Guyana Long Term Observation Group

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European Union Election Observation Mission

Guyana Elections, 19 March 2001

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1. Executive Summary

Elections in deeply divided societies will always be prone to dispute unless there is a broader political determination to reach accommodation across the ethnic and political divide. Guyana, sadly is no exception to this rule.

Although the 2001 General and Regional elections in Guyana broadly met the international standards for democratic elections. The legitimacy of the results and the administration of the elections remain largely suspect among significant sections of society.

Notwithstanding this point the management of these elections were prone to administrative mistakes, poor communication, consistently missed deadlines and unnecessary political interference. Furthermore some of these mistakes attracted considerable and justified criticism of the process. The most damaging of which concerned the publication of the official list of electors.

The inexplicable exclusion of an unspecified but significant number of people previously entered on the Revised Voters List fundamentally undermined confidence in the election process and administration. It is to be welcomed that Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) has committed themselves to an external audit of their computer systems and administrative procedures.

It is to the credit of the people of Guyana that they are unwilling to accept second best for their elections. If public confidence is to be regained then GECOM, the parties, Government and the media will need to work tirelessly to improve the electoral process. To that end the parties, both in parliament and outside will need to commit themselves to a fundamental review of the electoral process in consultation with GECOM. This will require greater political accommodation between the stakeholders than has been previously evident. The objective of such review should be to vastly improve the administration of elections such that the mistakes of these polls are not repeated in future.

The media in particular have an important role in elections. Sadly the publicly owned media failed to meet the challenge of providing news and information to the public on an impartial basis. Although privately owned media were generally better in meeting the standards of impartial newsgathering and dissemination, the chat show hosts acted irresponsibly and fostered ethnic division. Deepening the cleavages in Guyanese society is deeply irresponsible. In future the media should take far greater care to provide their readers, listeners and viewers with a far higher standard of information. In such a manner they too can improve public confidence in the election process.

This report makes a number of specific recommendations for the consideration of all stakeholders. It is hoped that they may be taken seriously.

Finally we would wish to place on record our gratitude to the members and staff of GECOM and the Permanent Election Secretariat for their forbearance and co-operation during the period of our deployment. We would also wish to thank the candidates, parties, civil society organisations and all those who provided freely of their time and assistance.

2. Introduction

The Guyana Long Term Observation Group was established in October 2000, on the assumption that the election would be held as scheduled on 15 January. The mission remained in country until 5 April 2001. It was

Mr. Simon Osborn (UK) was appointed as Observer Co-ordinator. He arrived in the country on 13 October. The other team members joined him during October and November.

The European Union Election Observation Mission represented a component within the Long Term Group as well as the provision of 29 Short Term Observers. Mr. Mark Stevens (UK), First Deputy Observer Co-ordinator of the Guyana Long Term Observer Group, assumed a second function as Head of the EU Observation Mission.

The Long Term Group further comprised a Deputy Observer Co-ordinator Logistics (Peru) and a Deputy Co-ordinator Media Monitoring (Slovakia). In addition six Long Term Observers (LTO) and two Medium Term Observers (MTO) were deployed between 15 October 2000 and 31 March 2001. LTOs were from: France, India, Indonesia, Nepal and South Africa (2) and the two MTOs were seconded by the Argentine based White Helmets Commission.

The European Union deployed a team of 29 Short Term Observers (STO), between 13-26 March. STOs were from: Germany (2), Austria (1), Belgium (4), Spain (2), Finland (1), France (2), Greece (2), Ireland (2), Italy (4), Portugal (1), Sweden (3) and United Kingdom (5).

The Long Term Group further supplemented the EU STOs, through the recruitment of 16 observers from among members of the international community already present in Guyana and four bilateral observers from the UK.

The following report is based on the collective findings of the Long Term and EU Election Observation Missions. The election day findings are based observation reports from 627 polling stations (33% of the total number). These reports also cover all ten regions of the country.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the representatives of the International Community in Guyana and the Government of Guyana and the Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) defined a set of international standards for elections taken from those outlined in the Copenhagen Document 1990 and related commitments[1]. A copy of the relevant section of the MoU is attached in Annex 1.

The Guyana Long Term Observation Group and the European Union Election Observation Mission would like to express their sincere thanks to the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), its Chairman Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Joe Singh and electoral officials all over the country for their full support and co-operation throughout the course of the observation.

The two missions would like to thank all political parties in the country, who welcomed the presence of observers and offered their full co-operation at all times. The two missions would also like to thank representatives of the international community, notably UNDP, the British High Commission, and the EC Delegation to Guyana, who supported the observation financially and who also offered their full support and co-operation.

[1] *Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, 29 June 1990.*

3. Political Background

Two major political parties have dominated political life in Guyana since the late fifties, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the People's National Congress (PNC). The PNC in alliance with The United Force (TUF) formed the first post independence Government after the departure of the British. The former remained in power for the whole of the seventies and eighties until the elections of 1992. During this time public confidence in the freedom and fairness of elections steadily deteriorated. Opposition parties, elements of civil society and overseas observers made numerous allegations of electoral malpractice and manipulation after each of the elections.

Following intense criticism of the 1985 elections the PNC Government led by President Hoyte instituted reform of the electoral process and relinquished control of the electoral machinery. The PPP, in an attempt to broaden its appeal to non Indo-Guyanese electors and demonstrate a break with its own political past, allied itself with a group of people from the business community and civil society under the title of PPP/Civic.

The 1992 elections bought about the first change in Government since 1964. Although international observers and others proclaimed the 1992 election as "free and fair", a minority of the electorate remained sceptical and Georgetown witnessed a number of demonstrations.

The 1997 elections also ended in allegations of irregularities and electoral malpractice, which sparked off numerous demonstrations. Unfortunately some of these protests degenerated into violence and civil disturbance. President Jagan of the PPP/Civic and former President Hoyte for the PNC finally bought peace to the country through the signing of the so-called Herdmanston Agreement.

