Mayor of the City of Georgetown, Mr. Hamilton Green is preparing a dossier chronicling what he calls the Siege of the City. In an exclusive interview with New Nation, the Mayor said that the Government continues to launch an assault on the major municipal authority - Georgetown. He said this attack began after the People’s Progressive Party committed tremendous resources, including state resources and the PPP/C's formidable propaganda machinery to the 1994 local government elections in Georgetown and only secured 27% of the votes.

The Mayor said, "it appeared that a diabolical mind set out since then to punish the city and citizens, ignoring the wishes of the majority.... in the process emasculating the traditional authority and rights of the duly elected Mayor and Council." He noted that prior to 1994 the city was governed by a hand-picked Interim Management Committee, however in spite of generous Government largesse that group declared that the municipality could not provide citizens a satisfactory service unless it was able to "broaden the revenue base." Mayor Green said the city like any business can only be successful if two things are available - money and good management. In order to improve the revenue base several proposal were made to the Government starting with a lottery. The Mayor said then acting President Samuel Hinds had rejected that proposal on the grounds that the religious community would object. Green said that the PPP/C then turned around and adopted this very proposal and today no one knows what happens to the billions of dollars of lotto funds raised annually.

However, the Mayor claims that every other proposal that was made to raise much needed revenue was rejected; proposals for parking meters; proposals to tax containers that traverse city streets; proposal for the city to get a percentage of the environmental tax; proposal for the GPL to pay a nominal fee for planting their poles on city parapets; proposal to hasten the re-evaluation (a legal requirement) of the many large new buildings in the city, all have been rejected. The Mayor said that what has made this siege of the city more criminal is, "even when the city earned revenue the government intervened and with neither notice nor discussion robbed the city." He noted, as examples, the dismantling with chain saws of the GT&T signs; the operation of the Stabroek speed-boat service; the Stabroek Market car park. With respect to management, Mayor Green said that except for a brief period when the late Town Clerk Prince Melville resisted Ministerial efforts to control the council, all other Town Clerks for a variety of reasons are directed and dictated to by the Minister of Local Government.

In late February 2014, A Partnership for National Unity issued a statement calling on the PPP/C administration to desist from damaging Georgetown’s Mayor and City Council. In that statement, APNU noted the antagonistic attitude of the PPP/C Administration to the M&CC which it perceives to be controlled by APNU supporters. This mindset according to APNU has led to the PPP/C refusal to deal specifically with the problems facing the city, since its sees every crisis as an opportunity for political confrontation rather than municipal improvement. It is a well-known fact that the central government is one of the main property owners in the city, but it is the most delinquent in the payment of its rates and taxes. New Nation in its next publication will delve deeper into the management crisis of the city. What we have seen so far is a central government that has refused to positively engage the M&CC in a responsible manner. Many citizens of Georgetown are anxious for Local Government elections as a means of registering their dissatisfaction with the way the PPP/C Administration is handling the capital city.

Member of the PNCR, Former Deputy Speaker and Member of Parliament, Deborah Backer has died!

See tributes on Back Page!
**Where are your children now?**

At some point in your life, you must have heard the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”. I’ll now beg and plead for us to return to those days when we indeed allowed our villages to raise our children. Can you recall what you did as a child if you were with a group of friends and spotted an approaching adult (be it neighbour or complete stranger)? You would be on your most sedate and best behavior until that adult was no longer in sight, for fear of a complaint reaching your parents or guardian. Not today. Today our children do as they please and when they please. But many would argue that our children are not to be blamed. In examining the state of our country’s youth and children, one must not only take their behavior into consideration but also the extent to which they are protected or in many cases not protected.

The horror stories of our children being exposed to the ills of society are many - beginning with what happens in their homes. Children are abused and violated by their own parents, guardians or others. Recently in the news was the incident involving the one-year old who was assaulted and abused by her 19 year old sitter; the story of the 2 year old discovered by social workers abandoned in a house in Georgetown; and the four year old who was stabbed to death by his step father at Linden. There are also those children who reside with single parents who have to work long hours, leaving their children to fend for themselves. Some of these children are then influenced by other ills in society. They become consumed by society’s negatives and as a result become deviant.

