

The General and Regional Elections in Guyana

15 December 1997

The Report of the
Commonwealth Observer Group



Commonwealth Secretariat

The General and Regional Elections in Guyana

15 December 1997

The Report of the
Commonwealth Observer Group



Commonwealth Secretariat
1998

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
Britain

© Commonwealth Secretariat, 1998

Other publications in the Commonwealth Observer Report series:

The General Elections in Malaysia, 1990

Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, 1991

Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Zambia, 1991

Elections to the Constitutional Commission in Seychelles, 1992

The General and Regional Elections in Guyana, 1992

The Presidential Election in Ghana, 1992

Referendum on the Draft Constitution in Seychelles, 1992

The Presidential, Parliamentary and Civic Elections in Kenya, 1992

Violence in South Africa, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa,
Phase I, October 1992–January 1993

Violence in South Africa, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa,
Phase II, February–May 1993

South Africa in Transition, Report of the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa,
Phase III, August–December 1993

The General Election in Lesotho, March 1993

The Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Seychelles, July 1993

The National Assembly Election in Pakistan, October 1993

The End of Apartheid: The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group to the South Africa
Elections, April 1994
ISBN 0 85092 410 3, £9.95

The Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Malawi, May 1994
ISBN 0 85092 409 X, £6.95

The Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Namibia, December 1994
ISBN 0 85092 417 0, £5.95

The General Election in St Kitts and Nevis, July 1995
ISBN 0 85092 466 9, £5.95

The Union Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Tanzania, October 1995
ISBN 0 85092 467 7, £5.95

The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, February 1996
ISBN 0 85092 462 6, £5.95

The Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, June 1996
ISBN 0 85092 492 8, £5.95

The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Ghana, December 1996
ISBN 0 85092 497 9, £5.95

The General Election in Pakistan, February 1997
ISBN 0 85092 500 2, £5.95

The Parliamentary Elections in Cameroon, May 1997
ISBN 0 85092 513 4, £5.95

The General Election in Papua New Guinea, June 1997
ISBN 0 85092 514 2, £5.95

Pictures by: Ken Moore, Judith Pestaina, Guy Hewitt, Mwambu Wanendeya

ISBN : 0 85092 537 1

Designed by: TSGD Printed by: CPS

**REPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP TO THE
GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS IN GUYANA**

15 DECEMBER 1997

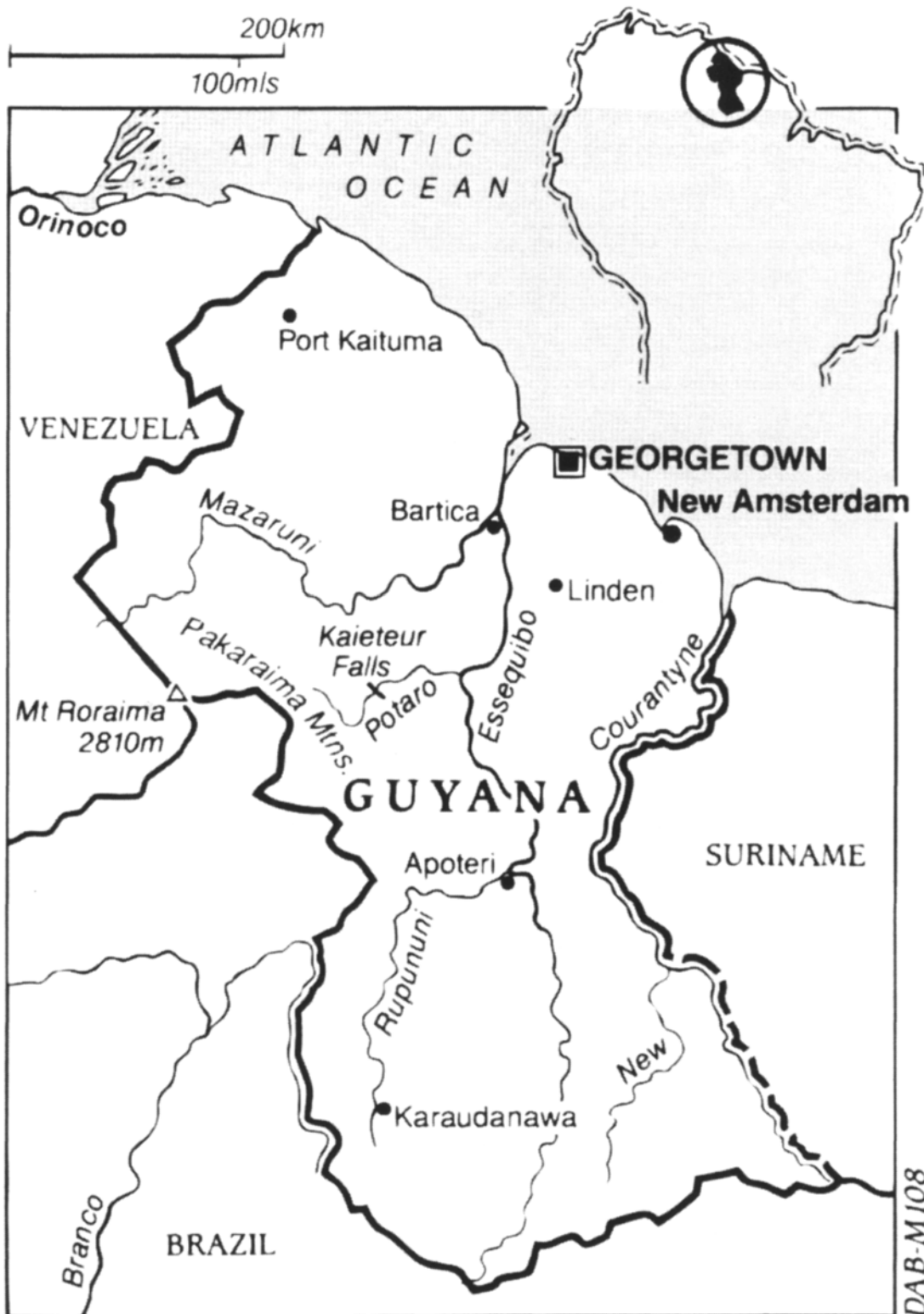
CONTENTS

	Page
Map of Guyana	v
Letter of Transmittal	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
The Observer Group and its Terms of Reference	1
Method of Work	1
1. Political Background	3
Background	3
The Political Parties	4
Inter-Party Relationships	6
2. The Administrative and Legislative Framework and Preparations for the Elections	7
Administrative and Legislative Framework	7
Preparations for the Elections	8
3. The Campaign and the Media	13
The Campaign	13
The Role of the Media	14
4. The Poll and Count	19
The Disciplined Forces Poll – 10 December 1997	19
Events on Polling Day – 15 December 1997	20
Close of Poll and the Count	25
Tallying	26
Announcement of Election Results	28
SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS	29
Conclusions	29
Observations	30
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	31

ANNEXES

I	Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group	35
II	Commonwealth News Release of 24 November 1997	39
III	Arrival Statement of 8 December 1997	41
IV	Schedule of Engagements	42
V	Deployment for Observation of Disciplined Forces Poll, 10 December 1997	44
VI	Deployment for Observation of the General and Regional Elections, 15 December 1997	46
VII	Observation Notes for Poll and Count and Check List for Visits to Polling Stations	47
VIII	Interim Statement of 16 December 1997	52
IX	Departure Statement of 19 December 1997	53
X	Procedure for Removal of Chairman and Members of the Elections Commission	54
XI	Text of Code of Conduct for Political Parties	55
XII	Elections Commission Voter Education Material	57
XIII	Elections Commission Guidelines for International Observers	58
XIV	Elections Commission Guidelines for the Media	60
XV	Procedure for Verification of Statements of Poll – Statement by Guyana Elections Commission	65

Map of Guyana



□ international airport

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL



Guyana General and Regional Elections, 1997

Commonwealth Observer Group

Tel: 592(2) 66114 (Office)
592(2) 52856 (Hotel)
Fax: 592(2) 66114

The Guyana Pegasus Hotel
Old Seawall Road
Georgetown
Guyana

19 December 1997

Dear Secretary General,


At your invitation, in response to the request from the Government of Guyana, supported both by the Elections Commission and the political parties, we came to Guyana to observe the General and Regional Elections held on 15 December 1997.

We wish to thank you for this unique opportunity to strengthen the bonds in the Commonwealth family and contribute to the enhancement of the democratic process in one of our member states.

In the Interim Statement issued on 16 December after close of poll, we celebrated the peace of the election day and indicated that the conditions appeared to have existed for the people of Guyana to express their will through the ballot. We take pleasure in forwarding to you our substantive report which confirms our initial impressions and raises a number of observations which we hope will assist in advancing the democratic process in Guyana. We have no doubt that the Commonwealth will render to Guyana whatever assistance it can.

We wish to record our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Guyana, the Chairman and officials of the Elections Commission, the political parties and the people of Guyana at large.

In closing, we reiterate our appreciation to you for this opportunity of serving the Commonwealth.



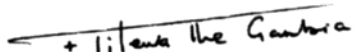
Ali Hassan Mwinyi
Chairman



Ms Jeannette France



Advocate Bience Gawanas


Rt. Rev. S. Tilewa Johnson


Mr Stanley Martin, CVO, JP


Ms Mary-Christine Murphy


Dr Hetherwick Ntaba, MP


Hon. Neil Pickard


Professor Bharati Ray, MP


Mr Hensley Robinson


Mrs Camille Robinson-Regis, MP


Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell


Sir Anthony Siaguru, KBE


Hon. Sir Peter Tapsell



The Commonwealth Observer Group ... (front row from left) Bience Gawanas, Stanley Martin, Bharati Ray, Ali Hassan Muwinyi (Chairperson), Sir Anthony Siaguru, Jeannette France, Camille Robinson-Regis, (back row from left) Sir Peter Tapsell, Hensley Robinson, Mary Murphy, Hetherwick Ntaba, Neil Pickard, Dorianne Rowan-Campbell and Rt Rev S Tilewa Johnson

Introduction

Following receipt of a request from the President of Guyana, HE Mr Samuel Hinds, for a Commonwealth presence at his country's General and Regional Elections scheduled for 15 December 1997, the Commonwealth Secretary-General sent an Assessment Mission, comprising three Secretariat officials, to Guyana to establish whether the major political parties would welcome Commonwealth observers. The Assessment Mission visited Guyana from 12-18 October and met with the Elections Commission, the main political parties and other interested groups. It confirmed that there was broad support within Guyana for the presence of Commonwealth observers.

The Observer Group and its Terms of Reference

This was the twenty-third Commonwealth Observer Group to have been constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General since the October 1989 meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The context for the Secretary-General's positive response was set by Commonwealth commitment to the promotion of fundamental political values set out in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration and reinforced by Commonwealth Heads of Government in their Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration, adopted at their meeting in New Zealand in 1995.

It was in this context that the Secretary-General invited our Group of 14 Observers, supported by eight staff from the Commonwealth Secretariat, to observe the 1997 General and Regional Elections in Guyana. The composition of the Group, which was led by HE Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi, is set out at *Annex I*. The terms of reference for our Group were incorporated in the Secretary-General's letter inviting each of us to participate in the mission and were as follows:

The Group is established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request of the Government of Guyana and supported by the major political parties. It is to observe relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections in accordance with the law of Guyana. It is to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine in its own judgment whether the conditions exist for a free expression of will by the electors and if the result of the elections reflects the wishes of the people.

The Group is to act impartially and independently. It has no executive role; its function is not to supervise but to observe the process as a whole and to form a judgment accordingly. It would also be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of the elections.

The Group is to submit its report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will forward it to the Government of Guyana, to the leadership of the political parties taking part in the elections and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments.

The Secretary-General's announcement of our mission on 24 November 1997 is at *Annex II*.

Method of Work

We assembled in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 6 December 1997 and were briefed by the leader of the Secretariat team, Mr Carl Dundas, on 7 December prior to our departure for Guyana. We arrived in Georgetown later that evening and the following day issued an Arrival Statement at a press conference (*Annex III*).

On 8 December we began a series of meetings in Georgetown with the Elections Commission, representatives of the main political parties contesting the elections, non-governmental organisations

(NGOs), representatives of the Amerindian community, media organisations, representatives of professional organisations, women's groups and other international observers. On Wednesday 10 December, our Chairperson and some members of our Group met for a second time with the Chairman of the Elections Commission to make known to the Commission representations made to us and to seek clarification of some of the points which had been raised during our earlier meetings. On Thursday 11 December, our Chairperson and some members of our Group who had not yet been deployed met with Commonwealth High Commissioners accredited to Guyana. Our Schedule of Engagements is at *Annex IV*.

On Wednesday 10 December 1997 we observed the voting of the Disciplined Forces at 18 polling centres in Regions 3 and 4 (see *Annex V*). On 11 December, we divided into 10 two-person teams and were deployed to all 10 regions in Guyana (see *Annex VI*). Our discussions at regional and local levels were of a similar nature, though necessarily more limited in scope, to those held in Georgetown and provided an overview of the political situation and the state of electoral preparedness. We had direct access to the voters, an experience which proved to be beneficial to all of us. All teams travelled extensively throughout their designated regions in order to familiarise themselves with local conditions, assess the state of preparedness for the poll and observe the last days of the campaign. Those teams which were able to do so submitted daily reports of their observations to the Observer Group's Chairperson.

Between 11-14 December our Chairperson and the leader of the Secretariat team travelled widely in Georgetown and its environs and also visited Regions 1, 5, 6 and 10 to assess first hand the state of electoral preparedness in those regions. While there, they met with regional election officials and spoke with members of the public.

On polling day we observed voting at approximately 342 polling stations across the country. We also observed the count at 20 polling stations. During our visits to polling stations we spoke to election officials, party representatives, international and local observers, security personnel and voters themselves. During our deployment we were assisted by Observation Notes and Check Lists (see examples at *Annex VII*). On the basis of our reports during deployment, our Chairperson issued an Interim Statement at 11 a.m. on 16 December 1997. A copy of this statement appears at *Annex VIII*.

Our Group reassembled in Georgetown on 16 December 1997 for a debriefing and to finalise our Report. We departed Guyana on 20 December 1997 (see *Departure Statement at Annex IX*).

Chapter 1

Political Background

Background

Guyana has a rich and colourful political history dominated from the period before independence by two of its equally colourful political leaders, Dr Cheddi Jagan and Mr Forbes Burnham, both former Presidents and both now deceased. The first major popular political organisations in Guyana, of which both former Presidents were founding fathers, were established in 1946 but combined in 1950 to form the People's Progressive Party (PPP) under the leadership of Dr Jagan, to press for independence from Britain.

In 1955, a serious split in the PPP led to the formation of the People's National Congress (PNC) under the leadership of Mr Burnham. However, the PPP dominated most of the politics of the era prior to independence in 1966. With the emergence of other political parties the PPP lost its pre-eminence. This occurred, first, because the PNC was able to form a coalition with The United Force (TUF) to oust the PPP from power and to form a government under Mr Burnham (who subsequently led the country to independence) and, second, because the PNC under the leadership of Mr Burnham was able to consolidate itself in power.

Prior to the December 1997 elections there had been five elections since independence. The first four had been won by the PNC, while the 1992 elections saw the PPP, which now included a civic element (hence the name PPP/Civic), returned to power with Dr Jagan as President. The Commonwealth Observer Group, as well as observers from the Carter Center (the other major international observer group to observe the 1992 elections), declared itself satisfied that the voters had had the opportunity to freely vote for the political party of their choice and that the results reflected the genuine will of the Guyanese people. Following his death in March 1997, Dr Jagan was succeeded as President by the then Prime Minister, Samuel Hinds.

Before the December 1997 elections, we met and had intense and wide-ranging discussions with seven of the political parties contesting the elections. We gained the general impression from our discussions that the campaign was being conducted in an atmosphere of relative calm, but not lacking in the competitive spirit that is usually characteristic of any truly democratic state. A question that was regularly raised in public discussions was how the political atmosphere and temperature at these elections compared with those that prevailed at the time of the 1992 elections. Fears that there would be violence were unfortunately realised after polling day.

One matter that dominated the political debate in the period immediately leading up to the elections was the issue of the Voter Identification Cards which, by law, were the only means of identification for voters wishing to exercise their franchise. Most political parties expressed concern about several aspects of the issue. These included the slow rate of the production and distribution of the cards and, in some cases, there were allegations that this was either deliberate or selective in order to disadvantage certain political parties.

There was even the suggestion that the introduction of the Voter Identification Card was an unnecessary and expensive exercise, especially as it would only be used to identify voters at the polling station. There was particular concern that voters who had not received their Voter Identification Cards before polling day would be disenfranchised. And there were fears about the likely consequences if significant numbers of voters who had not received their cards before election day turned up at a polling station and demanded to vote.

We were therefore impressed by the constructive role played by political leaders and others who made public statements up to the eve of the elections urging their supporters to cast their votes peacefully and to remain calm.

During our discussions with the political parties, we were impressed, not surprisingly, by their confidence and determination to win the elections and to form the next government, aided by the prevailing system of proportional representation which determines the political composition of the National Assembly. Under this system, there are no single-member constituencies but instead the whole of the country forms one constituency. Voters cast their votes throughout the country in favour of any one of the lists of candidates submitted by the political parties wishing to contest the elections and accepted by the Elections Commission. Each voter can cast two votes – one vote in respect of the General List and one in respect of the Regional List. Seats in the National Assembly are then allocated among the political parties in proportion to the number of votes cast in favour of their list.

