PROBLEMS OF CLASS FORMATION IN GUYANA

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ABSTRACT

The apparent primacy of the race question over the class struggle in Guyana is understood best when viewed in the context of the domination of the local economy by metropolitan capitalism. The monopolization of local resources by a few multi-national corporations engaged in monocultural production for the metropolitan market, resulted in very little of the surplus extracted being ploughed back into the local economy. Few linkages developed between the dominant capitalist sector and those in which there was some local control.

I have argued that changing conditions in the sugar industry in the immediate post-emancipation period, led to the differential incorporation of racial groups into the modes of production. This has had serious repercussions for the development of class struggle as chronic underdevelopment has reinforced the ethnic division of labor. Between 1905 and 1924, mounting contradictions between the capitalists and the workers, both African and Indian, produced a spate of strikes and work stoppages. In the immediate pre and post-World War I years, the emergence of a united working-class trade union seemed imminent. There was, however, a marked paucity of genuine working-class leaders. Consequently, it devolved on the 'middle class' to provide union leadership.

Rivalries were rampant in the 'middle class'. 'Middle class' Africans, lacking a base in the distributive trade but prominent in the legal profession, held many of the elected seats in the legislature by the early 1920s. They had access to the patronage and privileges of the colonial administration. The Indian 'middle class' was largely unrepresented in the legislature. However, their increasingly strong base in the distributive trade in conjunction with their rising representation in the independent professions in the 1920s, did much to antagonize the African 'middle class'. This was exacerbated by the Indian 'middle class' fierce interest in gaining political honors.

It was in this context that workers' militancy was developing. To dampen this, the colonial state bidded up the price for patronage. The 'middle class' had to demonstrate its capacity to control the trade unions. In the process, working-class militancy was eroded, as racism was used by the 'middle class' politicians in advancing their narrow class interests.

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HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND PROBLEMS OF CLASS ARTICULATION IN A MULTI-RACIAL PERIPHERAL CAPITALIST SOCIAL FORMATION

> There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.
>
> Marx.

> To take part in the African revolution it is not enough to write a revolutionary song; you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion it with the people, the songs will come by themselves, and of themselves.....
>
> In order to achieve real action, you must yourself be a living part of Africa and of her thought; you must be an element of that popular energy which is entirely called forth for the freeing, the progress, and the happiness of Africa. There is no place outside that fight for the artist or for the intellectual who is not himself concerned with and completely at one with the people in the great battle of Africa and of suffering humanity.
>
> Sekou Toure, 1959.

THE PROBLEMATIC

This study is concerned implicitly with the problems of mobilization which will inevitably confront a revolutionary socialist party committed to the unity of wage workers and peasants in Guyana. The degeneration of the nationalist movement led by Cheddi Jagan, a Marxist, into one based primarily on racial loyalties makes it necessary that emphasis be placed on problems relating to the formation of classes.[1]

A cardinal premise of this study is that the Guyanese people are not umbilically tied to poverty and backwardness and moreover, that the primary contradiction will not continue to manifest itself at the super-structural level in the form of racial conflict. In fact, we see the apparent prominence of race over class as a dialectical outcrop of the historical peculiarities of this social formation. Consequently, the 'race problem' is best understood when situated in the context of the articulation of the capitalist mode of production with pre-capitalist modes of production, bearing in mind the historical peculiarities of this social formation. We are also interested in the nature of the emergence and growth of the peasantry, the proletariat or strata which are in a transitional phase and, moreover, the relations between them.

Thus, our task with reference to Guyana, must be to analyze critically why contradictions at the super-structural level, epitomized by the 'racial problem', seem to have superseded contradictions at the level of economic practice, that is the class struggle.[2] To do this, we must concentrate on the development of the different modes of production and trace historically the nature of the incorporation of various ethnic groups within these modes. In the process, we should indicate how these modes are joined together in this social formation thus facilitating some insight into the formation of classes and various strata which might still be in a transitional phase. It is important to note that in a social formation where the dominant capitalist mode is restricted to sectors catering

largely for metropolitan markets, and, moreover, where the pre-capitalist modes are in varying stages of development, the class structure is likely to be extremely complex.[3]

Finally, we can ascertain why racial contradictions play a significant role, by assessing the articulation of different classes or strata at the level of political practice. The organizational structures of political practices provide the 'super-structure' on the economic 'sub-structures'; hence the two are dialectically inter-related. As a result, one can assume that if a social formation is characterized by the co-existence of the capitalist mode of production with pre-capitalist modes in diverse phases of development, the complex class structure will be marked by a certain degree of fluidity between classes and strata. This, in turn tends to spawn eclectic political practices. However, we can, at least from our understanding of the 'sub-structure' appreciate why a particular super-structural stance, for example, racism might be covertly or overtly taken by a particular class or stratum.

What, then, are the short-comings of conventional scholarship on this question as it relates to Guyana?

A CRITIQUE OF THE CULTURAL-PLURALIST ARGUMENT

Anthropological scholarship in the Caribbean was dominated for nearly three decades, beginning in the 1930's, by Melville and Frances Herskovits and their students, as well as by scholars who were indirectly influenced by them. Their works focussed primarily on the exotic: those aspects of

Caribbean culture which reflected the African influence to an inordinate degree. Cultural persistence was the beacon which guided inquiry.[4] Interestingly enough, as the Herskovitses assiduously sought to demonstrate the African connection, the working class throughout the Caribbean, from Jamaica to Guyana, was revolting against abominable working conditions.[5] But, such modern practices were not in the realm of anthropology.

In the 1950's, as metropolitan social scientists tried to grapple with the realities of mass-based political parties, engaged in the struggle for constitutional independence, Caribbeanists in anthropology seemed to have moved into an area of inquiry apparently more congruent with the political realities. A Jamaican anthropologist, M.G. Smith, resurrected J.S. Furnivall's notion of the plural society and harnessed it not to understand the dynamics of mass protest, but rather to describe race/color perceptions in Caribbean societies.[6] In Guyana, specifically, M.G. Smith's foremost disciple was Leo Despres, who adapted the concept in his attempt to explain the persistence of the racial/cultural factor in the nationalist politics of the 1950's and early 1960's.

According to Despres, Guyana is a plural society.

> ....the plural society occurs when groups living within a political unit practise very different systems of compulsory or basic institutions. Under these conditions the cultural plurality of the society corresponds to its social plurality (Despres 1967:16).

In short, Guyanese society comprises a number of 'subordinate cultural sections' and an overall 'dominant cultural section'. These retain an independent identity.

Moreover, for the cultural pluralist, following Malinowski:

> The core of a culture is its institutional system... Because institutions function to define and sanction the persistent forms of social behavior, the institutions of a people's culture make up the matrix of their social structure. (Despres 1967:15)

Thus, the social structure of the plural society is best understood in terms of:

> 1) The extent to which specified groups are culturally differentiated in terms of specific institutional activities
> and
> 2) The level at which institutional activities serve to maintain cultural differentiation as the basis for socio-cultural integration. (Despres 1967:22)

When institutional activities maintain cultural differentiation at the local level, minimal or local cultural sections exist. Again, as Despres argues:

> When institutional activities serve to integrate similar cultural groups at the national level, such groups constitute maximal or national cultural sections. (Despres 1967:22)

In Guyana, he states that broker institutions e.g. corporations, political parties, labor unions etc. are instrumental in that:

> They integrate, separately, similar minimal cultural sections and thereby allow for the expression of their characteristic cultural values in national spheres of social activity. (Despres 1967:25)

Finally, Despres points out that 'cultural sections' can become politically active with all the ramifications for conflict and instability, though this needs not be so. 'Change' can be peaceful. He adds:

> The creation of social alignment for political purposes (as well as for other purposes) requires organizational strategy and organizational effort. National leaders are in a position to provide both of these elements. Whether or not the alignments they forge will lead to stability and national integration will depend, in large part, on the kinds of decisions they make. (Despres 1967:29).

It is obvious that for the cultural pluralist, culture is given an autonomy of its own. As it is, the concept of cultural pluralism rests on a syllogistic over-simplification. A plural society has different 'cultural sections'. Different 'cultural sections' have separate forms of 'organizational integration'. Therefore, the presence of separate forms of 'organizational integration' means that the society is a culturally plural one. One starts off with cultural givens; one ends with cultural givens.

No attempt is made to understand that in a peripheral capitalist society such as Guyana, the social structure was conditioned overwhelmingly by imperialist domination, and was largely a product of the historical development of the whole productive process within the framework of metropolitan demands

on this social formation.

Again, the cavalier way in which history is treated leads to a reification of the political process. As it is, Despres fails to locate the rise of trade unions and political parties within the changing patterns of the local productive process and the concomitant changes in forms of super-structural adaptation. One gets no new insights as to why certain institutions may assume a greater credibility within an ethnic framework. Sectional allegiances and the proliferation of ethnic politics become pathologically static features of a society whose rationale is its ethnic cultural separateness.

One cannot adequately explain the failure of the nationalist movement in the 1950's and 60's to retain its initial multi-ethnic base, unless one assesses the historically varied circumstances which produced certain basic differences in the class composition of different ethnic groups. What one needs are historically-grounded explanations not synchronic descriptions. Yet, even when a historical dimension is employed by Despres, it is so tainted with an arid non-materialistic notion of institutions as overarching entities unto themselves that Guyanese history becomes essentially a record of this or that character manipulating 'cultural sections' for short-term gains.[7] In short, Despres' analysis lends credence to the popular but erroneous view that Guyanese society is so deeply rooted in the bedrock of racialism that survival, at best, might be unattainable.

However, Despres' task is not to understand a people's history dialectically with an aim to aiding the liberation struggle. At best, even as extensive and well-researched a work as Despres', is largely descriptive and leads to an analytical 'dead-end'. For people committed to revolutionary change, it offers little.

HISTORICAL MATERIALISM AND THE DIALECTIC OF RACE AND CLASS

Historical materialism or 'the materialist conception of history' was developed mainly by Marx to combat those schools of thought in Western Europe which sought to rationalize the rise of the bourgeoisie. Though influenced both by the philosophers of the Enlightenment as well as by those of the 'Romantic-Conservative Reaction', Marx's notion of historical materialism was, in the main, premised on a refutation of the essentially idealist and static implications of the latter. As Zeitlin points out:

> Hegel....brought his dialectical process to an abrupt stop with the Prussian state, the highest expression of reason, Saint Simon...wanted to eliminate conflictive elements from the new organic system. (Zeitlin 1968:65).

For Marx, conflict was endemic in class society because of an ever present contradiction between the 'material forces of production' and the 'social relations of production'. Moreover, one cannot possibly account for the dominance of certain ideologies at a particular juncture in isolation from this basic contradiction.

Historical materialism is grounded in the perception that people can collectively arrive at a level of consciousness which makes it possible for them to struggle to transform their

material environment. This effort to exploit the material environment has always been a social experience. The conscious channeling of human energy, in myriad organizational forms into production for the reproduction of human societies is a universal phenomenon.

However, man's environmental reality is not uniform. Organizational forms (i.e. social structures) vary considerably over space and time. Yet, the central point is that whatever the differences or similarities between social formations, we cannot comprehend social and political processes adequately unless we grasp the essence of the reproduction of human societies - the way they are organized for production. As Marx argued:

> Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connexion of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination but as they really are i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.(Marx 1970:46-47)

Some argue that this is a crude form of material determinism which obviates any possibility for self-conscious activity. That is, historical materialism has a built-in contradiction, for Marx's man becomes a fossil so encrusted in his material reality that he becomes incapable of conscious action to change that reality. This is a serious misrepresentation of the

thesis and needs to be challenged. To do this we must turn to materialist dialectics and contradiction.

MATERIALIST DIALECTICS AND CONTRADICTION

Materialist dialectics is based on the notion that development is the product of contradictions within a thing. It holds that contradictions are universal and, moreover, that their presence within a thing is the primary cause for self-movement; for it is the dynamic which produces change. Change can be revolutionary. That is, there can be a radical restructuring of a thing as a result of the development to maturity of internal contradictions. Therefore, it is erroneous to attribute to external causes or external motive forces the fundamental reason for the development of a thing. At best, they produce changes in scale or quantity not revolutionary qualitative change.

The universality of contradictions has a two-fold meaning, as Mao Tse-Tung points out:

> One is that contradictions exist in the process of development of all things, and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end. (Mao Tse-Tung 1967:316)

This is illustrated by Lenin in a more concrete way:

> In mathematics: + and -. Differential and integral.
> In mechanics: action and reaction.
> In physics: positive and negative electricity.
> In chemistry: the combination and dissociation of atoms.
> In SOCIAL SCIENCES: THE CLASS STRUGGLE.[8]

Ever since the division of labor in society made it possible for one stratum of society to appropriate the surplus generated by a majority of the producers, there has emerged a basic contradiction. That is the contradiction between the FORCES OF PRODUCTION and the (SOCIAL) RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION.

The former include machines, instruments and tools, raw materials, natural resources, as well as human beings. As Gurley points out:

> Productive forces develop through the labor and activity that people expend in extracting a living from their natural environment. Part of their development includes the growth of human abilities and needs. As people change their world, they develop their own capabilities as well as their desires to change the world still further. People thus make their living and themselves simultaneously. Human activity is, therefore, an integral part of the productive forces; and interpretation of the Marxian theory as being a form of 'technological determinism' emasculates it by excising the human factor. (Gurley 1975: 10-11)

The relations of production are closely related to the forces of production. In fact, the specific nature of the latter determines the social relations of production. The relations of production refer to the institutions and practices which determine how goods are produced, exchanged and distributed. Moreover, they include property relations; the way labor is recruited, organized and compensated; the markets or other means for exchanging the products of labor; and the methods by which the ruling classes expropriate the surplus value produced by labor. In short, these relations of production form the basis

for the evolution of the class structure of a particular society.

The specific character of the forces of production and its related relations of production are what distinguish one mode of production from another. It follows, then that the transition from one mode of production to another involves, in the first instance, significant changes within the forces of production. Meanwhile, this also implies that the relations of production must also undergo a transformation more congruent with the new forces of production.

The transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode in Western Europe, produced a situation in which the relations of production characteristic of the former were no longer compatible with the new forces of production. As Gurley argues:

> This growing contradiction takes the form of a class struggle between the rising class associated with the new means of production and the old ruling class whose dominance was based on its control of the older, waning forces. This class struggle, under appropriate conditions, intensifies the contradiction between the means of production and the class structure until, as a result of revolution, new relations of production which are compatible with the superior productive forces are established. (Gurley 1975:13)

Thus far, we have focused on what historical materialism holds as the principle contradiction, namely that between the forces of production and the relations of production. In the process, we have concentrated on contradictions at the fundamental level; that is at the level of economic practice. However, to assume that contradictions do not manifest themselves at the

super-structural level - at the level of IDEOLOGY - is really to embrace mechanical materialism (Mao Tse-Tung 1967:336). This goes against historical materialism which holds that ideological contradictions may, at certain junctures, appear as the principal and dicisive ones. Thus, religious bigotry, racism, tribalism etc. may at some phrases appear to take precedence over class contradictions.[9] This does not constitute a refutation of the historical materialist method. In fact, it is in line with its proposition that to understand the apparent prominence at this or that juncture of super-structural contradictions, one must study the level of development of the productive forces and its related relations of production within a particular social formation.

THE ARTICULATION OF MODES OF PRODUCTION AND THE QUESTION OF RACE

To explain the apparent centrality of the race question in a peripheral capitalist formation such as Guyana, one must be able to identify the different modes of production. Having argued that such a society is characterized by the co-existence of a variety of modes of production, it is reasonable to posit that not only is the class structure an extremely complex one, but moreover, one is likely to find certain strata in varying stages of transition. This notwithstanding, the exercise remains legitimate for a number of reasons.

First, it facilitates an understanding of the historical development of the productive process. It also makes it possible to assess the nature of the relations of production within each mode. Consequently, a concrete overview of the

class structure of the social formation could be made. Those classes which have been most developed could be identified; others that are in the process of formation or are in a transitional phase may be located and their relationships to each other could be determined. Again, in a multi-racial society, such as Guyana, one can situate each ethnic group in the context of the development of each mode.

In peripheral capitalist formations, the implantation of the capitalist mode in certain enclave sectors of the local economy - and Guyana experienced this par excellence - resulted in the stultification of other modes of production. Consequently, the productive process was greatly retarded. Thus, while the capitalist (plantation) mode was unquestionably dominant, it shackled the pre-capitalist modes to its specific requirements.

It becomes crucial, then, in discussing problems of class articulation in Guyana to define as succinctly as possible what is meant by social classes. One of the most precise definitions was made by Lenin. He wrote:

> Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labor, and, consequently, by the dimension and mode of acquiring the share of wealth of which they dispose. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labor of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy (quoted in Stavenhagen 1975:28).

What is evident, here, is that the relationship of groups of people to the means of production becomes the primary criterion by which their class position is located. The concept becomes a potent one in any struggle, as it illuminates the potential role of distinct classes or strata which can be mobilized as the contradictions develop within the economic sub-structure of a social formation.

In this context, as Rodolfo Stavenhagen argues, the concept of class is rescued from the nebulous arena of income distribution and value orientation, so dominant in conventional scholarship. Stavenhagen adds:

> Classes are tied to the evolution and development of society. They are found in historically constituted social structures. The various classes exist in specific socio-historical formations. Every epoch is characterized by its own social classes. For this reason, there is not much point in talking, as do the sociologists of the stratification school of upper, middle and lower classes in every society, in every epoch. (Stavenhagen 1975:26).

The degree to which classes are articulated and the extent to which class consciousness develops are closely related to the level of development of the forces of production within a social formation. The related relations of production provide the basis of the expression of the class structure of that society.

In a multi-racial social formation such as Guyana, it becomes crucial to focus both on the articulation of classes at the economic level, as well as the super-structural level, which

includes the role of racism in political practices.[10]

The ethnic question and its related cultural ones have not been handled generally in a rigorous manner by Marxists, seeking to assess the part played by ideological contradictions in slowing down the advancement of class struggle. If we are to use historical materialism as a method of analysis and not as dogma, it is imperative that while we maintain the centrality of contradictions within the economic sub-structure, we do not forget that in view of the retardation of the development of the productive process, ideological contradictions can assume a dominant role.

In the Guyanese social formation, we must historically situate the development of each mode of production in the context of the differential incorporation of each ethnic group. For, as we have argued, if racial groups were incorporated differentially in various modes of production, then class formation within each mode will reflect a disproportionate presence of this or that group within each class or stratum. Moreover, this method of analysis helps us to ascertain how far the material environment has contributed to cultural evolution. Thus, in an 'immigrant' society like Guyana, with a low development of the productive forces, the development of a particular mode of production in a material environment not dissimilar from that of the source of immigration of a particular group, could make for the primacy of racial/cultural consciousness over class consciousness.

The late revolutionary and theoretician from Guinea -

Bissau, Amilcar Cabral, spoke of the 'strong, dependent and reciprocal relationships' between culture and the economic and political situation in human societies. He argued:

> Culture is always in the life of a society (open or closed), the more or less conscious result of the economic and political activities of that society the more or less dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society, on the one hand between man (considered individually or collectively) and nature, and, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or classes. (Cabral 1973:41).

By focusing on the development of each mode of production and the specificity of each mode, we can group both the conditions which aid class articulation as well as those which make for the dominance of racial/cultural contradictions at certain phases. However, to discuss race and culture in isolation from the development of the productive forces and their related relations of production, is to engage in mystification - to see forms without grasping their essence.

THE ARTICULATION OF CLASSES OF THE POLITICAL LEVEL

Ken Post has pointed out that, '.....although the modes of production, distribution and exchange are the primary determinants of class structure and human action, classes can only be fully formed and action embarked upon because economic structures are articulated with others and receive their full expression through them. Thus, the ruling classes may be that which controls the dominant mode of production, and THE STATE may be its instrument, but it is only because it can use the

state to co-ordinate all aspects of its power that it can fully control the processes of economic practice (1975:3)'.

It cannot be refuted that the absentee bourgeoisie which controlled the dominant mode of production also controlled the colonial state in Guyana.[12] A more crucial question, however, relates to the location of each class or stratum within the colonial social formation in terms of its relationship to the means of production, on one hand, and its position vis-a-vis the colonial state, on the other. In the process, we can identify those classes or strata which, because of their specific location in the productive process seemed to have acquired or were in the process of acquiring a degree of class consciousness hence were responsive to political mobilization.

However, class consciousness does not develop automatically from the socio-economic realities present in a social formation. In fact, the relations between a particular class in the socio-economic order and its conscious political action to change the social structure or to preserve the status quo are contingent upon specific economic and historical circumstances. Moreover, social class may not even be the basis for the mobilization of certain groups. Thus, whatever forms political mobilization assumes is best understood by concrete studies.