The PPP/Civic gathers most of its support from the Indo-Guyanese community whilst the PNC is largely supported by the Afro-Guyanese. As a result commentators have often described Guyanese elections as an "ethnic census". Although both major parties can claim "crossover" support from all the communities that make up Guyana, they are numerically small.

A number of so-called third parties have from time to time risen to challenge one or other of the larger parties' support either within a community or attempted to secure cross community appeal. However few have in the past succeeded in winning substantial support. Consequently even by 1997 almost 96% of the electorate voted for one or other of the major parties.

Under the current constitutional arrangements the nominee of the largest party wins the Presidency, which under the 1980 constitution has considerable executive power. With exception of 1964 the largest party in each of the elections secured a majority in Parliament. Unless forced into coalition or co-habitation by a split in the vote, the largest party in 2001 was likely to win political control of both the National Assembly and the Presidency.

Critics of the system pointed out that the prize of almost unlimited political power under the Guyanese constitution coupled with a nation that is deeply divided on ethnic grounds when it comes to politics could be a recipe for conflict. Although this has not come about in the past it was certainly true that supporters of the loosing side *could feel* excluded from decision making in their own country.

This was the backdrop to the 2001 National and Regional elections in Guyana. A history of disputed elections, a winner takes all system and politically a nation divided between two ethnic communities.

3.1 The CARICOM Electoral Audit and the Herdmanston Agreement

In the wake of violence on the streets of Georgetown, CARICOM dispatched a goodwill mission to Guyana in January 1998. On 17 January the CARICOM Mission brokered an agreement between the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/Civic) and the People's National Congress (PNC). This has become known as the Herdmanston Agreement, under which the parties to the agreement committed themselves to political dialogue, an external CARICOM audit of the election results and constitutional reform. The purpose of the agreement was to reduce conflict and bring about a level of normality. As a consequence the PPP/Civic government agreed to prematurely end its term in office on 17 January 2001.

In March the CARICOM audit team met with all stakeholders and audited the ballot boxes, statements of poll (SOP) and associated documentation. In conclusion the CARICOM audit stated:

"..evidence of many procedural omissions, irregularities and systematic difficulties was found and it is clear that these provided the basis for suspicion….The Auditors examined and recorded the information in a systematic process and although rejected ballots were revisited and awarded, no significant difference in result of the count was found."

3.2 The Court Decision of 15 January 2001 on the Validity of the 1997 Elections

The CARICOM Audit did not however satisfy all sides and in 1998 Esther Pereira, a PNC supporter, petitioned the High Court to set aside the results of the 1997. Her petition was made on the grounds that the election was "unlawfully conducted and/or the results of that election (if unlawfully conducted) was affected or may have been affected by unlawful acts or omissions".

The court took three years following the submission of evidence and hundreds of affidavits and witnessed statements to conclude that the elections of 1997 were "vitiated[2]". In particular Justice Claudette Singh found that the requirement for voters to have a Voter ID card in 1997 was *ultra vires* Articles 59 and 159 of the Constitution (despite a parliamentary agreement to use the cards). Consequently the elections were therefore null and void.

Although many witnesses had attested to numerous irregular practices Justice Claudette Singh concluded:

*"Although I view these flaws (irregularities and illegalities) as massive". [*I am] *"unable to hold that illegal voting by persons who were not registered and were without voter ID cards would have per se affected the results of the elections"*.

Clearly this judgement had implications for the status of government[3] and the court was asked to rule on this issue too.

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[2] Justice Claudette Singh in her oral presentation concluded that the elections were "vitiated" although her written judgement simply declares that "the 1997 elections were not conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act Chapter 1:03 and articles 59 and 159 of the Constitution of Guyana". 15 January 2001.

[3] It also necessitated a rapidly introduced Constitutional amendment to protect the legality of the use of ID Cards for the 2001 elections.

3.3 Delay of the Election and Limitations on Government

Under the Herdmanston Agreement the government's shortened mandate should have ended on 17 January, following new elections scheduled for 15 January. On Monday 13 November the GECOM concluded that they were unable to meet the requirement of an acceptable election by 15 January and decided to postpone polling. Once GECOM announced it was not technically prepared to hold the elections on 15 January the burning political question was what happens to government in the interim period.

On 16 November former President Hoyte, leader of PNC/Reform asked his supporters "Will it be business as usual after 17th January? Are you prepared to let them *(the PPP/Civic Government)* function? Are you ready to take the necessary action?" at his Party's rally in the Square of the Revolution, Georgetown. Against this background of growing tension the leaders of the four parliamentary parties met with President Jagdeo on 7 December 2000. At this meeting the parties agreed to set Monday 19 March 2001 as the new date for polling day and to refer the matter of governance after 17 January for "further discussion" to an All-Party committee.

The All-Party Committee failed to resolve the impasse between the Government's position of wanting to maintain the status quo with some voluntary limitations on the activities of government, and the opposition demand for either more substantive and legislated-for limitations, a shrinking of government or ultimately the imposition of an interim government.

The resolution of Esher Pereira's election petition effectively settled the issue. The court stating that in order to uphold the rule of law, prevent the creation of a legal vacuum with grave consequential chaos and in the interests of effective government, the President and his Cabinet, as presently constituted, should continue to perform their respective functions of office, not under virtue of declared unlawful elections but "under virtue of the order of the court"[4].

In addition, the court placed a series of limitations upon the government, namely that: no legislation shall be introduced in parliament except those required for the proper and timely holding of elections and in accordance with Herdmanston Accord; no substantial contracts for the execution of public works, without permission of courts; state owned media shall only be used for election purposes through paid advertisements.

This final, legal if not political, resolution of the 1997 elections effectively formed the backdrop to the start of the 2001 political campaign, but raises some interesting questions regarding restrictions on government during an election period. Some points regarding the court ruling and good practice need to be highlighted.

