which ...present a more or less coherent picture of (1) how the present social, economic and political order operates, (2) why this is so, and whether this is good or bad, and (3) what should be done about it, if anything (1971: 3). Similarly, Nigel Harris has defined the beliefs and ideas used by people to explain their position in the social order, and to justify their roles in political and economic struggles, as ideology (1971: 43-44).

concept of ethnicity as ideology³ provides a useful tool for explaining inter-ethnic conflict in former British Guiana.

In 19th and early 20th-century Guyanese society, perhaps the most important ethnic boundary was based upon the criterion of skin colour. The predominantly white, Northern European ruling class stood in contrast to the predominantly non-white working class. The ruling class belief in non-white inferiority was consistently used to justify existing power and property relations in the face of 'external' threats or actual or potential working class political and industrial action (see Bartels, 1978a). Thus, according to the definitions of 'ideology' cited above, the ethnic boundary based upon skin colour, with its concomitant connotation of non-white inferiority, constituted an ideology by virtue of its role in class conflict.

Ethnic boundaries also played a central role in the ideology of conflicts between working class ethnic groups throughout Guyanese colonial history. These conflicts, however, can only be understood in light of ruling class policy and ideology.

During the colonial period, a constant feature of ruling class policy was differential allocation of economic benefits and burdens to different working class ethnic groups. Instances of differential allocation in the 19th and early 20th centuries included stimulation of the Portuguese retail sector, while black and coloured retailers were ruined (see Moore, 1975); stimulation of the Indo-Guyanese rice sector, after the cooperative farming attempts of blacks had been smashed (see Bartels, 1977); exclusion of the children of non-Christian Hindu and Muslim i.e., East Indian) plantation workers from educational opportunities. This 'channeled' educated Afro-Guyanese into urban clerical, professional, and industrial occupations, and restricted most Indo-Guyanese to rice farming and plantation labour (see Bartels, 1979). Policies of differential allocation also played a major role in the political-ethnic conflicts of the 1950's and 1960's (see Bartels, 1978).

³ D. R. Aronson also defines ethnicity in terms of ideology 1976: 14-15), but claims that the distinguishing feature of an 'ethnic ideology' is that it contains goals and values not shared by other groups. This concept seems inappropriate for distinguishing between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese ethnic groups whose members often share aspirations to a 'middle-class, Mid-Atlantic' lifestyle (see R. T. Smith, 1971: 424-435).

Ruling class policy-makers justified disproportionate allocation by citing racial stereotypes. Many accounts by plantation owners, plantation managers, colonial officers, and Christian missionaries characterized East Indians as (1) industrious and hardworking; (2) thrifty to the point of greed; and (3) lacking in Christian morals (see Payne, 1971: 67; Pearson, 1897: 1, 8-43; MacRae, 1856: 9, 65). On the other hand, Afro-Guyanese were often characterized as (1) physically strong, but lazy, carefree, irresponsible, financially improvident, and intellectually dim; (2) physically repulsive because of their facial features, skin colour, and hair type; and (3) child-like trusting, and easily misled by more intelligent, unscrupulous people (Rodway, 1895, 243; Pearson, 1894: 243-249; Bellairs, 1897: 288-289; Hudson cited in Moore, 1975, 12; colonial officials cited in Payne, 1971: 67).

The racial stereotypes used by the ruling class to characterize various working class ethnic groups were taken over by the subordinated populations — i.e., they became ethnic boundaries in Barth's sense. If these features were, in some respect positive, they were used as a means of self-ascription. If these features were negative, they were used as means of ascription by others. Thus, East Indians often came to see themselves as thrifty, industrious, and physically attractive in contrast to Afro-Guyanese, whom they saw as irresponsible, physically unattractive, and lacking in initiative. Afro-Guyanese, on the other hand, often saw themselves as physically strong, Christian, generous, and trusting in contrast to East Indian 'coolies' whom they regarded as greedy, clannish heathens. Working class ethnic groups used these stereotypes to 'explain' their social and economic positions, and to justify their roles in struggles against each other for economic resource and political power.⁴ In a context where the best economic resources were monopolized by the ruling class (see Despres, 1975), and where the working class was continually ravaged by ruling class exploitation and periodic economic crisis (see Bartels, 1978), such struggles were often bitter.