Commenting on the development of class, Stavenhagen remarks:

> There are two consecutive phases in the development of class. In the first phase, a class constitutes a class only with respect to other classes, as a function of its position in the socio-

> economic structure, and the specific relations that grow out of this position. In the second phase, a class has gained consciousness of of itself, its interest, and of its historical 'mission', and constitutes a class 'in the truest sense of the word'. It is a political action group that intervenes as such in social struggles and economic-political conflicts and contributes as such to social change and the development of society. Although the two phases are consecutive from the historical point of view, because men's social conditions determine their consciousness, the move from one to the other depends on a number of concrete historic factors (Stavenhagen 1975:31).

In the colonial social formation, the state functioned primarily to neutralize the contradictions existing between the relations of production and the forces of production within the dominant capitalist mode. For example, the colonial state was instrumental in undermining the development of pre-capitalist modes which were perceived as a potential threat to the dominant mode. Its fiscal policies, educational programmes, its coercive power, etc., were geared primarily to preserve the established relations of production. In a multi-racial society, such as Guyana, this strategy would also have found expression in covert attempts at exploiting racial/cultural contradictions.

Yet, in Guyana, contradictions continued to develop at the level of economic practice. In the capitalist mode, a degree of working-class consciousness started to develop before and after World War I. A logical result of this, was the rise of trade unionism. Trade unions, as Peter Waterman points out:

> ....are ideally organizations of wage-earners, united on the basis of their occupation, skill or industry, in order to protect and advance their common interests vis-a-vis employers. (Waterman 1975:5)

He adds that while they were originally created in Europe for workers, the membership has become multi-class. The singularity of dedication of the original leadership has undergone a significant diminution. The accession to leadership positions of many whose class position and interests conflict with those of the workers has done much to deflect from the original goals of the trade union movement.

In Guyana, the backwardness of the productive process, the political naivete of the workers and the petty-bourgeois aspirations of even those few workers who played leadership roles, not only dampened class contradictions but, moreover, led to the escalation of racial/cultural contradictions.[13]

Therefore, we must assess the organizational response of the workers within the capitalist mode of production and its implications for the peasantry or sectors of the peasantry. This becomes especially complex in the Guyanese case where the enclave development of the capitalist mode coupled with the systematic strangulation or stultification of the pre-capitalist modes produced chronic backwardness, with serious problems of class articulation. Again, the differential incorporation of ethnic groups into the productive process has further compounded the process. Finally, the particular class interests of the trade union leaders must be determined, both in relation to

other classes or strata as well as to the colonial state; certain strata in transition can play a decisive role. It is this rather fluid scenario which often produces eclectic political practices, marked by opportunism and the exploitation of superstructural contradictions of a racial/cultural nature.

FORMAT OF STUDY

What follows is an attempt to understand why the racial question seems to have taken precedence over the class struggle in Guyana. While the most violent expressions of this problem took place during the early 1960's, a better perspective is gained by a study of antecedent developments between 1838 and the early 1940's - that is from the commencement of Indian indentureship to the period of incipient unionism (1919-1940).

Chapter 2 focuses on the transition from a 'pure' plantation economy to a peripheral capitalist one. In the process, we wish to demonstrate how the dominant capitalist mode of production, controlled almost exclusively by expatriate interests, consistently sought to limit or destroy whatever potential for growth petty commodity production might have had. In a situation of chronic underdevelopment, then, the class structure was very complex. The lack of a throughgoing industrialization meant that a simplification of the social structure did not occur. This, of course, was compounded, as we argued earlier, by the historically differing circumstances in which various ethnic groups became involved in the productive process. Consequently, there developed a rather disproportionate presence

of this or that ethnic group within specific classes or strata.

In Chapter 3, we focus on mobilizational problems at the level of political practice. Emphasis will be placed on the emergence of a working class and the rise of trade unions, demonstrating why the structural contradictions within the capitalist mode in the 1919-1940 period did not lead to a unified workers' trade union movement. We will argue that in the absence of genuine working-class leadership, certain indigenous strata or classes exerted an inordinate amount of influence within the union movement. The class or class-like perceptions of the union leadership reflected its own precarious position in the colonial social formation. The perpetuation of underdevelopment as a result of the monopolization of local resources by metropolitan-based capitalists to meet metropolitan demands did little to alter the essentially ethnic division of labour in Guyana. As a result, it was possible for the weak 'middle class' to exploit racial/cultural contradictions for their own narrow interests.

In Chapter 4, we make some concluding remarks.

NOTES

1. The People's Progressive Party, the first mass-based political party in Guyana, was elected to office in April, 1953 under a very restricted constitution, in which considerable power remained the prerogative of the Colonial Office-appointed Governor. After 133 days in office, the British government suspended the consitution and prorogued the House of Assembly and the State Council. The reason given was that:

> ....the intrigues of Communists and their associates, some in Ministerial posts, threaten the welfare and good administration of the colony. If these processes were to continue unchecked an attempt might be made by methods which are familiar in some other parts of the world to set up a Communist-dominated state. This would lead to bloodshed (quoted in Jagan 1954:7).

The mass-based orientation of the party in the early 50's is reflected in the following observation by two local commentators:

> Racially the party represented a step towards the unification of the African and Indian workers and intellectuals who shared in the common desire to remove the imperial presence and initiate a programme of social reform.
>
> Economically, the party represented a coalition of peasant, 'rural proletarian' and city workers; all in different ways affected by the social structure of colonial rule and all eager for change (DeCaires and Fitzpatrick 1966:39).

2. The Trinidadian marxist historian, literary critic, and cricket authority, C.L.R. James, points out that:

> The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. BUT TO NEGLECT THE RACIAL FACTOR AS MERELY INCIDENTAL IS AN ERROR ONLY LESS GRAVE THAN TO MAKE IT FUNDAMENTAL (emphasis added).
> Black Jacobins, N.Y.: Random House, 1963, p. 283.

3. These are two of the basic structural characteristics of a peripheral capitalist formation. The concept is probably best developed in the recent works of Samir Amin. It describes a social formation in which:

> ..... the capitalist mode of production, introduced from outside - that is, based on the external market - tends to become NOT EXCLUSIVE, but only dominant.... Contrasting with the increasing homogeneity of the social formations of the centre is the persisting heterogeneity of those of the periphery - by which I do not mean mere juxtaposition. Just as the pre-capitalist modes of production are here integrated into a system, subjected to the distinctive purposes of dominant capital....so the new social structures form a structured, hierarchial totality, dominated by the 'great absent member of colonial society': the dominant metropolitan bourgeoisie (Amin 1974:360).

4. The best examples of this type of inquiry were the works by the Herskovitses themselves.

   cf. 1. Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana, N.Y: McGraw-Hill, 1934.

   2. Life in a Haitian Valley, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.

   3. Trinidad Village, N.Y: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.

5. A history of working class revolt in the British West Indies between 1935 and 1939 is still to be written. A chronology of these events gives the impression of a highly co-ordinated grass-roots movement at work. This was hardly the case. They were workers' responses to the massive erosion of their standard of living brought on by the depression in the metropolis. They were vivid illustrations of the disastrous consequences of the shackling of the West Indian economies to the advanced capitalist centres. The following is a roster of these events:

   1935 - A sugar strike in ST. KITTS.
   1935 - A revolt against an increase in customs duties - ST. VINCENT.
   1935 - A coal strike - ST. LUCIA.
   1935 - LABOR DISPUTES ON THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS - GUYANA.
   1937 - An oil strike which became a general strike - TRINIDAD.
   1937 - A sympathetic strike - BARBADOS.
   1937 - REVOLT ON SUGAR PLANTATIONS - GUYANA.
   1937 - A sugar strike - ST. LUCIA.
   1938 - A sugar strike - JAMAICA.
   1938 - A dockers' strike - JAMAICA.
   1939 - A SUGAR STRIKE - GUYANA.

   (Williams 1970:473)

6. M.G. Smith's clearest exposition of this concept is found in, THE PLURAL SOCIETY IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.

7. There was certainly a great deal of this in the 1920's and 30's, as we argue in Chapter 3, but to isolate the political practices of opportunistic 'middle class' elements from an understanding of the limitations and weaknesses of that class within the economic 'sub-structure' is to over-simplify a very complex problem.

8. V.I. LENIN, 'On the Question of Dialectics', Collected works, Vol. 38, pp. 357-58.

9. Arguing from a Marxist perspective, Walter Rodney has illustrated how the 'material base' ('the economic sub-structure') and the superstructure are dialectically inter-related. He points out:

> ..... as human beings battled with the material environment, they created forms of social relations, forms of government, patterns of behavior and systems of belief which together constituted the superstructure - which was never exactly the same in any two societies. Each element in the superstructure interacted with other elements in the superstructure as well as with the material base. For instance, the political and religious patterns affected each other and were often intertwined. The religious belief that a certain forest was sacred was the kind of element in the super-structure that affected economic activity, since that forest could not be cleared for cultivation. While in the final analysis the breakthrough to a new stage of human develop-ment is dependent upon man's technical capacity to deal with the environment, it is also to be borne in mind that peculiarities in the super-structure of any given society have a marked impact on the rate of development (Rodney 1972:16).

10. Samir Amin has recently criticized the tendency to attribute historical causality exclusively to the economic base- probably a rationalization for inactivity by so-called Marxists in advanced capitalist societies. He writes:

> In pseudo-Marxist mechanistic expositions, the qualifier 'objective' is widely reserved for the economic base, whereas elements pertaining to the superstructure are regarded as 'subjective' factors. The base is thus

> placed in absolute opposition to the superstructure - the superstructure becomes a simple reflection (and in this case all one has to do is wait, since the economic base will spontaneously lead to socialism); or superstructural 'lag' is attributed to 'betrayal' by leaders (as in a 'whodunit' version of history). (Amin 1977:29)

11. We are alluding here to the involvement by the Indians in Guyana in a petty commodity mode based primarily on rice cultivation, an activity on which most of the rural communities in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (India) were rooted. As some 85 percent of the indentured laborers were recruited from this region, the development of rice production in rural Guyana was bound to have profound cultural ramifications.

12. A British Parliamentary Commission, appointed in 1927 to make recommendations for constitutional reforms, described the relationship between the planters and the colonial state thus:

> The survival of an industry without which the population of the Colony would by now have practically disappeared was secured only at the price of a plantocracy or government of sugar, by sugar, for sugar, inevitably tending to restrict development in other ways. (quoted in Blanshard 1947:126)

This same Commission recommended new constitutional arrangements in 1928 which eroded away even the modicum of power in the hands of the elected representatives, drawn mainly from the African 'middle class'.

13. William A. Knowles has observed the negative aspect of this phenomenon in the West Indies. He writes:

> Any worker who does have the ability to become a leader and who can develop a following among workers is so unusual that he stands apart from the group and can no longer be regarded as one of them. (Knowles 1959:62).

CHAPTER TWO

THE DIFFERENTIAL INCORPORATION OF RACIAL GROUPS INTO THE MODES OF PRODUCTION AND ITS IMPACT ON CLASS FORMATION

> I fully and cordially agree....that the highest interest of the negroes requires that the cultivation of sugar should not be abandoned, and that the proprietors of European race should be enabled to maintain their present place in the society of the colony, which can be done by giving them greater command of labor.
>
> Lord Harris, 1848
> Governor of Trinidad.

> Give me my heart's desire in Coolies, and I will make you a million hogshead of sugar without stirring from this colony!
>
> Guyanese Planter to Anthony Trollope (English novelist), 1859.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PLANTATION MODE OF PRODUCTION

Like all societies in the Caribbean, Guyana is largely an immigrant one. Apart from a very small percentage of Amerindians, the population comprises people of African, Indian, Chinese and Portugese origins who were brought in to provide cheap labor on European-owned plantations. However, unlike the rest of the Caribbean, the aboriginal people were not decimated.[1] This may be attributed to three factors.

Settled European involvement started at a later period in Guyana, thus delaying the establishment of plantations and the demand for regimented, cheap labor - the main element in their decimation elsewhere. Dutch traders, while penetrating

far into the interior of Guyana in the 17th century, restricted the encounter mainly to trade. As Raymond Smith points out:

> Cotton, dyes, and wood were obtained from the Indians in exchange for trade goods, but the cultivation of crops such as sugar gradually came to be of equal and then of greater importance (1962:15).

A peculiar feature of the rise of European-dominated commercial agriculture was the development of a plantation mode of production. A central aspect of its productive relations was the use of non-market mechanism in recruiting labor. In Guyana, slavery and, later, indentureship performed this function. This is how Mandle describes the process:

> Where plantations are dominant, their man-power requirements are such that these needs come to set the pattern of social relationships, not only on the estate but in the wider society as well. A plantation economy, because of the plantations' economic dominance and the characteristic chronic relative shortage of labor associated with this kind of production, requires some form of coercion, work as unskilled labor on the estates is the only employment option available to the population, and ultimately such labor is compelled by the state through officially sanctioned legislation and violence (emphasis added; Mandle 1973:10)

The shift from trade to plantation agriculture did not really gain momentum until the 1730's. While Amerindian slave labor was used initially, it did not prove very successful. The brutalities of the system soon started to take their toll. But, unlike their counterparts in the Caribbean islands, the Amerindians of Guyana could escape from the system by seeking freedom in the dense tropical rain-forests of the interior.

Meanwhile, the establishment of the Atlantic slave trade in the region, with the availability of a vast reservoir of West African slaves, soon made for a less rigorous pursuit of Amerindian slaves who had escaped to freedom. The colonist was free to stake his claim to African slave labor. As a result, an overwhelming majority of the Amerindian people moved out of the coastal zone, where the plantations were established, and returned to their primitive communal mode of subsistence. This involved hunting, gathering, and swidden agriculture. As this mode of production hardly contributed to the appropriation of a surplus in the social formation which evolved, we do not propose to focus specifically on the Amerindians beyond here.

With the constant penetration of Dutch capital in the 1730's and soon afterwards, British capital, plantation agriculture continued to develop.[2] It was heavily labor intensive and the security of West African slave supplies guaranteed access to metropolitan capital. This traffic in slaves did not terminate, in the British colonies, until 1807.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain precisely how many slaves were imported into Guyana for the duration of the Atlantic slave trade. The problem arises because of the unreliability of statistics compiled during this period.[3] Again, the constant shifting of administrative control of the colony, wrought by imperialist rivalries in the region, compounded the problem further. In fact, Guyana was not incorporated into its present form until 1831, though it was ceded for the last time to the British in 1803.

Some of the problems involved in computing accurate figures on the number of slaves brought to Guyana, may be gleaned from the following description of the impact of imperialist rivalries on the administration of the colony:

> From about 1580 until about 1803, the history of Guyana reflected the scramble for territories by the big powers of the day, Britain, France and Holland. An almost continuous procession of seizure and counter seizure took place and Guyana was Dutch, French, British, Dutch, French, British until settling for the name British Guiana in 1831, a name it kept until 1966. (Armstrong 1974:1)

In spite of these difficulties, Curtin suggests that the figure of 500,000 for both Surinam and Guyana (Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice) - with 350,000 for the counties of Demerara and Berbice - is acceptable for the duration of the slave trade (Curtin 1969:85).

The ethnic diversity of the slave population, in conjunction with deliberate attempts, by the planters, to retain this heterogeneity on the plantations made opportunities for reconstructing traditional societies virtually impossible.[4] Moreover, the constant attempts made by the slaves to win freedom - the two most important revolts took place in 1763 and 1824 - tended to reinforce this pattern of slave distribution.

Yet, the rigid hierarchical structure of the slave plantations, (Fig. 1) paradoxically necessitated a rapid homogenizing of the slave population if the relations of production congruent with the plantation mode of production were to be met.

Cultural diversity and the retention of ethnic particularisms hindered the chain of command characteristic of the plantation mode. Consequently, there started a process of cultural evolution that became increasingly a variant of British culture.[5]

FIGURE 1

THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF A TYPICAL GUYANESE PLANTATION DURING SLAVERY.

1. THE PLANTER - usually absentee landlord, resident in England.
2. THE AGENT - based in GEORGETOWN, GUYANA to facilitate contacts with the COLONIAL STATE.
3. THE RESIDENT MANAGER - frequently of Scottish origin.
4. THE OVERSEERS - local whites, occasionally mulattoes ('colored').
5. DRIVERS (sic) - selected from the slaves, with emphasis on brawn, not brain.
6. THE FIELD-SLAVES.

It was this hierarchical pattern of social relations, executed with the help of the colonial state and the support of overseers and drivers which created a peculiar sensitivity to color and race. The congruency between the color of one's skin and one's social class position produced a pervasive tendency to give a racial rationalization to this oppressive system. Not only were the planters enmeshed in this, but the slaves themselves soon perceived their oppression purely in racial terms. Again, the appointment of a few mulattoes ('colored') as overseers was another advancement of the planters' racial rationalization for

what was an economic phenomenon. This is how Eric Williams explains the origin of African slavery:

> The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. As compared with Indian (Amerindian) and white labor, Negro slavery was eminently superior. 'In each case', writes Bassett, discussing North Carolina, 'it was a survival of the fittest. Both Indian slavery and white servitude were to go down before the blackman's superior endurance, docility, and labor capacity'. The features of the man, his hair, color and dentrifice, his 'subhuman' characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to Negro labor because it was cheapest and best. This was not a theory, it was a practical conclusion deduced from the personal experience of the planter. He would have gone to the moon, if necessary, for labor. Africa was nearer than the moon, nearer too than the more populous countries of India and China. But their turn was to come (Williams 1964:19-20).

In Guyana, specifically, the African's perception of his oppression purely in racial terms was to be fortified in the post-emancipation period.

THE PLANTATIONS AND THE STULTIFICATION OF AFRICAN PETTY-COMMODITY PRODUCTION, 1838-1870's

With the end of slavery in 1834 and the termination of 'apprenticeship'[6] in 1838, the plantation mode was on the threshold of a potentially devastating crisis. The enthusiasm with which ex-slaves sought to acquire plots of land for petty-commodity production, constituted a threat to the traditionally guaranteed supply of cheap labor which was the backbone of the

system. Again, this situation was exacerbated with the introduction of free trade in Britain in 1846. This brought a precipitous decline in the price of Caribbean sugar which had, hitherto, been imported at preferential rates.[7]

For a large percentage of planters in Guyana, sugar cultivation was no longer remunerative. Numerous estates were abandoned. As Table 1 shows, the number of plantations under cultivation fell from 308 in 1838 to 173 in 1853; 135 having gone out of production in fifteen years. This tended to deflate the prices of land, thus giving momentum to land purchases by Africans.

TABLE 1

ABANDONMENT OF PLANTATIONS, 1838-53

YEAR	# UNDER CULTIVATION	# ABANDONED
1838	308	
1846	251	57
1846(Jan.1)	235	16
1848(June 30)	210	25
1849(Dec.31)	196	14
1852(June 30)	183	13
1853	173	10
	TOTAL ABANDONED	135

SOURCE: Adamson 1972:161

While many planters were ruined, others sought to stem the tide by rigorous efforts to destroy the potential viability of African petty-commodity production - a fate which the white yeoman peasantry had already experienced in those islands where planters needed room for expansion. The plantation mode of production, present in Guyana until 1917, was based on the

coercive control of a vast reservoir of cheap labor. Unlike capitalist enterprises, plantation agriculture did not have to depend on the recruitment of its labor through market mechanisms. It was only in the 1840's - 50's that the potentially harsh consequences of the transition from a plantation to a capitalist mode presented themselves. Significantly enough, this was occasioned by the emergence of a free peasantry, or rather, African peasant proprietorship.

Our argument, beyond here, is that the survival and recuperation of the plantation mode of production was achieved at the expense of the African petty-commodity producers. The stultification of the latter was facilitated, in part, by the continuous mass importation of indentured laborers from Madeira (Portuguese), China and India, recruited between 1835 and 1917, through non-market mechanisms (see Table 2)[8]. In the process, not only was African petty-commodity production irreparably robbed of its potential for growth, but the possibility of combining peasant cultivation with wage-labor on the plantations, at least during a transitional period, was effectively eliminated. Moreover - and this is one of the most tragic legacies of this experience - the perception by a disillusioned peasantry of the role of the European planter class was considerably attenuated; the antagonism having been deflected to his equally exploited rival, the Indian indentured laborer.