The court ruling that: "state owned media shall only be used for election purposes through paid advertising" was not clear in its intended meaning. It is usual for state media to cover an election campaign in its news broadcasts, to facilitate the holding of debates between candidates, to broadcast discussion programmes and to possibly provide free airtime to all parties. The important stipulation for state media should be that any and all election coverage must be impartial and afford all parties equal opportunity.

Formal limitations on the role of government during an election period are appropriate, and often importantly include a prohibition on the use of state resources of government offices for election campaigning. In the context of Guyana, the use of a voluntary set of limitations by government does not serve necessarily to ensure adherence by the government or create confidence among the opposition.

[4] *Remedial Order, 2 February 2001.*

In the final analysis the court's judgement confirmed the PNC's view that the 1997 elections were massively flawed and the PPP/Civic's view that the election was declared null and void on the "technicality" and should not require the Government to resign. However for many citizens it left them confused – how could a government remain in power if the election had been declared null and void or how could an election be declared null and void when all the party's had agreed to the use of a voter ID card?

4. Legislative Framework

The legal framework for 2001 General and Regional elections was based principally on the Constitution (1980), the National Registration Act (1967), the Representation of the People Act (1964), the Local Democratic Organs Act (1980) and National Assembly (Validity of Elections) Act (1964). As in many Commonwealth countries much of Guyana's electoral legislation has been adapted from UK statute.

4.1 Representation of the People Act

Various Governments since 1964 have amended the Representation of the People Act at least nineteen occasions the last of which was made on 13 February 2001 by the outgoing PPP/Civic Government just prior to the dissolution of the National Assembly. Much of the changes since reflect the three changes in the system of election, the formation and establishment of an election commission, the end of overseas voting, and counting and declaration of results at the place of poll. Although many of these developments are to be welcomed the legislation still reflects the piecemeal nature of the reforms enacted, often in response to specific criticism. The consequential impact of such change has been a bewildering number of amendments, which do not always match the requirements of other parts of the law. For example, results are now posted at the place of poll but there seems to be no mandatory system to ensure that agents can monitor the tabulation of those results at each stage of the tabulation either of preliminary or official results. Given the level of suspicion surrounding the electoral process it would seem wise to ensure that there is comprehensive transparency at all times during the counting and tabulation process.

There is an obvious need to consolidate the Representation of the People Act following a thorough review to ensure that the law meets the requirements of the new system and vice versa. Such a review should attend to the conflicting nature of specific parts of legislation and, once addressed, these changes should be incorporated into a consolidated Representation of the People Act.

4.2 National Registration Act

The National Registration Act envisages periodic enumeration of electors and a period of claims and objections prior to an election. Consequent changes to the Preliminary Voters List need to be incorporated into a Revised Voters List, which is open for inspection to the public for a period of 21 days. Once amended GECOM should produce an Official List of Electors. The Act lays down in substantial detail the means by which changes can be made to the voters' lists. The latest and most significant change to the Act (Regulation No.5 of 2000) came about as result of queries over the size of the Preliminary Voters List in 2000. This regulation was later incorporated into statute by the Election Laws (Amendment) Act 2000 and given constitutional protection through Constitutional (Amendment) No. 1 of 2001. This legislation provided GECOM with substantial powers to remove names from the voters list who had had failed to be photographed for the new National ID card but had not been objected to through the normal process. This change although deemed necessary by the

National Assembly radically altered the thrust of the original legislation, which required individuals to make objections to a person's entry on the Preliminary Voters' List and for the objector to provide proof of their objection at a hearing. This amendment in itself was recognition of the failure of the normal process of claims and objections to "clean" the voters' lists.

GECOM's new powers in this respect will need to be reviewed in the light of experience and with a view to future elections. For example, once all ID cards have been distributed the problems of deleting names of people who have emigrated or died still needs to be addressed. Currently the data provided by relevant authorities does not seem to reflect reality. If, as is suggested below, that GECOM established permanent registration offices in the ten administrative regions who would have responsibility for an annual updating of the register or even a rolling register then there will need to be substantial revision to the National Registration Act.

Even if these suggestions are not accepted there is a need to make sweeping changes to subsidiary legislation to ensure that registration of electors and the process claims and objections is far less bureaucratic and far more "user friendly". Currently the fifteen different forms for these procedures are listed in the subsidiary legislation. They are complicated and each claim can generate anything up three or four forms. This alone provides ample opportunity for human error either in the field or during encoding. The National Assembly may wish to amend the Act, given the experience of these elections, to empower GECOM to determine the content and number of forms required.

4.3 Codes of Conduct

GECOM produced two codes of conduct during the election period, neither of which was enforceable. The first was a Code of Conduct for the Media. In the absence of fair and reasonable Broadcasting legislation this was a commendable effort by GECOM and its advisors to try a get agreement across the media to maintain standards of accuracy, impartiality and balance. However the media code relied almost exclusively on moral suasion and as such did not deter some media houses (see section on the media below). The electronic media, in particular, will continue to grow as the pre-eminent source of information for electors. Consequently the new Government, in conjunction with the other Parliamentary Parties and media houses, should bring forward Broadcasting legislation which would provide for impartial news and current affairs broadcasting.

The second code of conduct – The Electoral Code of Conduct For Political Parties – drawn up by GECOM hoped to encourage Parties, their candidates and supporters to contribute to an atmosphere which would enable the electorate to exercise their franchise free from fear, intimidation or racial intolerance. GECOM had hoped that such a code would have been included in the statutory provisions. This was not the case and GECOM decided to published and circulate a revised version of the 1997 Code of Conduct to the parties less than two weeks prior to polling day. Once again this code relied heavily on voluntary restraint and moral suasion. At least one Party refused to sign it, arguing the code was late and had already been breached by other Parties. During the course of the Christmas period the parliamentary parties had engaged in all party talks on the issue of Governance in the run up to 17 January (the Herdmanston Accord deadline for polling day). Eventually the discussion centred on the Model Code of Conduct issued by the Indian Election Commission. This code provides for substantial restraint of the activities of parties, candidates and government Ministers. The key aspect to the code is not in its content it is that the Indian Election Commission has power to enforce the code and can issue sanctions if they believe it has been broken. If a Code of Conduct, either along the lines of the existing Guyanese model or the one used in India (or any other country), is to be provided for in legislation consideration will have to given to whom will enforce it and what sanctions would be available. For example

should GECOM be given the power to enforce a Code of Conduct or should it be the courts or some form of special election tribunal?