There are those unfortunate incidents of teenagers fighting each other - fights that have inevitably led to murder. We remember Afernee Bowman who was stabbed outside his lessons in February 2012; the three reported incidents of stabbing at the Lodge Secondary School in 2010, the 17 year old who was stabbed to death outside his lesson in May 2012, the 13 year old who was stabbed several times in January 2013, and the list goes on.

I’m sure everyone will remember the blaring and dreadful headline accompanied by a photograph in January, which told the world that a 15 year old in Guyana was shot down by a businessman after a home invasion. This was indeed shocking. There were reports that this youngster was consumed by the dark side of his life after losing his mother at a tender age and was influenced by older criminals who recruited him.

It must be noted that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and by extension the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government of Guyana has no plan for our nation’s youth. Or is it that they do not care what happens to our nation’s youth? While we await the answer, adults must collaborate to play a much greater role in the lives of our children. The People’s National Congress Reform (PNCR) and A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) have continuously placed children and youths on the front burner. At the end of 2012, Opposition Leader David Granger declared 2013 ‘Year for Youth’ - a year that the Party and Partnership dedicated much of its work to the benefit of youths. APNU continues to call for the immediate improvement in schools across the country, providing a foundation for our youth to become productive adults. Let’s work with APNU to ensure that Guyana returns to the days when it took a village to raise a child.

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**The Foundation of Democracy**

It is important in a functioning democracy to have regular Local Government Elections. The institution of local government is the fulfillment of a living democracy, where citizens are allowed the opportunity, in their towns and villages to give leadership and to get things done for themselves, tackling local problems and engendering local pride. This arrangement becomes even more acute where our youth are concerned. Last year the PNCR designated 2013 “Year for Youth.” This was partly in recognition of the important leadership role that young people must play in local democratic organs, in order for those systems to remain vibrant and credible. Guyana needs local government elections so that our youth can get involved in the management of their communities. We need local government bodies with new leadership and that are devoid of the heavy hand and steel heel of the central government. Local bodies that allow our young people to release their creative energies and to get involved in the future development of their respective communities. This type of youth involvement gives our youth a stake in this society and can serve to stem the tide of immigration, juvenile delinquency and youth unemployment. The PNCR urges all youth to take control of your communities. Take control of your neighbourhood and take control of your lives. We embrace Local democracy and local government election in 2014.
POLITICS

The crisis of youth unemployment

By Dave Danny, Jr.

A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) has dedicated 2014 as the "Year for Workers." And, this is by no means a theme pulled from a hat, but one arrived at after careful consideration and lengthy examination. While, the focus for some may be workers exposed to poor conditions and awarded pitance for labour, those, particularly youths, who are unemployed and underemployed should see this year as a challenge.

In 2012, a census was done to provide vital information on the populace. Earlier this year, the report on the findings was expected to be submitted to the Ministry of Finance and later presented to Cabinet. We are now in the first quarter of 2014 and the findings of that census have not been made public. As such, the populace remains ignorant of the country's population count, the unemployment level and, more importantly, youth employment.

In October 2011, before that memorable November 28th General Elections, then Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs. Clarissa Riell said, "Guyana's electorate is getting younger. For this year's National Elections over 260,000 of the registrants to vote are 35 years old and below." This tells us that there is a large section of the society that is youthful and, there is a possibility that a large number of this group may not have a steady income or are underemployed. In fact, the Minister of Labour Nanda Gopal whilst boasting that Employment Agencies are helping to provide jobs admitted that his Ministry has been unable to establish the level of unemployment in Guyana.

But, while having the statistics may be important to definitively pinpoint the percentage of jobless, observation would tell you that many of our youths are unemployed. The limers on the street corners and those idly walking the streets are evidence enough that there is a serious need for the generation of jobs.