TABLE 2

INDENTURED LABORERS TO GUYANA BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 1835-1971

1.	INDIA	239,149
2.	MADEIRA (PORTUGUESE)	30,685
3.	AZORES (PORTUGUESE)	164
4.	WEST INDIES	40,783
5.	AFRICA	13,355
6.	ENGLAND	21
7.	CHINA	14,189
8.	CAPE VERDE	819
9.	MALTA	208
10.	U.S.A.	70
	TOTAL	339,263

SOURCE: Nath 1970:220

The preponderance of the Indian laborers in itself, however, did not perpetuate this negative perception. It was the preservation of the plantation mode with its concomitant underdevelopment of every sector of the local economy which rendered African labor redundant and African agricultural pursuits marginal. This tended to lend credence to the erroneous, but understandable view, that African economic backwardness was a question of race.

The essential social relations of production were retained. These were, as Mandle argues:

> ....the monopolization of the productive assets by a small planter class, production of a staple for external markets, absence of a vital domestic labor market, use of low productivity, two-wage labor, and a highly uneven distribution of income (Mandle 1972:60).

Precisely how the plantations were able to stifle the African petty-commodity mode is important both because it points up the contradictions inherent between the two, while it allows

us to situate the genesis of racial contradictions within the parameters of the economic sub-structure.

Rawle Farley points out:

> The land hunger of the new peasantry was enormous. Equally great was their industry in the development of the land acquired. The second half of the second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed in this regard the most spectacular and aggressive settlement in the history of the people of the British Caribbean and a movement which seemed to one planter in British Guiana to be certainly without parallel in the history of the world (Farley 1954:98).

In a majority of cases, land was bought collectively with cash earned and saved during the period of 'apprenticeship' (Smith 1956:11-12). This was truly phenomenal and does much to debunk the racist myth that Africans were naturally incapable of deferring present wants and, moreover, that they could not act co-operatively for the benefit of their community.

However, this myth was used to rationalize the planters' commitment to the frustration and strangulation of the African peasantry. Their stance was based on the perception that the rise of an independent peasantry was in contradiction to the primary requirement of the plantation mode of production - the availability of a vast body of cheap, reliable labor. The changing forces of production which emancipation brought in its train, as evidenced by the acquisition of free-hold property; combination of labor power into work gangs moving from one plantation to another; and the actual withdrawal of labor in 1842 and in 1847, was beyond the tolerance of a class which had

never been exposed to market mechanisms in recruiting labor. Again, the demonstration effect of a peasantry which could establish a base by augmenting their cash needs by working for wages only when they chose to, could not be countenanced. The contradiction between the emerging forces of production and the static relations of production which the planters wanted to perpetuate were too antagonistic to be prolonged without major changes in the plantation mode of production. The plantocracy was to use legal and extra-legal coercion to undermine the potential independence of the African petty-commodity producers.

As early as 1811, in recognition of the demonstration effect, the planters in collaboration with the coercive apparatus of the colonial state, sent expeditions to destroy the crops of runaway slaves or maroons. With the connivance of the acting Governor of Berbice, Dalrymple, the planters seemed to have created a para-military force to deal specifically with these communities. In a sense, this was a rehearsal of the pattern which emerged in the early decades after emancipation. Not only were these maroon communities demonstrating their independence of the repressive system, but their mere survival was a stirring testament to the slaves that a way out was not only possible but viable (Mintz 1974:78-79).

Farley describes one such expedition in 1811 thus:

> Charles Edmondson, commander of an expedition undertaken on the east coast of Demerara jointly by the Demerara and Berbice militia against Bush Negroes, reported as follows: 'The quantity of rice the Bush Negroes

> have, just rising out of the ground is very considerable, independent of yams, tannias, plantains, tobacco, etc., and as it will be three months before the rice is fit to gather in, I would recommend at that period another expedition to be sent and destroy the same.... It devolved on Major Brandt and Mr. Avery to destroy all the provisions that could be met with. This they did most effectively, fourteen houses filled with rice and several fields in cultivation being by their exertions totally destroyed .....I take upon me to say from these gentlemen's report that on a moderate calculation the quantity of rice that has been destroyed by them (independent of ground provisions) would have been equal to the support of seven hundred Negroes for twelve months (quoted in Farley 1954:88).[9]

Another problem with which maroons had to contend, was the use of Amerindians by planters to capture slaves who were seeking their freedom by establishing independent plots in the forest (Price 1973:9). Price suggests that:

> In British Guiana and parts of Brazil and Virginia, it was probably the mere presence of hostile Indians in large numbers that prevented the establishment of viable maroon communities (Price 1973:16).

This is corroborated by Adamson (1973:27):

> ... It was Gravesande who developed the policy, continued by the British of converting the indigenous Indians into slave catchers. By the beginning of the nineteenth century this had become an integral part of the Guyanese slave system. Attempts to enslave the Indians were opposed since the planters regarded them as their paid protectors and 'the inspired enemy of the Negro'.

Thus, the perception that petty-commodity production was antithetic to the free development of the plantation mode, inspired planters' reaction at an early stage. Equally important was the fact that the coercive machinery of the colonial state was deployed, in tandem with the planters' repressive forces, in order to destroy early African peasant initiatives. Moreover, the use of another ethnic group in this exercise, reflected a pattern which was to become institutionalized.[10]

Adamson writes of a case in 1866 in which a planter's agent, one Bury, sent a gang of Indian and Chinese immigrants from Plantation Columbia to drive the African villagers' cattle off the village of Aberdeen. He continues:

> The next day another gang, armed with cutlasses, went to the village itself and tried to turn the people out of their houses, but the villagers fought back and held their ground. A gang was sent to the provision grounds where it destroyed about forty beds of plantains. It was useless for the villagers to call on the local justice of the peace for protection, since he was the aggressor himself, Bury. They turned to the county sheriff, but he, doubtless not anxious to involve himself in a fight with a planter, told them to apply to the governor....it does illustrate what kind of protection the villagers enjoyed when their interests clashed with those of the plantation economy (Adamson 1972:66-67).

Throughout, the position was taken, as Governor Barkly wrote to Lord Grey, the Colonial Secretary that, 'The progress of civilization among the negro race depends....upon the maintenance of sugar cultivation in these colonies'.

(Adamson 1970:386). Thus, the planters who dominated both chambers of the colony's legislature - the Court of Policy and the Combined Court - secured the passage between 1852 and 1861 of a series of ordinances designed to drive the ex-slaves back to the plantations.

The joint purchase of land by more than twenty people was prohibited. Moreover, land could not be bought under a minimum parcel of 100 acres. All land purchased by more than twenty people had to be sub-divided. Meanwhile, the price of Crown land went up from five to ten dollars an acre.

Unable to secure capital from government for land purchases, while some £223,000 from public revenue were spent on immigration between 1841 and 1848, the African peasants consumed all their savings in the acquisition of these plots (Nath 1970:157). There was consequently, no capital left for the crucial but costly task of reclaiming the land from the inhospitable swamps obtaining on the coastland of Guyana.[11] In the absence of government support for land reclaimation, the African peasantry was virtually doomed to stagnation. The commodities which Africans concentrated on - yams, cassavas, plantains, etc. could not thrive on land which was perpetually at the mercy of the sea at high tides. The problem was aggravated during the rainy season.

Yet, the Governor of British Guiana from 1852 to 1862, Wodehouse, the man who had presided over the strangulation of the African peasantry, was quick to marshall racist reasons for

the rapidly declining production on African farms. He wrote:

> The fact is that a negro needs to be under a necessity to do right.... Remove the necessity and the spirit of license comes into operation at once (quoted in Adamson 1970:388).

Of course, for Wodehouse, 'to do right' constituted meeting the planters' voracious appetite for cheap, docile labor.

Again, fragmentation of plots did nothing to ameliorate the situation. Because land was invariably collectively purchased, it was extremely difficult to distribute it so that each person had access to high and low ground alike. The result was that peasants came to own a number of small plots dispersed over a wide area. This further compounded the problem of drainage, apart from the built-in unremunerative nature of such cultivation.

Poor communications and an extremely limited local market, in conjunction with government's indifference to the possibility of developing an external one added to the mounting depression among the African peasants. Even the reactionary ROYAL GAZETTE felt moved, on June 2, 1866, to remark that, "It is useless to blame the apathy and sloth of the Negro character for this state of things", in referring to the constant decline in the output of ground provisions. It proceeded to pose a very important question, "What is the use of a man expanding his labor in growing articles which he cannot get to market?" (quoted in Adamson 1970:394).

By the early 1870's the strangulation of the African petty-commodity producers had been achieved. Probably the most decisive factor in this process was the large-scale importation of cheap indentured labor, designed to hasten the redundancy of African labor.[12] As table 3 indicates, 154,227 laborers were imported between 1835 and 1870, a period when Guyana witnessed the birth and death of the African peasantry.

Mention has already been made of the pervasiveness of capital starved plots. In the 1840's and 50's, especially, it was absolutely necessary for the peasant to build a base for petty-commodity production by performing a certain amount of wage labor on the plantations. In fact, as we argue later, the Indian peasantry achieved a measure of success primarily because this option was available to them during the embryonic stages of rice production.. Indentured immigration undercut the potentially strong bargaining position of African labor in the 1840's and in the process, effectively eliminated the possibilities for changing the relations of production on the plantations. In fact, the strikes of 1842 and 1847 testified to at least a rudimentary sense of the implications for labor as a result of the abolition of slavery.

TABLE 3

GROSS IMMIGRATION BY AREA OF ORIGIN, 1835/40 - 1861/70.

YEARS	INDIA	MADEIRA	WEST INDIES	AFRICA	OTHER	TOTAL
1835-40	396	429	8,092	91	278	9,286
1841-50	14,100	16,744	4,806	9,893	-	45,543
1851-60	23,381	9,587	-	1,968	3,288	38,224
1861-70	38,715	1,533	10,180	1,403	9,343	61,174

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:24

Finally, planter domination of the Combined Court, in particular, resulted intheir exerting an inordinate amount of influence over the annual estimates. Consequently fiscal measures were used in the post-emancipation period to undermine the African peasantry's struggle to become independent of the plantations. This was done by shifting the tax base from direct to indirect taxation. Adamson describes the process obtaining in the crucial 1840's and 50's:

> The problem of creating an expanded revenue base was solved by shifting the tax burden onto the new Negro peasantry.....Specific duties fell with particular weight on items of common consumption like corn, oatmeal and flour, pickled beef and pork, dried fish, rice, and tallow candles. Governor Barkly estimated that before 1851 imported provisions paid an average duty of 27.5 percent on value. In 1851, a reduction was made on some specific duties, but flour still paid 20 to 25 percent on its value and salt beef 'not much less'. Flour, rice, dried fish, and salt pork contributed

> more than half the total value
> of import duties in 1850.
> (Adamson 1972: 240-41)

Meanwhile, items consumed primarily, if not exclusively by the planters were imported duty-free. In 1850, these items included corn, bullion, diamonds, cattle, sheep, hogs, fresh fruit and vegetables, cotton and wool, ice, fresh fish, fresh meat, turtles, poultry, manures, printed books, machinery, provisions for the forces, and all wines and spirits imported by the governor. In 1853, duties were removed from other items of higher-income consumption. These included clocks, watches, drugs and chemicals, glassware, jewelry, musical instruments, perfumery, pickles and sauces, preserved meats and fish, saddlery, silver, and plated silverware. (Adamson 1972:241)

Yet, there were no funds available from the public treasury for the drainage of African land. Again, as some £223,000 out of the £360,000 spent on immigration between 1841 and 1848 came from general revenue, it is obvious that the African peasant was being made to dig his own grave. Such was the power of the planters. It is not strange that Eric Williams could write, 'Strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary to human existence, should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed!' (Williams 1964:27)

As with slavery, so with indentureship, metropolitan capitalism was able to recreate an archaic mode of production in the periphery in order to extract a greater surplus. The plantation mode of production got a new lease on life; African

petty-commodity production stagnated.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW SECTOR IN PETTY-COMMODITY PRODUCTION - THE RICE 'INDUSTRY' AND THE INDIANS (1880's/90's - 1918).

A crucial element in the development of race and class relations, was the emergence of the rice 'industry'. While this process commenced in the 1880's and 90's, its most significant growth and expansion took place during World War I. The circumstances which led to the development of this peasant sector by the Indians were radically different from those surrounding the emergence of the African peasantry in the 1840's and 50's. Consequently, the economic implications of the development of rice production were bound to have an impact at the superstructural level.

The centrality of the development of the rice industry to the question of race in Guyana is based on three factors. It was, at least during its initial stages, not perceived as a threat to the plantation mode. It also constituted a radical departure from previous patterns of adaptation to the rural environment by petty-commodity producers. Finally, the opportunity which it offered for primary accumulation, albeit limited, contrasts sharply with the chronically-depressed situation among African peasants. (The last point will be developed later.)

The development of rice production by the Indians from the latter half of the 1880's to the end of World War I, coincided with a depression in the sugar industry. An increase

in the importation of beet sugar into Britain, from 400,000 tons in 1882 to 1,000,000 tons in 1891 and a concomitant decline in the demand for British West Indian sugar, from 200,000 tons to 50,000 tons, was a severe blow to the industry in Guyana (Nath 1970:87).

To tide them over this bleak period, the planters actively discouraged indentured laborers whose contracts had expired, from returning to India. With the co-operation of the colonial state, land was granted to these laborers in lieu of return passages. As a result, for a considerable number of Indians, little or no capital was consumed by land acquisition. This had absorbed virtually all the ex-slaves' capital in the post-emancipation years. Apart from Crown Land grants, many plantations allowed unemployed as well as under-employed laborers to grow rice on land that was held but not used. As Mandle argues (1973:41):

> ....in the early development of the industry the planters' decision to bring into use in rice production factor inputs belonging to the sugar industry - estate land and indentured laborers - played a role almost equal to that played by the release of Crown land to ex-indentured workers in the villages.

In fact, for a short period, between 1903 and 1907, estate acreage under rice averaged about 44 percent of total rice average. This declined sharply to about 23 percent between 1907 and 1912 and further still to about 17 percent in 1912-1914 (Mandle 1973:41).

This decline notwithstanding, rice cultivation on the estates by Indians constituted a radical shift in the perception of the planters of the role of a limited amount of petty-commodity production vis-a-vis their own interests. This was clearly reflected in the fact that while estate acreage under rice declined precipitously between 1903-07 and 1912-14, the total area increased consistently during the same period. As Table 4 indicates, there was a progressive rise in the area under rice cultivation, from 17,500 acres in 1903 to an all-time high of 61,400 acres in 1919. The World War I years in particular, witnessed a considerable increase in rice cultivation. The main reason for this rise, of course, was the opening up of the British West Indian market, which hitherto was monopolized by cheap Burmese rice.

It is obvious then, that while the planters soon drastically reduced rice acreage on the estates, they apparently did little to block its expansion in the villages in the immediate pre-war and inter-war years. Their position, however, was to change radically after the war. Suffice it to say that it was a temporary easing of the stranglehold by the dominant plantation mode between the latter half of the 1880's and the end of World War I, which gave the initial crucial impetus to rice production. This is how Mandle interprets the temporary modus vivendi:

> Their acceptance of the growth of the village industry probably reflected the reported views of 'one of the oldest and most popular managers in the Colony', that by allowing sugar

> workers, both indentured and unindentured, to grow rice 'general dissatisfaction' was avoided and as a result the planter 'has a happy body of people working willingly for him'. Implicit in this statement, of course, was the belief that the marginal increase in wages necessary to dissuade the Indians from working on their rice plots, without causing dissatisfaction, would have been greater than the marginal cost to the planters as a result of the loss of labor associated with the work the Indians performed on their rice farms. (Mandle 1973:42-42).

TABLE 4

PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF RICE, 1903-40

YEAR	AREA UNDER CULTIVATION (ACRES)	QUANTITY EXPORTED (TONS)	YEAR	AREA UNDER CULTIVATION (ACRES)	QUANTITY EXPORTED (TONS)
1903	17,500	about 5	1926	32,798	2,914
1908	29,746	3,120	1927	37,340	11,497
1913	33,888	7,710	1928	44,359	18,083
1914	47,037	9,374	1929	52,989	14,091
1915	50,737	9,227	1930	49,702	22,480
1916	57,022	13,124	1931	73,647	23,632
1917	58,090	14,367	1932	73,453	28,541
1918	60,432	8,018	1933	72,161	29,120
1919	61,400	6,940	1934	63,227	14,700
1920	55,200	8,005	1935	70,882	10,565
1921	55,900	2,027	1936	51,041	20,559
1922	49,100	8,790	1937	60,079	18,795
1923	35,000	3,971	1938	49,159	12,888
1924	29,400	4,470	1939	60,077	12,501
1925	29,300	6,918	1940	57,859	11,691

SOURCE: Nath 1970:256-57.

However, this option would not have materialized had it not been for a disastrous decline in the export price of sugar in the mid 1880's. More important, however, was the ease with which planters were able to recruit indentured laborers from India.

With a local surplus of indentured laborers and with supplies for the foreseeable future guaranteed, the planters took the risk of encouraging Indians to settle in villages adjacent to the plantations.[13] In some cases, Indians bought land from Africans who were migrating to the urban centres because of the chronically-depressed state of peasant farming (see Tables 5 & 6).

TABLE 5

PRICES RECEIVED FOR EXPORTS OF SUGAR, FIVE-YEAR AVERAGES, 1835/39 - 1935/39.

YEARS	SHILLINGS PER CWT	YEARS	SHILLINGS PER CWT
1835/39	36	1885/89	14
1840/44	39	1890/94	13
1845/49	29	1895/99	10
1850/54	22	1900/04	9
1855/59	27	1905/09	9
1860/64	23	1910/14	12
1865/69	22	1915/19	22
1870/74	23	1920/24	26
1875/79	22	1925/29	12
1880/84	20	1930/34	6
		1935/39	6

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:39.

TABLE 6

INDIAN IMMIGRATION, 1881/82-1917

YEARS	INDIAN IMMIGRANTS	TOTAL
1881/82 - 1890/91	38,851	43,012
1891/92 - 1900/1901	39,464	40,171
1901/1902 - 1910/11	23,769	24,224
1911/12 - 1917	9,216	9,416

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:24.

Thus, while the continuous inflow of laborers tended to depress wages, it gave the Indian peasantry a degree of freedom to practise rice cultivation - a marked departure from the position of the African peasants in the 1840's and 50's when the immigration scheme was on very shaky grounds and peasant farming threatened to absorb plantation labor.

Another important factor was the choice of rice cultivation itself as the principal crop. Unlike petty commodity production among the Africans, there was considerable local demand for it. Indians still indentured or working exclusively as laborers provided an immediate local market. Again, African peasants as well as the urban proletariat were major consumers of rice. As Table 7 indicates, there was a progressive decline in rice importation with the emergence of the rice industry in the mid 1880's.

TABLE 7

DECLINE IN RICE IMPORTATION IN GUYANA 1884/88 to 1917.

(AVG. PER YEAR IN TONS)

1884/88	-	19,411
1888/93	-	18,734
1894/98	-	14,313
1899/1903	-	14,693
1904/08	-	8,092
1909-1913	-	2,519
1914-1916	-	159
1917	-	3

SOURCE: Nath 1970:256.

Meanwhile, access to the British West Indian market, especially during World War I, when cheap Burmese rice could not be transported, provided it with a fairly firm base. As Table 4 indicates, rice exports increased from 9,374 tons in 1914 to 13,124 and 14,367 tons in 1916 and 1917 respectively. Consequently, for a small minority, there was the possibility to move out of subsistence production and produce a substantial surplus, thus creating the basis for a form of primary capital accumulation. This, as we have argued, was practically eliminated from the inception among the African petty-commodity producers.

The structure of the Indian peasant family made for a radically different utilization of the limited rural resources. The retention of the extended family, with the father supervising the allocation of family labor, while controlling the wage-earnings of other members of the family, produced a degree of economic rationality. In this petty commodity mode, large families operating as a corporate economic unit considerably reduced the need for cash during the initial stages of the industry. Labor was largely family labor and when one considers that petty-commodity production is characterized by few technological inputs, it could be appreciated why Indian family structure was ideally suited to this mode of production.[14]

Again, and this was crucial in the pre-World War I years, the extended family structure facilitated the exploitation of both petty commodity production as well as the plantation mode, from which short term capital could be obtained. The traditionally powerful role of the Indian father was of

profound importance during the embryonic stages of the development of rice production. As it was, control over his sons' labor might result in badly needed short-term capital being provided by wage labor on the sugar plantations, an option which was virtually eliminated for the Africans by the continuous introduction of indentured laborers into Guyana.