Although it was not possible for us to observe the nomination process, we ascertained on our arrival in Georgetown that at the close of nominations on 5 November 1997 the lists of candidates of only 10 of the political parties, out of the 12 submitted to the Chief Election Officer, were approved and accepted by the Elections Commission as having fulfilled the requirements of the electoral law, and that the process was completed entirely without any controversy.

The Political Parties

While it did not form part of our mandate to assess the electoral prospects of each of the political parties which contested the elections, we believe it would be appropriate and useful to include in our Report a brief profile of the parties and highlights of their manifestos, in the belief that this will illustrate the range of the differing visions offered to the voters. In spite of the fears that voting would be along racial lines, the formal appeals to the electorate by many of the parties were based on issues rather than on personalities.

Alliance For Guyana (AFG) *Presidential candidate: Dr Rupert Roopnaraine (party symbol – the bell; party motto – ‘Guyana for Guyanese’)*. The Alliance is a coalition of three separate groups – the Working People’s Alliance (WPA), which held one seat in the last parliament, the Guyana Labour Party (GLP) and independent citizens. It stated in its manifesto that its mission in these elections would be to seek the formal permission of the electorate as a whole to represent it at the governmental level. It proposed legislation to make the manifesto legally binding on the government and highlighted, among other things: reconstruction and human resource development; education; youth opportunity; addressing the causes of crime; and open government. The Alliance contested all 10 regions for both the national and regional seats.

A Good and Green Guyana (GGG) *Presidential candidate: Mr Hamilton Green (party symbol – front-end loader; party motto – ‘Moral & Spiritual Revival’)*. Mr Green was Prime Minister at the time of the 1992 elections, soon after which he left the PNC and formed the GGG. In the 1994 local elections the GGG secured the highest number of votes in Region 4 and Mr Green became the Mayor of Georgetown. Among other things, the party highlighted: protection of the environment; free and quality education and health services for all; housing for the poor; development of financial and human resources; encouragement of local business and industries; reducing the gap between the rich and the poor; and increased pensions for senior citizens. It contested all 10 regions for both the national and regional seats.

God Bless Guyana (GBG) *Presidential candidate: Mr Hardat Persaud (party symbol – dove; party motto – ‘Exalt Righteousness and Honesty’)*. The party leader and presidential candidate revealed that it was the voice of God that drove him into politics. His central message had an underlying evangelical slant: by being President he would drive out the “nest of demons” in Parliament. Nevertheless, he promised, among other things: full development of gold, timber, agricultural and the other resources of the country; free education and health facilities; and better housing and electricity. The GBG did not contest any of the regional seats.

Guyana Democratic Party (GDP) *Presidential candidate: Mr Asgar Ally (party symbol – house; party motto – ‘Organisation and Management’)*. The party was formed in 1997. Its leader and presidential candidate was Finance Minister in the 1992-97 PPP government. In launching the party manifesto he said it was his party’s contract with the people. His was a capitalist party which would give entrepreneurs the confidence to invest in Guyana. The party planned to make education its top priority but also said that central to its vision for Guyana would be infrastructure development to encourage investment flows into, among other things, manufacturing, natural resources, tourism and agriculture. The GDP did not contest the regional seats in Region 8.

Justice For All Party (JFAP) *Presidential candidate: Mr C N Sharma (party symbol – scale; party motto – ‘Vote For a Change Not For Race’)*. The leader and presidential candidate claimed to speak for the disinherited poor and was the owner of a television channel which he used to highlight the plight of the poor and to campaign against injustice. He promised, among other things: lowering the cost of living; free trade with Guyana’s Latin American neighbours and CARICOM; land rights to Amerindians; protection and care for the disadvantaged such as pensioners, street children and women; and the resolution of the ethnic problem. The only region in which the JFAP contested for the regional seats was Region 4.

National Democratic Front (NDF) *Presidential candidate: Mr Joseph Bacchus (party symbol – factory; party motto – ‘A Better Way of Life’)*. The party has had a long history under the same leader without much recent electoral support. Among other things, it promised a free enterprise market system; free education from kindergarten to high school and better pay for teachers; priority for low-cost housing for low-income earners; the creation of a welfare state and fostering racial unity. The NDF participated in the contest for regional seats only in Region 10.

National Independent Party (NIP) *Presidential candidate: Mr Saphier Husain (party symbol – jagged concentric circles; party motto – ‘Illumination, Modernisation, Unity’)*. The leader and presidential candidate was a lawyer who had been active on various constitutional issues and in his party’s manifesto promised, among other things, a new constitution; amnesty to squatters and title to land; and greater involvement for young people in his administration. The NIP did not contest any of the regional seats.

People’s National Congress (PNC) *Presidential candidate: Mr Hugh Desmond Hoyte (party symbol – palm tree; party motto – ‘Making A Difference’)*. With the exception of the five years of the last parliament the PNC had been the ruling party since independence, losing the elections of 1992 to its main rival, the PPP. In launching its manifesto on 8 December 1997 the PNC sought to emphasise its commitment to confronting and combating corruption; challenging drug trafficking, money laundering and violent crime; and improvement of the justice system. It also highlighted a number of priorities, among these: development of the education system; improvement of the standard of living; social justice to protect the poor and disadvantaged; the encouragement of private initiative; and honest, decent, competent and efficient government. The PNC contested both the national and regional seats in all 10 regions.

People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) *Presidential candidate: Mrs Janet Jagan (party symbol – cup; party motto – ‘Continued Progress in the 21st Century’)*. The PPP was the dominant political force in Guyana and held the reins of government from the introduction of universal suffrage in 1953 until it lost power in 1964 to the combined forces of the PNC and The United Force. It remained out of office for the next 28 years until it regained power at the 1992 elections under the leadership of its co-founder, the late Dr Cheddi Jagan. At the 1992 elections the PPP introduced a civic element in its slate in order to broaden its electoral appeal, a practice that it has maintained. Throughout the campaign and in launching its manifesto the PPP/C sought to underline its achievement in office. It emphasised a balanced economic and social development; social stability

and harmonious inter-ethnic relations; a heightened democratic involvement at all levels; and the eradication of poverty. The PPP/C contested both the national and regional seats in all 10 regions.

The United Force (TUF) Presidential candidate: *Mr Manzoor Nadir (party symbol – sun; party motto – ‘Meaningful Change’)*. TUF was founded in 1961 and played a critical role in the early political development of Guyana. In the 1964 elections it won seven seats, which led it into government in a coalition partnership with the PNC. Its political fortunes declined in the subsequent years, but it won one seat at the 1992 elections. In its manifesto it highlighted, among other things: strengthening community ties and people investment; creation and implementation of innovative solutions to unemployment and crime; sound financial management; better health care and basic services. TUF contested both national and regional seats in all 10 regions.

Inter-Party Relationships

During the period immediately prior to the elections, contact between the political parties, while not openly hostile, was not as accommodating as it might have been. Although we understood that the existence of an Inter-Party Committee on Electoral Reform had helped, to an extent, to take some heat out of the situation, a number of the opposition political parties had complained that they had been denied fair media treatment and access to vital information relating to the elections. Since membership of the committee had been restricted to the four political parties that were represented in the last parliament it appeared to have generated a feeling of exclusion among the other parties. That also seemed to have been the case with regard to the work of the Elections Commission, in which only the four parties that had won seats in the last parliament were represented. However, the Commission was generally acknowledged by most political parties to have done a commendable job in the run-up to the elections, a view that we share.

Chapter 2

The Administrative and Legislative Framework and Preparations for the Elections

Administrative and Legislative Framework

The Constitution of Guyana sets out the electoral system and the management machinery that govern the conduct of elections. Fifty-three members of the National Assembly are elected in accordance with a system of proportional representation. The Constitution provides the following:

- votes shall be cast throughout Guyana in favour of lists of candidates;
- each elector shall have one vote and may cast it in favour of the lists;
- the seats of the said 53 elected members in the Assembly shall be allocated between the lists in such a manner that the proportion that the number of such seats allocated to each list bears to the number of votes cast in favour of the list is as nearly as may be the same for each list;

and further that:

- each of the 10 regional democratic councils elects one of its members to serve as a member of the National Assembly; and
- the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs elects two of its members to serve as members of the National Assembly.

The election management body was established by a Constitutional Amendment Act of 1995. It established an Elections Commission, which consists of a chairman and six members. In order to ensure balance and impartiality, the appointment of the Chairman is made by the President from a list of six persons, who are not unacceptable to the President, and who are submitted by the Minority Leader after consultation with the political parties (other than the party to which the President belongs) represented in the National Assembly. The Chairman of the Commission is required to be a citizen of Guyana and have the same qualifications as a High Court Judge or a Judge of the Court of Appeal in any part of the Commonwealth, and be a fit and proper person to be appointed to that office.

The six members are appointed as follows:

- (a) three members are to be appointed by the President, acting in his own deliberate judgment; and
- (b) three members are to be appointed by the President acting in accordance with the advice of the Minority Leader, tendered after consultation with political parties (other than the party to which the President belongs) represented in the National Assembly.

The procedure for the removal of the Chairman and members of the Commission is set out in the Constitution (see *Annex X*).



Vote here ... the buildings to be used as polling stations were clearly identified in advance by means of Elections Commission notices such as these

The Commission has wide powers to make appointments to election offices, to remove and to exercise disciplinary control over election officers. These powers extend to officers who hold certain posts relating to registration of voters under the National Registration Act.

In addition to the Commission, the election personnel consists of a Chief Election Officer, returning officers, deputy returning officers, election clerks, presiding officers, assisting presiding officers and poll clerks. For the purposes of registration of voters, the Commission exercises control over the Commissioner of Registration, the Deputy Commissioner of Registration, district supervisors, registrars, deputy registrars and divisional registrars.

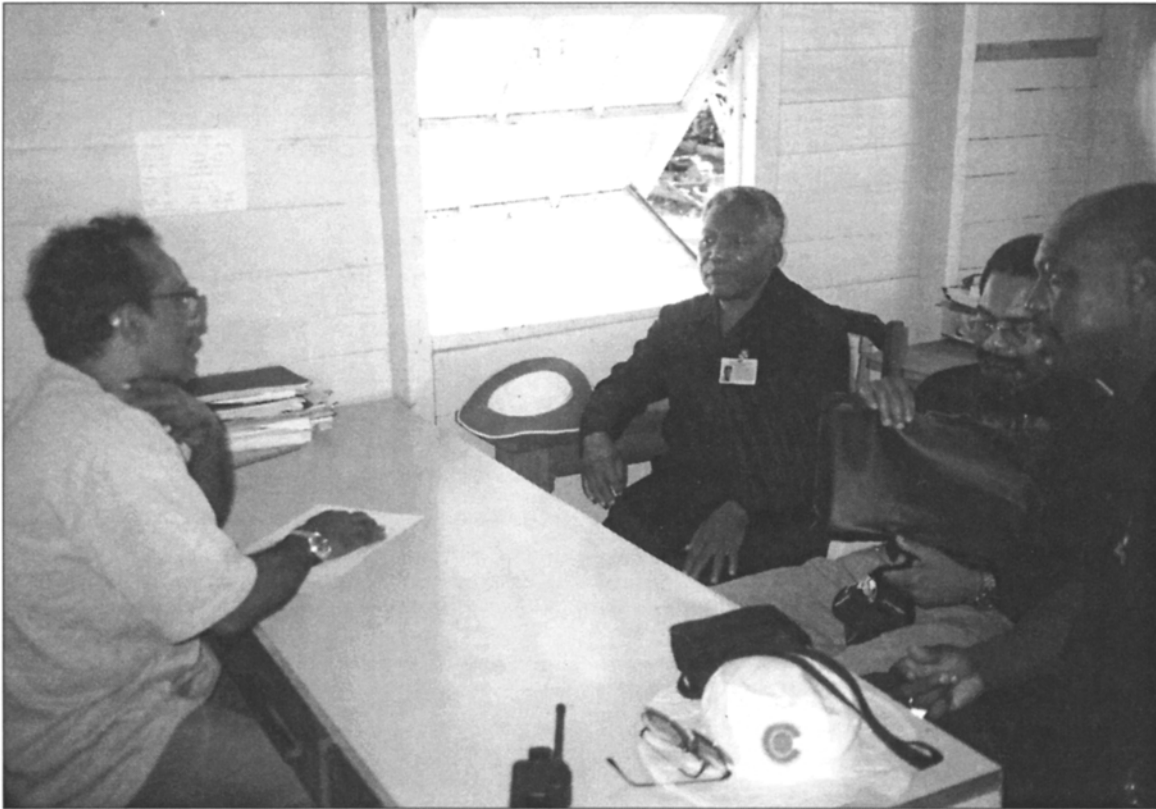
The Elections Commission's functions include the exercise of general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of elections of members of the National Assembly. The Commission is vested with the power to take the necessary action to ensure impartiality, fairness and compliance with the Constitution or any Act of Parliament by any election officer.

The statutory framework for governing elections is constituted by the Representation of the People Act as amended (CAP 1:03). It provides for the Elections Commission to cause a voters' register to be prepared and to make preparations for the holding of elections.

Preparations for the Elections

Voters' Register

The size of the register was 461,369 electors. We did not observe the conduct of the registration process, which was completed before our arrival in Georgetown. The representatives of the Elections Commission who met us explained the procedure followed in preparing the voters' register. One Returning Officer for each of the 10 regions was appointed to supervise the registration of all



Briefing ... after three days of briefings in the capital Observers deployed across the country: here a regional official of the Elections Commission describes his preparations to the Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group and colleagues

Guyanese aged 14 and over as at October 1996. On 1 January 1997, a preliminary list of voters was extracted from the database of registered nationals who would be age 18 and over as at 1 September 1997. The procedure for claims and objections in respect of the preliminary voters' list was followed and a revised list was prepared which, after final auditing, became the official voters' list.

After the completion of the compilation of the voters' list, the production and distribution of the Voter Identification Cards followed. Although the Commission expressed satisfaction with the high percentage of distribution (over 90 per cent) of the ID cards, most of the political parties, NGOs and many others expressed dissatisfaction that many voters had not received their Voter Identification Cards, without which they could not vote. Many reasons were given to us as to why some cards remained undelivered. For example, some voters had been out of the country, some were indigenous miners who would not return home until Christmas, some might have died since registration, some simply did not wish to vote (for reasons of conscience), and some had either lost or changed their jobs and left the place where they were registered.

The number of lost cards reported remained few (five cases in all) and this was not considered to be a serious problem. There was a reported problem regarding the sale of Voter Identification Cards, but it did not appear to have been a serious threat to the integrity of the process.

Most of the political parties we met expressed their general satisfaction with the conduct of the registration exercise and its extent of completeness. Many of the NGOs (including women's groups and representatives of religious bodies) expressed the view that the Commission had done a good job regarding the registration of voters. However, some political parties expressed concern about the number of Voter Identification Cards that had not been distributed in some areas, particularly in Region 4, the largest region (in terms of population) which includes the capital, Georgetown. We brought this complaint to the attention of the Elections Commission which acknowledged that a problem had existed in that respect and indicated that it had taken steps to remedy it. The

Chairman of the Commission told us that every effort was being made to deliver Voter Identification Cards by the original cut-off date of 13 December 1997. This date was extended subsequently to Monday 15 December (election day) for interior regions and Sunday 14 December for other regions.

During the voting of the Disciplined Forces (Wednesday 10 December 1997), we came across cases where voters had their Voter Identification Cards but their names were not on the register. At first, they were turned away without being allowed to vote, but by mid-morning on Disciplined Forces polling day, the Commission announced that the names of such persons should be entered on the register at the polling station and that they should be allowed to vote. This procedure only applied to voting by the Disciplined Forces and not to general voting on 15 December 1997 (although arrangements for the general voting were later revised – see below).

Polling Places

Polling places were selected with a view to ensuring a smooth flow of the voting and reasonably good quality election services to the voters. Thus the number of polling places was increased significantly to a total of 1,844. The majority of these places were public buildings or schools, but private premises were also used. In the case of private premises, care was taken to ensure that premises owned by political party officials or activists were not used as polling places. Polling places had to be of sufficient size and appropriate layout to properly accommodate polling staff, party agents and both international and local observers.

The Commission decided to subdivide some polling stations, in order to ease the congestion at the large stations which existed in 1992. The larger stations were established on geographical rather than demographic lines. As a result, some stations were still disproportionately larger than others in terms of the number of registered voters. Some stations which had been split therefore had to be re-merged and then subdivided again, by alphabet, to ensure the most even division. The Elections Commission stated that the public was to be advised of the re-subdivision but this information was not readily available.

Selection and Training of Election Officers

The Elections Commission was better prepared in identifying polling stations than in the 1992 elections. There were a number of changes in the siting of polling stations during the last two months and 12 changes in the last week. In 1992 there had been significantly more changes, many on the eve of the elections. Five criteria for selecting polling officers were established:

- attendance at training programmes;
- score on training evaluations;
- previous experience (range of 1-5);
- proximity to polling station (range 1-5);
- maturity (age).

The Human Resource Department of the Elections Commission trained 99 per cent of the polling officers, as opposed to 58 per cent in 1992. Following complaints that applicants for work in polling stations were not selected for training, an open door policy for any interested persons to attend the training was established.

The training programme had varied results, due to time constraints and facilitator variation. Inconsistencies were noted, including instruction which was in conflict with the materials in the training manuals prepared by the Elections Commission. Although a video cassette was prepared to standardise the training, last minute changes added to the misinformation being passed onto the polling officers. These changes included:

- the stamping of ballots (from once to twice);
- the punching of Voter Identification Cards;
- allowing party agents to scrutinise the cards;
- where uncollected cards should be kept on polling day.