For example, the pervasiveness of ruling class ideology insured that many blacks 'explained' the success of Indo-Guyanese rice

⁴ For an analysis of the beginning of this process in the 1840's, see Bartels 1977: 399-400).

farmers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in terms of ruling class racial stereotypes of East Indians as 'miserly' and willing to tolerate 'uncivilized' conditions (Payne, 1971: 49). And by the 1920's and 1930's, East Indian organizations were using ruling class racial stereotypes of 'lazy' blacks and 'industrious' Indians to justify allocation of agricultural Crown Land exclusively to Indo-Guyanese (see 'East Indian Intelligentsia', 1938).⁵ Thus, ruling class racial stereotypes, transformed into ethnic boundaries in Barth's sense, played an ideological role in conflicts between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese.⁶

Such conflicts also played a role in the larger struggle between labour and capital insofar as they diverted the attention of workers from the actual causes of socio-economic inequalities between Indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, and Portuguese (viz., ruling class exploitation and differential allocation), and inhibited concerted action by working people in political and industrial struggles against the ruling class.

Conflicts between working class ethnic groups were seen by the ruling class as evidence that non-whites were "naturally incapable" of governing themselves peaceably. A corollary of this ideological position was the belief, held by members of the ruling class, that they had a "responsibility" to continue exercising power in order to insure that such inter-ethnic conflicts were held in check. At the same time, the ruling class racial stereotypes which portrayed all non-whites as inferior,⁷ were consistently used by the ruling class in attempts to justify and defend the colonial social order against working class political and industrial action. To the extent that the features of self-ascription and ascription-by-others which defined (and continue to define) ethnic boundaries in Guyana played a role in class struggle, and in conflicts between working class ethnic groups, they were ideologies.

⁵ For an excellent account of the policies of disproportionate allocation by which plantation owners and the colonial government ruined Afro-Guyanese agricultural co-operatives and later encouraged the growth of an East Indian rice sector, see Adamson (1972).

⁶ For further examples of such conflicts, and the ideological role of ethnic boundaries, see Bartels (1978a).

⁷ The ruling class ideology of non-white inferiority emerged from fear of slave revolts and from the struggle against abolitionism long before the introduction of Portuguese, Chinese, and East Indian indentured labourers to British Guiana in the 19th century (see Williams, 1945; Montagu, 1945).

ETHNICITY AND IDEOLOGY IN POST-COLONIAL GUYANESE SOCIETY

Tendencies toward inter-ethnic conflict based upon disproportionate allocation and racist ideology persist in post-colonial Guyanese society. Economic scarcity among Guyanese working people is still 'explained' in terms of the racial stereotypes of the former ruling class and its various allies. Ethnic boundaries continue to exist, and there is inter-ethnic conflict over scarce resources. As in the past, the basis of these phenomena is disproportionate allocation, but it is no longer practiced by a 'white, Northern European' ruling class overtly supported by British state power. Rather, the PNC regime practices disproportionate allocation in order to retain the support of a core of Afro-Guyanese constituents (see Hanley, 1975; Despres, 1975). Without such support, the PNC's power would be seriously jeopardized. This disproportionate allocation has sharpened ethnic boundaries and reproduced political conflict which follows ethnic lines. The interplay between ethnicity, ideology, and disproportionate allocation during the 1973 election will be described in the remainder of this paper.

On May 30, 1973, the PNC government proposed legislation to lower the voting age to 18. The opposition Peoples Progressive Party (PPP)⁸ objected to this, in spite of the fact that the number of 18-21 year old Indo-Guyanese PPP supporters was probably greater than the number of 18-21 year old Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters, on the grounds that the PNC would manipulate registration of 18-21 year old voters in such a way that the PNC would get the vast majority of their votes (see J. Jagan, 1974, regarding methods of electoral manipulation in Guyana). The PNC responded by claiming that the PPP was being hypocritical on this issue since the PPP had