Commenting on the significance of this involvement in two different modes of production, Richardson argues:

> Though the beginning of the colony's rice industry is credited to the rural East Indian farmers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there must be no mistake about the importance of part-time estate work as an ingredient of East Indian livelihood during this period. Some of the problems leading to the failure of certain East Indian communities were commented upon by acting governor Sir Charles Bruce in 1909:
>
> The failure....is partly attributable to the fact that the immigrant must necessarily pass through a period of transition during which he cannot possibly live by the produce of land worked on his own account, but is compelled to divide his time between working for hire and cultivating his own land (Richardson 1970:46-47).

Another reason for the comparative viability of the Indian peasantry was the tendency to supplement rice production and plantation labor with a wide range of petty-commodity production, including cattle rearing. As early as 1890, it was estimated that on pasture <u>not</u> connected with the sugar estates, the Indians had some 20,631 head of cattle and 5,126 head of sheep and goats (Ruhoman 1946:160). On the estates, on land leased by Indians, some 20,000 head of cattle were being reared.

This apparently had provided a base for capital accumulation to the degree that, 'There are a few wealthy cattle owners on the Corentyne Coast and West Coast Berbice'(J.A. Luckhoo 1919:60).

Joseph Ruhoman (1946:160) has pointed out:

> With the successful development of the rice industry, we must associate the cattle industry and the milk trade together with the growing traffic in green grocery and farm products for which Indians, to a large extent, are responsible.

Thus, by the end of World War I, a number of viable Indian village communities had emerged. Significantly enough, the economic underpinings were a major departure from those on which the African villages were based. Thus, while the latter stagnated, the former enjoyed a comparatively greater degree of stability. In the process, this rather ethnic division of economic activities tended to divide the Guyanese peasantry. Moreover, the monopolization of local assets by the plantations virtually proscribed any form of meaningful development. This tended to foster a peculiar sensitivity among the oppressed of even the slightest forms of economic differentiation among themselves. Small wonder that the African peasant's negative perceptions of the planters were deflected unto the Indians, a process which was reinforced by the emergence of a ruthless Indian petty bourgeoise, as we shall see later.

THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE CAPITALIST (PLANTATION) MODE TO DISASTROUS MARKET CONDITIONS AND THE FURTHER STIFLING OF PETTY-COMMODITY PRODUCTION, 1917-40.

The inter-war years witnessed an acceleration of the process towards the amalgamation of the estates in the sugar industry (see Table 8). This was precipitated by the end of indentureship in 1917 on one hand, and the consistently massive decline in sugar prices from a high of 26 shillings per cwt. in 1920/24 to 12 shillings per cwt. in 1925/29 and 6 shillings per cwt. in 1930/39 (see Table 5).

TABLE 8

THE AMALGAMATION OF ESTATES IN GUYANA, 1839-1940

YEAR	NUMBER OF ESTATES	
1839	222	
1891	101	
1911	44	
1921	44	
1931	38	
1940	28	- 18 owned by BOOKERS BROS, McCONNEL LTD., a British multi-national corporation

SOURCE: Nath 1970:184

However, this amalgamation did not herald the decline of plantation agriculture. In fact, its production process increasingly was rationalized along capitalist lines. A major force behind this thrust was a change in the forces of production occasioned by the termination of indentureship. The British multi-national corporations which dominated the industry after

World War I, were forced to develop the production relations in keeping with a certain qualitative change in the productive forces after 1917. This process was made comparatively easier by the tremendous power exerted by Bookers Brothers McConnell and Co., which by 1940, owned 18 of the 28 plantations. Its monopoly of shipping, its access to the British capital market[15] and, moreover, the control which it exerted on the colonial state, all facilitated the up-grading of the production process and expansion into every profitable sector of the local economy.[16]

The up-grading of the production process included the introduction of modern machinery at the factory level, increased use of sulphate of ammonia and improved varieties of cane (Mandle 1973:74). The upshot of this change was that productivity per field laborer increased from 5.47 tons in 1911-15 to 7.72 tons in 1936-40. The export per acre also increased - from 1.34 tons in 1911-15 to 2.53 tons in 1936-40 (see table 9). So successful was this exercise that it seemed as if the planter's voracious appetite for cheap labor had been satiated. The labor force had stabilized at approximately 20,000 in the 1920's and 30's. As Mandle points out:

> Between 1921-25 and 1931-35 sugar exports increased by 47.7 percent, while the average weekly labor force grew only 11.7 per cent. By 1936-40 output per field laborer stood at 7.72 tons, an all time high for the industry, 38.6 percent higher than it had been in 1921-25 (Mandle 1973:75).

TABLE 9

CHANGES IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1911-15/1936-40

YEARS	PRODUCTION (TONS)	EXPORT (TONS)	ACREAGE	AVG.WKLY FIELD LABOR FORCE	EXPORTS PER ACRE (TONS)	PRODUCTION per FIELD LABORER
1911-15	110,807	97,149	72,685	20,257	1.34	5.47 tons
1916-20	100,176	95,293	71,324	N.A.	1.34	N.A.
1921-25	100,447	93,126	59,337	18,029	1.57	5.57 tons
1926-30	114,737	104,811	57,995	20,867	1.81	5.50 tons
1931-35	145,403	135,515	63,315	20,130	2.17	7.22 tons
1936-40	187,242	172,676	68,130	24,254	2.53	7.72 tons

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:72

Interestingly enough, while the export price of sugar slumped from 26 shillings per cwt. in 1920-24 to 6 shillings per cwt in 1935-39 (see Table 5), sugar production increased from 100,447 tons in 1921-25 to 187,242 tons in 1936-40, a rise of nearly 87,000 tons. Meanwhile, less than 9,000 acres of new land were brought under cultivation and the field labor force had stabilized at around 20,000.

How does one explain this apparently paradoxical situation of a massive increase in sugar production in a period of catastrophic decline in prices? Increased productivity absorbed some of the losses. Profitable operation was aided by the pathetically poor remuneration to labor. However, a major reason for the increase in production in the 1930's was the gradual monopolization of the sugar industry by Bookers. This produced the first serious attempts at modernizing production techniques (Mandle 1973:75).

Although mechanization and increased productivity led to a stabilizing of the labor force, the removal of non-market mechanisms for recruiting labor after 1917 meant that the capitalists had to redouble their efforts to ensure that labor remained redundant, thus continuously depressing the wages on the estates. Petty-commodity production had to be made unappealing if the workers, no longer indentured, were to remain on the plantations. The perpetuation of a depressed peasantry meant that the labor market was flooded by those who could not subsist on petty-commodity production. Rice production in particular had to be frustrated - a policy that bore some similarities with the planters' stance toward the African peasantry after emancipation. However, they could not resort to the outright barbarism of that period. There was a way opened for this; the use of the colonial state. As Mandle puts it:

> Sugar was dominant and dominating, with the political and social institutions of the society behind it, while rice had emerged as a dependent of sugar without the strength or resources to adjust adequately to adverse circumstances (Mandle 1973:79).

This power was used effectively in the inter-war years to erode Guyana's competitive potential in the international rice market. With the process of import substitution completed by World War I, access to external markets was crucial for the expansion of the industry. If productivity remained low because of poor drainage facilities, if the best lands were held but not used by the plantations, if milling facilities remained archaic

and marketing agencies non-existent, the stifling of the industry could be guaranteed.

The sugar interests were in a position to do all of these things. In the executing of drainage and irrigation policies, the planters held a pre-eminent position. As Jagan points out:

> The sugar planters have always controlled drainage and irrigation policy. Sir F.J. Seaford was for many years chairman of the Drainage Board. He was succeeded by Mr. J. Morrish of the Demerara Company Ltd., who on his retirement was replaced by Mr. W. Macnie, managing director of the Sugar Producers' Association (Jagan 1954:25). (Sir F.J. Seaford was the chairman of Bookers in Guyana.)

The consequences of this plantocratic monopoly over this very important board were eloquently expressed by the Royal Commission which visited Guyana in 1939. The report read in part:

> ....practically all well drained land is in sugar... The areas devoted to rice and pasture are badly drained and abound in large swampy areas where almost amphibious cattle, sheep and pigs eke out an unusual existence (quoted in Jagan 1954:25).

Again, government's land policies in the inter-war years were designed to perpetuate plantation monopoly of the best lands in a country where land hunger was chronic. The following description of the situation in 1950 was representative of the pattern in the pre-war years as well. Jagan writes:

> Large tracts of land are kept idle or are not properly utilized. The sugar planters control directly about 170,000 acres, and tax figures for 1950 showed that more than 50 percent

> of the total land holdings are uncultivated. This land idleness can be maintained because the rent charged by the Government averages only five cents an acre for nearly 90,000 acres of land (Jagan 1954:24).

Meanwhile, it was extremely difficult to obtain credit for the improvement of milling facilities. This stemmed largely from the planters' influence on the local banking system; they being by far the largest customers. Poor drainage and an uncertain market in the West Indies, where cheap Far Eastern rice was still available, contributed to the buttressing of the planters' position. Consequently, interest rates prevailing in the industry were excessively high - varying between 12 and 20 percent (Mandle 1973:78). Small wonder, then, that a committee of the Legislative Council could report in 1938 that the mills were 'generally ill-equipped' and that a 'good deal of excellent padi is spoilt'.

This problem was compounded by the absence of a centralized Marketing Board. The way was thus opened for unscrupulous businessmen,many of them Indians, to exploit the peasantry as the export trade was exclusively in their hands. As Nath points out:

> At one time the export of rice was in the hands of private individuals who used to purchase rice from producers at very low prices, and outsell each other in the West Indies. There were no standard grades, and importers were always uncertain whether or not they could get the quality of rice they had arranged to buy (Nath 1970:114).

TABLE 10

CHANGES IN THE RICE INDUSTRY, 1911-15/1936-40

YEAR	PRODUCTION (TONS)	EXPORT (TONS)	DOMESTIC AVAILABILITY (TONS)	ACREAGE	OUTPUT PER ACRE (TONS)
1911-15	N.A.	8,770	N.A.	43,867	N.A.
1916-20	N.A.	10,106	N.A.	58,892	N.A.
1921-25	24,143	5,233	18,190	41,803	0.58
1926-30	36,856	13,813	23,043	45,697	0.81
1931-35	43,695	21,211	22,484	71,440	0.61
1936-40	38,812	15,087	23,725	56,725	0.68

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:77

As a result, as Table 10 indicates, exports fluctuated continually, from 10,106 tons in 1916-20 to 5,233 tons in 1921-25. Again, in 1931-35, exports rose to the all-time high of 21,211 tons only to decline to 15,087 tons in the 1936-40 period. The uncertainty of external demand for Guyanese rice in conjunction with the stabilizing of local demand at 23,000 tons during the 1926-40 period, aborted the dynamic for expansion which the rise in British West Indian demand during World War I had produced. In the process, the appeal which rice production had to Indian rural workers diminished considerably. Moreover, the possibility for the depressed African peasantry moving into this comparatively remunerative activity was effectively eliminated. The prepetuation of this ethnic division of labor among the peasantry reinforced at the superstructural level those mutually negative interracial perceptions which plantation agriculture had spawned.

Another factor behind the absence of a sense of communality among the Indian and African peasants was the even greater

stagnation of ground provisions and coconut farming. As Table 11 indicates, the acreage under ground provisions, the main activity of the African peasants, declined consistently from 18,534 in 1911-15 to 14,000 in 1911-15 and 1936-40 respectively.

TABLE 11

ACREAGE UNDER GROUND PROVISIONS AND COCUNUTS, 1911/15-1936/40

	1911-15	1916-20	1921-25	1926-30	1931-35	1936-40
GROUND PROVISIONS	18,534	17,564	13,914	14,236	N.A.	14,000
COCONUTS	13,191	24,149	25,269	27,555	22,579	21,809

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:116.

During the same period, the acreage under coconuts increased remarkably initially, but depression seemed to have set in during the 1930-40 decade. Meanwhile, cooking-oil had to be imported from hard currency areas such as Canada (Jagan 1954:23). The colonial state, of course, was indifferent to the development of light industries which could have strengthened the base of petty-commodity production.

We have argued that the preservation of the hegemonic position of the capitalist mode was achieved at the expense of the further development of petty-commodity production in Guyana. Again, the chronic underdevelopment which this process entailed for both the Africans and Indians tended to reinforce the ethnic exclusivity of different sectors of the peasantry. The African peasantry, in particular, shouldered an inordinate amount of burden because of the peculiar circumstances in which it emerged.

The problem was exacerbated by the non-viability of agriculture based primarily on ground provisions, the redundancy of which was emphasized by its prominence in British West Indian peasant farming.

A comparatively greater degree of success among the Indians materialized because of the possibility of combining rice farming with wage labor on the plantations, during the pre-World War I years. In the inter-war years , the stabilizing of the rural proletariat at around 20,000, affected this practice. However, its centrality to peasant farming among the Africans could not have been missed. That this option was eliminated in the embryonic years of the African peasantry by the introduction of predominantly Indian laborers, became a part of African lore.

Moreover, the emergence of a small stratum of prosperous rice-farmers in the distributive trade tended to distort African peasants' perceptions of the measure of success among the rice farmers. That rice farming had to be done in conjunction with the rearing of a few heads of cattle, a limited amount of market-gardening and fishing in the village ditches, if it were to be remunerative, was often missed. Yet, as Table 12 shows, a comparatively better adaptation to the village environment did make for a greater amount of savings among the Indian peasantry. It is reasonable to assume that the figures given as the average savings per Indian depositor (see Table 12) were not inflated by the disproportionately higher deposits of Indian businessmen or big land-owners, as these were inclined to deal with the

commercial banks. The Post Office Savings Bank was patronized primarily by workers and peasants of both ethnic groups.

TABLE 12

AVERAGE SAVINGS OF DEPOSITORS IN THE POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK (1920 to 1935).

YEAR	TOTAL # OF DEPOSITORS	# OF INDIAN DEPOSITORS	AVG.SAVINGS PER DEPOSITOR	AVG.SAVINGS PER INDIAN DEPOSITOR
1920	36,658	8,716	$51.90	$91.25
1925	36,252	9,294	$54.35	$101.45
1935	44,858	12,976	$52.35	$79.80

SOURCE: Bacchus 1970:20

Another indication that the Indians had developed a better strategy for exploiting the village environment is reflected in population changes between 1931 and 1946. As Table 13 indicates, with the stabilizing of the labor force by the late 1920's, those who left the estates invariably moved into the villages and not the urban centres. Thus, while the percentage of Indians, on the estates, declined from 46.8 in 1931 to 38.0 in 1946, it increased from 46.1 to 56.1 for the same years, in the villages.

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EAST INDIAN POPULATION, 1911-46

YEAR	ESTATE	VILLAGE	URBAN
1911	48.0	46.2	5.8
1921	43.3	50.5	6.2
1931	46.8	46.1	7.1
1946	38.6	56.1	5.9

SOURCE: Mandle 1973:98

For the Indian peasantry, engaged in rice production primarily, there was a clear perception of the connexion between the superior drainage and irrigation facilities on the plantations and their own primitive ones. The point could not have been missed, as sugar and rice were cultivated in the same ecological zone. The rural proletariat, nearly 90% of whom were Indians by the early 1940's, found itself stripped of opportunities to grow rice on the plantations and was acquiring a degree of class consciousness. (Mandle 1973:98) Meanwhile, the Indian peasants, increasingly robbed of part-time wage labor on the plantations also tended to acquire an antagonistic view towards the plantations. That they were owned by a few British multinational corporations, with a marked absence of the paternalism which characterize individually owned enterpises, did much to accelerate the contradictions between the capitalists, on one hand, and the predominantly Indian rural proletariat and the Indian peasantry, on the other. The extremely marginal position of Africans in this process, gave a distinctly racial appearance to what was unquestionably an aspect of class struggle.

THE PREDOMINANCE OF AFRICANS IN THE URBAN PROLETARIAT - A RESPONSE TO A DEPRESSED PEASANTRY.

With the stultification of petty-commodity production, Africans turned increasingly to 'professional' and 'industrial' activities, and in the case of women to 'domestic'work. The experience under slavery in conjunction with an equally debilitating experience with agriculture, produced an aversion to

the land, which did much to create a rather ethnic division of labor in Guyana. Indeed, as Table 14 indicates, the so-called 'industrial'jobs were held mainly by Africans living in the urban centres. Thus, while the Indians in 'industrial' jobs reached 10% by 1931, it is likely that this reflected an increase in Indian workers in the sugar factories - an exclusively rural occupation.

TABLE 14

PERCENTAGE OF INDIANS TO ALL RACES IN EACH CLASS OF OCCUPATIONS, 1891-1931.

	1891	1911	1921	1931
CLASS I				
PROFESSIONAL (including Public Service)	5.8	8.2	6.8	12.0
CLASS II				
COMMERCIAL	10.6	24.3	23.6	30.5
CLASS III				
INDUSTRIAL	4.3	5.4	4.9	10.0
CLASS IV				
AGRICULTURAL	75.9	81.6	91.9	71.5
CLASS V				
DOMESTIC	7.6	7.8	4.7	8.1
CLASS VI				
UNOCCUPIED	19.8	31.1	38.8	39.8

SOURCE: Nath 1970:241

In light of the rather small size of New Amsterdam, the second largest town, and the even smaller population of the mining, quarrying and the lumbering centres of MacKenzie and Bartica, it is accurate to suggest that the bulk of the urban population was concentrated in Georgetown, the capital. Again, because of the classic pattern of peripheral capitalist economies, that is those in which the metropolitan-controlled dominant capitalist mode is centred on selected enclave sectors- in the Guyanese case in commercial agriculture, the higher levels of the distributive trade, and bauxite mining[17] - there was no development of a manufacturing sector based on local raw materials. As a result, Africans in 'industrial' employment were dispersed over a wide range of small or medium-size business, very few being industrial in the metropolitan sense.

A significant proportion of the urban proletariat was made up of dock workers, a stratum that was invariably under-employed. All the wharves were concentrated in a small area at the mouth of the Demerara river, a factor, as we shall demonstrate later, which aided class consciousness and union mobilization. Government workers in the transport, postal, and health services also were considerable. Construction workers, employees in the printing business, and artisans of diverse persuasions constituted the bulk of the rest.[18] Women tended to become domestic servants, ekeing out a meagre livelihood under paternalistic conditions with little potential for collective bargaining. They were extremely ignorant of themselves as members of a class and were not susceptible to mobilization.

In 1931, 'mechanics, artisans and similar occupations' employed 15,617 workers, only 14.4 percent being Indians - a majority of these operating in rural areas. Again, the water-front (dock) workers were exclusively Africans. In mining and quarrying, only 51 out of some 5,058 workers were Indians. 'Forest Occupations' accounted for 3,078; 78 of whom were Indians. (Nath 1970:239:40)

The picture that emerges was one in which Africans formed the bulk of the labor force in the urban centers Some of these urban workers were single males or younger heads of households from the villages. In the 1920's and 30's, they would have retained fairly strong links with relatives in the rural areas. To a degree, then, the urban proletariat shared some similarities with its counterpart in many peripheral capitalist formations - a certain mobility between town and country. However, given that this process had started as early as the 1870's, a fairly large porportion of the urban proletariat comprised a stable labor force, owning nothing but its labor-power, hence their susceptibility to unionization. The dock workers were highly represented among the latter.

As some rural African households depended on remittances from sons in urban employment, for the payment of rates or for the renovation of houses, the separation between town and country never became strident, in a social sense, among the Africans. This tended to reinforce a feeling of ethnic distinctiveness, akin to the social relationship between the pre-

dominantly rural proletariat and the Indian peasantry.

Mounting contradictions between the workers and the capitalists, in the urban centres, advanced in tandem with those in the sugar industry; but the disproportionate way in which the two major ethnic groups were incorporated into the productive process, tended to dilute the potential influence of contradictions at the level of economic practice.[19]

THE RISE OF THE PETTY-BOURGEOISE AND THE EXCLUSION OF AFRICANS

Another factor which made for the development of ideological contradictions at the expense of the class struggle was the uneven way in which various ethnic groups had access to the few avenues of social mobility present in the colonial society. In Guyana, this involved movement into the petty-bourgeoisie or the bureaucratic stratum - the 'middle class' as some call them (Jagan 1972; James 1973).

It is important to recall that the owners of the plantations, mines etc. - the bourgeoisie - was always an absentee one. As a result, it is erroneous to speak of an indigenous bourgeoisie. In the absence of an industrial sector and with the raw material-producing sectors under expatriate control, local ownership was restricted to the distributive trade and, in the rural areas, to rice-milling and a limited amount of large-scale rice production.