In one specific case, the request from one party that Voter Identification Cards thereafter be placed in the canvas bag rather than the sealed ballot box was translated into standard procedure, although the Elections Commission ruling was always that the cards be placed in the ballot box.

The Elections Commission had set in place and trained the Presiding Officers in the reporting procedures to be followed at the end of the count. The procedure in all regions was for the Presiding Officer to transmit the results and transfer the ballot boxes to the Deputy Returning Officer who was then to pass them on to the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer was responsible for sending the materials to the Chief Election Officer. This process was to be supported by the direct communication of the results to the Chief Election Officer by the Presiding Officers. However, it would appear that these procedures failed to function, resulting in confusion in tallying the results.

Voter Education Programmes

The Commission established a Voter Education and Information Unit with financial and other forms of assistance from international organisations. The programme of activities included a workshop for the Indigenous Peoples Organisation and a voter hot-line and communication network. Further workshops were held for the news media, women, trade union leaders, religious organisations and youth and students. Representatives from all political parties were invited to participate in the workshops.

The voter education process was divided into three phases. Phase One was designed to create awareness at the national level. The programme was aimed at organisations with major representation in the capital including political parties, churches, trade unions, the business community and organisations representing the Amerindian community. All programmes were centralised in Georgetown.

Phase Two focused on outreach at the regional and district levels and targeted in particular NGOs, religious groups, political groupings, trades union, district and village organisations. Due to financial and time constraints Regions 8 and 10 did not participate in this phase of the programme.

Phase Three focused on building community alliances. Public meetings were held in outlying districts to provide information to community leaders and clarify the voting process so that information could be disseminated to members of the community.

Each of the three phases was accompanied by sub-components – including flyers, posters, banners, stickers and buttons – which were used to promote awareness of the claims and objections period of the voter registration process. Special shirts were worn by registration officials for identification and public awareness.

Acquisition of Materials

Of the 1,844 ballot boxes sent to polling stations 1,841 were used. The three which were unused (two in Region 2 and one in Region 4) were assigned to polling stations designated for essential services personnel. However, as they had been allowed to vote along with the Disciplined Forces on 10 December these stations were no longer necessary. Almost all the ballot boxes had been acquired specifically for these elections. Ballot boxes and non-sensitive supplies were sent to Returning Officers seven days prior to voting. Ballot papers, ink and the Presiding Officer's seal were sent out three days prior to voting.

The ballot papers were printed in Trinidad and Tobago. This decision was taken by the Chairman of the Elections Commission based on the threat of industrial action at the government

printing office. Some of the other members of the Elections Commission and some political parties criticised the decision to have the ballots printed outside the country.

Ballots were printed with a surplus of 5 per cent. Some 500,100 ballots were printed (of which 11,100 were set aside for tendered ballots and 10,050 for the voting of the Disciplined Forces). Ballot books were printed in quantities of 100, 50 and 10, depending on the district to which they were being sent and the Returning Officer was given the ballots for each region. A Ballot Allocation Sheet was prepared indicating the number of ballots sent to each district.

Security

Security on election day was the responsibility of the police, who had been trained to deal with incidents which might occur on polling day. However, the limited size of the police force would not allow for a police presence at each polling station. Consequently, rural constables and other security personnel were used. A security and logistics unit was established by the Elections Commission to assist in co-ordinating the security arrangements for the elections with the army and police. The security unit was responsible for ensuring that all polling stations were supported by a tactical services unit.

While rural constables helped to keep the peace on polling day, concerns were raised about the appropriateness of placing them in charge of the transportation of ballot boxes.

Nominations

In accordance with the Representation of the People Act (CAP 1:03, Section 11) and the Election Laws (Amendment) Act 1997, Act No. 22 of 1997, the Elections Commission – by Notice published in the Official Gazette – appointed the day on which lists of candidates were to be submitted to the Chief Election Officer by the representative of the list.

Any list of candidates that did not reflect the required number of candidates, and/or nominators, as specified under the Act was refused approval by the Elections Commission. The representative of the list of candidates had the right to appeal to the High Court against such refusal. Originally 21 political parties put themselves forward for the General and Regional Elections. The process of nomination and approval eventually reduced the number to 10 (see Chapter 1).

Chapter 3

The Campaign and the Media

The Campaign

When we arrived in Georgetown the campaign was well under way, and although there were relatively few posters in and around the city there could be no doubt that elections were imminent. With nine days to go before the General and Regional Elections there were regular rallies and meetings by the larger political parties and all sections of the Press were full of campaign advertising and news. The number of people attending rallies depended on who was speaking. We attended the launch of the PPP/C manifesto in Georgetown. Several political party activists involved in the elections in 1992 said that the nature of the campaign had changed and that the expanded broadcast media was playing a more significant role.

We attended as many rallies as we could, in the Georgetown area and in many other parts of the country. The general view of the campaign period, from our own observations and as reported to us, was that it was peaceful, notwithstanding the isolated incidents of intimidation and stone throwing that took place. As the election date drew nearer there was an increase in negative campaigning, such as the defacing of billboards and tearing down of posters. There were incidents in which the houses of known political activists living in areas in which other parties had a stranglehold were stoned. Later the presidential candidates of both the PPP/C and the PNC were pelted with stones and eggs during separate rallies.

The security section of the Commission worked closely with the police and army, whose task was to assist the Commission to ensure that conditions existed in which every voter would be able to vote in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. Both the police and army Commands attached senior officers to the Commission to keep their respective headquarters informed of developments.

Our teams were deployed in all 10 regions of the country in time to witness the closing stages of the political campaigns. We paid attention to the security presence at the rallies and noted that there were police attending all large meetings and most of the small ones. In several regions the police prevented rallies from taking place within half-a-mile of each other, in order to avert potential clashes between supporters of rival parties. In Linden, for example, the police made the PNC move its final rally to another location nearby in order to avoid potential trouble between their supporters and those of the GGG, which was holding a meeting close by. Similarly, in New Amsterdam a GGG rally was brought to an abrupt end by the police because a PNC meeting was due to start shortly in the same place.

We noted that at many of the rallies there was a strong presence of young people and some families had brought their babies. Reggae bands and other popular local musicians played at the large rallies before the crowds were addressed by the politicians, and this gave the meetings a carnival atmosphere. Large convoys of cars belonging to party supporters gathered at a place nearby; as the motorcades snaked their way to the rallies the vehicles tooted their horns; and as they approached the rally venue the supporters used megaphones to sing the praises of their party. The police presence at the rallies we attended was not intimidatory.

In some areas, such as Region 3, we noted that there was a very fine line between the work done by some people in their role as government officials and their work as party representatives. It was noticed that some of the government offices there had campaign posters of the PPP/C's candidates next to those for voter education. Some leaflets distributed at a PPP/C rally in Region 4 were printed by the Ministry of Information.

The content of the speeches at the rallies varied and as the election date grew closer the number of personal attacks by politicians from all parties on their opponents increased, as did the crowds.



Campaigning ... party vehicles toured the towns urging support for their candidates

Racial undertones were perceived by some to be behind many platform statements by some politicians. There were occasional incidents of threats and intimidation. Despite these, many Guyanese with whom we spoke expressed satisfaction and indeed delight at the quality of the campaign. It was felt that the political parties in general dealt with issues, rather than concentrating on negative propaganda. The quality of the election campaign may have been helped by the publication of party manifestos. In spite of late publication these helped to focus debate on action plans and policies.

The Role of the Media

The media is very active in Guyana and the number of television stations has increased from four to 17 over the last five years. The Elections Commission sought assistance from the media in informing the public during the campaign and this was given. The print and broadcast media were useful channels through which the Commission could relay information about last minute changes to deadlines for collecting Voter Identification Cards and voting procedures. The Chairman of the Elections Commission and his staff gave frequent interviews to the media and the newspapers printed guides to show people the intricacies of the voting process. The Commission also used the media to inform people who had not collected their Voter Identification Cards where they could get them.

Access by Political Parties

Following advice from the Inter-Party Committee on Electoral Reform formed by the four political parties represented in parliament, the Guyana Broadcasting Corporation allocated free time on state

radio and television according to the number of seats that each party had held in parliament. The six other parties – which were not represented in parliament but which were contesting the elections – were also given some free time on the state broadcasting media, but they were not satisfied with their allocation. The breakdown of time allocated to the political parties on Guyana Television is detailed below:

PPP/C	14 programmes each of 10 minutes
PNC	10 programmes each of 10 minutes
WPA/AFG	1 programme of 10 minutes
TUF	1 programme of 10 minutes

The six other parties were allocated one five-minute programme each. The PPP/C used all the slots that it was allocated, while the PNC used only half of its slots. The WPA/AFG and the six contesting parties which were not represented in parliament did not use the time allocated to them. Guyana Television did not know why the parties did not use all the time they were allocated.

Paid Political Messages

The radio and television stations frequently aired the snappy jingles advertisements paid for by the political parties. The PPP/C and the PNC had far more advertisements than the other parties and had hired experienced external agencies to produce them. These political messages featured fewer personal attacks on opponents than did the speeches at rallies.

The majority of the paid political messages broadcast were about the PPP/C and the PNC, with the PPP/C having bought more time on Guyana Television than any other party. The station did not offer any discounts to any political party.

The Print Media

There are several newspapers in Guyana. The only dailies are the government-owned *Guyana Chronicle* and the private *Stabroek News*. Both of these newspapers have a daily circulation of about 20,000 copies and their Sunday editions have almost twice that. The *Guyana Chronicle* has a slightly higher circulation and also a better distribution system. We noted that the *Guyana Chronicle* and the *Stabroek News* were also being sold in Regions 9 and 10.

Both the *Guyana Chronicle* and the *Stabroek News* increased their print run for the elections and carried numerous full-page advertisements from all parties, featuring their manifestos and rally timetables, although most were from the PPP/C and the PNC. For example, the edition of the *Guyana Chronicle* published three days before the elections had the equivalent of nine pages of party political advertisements and a further three pages of election news in a 40-page newspaper. The shareholders of the *Stabroek News* include among their number supporters of different political parties.

Other newspapers in the country include the *New Nation*, the *Mirror*, *Kaitaur News* and the *Catholic Standard*. The *New Nation* is perceived to support the PNC, while the bi-weekly *Mirror*, which has a circulation of 20,000, was for many years edited by the presidential candidate of the PPP/C, Mrs Janet Jagan. The *Kaitaur News*, which is printed on Fridays, has a circulation of 30,000, while that of the weekly *Catholic Standard* is 3,000.

The print media also carried advertisements from the Elections Commission explaining the voting process. Both the government and the opposition parties alleged that the print media was biased.

Radio and Television

Despite the increase in the number of television stations over the last few years, none of these is broadcast around the entire country. Most of the stations cover Georgetown and its environs, but



Party posters ... especially outside Georgetown every available space was plastered by posters depicting the parties' presidential candidates: here PPP/C posters adorn an earth mover (above), while PNC posters decorate the entrance to a restaurant (opposite)

the state-owned Guyana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) records its 6 p.m. news bulletin and sends it to television stations in Linden and New Amsterdam, where it is rebroadcast the next morning. Most of the programming consists mainly of American entertainment programmes and the television stations do not carry much local news.

There are no private radio stations to compete with the state-owned GBC, which runs two stations. Although it has countrywide reach, due to the difficulties of terrain the remoter regions of the interior receive GBC sporadically and then only at night. The stations owned by the GBC are Radio Roraima on FM 101.1 and the Voice of Guyana on FM 760 and 560 AM, which has a nationwide reach. Although viewers were seen using battery-powered televisions in Region 5 the majority of people receive their news from the radio.

Access to the Media

The Elections Commission published a set of guidelines for the media and contesting political parties. These guidelines called on the media to be 'fair, balanced and as far as it is possible objective whether privately or publicly owned'. The Commission recommended that radio time should be allocated to political parties in parliament proportionate to the number of seats they had held, and that contesting political parties without parliamentary representation should also be given broadcast time. The presidential candidates were offered the opportunity to take part in a radio phone-in programme that offered the public the chance to telephone in and quiz them directly. Several parties took up this offer.

One presidential candidate, Mr C N Sharma, owned a television station, Channel 12, on which he offered his rivals the chance to have an interview broadcast. Channel 12 claimed that it had offered every political party 10 minutes per week of free airtime. The station broadcast nine interviews supplied to it by the PPP/C, but despite this it claimed that relations between it and this party were frayed. The editors of Channel 12 did not deny that they gave Mr Sharma a lot of airtime, but said that this was because he could not afford to buy time on other stations and therefore all his advertising was concentrated on this station. In order to encourage other parties



to advertise on their station Channel 12 reduced its advertising rates for political parties by almost 30 per cent during the election period.

The PPP/C alleged that the private media was very partial to the opposition, which in turn maintained that the state media favoured the PPP/C. Journalists from the state-owned broadcast and print media said that they were under pressure to highlight stories that portrayed the Government in a favourable light and to ignore opposition activities. One broadcast journalist recalled being called by the Minister of Information and questioned as to why a positive story about the opposition had been run. The allegations of bias by both government and opposition media were supported by a report made by the independent Electoral Assistance Bureau.

Adherence to Media Guidelines

The Elections Commission guidelines on paid political messages stipulated that all parties should have equal access to the broadcast time slots and schedule for broadcast media and that there should be similar equitable access, space and location for the print media. On the whole, these guidelines for paid political messages were followed; however the broadcast media did not always specify that some of the messages were paid political messages. Some parties had more funding than others and were therefore able to buy more space in the media. This led to further allegations from the smaller parties that the media was biased. However, Guyana Television (GTV) denied that it was partisan and stated that it adhered to the media guidelines.

GTV broadcast a disclaimer at the end of the longer political broadcasts stating that they were party political broadcasts. However, the station admitted that this disclaimer was not transmitted after every party political broadcast.

The Debates

The radio phone-in programmes, in which the public could question politicians directly, were very popular and attracted many listeners. Some of the political parties listened-in to what their rivals

were saying on these programmes and were quick to highlight what they thought were political errors and to rebut allegations. Many of the television channels broadcast interviews with the presidential candidates. The state-owned GTV turned over its regular weekly programme, *One on One*, to interviews with the presidential candidates of the parties contesting the elections. The PPP/C, PNC, GGG, AFG, GDP, JFAP and NIP candidates were interviewed on this programme.

Plans to televise a debate between the main presidential candidates fell through a couple of days before it was scheduled to be broadcast. There were numerous reasons cited by different parties as to why this eagerly anticipated debate was dropped. According to GTV, which was supposed to broadcast this debate, the Caribbean Broadcasting Union which was preparing the programme, was not able to produce it. The original programme was supposed to feature the PPP/C and PNC presidential candidates and a presidential candidate from one of the other eight political parties. However, the eight parties could not agree on which one of them would put forward a candidate to take part in the debate. Other reports in the Press alleged that one political party thought that the proposed moderator of the debate favoured one of the political parties scheduled to take part.

Intimidation and Violence

There were two separate incidents during which the leaders of the PPP/C and the PNC were stoned. Other minor scuffles were reported but the police were deployed at each rally and no major incidents of violence or intimidation were reported during the campaign.

The Electoral Assistance Bureau

The Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) is a Guyanese NGO set up in 1991 with the main objective of 'assisting in the establishment, maintenance and preservation of democracy, in particular the establishment and maintenance of democratic elections.' The EAB is sponsored by 11 local organisations and associations. These are the Guyana Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana, the Guyana Central Arya Samaj, the Consumer Advisory Bureau, the Guyana Consumers Association, the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union, the Private Sector Commission, the Guyana Bar Association and the Guyana Medical Association. The EAB is funded and assisted by various national and international donors including United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the National Democratic Institute.

The EAB had been monitoring the media in Guyana, had conducted surveys and produced reports. The surveys stated, in summary, that the government media favours the government while some private media is partisan towards the opposition.

Chapter 4

The Poll and Count

The Disciplined Forces Poll – 10 December 1997

On Wednesday 10 December we observed voting by the Disciplined Forces, which included the police, the defence force, the prison service and the national service. This provided us with an opportunity to observe voters using the newly introduced Voter Identification Card for the first time. Separate lists for the voting of the Disciplined Forces were extracted from the general list on the basis of a list of names provided to the Elections Commission by the relevant service. Special Balloting Places, which were usually located within the perimeters of the service concerned, were designated for the poll.

At the beginning of the poll, the number of voters on the extracted lists totalled some 5,853. Many voters voted early and the operation was virtually over by mid-day. Although polling went smoothly in most regions and at most polling stations, at some centres there was confusion. This was caused mainly by the absence from the voters' list of electors who were in possession of their Voter Identification Cards. However, the Chairman of the Elections Commission decided that, as an exception, members of the Disciplined Forces could vote at their designated polling place, even if they were not on the list for that polling station, provided they produced their Voter Identification Cards. Their names were then added to the list and they were allowed to exercise their franchise.

In the event, on 10 December, a total of 5,901 voters exercised their right to vote as members of the Disciplined Forces at 51 polling places. We were impressed by the smooth running of the voting process at the 18 polling stations we visited and formed the view that this augured well for the voting on election day.