⁸ The PPP initiated Guyana's struggle for independence, and commanded the support of most Guyanese working people from 1950 until around 1955. Its advocacy of socialism and strong ties with the socialist countries, however, provoked intervention from the U.S. and British governments which went far to splinter the party (and the country) along ethnic-political lines in the late 1950's and early 1960's. L. F. S. Burnham's breakaway faction eventually gained power with British and U.S. support, in 1964. It has retained power since that time, mainly through questionable electoral practices. Independence was achieved in 1966. The PNC's supporters are predominantly Afro-Guyanese, while PPP supporters are mainly Indo-Guyanese. For a fuller account of these events, see Henfrey (1972), Walton (1972), Radosh (1969), and Bartels (1978a).

proposed lowering the voting age to 18 while it was in office. The PNC also claimed that the PPP was afraid of giving young people the vote because so many of them were PNC supporters. After this exchange, Prime Minister Burnham called an election for July 16, 1973.

PPP leaders decided to contest the election in spite of their expectation that it would be rigged in favour of the PNC. Some PPP activists believed that the massive rigging which would be necessary for a PNC 'victory' would destroy any remaining pretense of 'democracy' in Guyana, or that, along with minor opposition parties, they would command such strength that the PNC would not dare rig the election for fear of mass discontent and anti-government action.

Shortly after notice of the election was given, rumours began to circulate that the PNC 'expected' to win a $\frac{2}{3}$ legislative majority which would enable them to change the constitution, outlaw all opposition parties, and turn Guyana into a one-party state. Presumably in order to dispell such rumours, Burnham declared that representatives of all political parties would be present during voting, transportation of ballots, and counting of ballots. There was a concerted PNC effort to win the votes of Afro-Guyanese in Georgetown who had been hit hard by inflation and banning of certain staples (e.g., 'English' potatoes) involved in the PNC policy of import substitution. PNC activists claimed that Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters in Georgetown might be so assured of Burnham's victory that they might not bother to vote.

PPP activists accused the PNC of corruption, incompetence, extravagance, racial discrimination against Indo-Guyanese, and subservience to Bookers⁹ and the U.S. government. They drew attention to inflation, mass unemployment, deterioration of social services, labour problems, inadequate medical facilities, housing shortages, food shortages, etc., and claimed that a PPP government could solve these problems by starting Guyana on the path of socialism. PNC activists, in turn, accused the PPP of hypocrisy on the issue of the voting age, fomenting racial politics, and sub-

⁹ By 1920, almost all Guyana's sugar plantations and mills were owned by the London-based firm of Booker Brothers and McConnell. 'Bookers' controlled the Guyanese sugar industry, as well as several other significant areas of Guyana's economy, until its nationalization in 1975.

servience to Moscow. They also claimed that their government had made great gains in providing 'economic development' for Guyana.

There were no *overt* ethnic appeals by PNC or PPP political activists. However, the historical context of the election campaign insured that practically every political appeal had covert ethnic overtones. The PPP was widely viewed as a vehicle for gaining scarce economic resources for its Indo-Guyanese supporters, and the PNC was widely viewed as a vehicle for gaining scarce economic resources for its Afro-Guyanese supporters. Many Indo-Guyanese claimed that the PNC government had systematically given government jobs and other sorts of economic resources to its Afro-Guyanese supporters while denying them to better-qualified Indo-Guyanese. They believed that a PPP government would redress this imbalance. Some Indo-Guyanese PPP supporters used former ruling class 'racial' stereotypes to justify their belief that the government should give more jobs to Indo-Guyanese.¹⁰ They sometimes claimed that Indo-Guyanese, because of their allegedly 'superior racial characteristics', had built up Guyana economically, and therefore deserved to govern (i.e., to get the bulk of economic resources dispensed by the government). Similarly, many Afro-Guyanese justified the view that the PNC should favour Afro-Guyanese by arguing that Blacks had built up Guyana economically, but that the fruits of their labour had been stolen, first by colonialism, and later by Indians, who had been favoured by the colonialists. The former ruling class racial stereotype of Indians as 'stingy' and 'miserly' was often invoked to justify this argument. Despres writes,

...As an industry, the government generates 10 percent of the GDP and contributes 19 percent to the employed labor force. Thus, apart from agriculture, the government is the largest consumer of labor in the country. While all elements of the population look to the government for favors and support, the overwhelming majority of Africans view their control of the government as an absolute prerequisite of their economic survival. As a consequence, competition

¹⁰ A distinction must be drawn between those who support the PPP because they view it as a vehicle for furthering the interests of Indo-Guyanese, and those who support the PPP because they see it as a vehicle for furthering the interests of all workers and farmers, irrespective of 'race'. During the past several years, the PPP leadership has attempted to eliminate the former ideological tendency from the party (see Bartels, 1978a). PPP leaders and activists, while alleging PNC favoritism toward Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters, have attempted to increase PPP influence in multi-ethnic and predominantly Afro-Guyanese trade unions and other working class organizations.

for the government and for the resources which the government commands is fierce among Africans and Indians (1975: 99).