To some degree precedent could be set by the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2000 (No. 17 of 2000). In effect this legislation offers parties alternative to courts in the resolution of disputes without prejudice to their right to go to court. It prohibits any person or political Party from causing racial or ethnic violence or hatred. Such cases could be bought before the Ethnic Relations Commission, and if it found that a Party has been complicit in encouraging ethnic hatred or violence then the Ethnic Relations Commission could require GECOM to refuse nominations from that Party's list of candidates for five years. However this legislation remains largely declaratory until the Ethnic Relations Commission (and the Tribunal) has been appointed.

In conclusion there is a need to review and consolidate the electoral framework in the light of these elections and to provide legislative framework for Broadcasting and the conduct of Government, Ministers, Parties, candidates and supporters during an election period.

5. Electoral System

The Herdmanston Accord particularly called for cross party agreement on constitutional reform. Certainly some commentators and parties felt that these elections were premature given that the constitutional reform process remained unfinished business and had not addressed the fundamental flaws of the "winner takes all" system of government. It is not the remit of this report to deal with these issues in any depth, albeit to say that, observers witnessed numerous calls from across the political spectrum for *"inclusive governance"* and even power sharing in the immediate aftermath of the election period.

The electoral system was the subject of significant cross examination and discussion. Eventually the parties agreed to a reformed system which included "an element of geographic and gender representation". Previously only 53 of the 65 members of the National Assembly were directly elected, the remaining twelve were indirectly elected.

5.1 Overview of New System

Under the new system, eventually adopted after amending the Constitution and Representation of the People Act[5] in November, all members were to be directly elected. Twenty five to be elected from the ten geographic constituencies (equivalent to the ten administrative regions of the country) and the remaining forty elected from a national "top up" list to guarantee a very high degree of proportionality. The changes also envisage any party contesting seats for the National Assembly must nominate validly candidates in six of the ten geographic constituencies or for thirteen of the twenty five constituency seats. Furthermore a third of the candidates validly nominate must be women. On 13 February 2001 the National Assembly conscious of the need to ensure the constitutional requirement of proportionality further amended the Representation of the People Act and Constitution[6] to allow the National Assembly to have *"at least 65 (members)"* and allow GECOM to allocate "overhang seats" if required. Overhang seats would be required if a party won a disproportional number of constituency seats thereby giving it an advantage over the other parties. In these circumstances GECOM would award overhang seats to the national top up to ensure that the advantage was removed.

[5] *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 3) Act 2000 and Election Laws (Amendment) Act No. 15 2000.*
[6] *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 1) Act 2001 and Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2001.*

Unlike other similar systems in use around the world where voters have two votes – one for the candidates contesting the constituency and one for the parties contesting for national top up votes – the Guyanese electorate had only have one vote. This vote counted towards both the regional and national allocation of seats in the parliament and for presidential candidates. Thus any party that had not validly nominated candidates for all ten constituencies would be disadvantaged as voters in a region not contested by them could not vote for them even though they had validly nominated candidates for the national top up list and president. These candidates if elected obviously do not represent a geographical area but have a mandate to represent the interests of electors throughout the whole nation. By not allowing electors the opportunity to vote for a party's national top up list and consequently their presidential candidate unfairly restricted their freedom of choice.

5.2 Gender Representation

The legal requirement for parties to nominate women as one third of their candidates aimed to improve representation of women. However the new laws did not require the parties to appoint women as one third of their winning candidates. Despite this legal lacunae the parties did appoint large numbers of women as MPs (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Women MPs in the National Assembly

Party	Women MPs	Total No. of MPs	% of Women MPs
GAP/WPA	2	2	100%
PNC/Reform	10	27	37%
PPP/Civic	8	34	24%
ROAR	0	1	0%
TUF	0	1	0%
Total	20	65	31%

This marks a dramatic rise in the number of women members elected up from 19% in the old National Assembly to 31% in the new one and places the Guyana National Assembly at the upper end of the scale worldwide in terms of women's representation in parliament. For example, according to the most recent statistics for the Americas Guyana is now far in advance of the hemispheric average of 13.5%[7]. Although it falls short of the ambitious constitutional requirement[8] that the number of women represented in the National Assembly should be equivalent to the proportion of women in the electorate.

5.3 Allocation of Seats for Geographical Constituencies

The most contentious part of the system remains the allocation of seats per geographic constituency. The allocation of one seat for the large sparsely populated hinterland regions 8 and 9 was particularly contentious and caused the PNC/Reform parliamentarians to walk out of the chamber in protest at its passing. The Opposition's contention was that it would be extremely difficult for a single member to represent and service such sparsely populated regions. The Government's argument was that the awarding of two seats to each would unfairly reduce representation for the more populated coastal regions.

The original allocation of seats was made on the basis of the statistics available at the time. The number of registered voters on the Official List of Electors would indicate that the original data was not as accurate as had been hoped. Any more proportional allocation of seats per region based either on population or registered voters would give far more seats to

[7] *Statistics from the Inter-Parliamentary Union provided by National Parliaments as of 1 January 1998.*
[8] *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 3) Act 2000.*

Region 4 (anything between 10 and 11 seats) to the disadvantage of the hinterland. Thus the minimum allocation of seats is largely a matter of choice, particularly as the parties' overall allocation of seats are determined by their national proportion of votes. There is no international standard on this matter, although in most cases countries err on the side of favouring the sparsely populated areas.