The bureaucratic stratum encompassed those who were engaged in a wide range of civil service jobs in the colonial state as well as certain professionals (lawyers, doctors,

teachers, etc). One can make a distinction between an upper layer and a lower one. The former included the high-salaried Heads of Department and other senior civil servants who were appointed by the Colonial Office, on the 'advice' of the governor. Europeans and mulattoes (or 'coloreds') dominated this layer because of ascriptive selection criteria - a hallmark of colonial administration, designed to rationalize the racist myth that Africans and Indians were naturally disinclined to assume responsibilities. One may also include in this layer certain university trained professionals, for example, doctors, lawyers, etc., because of their high incomes. However, their base in these 'independent' professions - that is independent of the powerful colonial state - gave them some room for manoeuvre. The lower layer of the bureaucratic stratum included junior civil servants, teachers, clergymen etc.

The distinction between the petty-bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic stratum is important because the former were engaged in a process which offered opportunities for the extraction of a surplus and the accumulation of capital for further expansion. In short, the petty-bourgeoisie was able to reproduce itself because of its base in the distributive (productive) process. It realized value through rent, the direct exploitation of labor, and the exploitation of the market.

The bureaucratic stratum, however, did not have a base in the distributive (productive) process. Consequently, access to patronage and other forms of hand-outs from the colonial

state were central to its reproduction.

A crucial element in the Guyanese social structure was the virtual absence of Africans in the petty-bourgeoisie. In fact, throughout the post-emancipation period to the 1940's and beyond, one would be hard-pressed to name a few Africans who were engaged in the distributive trade or in any form of large-scale agriculture. This has produced among the African peasants and workers especially, a profound sense of economic deprivation. That a very small minority of Indians were in the petty-beourgeoisie became less prominent in view of the absence of Africans in this class.[20]

In the immediate post-emancipation years, as the battle to maintain control over African labor escalated, not only was petty-commodity production discouraged, but inital attempts to move into the retail trade business were equally suppressed. All efforts at finding viable alternatives to plantation wage-labor were perceived by the planters as a threat to the traditional supply of cheap African labor. So ruthless were the planters in prosecuting their claims to a monopoly over African labor, that the extremely small stratum of Africans who could have been absorbed by the retail trade became magnified to create an atmosphere of crisis.

Yet, as Raymond Smith points out:

> As soon as the slaves were free there was an immediate need for small-scale retailing of things like salt-fish and salt-meat, spices, rice, clothing, and utensils .....the Portuguese quickly came to dominate retailing, and because of their

> marginal position in the society and the absence of any relationship with their customers other than a straight market relationship, they prospered (Smith 1962:44).

However, a more significant reason for the monopolization of the retail trade by the Portuguese resides in the classic colonial policy of allowing a visible ethnic minority to serve as a 'buffer' between the rulers and the masses. As this type of business required a ruthless pursuit of primary accumulation, the Portuguese marginal position was certainly an asset. More important, however, was the fact that the masses' daily contacts with this small group of exploiters, contributed to the deflection of much of the Africans' antagonism to the planters onto them. Interestingly enough, it became popular in Guyana to make a distinction between Europeans and Portuguese. The distinction had nothing to do with race, it was purely sociological.

A way was open for the planters to guarantee Portuguese predominance in this sector of the local economy. First, the planters, through the colonial state were able in the immediate post emancipation years to increase duties on commodities for public consumption to such a level that Africans were forced to seek wage labor at the expense of agriculture or retail trade. Of course, the Portuguese were able to pass these prices on to the African consumers. (Adamson 1972:70)

Again, the planters were able to use their influence on the European merchants in Georgetown to frustrate the initial

attempts by Africans to acquire goods for retailing in the villages. While there was probably an underlying racist premise to this practice, the necessity to fortify the Africans in the erroneous belief that their advancement could not be divorced from sugar, was certainly a major factor. Raymond Smith has remarked:

> A certain number of the freed Negroes had gone into the retail trades, for obviously there had to be agencies of distribution for essential commodities such as imported foodstuffs, cloth and hardware now that this function was no longer carried out by the management of the estates. Rodway suggests that the later ousting of the Negroes from this activity was due to the fact that the town merchants refused to sell to Negroes in an attempt to drive them back into the fields, but favored the new Portuguese immigrants who had proved less satisfactory as field hands. Even at a common-sense level this gives a new slant to the usually propounded theory that the Portuguese were just naturally better businessmen and so monopolized the retail trade (Smith 1956:12-13).

Jagan adds that credit was granted liberally to the Portuguese, while the Africans found it virtually impossible to obtain. He has argued that the pattern in which racial contradictions came to dominate economic ones was emerging in the post-emancipation years (Jagan 1972:39-40). In fact, in 1848, 1856, and again in 1889, African workers in Georgetown as well as African peasants in the rural areas, attacked and destroyed many Portuguese business premises.[21] These attacks were largely spontaneous, with a large 'lumpen' element participating.

However, they were a reflection of the profound antagonism which the Portuguese petty-bourgeoisie's ruthless exercises in aggressive primary accumulation had fostered among the Africans. Commenting on the extent to which Portuguese monopoly of the retail trade had driven up prices, the COLONIST, as early as 1854 wrote:

> Their grasping avarice has been well displayed in the late months when they have falsely availed themselves of the pretext of increased duties to add to the exorbitant prices charged for their provisions.....It is no exaggeration to say that the cost of housekeeping is now double what it was twelve months ago (quoted in Adamson 1972:70).

The economic underpinnings of these attacks were very obvious. On the events of February, 1856 Adamson writes:

> They were surprisingly discriminate: only Portuguese property was attacked. Nor were the Creoles (the Africans) the only group involved; in many cases, indentured immigrants, who had also suffered from commercial monopoly and high prices, joined with the villagers (Adamson 1972:71).

It is interesting that the European-owned import businesses were not attacked. They were insulated from these attacks of the masses by the Portuguese, who were in the lower stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie. It was the latter with whom the oppressed dealt on a day to day basis. Whenever, the cost of living became unbearable,they were identified as the immediate oppressors. Increasingly, however, the Portuguese started to move into the upper stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie.[22]

In the inter-war years, the Indians moved into the retail-trade business. They were taking the place in the lower stratum of the petty-bourgeoise, vacated by the Portuguese. For the Africans a stagnating peasantry and active planter opposition to their participation in the retail trade had eroded this option by the 1860's.

The rise of a small stratum of the Indian population into the petty-bourgeoisie, did much to exacerbate African fears of virtual economic annihilation.[23] Moreover, the manner in which the Indian petty-bourgeoisie emerged tended to revive among the Africans a sense of their aborted development and the role of indentureship in the process. As happens so often among the oppressed, the exploiter's role gets lost in myriad super-structural contradictions.

Rice production provided the base for primary accumulation, an exercise more ruthless than the Portuguese experience in the nineteeth century. Import substitution between 1890 and 1913, as well as access to the British West Indian market during World War I were decisive in the development of the Indian petty bourgeoisie. A thin layer of landlords, who invariably had a head start because they occupied a privileged position on the plantations, as 'sirdars' or drivers, prospered from the rice trade.[24]

These landlords were able to move simultaneously into a variety of commercial activities. The typical pattern of transition would have been characterized by the movement out of the

plantations of the drivers or 'sirdars'.[25] They acquired vast tracts of land, at nominal cost. On the Essequibo Coast, in particular, where sugar production had been abandoned, this was commonplace. By producing rice and renting plots to petty producers, a substantial surplus was generated during World War I. This usually was invested in a rice mill, a saw mill, a dry goods and provision store or a liquor store. Money-lending, at exorbitant rates of interest, often was practised as well. In cases, all these activities were combined within the rural community, thus monopolizing all aspects of the distributive trade. Consequently, a solid base was created for these Indians to move into the distributive trade at the wholesale level in the urban centres.

As Table 14 indicates, Indians comprised 23.6 percent and 30.5 percent of those engaged in commercial activities in 1921 and 1931 respectively. Significantly enough, the percentage of Indians to all races engaged in agricultural activities decreased from 91.9 percent (sic) to 71.5 percent during the same period - a clear indication that once a certain amount of capital was accumulated from agriculture, they tended to move into commerce. Meanwhile, the Indian proportion of the bureaucratic stratum rose from 6.8 percent to 12.0 percent. It is obvious, then, that by World War I, Indians were becoming increasingly incorporated into the petty-bourgeoisie and were finding considerable opportunities for advancement in the independent professions and the civil service - areas that

traditionally were the only ones opened to Africans in their struggle for upward mobility.

Finally, it should be noted that Indians came to occupy the lower stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie, the Portuguese and a few other Europeans with a tremendous head start, having moved into the upper stratum. The Portuguese, in particular, had capitalized on the gold business in the 1880's and 90's. Consequently, most of the pawnbrokeries and the large import houses came under their control. The Africans were conspicious by their absence.

The picture that emerges was one in which a petty-bourgeoisie rooted in the sphere of distribution had clearly developed by the 1930's. In the absence of an indigenous bourgeoisie - all the plantations, mines etc. being owned by foreign capitalists - the local petty bourgeoisie was extremely visible. Yet, constant conflicts between the import houses, on one hand, and the wholesale and retail shops did much to dampen the possibility of the upper and lower strata ever coalescing. In fact, there was a tendency for the predominantly Indian lower stratum to perceive the upper stratum as a major block to its advancement. Moreover, the dominance of metropolitan capital subordinated them to the big capitalist sector. It is not surprising, then, that this weak petty bourgeoisie had a certain predisposition to opportunism.

There is a tendency among Africans to exaggerate the extent to which the economic pattern described above was

operative among the Indians. However, the rather meteoric rise of this small stratum into the local petty bourgeoisie in an environment characterized by a stagnating African peasantry did much to strengthen African racial consciousness.

THE EMERGENCE OF A BUREAUCRATIC STRATUM - AN ASPECT OF SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE AFRICANS

The callous disregard for education in the colony was obvious, for between the 1850's and the 1890's, education costs never rose above 5.5 percent of public expenditure. In 1857, out of a total population under the age of fifteen of 43,000, only 3,511 were enrolled in school (Adamson 1972:62). However, even before emancipation, a few mulattoes had succeeded in gaining a niche in the bureaucratic stratum, albeit below the British. An integral part of this process entailed the somewhat ludicrous mimicry of European life styles. Commenting on this phenomenon in the West Indies, David Lowenthal has pointed to the role of the education system in the process:

> The schools were at first open only to white children who learned more or less what upper-class children in England were taught. After emancipation a few colored children were admitted; they naturally took the standards of the white elite as their own. Since prestige also required dissociation from slavery, field labor and the like, the less practical one's schooling, the higher one's status. (Lowenthal 1961:90-91)[26]

While the planters and the colonial administrative had argued that the civilizing of the Africans was contingent upon the survival of the plantations - a stance vociferously advanced

in the immediate pre and post-emancipation period; the growing redundancy of such labor in Guyana by the 1870's produced an institutionalized indifference to their welfare. This opened the way for large-scale missionary work by the London Missionary Society and the Baptists. As missionaries started to play a prominent role in articulating African grievances, the colonial state acquiesced in the former's requests for subsidies to set up schools in the African communities (Smith 1956:16).

There was also a pragmatic aspect to this overture. A degree of loyalty to the colonial state was crucial for the preservation of law and order in the colony. Shirley Gordon points out that in a circular prepared by the Colonial Office, dated January 26, 1847, a number of points were stressed in connexion with the aims of education. Among these were:

> a) Religious Education - to inculcate the principles and promote the influence of Christainity.
>
> b) The English language - to diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization for the colored population of the colonies.....
>
> c) Relationships with authority - The lesson books of the colonial schools should also teach the mutual interests of the mother-country and her dependencies; the rational basis of their connection, and the domestic and social duties of the colored races (emphasis added; quoted in Oxaal 1967:21).

Of course, the planters could not have been oblivious to the fact that a submissive African population, especially in Georgetown, the main port, was crucial for the smooth operation of the productive process. Moreover, the influence of the missionaries, providing they did not secularize their doctrines so as to question local realities, could do much to promote submission to the status quo. Consequently, the church and the church-administered but largely publicly-financed schools became an effective instrument of socialization among the African people.

The colonial state also needed a certain amount of local personnel in the lower stratum of the civil service, the police force, etc., in order to provide limited services required for the survival of the colony. Thus, some education for the African people was essential to the maintenance of a climate healthy for planters' exploitation of the colony. With all other avenues blocked, educational achievements offered some Africans an opportunity for social mobility.

The most accessible positions initially were teaching and the clergy. Because of the student-teacher category, students who had successfully completed elementary school could move directly into teaching, without having to secure a costly secondary education (Smith 1962: 106-109; Bacchus 1970:16). As Norman Cameron has pointed out, some were able to use the teaching profession to move into more rewarding and prestigious job. Meanwhile, teaching created among the Africans a sense of self

worth and the school teacher was a person with considerable influence in the African communities. Cameron writes:

> On the 1st August, 1852, a Teachers' Benevolent Society was formed; but in addition to the usual benefits of such societies, the organization demanded a high standard of conduct from its members and set itself to elevate the teachers as a class..... Also this period saw the commencement of professional men among Negroes. In 1855 through the instrumentality of the London Missionary Society, three men, all schoolmasters, entered the Free Church College in Halifax. Two returned in 1864 and had the charge of some of the Congregational Churches in the colony. For a long time since, the members of the higher professions were recruited from the ranks of the elementary schoolmasters (Cameron 1970: 18)

For a few, access to secondary education became possible with the establishment of a few scholarships at this level. In Georgetown, Queen's College was founded in 1844. A secondary education virtually guaranteed the student a junior position in the civil service or the teaching profession. The pervasiveness of ascriptive criteria for recruitment into the civil service fortified African students in the belief that only academic excellence could penetrate the cordon sanitaire of color and connexions. As a result, some African students were able to win scholarships for university education in the independent professions (Cameron 1970: 77).

We should add that the destruction of African cultures accelerated this omnivorous quest for British education. The brutalities of the slave experience had done irreparable damage

to the African social fabric, diverse though it was. With peasant farming stagnating, with the retail trade monopolized by the Portuguese in the 1850's and 60's, advancement through education into the bureaucratic stratum was perceived as the only avenue for social mobility still open.

Moreover, the almost total absence of competition from the Indians for job in the lower echelons of the civil service and the teaching profession until World War I, allowed for a high representation of Africans. Competition in these areas existed primarily between the 'coloreds' and the latter. This had two deleterious social repercussions for the society. Sensitivity to color and race was exacerbated.[27] Meanwhile, the tendency to equate European perceptions of local reality with the ideal became entrenched.

The prevalence of many distinctly Indian aspects of culture epitomized all that was backward, hence undesirable.[28] The plantation interests welcomed this, as it tended to reinforce at the ideological level those negative perceptions among the Africans and Indians, which their domination at the economic level had unleashed. The congruity of perceptions by the planters as well as the colonial administration on the question of education for Indian children, did much to reinforce this pattern (Smith 1962:41-42).

The sugar interests' position was that education for Indian children would ultimately lead to a reduction of the labor force on the plantations. This is how a planter in

Trinidad expressed it in evidence before the Trinidad Legislative Council, as late as 1926. He argued:

> Give them some education in the way of reading and writing, but no more. Even then I would say educate only the bright ones; not the whole mass. If you educate the whole mass of the agricultural population, you will be deliberately ruining the country.... ..Give the bright ones a chance to win as many scholarships as they can; give the others three hours education a day....but if you keep them longer you will never get them to work in the fields. If you want agricultural laborers and not dissatisfaction, you will not keep them longer (emphasis added; quoted in Williams 1973:456).

The neglect of Indian children as far as education went, during indentureship as well as in the post-1917 period, was a testament to the colonial state's support for the planters' argument. The Colonial Office - appointed Immigration Agent General, 'the protector of immigrants', Charles Barry King remarked in his report for 1880:

> .....on most estates large gangs of little children under the compulsory education age are employed (in light work such as carrying earth, ashes and manure and this is not only a benefit to the parents but a sense of pleasure to themselves (quoted in Bacchus 1970:15).

Robert Duff, another 'protector of immigrants', in his report for 1912-13, argued that an educated child tended to look down on his father, got beyond control, and rarely settled down on the land (Nath 1970:188). This view also was corroborated by other influential people in the colonial administration.

The disastrous consequences of this policy are reflected in Table 15, showing primary school enrolment in Guyana between 1920 and 1935. Thus, while Indians accounted for 41 percent of

TABLE 15

PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT IN GUYANA, 1920-35

YEAR	TOTAL ENROLMENT	# OF EAST INDIAN PUPILS ENROLLED	EAST INDIANS AS % OF TOTAL ENROLMENT	% of EAST INDIANS IN POPULATION OF SCHOOL AGE 5-14
1920	35,027	8,484	24	41
1925	43,131	12,400	29	
1930	42,634	13,207	31	45
1935	49,544	17,855	36	

SOURCE: Bacchus 1970:7.

Guyanese children between the ages of 5 and 14 in 1920-21, they formed only 24 percent of total enrolment. Again in 1930-31, while the percentage of Indians between these ages had risen to 45, they still accounted for only 31 percent of total enrolment. Moreover, as Table 16 indicates, while the proportion of Indian children in the preparatory division increased from 54 to 89 per 100 children of other ethnic groups between 1920 and 1935, the proportion decreased rapidly from the lower to the middle and upper divisions. Particularly, in the latter, one finds that between 1925 and 1935, Indian children averaged about 22 per 100 children of other ethnic groups.

The primary reason for the abysmally low enrolment of Indian children in the upper division was the use of child labor on the plantations. As Eric Williams has argued, discriminatory legislation favored the plantations:

> The Education Ordinance required children to attend school up to the age of 14. But the same ordinance prohibited children from being employed during school hours if below the age of 12. Thus, while the Education Department could prosecute the parent for the non-attendance of a child between the ages of 12 and 14, it could not prosecute the employer for the employment, although the employment was the cause of absence from school. The planters, as always, could make their influence felt in the colonies and in the home country (Williams 1973:457).[29]

TABLE 16

PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT OF INDIAN CHILDREN PER 100 CHILDREN OF OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS BY DIVISION, 1920-35

DIVISIONS	1920	1925	1930	1935
PREPARATORY	54	50	68	89
LOWER	29	40	43	58
MIDDLE	20	31	33	40
UPPER	15	22	24	22

SOURCE: Bacchus 1970:8

It is not surprising, then, that the percentage of Indians in teaching and the civil service remained disproportionately low in the inter-war years. In fact, there were only 100 Indian teachers out of 1,397 in Guyana in 1931 - the rest being

predominantly African. The upper echelons of the civil service were dominated by Europeans, these being primarily Colonial Office appointments. In 1940, as Table 17 shows, 29 out of 34 Departmental or Executive heads were European and Portuguese. The remaining five were listed as Africans, probably mulatto (colored). As appointment to the upper layer of the civil service was based on ascriptive criteria, Africans experienced a great deal of racism. In one of the few areas in which they were heavily represented, they found the avenues for upward mobility blocked. Frustration must always have been rife in the lower layer of the bureaucratic stratum. Among these were the junior civil servants, of whom 66.6 percent were Africans and only 10 percent were Indians, in 1940. (see Table 17)

TABLE 17

COMPOSITION OF PENSIONABLE CIVIL SERVANTS BY ETHNIC GROUP, 1940

	DEPARTMENTAL OR EXECUTIVE HEADS		PENSIONABLE STAFF	
	NO.	PERCENT	NO.	PERCENT
EUROPEANS	27	79.4	89	14.1
AFRICANS	5	14.7	419	66.1
INDIANS	0	0.0	63	10.0
PORTUGUESE	2	5.9	40	6.4
CHINESE	0	0.0	18	2.9
	34	100.0	629	100.0

SOURCE: Despres 1967:163

Finally, it should be added that the rather precarious position of the lower layer of the bureaucratic stratum, with no roots in the productive process or even in the sphere of distribution, predisposed it to an element of opportunism. The quest for individual gains and a penchant for genuflecting before the bosses were to have major repercussions for the race/class question.

At this stage, it should be noted that the Indians were not opposed to education per se. What was given premium, was the degree to which educational achievement could allow for some independence of the colonial state. Consequently, there developed a somewhat anomalous situation in which the Indians, underrepresented in the school population, marginally represented in the lower echelons of the civil service and the teaching profession, came to assume a position of considerable prominence in the independent professions of law and medicine. A few Africans had gone into these professions at the turn of the century - the church, and scholarships won through academic excellence, being the primary means by which this was possible.

With a base in the petty-bourgeoisie after World War I, Indian representation in the independent professions increased remarkably. As Table 18 indicates, the proportion of Indian doctors increased from 19 percent in 1924 to 37 percent in 1925-1934. The figures for the legal profession were even more impressive - from 26 percent in the 1907-20 period to 66 percent in the 1941-50 period (see Table 19). The importance of these

developments is brought into sharper focus when one considers that as late as 1931, only 25 percent of the Indians in Guyana were literate in English. Among the Africans, literacy stood at 80.8 percent in 1931 and 97.3 percent in 1946; while 44 percent of the Indians were still illiterate by the latter date (Nath 1970:247-48).