The non-employment of Guyanese workers during the construction phase of the Marriott branded hotel at Kingston was an injury to Guyanese workers. The excuse made that the skills to construct such a hotel was not available locally only added insult to the injury. It also exposed the PPP/C's lack of planning and the neglect of vocational and technical training in Guyana.

We, the youth, should not allow any Government to railroad us and deprive us of being employed and having a decent living.

The People's National Congress Reform, the largest bloc in A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change and Student Movement (GYSM) are cognizant of these struggles. The Youth population needs to remain unified and vote for a group that is needed, and make use of every technical or vocational training opportunity that becomes available, for it is the taxpayers who are standing that expense not the PPP/C. So in this the year for Workers we call on all youth to get trained so that they too can enjoy a good life.

"A Dem Want Dat" - says Region No. 6 sugar worker

Region Six continues to play a pivotal role in the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) elections campaign. On the occasion of the 101st Anniversary of the death of 15 sugar workers at the Rose Hall Estate, the PPP/C used this occasion to conduct a political rally. In remarks that opposition leaders have classified as distortions and outright lies, President Donald Ramotar accused A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change (AFC) of trying to "close down" the sugar estates. Neither political party has made such statements.

All the evidence of a political campaign was present. The Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) workers were pulled out of their regular schedule and assigned political tasks. These practices have been routinely condemned by the Councillors of East Berbice-Corentyne Region (Region Six) but the PPP/C still continues the practice. Other examples of using state resources were evident. Several GuySuCo trucks were used to transport sugar workers, party supporters and those ordered to attend. In addition, it was observed that meals and other refreshment were provided by the organisers; it is unclear whether public funds were utilized to defray this expense. One resident with whom this paper spoke was highly upset with the use of state resources for what he called "PPP wuk" and opined that there was need for campaign reform to curtail the use of state resources for partisan political purposes.

President Ramotar ignored the solemn occasion and paid scant tribute to the workers in whose honour the ceremony was held, instead he chose to spend most of his time on attacking the opposition. He stated that he cannot sign the bill to establish the Procurement Commission because he would be "impeached." The AFC has said that the PPP/C reluctance to proceed on this issue is due to the fact that the Government does not want to lose control of the procurement process. Commenting on the President's remark that the opposition wanted to close down sugar estates, a sugar worker was overheard saying: "A dem (Ramotar and the PPP/C) want dat."

PNCR leader calls for reconciliation, not recrimination

People's National Congress Reform Leader, Brigadier David Granger has called on Corentyne residents to commit themselves to national unity and racial reconciliation and to renounce thoughts of retaliation and recrimination.

Brigadier Granger told family members who had assembled for the ceremony in the Auchlyne Presbyterian Churchyard, Corentyne that Edgar Munroe was the first person to be murdered in the 'Disturbances.' Ramraj Gunraj died later the same day as a result of the same incident. Both Munroe and Gunraj came from Liverpool village.

It is a historical fact that the Guiana Agricultural Workers' Union had called a strike in the sugar industry at that time. A bomb was thrown into one of three lorries on the Tain public road, about 25 km from New Amsterdam. They were travelling from Manchester Village to Albion estate carrying 30 sugar workers at about 05:45 hours on Wednesday 4th March 1964.

He said that those responsible for orchestrating the bombing are known and that the incident occurred during a time that was labelled "a hurricane of protest." The double murder was lamented in song by Corentyne singer Nesbit Changuin: "Tain public road the beginning, when their labour was completed. Out of the darkness is pelted, out of blackness comes the bomb. Negroes and Indians screaming, onto the roadway they fall. Is this the only way races will join today, join in barbarous death? Gunraj and Munroe, Oh land in agony.

When will our hatreds end and race with race work together as friends?"