This electoral system was intended as a transitional arrangement. Its detractors claim that the element of geographic representation does not go far enough in identifying candidates with constituencies nor does the gender representation guarantee a specific proportion of women in the National Assembly. It does, however ensure a high degree of proportionality thereby ensuring that parties are reasonably fairly represented. To that degree the system does ameliorate the effect of ethnic voting far more than a less proportional system such as the "first past the post" system in place in a number of other Caribbean and Commonwealth countries. It will not however change the way people vote or the choices they make.

6. Electoral Administration

The electoral administration is headed by a six person election commission – GECOM – and backed by a small core staff in the election secretariat/national registration centre and supplemented by thousands of temporary staff during the highly labour intensive periods for "claims and objections" and polling day.

6.1 Composition and Functions of GECOM

The Guyana Election Commission (GECOM) sets policy for voter registration, maintenance of voters' lists and the administration of elections within the legislative framework, whilst the Permanent Election Secretariat (PES) implements the policy under the supervision of the Chief Elections Officer (CEO). The PES also performs the tasks of the National Registration Centre under the National Registration Act and the CEO acts as the National Commissioner for Registration. The National Registration Centre has responsibility for the registration of electors and maintenance of the registers whereas the PES has responsibility for administering the elections.

GECOM is constitutionally obliged to act with impartiality and fairness in the execution of its duties (Constitution Art. 162 (1) [b]). Until recently GECOM was a temporary institution constituted prior to an election. In May 2000 President Bharrat Jagdeo appointed a new commission following nominations from the Leader of the Opposition, former President Desmond Hoyte, and from the governing PPP/Civic. This commission, unlike earlier ones, is intended to be a permanent commission appointed for a five year term.

The Chairman, Major General (ret'd) Joe Singh and three members (two PNC and one member for the "minority" parliamentary parties), were nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and three by the governing PPP/Civic and appointed by the President in accordance with the so-called "Carter formula". It seems that the intention of the framers of the formula was to create confidence in the electoral process by allowing the Opposition parties the right to nominate a majority of the commissioners.

GECOM was committed to maximum transparency and accountability. To that end it agreed a policy often described by the Chairman as the three Cs – Confidence Building, Consultation and Collaboration. In addition to regular statutory meetings of the all-party commission, GECOM and the PES would hold bilateral meetings with the parties. To that end senior staff from the PES and the Chairman held regular consultative meetings with the

chief scrutineers of all 22 parties that had indicated they might contest the elections during the period of "claims and objections". Furthermore the Statutory Officer made himself available to all parties in the month prior to nomination day to ensure they were fully informed of regulations.

There is no question that any of the commissioners acted improperly or made decisions that were intended to hinder administratively the activities of one party or another. Furthermore the observer missions found no conclusive evidence that indicated that the election administration actively attempted to hinder a party. In fact all evidence gathered was to the contrary and despite GECOM's statutory and constitutional responsibility to act impartially and its multi-party composition the parties still remained highly suspicious of the process throughout.

It is therefore reasonable to ask whether the so-called "Carter formula" has actually succeeded in fostering greater trust and confidence in the electoral administration. There may be a strong argument to suggest that GECOM should be freed from the pervasive intrusion of the parties in the election administration (see section 6.2 below). The latter, after all, have a vested interest in the outcome of the election and their interests may reasonably affected their desire to influence the administration of elections. Whether a new formula that requires parties to nominate persons who must relinquish all contacts and positions within their parties or whether the nomination of persons independent from the parties by other institutions should be considered is a matter for the new National Assembly to decide. What is certain is that the current system of substantial political party influence over the administration of elections has failed to foster trust and confidence in the system. Perhaps a more independent and professional body, whilst open and transparent, may be able to administer elections more easily and to the satisfaction of the contesting parties?

6.2 Staffing and Administration of PES/NRC

The PES/NRC suffered from numerous problems, many of which were outside the control of PES/NRC staff. These included: the loss of the Chief Executive Officer, delays in appointment of key staff at both national and regional level, a lack of suitably qualified staff, a much reduced period to prepare for elections, poor internal and external communications, stakeholder suspicion, and poor planning.

The Mr. Stanley Singh, the Chief Elections Officer/National Commissioner for Registration, headed the PES/NRC. Unfortunately Mr. Singh, who retained the respect of his colleagues and most stakeholders, had a stroke in mid September. The loss of the CEO/NCR at this juncture was personally devastating to him and placed an even heavier burden on the over stretched staff of the PES. Sadly Mr. Singh was unable to return to active service.

The burden of leadership of the PES/NRC fell on the shoulders of the Deputy Chief Elections Officer (Administration), Mr. Gocool Boodoo, who was eventually sworn in as Chief Elections Officer (Acting) in late January. However no person replaced him as DCEO (Admin).

The PES further suffered from delays in the appointment of staff at both national and regional level. The latter became chronic in the run up to polling day, particularly in District 4, Demerara – Mahaica. At the national level the PES/NRC lacked sufficient high quality senior staff. Consequently the seven senior staff had to "double up" in their duties. For example the Training Officer was appointed after the core trainers had been appointed and near the end of the development of the manuals. Further she was given almost negligible induction and had not previously been involved in elections. The Voter Education Officer was not appointed until the first few weeks of January just under two months after the new electoral system had

been passed by the National Assembly. Furthermore, although highly qualified the appointee had no previous experience of voter education campaigns and was only a part time appointment. GECOM's press office was never fully functioning and the Chief Press Officer declined to extend her contract only weeks before polling day.

The time available for preparation for this election was considerably shorter than 1997. The 1997 commission had two years to prepare for elections, this time GECOM had only eight months (later extended to ten). Furthermore GECOM tried to do more in the time available than it attempted to do in 1997. For example the GECOM Field Test Exercise and the production of a Revised Voters List were completely unscheduled. The decision to proceed with the production of a new National ID card was not made until 21 September 2000, leaving only weeks to prepare for the photographing of over 516,000 people listed on the Preliminary Voters List. None of these key events were originally scheduled. All of these tasks had to be undertaken by an organisation, which was recruiting its own staff as it went along. It was hardly surprising therefore that the senior staff were required effectively to engage in crisis management from October 2000 onwards leaving little time for organisational development and forward planning. The pressure of the moment always precluded consideration of issues some months away.