We had been made to believe, pursuant to Section 10 of the *Manual for Presiding Officers and Polling Place Staff* issued by the Elections Commission under the Representation of the People Act (CAP 1:03), that the ballots cast by the Disciplined Forces *must* be intermixed with and counted on election day at a designated polling place in each electoral district together with the ballots cast at that polling place. However, we were concerned to note that this was not done. Instead, we were surprised to find that the results of the Disciplined Forces vote had been declared and published separately in the *Chronicle* of 17 December, showing the way they had voted. The Commission confirmed to us that it had released the results to the *Chronicle* in the form in which they were published. We believe this to have been unfortunate because of the potentially damaging implications it could have for the integrity and secrecy of the ballot by a relatively small, but none the less important, section of the electorate.*

* The Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission subsequently wrote to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, to explain that: "the counting procedures stipulated in Sections 65L and 87 of the Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03 of the Laws of Guyana were replaced by Section 7 of the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act No. 30 of 1990, which removed the requirement for the ballot papers taken from the ballot boxes into which members of the disciplined forces had placed their ballots, and for these ballots to be intermixed and counted with other ballots. In these circumstances, it is indeed unfortunate that the *Manual for Presiding Officers and Polling Place Staff* provided for intermixing of Ballot Papers of the disciplined forces. This was an error which I personally explained to the observers of the Commonwealth Group, and for which I apologised on my behalf and on behalf of the supporting staff in the electoral process."



Forces vote ... Commonwealth Observer Dr Hetherwick Ntaba at a polling station during the Disciplined Forces vote on 10 December: over 5,000 police, soldiers and other members of the Disciplined Forces voted, five days before everyone else

Events on Polling Day – 15 December 1997

On Monday 15 December 1997, polling stations were scheduled to open at 6 a.m. for the General and Regional Elections. We travelled by road or boat to the polling stations where we had decided in advance to observe the opening of the poll. We arrived in good time to witness the opening of the poll in the regions to which we had been deployed. Many voters also arrived well before polling stations opened. Although most polling stations opened on time, in a few cases the opening of the poll was delayed, mostly due to the late arrival of ballot boxes but also because of a shortage of materials. However, these problems were speedily remedied and voting got under way.

Under the Representation of the People Act (CAP 1:03), the Elections Commission prepared a *Manual for Presiding Officers and Polling Place Staff* for use during the conduct of the General and Regional Elections. Presiding Officers were meticulous in ensuring the transparency of the process prior to the opening of the poll. This included:

- the sealing of ballot boxes after showing party agents and those present that they were empty;
- random selection, involving polling place staff and party agents, of a six-digit number for the official mark to be used on ballots;
- preparation of the paraphernalia necessary to the conduct of the poll;
- signing and witnessing of the poll book;
- the synchronisation of watches.

Since the last General and Regional Elections in 1992, the number of polling stations had been increased from 987 to 1,844. In addition, no more than 350 voters would cast their ballot at any polling station. This enabled speedier voting and less congestion at polling stations. Most polling centres were located in schools, community centres and public buildings. A few were located in



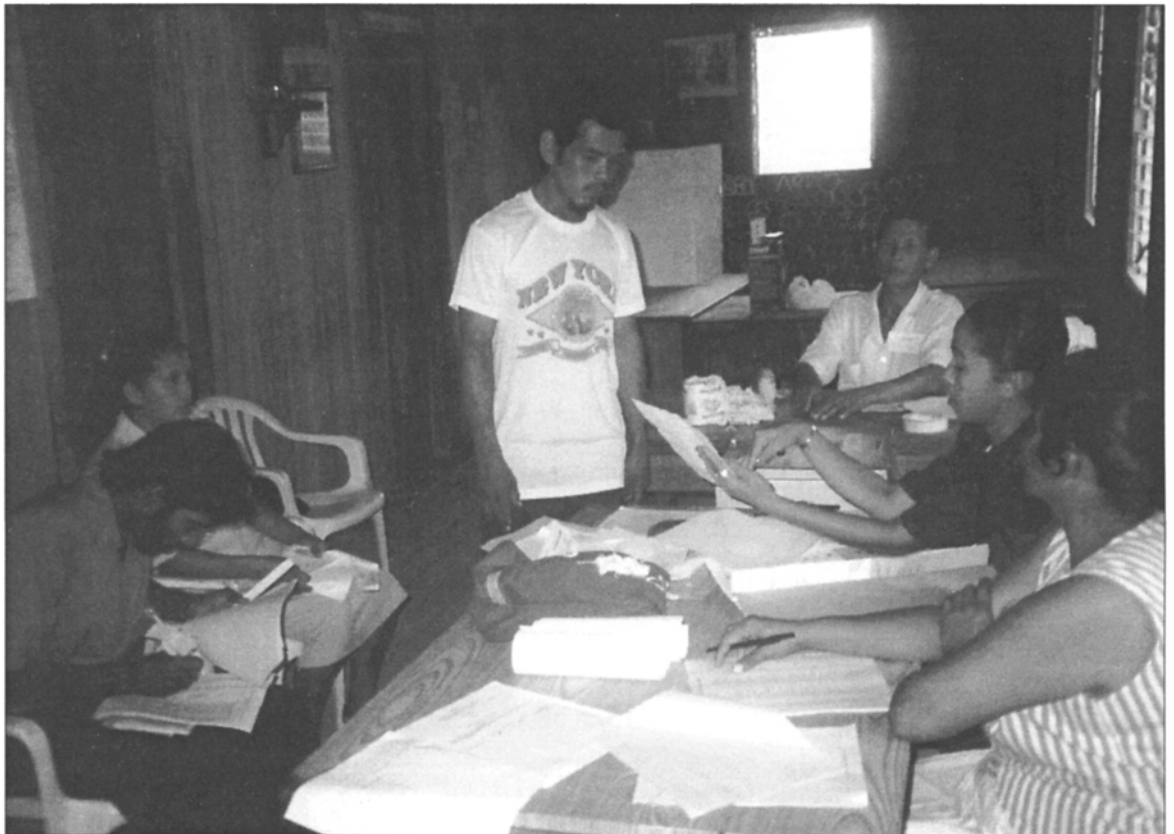
Election day ... voters queue to enter a polling station in Mabaruma, near the border with Venezuela: the number of polling stations was almost doubled for these elections

shops and private residences. In the majority of cases, polling stations were well lit and there was adequate space for accommodating the electors as well as polling place staff, party agents and observers. But some polling stations were cramped and had inadequate lighting. We observed that at some polling stations polling booths might have been better situated. Nevertheless, in all the cases we observed the secrecy of the ballot was assured. Where separate entrances and exits were available, it enabled an easier flow and more organised processing of voters.

In general, several polling stations were located at one polling place. This enabled us to observe voting in more polling stations than would normally have been possible. Observers in one region were informed by the Deputy Returning Officer for that region of arrangements in place for voting by mobile poll in riverine areas. We were also informed of arrangements in some regions for voting at mobile polls which would arrive by air. As this was clearly advantageous, consideration should be given to making the arrangements generally applicable.

In Regions 5 and 7 we noted the tremendous efforts made to ensure that voters in far-flung areas were provided with transport so that they could reach their designated polling stations. We were also satisfied that polling stations in these areas were adequately staffed and equipped on polling day.

The majority of Presiding Officers appeared to be well-trained in the procedures to be followed prior to the opening of the poll and during the voting process. On the whole, they were professional and took pains to explain the procedures to voters. However, there were inconsistencies. In some cases the official six-digit mark was stamped on the back of the ballot papers and in others the stamp was placed on the front. While most Presiding Officers stamped the ballot papers twice, i.e., at the top for the General Election and at the bottom for the Regional Election, in some cases ballot papers were stamped in only one place. The latter presented some difficulties at the count and at one polling station counting could only proceed after agreement had been reached between party agents and the Presiding Officer that the second stamp could be placed on the ballot papers. In most cases, Voter Identification Cards were placed in the ballot box after being checked for their



Inside ... (top) officials get ready and are observed by party agents, Commonwealth Observer Bishop Johnson and a local observer from the non-governmental Electoral Assistance Bureau; (bottom) the Presiding Officer explains the procedure to a voter: the ballot box is on his left

authenticity. However, in a few cases we observed that they were placed in the canvas bag provided for the storage of Voter Identification Cards after the count.

In most cases the punched Voter Identification Cards were placed in the ballot box after the ballot paper had been given to voters, but before the vote had been cast. This procedure varied from station to station and in a few cases Voter Identification Cards were placed in the ballot boxes along with the ballots. We also found that the placing of the ink next to the ballot box allowed some voters to cast their ballot before their fingers were stained. At some polling stations only the serial number and name of the voter were announced; while at others the serial number, voter identification number, name and occupation were announced.

While some Presiding Officers were able to follow the procedures for voting by proxy with confidence, others were clearly unfamiliar with the process. In one instance, for example, voting was delayed for 20 minutes while clarification of the proper procedure was sought. However, the above incidents were relatively few and on the whole the system worked well.

The presence of security officers at all polling centres was discreet. We witnessed no intimidation and voters appeared comfortable with the arrangements. The use of rural constables seemed to have been particularly effective and polling centres were orderly.

Voters who were in possession of a Voter Identification Card were required to cast their ballot at the polling station at which their names appeared on the voters' list. A late decision by the Elections Commission enabled voters in some regions to cast their ballot at any polling station within the region in which they had been registered. However, such late decisions and last minute instructions or changes made by the Elections Commission did not reach all polling places and did not apply to all areas.

Initial processing of voters was very slow, but as polling staff became familiar with procedures it speeded up considerably and by early afternoon most people who wanted to vote had done so. Voters seemed generally familiar with voting procedures. However, there were some who required assistance and this was provided readily by polling staff.

We were pleased to note that in some Amerindian communities the elderly and infirm were assisted to vote first. At most polling stations in these communities at least one polling officer could speak one or more of the Amerindian dialects. In some places, however, this was not the case and on one occasion the Presiding Officer asked a local observer to act as translator.

We observed some shortcomings on polling day. The main cause of anxiety was the absence from the voters' list of the names of voters in possession of Voter Identification Cards. In a few cases where we were present those voters, if registered in the same region, were allowed to vote and their names were added to the list. In some cases, they were directed to the correct polling station and were able to cast their ballot; in others they were directed to the office of the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer for assistance. There were also a few cases where the Addendum to the voters' list was either not available at the polling station or the Presiding Officer had not been aware of its significance. In those cases voters were allowed to vote only after it was suggested to the Presiding Officer by our Observers that the Addendum should be referred to for verification.

The Elections Commission had provided Certificates of Employment to certain electors in extraordinary circumstances, allowing them to vote at a polling place other than the polling place at which their names appeared on the official list of electors. This included polling officers, nurses and others employed in essential services. We are grateful to the Elections Commission for issuing Certificates of Employment to drivers attached to the Commonwealth Observer Group whose employment on polling day would take them away from their registered polling district.

No cases of fraudulent Voter Identification Cards were noticed or reported. However, there were a few reported cases of voters receiving more than one Voter Identification Card. It was also reported that at one polling station in Region 4 the Presiding Officer did not allow a member of the Disciplined Forces to vote on discovering that his name had already been crossed off the voters' list, suggesting that he had voted on 10 December.



The count ... Presiding Officers were scrupulous in showing other officials and the observers each ballot paper: Commonwealth Observers were generally impressed both with the officials' professionalism and the conduct of the party agents

We received complaints from a number of voters, especially miners and nurses, who were unable to vote because they had moved from the region in which they had registered to a different region. On Sunday 14 December, the day before polling, the Elections Commission announced that some categories of voters, including miners, in some regions, would be allowed to vote at any polling station in the region in which they had been registered. However, while this action on the part of the Elections Commission was commendable, it did not entirely solve the problem. Many miners had left their regions to return to the capital because of the drought or the temporary closure of their mines. Some had not been able to uplift their Voter Identification Cards prior to their departure and, in any event, would not be able to return to the regions in which they had been registered to vote on polling day. We were pleased to learn that planes were chartered on polling day to fly some nurses and miners to the regions in which they had registered so that they could exercise their franchise.

In some mining regions, polling stations had been identified when miners' camps were inhabited. By polling day, however, virtually all the miners had left the region and the polling stations were abandoned. One polling station had been located at a shop but the owner had left the region and the shop had been boarded-up; at another all but three voters had left the area.

The rate of processing varied greatly from station to station depending on the efficiency of polling officers. At one polling station where processing was slow and a bottleneck had built up, the Presiding Officer sought the opinion of one of our Observers on ways of improving the efficiency of the process. Our Observer suggested minor changes, such as allowing fewer voters into the station at any one time and shifting the polling booth to allow greater secrecy. We were struck by the patience of voters and polling staff in cases where such bottlenecks caused a slowing down of voting.

Party agents, particularly those representing the two major parties – the PPP/C and the PNC – were present at all the polling centres we visited. Most appeared to understand their role and function and co-operated with polling officers. We saw no evidence of interference or disruption by party agents or attempts to influence voters. However, at one polling centre a party agent complained to observers that certain party agents were within the 200-yard exclusion limit and had been attempting to sell alcohol to voters. The police officer in charge of the area dealt with the situation swiftly. At another polling place where there were multiple polling stations, agents from one political party had set up a table outside the 200-yard exclusion limit. As voters arrived, they checked their Voter Identification Cards against the electoral list and directed them to the correct polling station. No one expressed concern at this procedure.

We were impressed by the number of local observers who were present at polling stations. The Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) had recruited and trained more than 1,000 local observers and they were present at a large number of polling stations which we visited. They appeared to be well-trained and co-operated with polling officers and party agents to ensure a smooth process.

We were also impressed with the high voter turnout on polling day, confirming the strong support for the elections and the democratic process. We were particularly impressed with the number of women involved in the process – both as polling officers and voters. Our impression was that the majority of voters exercised their franchise without fear or intimidation.

Close of Poll and the Count

In most areas the poll closed as scheduled at 6 p.m. However, where voters were in the queue at that time the prescribed procedure was followed, whereby a security officer stood behind the last person in line at 6 p.m., so that while those in the line were allowed to vote no new arrivals could join the queue.

The *Manual for Presiding Officers and Polling Place Staff* stipulated procedures to be followed at the close of poll. Most polling officers were in possession of the manual and on the whole adhered to the procedures.

The first step in the process was the separation of Voter Identification Cards from ballots. This was a time-consuming process as, in many cases, the cards had slipped between the folds of the ballot and several checks had to be made to ensure that they had all been removed. The Presiding Officer and counting assistant then separated ballots for the General Election from those for the Regional Election. Ballots for the General Election were counted first and Presiding Officers were scrupulous in showing party agents, poll clerks and observers every ballot opened before placing them on the correct pile. Rejected ballots were also meticulously checked and displayed and marked accordingly.

The count was generally orderly and we were impressed with the professionalism of the election officials and the conduct of party agents. The presence of observers was acknowledged and we encountered no difficulty in observing the count. We were further impressed by the spirit of co-operation among all those present.

After each count we attended, the Presiding Officer verified the election results with those in attendance and entered them into an official Statement of Poll. The Presiding Officer then signed this document and requested the signatures of polling agents and, in some cases, those of the observers.

The ballots and all election materials were placed in separately sealed envelopes which were then locked, sealed and signed by several people. The Statement of Poll – the legal document for the official tallying of results by the Elections Commission – was sent in a separately sealed envelope with the ballot box to the District Offices of the Elections Commission and thereafter to the Commission's headquarters in Georgetown. In one case, one observer reported that the envelope with the signed Statement of Poll was placed in the ballot box.

The transit period from polling station to the Commission's headquarters was in some cases expected to be well over 24 hours. However, where possible – and this was the case in most places – the results were either telephoned or radioed into the head office of the Commission.

We found the process of counting to be unnecessarily slow and tedious. In some cases, it took more than three hours to count less than 200 ballots. At some polling stations the lack of proper lighting was a contributing factor while in many centres it was mostly the necessary procedures that made the count last so long. On the whole, in spite of the shortfalls, and the obvious exhaustion of all concerned, the counting was concluded to the satisfaction of all parties.

However, it would appear that the procedures with respect to handling the Statement of Poll were not followed completely in some polling stations, notably in Region 4. For instance, some Statements of Poll were locked in the ballot boxes instead of being sent in a separately sealed envelope; while other Statements of Poll did not have the required validating signatures.

Overall, however, we were impressed with the spirit of the polling staff and their determination to perform their tasks professionally. A notice in the polling station in one region sums up this attitude: 'We are working towards a free, fair, historical transparent and effective election. We can, we must, we will.'

Tallying

Here the problems began. Early election results were first received by telephone and radio, where possible on Monday evening, followed by the ballot boxes and Statements of Poll. This process continued through to Friday 19 December. The procedure adopted by the Commission was that all duly signed Statements of Poll would be fed into the computer. This commenced on Monday 15 December and the Commission was able to announce some initial results (see *Annex XV* for Elections Commission statement on the procedure for verification of Statements of Poll).

The database system initially appeared to be reliable. Problems arose, however, because a significant number of Statements of Poll were unsigned or were absent. Or, as we had occasionally observed, they had not been sent in the designated envelopes provided separately, but had been enclosed in sealed ballot boxes. These Statements of Poll could not be fed into the computer and thus could not be reflected in the tally and reported. The problem was particularly acute in Region 4, which is the largest region and includes Georgetown, accounting for some 200,000 electors.

By late Tuesday 16 December, the Commission realised that the breakdown in the process was causing a severe delay in the declaration of results. At this point, the Elections Commission made a decision to address these problems by involving the political parties in a new process to verify the results from the poll in the presence of observers. The party representatives were requested to meet at the Commission at 8 a.m. on Wednesday 17 December and to bring in their tally sheets for reconciliation with the information that the Commission had received. Out of these the official results would be declared. This process of verification contributed to the unavoidable delay in the declaration of the results, which still remained incomplete three days after polling.

This system was slow, being manual rather than computerised. A declaration of results was further compromised because the Commission failed to organise effectively, or manage efficiently, the tally process in which the political parties had been invited to participate. The tally sheets were not presented in sequential order and this led to double tallying of some polls. Often national and regional results were combined by Presiding Officers as a total. The Commission did not identify these errors until they were pointed out by party agents. In other instances, the national and regional tally sheets had become separated so that only national or only regional votes could be tallied. At this point the Commission was unable to produce the original ballot paper accounts or ballot boxes.