The, PNCR leader, who attended the Auchlyne Church of Scotland in his childhood, said that his dream was for Corentyne children to come together as members of a cohesive Guyanese community. He declared 4th of March "Munroe-Gunraj Day" and called for the entire East Berbice-Corentyne Region to work towards healing the wounds of distress and the deaths which occurred during the 'Disturbances.'
MESSAGES

PNCR Phagwah Message

The People’s National Congress Reform extends sincere Holi greetings to the Hindu Community of Guyana in particular, and Guyanese in general, on the occasion of the celebration of the Festival of Phagwah in Guyana.

The significance of Phagwah is two-fold. Its secular significance lies in the advent of the season of spring, and its real and allegorical implications of fertility, rebirth, renewal and regeneration. The religious significance of Holi lies in the conquest of good over evil, manifested by the destruction by Prahalada of his demonic father, King Hiranyakashipu.

In Guyana today, our spirits are becoming increasingly sullen and sour in the brooding darkness that now engulfs our land. Violent crime, pervasive joblessness, narco-trafficking, gun-running, creeping despotism, social disintegration and deepening poverty, stalk our land; partisanship, discrimination and executive lawlessness compound bad governance.

We urge all Guyanese people to see some spiritual inspiration in this Festival and to brace themselves against these many evils that are in our midst, and resolve, at this juncture, to take steps to end these calamities that now bedevil our country, and to restore equity, justice, peace and prosperity to our dear Motherland.

As the celebrated Indian National Kulapati Vani wrote many years ago, “festivals are gathering for refreshing spirit and enjoying life.” We urge all Guyanese to use this occasion of Phagwah to refresh their spirit and enjoy life, and to participate fully in this colourful festival and enjoy the rich elements of our religious and cultural diversity.

Happy Holi to all Guyanese!

Message on International Women’s Day 2014

The National Congress of Women (NCW), the women’s arm of the People’s National Congress Reform, salutes all women in Guyana and throughout the world as International Women’s Day is observed on Saturday 8th March 2014.

The NCW salutes those stalwarts of the PNC Women’s Auxiliary and the WRSM, the forerunners to our organisation - the late Jane Phillips-Gay, Margaret Ackman, Hyacinth Godett, Viola Burnham and Shirley Field-Ridley - who worked hard for the advancement of the women of our organisation and Guyana as a whole.

The NCW welcomes the focus of the United Nations in its 2014 theme for International Women’s Day - “Inspiring Change.” The NCW recognizes the fact that Women are the agents of change and they have been in the forefront of change for many years. It was the People’s National Congress (PNC) Government that inspired change when the laws of Guyana were revised to benefit women. The enshrinement of Article 29 in the 1980 Constitution of Guyana on ‘Equality for Women’ inspired the change.

As we observe IWD 2014, the National Congress of Women has decided as its theme - “Unfinished Business - Time for action.” Gender equality and women’s rights are essential to achieving the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which include the call to ‘Stop violence against women and girls.’ It is time to back up political promises with action and resources.

The NCW notes that poverty and corruption have caused our young people to become involved in unwholesome activities. We call for the support of Government and that of other organisations in promoting education awareness programmes to improve the self-esteem of our young women and girls. We call for the return of ‘Guidance and Counseling’ to the regular curriculum of our Primary and Secondary schools.

The NCW also joins with all other organisations in reiterating the call for strict implementation of the laws of Guyana which deal with Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences, in order that justice could be meted out to the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. We ask for harsh penalties for those involved in Trafficking in Persons, especially when our young women and girls are the victims. The NCW also reiterates its call for the Guyana Police Force (GPF) to enforce better training for its ranks so that they could carry out more efficient investigations. We ask that the Judiciary should deal condignly with those found guilty of these crimes. We also call on our sisters and all other concerned Guyanese to report every known case of abuse at the very earliest opportunity before it is too late.