Communications under these circumstances became strained both between departments in the PES/NRC and between the centre and the regions. Staff attended endless meetings, which were often repetitive, dealing with the current crisis whilst other departments waited for instructions. For example in February the production of ID cards became stalled for a number of days whilst both the Operations department and Information Systems department held crisis meetings to find a solution. The problem was that master registration cards needed to be batched according to division and supplied to ID production in that order. ID production then needed to follow that order to ensure that the ID cards could be batched according to division (ID Cards did not have a divisional identification number). In the meantime the regional offices and stakeholders had identified a growing number of significant flaws in the Revised Voters List. Under such circumstances the plans for polling day logistics and return of materials after polling day (less than six weeks away) could not be addressed.

Communications were dealt a further blow by the inordinate delay in the procurement of equipment for Returning Officers' offices. The Returning Officers were formally appointed in the beginning of January. The telephones, faxes, computers and filling cabinets for their offices were only finally delivered three weeks before polling day! At one stage the lack of communications equipment became almost comic. In February GECOM requested Returning Officers to fax back returns from their enquiries into the Revised Voters List only to be told that no fax machines were available and those that were had no manual of instruction and could not be set up! Filling systems were non-existent throughout as were filling cabinets! Consequently many Returning Officers had to make the best of it under particularly trying circumstances, much of which was outside their control.

Time, lack of resources, poor forward planning, endless meetings and lack of qualified staff available placed an almost impossible burden on senior staff in the PES/NRC. It is therefore hardly surprising that mistakes occurred and deadlines were missed. Given these circumstances it is remarkable how well polling day went.

6.3 Administration and Staffing of Regional Offices and Polling Stations

The recruitment, selection and training of staff for regional offices and polling stations became one of the most problematic issues as key stakeholders involvement became more and more pervasive and politically charged.

Ten Registrars were recruited and selected for the claims and objections period and the photographic exercise. Of the ten Registrars seven were appointed in January as Returning Officers. Under the Registrars were the Deputy Registrars and Divisional Registrars each of whom had a small staff of clerical assistants and clerks. In most pasts of the country a Deputy Registrar would have only a small and manageable number of Divisional Registrars to supervise. This was not the case in Region 4, the most highly populated region in the country with almost half the country's electorate. The region clearly was understaffed during this period (regional office staffing levels were doubled in advance of the elections) as there was substantial signs of staff struggling to meet deadlines. This does not however excuse some of the problems that were evident (see chapter 7 below).

Recruitment of staff was through a complex system of application, followed by training and assessment, leading to recommendations for appointment. In theory those appointed should have been the persons who attended the training, passed the assessment, were locally based and had some level of experience of elections. Obviously those recommended for higher positions would reasonably be expected to do better in the assessment and have more experience. Those recommended for appointment would then formally be required to be appointed by GECOM (not the Returning Officer or Registrar). In practice this meritocratic system was severely compromised. It should be noted that there is no requirement for GECOM to follow any guidelines for equal opportunities or to monitor the applications and appointments of staff.

The Observer missions were too late to directly observe the training and recruitment of registration staff although we did monitor their application of the process (see Chapter 7 below). However the missions were in place to observe the training and recruitment of all staff for the so-called second phase leading up to polling day.

Originally GECOM planned to have 60 core trainers who would be deployed throughout the country to train polling station staff. These trainers were involved in the development of the *Official Manual for Returning Officers and Other District Staff* and the *Manual for Presiding Officers & Other Polling Day Officials* and devising course materials and curriculum. However the original plan to have a relatively small group of highly trained core trainers was ditched for a new concept of "community training". Community training required the training, evaluation and recruitment of another 300 regional trainers and an additional layer in the cascade.

On 15-16 December 2000 approximately 210 applicants for Regional Trainers attended training at St Joseph's High School, Georgetown. Observers at the training were dismayed to see; poor preparation, conflicting information given out particularly over the disciplined services and conflict between core trainers. The mission later discovered that the evaluation test set by the National Centre for Education Research and Development (NCERD) had not been checked and some of the multiple-choice questions had multiple answers!

A further set of training was initially set for 27-29 December 2000, however this was postponed until the weekend of 5-8 January 2001. Training was made available to applicants for Returning Officers, Election Clerks, Deputy Returning Officers, Clerical Assistants and Regional Trainers. Approximately 500 applicants turned up for RO, EC, DRO and Clerical Assistants training and 220 for the Regional Trainers training. This time the GECOM Trainers were far better prepared and equipped to provide better quality training. Although the Returning Officers' and other District Staff Manuals were available there was a shortage of Presiding Officers' manuals.

Training for polling station staff applicants was scheduled to commence on the Monday 9 January. Unfortunately many of the regional trainers who were trained on the weekend of 7-8 were unaware of the need to be available the following week and their employers could not release many for the full week. Equally many of the applicants for polling station staff (some

8,400 had sent in written applications) had received neither a letter of acknowledgement nor notice of the training days. Furthermore many of those who were to attend could not be released for a full five days. Consequently no region in the whole country met its required quota for training. On the first day of training as few as half of the required quota turned out for training in Region 4.

Furthermore no manuals were available in Region 4,5,and 6 and trainees in Regions 3 and 10 had to share a limited number of manuals. This obviously affected the morale of those doing the training and those attending and seriously hampered the whole training programme for thousands of prospective polling station staff. Observers noted that manuals for all trainees in Regions 3,4,5,6 and 10 were only available from Thursday 12 January. Participants in these regions would clearly suffer from this disadvantage when it came to the evaluation thus GECOM allowed training in 4,5 and 6 to be extended by an additional day.

It was clear to observers that the chaos of the first few days was due to lack of forward planning, mismanagement in the field and delay in arrival of manuals all of which seriously undermined confidence in the process among prospective staff. Despite the best efforts of some excellent trainers the training that week was a shambles.