Newly-refreshed memories of the inter-ethnic and political violence of the 1960's added to the tension as the 1973 election drew near.

While the racial stereotypes cited above were never openly used in political speeches by PNC or PPP candidates, they were often repeated in private conversations *within* each major ethnic section. Indo-Guyanese PPP supporters would constantly complain amongst themselves that all government jobs and scholarships were given to blacks, while better-qualified Indo-Guyanese were unemployed. While a few Indo-Guyanese workers in East Coast Demerara villages argued that Cheddi Jagan, the leader of the PPP, would provide more economic benefits for all "poor people", irrespective of 'race', most of them used the argument that a PPP government would redress inequalities in government allocation of scarce resources.¹¹ Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters, on the other hand, constantly warned each other that a PPP victory would mean that the economic benefits that the PNC had brought them (e.g., jobs and scholarships) would be taken away and given to Indians.

In a context where such arguments were constantly in the minds of voters, PNC and PPP political activity (e.g., speeches, posters, rallies, etc.) inevitably assumed ethnic overtones. And, as election day approached, a series of violent ethnic-political incidents sharpened ethnic and political tensions. Although several people were killed or injured in such incidents, major outbreaks of violence did not occur (see Bartels, 1978a).

Burnham and the PNC received a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority in the election. According to the *Guyana Graphic* of July 20, 1973, the PNC received 243,803 votes (70.15%) and won 37 seats; the PPP received 92,374 votes (26.51%) and won 14 seats; other parties received a total of 11,633 votes (3.3%) and won 2 seats.

It was rumoured after the election that when the earliest election returns from the PNC 'strongholds' in Georgetown indicated that Burnham was doing poorly because of a high abstention rate, he ordered the predominantly Afro-Guyanese Guyana Defense

¹¹ Again, the distinction between those who see the PPP as an 'Indian party', and those who see it as a socialist party championing the cause of *all* working people, must be borne in mind.

Force (GDF) to rig the election in order to insure a $\frac{2}{3}$ PNC majority. Documentation regarding widespread PNC rigging in the 1973 election is extensive, and need not be treated here (see J. Jagan, 1974).

In the light of the foregoing discussion, parallels can be drawn between disproportionate allocation, the ideological role of ethnic boundaries, and inter-ethnic conflict in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Throughout Guyana's colonial history, conflict between subordinated ethnic groups often stemmed from disproportionate allocation of economic benefits and burdens to different working class ethnic groups by the ruling class. The resulting differences in the social and economic positions of different working class ethnic groups were often 'explained' in terms of ruling class racial stereotypes. This pattern has continued in contemporary Guyanese political economy in the sense that the political strategy which promotes inter-ethnic conflict continues to be based upon disproportionate allocation of economic benefits among Indo- and Afro-Guyanese. Specifically, the PNC allocates a disproportionately large amount of scarce economic resources to a core of Afro-Guyanese constituents in order to retain their political support. As in many ex-colonies, these scarce resources include land, jobs, places in vocational training programmes, and government scholarships. Indo-Guyanese resentment of such disproportionate allocation figures prominently in contemporary Guyanese politics. As in the past, the different economic and social positions of different ethnic groups are often 'explained' in terms of the racial stereotypes that were used by the former ruling class.