To achieve the unfinished business of the MDGs, it is essential to put women and girls front and centre and beyond empty promises. It is time to act - not just talk.
On Friday 14th March 2014, 30 students graduated from an Information Technology literacy programme sponsored by the New York based Guyana Action Committee (GAC). The students who reside in the East Berbice-Corentyne Region are the first batch in an ongoing programme initiated by the New York based NGO. The 12 month programme which included elementary, intermediate 1 and 2 and advance level studies was held at the Berbice High School Computer Lab. The facilitator was Ms. Marva Gordon.

The Guyana Action Committee Inc. (GAC) is a vibrant organization of mainly Guyanese Americans with diverse backgrounds. Its Mission is “to engage in projects and discussions aimed at providing means for cultural economic and social change, and economic empowerment for Guyanese in Guyana and the Diaspora”. GAC is a charitable, not-for-profit organization incorporated in New York State and headquartered in the Greater New York City Area.

Since its formation in 2011, the organization has mobilized Guyanese (Americans) in the Diaspora, and other nationalities sympathetic to its Mission. The founding members pledged to solicit help, and or donations from supporters, and host fund raisers in a continuous effort to affect its pursuits. The GAC is open to collaborating with other not for profit organizations sharing similar goals and objectives as ours. The organization has said that a second IT training programme will commence shortly.

85th Birth Anniversary of Hugh Desmond Hoyte

Sunday 9th March 2014 marked the 85th Birth Anniversary of the late Hugh Desmond Hoyte, former President of the Republic of Guyana (1985-1992), former Leader of the main Opposition Party, the People’s National Congress, and former Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament of Guyana.

Mr. Hoyte was born on March 9, 1929 and died on December 22, 2002. In his 73 years he accomplished much in the legal profession, in politics and as President of Guyana and Leader of the PNCR. The PNCR took the opportunity to salute this Great Statesman.

May his soul continue to rest in eternal peace!
Laughter - best medicine

In Great Britain there are special institutions called "laughing clubs" and it is no laughing matter. Tell me, does enjoyment and laughter really help your heart? There has been much speculation about this but researchers now have the answer. Yes, laughter has healing power, especially when it comes to the health of your heart.

Let me explain. The endothelium, the inner lining of the arteries, plays an important role in the fight against cardiovascular disease. Remember, this is the condition which causes stroke, and the endothelium is what regulates blood flow by controlling when the blood vessels expand and contract. In addition, it also secretes chemicals, such as nitric oxide, that inhibit inflammation (a key step in the formation of dangerous arterial plaque that can trigger heart attacks or sudden death) and blood clotting (a cause of many heart attacks).

Mental stress is known to be harmful to the endothelium. Blood vessels tighten in stressful situations, and chemical changes may leave you open to arterial damage. One study suggested that laughter works like stress in reverse, to promote endothelial health. The study conducted at the University of Maryland in Baltimore, involved 20 non-smoking, healthy volunteers who were hooked up to a machine to measure blood flow in a major artery.

Half the group watched the opening scene of the war movie Saving Private Ryan, a graphic and violent depiction of World War II. The other half saw a segment of the comedy Kingpin, starring Woody Harrelson and Bill Murray, which was described by critic Roger Ebert as "a very funny movie, and sometimes even funnier than that."

Two days later, the groups were switched and the films were rerun.

The difference was striking. Minutes after watching Saving Private Ryan, arterial blood flow was constricted in 14 of the 20 volunteers. But blood vessels opened up in 19 of the 20 participants after they had laughed their way through the Kingpin segment. The relaxation of the arteries suggested that the endothelium was working in a healthy way, secreting chemicals such as nitric oxide, to protect against clot formation and the formation of fatty deposits on the walls.

Laughter's exact physiological mechanism is unclear, but researchers speculate that the release of endorphins - "feel good" brain chemicals - triggers positive endothelial changes. Watching the funny movie had as much positive effect on arteries as 20 to 30 minutes of jogging. Again, earlier study by the same researchers at the University of Maryland also offered evidence that the ability to laugh could protect against heart disease.