TABLE 18

ETHNIC ORIGIN OF GUYANESE PRACTISING MEDICINE UP TO 1944

PERIOD OF LOCAL REGISTRATION	TOTAL # OF GUYANESE DOCTORS	TOTAL # OF INDIANS	INDIANS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL REGISTERED
IN 1924	32	6	19
1925-34	30	11	37
1935-44	18	7	39

NOTE: The fall in numbers in the 1935-44 period was due to the Second World War.

SOURCE: Bacchus 1970:13

TABLE 19

ETHNIC ORIGIN OF GUYANESE LAWYERS CALLED TO THE LOCAL BAR UP TO 1950

PERIOD	TOTAL NO. OF GUYANESE LAWYERS	TOTAL NO. OF INDIANS	INDIANS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
1907-20	19	5	26
1921-30	20	5	25
1931-40	9	4	44
1941-50	33	21	66

SOURCE: Bacchus 1970:13

Bacchus has argued that an overwhelming majority of these professionals came from families which had already moved into the petty bourgeoisie. Nath has documented this trend with regard to a number of prominent Indian families (Nath 1970: 199-206). As we have argued above, this process invariably involved a gradual rise from the 'sirdar' or foreman's position on the estates to large-scale land-ownership and rice production, cattle rearing, and money-lending at exorbitant rates, and finally into the distributive trade. The capital accumulated in the process was often substantial enough to facilitate some ploughing back for expansion, while simultaneously allowing for the education of an elder son.

Again, the tremendous influence exerted by the father within the semi-extended family structure was instrumental in the development of the family as a corporate economic unit which could be relied upon to provide the funds necessary for the education of a son, in law or medicine. As Bacchus argues:

> Those who were withdrawn from school joined in the income-earning activities of the family while, for the son who was allowed to continue his education, the total family efforts and resources were pooled to meet his expenses. The pooling of the family resources was possible because of the strong family solidarity which was characteristic of East Indian families. Though often nuclear in structure, the family was closely knit with the father usually responsible for the total financial resources of the entire family.....
>
> After the family had successfully put one son through his professional training, he was expected, on his

> return to the country, to assume the financial responsibility for the education of his younger brothers, or if they were too old, for his brothers' or even his sisters' sons (Bacchus 1970:24).[30]

As a result, Indians in the independent professions were able to short circuit the colonial system of 'sponsorship' and patronage and move directly into the upper layer of the bureaucratic stratum. For an overwhelming majority of Africans, in spite of their tremendous head-start in education, it was difficult to move out of the lower echelons of the bureaucratic stratum because ascriptive selection criteria favored the 'coloreds' and, moreover, their non-representation in the petty bourgeoisie made it increasingly difficult to maintain their apparently important presence in the independent professions. It is possible that many of the non-Indian lawyers and doctors were 'colored' and Chinese.

Thus, by the early 1940's, it became possible to identify certain distinct classes and strata purely on the basis of their functions within the socio-economic structure. To suggest, however, that these classes and strata had gained consciousness of themselves as distinct entities, with specific interests and a sense of their potential for effecting social change, is to distort the picture. Yet, the rudiments of class consciousness were developing within the dominant capitalist mode of production in the inter-war years, as we argue in Chapter 3. The low development of the productive process in conjunction with the differential incorporation of the various ethnic groups into this

uneven process, opened the way for the exploitation of the race question (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

A GENERAL VIEW OF ETHNICITY AND CLASS FORMATION IN GUYANA AROUND 1940

1. DOMINANT METROPOLITAN BOURGEOISIE - British. Based primarily in plantation agriculture (sugar). Centred on the metropolitan market. Also monopolized shipping and certain strategic areas of the distributive trade (e.g. farm machinery, fertilizers). ABSENTEES.

2. PETTY-BOURGEOISIE: (a) UPPER STRATUM - Portuguese. Based largely in the import business, the larger and wholesale houses in the distributive trade, and the pawnbrokeries and larger liquor stores.

   (b) LOWER STRATUM - Indians and Chinese. Based mainly in the smaller wholesale houses and the retailing aspect of the distributive trade. In the rural areas, a few Indians in large-scale rice-farming, rice milling. NO AFRICANS.

3. BUREAUCRATIC STRATUM: (a) UPPER LAYER - British predominantly, though some Portuguese and 'colored' senior civil servants. Largely Colonial Office appointees. Ascriptive recruitment criteria institutionalized. OPEN DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AFRICANS.

   And 'colored', African and Indian doctors and lawyers - the stratum of petty-bourgeoisie increasingly important. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICANS LIMITED.

   (b) LOWER LAYER - Africans predominantly. Teachers, junior civil servants, clergymen. SMALL INDIAN PRESENCE, BUT INCREASING. UPWARD MOBILITY, DIFFICULT FOR AFRICANS BECAUSE OF RACIST PRACTICES IN COLONIAL STATE.

4. PROLETARIAT: (a) URBAN - Africans predominantly. Scattered over a wide range of activities in the service sector. WATER-FRONT WORKERS, A SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT.

   (b) RURAL - Indians predominantly. Many resident on plantations. CASUAL LABOR OFTEN PROVIDED BY INDIAN PEASANTS.

5. PEASANTRY: (a) GROUND PROVISION PRODUCERS - Africans, overwhelmingly. Chronically depressed activity. OFTEN DEPENDENT ON SONS IN URBAN WAGE LABOR.

(b) RICE PRODUCERS - Indians, overwhelmingly. Also practice limited amount of cattle-rearing, fishing, gardening ALONG WITH CASUAL LABOR ON PLANTATIONS. FAMILY OPERATED AS CORPORATE ECONOMIC UNIT.

NOTES

1. Throughout the 1960's, Amerindians averaged approximately 4.5 percent of the Guyanese population.

2. In the county of Demerara, 34 out of 93 plantations were owned by English planters by 1762. They came mainly from Barbados where land-hunger was chronic.

3. Planters frequently gave false figures regarding the slave population on their plantations in order to evade taxation.

4. Slaves imported into Guyana, came mainly from the following four broad geographical regions in West Africa: Windward Coast (i.e. Ivory Coast and Liberia), Gold Coast (Ghana), Bight of Biafra and the Congo Region of Central Africa (Curtin 1969:155).

5. Mintz has commented on the difficulty of attributing to specific African cultures those aspects of West Indian culture which are of African derivation:

> While Herskovits has argued that the majority of New World slaves were drawn from a relatively restricted area of Africa, and while many specific culture elements can be traced with confidence to Africa, it would be extremely difficult to attribute a significant part of the culture of any Caribbean people to specific African cultures. Moreover, the cultural heterogeneity of the enslaved Africans who reached the islands was apparently reinforced by plantation practices, since attempts were made to prevent any substantial number of slaves of a common tribal background from being concentrated on the same plantation (Mintz 1971a:26).

6. The 'apprenticeship' period lasted from 1834 to 1838 in most of the British West Indian colonies. The term was a misnomer, for the ex-slaves hardly needed to be apprenticed to plantation labor. This period was designed to allow the planters some time to develop mechanisms by which control over labor could be retained. The apprenticeship system failed because it asked, as Mintz argues:

> ....too much of mere mortals. It allowed the masters the labor of their slaves for a stated number of hours per week. Beyond this limit, the slaves (or 'apprentices') had the right either to refuse to work for their masters or to demand wages for the

> work they did....It was too much to ask that a man should be a slave on weekdays and a wage earner over the weekend (Mintz 1974:206).

7. The price of Caribbean sugar imported into Britain fell from an average of 720 shillings per ton between 1836-46 to 560 shillings per ton in 1847 (Nath 1970:250).

8. Mintz has remarked on the basic economic motive which spawned the racial heterogeneity of the Caribbean. He writes:

> The forces that led to such variety flowed from the economic objectives of the European colonial powers, and from their inability or unwillingness to build stable local societies upon free European yoeman populations; what they sought was profit, not ethnic or physical homogeneity (emphasis added; Mintz 1971b:437).

Interestingly enough, it was plantation monopoly of the best lands and its voracious appetite for cheap labor which precluded the development of a European peasantry. Plantation agriculture and peasant farming were incompatible. Like the European peasants who tried to co-exist with the planters and failed, the Africans were to get the message. It was not a racial question; basic economic promptings were the determining factor.

9. It is difficult to determine why the emerging African peasantry did not continue with rice cultivation.

10. The long-term consequences of this were detrimental to race relations in Guyana. As recently as 1961, V.S. Naipaul observed:

> Everyone knows that Amerindians hunted down runaway slaves; it was something I heard again and again, from white and black; and on the Rupununi; and wherever one sees Amerindians, it is a chilling memory (Naipaul 1969:107).

11. In the 1840's and 50's, pumps suitable for drainage were priced at $24,000 and above. Unless the colonial administration was prepared to subsidize or provide long-term loans to the African peasantry, serious reclamation was unthinkable. Of course, the plantocracy was not prepared to entertain this proposition.

12. Tinker describes how Indian indentured laborers were used to frustrate African demands for wage increases. While he speaks of the situation in Jamaica, it is even more applicable to post-emancipation Guyana, where these laborers were significantly greater. He writes:

> In Jamaica, as early as 1857, the Blacks - encouraged by the Baptist missionaries - petitioned against renewed immigration, and the enabling bill was disallowed by the Colonial Office. However, the planters still managed to utilize the Indians to oppose Creole demands: 'In several districts at the beginning of the year (1866) there were strikes by the native laborers for higher pay, but the planters refused to submit to their terms, and having immigrants.....the Creole laborers found the planters not entirely dependent on them, and returned to work on the old terms.' The writer calculated that without the Indians in reserve, employers would have been compelled to raise wages by 25 percent (Tinker 1974:217-18).

13. The failure of some government-sponsored land settlement schemes in the 1890's and the first decade of this century was partly attributable to the impossibility of combining rice cultivation with plantation wage-labor, in the initial stages. As late as 1937, the Director of Agriculture could still remark:

> The small agriculturalist in this colony is best off, in the economic sense, when he is located near some source of part-time employment such as a sugar estate (quoted in Nath 1970:104).

Many Indian rice cultivators were in a position to do this.

14. Raymond Smith has described how extended family labor is utilized on plots cultivated by Indian peasants. He observes:

> They are assisted by their families, in almost every case. Sons who have left school, and are still living in their father's home, work under their father's direction on the exclusively male operations of ploughing, raking, preparing seed beds, threshing, etc. Wives, wives of sons living in the parental home, and unmarried daughters work on transplanting seedlings and reaping. For both male and female tasks it is customary for groups of workers to

> co-operate by working on each other's land in town. A team of women, who may have kinship ties or merely be friends or neighbours, will work together on transplanting, going from one farm to another (Smith 1957:508-09).

15. The shareholders of Bookers included Atlas Assurance, Birmingham and District Investment Trust, Barclays Bank and London Life Assurance (Jagan 1954:20).

16. By the late 40's, Bookers had over 50 subsidiaries in Guyana and an interest in several other concerns. As Jagan points out:

> It has a dominant position in commerce, selling almost every conceivable product. Through Campbell, Booker, Carter it handles a large export and merchandising business.....
> Unity Rum Merchants controls Booker's Rum Company and Albion Distilleries Ltd., both of which operate in British Guiana. There is also Booker's fleet of ships plying from Liverpool to Georgetown and between the West Indian Islands.
> Not very long ago, Booker's made tremendous profit by selling its extensive wood grant and saw mill interests to the Colonial Development Corporation. It has shares in the largest cattle company, the Rupununi Development Company, the chairman of which is a Booker director, Mr. E.G. Seaford (Jagan 1954:20).

17. Little reference is made to bauxite mining in this study primarily because it did not impinge directly on economic and social relations on the coastland. Based in the interior and highly capital intensive, it was the classic enclave industry. While huge profits were made, it had few linkages with the local economy, short of providing employment for a few thousand predominantly African workers. Moreover, as no royalty was paid by Demba on bauxite mined on its own land and only 10 cents per ton was paid on ore obtained from leased crown lands, even its indirect impact on the Guyanese economy was marginal. For an excellent account of the history of the bauxite industry and its exploitative role, see Jagan 1972:74-79.

18. The radically different perception which Africans had of certain artisan jobs, compared to their negative view of agriculture or agricultural labor is evident in the following flambuoyant description by a local scholar:

> In carpentry and boat-building, masonry, mechanical and electrical - in the numerous trades that modern civilization has created or fostered, laborers are to be seen gaily chatting, arguing, or indulging in a ditty, that fits itself to the rhythm of mechanical movement and lightens the dullness of labor. They are the builders in these parts (Cameron 1970 (orig.1934):89).

Commenting on the predominance of Africans in the postal services, Cameron adds:

> Whether....the primitive attempts to transmit messages by means of the talking drums have subconsciously contributed to this fascination, I do not know, but it seems to exist nevertheless. These departments are largely run by Negroes who show themselves capable of bearing the strain of long hours and the pressure of rush-work (Cameron 1970:91).

African aversion to agriculture, then, had nothing to do with laziness. It was conditioned by their harsh experiences as peasant farmers in the face of the planters' commitment to their annihilation after 1838.

19. The preponderance of Africans among factory workers on the plantations and the higher remuneration of this type of labor tended to reinforce mutually negative perceptions between African and Indian workers.

20. Commenting on the Jamaican situation, in many respects analogous to the Guyanese case, Nettleford writes:

> ....the parboiled state of our identity will continue to be just this until adjustments are made in the society in bold economic and social terms. People who look like Africans will then no longer have evidence to support their much - repeated claim that their poverty, destitution and loss of hope is somehow organically linked with the fact that

> they are of a certain ethnic origin in a country controlled by people of another ethnic origin who think themselves superior (Nettleford 1973:55).

21. In the early 1960's, Africans in Georgetown rioted. Many Indian businesses were destroyed by fire. Of course, by then, many Indians had moved into the upper stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie, having expanded their base in the distributive trade and light manufacturing.

22. Despres describes this process as follows:

> .....some of the profits made in retail trade were invested in other enterprises. In the 1880's, for example, the Negro 'pork-knockers' who carried out expeditions to the goldfields were primarily financed by Portuguese merchants. Similarly, Portuguese merchants also provided much of the capital needed to develop the diamond and timber industries (Despres 1967: 62-63).

23. As early as 1895, Indians had credit amounting to £103,540 in the Government Savings Bank. In the same year, 408 Indians were licensed as shopkeepers, 1,620 as hucksters, 44 as owners of mule carts, 45 as owners of cabs, and 249 as owners of donkey carts (Eves 1897:141).

24. In the absence of a centralized government-controlled rice marketing board until the 1940's many Indian businessmen accumulated considerable surplus by acting as middlemen. As Richardson (1970:58) puts it:

> Farmers brought grain to Georgetown or smaller towns and sold it to shop keepers who would arrange for export. Rice producers complained of collusion among the rice buyers to keep prices low.

25. The high-handed manner of the 'sirdar' is discussed by Tinker, who also mentions their exploitative relations with the masses of illiterate and defenceless laborers. He writes:

> The driver or sirdar exercised a certain amount of power and influence. He might get up lotteries....and he usually took up subscriptions from his gang to buy the taziyas for the

> Muharrum procession - they rarely get their money's worth. The sirdar could usually arrange things for the coolies - secure a pass to leave the estate, or obtain a change of accommodation - and he often bolstered his position by detailing the tougher members of the gang as his bodyguard. In addition to arranging small benefits (for a consideration) he could hand out small punishments, unofficially, at the hands of his henchmen (Tinker 1974:223).

26. Until today, the socialist rhetoric of the Guyanese government notwithstanding, secondary education is still geared primarily to meet the requirements of the University of London's General Certificate of Education examinations.

Walter Rodney has made a rather biting but accurate comment on the impact of colonial education on the 'natives'. Unfortunately, it needs no revisions with reference to contemporary Guyana. He says:

> There is a famous West Indian calyposian who in satirizing his colonial school days, remarked that had he been a bright student he would have learnt more and turned out to be a fool. Unfortunately, the colonial system educated far too many fools and clowns, fascinated by the ideas and way of life of the European capitalist class. Some reached a point of total estrangement from African conditions and the African way of life...(Rodney 1972:273).

27. The following extensive quote from the autobiography of the late Guyanese novelist, Edgar Mittelholzer (1909-65) is a classic description of the ridiculous perception of 'race' which the colored or mulatto element had acquired. Unlike the United States, the absence of a large white population from which the lower rungs of the bureaucratic stratum could be filled, created a few openings for them. Selected purely because of the degree to which their own physical features were a departure from 'bad' African features, the 'colored' elements acquired a paranoiac view of color and approximations to European perceptions of physical beauty. All were to be affected by this. The Africans and the Indians - the latter, in particular, assumed many of the ludicrous positions on the race/color question as the mulattoes.

Mittelholzer writes:

> I was born at 2 a.m. on the sixteenth of December, 1909. For my father, it was an occasion of momentous disappointment. I turned out to be a swarthy baby!
>
> Himself fair-complexioned with hair of European texture, as were his brothers and sisters (save Anna, the youngest), and his wife also fair-complexioned and European in appearance, he had, naturally, assumed that the chances were heavy in favor of a fair-complexioned baby. (Widely read in his teens and as a young man, had he, I wonder, heard of Mendelism?) However, there it was. His first-born - a swarthy boy!
>
> Almost a confirmed negrophobe, he must have felt it deeply that December morning. He has my empathy. It requires the minimum of effort for me to put myself in his place. In a community like that, at that time, he would have had to be superhuman not to be dis appointed. A bleak morning and a sunny, dry afternoon: such is the analogy of contrast that could be applied to a swarthy and a fair complexion in New Amsterdam in the year 1909.
>
> There was one important consolation for him, though. I stress important. My hair was dead straight. No sign of any negroid kings (Mittelholzer 1963:17-18).

For a discussion of the role of the 'colored' element in the Caribbean, see Blanshard 1947:51-54.

28. Jayawardena, an anthropologist from Sri Lanka, has made the following observations on the Eurocentric perception of Indian culture which both the 'colored' and the Africans acquired:

> Their language (the East Indians') was 'outlandish', they knew no English; their clothes were strange and their religion was heathen. They lacked the cultural characteristics valued in the society, and in return the society withheld its rights and privileges from them. Indian culture or 'coolie culture', as it was and is called, became a mark of low status in the eyes of the white upper status group as

> well as of the colored and black lower status groups (quoted in Bacchus 1970:15).

Yet, the planters apparently assisted in the construction of Hindu temples and mosques on the plantations (Smith 1962:47) Apart from its role in placating these laborers, this gesture could only be interpreted as a subtle though potentially powerful weapon in retarding the emergence of a culturally homogeneous and united working class.

29. As late as 1931, and Education Commission from England sent to the Caribbean, was able to add its authoritative voice to the rationalization of child labor among Indians in the Caribbean. It argued:

> We appreciate the argument of those who see in compulsion and instrument for abolishing child labor on the estates. But while accepting the desirability of such abolition we think it is possible to over-estimate its extent and its evils. It is for the most part confined to the sugar and, at certain seasons, cotton estates. The conditions are not comparable to those of factory labor under European urban industrial conditions, and we are not convinced that children under 12 years old are necessarily worse off under these conditions than they would be in the overcrowded badly staffed schools which the introduction of compulsion without heavy additional expenditures would perpetuate and extend (quoted in Williams 1973:457).

30. Cheddi Jagan's role in the education of other members of his family is illustrative of this pattern (Jagan 1972:66).

CHAPTER THREE

THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AND THE BUREAUCRATIC STRATUM IN THE POLITICAL PRACTICES OF THE INTER-WAR YEARS

The growing contradictions between the capitalists and the masses of workers were reflected in the continuous protests and strikes, staged in the inter-war years, by the rural as well as the urban proletariat. In fact, this period is classic in terms of the workers' perception both of their exploitation as well as the potential for reforms inherent in the use of the strike weapon. The crucial problem was the extent and the mechanism by which these contradictions could find expression at the level of political practice.

While the race question was certainly a problem for working-class unity, beyond here, we argue that the failure to build working-class unity is directly attributable to the absence of indigenous leadership. Consequently, this role was virtually thrust upon those in the bureaucratic stratum (the professionals, clergymen, teachers, lower-echelon civil servants) and the lower stratum of the petty bourgeoisie - the 'middle-class'. This was not an inherently negative development. However, it was precisely because of the historically conditioned orientation of this rather complex stratum or class that possibilities for unity across ethnic lines were thwarted and racism, covertly or overtly, came to take precedence over rapidly-developing structural contradictions between the wars.