There was a worrying disparity between the results that were agreed between the Commission and party agents and those that were announced by the Chairman of the Commission. We observed that the overall administration of the tallying process by the Commission was not only not transparent but very poor. This exacerbated concerns already expressed by most party representatives.

At 10 p.m. on Wednesday 17 December some of the party representatives, frustrated by the shortcomings in the tally procedures, insisted that the count be halted. The Commission was asked

to ensure that all the relevant documentation be made available and a proper management system put in place before they were prepared to resume the tally.

On Thursday morning, 18 December, the tally resumed with the participation of the party representatives and continued, with some breaks, until 3 a.m. on Friday morning. The delays continued to exacerbate the uncertainty and rumour-mongering rife on the streets.

During the process of verifying the results, we observed that the overall administration of the Commission with respect to the entire tallying process was poor. This further added to the concerns already held by some party representatives.

The protracted period of verification, during which the Commission announced election results piecemeal, created an environment which was exploited by both major political parties to declare victory prematurely.

The role played by the EAB in the tallying process was commendable. Its participation in this process, particularly in Region 4, allowed the Elections Commission to use its Statements of Poll to assist in the resolution of disputed poll results. They were regularly appealed to as a reference point for mediation/negotiations. Regrettably, this did not resolve the problems that arose, which grew progressively worse, culminating in the PNC announcing that it would not accept the results. It demanded a recount of the votes in Region 4, where the problems were concentrated.

Our Group, concerned at the rising tension, mandated the Chairperson to consult other observer delegations and as a result a series of meetings was held between the groups. This series of meetings resulted in a proposal for a joint visit to the Commission to be formally updated by the Chairman on the cause and nature of the problem. The heads of the observer groups then decided that it might be useful to make personal contact with the leaders of both main political parties. This was achieved and separate meetings were held with the leaders, at 8.30 p.m. on Thursday 18 December with the ruling party and at 9.30 p.m. with the minority leader.

It was reported that shortly before these meetings a street demonstration resulted in tear gas and shots being fired. It was reported that 11 people had been wounded, some of whom were hospitalised.

Both leaders expressed their deep concern at the tense atmosphere in the capital and communicated their earnest desire that the observer groups remain in the country to see the process to its conclusion and to assist in calming and reassuring the populace.

The main political parties had both already publicly claimed victory. The leaders of the observer teams urged both party leaders to do their utmost to control their supporters and not to make inflammatory statements. As a result, both leaders agreed to name a liaison official to facilitate communication between the two parties.

The leader of the ruling party, in response to the suggestion of the heads of observer groups, said that she would be prepared to meet the leader of the minority party to make a joint appeal to the country. The proposal was never discussed with the opposition leader.

The leader of the ruling party explained its claim to victory by producing a document which indicated that it had achieved its tally – 200,000 plus votes – and thus would be the majority party. Correspondingly, the leader of the minority party produced evidence to support his position that there were material discrepancies in the computer compilations of the results, and he indicated that unless there was an impartial investigation into the matter he could not accept the results.

The minority leader announced at a press conference on Friday morning, 19 December, that his party would not accept the results of the elections and, based on his party's suspicion of nationwide fraud, would be challenging the same in the courts. Further, the party would demand that the results of each ballot box be verified, comparing the totals obtained by the Elections Commission with those obtained from party agents countrywide. Any announcement of winners or losers should not be reported until an investigation of the entire process was undertaken. This action was based on his party's suspicion of nationwide fraud.

A fear was expressed that, because totals of the data spreadsheets did not add up accurately and did not tally with the party representatives' numbers, there had been manual overwriting of the totals in the computer system.

Announcement of Election Results

The Chairman of the Elections Commission announced on Friday 19 December, close to mid-day, that the PPP/C, on the basis of the results received thus far, had the largest number of votes. On the basis of the Commission's projection, having regard to the number of votes counted, the number received by the PNC and the number received by the PPP/C, even if all the remaining votes went to the PNC it could not achieve a majority. In accordance with the Constitution, he therefore declared the winning party and its leader as the President of Guyana, although all the votes had not yet been tallied.

We were informed that some opposition parties had already gone to the High Court of Guyana to ask for an injunction to prevent the continuation of the tally of the votes and to ask that the ballots from all over the country be recounted.

As these events were transpiring, particularly the threat of an injunction which might halt the process, our Group was concerned as to how best we might see our mission to its end. We considered that this might entail a small representative number of us remaining in the country or returning at a later date should that become necessary.

During the morning of Friday 19 December we awaited further developments. In the afternoon, in light of the announcement by the Chairman of the Elections Commission that the PPP/C had received the largest number of votes, the presidential candidate for the PPP/C was sworn in as President.

Summary of Conclusions and Observations

We formed our Conclusions and Observations while examining most aspects of the election process during the Guyana General and Regional Elections in accordance with our terms of reference, which state among other things that the Group 'would ... be free to propose to the authorities concerned such action on institutional, procedural and other matters as would assist the holding of such elections.'

Conclusions

Up until the closing of the poll the following conditions existed for the people of Guyana to freely express their will:

- the good sense of the Guyanese people – in addition to the appeal by the Elections Commission, party leaders and the leaders of the various religious bodies – contributed to a peaceful election on polling day;
- the high turnout at the polls was an indication of the confidence held by voters in their ability to freely exercise their choice;
- in most parts of Guyana political parties were able to campaign freely without major threat of intimidation or violence;
- the security arrangements for the poll were good;
- the secrecy of the ballot was assured;
- the arrangements for provision of materials and staff for polling stations were adequate;
- with some exceptions, the procedures were well understood and followed;
- election officers were co-operative, helpful and willing to share information;
- whilst there were shortcomings, most were not significant enough to affect the integrity of the electoral process on polling day;
- party agents behaved responsibly and there was a great deal of co-operation between them on polling day, which was an important contribution to the electoral process;
- we hope that the important role in the process played by local observers will be strengthened in the future;
- the presence of international observers was well received by the political parties, the Commission and the voters and, we would like to think, contributed to increased confidence in the electoral process;
- the participation of women at all levels of the electoral process needs special mention and they should be particularly commended for their role as Presiding Officers in many of the polling places;
- the Elections Commission should be congratulated on its preparations for the elections;
- all political parties in general should be commended for their adherence to the Code of Conduct;
- the voters should be congratulated for the orderly and disciplined manner in which they conducted themselves on polling day.

However, there were a number of shortcomings. These included:

- the tallying process was inadequately handled, which contributed to the problems that subsequently arose;
- the procedure at the close of poll was not accurately adhered to: this included failure by many Presiding Officers to sign their return;
- in some cases Presiding Officers posted their results returns in ballot boxes instead of placing them in envelopes to be delivered separately to the Deputy Returning Officer;

- the Elections Commission had no clearly defined mechanism for communicating its decisions on the results to the political parties and the general public;
- the computer database for processing the tallying and the results left much to be desired;
- contrary to clearly prescribed procedures in the manual for election officials, measures were not taken to ensure that the voting of particular communities could not be easily identified.

We believe that these shortcomings contributed to the diminished credibility of the election results that were being announced by the Commission.

Observations

- We hope that the Inter-Party Committee on Constitutional Reform, or its successor committee, will include electoral reform in its work;
- important and earnest consideration should be given to the future role of the Elections Commission: it may be useful to consider the creation of a permanent institution, which might be responsible for the management, organisation and conduct of elections;
- in view of the many difficulties still posed by the Voter Identification Card system, which prevented a number of citizens from voting, further efforts to rectify these should be undertaken;
- the Elections Commission may wish to consider a method for cross matching to ensure that prior to polling day, Voter Identification Cards and registers carry the same names;
- all parties should take greater part in encouraging their supporters to register and collect Voter Identification Cards;
- the Elections Commission should devise a more efficient means of communicating decisions earlier to those areas which are inaccessible or have no telecommunications links;
- a formula should be devised to ensure equitable use of the public media by all political parties;
- improved mechanisms should be developed to speed up the count without loss of fairness and accuracy;
- measures should be put in place and implemented to ensure a secure means of transmission of the results and transfer of ballot boxes to the office of the Elections Commission following the close of poll and count;
- the Elections Commission may wish to reconsider the separate declaration of the results of the Disciplined Forces Poll;
- urgent consideration should be given to ensuring that mechanisms are put in place for transparent and expeditious verification of results.

Acknowledgements

We wish to record our sincere appreciation to the many people across the country who helped us in a variety of ways during our mission. Without their assistance the task would have been extremely arduous. We have been touched by the warm hospitality of the people of Guyana. Wherever we went, in the towns and in the remote regions, we were warmly welcomed and we will take with us some fond memories of this visit. We wish the people of Guyana well in their efforts to consolidate their democracy.

We wish to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his officials. We also wish to express our appreciation to the Chairman of the Elections Commission, his colleagues on the Commission and his staff, especially those in the Support Team for Observer Facilitation, who worked extremely long hours under pressure, especially in the run-up to the elections and shortly afterwards. Other international observer groups shared their information with us and for this we are grateful. We wish to thank the staff of the Electoral Assistance Bureau, in Georgetown and across the country, for their assistance before and during the election period.

We are highly appreciative of the political parties, religious bodies, media, NGOs and other associations who provided us with invaluable briefings on the situation on the ground.

We acknowledge the assistance given to us by the Commonwealth High Commissions in Georgetown, the Director-General of the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development and the United Nations Development Programme, who ably solved some of our transport problems. Our thanks also go to the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Caribbean Centre, which was an invaluable source of information and support during this mission.

We extend our gratitude to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, for providing us with the opportunity to participate in this mission and for supporting us with his wise counsel during it.

Our final words of thanks go to Mr Carl Dundas and the Commonwealth Secretariat support staff who accompanied us to Guyana for their magnificent effort. We would not have been able to carry out our mandate without their dedication and full support.

Annexes

ANNEX I

Composition of the Commonwealth Observer Group

HE Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi (Tanzania – Chairperson)

HE Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi was President of the United Republic of Tanzania from 1985-95. After training as a teacher he worked first as a primary school teacher, then as a tutor in a teachers' training college and from 1962-63 as Principal of the Teachers' Training College, Zanzibar. Mr Mwinyi continued his career with a brief period as a civil servant and six years in business, and was then Minister of Health and Minister of State in the President's Office from 1970-72. For the next three years he served as Minister of Home Affairs, from 1977-81 he was Ambassador to Egypt and from 1981-83 he was Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism. In 1983 Mr Mwinyi became Minister of State in the Vice-President's Office (Zanzibar) and from 1984-85 he was President of Zanzibar.

Ms Jeannette France (St Vincent and the Grenadines)

Ms Jeannette France has worked as a teacher and an educational administrator in Jamaica, in Guyana and in St Vincent and the Grenadines. She has served as an Examiner on the Caribbean Examinations Council and has been Chief Commissioner of the Girl Guides Association of St Vincent and the Grenadines. At present she is the Field Executive Trainer for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, in which capacity she is responsible for 16 Caribbean countries.

Advocate Bience Gawanas (Namibia)

Advocate Bience Gawanas is Namibia's Ombudswoman and a barrister. After independence in 1990 she worked as a lawyer at the Legal Assistance Centre (a human rights NGO). She was called as an advocate to the Namibian High Court in 1991 and from 1991-96 served as a full-time member of the Public Service Commission. From 1991 to the present she has also occupied various part-time positions: as a lecturer in Gender Law; Chairperson of the Law Reform and Development Commission; member of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Namibia; Alternate Chairperson of the Lands Tribunal; Deputy Chairperson of the Human Rights and Documentation Centre; and as Secretary-General of the Namibia National Women's Organisation. She was an observer during the first multiracial elections conducted for South African citizens in Namibia. She holds an LLB (Hons) and an Utter Barrister degree and was called to the Bar in Britain.

The Rt Reverend Solomon Tilewa Johnson (The Gambia)

The Rt Rev Solomon Tilewa Johnson has been Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission of The Gambia since April 1997 and, as Bishop of the Diocese of The Gambia, is head of the Anglican Church in The Gambia, Senegal and the Cape Verde Islands. He was previously Vice-Chairman of the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission, which was responsible for supervising and conducting all public elections and referenda in The Gambia during the period of transition from military to democratic rule. He was also a member of the Constitutional Review Commission which drafted the present Constitution. He was educated in Nigeria and Britain, where he obtained respectively a Diploma in Theology and a BA (Hons) degree in Theology. He was ordained as a priest in 1980 and consecrated as a bishop in 1990.

Mr Stanley Martin, CVO, JP (Britain)

Mr Stanley Martin is a retired diplomat. Having graduated in law from the University of Oxford, he joined the Diplomatic Service and worked as a ministerial private secretary before serving in Australia and Malaysia. After working in the personnel selection and policy planning fields, he specialised in protocol as Assistant, and later First Assistant, Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps. In retirement, he is an Extra Gentleman Usher to the Queen, Protocol Consultant to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a visiting professor at the University of Westminster and a magistrate in inner London. He is also engaged in various voluntary, charitable and commercial activities.

Ms Mary-Christine Murphy (Canada)

Ms Mary-Christine Murphy is an Election Officer with Elections Canada and a director of a number of private companies and charitable, cultural and literacy organisations. Prior to this appointment with Elections Canada she has worked as an executive assistant in the House of Commons and as executive vice-president and general manager of a four-season ski resort. In 1985 Ms Murphy was appointed a member of the Local Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. She has served as a member of observer groups which were present for elections in Cambodia and South Africa. Ms Murphy was educated at the Institut Miramonte, Switzerland, and the University of Toronto.

The Hon Dr Hetherwick Ntaba, MP (Malawi)

The Hon Dr Hetherwick Ntaba was elected to Parliament in 1990. He was appointed as Malawi's Minister of Health in the same year and as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1993. Prior to being a Member of Parliament and a Minister, Dr Ntaba had a distinguished medical career. From 1971-84 he was Chief Surgeon at the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital in Blantyre, the largest hospital in Malawi, and from 1984-90 he was Chief of Health Services for the country. Dr Ntaba served on the National Consultative Council and the National Executive Council which formulated Malawi's new constitution and turned the country into a multi-party democracy between 1993 and 1994. Dr Ntaba is now an opposition spokesman for health in the national parliament. He represented Malawi several times at World Health Organisation meetings and served as a member of its Executive Board for three years, until 1989. Dr Ntaba was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II in 1985 for his contribution to health services in Malawi and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine in 1990.

The Hon Neil Edward William Pickard (Australia)

The Hon Neil Pickard was first elected to the New South Wales (NSW) Parliament in November 1972 as the representative for Hornsby. He retained the seat until April 1991. During this time he served as the NSW Minister for Education, Minister for Minerals and Energy and member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on High Examinations. He also held the shadow portfolios of Education, Energy and State Development. Mr Pickard entered politics after a career as a minister of the Methodist Church for 13 years and then as a High School teacher of English and History and a lecturer at Sydney University. He was admitted to Sydney University as a mature student and there he obtained a Bachelor of Arts, a Masters degree in Education and a Diploma of Education. He also has a Certificate of Theology and Ministerial Studies from the United Faculty of Sydney, which is also part of Sydney University, and a Licentiate from the University of Melbourne. He has served as Alderman, Peak Council, and in various civic and sporting associations. Mr Pickard has led many educational, business and voluntary groups on trips to Asia and the Pacific region. Following his retirement from the NSW Parliament in April 1991 Mr Pickard was appointed Agent-General for NSW to London and the Commission of Europe. He withdrew from this position in November 1992.

The Hon Professor Bharati Ray, MP (India)

The Hon Professor Bharati Ray is a Member of Parliament and serves on the Parliamentary Committees on Human Resource Development and Information and Broadcasting, as well as on a Railway Users' Committee. She was a member of the Indian Delegation at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference (Delhi, 1997), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Mauritius (1997) and the 52nd Session of the UN General Assembly (1997), as well as a member of the Prime Minister's team to Visva Bharati (1997). Prior to becoming an MP she was the first woman Pro-Vice Chancellor (1988-96) of the 140-year-old University of Calcutta. She is the founder-director of the Women's Studies Research Centre, University of Calcutta, has been a member of the West Bengal State Commission for Women and is actively

involved in the National Literacy Mission. She has also adjudicated in the *Lok Adalat* set up to dispose of pending litigation in the Calcutta High Court. Prof Ray is the author of several academic books and articles, and holds a PhD in History from the University of Calcutta. She has received many awards and grants, including a Shviomoni Vikas award, a Ford Foundation Research grant, a Rockefeller Foundation Residency at Bellagio Centre for Research and was a visiting professor at the Maisons des Sciences de L'Homme, Paris.

Mr Hensley Robinson (Barbados)

Mr Hensley Robinson has held senior positions in the public service of his country for the past 17 years and is currently the acting Chief Electoral Officer. He joined the public service of Barbados in 1960 and has had more than 30 years experience at all levels of the electoral process there. He worked as a Registering Officer, Poll Clerk and Presiding Officer during the period 1961-87; as Returning Officer for the 1981, 1986 and 1991 general elections; and as the Deputy Supervisor of Elections for the 1994 general election. Mr Robinson holds a Masters degree in Social Science from the University of Wales (Cardiff).