While disproportionate allocation can no longer be practiced directly by a predominantly white ruling class, supported by British and/or U.S. state power, as it was during colonial times, the practices and policies of the U.S. government often make it possible for the PNC regime to practice disproportionate allocation. Specifically, the U.S. government, through various forms of 'economic aid', enables the Burnham regime to provide a disproportionately large amount of economic resources to Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters in order to retain their political allegiance. For example, in East Coast Demerara, many Afro-Guyanese youths from 'PNC families' have received PNC-sponsored training in the U.S. which was financed by the U.S. government. Scholarships for study at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama are especially popular (see Vernon,

1972: 11-16). Most youths who are chosen by the PNC to study in the U.S. are assured of relatively high-paying government jobs upon completion of their training.

Even the 1971 nationalization of Alcan's bauxite extraction operation was financed, in part, by an \$8 million (U.S.) loan from the Chase Manhattan Bank (see Despres, 1975: 98). Shortly after this loan was made, the World Bank granted a \$10 million (U.S.) loan to the Guyanese government, and the U.S. government renewed Guyana's sugar quota (Jagan, 1972: 407). Furthermore, between 1946 and 1973, the U.S. government furnished \$9.6 million (U.S.) to train and equip Guyana's security forces (North American Congress on Latin America, 1973: 26). Almost all of this aid has been furnished since Burnham came to power in 1964. The PNC regime has insured that such training and equipment are monopolized by Afro-Guyanese PNC supporters who make up the majority of army and police personnel.

Until its nationalization, Bookers' sugar estates also pursued policies which contributed to the maintenance of differential allocation of resources. On Bookers' sugar estates, unskilled, low-paid labourers were mostly Indo-Guyanese, and skilled, highly-paid labourers were mostly Afro-Guyanese. Until the early 1970's, these groups belonged to different trade unions. Bookers refused to recognize the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), which commanded the support of most unskilled Indo-Guyanese sugar workers. Thus, the representatives of skilled Afro-Guyanese sugar workers could bargain with Bookers, while GAWU representatives could not. Bookers' refusal to recognize the GAWU was supported by the PNC government and several U.S.-controlled 'international' labour organizations operating in Guyana. All of these circumstances promoted the continuity of political-ethnic conflict and maintenance of ethnic boundaries between Indo- and Afro-Guyanese sugar workers.

These considerations show that, just as the policies of disproportionate allocation practiced by the ruling class during colonial times depended, to a large extent, upon support from British, and, later, the U.S. governments (see Bartels, 1978), so the present PNC policies of disproportionate allocation depend, to some extent, upon support from the U.S. government. Presumably, the U.S. government has provided this support in order to secure Burnham's

support upon various issues in international politics, and, more importantly, to keep the PPP out of power. Insofar as policies of disproportionate allocation promote the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and conflict, the latter phenomena cannot be fully understood without reference to the policies and practices of the U.S. government and ruling class with regard to Guyana.

In spite of the continuity of disproportionate allocation and inter-ethnic conflict described above, Indo- and Afro-Guyanese working people were able to unite in a squatters' movement to obtain unused, Bookers-owned residential land prior to the 1973 election (see Bartels, 1979).¹² The squatters' movement and the 1973 election period exemplify coexistence of the same tendencies toward working class consciousness with tendencies toward inter-ethnic conflict and racist ideology that characterized Guyanese colonial history. As with analyses of major instances of inter-ethnic conflict and working class unity in struggles throughout Guyanese colonial history, attempts to understand post-colonial Guyanese social and political processes must take such coexisting tendencies into account. Also, as in the case of Guyanese colonial history, class struggle, disproportionate allocation, inter-ethnic conflict, and the ideological role of ethnic boundaries cannot be understood without reference to the policies and practices of Anglo-American governments and ruling classes. The degree to which internal and external bourgeois control, racist ideology, and disproportionate allocation are eliminated is the degree to which the necessary conditions for overcoming inter-ethnic conflict are present.

Critics of the PPP sometimes claim that a PPP government would favor Indo-Guyanese over Afro-Guyanese despite claims by PPP leaders that the PPP is a working class party which champions all working people equally, irrespective of 'race'. It should be pointed out, however, that there have not been any recent opportunities to judge PPP government policy, since the PPP, despite support from a majority of the Guyanese electorate, has been kept out of power since 1964.

¹² This struggle can be seen as a continuation of previous struggles during the colonial period, where Afro-Guyanese, Indo-Guyanese, and Portuguese working people co-operated in political and industrial action against ruling class and colonial exploitation (see Bartels, 1978).

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