Our discussion will involve a documentation of the fact that economic contradictions were quite developed during this period. The absence of a leadership genuinely committed to the workers, militated against the articulation of these contradictions in a coherent way at the political level for two primary reasons:

1) The cleavages within the bureaucratic stratum, in particular, and between this stratum and the petty bourgeoisie within the colonial social formation, aggravated the ethnic divisions within the working class.

2) The constitutional limitations, designed to perpetuate plantation and allied commercial stranglehold of the Guyanese economy, resulted in the subversion of the trade union movement by the 'middle class'. In fact, it became an instrument for the prosecution of claims to patronage from the colonial state, in order to bolster the unstable economic base of many of the leaders.

EARLY MANIFESTATIONS OF CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN CAPITALISTS AND WORKERS, 1905-18

As early as 1905, waterfront workers at Sandbach Parker and Co. Ltd. went on strike, seeking an increase in wages. This was a response to considerable underemployment on the docks as well as the continuous rise in the cost of living (Chase 1964: 20-21). There was unanimous support from the other waterfront workers who were experiencing similar difficulties. The commercial capitalists, operating in tandem with their colleagues on the plantations because of a commonality of interests based on inter-locking directorships and the necessity to maintain a docile working class, refused to negogiate.

They responded by employing strike breakers. The colonial state, in defense of these interests, called out the police. Portuguese businesses as well as European-owned stores were destroyed. 'Lumpen' elements soon intervened, invading European homes demanding food. Colonial Officials also were attacked (Chase 1964:22). However, nothing tangible came of this uprising, as there was no organized leadership and trade unions still were proscribed.

While these workers overwhelmingly were African, almost simultaneously, predominantly Indian sugar workers went on strike at Plantations Ruimveldt and Diamond. The grievances were similar-wages could not keep pace with rising living costs. Significantly enough, indentureship did not preclude largely illiterate workers from articulating their discontent. As in Georgetown, state-sanctioned force was deployed. The laborers gained nothing.

These two events indicated a pattern that was to be reproduced consistently between the wars. Urban workers, overwhelmingly African, and rural sugar workers, predominantly Indian, continually responded to capitalist exploitation by withholding labor. The absence of organized leadership made for spontaneity, with little co-ordination within or between the rural proletariat and the urban proletariat. This apart, it demonstrated the unity of the propertied class; the collaboration between the coercive organs of the colonial state and the sugar barons and the mercantile community; and finally, the

extent to which the bourgeoisie would go to maintain their dominance.

In the following year, 1906, waterfront workers at Bookers and Sandbach renewed the struggle. They struck again, in pursuit of an increase in wages. Nothing of consequence was achieved, as 'ex-convicts' and 'wharf-rats' were recruited to break the strike. Of significance, however, was the fact that a worker, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow (1884-1958)[1], came to prominence. Committed though he was to the workers' struggle, his capacity for action was severely circumscribed in the absence of an organized movement to politicize the workers.

Interestingly enough, on the same day that the water front workers struck, Indian sugar workers at Plantation Providence also came out on strike, seeking an increase in wages as well. There is no evidence that the taking of strike action simultaneously, in 1905 and 1906, was in any way a deliberately co-ordinated response. There was no co-ordinating machinery. What it did indicate was that there were basic contradictions in the economic 'sub-structure' between the workers and the capitalists which tended to be sharpened simultaneously in all sectors. This, of course, was a clear reflection of the mono-cultural base of the Guyanese economy. The ramifications of sugar production were pervasive.

Between 1906 and 1916, there was comparative quiet on the waterfront. On the plantations, on the other hand, the laborers, in spite of their illiteracy, the limitations to

mobilization inherent in indentureship, and the paucity of leaders, continued to express their disaffection with the abysmally poor working conditions. Indeed, so pervasive was this sense of deprivation, that a catalogue of work stoppages between 1906 and 1916 (see Table 20), reads like a record of anarchy heralding the demise of the plantations (Nath 1970: 132-42; Chase 1964:39-42). Fallacious though this impression is - most of the stoppages being of short duration - it was symptomatic of a widening gap between plantation appropriation of surplus value, on one hand, and the chronically low remuneration to labor, on the other.

TABLE 20

STOPPAGES OF WORK BY SUGAR WORKERS, 1906-16

DATE	PLANTATION
MAY, 1908	LA BONNE INTENTION
DECEMBER, 1908	FRIENDS
JULY, 1909	WALES
JULY, 1909	ANNA REGINA
AUGUST, 1909	LEONORA
DECEMBER, 1909	PETER'S HALL
APRIL, 1910	PETER'S HALL
MAY, 1910	FRIENDS
1911,1912,1913	ROSE HALL, LUSIGNAN, UITVLUGT
1916	LEONORA, PETERS HALL, DIAMOND, RUIMVELDT, BLAIRMONT

There was a recurring pattern to these events. They were sparked off principally by disputes over wages and planters' recalcitrance in dealing with grievances. This invariably resulted in the laborers trying to get the so-called 'protector' of immigrants, the Immigration Agent-General to arbitrate. This, somewhat-ritualistically, involved a march to the IAG's office in Georgetown or New Amsterdam.[2] To curb the potential demonstration effect of this exercise, the state's coercive apparatus was enjoined, with the result that African policemen were used to harass Indian laborers. The exploiters were usually the victors.

Once again, the crucial factor, as with the urban proletariat, was the rather spontaneous and un-cordinated nature of these genuine strike efforts. However, for the Indian indentureds, the problem was magnified by the legal encumbrances accompanying the system. As Ashton Chase points out:

> The indenture generally kept the men bound to the plantation for five years from the date of allotment, and the women for three years from the said date. At the end of this period, they were entitled to passages back to India from whence they came.
>
> In the circumstances, they were primarily itinerant workers without any permanent interest in the industry. Without a revolving labor force therefore it was impossible for any sort of permanent organization to be established or for leadership to emerge. It was not until after immigration of these workers ceased in 1917, and their semi-feudal status which had by then become outmoded

> due to inefficience and waste that prospects for organization seemed ripe (emphasis added; Chase 1964:33).

The apparent passivity among the urban proletariat was short lived. As a result of the war, the supply of certain essential commodities for popular consumption was disrupted. The implications for the working class were grave. The situation was exacerbated in Guyana, where plantation monopoly of the best agricultural facilities had produced a marked poverty in the food-base sector of the economy. Again, this stranglehold precluded the channelling of scarce local resources into this crucial area. The peasantry was shackled. For the urban proletariat, in particular, the problem was compounded.

The economic crisis was magnified by the pervasiveness of hoarding and blackmarketing. Many of the accomplices were Indian retail merchants - a fact which the African urban workers, in particular, could not have missed. This certainly deflected some of the antagonism from the upper-stratum of the petty-bourgeoisie, largely Portuguese. As the cost-of-living increased severalfold, workers' wages stagnated. Small wonder that in 1916, numerous strikes took place both on the sugar plantations as well as in Georgetown.[3] These strikes were largely a response to major increases in the prices of commodities basic to the diet of the working class. As Table 21 shows, price hikes were often as high as fifty percent.

TABLE 21

INCREASES IN THE PRICES OF COMMODITIES BASIC TO WORKING CLASS DIET, JANUARY, 1917 - OCTOBER, 1917

COMMODITIES	PRICES IN JAN.,1917	PRICES IN OCT.,1917
RICE	4 cents per pint	5 cents per pint
FLOUR	5 cents per lb.	10 cents per lb.
SUGAR	4 cents per lb.	5 cents per lb.
SALT-PORK	16 cents per lb.	28 cents per lb.
SALT-FISH	12 cents per lb.	16 cents per lb.
SALT-BEEF	16 cents per lb.	28 cents per lb.
SPLIT-PEAS	6 cents per pint	12 cents per pint
CORN FLOUR	4 cents per lb.	8 cents per lb.
KEROSENE OIL	4 cents per ½ bot.	6 cents per ½ bot.
SOAP	2 cakes for 3 cents	2 cakes for 7 cents
PLANTAINS	2 for 3 cents	2 for 4 cents
BUTTER	40 cents per lb.	56 cents per lb.

SOURCE: Chase 1964:49

Meanwhile, the export price for sugar recovered remarkably from the slump of the previous two decades. As Table 22 indicates, there was a 100 percent increase in prices between 1914 and 1919. Yet, the planters remained implacable in face of an escalation in work stoppages.

TABLE 22

PRICE OBTAINED FOR SUGAR EXPORTED, 1913-1919

YEAR	PRICE PER TON IN POUNDS
1913	12.60
1914	14.70
1915	21.30
1916	20.65
1917	21.30
1918	22.00
1919	29.80

SOURCE: Nath 1970:250

Even the conservative DAILY CHRONICLE could not resist commenting on the 23rd May, 1916 on this callous disregard for the laborers' plight. It editorialized:

> When the export price of sugar was low, the planters constantly reminded the laborers of this in their determined efforts to keep wages down. Now that the export price of sugar has gone up, on the laborers reminding the planters of this, the latter cooly tells them that that is not their concern, they should mind their own business (quoted in Chase 1964:43).

The workers responded. Once again, waterfront workers and the indentured laborers struck in May 1916. In January 1917, the dockworkers at Bookers struck as well. With Critchlow, the worker, leading them, they held out and made major gains which constituted a watershed in the workers' struggle in Guyana. The strike lasted from the 4th to the 14th of January.. In an unprecedented move, the Chamber of Commerce decided to negotiate with Critchlow and a few other representa-

tives of the workers. They fought and won the 9 hour-day, a ½day minimum guaranteed work and a 25 percent rise in wages. The latter, however, did not satisfy them. They held out and also won a 1 hour-lunch break as well as overtime rights.

The greatest overall impact of these struggles in 1917, was that the capitalists by negogiating with the workers through their representatives had opened a pandora's box - they gave tacit recognition to the right to collective bargaining. Meanwhile, in Critchlow, the waterfront workers had found a leader whose class position coincided with their own. The message soon reverberated throughout the city.[4] The contradiction between the workers and the capitalists had advanced considerably; workers in a wide range of service activities struck. Diverse though their jobs were, they were unanimous in their call for wage increases (Chase 1964:46-48).

Meanwhile, the predominantly Indian sugar workers stepped up their agitation, not in collaboration with the urban workers but simultaneously, nevertheless. As they also were experiencing a massive erosion in their standard of living, East and West Bank Demerara sugar workers came to Georgetown in the months of March, April and May 1917, to impress the hardships they were suffering on the Immigration Agent-General. Significantly enough, indentureship came to an end in the same year. If the immediate economic repercussions were negligible, the event was of profound psychological importance. For the first time since 1838, there were no legal restrictions on their

place of residence or their mobility. In a sense they joined their African counterparts; they were a rural proletariat.

We have tried to demonstrate that the structural contradictions in the plantation and allied commercial sectors were quite advanced by the end of the first World War. Both the rural laborers and the urban proletariat were conscious of their positions vis-a-vis the capitalists. They had shown this throughout the 1905-1918 period by the consistency with which they withheld their labor. However, while they often did this simultaneously in the urban as well as the rural areas, there is no evidence to suggest that these were the conscious co-ordinated efforts of a united working class. The ethnic specialization of labor coupled with the system of indenture slowed down the process considerably. Yet, a degree of working class consciousness had developed. What was required to crystallize this consciousness further, was organized unionism and a political programme to combat the planter-dominated colonial state. Given the political backwardness of the workers, where was the leadership to come from?

THE BUREAUCRATIC STRATUM AND THE BIRTH OF THE BRITISH GUIANA LABOR UNION (B.G.L.U)

The centrality of this question for the union movement became evident as soon as the BGLU was founded in 1919. An organizational machinery with dedicated cadres and a leadership capable of resisting the temptation to be co-opted by the capitalists, through patronage doled out by the colonial state,

were essential. The pervasiveness of oppression and the absence of even a modicum of political education for the masses, made the union dependent on those in the bureaucratic stratum, from the inception.

No movement aiming to unionize a wide range of workers, as the BGLU sought to do, could have achieved any success purely on the efforts of one worker.[5] The efforts of Critchlow during its embryonic stage were phenomenal. However, the limitations ofthis one-man approach were soon obvious. As Chase puts it:

> His speeches throughout the country were charged with zeal and a great deal of emotion. He inspired confidence, loyalty, and action by his followers. But the tasks were greater than any one man could successfuly achieve. The BGLU had spread itself over a very wide area and travelling around the country was an arduous and exacting business. When he was wanted in one place, he was engaged in another. But the workers were prepared to wait on him. Still it is fair to say that lack of administrative ability and also his reliance on his better educated colleagues soon had their repercussions.
>
> His limited education and poor circumstances were the first objects of attack by those who sought to destroy the Labor Union.....The demand was for lawyers and doctors, professional men, to take the helm (emphasis added; Chase 1964:51).

Indeed, as early as the first anniversary meeting held on 19th January 1920, internal conflicts started to take their toll. Attempts were being made to railroad elements in the bureaucratic stratum into the leadership of the union. While Dr. T.T. Nichols, J.S. Johnson and A. McLean Ogle (lawyers)

were rejected and an overwhelming vote of confidence given to Critchlow, the problem of working-class leadership was simply papered over.

If Critchlow remained conspicious and continued to exert a somewhat messianic influence on the workers, elements in the bureaucratic stratum remained behind the scenes, their profile temporarily lowered but their influence hardly diminished. In fact, a roster of persons associated with various aspects of the fight to get the union registered - this was not accomplished until the 21st July, 1922 - is indicative of the pervasiveness of 'middle class' influence. Apart from Critchlow, the prominent members were all from the bureaucratic stratum (see below).

1. Chase, clergyman (not the author quoted elsewhere).
2. Hon. F. Dias, Member of the Court of Policy, businessman.
3. R.F. Frank, clergyman.
4. E.F. Fredericks, lawyer.
5. H.W. Grant, clergyman.
6. J.S. Johnson, lawyer.
7. A. McLean Ogle, lawyer.
8. A.A. Thorne, M.A., Member of the Court of Policy, head-master.

(Chase 1964:52-53)

The pernicious impact of 'middle class' leadership, was soon to be felt not only within the BGLU but also in the sensitive area of inter-ethnic union mobilization. While there was no unanimity of perception of their role within the union, it is important to recognize that they injected, from the inception, a rather elitist orientation. Moreover, the preponderance of clergymen of African descent, hardly helped attract Indian workers to the BGLU. Indeed, it is quite possible that many of these characters were openly contemptuous of the largely illiterate Indian sugar workers, overwhelming Hindus and Muslims.

Yet, paradoxically enough, these were the representatives of the sugar workers in the early 1920's. As Chase points out:

> Whenever grievances over conditions of work arose, either the Secretary-Treasurer, Rev. Chase, Inspector of Branches, Rev. Frank of New Amsterdam, or some other high level official made the necessary representations (Chase 1964:56).

It is not difficult to appreciate how paternalistic this exercise must have been. The mere nature of the emergence of the African bureaucratic stratum placed it in a diametrically opposite position to the masses of Indian sugar workers. The former's upward mobility was premised on the assumption that all that was British was inherently good, hence desirable. Their weltanschauung constituted an a priori relegation of all that smacked of Africa to the sphere of backwardness. How much more

so must they have perceived the illiterate Indian laborer with his strange non-Christian customs! Small wonder, as the abysmally scanty record of the early 20's indicates, that the BGLU made little progress among the Indian workers, agitated though they were.

That this was so, was reflected in the events of April, 1924. Early in themonth, the BGLU organized a dock-strike in Georgetown. This was followed by a demonstration in the city. Almost simultaneously, Indian sugar workers on the East Bank of Demerara marched towards Georgetown - a pattern which is classic in Guyanese history of the period. They were stopped at Ruimveldt and dispersed after police fired into the crowd, killing thirteen (Spackman 1973).

Again, there seemed to have been no co-ordination between the dock-workers strike and the sugar workers' march. This coincidence, by then standardized, was rooted in another decline in real wages between the increases won in 1920 and rising cost of living by 1924 (Spackman 1973:318). Nothing came out of these protests and the BGLU was soon confronted with greater hurdles in its attempts to win over the sugar workers.

A new factor in the struggle of the working-class in Guyana in the early 1920's was the emergence of a 'middle class' organization, the exclusively Indian, British Guiana East Indian Association. Interestingly enough, it seemed to have arrogated unto itself the right to 'advocate and promote by all possible legitimate means,....the general public interest and

welfare of the East Indian community at large' (quoted in Despres 1967:168).

Equally interesting was the fact that this development coincided with an apparent strengthening of efforts by the BGLU to organize the sugar workers.[6] As Ann Spackman points out:

> ....the BGLU had been trying to expand its activities into the sugar plantations of the East Bank. It had distributed pamphlets and had called meetings of workers during March 1924, apparently with the aim of expanding its organization outside Georgetown into the crucial sugar areas and obviously emphasizing low wages, poor working conditions and possibly child labor. This contact between Afro-Guyanese labor and East Indian labor was unusual and would obviously cause alarm in government and among employers (Spackman 1973:320).

This was obviously a preliminary exercise on the part of the BGLU. However, even with its bureaucratic leadership, the point could not have been missed that a united workers' struggle was central to even reformist unionism. Moreover, the frequency with which simultaneous stoppages of work took place, even in the absence of a strong union to organize among the urban and rural workers, could have precipitated this decision to do something tangible among the sugar workers. Finally, the contradictions between the capitalists on one hand, and the urban and rural workers on the other, were clearly structurally linked - all the three major sugar companies were closely tied to the shipping facilities in Georgetown (Jagan 1954:20). Thus, in spite of the ethnic specialization of labor, the events of

1905, 1906, 1916, 1917 and 1924, offered possibilities for the development of class consciousness across ethnic lines. This was aborted by the increasingly important role played by the 'middle class' in the workers' struggles.

THE BUREAUCRATIC STRATUM AND THE LOWER STRATUM OF THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AND RACIAL POLITICS

Rivalry between the African 'middle class' and the Indian 'middle class' intensified after the mid-twenties. The very precarious position of the former, largely unrepresented in the commercial sector, made them particularly sensitive to the preservation of their numerical superiority in the local legislature. Limited though its influence was, because administrative and executive functions resided in the Executive Council, a body wholly subservient to the Governor, membership in the legislature provided access to a wide range of patronage. Consequently, the African 'middle class' took a very conservative position on matters relating to the expansion of the electorate (Reno 1964:9).

There were two principle reasons for their opposition to an increase in the franchise. A lifting of the literacy qualifications would have enfranchised a disproportionately larger number of Indians. As late as 1931, seventy-five per cent of them were still illiterate in English. Meanwhile, the elimination of property and income qualifications would have produced a popularization of the politcal process which could have attracted a number of candidates from the lower layer of

the bureaucratic stratum. Throughout the pre-World War I years and beyond, very few teachers and junior civil servants ventured into active politics for fear of victimization. As a result, they became dependent on those Africans and coloreds in the independent professions who were strategically placed to monopolize the elected seats in the legislature.

The literacy qualifications, in particular, hit the Indians hardest. In 1910, they comprised 188 out of 4,104 voters (4.6 percent). In 1915, as Table 23 indicates, while Indians made up 51.8 percent of the adult male population; only 0.6 percent of them were registered as voters and they constituted a mere 6.4 percent of the electorate. Only 6.8 percent of adult African males were registered as voters. However, they accounted for 62.7 percent of the electorate although only 42.3 percent of the total adult male population was African.

TABLE 23

RACE AND VOTE IN 1915

RACE	% OF EACH RACE IN ADULT MALE POPULATION	% OF EACH RACE IN TOTAL ELECTORATE	% OF ADULT MALES OF EACH REGISTERED AS VOTERS
INDIAN	51.8	6.4	0.6
AFRICAN	42.3	62.7	6.8
PORTUGUESE	2.9	11.4	17.7
BRITISH	1.7	17.0	46.1
CHINESE	0.9	2.4	12.3

SOURCE: Jagan 1972:297.

With these constitutional limitations, it is not surprising that the African 'middle class' was hardly inclined to organize among the working class. What was crucial to secure election to the legislature was support from Africans in the lower echelons of the bureaucratic stratum. The latter experienced blatant discrimination from the colonial state which practised racism when recruiting personnel for senior government positions. Commenting on the centrality of ascriptive criteria to mobility in the civil service in 1920s, Nath states:

> I speak from personal knowledge when I say that in the now defunct Immigration Department out of 14 or 15 members of the staff from the head of the department downwards, all of whom were either Europeans or fair-skinned Mulattoes, only one officer had passed the Senior Cambridge examination, the minimum qualification for entry into the Public Service at that time (i.e., in the 1920's). The regulations were not enforced, and anyone with the required color of the skin could have secured an appointment without any qualifications. As the Europeans withdrew, the Mulattoes took their places. Later the Negroes who were in the lower grade were also promoted (quoted in Jagan 1972:295-96).