If the quality of the training in some regions was cause for concern the numbers attending was even more troubling. No region in the country reported a full compliment of the numbers required by GECOM to staff the country's 1,844 polling stations[9]. GECOM moved to make up the shortfall by scheduling extra training sessions for the weekends on 19 & 20 and 26 & 27 January. Thankfully these sessions were better equipped and all those attending were given a manual. Many of those attending the sessions on 26 & 27 January had failed the evaluation test and had been invited for 'revision' training.

TABLE 2: Comparison with Number of Election Staff Required with Number of Applicants Trained, 20 January 2001.

Region		DRO	EC	CA	PO	APO	PC	BC	RT	TOTALS
1.	Required	3	3	3	65	65	130	65	N/A	334
1.	Trained	3	6	4	**34**	**40**	**29**	**9**	19	**144**
2.	Required	6	6	5	113	113	226	113	N/A	478
2.	Trained	**4**	15	11	142	154	240	**41**	47	654
3.	Required	15	22	14	254	254	508	254	N/A	1610
3.	Trained	15	39	21	378	426	454	**73**	72	1478
4.	Required	31	25	20	723	723	1446	723	N/A	4698
4.	Trained	44	69	42	1195	1395	**1196**	**414**	162	**4517**
5.	Required	10	10	9	116	116	232	116	N/A	609
5.	Trained	12	18	16	171	219	294	**85**	46	861
6.	Required	15	7	10	305	305	610	305	N/A	1557
6.	Trained	24	21	13	**208**	**226**	**253**	**51**	54	**850**
7.	Required	5	6	5	72	72	144	72	N/A	376
7.	Trained	6	8	5	**60**	**62**	**86**	**43**	15	**285**
8.	Required	6	6	6	41	41	82	41	N/A	223
8.	Trained	**5**	5	6	**33**	**10**	**11**	**2**	10	**82**
9.	Required	5	8	N/A	58	58	116	58	N/A	303
9.	Trained	5	8	6	70	**51**	**51**	**26**	33	**250**
10.	Required	4	3	N/A	81	81	162	81	N/A	412
10.	Trained	9	12	9	128	171	241	**55**	43	668
Total required		100	96	N/A	1828	1828	3656	1828	N/A	9408 (+)
Total trained		127	201	133	2419	2754	2855	799	501	9790

[9] *This was the number of polling stations chosen for recruitment purposes, in fact the final number was 1,894.*

District Level Staff: DRO – Deputy Returning Officer, EC – Elections Clerk, CA – Clerical Assistant, RT – Regional Trainers. Polling Station Staff: PO – Presiding Officer, APO – Assistant Presiding Officer, PC – Polling Clerks, BC – Ballot Clerk. Data Source: GECOM Training Department & Logistics Department.

Subsequent training in all ten regions was meant to address the shortfall in numbers. GECOM's target figures (quota) for trainees envisage a safety margin to include reserves and plus 20%. The latter should take account of the predicted failure rate. On 21 January a total of 1,995 persons sat the evaluation test and on 28 January a further 3,118 trainees were tested. Observers noted that just over a third of the persons trained in Georgetown on 27 January were new applicants, the rest were revision trainees (in other words those who had failed or received low mark but might be considered for appointment if their mark improved).

Clearly GECOM has found it more difficult to recruit and train polling station staff for this election. Our analysis of GECOM's figures indicates that they barely have sufficient poll workers to staff 1,844 polling stations and information centres on polling day. If, however, substantial numbers of participants fail the evaluation test or cannot be released for the refresher courses set for the six successive weekends in February and March then GECOM could face a serious shortfall in polling station staff.

The PPP/Civic lodged complaints with GECOM over the quality of the staff appointed and the method of appointment. Underlying their complaint is a concern that Indo-Guyanese seemed to be under represented among the temporary staff appointed. This issue was publicly aired in the 21 January edition[10] of the Party's newspaper, *The Mirror*.

The observation team finally acquired a copy of the first lists of persons to be proposed for appointment as Deputy Returning Officer, Elections Clerk (who acts as the Returning Officer's deputy in his absence) and the Clerical Assistants (assigned to work in the Returning Officers' and Deputy Returning Officers' offices). An initial analysis of these first lists revealed a worryingly large number of persons recommended for appointment even though they failed to pass the 40% pass mark. In almost all these cases a person with a higher mark in the area had been rejected (see data in table 3 below).

TABLE 3: Recommendations for Appointment for Regional Staff with Evaluation Scores of Less than 40% (or Did not Attend Training).

REGION	% of DRO	% of EC	% of CA
1.	50%	33.3%	100%
2.	0%	33.3%	40%
3.	6.6%	18.2%	35.7%
4.	19.4%	20%	35%
5.	27.3%	40%	33.3%
6.	13.3%	0%	33.3%
7.	40%	16.7%	0%
8.	83.3%	66.6%	83.3%
9.	20%	62.5%	N/A
10.	0%	0%	N/A
TOTAL	20.4%	27.1%	39.4%

Data Source: GECOM

Regions 1 and 8 have consistently poor performers recommended for appointment whereas most other regions have disproportionately poor performers in one or two categories. In almost every case a higher scoring applicant for the post has been overlooked. The only exception would be Region 8 where very few people seem to have applied. The

[10] *"Ethnic Composition of GECOM Staffers Cause Worry", The Mirror Vol. No. 1951, 21 January 2001*

explanation given to the Observation Missions was that there was a shortage of suitably qualified staff in some regions and that knowledge of elections often superseded test marks as the key criteria for recommending one person over another.

In addition the proposals revealed a marked imbalance between applicants of Afro-Guyanese origin and Indo-Guyanese. There is neither a requirement for GECOM to apply a policy of equal opportunity nor to monitor these applications and appointments on that basis. The data from the original list of persons recommended for appointment (RFA) indicates that the initial recommendations for appointment often reflected the ethnic mix of the pool of applicants with a few notable exceptions (see table 4 & 5 below).