The Hon Camille Robinson-Regis, MP (Trinidad and Tobago)

The Hon Camille Robinson-Regis has been a Member of Parliament since 1992 and has held two ministerial positions in the government of her country: from 1992-95 she was Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Information, Libraries and the Environment, and from 1993-95 Minister of Consumer Affairs. Mrs Robinson-Regis also headed the Trinidad and Tobago delegation at the 1994 UN Conference on Small Island Developing States. Before becoming an MP, Mrs Robinson-Regis was corporate secretary and legal adviser to the National Flour Mills, a state corporation, prior to which she ran her own legal practice. She is currently an opposition spokesperson for issues relating to the Office of the Attorney-General and Legal Affairs and Women. She is a member of the Joint Select Committee on Integrity in Public Life and was a member of the Joint Select Committees on Environmental Affairs, Constitutional Reform relating to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, Reform of Legislation governing Financial Institutions and Companies, and Reform of Legislation governing National Days, Holidays and Festivals. She has resumed private practice.

Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell (Jamaica)

Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell is an international development consultant specialising in change management and gender equity and human rights. She began as a journalist working with the Jamaica Information Service, Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, where she initiated the Office on the Portrayal of Women. She was the first Director of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender and Development Programme and subsequently undertook the institutionalisation of the Gender and Development Unit of the University of the West Indies. A commitment to women's active participation and representation in politics led her to work closely with the 300 Group in Britain and to a founding membership of the Jamaica Women's Political Caucus. The caucus is a non-partisan organisation dedicated to improving the quality of political representation. It provides training, qualified financial support and a forum for inter-party discussion for women politicians and aspirants. Ms Rowan-Campbell is on the boards of Womankind, the Global Fund for Women, and is also an editorial adviser to Oxfam.

Sir Anthony Siaguru, KBE (Papua New Guinea)

Sir Anthony Siaguru was Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General (Political) from 1990-95, during which time he was involved in organising Commonwealth election observer missions to 12 member countries, including Bangladesh, Guyana and South Africa. Prior to that he was a Member of Parliament and served as Minister for Public Service, following a five-year term as Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Sir Anthony currently practises law in Port Moresby.

The Hon Sir Peter Tapsell (New Zealand)

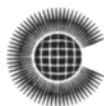
The Hon Sir Peter Tapsell retired as Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives in 1996, having served in that position for two years and as a member of the Cabinet from 1984-94. Sir Peter was elected to Parliament in 1981 after a career as a surgeon in Britain and New Zealand, specialising in orthopaedics. Following a number of senior ministerial appointments in the 1980s he was appointed Minister of Defence in 1990. He has been awarded an MBE and two honorary doctorates for his services to medicine.

SECRETARIAT SUPPORT STAFF

Mr Carl Dundas	Team Leader
Ms Judith Pestaina	Assistant to Observers
Mr Richard Nzerem	Assistant to Observers
Ms Lorna McLaren	Assistant to Observers
Mr Guy Hewitt	Assistant to Observers
Mr Mwambu Wanendeya	Media Officer
Ms Kereine Combie	Administrative Officer
Ms Charlene Lee-Ling	Secretary

ANNEX II

Commonwealth News Release of 24 November 1997



COMMONWEALTH NEWS RELEASE

ANTIGUA AND
BARBUDA
AUSTRALIA
THE BAHAMAS
BANGLADESH
BARBADOS
BELIZE
BOTSWANA
BRITAIN
BRUNEI
DARUSSALAM
CANADA
CAMEROON
CYPRUS
DOMINICA
THE GAMBIA
GHANA
GRENADA
GUYANA
INDIA
JAMAICA
KENYA
KIRIBATI
LESOTHO
MALAWI
MALAYSIA
MALDIVES
MALTA
MAURITIUS
MOZAMBIQUE
NAMIBIA
NAURU
NEW ZEALAND
NIGERIA*
PAKISTAN
PAPUA NEW GUINEA
ST KITTS AND NEVIS
ST LUCIA
ST VINCENT AND
THE GRENADINES
SAMOA
SEYHELLES
SIERRA LEONE
SINGAPORE
SOLOMON ISLANDS
SOUTH AFRICA
SRI LANKA
SWAZILAND
TANZANIA
TONGA
TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO
TUVALU
UGANDA
VANUATU
ZAMBIA
ZIMBABWE

97/60

24 November, 1997

Commonwealth to Observe General Elections in Guyana

A team of 14 Commonwealth Observers, together with a supporting team from the Commonwealth Secretariat, will be present in Guyana for the General and Regional Elections which are to be held on 15 December 1997.

In making the announcement today, Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku said that the Commonwealth was responding to a request from the Government of Guyana for a Commonwealth Observer Group to observe the General and Regional Elections. An assessment mission from the Commonwealth Secretariat which visited Guyana in October established that there was widespread support for a Commonwealth presence during the elections.

The Commonwealth team for Guyana will be led by **H E Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi**, former President of Tanzania. The other observers will be:

Ms Jeannette France
Former Public Servant, St Vincent and
the Grenadines

Rt Rev S. Tilewa Johnson
Chairman, Independent Electoral
Commission, The Gambia

Ms Bience Gawanas
Ombudswoman, Namibia

Mr Stanley Martin CVO, JP
Former Diplomat, Britain

... / 2

ISSUED BY THE INFORMATION & PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION

Commonwealth Secretariat Marlborough House Pall Mall London SW1Y 5HX Britain

Tel: +44 (0)171-747 6385/6 Fax: +44 (0)171-839 9081 Telex: 27678 Cable: COMSECGEN LONDON SW1
E-mail: info@commonwealth.int Web Site: <http://www.thecommonwealth.org>

* Commonwealth
membership currently
suspended

- 2 -

Ms Mary Murphy
Election Officer, Canada

Dr Heatherwick Ntaba MP
Member of Parliament, Malawi

The Hon Neil Pickard
Former Minister, Australia

Dr Bharati Ray MP
Member of Parliament, India

Mr Hensley Robinson
Chief Electoral Officer, Barbados

Mrs Camille Robinson-Regis MP
Member of Parliament, Trinidad and
Tobago

Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell
Consultant on Development Issues,
Jamaica

Sir Anthony Siaguru KBE
Former Minister and Commonwealth
Deputy Secretary-General, Papua New
Guinea

Sir Peter Tapsell MBE
Former Speaker, House of
Representatives, New Zealand

The Group will be supported by an eight-member team from the Commonwealth Secretariat, led by Mr Carl Dundas, Special Adviser, Economic and Legal Advisory Services Division.

Note to Editors:

The mission to Guyana will represent the 23rd election observed by the Commonwealth since October 1990, most recently in Pakistan, Cameroon and Papua New Guinea. These observer missions are to be seen in the context of a decision taken by Commonwealth Heads of Government to support the promotion of democracy in a number of ways, including through observation, on request, of elections in member states.

ANNEX III

Arrival Statement of 8 December 1997



Guyana General and Regional Elections, 1997

Commonwealth Observer Group*News Release***ARRIVAL STATEMENT BY THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP**

We are here to observe the General and Regional Elections, in response to a request from the Government of Guyana to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, and following advice by a Commonwealth Assessment Mission in October that there would be broad support for the presence of Commonwealth Observers.

As a team of Observers, we are serving in our individual capacities and not as representatives of the countries, governments or the organisations to which we may belong. Our remit is to observe all relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the elections in accordance with the laws of Guyana and, at the end, make an independent assessment as to whether the conditions existed for the people of Guyana to freely express their will through the polls.

We have no executive role. Our function is to observe the process as a whole and form an impartial judgment on the credibility of the exercise. On completion of our task we will present a report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who will in turn make it available to the Government of Guyana, the political parties which contested the elections, and thereafter to all Commonwealth governments.

In carrying out our mission, we will remain in close touch with the Elections Commission. We look forward to being briefed by them on the preparations in hand. We hope to have meetings with representatives of political parties, non-governmental organisations and other interested groups. We intend to travel throughout the country, both before and on polling day and to observe the counting of votes.

We are honoured to be here as guests in your beautiful country and greatly look forward to our mission.

Georgetown
8 December 1997

ANNEX IV

Schedule of Engagements

Monday 8 December

- 1030 Arrival Press Conference, Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown
- 1415 Briefing by the Guyana Elections Commission: Dr Barton Scotland (Member, Elections Commission), Mr Gocool Boodoo (Senior Manager, Elections Commission), Dr Martin J Boodhoo (Pro-Chancellor, University of Guyana), Colonel Carl Morgan and Lt-Colonel Joseph Harmon (security advisers, Elections Commission)
- 1800 Electoral Assistance Bureau: Mr Lawrence Lachmarsingh (Project Director)
- 2000 Chairperson's Dinner for Observers and guest of honour Mr Doodnauth Singh, SC, Chairman of the Elections Commission

Tuesday 9 December

- 0915 Alliance For Guyana: Ms Kathleen Rajcumar, Ms Andaiye and Mr Nigel Westmaas
- 1000 The United Force: Mr Charles Sugrim, Ms Joan Collins, Mr Lambert Johnson, Mr Hilbert Archer and Mr William Sampson
- 1100 People's Progressive Party/Civic: Mr Donald Ramotar (General Secretary, PPP), Mr Roger Luncheon, Mr Henry Jeffrey and Mr Reepu Daman Persaud
- 1330 Justice For All Party: Mr C N Sharma (Presidential candidate), Ms Savitree Singh (General Secretary) and Ms Elizabeth Bhagan
- 1400 A Good and Green Guyana: Mr Llewellyn John (Vice-Chairman)
- 1445 Guyana Democratic Party: Mr B Balkarrun, Mr Raymond Ally and Mr Ed Harris
- 1545 People's National Congress: Mr Aubrey Norton (General Secretary), Mr Hardat Singh, Ms Deborah Backer and Mr Raphael Trotman
- 1645 Non-governmental organisations: Trades Union Congress (Vice-Presidents Mr Norris Witter and Mr Richard Samuels, General Secretary Mr Joseph Pollydore and Assistant Secretaries Mr Randolph Kirton and Mr Lincoln Lewis), Human Rights Association (Co-President Mr Michael McCormack) and Guyana Bar Association (President Mr Vidyanand Persaud, Treasurer Mr Winston Moore)
- 1930 Chairperson's Reception, Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, followed by briefing on voting by the Disciplined Forces the following day

Wednesday 10 December

Observers deployed to observe the voting by the Disciplined Forces; some were also present for briefings as follows:

- 1030 Other international: Organisation of American States (Mr Bruce Rickerson), National Democratic Institute (Ms Deborah Ullmer and Mr Winston Cremer)
- 1130 Religious bodies: Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches (respectively Mr Raymond Shaw and Bishop Randolph George), Guyana Central Arya Samaj (Mr Harrychand Raghbir) and Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (President Mr Fazeel Mohamed Ferouz, Deputy President Mr Sultan H Rahaman, Shaikh Moeenul Hack and Mr Azam Ally)
- 1400 Women's organisations: Red Thread (Ms Vanda Radzik, Ms Shirley Goodman, Ms Halima Khan and Ms Vanessa Ross), Women Across Differences (Dr Janice Jackson), Women's Affairs Bureau/National Commission on Women (Ms Hazel Halley-Burnett) and Youth Challenge Guyana (Ms Ardis Sanmoogan)
- 1500 Media: Mr Robert Bazil (*Guyana Chronicle*), Ms Miranda La Rose (*Stabroek News*) and Mrs Michelle Elphage (Guyana Television)
- 1600 National Amerindian organisations: Mr Vivian Fredericks (Chairman, National Amerindian Council), Mr David James (President, Amerindian People's Association) and Mr Hubert Wong (Chief, Guyanese Organisation of Indigenous Peoples)
- 2000 Deployment Briefing: Mr Carl Dundas, Ms Lorna McLaren and Mr Guy Hewitt

Thursday 11 December

- 0830 Commonwealth High Commissions: HE Mr David Johnson (High Commissioner, Britain), HE Mr Alan Bowker (High Commissioner, Canada) and Mr S P Kanjlia (Acting High Commissioner, India)

- On Wednesday 17 December, Chairperson Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi met Foreign Minister Hon Clement Rohee. On Thursday 18 December, Mr Mwinyi had separate meetings with Chairman of the Elections Commission Mr Doodnauth Singh, Mrs Janet Jagan and Mr Desmond Hoyte. A number of meetings were also held with representatives of other observer groups

ANNEX V

**Deployment for Observation of the Disciplined Forces Poll
Wednesday 10 December 1997**

REGION	OBSERVERS	LOCATION
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi (Chairperson) Mr Carl Dundas	Police Sports Club Barrack Street Georgetown
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Rt Rev S Tilewa Johnson Dr Bharati Ray	All Ranks Sports Club Camp Ayangana Thomas Lands Georgetown
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Mr Hensley Robinson Mr Stanley Martin	Camp Stephenson Timeri East Bank Demerara
3 Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara	Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell Mr Richard Nzerem	La Grange Police Station Leonora Magistrates' Court
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Mr Neil Pickard Mr Guy Hewitt	Government National Service Base
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Sir Anthony Siaguru Ms Jeannette France	Cove & John Police Station Sparendam Police Station East Coast Mahaica Police Station
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Dr Hetherwick Ntaba Ms Judith Pestaina	Ruimveldt Police Station (Police Force) Ruimveldt Police Station (GDF) Garden of Eden, Timehri Prison
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Sir Peter Tapsell Advocate Bience Gawanas	Brickdam Police Station
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Ms Camille Robinson-Regis Mr Mwambu Wanendeya	Camp Seweyo, Dora Kuru Kuru Training Complex



Guyana General and Regional Elections, 1997

Commonwealth Observer Group

News Release

COMMONWEALTH OBSERVERS DEPLOYED FOR ELECTIONS

Yesterday the Commonwealth Observer Group to the General and Regional Elections observed the voting by the Disciplined Forces. The Group was split into nine teams which visited sixteen polling stations in Georgetown and its environs. More than 70% of the Disciplined Forces were registered to vote at these polling stations and the Observers are of the view that their visits enabled them to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the voting.

Following their visits to the polling stations the Observers held meetings with associations representing the Amerindians, non-governmental organisations, women's groups, the religious bodies and members of the media.

Today (Thursday 11 December) the Observers will be splitting up into teams consisting of two people each and moving out of Georgetown. They will be deployed in all ten regions of the country for the General and Regional Elections. The Observers will visit as many polling stations as possible on the election day in order to assess, as accurately as possible, the voting process.

The Observers hope that these elections will be conducted in a peaceful atmosphere and that the people of Guyana will be able to choose their leaders in a transparent process.

11 December 1997

ANNEX VI

**Deployment for Observation of the General and Regional Elections
Monday 15 December 1997**

REGION	OBSERVERS	BASE LOCATION
1 Barima/Waini	Rt Rev S Tilewa Johnson Ms Judith Pestaina	Government Guest House Mabaruma
2 Pomeroon/ Supernaam	Sir Anthony Siaguru Mr Hensley Robinson	Arabian Atlantic Hotel Hampton Court
3 Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara	Mr Stanley Martin Ms Jeannette France	Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel Georgetown
4 Demerara/Mahaica	Mr Ali Hassan Mwinyi Mr Carl Dundas	Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel Georgetown
5 Mahaica/Berbice	Ms Mary-Christine Murphy Ms Lorna McLaren	Le Meridien Pegasus Hotel Georgetown
6 East Berbice/ Corentyne	Dr Bharati Ray Mr Richard Nzerem	Parkway Hotel Corentyne
7 Cuyuni/Mazaruni	Ms Dorianne Rowan-Campbell Sir Peter Tapsell	Esmerelda Guest House Kamarang
8 Potaro/Siparuni	Advocate Bience Gawanas Mr Guy Hewitt	Hi-Lo Guest House Madhia
9 Upper Takutu/ Upper Essequibo	Ms Camille Robinson-Regis Dr Hetherwick Ntaba	Savannah Inn Lethem
10 Upper Demerara/ Berbice	Mr Neil Pickard Mr Mwambu Wanendeya	Government Guest House Linden

ANNEX VII

Observation Notes for Poll and Count and Check List for Visits to Polling Stations

OBSERVATION NOTES FOR POLL AND COUNT

PART A

The Observers may focus particular attention on the following aspects of the conduct of the elections:

THE CAMPAIGN

1. Balance of TV/radio election coverage and extent and nature of access by the parties (e.g., allocation of time for political broadcasts and advertisements).
2. Print media: nature of coverage and extent of access by the political parties.
3. The tone and content of material put out by the political parties, access to printing facilities?
4. The conduct of political meetings/rallies (permits for public meetings?)
5. The conduct of house-to-house canvassing of voters.
6. Nature, scale and effectiveness of Elections Commission and other voter education on radio and television, in the print media and by other methods.
7. Activities/measures to encourage the participation of women.
8. Access to funds and sources of funds.

THE POLL

1. The location of polling stations.
2. Distances travelled by voters to polling stations, particularly in rural areas.
3. The procedure followed at the opening of the poll.
4. The length of time voters wait to cast their votes.
5. The adequacy or otherwise of facilities at polling stations and their state of readiness.
6. Availability of adequate supplies, e.g., ballot papers, official stamps and stamp-pads, indelible ink, etc.
7. The performance of electoral officials at the polling stations visited.
8. The procedures in place to ensure proper security of ballot papers, ballot boxes and official seals.

9. Arrangements to facilitate voting by women.
10. The steps taken to ensure that the secrecy of the ballot is assured.
11. The general atmosphere at the polling stations visited.
12. Access of party agents and observers to polling centres/booths.

THE COUNT

1. Inspection of seals.
2. The process of reconciling the number of people who voted with the number of ballots cast.
3. The determination of invalid ballots.
4. The facilities for parties to witness and verify the count and overall transparency.
5. Access by domestic and international observers.
6. The conduct of electoral officers.