It was in this context that African professionals in the legislature were able to exploit their access to the Governor and his monopoly over patronage to seek promotion or appointments for Africans in the lower layer of the bureaucratic stratum. This is how Lutchman describes the process:

> Patronage was at times dispensed by the Government to the elected members not in their own benefit, but in that of others though the two are somewhat difficult to separate. For example, it was'one of the most cherished privileges of the Electives....to obtain positions in Government service for their relatives or proteges.' At the time appointments were made not in accordance with any established system of merit, but the Government service was 'steeped in nepotism' and 'family or political influence invariably counts infinitely more than merit....if such persons have the necessary 'pull' they find little difficulty in securing a Government post...' The office of Elective placed the holders among those who qualified as 'pulls'. Closely related to the question of appointments was that of granting salary increases and pensions. This was another field in which there was no regular system, and increases were normally granted, not as a matter of right, but by the Government in its discretion. Consequently, it was not unusual for elected members to make representations on behalf of serving or retired Civil Servants, for increase of salaries or pensions (Lutchman 1971:43-44).

Lutchman adds that patronage 'sometimes took the form of engaging the services of the politicians in their professional capacities. It was, for instance, not unusual for Government to grant briefs to the politicians who were lawyers (Lutchman 1971: 44)'. Thus, the African 'middle class' politicians, lacking a base in the distributive trade,were able to achieve a great measure of economic progress and prestige by flirting with the colonial adminstrators[7] while using their access to patronage to placate the small electorate, drawn largely from the narrow lower layer of the bureaucratic stratum.

The perpetual struggle by the African 'middle class' to influence the orientation of the union movement must be seen in light of the precarious position of the African 'middle class'. The formation of the BGLU represented the first attempt to organize the working class in Guyana. The governor's granting of patronage was based on the assumption that the elected representatives were the principal point of contact with potential dissidents. The absence of genuine working class leadership gave the African 'middle class' elements the opportunity to re-assert their position of prominence in the legislature.

A certain capacity to dampen the militancy of the workers' movement could be used to extract greater patronage from the colonial administration. In the process, the African 'middle class' could use the fact that some Indians had experienced a meteoric rise in the distributive trade and rice production and the absence of Africans in these sectors to kindle fear in the minds of the masses of African workers and peasants. As Jagan points out:

> The weapon of these leaders was fear. They told the African electors that the Indians had not only become big landlords and businessmen but were also filling the professions, and if Africans did not support each other as a race they would soon lose the on only thing they had left - their jobs. They were opposed to universal adult suffrage without a literacy test - Africans were almost 100 percent literate.

> As a result of all this, the cause of the working class was not pursued militantly (Jagan 1954:43-44).

The reactionary political stance of the African 'middle class' produced an equally reactionary and racist response from the Indian 'middle class'. In spite of the latter's base in the distributive trade and increasingly in the independent professions, their lack of a political base severely limited their access to patronage. The feeling of isolation from the cultural mainstream was very strong. Edgar Mittelholzer has described the response of the African and colored 'middle class' to the Indian 'middle class'. He writes:

> It was my class which looked down upon the East Indian sugar plantation laborers ('coolies' we called them, whether they were laborers or eventually became doctors or barristers or Civil Servants). (Mittelholzer 1963:155)

The perception of the Indian 'middle class' was a reflection of the African 'middle class' precarious position in its desperate efforts to maintain its foothold in the bureaucracy. As Lutchman argues:

> .....they did not reject the dominant British values but embraced them with a fervor which even the Europeans could not surpass.....They were also in very keen competition with each other for opportunities to display their Britishness. Membership of the legislature provided one such opportunity and other forms of involvement with Government were frequently envisaged as means of gaining social recognition in the society. This was more necessary because in spite of the absence of any meaningful or significant cultural differences between them

> and the upper class, they were not afforded the same degree of social acceptance and difference as their white counterparts (Lutchman 1971:38).

Small wonder that the Indian 'middle class' turned inwards[8] in order to stake their claims to the patronage and privileges which were part of the colonial package, awarded to those who were seen to exert some influence locally and consequently were important to the colonial administration. Interestingly enough, the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA) was founded in 1919, shortly after the formation of the BGLU.

Four of the twelve articles in the constitution of the BGEIA related to the question of greater political 'representation' for the Indians. Moreover, these articles appear to have been designed specifically to get Indians to vote as a bloc.[9] It is significant that while they advocated a change in the interpretation of literacy to include those who 'can read and write their own languages', there was apparently no interest in abolishing the high property and income qualifications required for candidates as well as voters.[10] Like the African 'middle class', their Indian counterparts must have harbored a certain fear that a massive increase in the worker and peasant vote would have demanded more than paternalism. It would have entailed a degree of ideological clarity and an uncompromising struggle with the plantocracy. By severely limiting the franchise, the colonial administration was setting the stage for the blatant use of racism in local politics.[11] In 1923,

the membership was one hundred. Commenting on the composition and the political orientation of the BGEIA as late as the 1940's, Jagan could argue:

> Its leaders were mainly professional men, businessmen, landlords and rice millers who were not prepared to face or resolve the problems of ordinary Indians. Indian landlords were not willing to take up the cause of the exploited Indian.....the BGEIA saw its functions in middle-class terms - competition with the African middle class for positions and places (Jagan 1972:60).

Like the African 'middle class', their Indian counterparts used racism for personal gains. The latter, starting later in the quest for political honors, were able to use the BGEIA to advance what was a clear racist line. Two specific issues of considerable concern among the Indians were exploited. One was the comparatively narrow Indian electorate - they comprised 15.62 percent in 1922, while the Indian population was 41.75 percent of the total population. Of course, as we have pointed out, the literacy test debarred many from voting.

On the other issue, the under-representation of Indians in the civil service, the Indian 'middle class' were even more forthright in their racist appeals. As Jagan points out:

> The Indian politicians told Indian workers that only they could get the workers the Government job which were being denied them in favor of the Africans. But first, said the politicians, they must be elected to the Legislature Council (Jagan 1954:43).

Interestingly enough, in the General Elections of 1926, most of the African 'middle class' candidates elected to the legislature, were backed by the British Guiana Labor Union. It is safe to suggest that with many Indian candidates closely attached to the BGEIA, the African 'middle class' must have felt free to exploit African fears of Indians encroaching on their government job, in order to gain African votes.

It is significant that while a large part of the Indian 'middle class' turned to the BGEIA, many Africans attached to the BGLU founded organizations which catered specifically to the needs of a small section of the African community. In the 1920's, the Georgetown branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (affiliated to Garvey's movement)[12], the African Communities League and the Negro Progress Convention were founded. These were superseded by the League of Colored Peoples in the 1930's. Of the latter, Despres has written:

> When Dr. Denbow undertook the organization of the LCP, it was intended to be a multi-cultural association. However, given the existence of the BGEIA, it was not long before the League was reorganized '.....to promote the social, economic, educational, and political interests of the people of African descent' (Despres 1976:166).

Despres adds:

> In view of the fact that most of the trade unions, particularly the BGLU, more or less effectively represented the political as well as the economic interests of the African masses, the League had very little to do politically. As a consequence, during the forties it concentrated most of its attention on problems of welfare and cultural improvement among Africans in the urban areas (Despres 1967:166-167).

In fact, if the African 'middle class' used its connexions with the BGLU to actively prosecute its narrow political ambitions and also to attract the dispensers of patronage, the LCP was used to inculcate a deeper sense of 'African consciousness'. The latter was designed to blurr class differences between the agitated African workers and their 'middle class' leaders in the BGLU. So institutionalized was the practice that even Critchlow fell under the influence of the LCP.

A similar process was developing among the Indians. Capitalizing on the growing contradictions between the workers and the capitalists in the sugar industry, and exploiting the increasingly racist orientation of the BGLU, C.R. Jacob and Ayube Edun organized the oddly-named Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) in 1937. Both of them were prominent members of the BGEIA.

The MPCA soon became a formidable force in Guyanese politics. Between 1938 and 1943, its membership reached the 20,000 mark (Chase 1964:85). An overwhelming majority of these

members were Indian field workers on the sugar estates. Concentrated as these were on plantations owned by three major British multi-national corporations, Bookers being pre-eminent, there was a generalized perception of the connexion between their poverty, on one hand, and the companies' profits, on the other. As a result, union mobilization had the appearance of an exercise in mass mobilization.

Unfortunately, however, while the MPCA appeared as a truly traumatic development in workers' struggles in Guyana, its emergence exacerbated the already deplorable situation in the union movement. The small proportion of African workers on the plantations - approximately 15 percent - tended to give the MPCA an unusually strong Indian appearance. Moreover, the strong links between the leadership of the union and the exlusively-Indian BGEIA aggravated whatever apprehensions African workers had. In fact, in 1938, a few months after the founding of the MPCA, C.R. Jacob, a 'leading light in the Union', was elected president of the BGEIA (Ruhoman 1946:242).

In 1931, possibilities for class mobilization across ethnic lines received a serious setback with the formation of the British Guiana Workers' League. One of its primary tasks was the organizing of factory workers on the sugar estates. As the latter were predominantly African, the impression of an ethnic bias in the union movement was created (Chase 1964:80). This was reinforced by the League's opportunistic 'middle class' African leadership. The president from its formation to its cancellation on the 18th August, 1951 was A.A. Thorne. For years,

a member of the legislature, he had opposed Critchlow's early militancy within the BGLU. A confirmed egomaniac, his activities on the plantations could not have augured well for the development of unity between the field workers and the factory workers.

The 'middle class' Indian leadership of the MPCU soon demonstrated that like the leadership of the BGLU, they were interested primarily in personal aggrandizement rather than in utilizing the contradictions between the workers and the capitalists to build working-class unity.

In 1941, C.R. Jacob formed an off-shoot of the MPCA--The Guyana United Trade Union. It set itself the pretentious task of organizing 'all agricultural and other workers in every trade and industry in the colony'. One of its rules was that the President of the Union should be Mr. C.R. Jacob! When the registration of the union was cancelled a few years later, it ended with a deficit of $238.76 owing to C.R. Jacob and Sons (Chase 1964:113).

In 1942, the General Secretary of the MPCA was suspended by the President, Ayube Edun, for allegedly accepting a 'gift' from the organization which represented the interests of the capitalists. The letter, dated 6th November, 1942 read in part:

> I have protested against your receiving as a gift from the Sugar Producers' Association (SPA) - a 'Wallet File' and I asked you to return it to Mr. Bayley - you refused. I consider this kind of thing eventually leads to bribery like the kind to which Mr ------ yielded, and as

> General Secretary your action is detrimental to the trade union.... (quoted in Chase 1964:112).

Edun and Critchlow were nominated to the Legislature Council in 1943. Interestingly enough, Edun had himself accepted a payment of $480.00 per month for four years from the Sugar Producers' Association. Knowles points out that:

> ....worker confidence in the union received a severe set back from which it never fully recovered when it was learned that Edun was in the employ of the Sugar Producers' Association as an 'industrial advisor' (Knowles 1959:96).

Jagan's experiences as the treasurer of the MPCA in 1945-46, documents further the extent to which 'middle class' leadership of the union pursued their own class needs more vigorously than those of the workers. He writes:

> The union leadership was against me and I was removed from office at the end of one year. Pressure was bought to bear upon me because I objected firstly to high expense allowances from the funds of a poor union; and secondly, to the tendency of the union leadership to collaborate with the sugar planters. Actually the union had been already set on its course of becoming company-dominated....In 1945 ....at the bargaining table where I sat for brief intervals it could be seen clearly that the union leadership was not prepared to fight for the workers (Jagan 1972:61).

Working class unity could not possibly develop in this situation. In the late 1930's when the workers' standards of living fell disastrously, instead of building a strong workers' party, the 'middle class', in line with its class limitations

created a number of tiny unions, with overlapping jurisdictions. These unions were formed to support the personal ambitions of the union founders (Knowles 1959:92)[13]. The working class, divided as it was by a largely ethnic division of labor was very vulnerable to the corrupt, egocentric and racist leadership which the Indian and African 'middle class' provided.[14] By 1940, the pattern was set clearly - racial and cultural contradictions were assuming priority over the structural contradictions which were developing in the immediate pre and post-World War I period.

NOTES

1. After doing a number of odd jobs such as apprenticehip at the Demerara Foundry, cigar packing and bottle-washing, Critchlow entered the waterfront as a dock worker.

2. The Immigration Agent-General or the so-called Protector of Immigrants held the responsibility of ensuring that working and living conditions on the plantations met the statutory requirements. Apart from James Crosby (1858-80), who often challenged the planters as well as the Governor to improve the laborers' standard of living, most of the other IAGs were lackeys of the plantocracy. However, until the end of indentureship, the Indians could circumvent the IAGs. The latter were ostensibly their representatives. This paternalism militated against the development of indigenous leadership among the laborers.

3. Because of the strict capitalist relations between the workers and their employers, it is fair to assume that a clearer sense of class consciousness had developed among the urban proletariat by this time. The indentured laborers, on the other hand, recruited by non-market mechanisms with their capacity for action hedged in by statutory restraints, probably had a more generalized sense of their class position. Yet, structural contradictions were already having an impact at the superstructural level.

4. The concentration of workers in a small section of Georgetown was of tremendous help; the dissemination of information was a comparatively easy task. The rural laborers, however, were distributed among many plantations over a wide area.

5. The union initially many sections. These included sections for tailors, engineers, carpenters, coal-burners, farmers, stevedors, painters, East Indians (sic), boiler-makers, gold diggers and domestics. It was among the stevedores (water front workers) that its roots were firmest.

6. The Annual Report of the BGLU referred to the union's campaign for 'East Indians to be paid on an equal basis with other laboring people of other races in the Colony'. It also opposed piece-work on the sugar estates. The BGLU saw this as a form of labor which facilitated the appropriation of an unusually high surplus (Chase 1964:67).

7. The Opportunism of the African 'middle class' politicians had become so institutionalized in the 1920s and 30s, that Governors could, with confidence, write of its place in colonial political practices. As Lutchman points out:

> ....in 1920 the Governor reported to the Secretary of State for the Colonies that on occasions a significant number of members would absent themselves from the Council room before a division so as to ensure while not appearing to support the government, that its views prevailed (Lutchman: 1971:39).

Of course, this exercise pleased the dispensers of patronage enormously while it preserved a degree of credibility with the electorate.

8. Raymond Smith has made an interesting connexion between the African 'middle class' tendency to assert their sophistication over the Indian petty bourgeoisie because of the latter's commercial success, on one hand, and the Indians' efforts to assert their Indian identity, on the other. This is how his argument reads in part:

> In certain respects the decay of Indian culture was arrested because adherence to certain aspects of it became symbolic of the prestige of the more successful Indians who were not sufficiently educated or acculturated to be assimilated to the creole middle class (Smith 1962:110).

9. These were Articles 1,4,5 and 6. They read as follows:

> 1. To unite the members of the East Indian race in all parts of the colony for representative purposes.
>
> 4. To urge the amendment of the Political Constitution Ordinance so that East Indians, ignorant of English, but who can read and write their own languages, and with the necessary qualifications, may be able to exercise the franchise (emphasis added).
>
> 5. To secure representatives of East Indian nationality in the legislature and in all Corporations where the interests of East Indians are concerned or stand to be affected, every candidate selected, to

> a pledge, before hand, to protect and further the interests of the race, as far as it lies in his power (emphasis added).

6. To appoint members in various parts of the colony to report on East Indians eligible for registration as voters.

For a copy of the constitution of the BGEIA in its entirety, see Ruhoman 1946:228-29.

10. An overwhelming majority of the indentured laborers were literate in no Indian language as well as English. Without the abolition of property and income qualifications, the BGEIA's advocacy of an amendment to the interpretation of literacy did not constitute much. It would have enfranchised many of the Hindu priests ('Brahmins' they called themselves). And they were reactionary to the core.

11. See article 5 of the constitution of the BGEIA (above).

12. It is interesting that at the third anniversary celebration of the BGLU, Dr. Tobit and other representatives of the United Negro Improvement Association were in attendance (Chase 1964:60).

13. Mayer's comments on the mushrooming of unions in Fiji are instructive. He writes:

> This is due, not only to differences of policy, but also to rivalries between leaders, who formed unions as aids to their own political aspirations. The lack of a system of responsible local government made the leadership of, or support from, a trade union one of the few ways of giving political power and status in the Indo-Fijian community (Mayer 1963:108).

14. The following is one of the most penetrative accounts written on the political practices of the African 'middle class' in the Caribbean. Based on Professor Macmillan's observations of their practices in the mid-1930s, it would have needed no revisions with regard to the Guyanese 'middle class' of the inter-war years. He argued:

....far from threatening the overthrow of 'white civilization' the colored leaders of the Opposition (he is referring to the elected representatives as opposed to those nominated by the Governor) in Parliament are staunch supporters of the constitution which enabled them to reach their present station.....

The political state of the leading islands corresponds roughly to that of England about the time of the Reform Act of 1832, and the ideas of the small politically active section belong so much to that earlier age that it is difficult to get even colored political support for the economic reconstruction needed to safeguard the masses of people.... In all the West Indies the new middle class, with just and proper pride in its own progress, is apt to feel it sufficient that others are free to rise as it has done. Even some who would profess Socialism are at most old-fashioned Radicals, laying great stress on machinery and the importance of abstract 'rights'..... A class, with rather bourgeois interests of their own, they feel - sometimes with justification - that they themselves could govern the country as well or better than some of its present rulers. Though discontent is strong enough to win them support from among the rank-and-file they are inevitably individualists.....understandably ambitious themselves to share the fruits of office rather than to do battle for social and economic reconstruction (MacMillan 1938:60-61).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The domination of the Guyanese economy by British imperialist interests created a great divergence between resource use and domestic needs. As in all peripheral capitalist formations, the monopolization of local resources by a few multinational corporations engaged in monocultural production for the metropolitan market, resulted in very little of the surplus extracted being ploughed back into the local economy. Consequently, in Guyana, few linkages developed between the dominant capitalist sugar sector and those in which the local people had some control. Even when market conditions improved for the country's staple, the implications for the rest of the economy were rarely positive.

It is incontrovertible that the development of the plantations was achieved at the expense of the indigenous peasantry. Probably the most negative aspect of this process, however, was the uneven development of the peasantry, a feature which was inextricably intertwined with the history of the plantations. The virtual destruction of the African peasantry on one hand, and the measure of success achieved by the Indian peasantry, on the other, militated against the development of peasant consciousness. Instead, elements in the superstructure, namely, religion and race assumed a sharper prominence.

Meanwhile, the uneven process of development also tended to reinforce the ethnic division of labor among the workers. With their initiatives in agriculture aborted, Africans moved increasingly into urban wage labor. As a result, the urban proletariat was almost exclusively African. The rural proletariat was predominantly Indian. However, between 1905 and 1924, mounting contradictions between the capitalists and the workers in the urban as well as the rural areas, produced a spate of strikes and work stoppages. Their simultaneous occurrences in both areas gave the illusion of co-ordinated organizational efforts. This was hardly the case. They were, to a great extent, responses to the continual erosion of workers' living standards.

In the immediate pre and post-World War I years, the development of a united working-class trade union movement was possible. However, there was a marked paucity of genuine working-class leaders. This was soon obvious in the British Guiana Labor Union. Consequently, it devolved on the 'middle class' to provide union leadership.

Rivalries were rampant in the 'middle class'. The only channels of social mobility for the Africans were the lower layers of the bureaucratic stratum and, to a degree, the independent professions, especially law. African barristers held many of the elected seats in the legislature even before World War I. They had access to the patronage and privileges which the colonial administration could provide.

The Indian 'middle class' was largely unrepresented in the legislature before the early 1920's. However, their increasingly strong base in the distributive trade created a great deal of antagonism among the African 'middle class'. This was exacerbated by the rising Indian representation in the independent professions in the 1920's. Like their African counterparts, the Indian 'middle class' were fiercely interested in gaining political honors with its potential for access to the patronage and privileges of the colonial state.

It was in this context that workers' militancy was developing. A crucial task for the colonial state after the formation of the BGLU in 1919, was to dampen rising militancy among the rural as well as the urban workers. A way was opened for this. By bidding up theprice for patronage, the 'middle class' politicians were forced to expand their base. In the absence of indigenous working-class leadership, racism became the mechanism by which the potential unity of the working class was aborted.

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