The scientists gave a questionnaire to 150 people ages 45 to 75 who had suffered a heart attack or undergone coronary bypass surgery, and to 150 healthy volunteers of the same age who did not have heart disease. The participants were asked whether they would smile, laugh or find any humour of real-life situations, such as having soup spilled on them in a restaurant, mistaking a total stranger for a friend or being honked at by an impatient driver while crossing a street. The result was that those with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to find humour in difficult or embarrassing situations, compared with those who were healthy.

By the way, you should check out the American Film Institute's "100 Funniest American Movies of All Time" at www.afi.com/tvevents/100years/laughs.aspx.
On Wednesday 19th March, the People’s National Congress Reform (PNCR) held a Town Hall Meeting at the Egbert Benjamin Center in Mackenzie. A panel headed by Party Leader, Brigadier David Granger and including Party Chairman, Mr. Basil Williams MP, Executive members Mr. Carl Greenidge MP, and Mr. Joseph Harmon MP, engaged residents of the Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice Region on matters pertaining to the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism amendment legislation and APNU’s principled positions regarding the passage of the Bill.

In his opening remarks, Brigadier Granger said that the intention was to inform, educate and shine light, so that residents could leave armed with the truth. During the two hour Town Hall meeting, the Party leaders emphasized that strong anti-money laundering laws were needed and outlined in great detail the following:

- APNU is committed to amending the current Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act of 2009 and to ensure that it is effective.
- APNU is committed to ensuring that the Bank of Guyana and the Financial Intelligence Unit are empowered and equipped to fulfil their functions and achieve the objectives of the Act.
- APNU is committed to engaging the Government of Guyana, the private sector, civil society, the trade unions and the international community to protect our economy with enforceable Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism laws.

APNU Member of Parliament, Mr. Renis Morian recently visited Coomaka in the Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice Region (Region No. 10). During a previous visit the MP had promised residents that he would return. Mr. Morian said that he was glad to be back and told residents that the presence of APNU was testimony of the Partnership’s commitment to the development of all Guyanese. He lamented the disrespect and what he called definite efforts by the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration to stifle development and independence of indigenous peoples.

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Mr. Renis Morian, MP, handing over footballs to the young people of Coomaka, Region No. 10 during his visit to the community.

The lack of potable water was also noted. Residents of this community get their drinking water from the river even though there is gold mining and other known contaminants upstream. Residents are also calling for telephone services and the equitable awarding of contracts by the Government. Presently only supporters of the PPP/C are awarded contracts to clear drains and do other minor civil works in the area. Mr. Morian promised the residents to bring these matters to the floor of the National Assembly.

Mr. Renis Morian, MP, handing over footballs to the young people of Coomaka, Region No. 10 during his visit to the community.
Deborah Jan Backer joined the People’s National Congress in 1994 and became a candidate for the Party on its list of candidates to contest the Georgetown Municipality Elections of the same year. Following the election, Ms. Backer was selected among ten candidates to represent the PNCR in the Georgetown Municipality. In 1997, she was again selected as a candidate for the Party in the General Election of that year and was elected a member of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana from 1998 to 2001 and was re-elected at each subsequent General Election, 2006 and 2011, until her resignation in February 2014 due to illness.

In 1997, Ms. Backer was co-opted to the Central Executive Committee of the Party and brought new and fresh perspectives to the deliberations of that forum. Because of her work and contributions among the rank and file members, she was elected to the Executive Committee at the Biennial Congress in 2000. In 2004, she was elected Vice Chairman of the Party at the Biennial Congress of that year and served until 2006.

An active member of the Party’s General Council, she undertook the task of reviewing the Party’s Constitution after the 2012 Congress recommended same but regrettably was side-lined by illness.

As a Parliamentarian, Ms Backer served as Shadow Minister of Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs as well as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

The PNCR offers sincere and heartfelt condolences to her husband, Steve and children, Natasha and Nigel and other sorrowing relatives and close friends.

May her soul rest in eternal peace!