PART B

Questions that may be put:

BEFORE POLLING DAY

1. Was the Voters' Register compiled in a satisfactory way? Were people missed out? Were the names of dead people or "phantom voters" included?
2. Who are the election officials? How were they chosen? Are voters confident that they will be impartial?
3. Is the person in the street satisfied with arrangements? Will he/she vote? If not, is he/she afraid to do so? Were there any attempts to discourage/encourage the participation of women and were they effective?
4. Have all parties been able to campaign freely? Has the campaign been free of intimidation, etc? Have all parties had full access to the mass media?
5. Is there freedom to advertise and distribute posters, leaflets, etc?

ON POLLING DAY

1. Before polling starts, are the ballot boxes empty? Are they properly sealed? Are all procedures being adhered to?
2. Are all parties represented at polling stations? Are they satisfied with the process?
3. Are voters apparently voting freely? Are they enthusiastic? Do they talk freely? Do they exhibit signs of fear or intimidation?

4. Do voters understand the procedures properly? If not, are the procedures being explained fully and impartially? Are attempts being made to suggest how voters should vote?
Is anyone voting without a Voter ID card? Has any registered voter been turned away because they had no Voter ID card?
5. Does the turnout indicate that women have been deterred from voting?
6. Is only one person at a time being allowed into the voting booth?
7. How long are voters waiting to vote? If a long time, are some being put off?
8. Will all parties be represented at polling centres throughout voting and count?
Are party polling agents adequately trained and vigilant?
9. Will foreign observers have free access to all stages of the process?
10. Is the security presence effective/oppressive?

THE COUNT

1. Are the boxes kept safe until opened? Are all parties present at opening?
2. Does the number of used ballot papers tally with the record of those who voted?
3. Are the papers counted properly? Are counting agents present? Are they satisfied with the procedure of the count?

CHECK LIST FOR POLLING STATION VISITS

Name of Observer(s):

Place and Region:

Polling Station:

Time of Arrival:

Time of Departure:

Voters in Queue: Rate of Processing:

-
- | | | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. | Opening of Poll: | On time?
No/Yes
Details: | Procedures followed?
No/Yes | |
| 2. | Layout and Facilities: | Good? | Adequate? | Poor? |
| 3. | Polling Staff: | Efficient? | Satisfactory? | Poor? |
| 4. | Security Presence: | Discreet? | Intrusive? | Oppressive? |
| 5. | Complaints by Party Agents: | No/Yes | Details: | |
| 6. | Complaints by Voters: | No/Yes | Details: | |
| 7. | Presence of unauthorised persons: | No/Yes | Details: | |
| 8. | Atmosphere at Station? | Orderly? | Tense? | Chaotic? |
| 9. | Secrecy of Ballot: | Assured? | Poor? | Uncertain |

10. **Voting:**
- (a) Personation attempts alleged: No/Yes
Details:
- (b) Multiple voting attempts alleged: No/Yes
Details:
- (c) Women deterred from voting: No/Yes
Details:
11. **Closing of Poll:** On time? Numbers still in queue?
Procedure followed? No/Yes
12. **The Count:** Are procedures being observed? No/Yes
13. **Apparent fairness overall:** Good? Acceptable?
Questionable?
14. **Other Comments:**

ANNEX VIII

Interim Statement of 16 December 1997



Guyana General and Regional Elections, 1997

Commonwealth Observer Group

News Release

16 December 1997 : 1100 hrs

INTERIM STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OBSERVER GROUP

The Commonwealth Observer Group arrived in Guyana on 7 December 1997. An advance team of three support staff have been here since 27 November. The Group consists of 14 eminent Commonwealth citizens and eight support staff.

The mandate of the Commonwealth Observer Group was to observe relevant aspects of the elections and to determine whether or not the people of Guyana had the opportunity to express their will through the ballot.

The Group began its work with comprehensive briefings by the Elections Commission, political parties, non-governmental organisations, associations representing the Amerindians, women's groups, Guyana professional organisations, religious bodies, and the media.

On 10 December, the Group was split into nine teams which visited sixteen polling stations in Georgetown and its environs to observe the voting of the Disciplined Forces.

On 11 December, the Group deployed to the ten regions across the country for the General and Regional elections. On polling day, we visited several polling stations in each region, and were present when the polls opened and when they closed. We also observed the count.

The picture that emerges as the polls closed is of a peaceful election day. The Elections Commission and their polling station officials, the parties, the security forces and the voters are to be commended for helping to ensure a successful election. The Chairman and members of the Elections Commission showed flexibility in accommodating parties' and individual's complaints, as evidenced by the extension of the deadline for the uplifting of Voter Identification Cards. On the whole, elections officers acted in a professional, open and transparent manner. We were struck by the level of co-operation between polling staff and party agents and by the presence in most polling stations of local monitors.

We were also struck by the absence of complaints concerning the voter registration process. But there were some shortcomings. The late issue of a number of Voter Identification Cards caused some anxiety among voters. Up to the day before polling the Elections Commission was producing Voter Identification Cards and on polling day itself Voter Identification Cards were being distributed in some regions. A few polling stations opened late, and in a small number of cases there were shortages of materials. The names of some voters who had Voter Identification Cards were absent from the voters' list.

However, none of these shortcomings was, in our judgment, of a scale or character as to have been likely to influence the outcome. In fact, in virtually all of the stations visited by us, political party agents expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the voting process.

ANNEX IX

Departure Statement of 19 December 1997



Guyana General and Regional Elections, 1997

Commonwealth Observer Group*News Release*

19 December 1997

DEPARTURE STATEMENT

The Commonwealth Observer Group to the Guyana General and Regional Elections departs tomorrow. We have been in the country for two weeks and some members of our Group have been here for even longer.

We were in Guyana at the request of the Government and with the support of all the major political parties. Our mandate was to observe all relevant aspects of the organisation and conduct of the General and Regional Elections in accordance of the law of Guyana. We were to consider the various factors impinging on the credibility of the electoral process as a whole and to determine, in our own judgement, whether the conditions existed for a free expression of will by the electors and if the result of the General and Regional elections reflected the wishes of the people.

We issued a statement on 16 December 1997, after the polls had closed but before the final results were declared, in which we expressed our satisfaction with the conduct of the voting process on polling day. As a result of our observations on polling day we concluded that the voters were freely able to express their will.

Events since polling day have led us to the conclusion that the prescribed procedures at the end of the count were not followed which contributed to the delay in declaring the results and the confusion which resulted. We have noted that there are reports of dissatisfaction with the results. We know that there are provisions within the law of Guyana for these issues to be resolved.

Our mission is now ended. We have concluded our report which will be sent to the Commonwealth Secretary-General who will, in turn, send it to the Government of Guyana, the political parties and the Elections Commission. The report will then be sent to the governments of other Commonwealth countries and thereafter will be in the public domain.

We travelled to many parts of the country and made many friends. We thank the people of Guyana for their hospitality and will take back with us some fond memories of our stay here.

ANNEX X

Procedure for Removal of Chairman and Members of the Elections Commission

The procedure for the removal of the Chairman and members of the Elections Commission is set out in the Constitution, in Article 225 paragraphs 4 and 6. These paragraphs read as follows.

Paragraph 4

If the prescribed authority advises the President that the question of removing the officer from office under this article ought to be investigated then –

- (a) the President shall appoint a tribunal which shall consist of a Chairman and not less than two other members, selected by the President after consultation with the Judicial Service Commission from among persons who hold or have held office as a judge of a court having unlimited jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters in some part of the Commonwealth or a court having jurisdiction in appeals from any such court or who are qualified to be admitted to practice in Guyana as attorneys-at-law and have been so qualified for such period as is prescribed by Parliament for the purposes of sub-paragraph (b) of article 129(1) in relation to the office of Puisne Judge; and
- (b) that tribunal shall enquire into the matter and report on the facts thereof to the President and recommend to him whether the officer ought to be removed under this article.

Paragraph 6

If the question of removing the officer from office has been referred to a tribunal under this article, the President, acting in accordance with the advice of the prescribed authority, may suspend the officer from performing the functions of his office, and any such suspension may at any time be revoked by the President, acting in accordance with such advice as aforesaid, and shall in any case cease to have effect if the tribunal recommends to the President that the officer should not be removed from office.

ANNEX XI

Text of Code of Conduct for Political Parties

“We the signatories hereunder on behalf of political parties contesting the 1997 National and Regional Elections and which are engaged in public political campaigns, rallies, meetings and other forms of peaceful activities in connection with the forthcoming general elections declare that we agree to the following:

1. To embrace the laws relating to freedom of speech and association and all other laws connected thereto.
2. To acknowledge the right of citizens of Guyana either individually or as a group or through their political parties to engage in lawful political activities which include the freedom to make house to house visits, to sell or distribute political literature, to hold private meetings, to hold public meetings, to hold rallies, to picket, to march, to demonstrate, to make representations, to advertise, to represent their political parties in the electoral process in accordance with the laws of Guyana.
3. To uphold the principle of peaceful political struggle as provided by the Constitution and other laws of Guyana.
4. To ensure that no political party, organisation, action group or individual shall be permitted to direct, plan, provoke or promote violence or threat of violence against any other party, organisation or action group or against any section of the public, individual or their property in pursuance of its campaign.
5. To condemn violence as a means of electoral campaigning and to undertake not to encourage, incite directly or indirectly violence or harm against any person in the course of the electoral campaign.
6. To uphold the principle of free speech and to discourage members and supporters from disrupting meetings and gatherings of other political parties.
7. To work in full co-operation with all relevant administrative and law enforcement authorities to maintain peace and law and order throughout the election campaign so that elections will be held with due regularity in an atmosphere of peace, order and goodwill and that racial harmony may be preserved.
8. To ensure that speeches, slogans, posters, handbills and other advertisements do not contain material offending public morality, decorum, decency or taunts, ridicule, innuendoes or defamatory matter.
9. To inform the public of the importance of ethnic harmony and cultural respect.
10. To refrain from using or permitting, as a political strategy or otherwise, an appeal to racial hostility or racial loyalty or to generate fears or insecurity based on the above.
11. To ensure that no advantage should be had by any party through free use of public property for electioneering purposes.

12. To respect private property and the right of all citizens, groups and political parties lawfully to use their properties in furtherance of their political objectives and philosophy in accordance with the law.
13. To publicly and privately inform party supporters and activists and other individuals of the absolute need for continued peaceful conduct after transparent elections, regardless of the results.

Further, that such results should not be perceived or represented as an ethnic victory but should be viewed only as one exercise of the will of the people by virtue of free and fair elections under the democratic process in the plural society of Guyana.

14. To adhere to this Electoral Accord, to issue instructions and orders to members and to appeal publicly to supporters to observe the electoral laws and to take decisive steps to restrain leaders, officials, candidates and members who violate this Electoral Accord.
15. To recognise the duty of the Elections Commission to discuss and resolve any matters relating to this Accord and hereby authorise the Elections Commission to receive complaints and investigate them and to take steps as may be appropriate.
16. To fully publicise this Electoral Accord and to promote the attainment of its objectives by all means of public communication and information.

This Electoral Accord is open to any political party that may wish to subscribe to its terms and conditions and to become a party thereto thereby agreeing to and embracing the conditions herein by the authorised representative affixing his/her signature hereunder.”

When released to the press and public on 19 November 1997 this text, signed by party representatives in the presence of the Chairman of the Elections Commission, was accompanied by the following additional statement:

“We, representatives of the political parties, contesting the upcoming elections condemn all actions which are designed to frustrate the free expression of ideas and programmes at political campaign meetings. More specifically we deplore the disruptions of political meetings by excessive heckling, throwing of missiles and other forms of aggressive and threatening behaviour.

We call on our political activists and supporters to desist from such conduct which can only demean our electoral process and lead to the undermining of our democracy. We wish to remind our supporters that we have collectively signed the Code of Conduct and have done so in good faith. Any violation of the Code of Conduct brings our parties into disrepute and constitutes a grave violation of this accord.”


ANNEX XII

Elections Commission Voter Education Material

GUYANA ELECTIONS COMMISSION

VOTE '97

Enhancing The Electoral System



*A message from the Chairman,
Guyana Elections Commission*


The 1997 Elections will be one of the most important in the history of independent Guyana. The selection of the President and of the National Assembly will not only be for the remainder of the 20th Century. Who we elect will also bring in the 21st Century. The Elections is about the leadership and direction of 21st Century Guyana.

This Supplement is but a small contribution of the Voter Education & Information Unit, at the Commission to help you participate effectively in the process. I sincerely hope that it answers questions you may have about how, where and why you need to vote.

John M. B. S.C.
Chairman

On Elections Day/Polling Day

1. Take your Voter ID Card




















Guyana Elections Commission
VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARD

SURNAME: SMITH
GIVEN NAMES: MARY ANN
DATE OF BIRTH: 1/2/65 GENDER: F
MUNICI: DISTRICT: BRIDGETOWN PIN: D
0025481 9 22877

Mary Smith

SPECIMEN ONLY

- ◆ The Voter ID Card is the property of the Elections Commission
- ◆ Keep Your Voter ID Card in a safe place until Polling Day
- ◆ On Elections Day you will have to return your Voter ID Card

GENERAL ELECTIONS		
1	A.F.G. ALLIANCE FOR GUYANA WPA/GLP/CITIZENS	
2	A.G.G.G. A GOOD AND GREEN GUYANA	
3	G.B.G. GOD BLESS GUYANA	
4	G.D.P. GUYANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY	
5	J.F.A.P. JUSTICE FOR ALL PARTY	
6	N.D.F. NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT	
7	N.I.P. NATIONAL INDEPENDENT PARTY	
8	P.N.C. PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS	
9	P.P.P.C. PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC	
10	T.U.F. THE UNITED FORCE	
REGIONAL ELECTIONS FOR REGION NO. 4		
1	A.F.G. ALLIANCE FOR GUYANA WPA/GLP/CITIZENS	
2	A.G.G.G. A GOOD AND GREEN GUYANA	
3	G.D.P. GUYANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY	
4	J.F.A.P. JUSTICE FOR ALL PARTY	
5	P.N.C. PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS	
6	P.P.P.C. PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC	
7	T.U.F. THE UNITED FORCE	

*2. Go To The Polling Place
marked on your Pink Slip*

*3. First mark an X
next to the Party of
your Choice for
General Election*

AND THEN

*Mark another X
next to the Party
of your Choice
for
Regional Election*

Guyana Elections
Commission

Voter Identification Card Info Sheet

YOUR POLLING DIVISION IS

YOUR POLLING PLACE IS

Voting will be from 6:00 a.m.
to 6:00 p.m. on Election Day

BE EARLY

- ◆ All eligible voters should receive this pink slip along with their Voter ID Card, stating Polling Division & Polling Place
- ◆ If You have not received a Pink Slip, Check with the Registrar or Deputy Registrar,
- OR
- ◆ Ask a Political Party activist where is your Polling Place

ELECTIONS/POLLING DAY IS DECEMBER 15, 1997

ANNEX XIII

Elections Commission Guidelines for International Observers

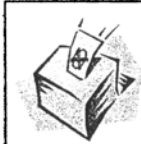
1. Following consultation with the Chairman of the Elections Commission, in conformity with Section 3(1) of the General Elections (Observers) Act 1990 (No. 17 of 1990), the President of the Republic invited a number of international organisations and institutions to officially observe all aspects of the democratic process involved in the forthcoming General and Regional Elections to be held on 15 December 1997.
2. The Elections Commission hereby wishes to inform those organisations and institutions that responded positively to the invitation that they may apply for accreditation and identification as international observers by 7 December 1997.
3. Each organisation referred to in paragraph 2 shall designate in writing to the Elections Commission its representatives, disclosing their particulars and credentials.
4. The particulars and credentials of the representatives so designated shall include the following:
 - a) full name;
 - b) date and place of birth;
 - c) address;
 - d) educational and/or professional background;
 - e) knowledge of the country and/or previous experience in the field of electoral observation.
5. The name of any representative accredited as an international observer shall be published in the Gazette and he or she shall be issued with an identity card by the Chairman of the Elections Commission or his authorized appointees.
6. All observers, while exercising their functions, shall clearly display the identity cards issued to them by the Elections Commission.
7. International observers shall have the right:
 - a) to request from the relevant authorities an appropriate visa to enter Guyana for the duration of the period of election observation as specified in Section 13;
 - b) to enjoy freedom of movement throughout Guyana;
 - c) to communicate freely with any political party and with any organisation or person;
 - d) to open offices within Guyana for the performance of their functions; and
 - e) to communicate with the local and election media.
8. (1) Any other law to the contrary notwithstanding, an observer may scrutinise the official list of electors, enter polling places and places appointed for the counting of votes, and seek information from the Chairman of the Elections Commission, the Chief Election Officer and other election officers.

(2) An organisation accredited to observe shall have the right to obtain from the Chairman of the Elections Commission a copy of the official list of electors for one or more polling divisions and of any written law governing or regulating any election.

- (3) The Chairman of the Elections Commission, the Chief Election Officer and other election officers shall facilitate the work of the observers and shall comply with any reasonable request made by said observers in the performance of their functions.
9. Observers shall be free to observe the course of the campaigning for elections, as well as to observe access to and use of the public media.
10.
 - (1) International observers shall have the following obligations:
 - a) to inform the Elections Commission, at the time of their application for accreditation, of the objectives of their observation;
 - b) to obtain proper accreditation, and supply information as required for that purpose;
 - c) to exercise their role with impartiality, independence and objectivity;
 - d) to respect the Constitution and the laws of Guyana;
 - e) to respect the role, status and authority of election officials;
 - f) to refrain from interfering in, or impeding the normal course of the electoral process, and from providing guidance or information to personnel involved therein;
 - g) to ensure that their activities do not affect the secrecy of the ballot;
 - h) to report to the Elections Commission in a timely manner all criminal activities relevant to the election and violations of the electoral legislation;
 - i) to provide to the Elections Commission prior to their release, copies of written information and statements which they have produced;
 - j) to refrain from announcing election results prior to their announcement by the Elections Commission;
 - k) to limit themselves to observing and reporting on the electoral process. Accreditation shall not entitle any observer to certify the accuracy of the elections nor to make any pronouncement on the results thereof; and
 - l) to return the identity cards issued to them by the Elections Commission at the end of their mission as observers.
 - (2) The Elections Commission may revoke the accreditation of any international observer who violates the obligations laid down in sub-paragraph (1) and thereupon his status as an international observer shall cease.
11. International observers may operate separately or jointly with other observers.
12. Diplomats accredited to Guyana who are designated and recognised as international observers shall exercise their functions as such observers in accordance with these Guidelines.
13. Election observation shall begin on the day of accreditation and shall end on the day determined by the Elections Commission, as reflected on the observer's identity card.

ANNEX XIV

Elections Commission Guidelines for the Media



GUIDELINES FOR THE MEDIA AND CONTESTING POLITICAL PARTIES AT THE FORTHCOMING GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS.

Background

The question of the role of the media during election campaign has traditionally been a controversial one over the years. However it is a question that has surfaced regularly, but compromises and reasonableness on the part of contesting parties have in times past allowed for solution, albeit far from perfect, to solve such problems.

Doubtless, as Guyana moves to further cement its democratic culture, first inherited from the British, the question of the role of the media will surface as election time draws closer, and heated debates could not be ruled out.

However, the Guyana Elections Commission is making some recommendations that could help diffuse unhealthy situations, and that could allow for a level playing field in the electoral battles that are ahead.

Indeed, the argument has long since been advanced that freedom of expression by the media, radio, television and print is symbolic of democracy. The manner adopted by the media in their use of their freedom carries an obligation to serve the society and public as a whole.

The media managers and owners must recognize their inheritance of a public trust developed over a period of time, and equally, they should be constantly aware of the public's expectations that the media would behave in a professional manner exercising a critical and discerning judgment which respects and advances the rights and dignity of all people, while at the same time maintaining standards of good taste as reflected by the society and the public being served.

News

The media should ensure that they adhere to the cardinal principles of fair, balanced and as far as is possible objective whether privately or publicly owned depart from the cardinal principles then, this could detract from, if not undermine the spirit of tolerance that the Elections Commission had been working to build, and could help to sour what ought to be an interesting campaign producing high level debates. In this way, the media could contribute significantly to a healthy campaign. Should the local media, Editorials, analyses and commentaries should be distinguished from the reportage of straight news.

Controversy and Balance

Matters of controversial nature must surface from time to time. The media in Guyana now have a glorious opportunity to display maturity that could be considered second to none. Issues of public interests are bound to have varying views and as far as is practicable, media houses should seek to allow for views of all parties to receive equal exposure. Requests by individuals, groups or organizations to present their views on controversial public issues should be considered on the basis of their individual merits and in the light of their contributions to the public interest.

Right of Recall

Parties or individuals involved in the campaign process should benefit from the right of recall if by one means or the other. In clearer words, media editors and managers should consider it obligatory to retract previously published other, inaccurate and or damaging information is published against the individual or party statements that are subsequently found to be untrue. They should consider it equally obligatory to replace inaccuracies with the truth.

Climate of Awareness and Tranquility


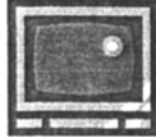

The media must recognise their roles to foster an ideal atmosphere during these elections period. Media operatives by contributing meaningfully to a state of developing awareness among their consumers could help to cement Guyana's democratic culture. The more Guyanese participate in the electoral process whether it be through debates, comments or by actually casting their votes on Election Day, the stronger will our democratic system become. The above supports the view that during the Official Campaign Period, the media have a special responsibility to the

public to encourage participation by the electorate in the democratic process and to ensure they have the opportunity to be informed on the candidates and issues. In keeping with the system that obtained during elections in previous years, particularly during the early nineteen sixties, the Guyana Elections Commission is requesting both the print and electronic media to provide contesting political parties with some publicity free of charge

Radio

It recommended that radio time should be allocated to political parties in Parliament proportionately, and contesting political parties without Parliamentary representation should also be given broadcast time as indicated below. Each broadcast should be for about five minutes on the Voice of Guyana and rebroadcast on Radio Roraima at a fixed time, or at a time that that would enjoy the same assumed listenership.

PPP/Civic	Nine Broadcasts.
	Eight Broadcasts.
	Three Broadcasts.
	Two Broadcasts.

	<p>Radio</p> <p>Non Parliamentary parties entering the electoral race should be given one broadcast each of five(5) minutes with a repeat on the sister station.</p>
	<p>Television Telecasts</p> <p>Each television station that operates in Guyana should provide each political party with thirty (30) minutes broadcast time.</p>
	<p>Newspaper</p> <p>Commercial newspapers are requested to allocate twelve column inches of space for each political party to state its policies for the forthcoming elections.</p>

Paid Political Messages

Political parties, contesting groups or candidates who wish additional time and space should pay for all messages or advertisements at current established rates; however media should allow all parties, contesting groups or candidates to pay at the lowest published rate of the current schedule for the particular type of message. For example, media frequently give discounts based on size or length and frequency of advertisements; the rates charged for all political messages should be the lowest discounted rate for that type of advertisement even if the party, contesting group or candidate does not otherwise qualify for the frequency discount. Further, the media should ensure all parties, contesting groups or candidates have equal access to the broadcast times and schedule for broadcast media, and similar equitable access, space and location for print media. One political party, contesting group or candidate should not be allowed to block access by other parties, contesting groups or candidates by purchasing all availabilities of time and space. Equitable and fair treatment of all parties, contesting groups and candidates should be the standard adhered to by all media. While the above addresses equitable treatment concerning broadcast or publication of the messages, the same standard should be applied to any production in preparation for broadcast or publication. All paid political messages or advertisements must be identified clearly that they are a "paid political advertisement."

Responsibility and Correction of Media Errors

The political parties, contesting groups and candidates must accept full responsibility for the content of the materials produced or used. Broadcast or publication errors beyond the control of the medium, i.e., mechanical failure or act of God, should be corrected in accordance with standard broadcast or publication policies or procedures for correction of mistakes. The media may not censor, change or alter in any of the materials presented by the eligible parties, contesting groups or candidates for broadcast or publication.

Questionable Materials

In the event of the media believe a political message not to be in good taste, or contrary to the public interest, security, peace or morality, the political message may be rejected for broadcast or publication. The political party, contesting group or candidate should be notified immediately of the specific reasons for the rejection and be given the opportunity to modify the material to meet broadcast or publication standards. The media representative(s) shall have the final authority to accept or reject any material considered questionable under these Guidelines. The media shall not use this authority to further individual political preferences.

Disclaimers

The media should insert or broadcast a disclaimer daily when any free or paid political messages will be carried or published by their medium. For example: "The political messages or advertisements published in today's newspaper are prepared by the political party, contesting group or candidate without editing or change and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of this newspaper." One insert anywhere in the newspaper should be sufficient. A similar statement should be made by the broadcast media at least once during the broadcast day and not necessarily immediately preceding or following broadcast of political material. The Role of the Elections Commission in media control: The Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission has had cause to intervene in disputes between one political party and the local radio station management after which an amicable solution was found for the problem. The Chairman, assisted by a three-man expert group will monitor the operation of the media during the pre-nomination and election campaign periods. The media both privately-owned and state-owned are expected to co-operate with the group of experts as part of the effort to ensure that the election campaign is consistent with the movement to strengthen the country's democratic culture.

ELECTIONS PERIOD:

This period is considered to be between the announcement of the date for Elections and Polling Day.

BROADCAST MEDIA

both radio and television This refers to radio and television both facilities which utilise the country's airspace and thus automatically benefit from the country's resources. Therefore whether privately or publicly owned must adhere to the code of conduct in relation to the stipulations governing their operations on the question of political broadcasts.

AIRTIME

Conditionalities set out in this Code of Conduct are dependent on availability of airtime.

FREQUENCY AND DURATION; No political party shall be entitled to more than two political broadcast each day on radio [this does not apply to the repeats of broadcast on Radio Roraima, that were broadcast earlier on the Voice of Guyana.]

THIRD PARTY

A third party might sponsor a political broadcast on behalf of a political party, provided that the benefitting party through an authorised concedes that the said broadcast must be deducted from the ones allocated to that political party. a broadcast based on its allocation to purchase broadcast time.

PAYMENTS AND CREDITS

On the question of payments or credits, this will be dependent on the established policies of the radio station.

COMMERCIAL POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Commercial advertisements should also be allotted on a basis similar to other broadcast time. Payments for commercial political advertisements should be based on a system, allowing for the lowest frequency rate that is usually given to advertisers with large quantity of advertisements. In clearer words the lowest rates should be charged for these advertisements.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations should be placed on political advertisements to each political parties.

SPOT ADVERTISEMENTS; Spot advertisements should be limited to fifteen minutes for each political

political parties daily. In the case of documentaries, there should not be more than six half hour documentaries for each political parties during the elections period.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS; The content of all political broadcasts shall not infringe any of the laws of Guyana, or the regulations of the Broadcasting Company.

All scripts must be submitted to the radio station 48 hours in advance to facilitate broadcast, and these are to be scrutinised by the Company, and the Company has the right to request substantiation of allegations made in the scripts if these allegations appear to infringe any criminal or civil laws.

Should the political party refuse to adhere to advice to have the script changed in doubtful cases, then the management has the right to reject the script.

However, in such cases, an appeal could be made to the Chairman of the Elections Commission via the three-man group of experts.

SCRIPTS; Scripts mean three exact transcripts of the intended broadcast. All copies of scripts must be signed by the party's Secretary, or other authorised officer.

DRAMA; Political parties could submit their scripts that could be dramatised or contain sound effects including music. The Broadcast Company may however reserve the right to ensure that music inputs used do

are not being used at the risk of breaching any copyright laws. The Broadcast Company may demand confirmation that permission was obtained from the companies holding the copyrights.

EFFECTS; All effects used in political broadcasts shall be generated by the Political Party. The radio station shall not provide any such material or effects. Material recorded from the Company's newscasts or other programmes cannot be used in political broadcasts.

Pre-recorded; All political broadcasts shall be pre-recorded and shall be of acceptable broadcast quality.

DURATION; Each fifteen minute broadcast shall not exceed 13 minutes material, allowing the extra time to be allocated for opening and closing announcements and/or credits. The Company has the right to adhere to such timing.

RE-BROADCASTS; In the event of poor quality broadcast because of some technical fault not due to the customer, or in the event of wide-ranging blackouts in significant areas of the listenership, then the radio station shall re-broadcast the paid political advertisement or programme. However, no political broadcasts must be repeated on polling day.

POLLING DAY: THERE SHOULD BE NO POLITICAL BROADCASTS ON POLLING DAY.

PARTY BROADCASTS; The management of the Broadcasting Company shall notify the General Secretary or some other authorised persons of each political party seeking broadcast time of the dates and times of such broadcasts.

LIMITATIONS; The radio station shall not allow more than four political broadcasts daily. This does not apply to the one or two minutes commercial advertisements.

STIPULATIONS/RE-POLITICAL COMMERCIALS; The radio station will not allow any political party more than six political commercials on any of its three radio stations for political party. The broadcast must not be for more than 120 seconds. While the first come first serve basis is applicable in this case, the radio station must not discriminate in its

allocation of peak time advertising to political party, or to act in any way that would appear to cause an imbalance in the distribution of time, thus bringing into illrepute, the question of fairness in broadcast time. Further, the radio station must ensure that it does not appear to discriminate to a point where the question of a free and fair election becomes questionable.

TELEVISION:

Similar conditionalities that apply to the conduct of the radio station during the elections period, would apply to the television stations excepting where it is otherwise specified. **GENERAL RULES;** The entire media must conduct their publications so that the election atmosphere would be geared towards enthusiastic debates without sacrificing the tranquil and cordial spirit in keeping with the way of life of the Guyanese people.

RACISM; Editors are obligated to ensure that their letters to the editor columns avoid the publication of letters that could promote racial disharmony.

INFLAMATORY REMARKS; Editors of radio, television on the print media, must avoid publishing inflammatory remarks which are intended or could cause feelings of ethnic insecurity.

ELECTIONS COMMISSION;The commission sees itself as duty bound to resolutely guard constitutional provisions to help protect the Guyanese people from becoming embroiled over publication of bias and irresponsible material, albeit innocently.

ANNEX XV

Procedure for Verification of Statements of Poll – Statement by Guyana Elections Commission

GUYANA ELECTIONS COMMISSION 1997 GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Verification of Statements of Poll

(Votes Count)

1: AGREEMENT:

- 1:1 As a result of certain procedural problems which appeared to have emerged after the close of polls on Election Day, December 15, 1997; and more specifically after the counting of ballots in the places of poll, the Chairman of the Elections Commission discussed the matter and reached agreement with representatives of the political parties which contested the 1997 General and Regional Elections, for a verification of the voting results to be undertaken by the Elections Commission and the political parties.
- 1:2 The exercise will commence with verification of the results for Electoral District No. 4 (Demerara/Mahaica), and then proceed to the results of the other nine (9) electoral districts.

2: OBJECTIVE:

- 2:1 To reconcile and verify the votes counted and recorded in the Statements of Poll prepared and submitted by Presiding Officers after the counting of ballots on December 15, 1997; with the votes recorded on the Tally Sheets by the Polling/Counting Agents of the political parties which were contestants in the 1997 General and Regional Elections.

3: PROCEDURE:

- 3:1 The Chief Election Officer will submit Statements of Poll received from the Returning Officers to the Command Centre of the Elections Commission, where the Statements will be checked and sorted sequentially.
- 3:2 Statements of Poll checked and sorted will be submitted to the Chairman of the Elections Commission, or other designated official or member of the Commission who will inform (by voice) the assembled representatives of the political parties, the number and the identity of each of the checked and sorted Statements of Poll submitted to and received by him at each meeting of the verification exercise.
- 3:3 The Chairman or other designated official or member of the Commission will announce (by voice) the number of votes secured by each contesting political party in each polling place where the votes cast by electors for these parties were counted and recorded in the relevant Statements of Poll.

- 3:4 The assembled representatives of the political parties will compare and verify the information on their Tally Sheets.
- 3:5 In cases where there are no discrepancies in the information on the Statements of Poll, the statements will be certified by an appropriate mark placed by the Chairman or other designated official or member of the Commission and sent to the computer unit for the verified information to be entered into the program in which the voting results for each contesting political party are stored for retrieval, as required.
- 3:6 Statements of the verified results will be retrieved from the Computer system and distributed to the representatives of the political parties and other approved sources.
- 3:7 In cases where there are discrepancies in the information on the Statements of Poll and the Tally Sheets, the Statements will be identified by an appropriate mark, placed by the Chairman or other designated official or member of the Commission and set aside for further investigation: if necessary, the relevant Ballot Boxes will be opened by the Chief Election Officer and the Ballots in the Boxes will be counted and recorded by election officials in the presence of representatives of the political parties.
- 3:8 The conclusive count of the Ballots under the preceding section 3:7 will be entered into the voting results program of the Computer system in order to update the results that were stored in the system for retrieval, as necessary.
- 3:9 Representatives of the media (Press, Radio and Television), and the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), and members of the International Observer Groups will be invited to attend each verification session.
- 3:10 The tallied information as recorded by the EAB on the voting results will be used as much as possible to reconcile any disputed discrepancy that may arise in the verification exercise.

4: DECLARATION OF ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT:

- 4:1 These procedures were carefully implemented until December 19, 1997, when the Chairman declared that the Presidential candidate of the PPP/C (People's Progressive Party/Civic) list of candidates should be deemed to have been elected as President under the powers vested in him by Article 177 of the Guyana Constitution (1980). The Chairman based his declaration on the number of valid votes received by the PPP/C list of candidates. The Chairman took into account the remaining smaller number of unverified votes.

5: WITHDRAWAL OF THE PNC – PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS – AND DISRUPTION OF THE VERIFICATION PROCESS:

- 5:1 The representatives of the People's National Congress (PNC) withdrew from the verification exercise when the Chairman declared as he did in the preceding section 4. As a result, the verification exercise was disrupted since representatives of the other political parties also withdrew from the exercise in the confusion, which emerged as a consequence of the withdrawal of the representatives of the PNC.

6: RESUMPTION OF THE VERIFICATION EXERCISE:

- 6:1 The PNC returned on December 22, 1997, and the verification process continued as previously planned with the remaining unverified Statements of Poll for Region 4.
- 6:2 On December 23, the Statements of Poll of 310 or approximately forty per cent (40%) of the polling divisions of Region 4 were verified in the process of which certain minor deficiencies were apparent in a very small number of the Statements: these deficiencies were not unacceptable to the PNC and the other participating parties.
- 6:3 However, as the exercise continued on December 23, the main representative of the PNC [Mr Robert Corbin] raised certain contentious issues and in spite of the efforts of the Chairman to address the matter in the interest of all the participating parties, the representatives of the PNC withdrew from the exercise for the second time – the first time being on December 19.

GUYANA ELECTIONS COMMISSION

January 27, 1998

ISBN : 0 85092 537 1

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE, PALL MALL, LONDON SW1Y 5HX