Table 4: Ethnic Composition of Lists of Applicants and Recommendations for Appointment for Deputy Returning Officers

Region	Ethnic Composition of Applicants			Ethnic Composition of RFAs		
	%Afro-G	%Indo-G	%Mix/Am.	%Afro-G	%Indo-G	%Mix/Am.
1.	50%	25%	25%	33%	33%	33%
2.	25%	75%	0%	17%	83%	0%
3.	35%	59%	6%	36%	56%	6%
4.	79%	18%	3%	81%	16%	3%
5.	58%	42%	0%	60%	40%	0%
6.	35%	63%	4%	47%	47%	6%
7.	75%	25%	0%	100%	0%	0%
8.	50%	13%	38%	67%	0%	33%
9.	0%	20%	80%	0%	20%	80%
10.	89%	0%	11%	83%	0%	17%
Totals	56%	33%	8%	58%	31%	11%

Data Source: GECOM

Table 5: Ethnic Composition of Lists of Applicants and Recommendations for Appointment for Election Clerks

Region	Ethnic Composition of Applicants			Ethnic Composition of RFAs		
	%Afro-G	%Indo-G	%Mix/Am.	%Afro-G	%Indo-G	%Mix/Am.
1.	0%	20%	80%	0%	0%	100%
2.	20%	53%	27%	33%	50%	17%
3.	24%	68%	8%	24%	68%	8%
4.	76%	14%	10%	65%	15%	19%
5.	44%	50%	6%	50%	40%	10%
6.	32%	68%	0%	43%	57%	0%
7.	73%	19%	9%	57%	29%	14%
8.	33%	17%	50%	33%	17%	50%
9.	38%	0%	63%	38%	0%	63%
10.	92%	0%	8%	100%	0%	0%
Totals	52%	35%	14%	45%	36%	21%

Data Source: GECOM

GECOM reacted angrily to accusations that the recruitment of staff was biased towards one group or another, claiming that the process was based on merit. However the issue did not go away and both major parties refused to accept the recommendations for regional in regions 2 and 4. The final allocation of staff was hotly contested in these regions by both parties with the result that some regional staff was not confirmed in post until the beginning of March.

In region 9 election officials and others complained to observers that the shortage of adequate staff had resulted in staff appointed who were relatives of party organisers. In region 3 election officials complained that the influence of the parties had resulted in staff appointed as Presiding Officers who were inadequate for the post. Finally the appointment of polling station staff in region 4 was so seriously delayed that letters of appointment were still being delivered three days before polling day.

The recruitment, training and selection of staff at all levels was seriously hampered by poor planning, undue interference by key stakeholders, and chronic delays in the despatch of letters of appointment. As a result staff morale plummeted and a number of disputes in regions 4, 6 and 10 occurred over terms and conditions. In some cases these disputes were based on simple misunderstandings however election staff were clearly frustrated by the delay in appointments and in some cases their lack of appointment. Others who had not been appointed could not understand why they had been passed over when others with lower scores had been appointed.

It is clear that the process of recruitment and appointment left a lot to be desired. There was little transparency and too much interference from stakeholders. GECOM should look to develop clearer and more effective methods of recruitment and appointment and should include a commitment to equal opportunities to avoid any future allegations of bias.

7. The Voters' List

According to the Constitution only persons over 18 who are Guyanese citizens or citizens of a Commonwealth country resident in Guyana registered as an elector and can satisfy "such other qualifications as maybe prescribed by or under any law"[11]. The latter provision defined in law allowed GECOM to determine what forms of identification would be required for an elector to prove their identity in a polling station. Who could satisfy these requirements was the issue that attracted enormous political debate from the very first day of the deployment of the Long Term Observation Group until the departure of both missions some six months later on 5 April 2001. Who could and should have been on the Voters' List on 19 March 2001 remains an issue even to this day.

7.1 From National Register of Registrants to the Preliminary Voters' List

The Preliminary Voters' List must be based on data extracted from the National Register of Registrants, a database of persons over the age of fourteen registered by the National Registration Centre in 1996. These persons listed would include all those over the age of eighteen on the qualifying date (later set to 31 December 2000). However a number of stakeholders, principally, but not exclusively, the PNC, questioned the integrity of the database. GECOM appointed an integrity committee, later renamed GISAT to conduct an integrity test of the Master Registration Card Database (the NRR database). In it report of 22 August 2000, the committee confirmed that, with a significant degree of certainty, the main Master Registration Card Database used to produce the 1997 PVL and FVL remained "intact and authentic".

The GISAT team's report, whilst rebutting allegations that the database had been tampered with, was not in the position to corroborate or deny the accusation that the list was allegedly "padded". Rather it suggested that GECOM would need to undertake a field test to determine whether the allegations of "padding" had any truth. GECOM continued preparations for claims and objections – training and recruitment of staff.

The PNC/Reform, among others, did not have any confidence that the total number of persons on the PVL represented reality. They claimed that the draft PVL had over 100,000 non-existent electors. The Party had submitted a list of two thousand people it claimed were no longer resident or were non-existent which was publicly rejected by PPP/Civic. Initial

[11] *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 1) Act 2001*

investigations by PPP/Civic and GECOM indicated that some of the people listed were in alive and resident in Guyana. Asgar Ally, the leader of the Guyana Democratic Party (GDP) and former PPP/Civic finance minister, also questioned the size of the PVL. His argument was based on predictions made from the statistics produced by the National Bureau of Statistics, which he claimed indicated that the total number of people over 18 by the end of the year would be no higher that 480,000.

GECOM decided in response to these serious allegations that it would investigate whether a field test could be undertaken and how by establishing a methodology committee. This committee included a number of statisticians and academics from the University of Guyana. On 22 August the committee reported. Its report outlined the method of testing the accuracy of the PVL through a field test survey and advocated its methodology be used. GECOM accepted the report and decided to commission a field test survey, which became known as the GECOM Field Test Exercise (GFTE). The GTFE working group comprised of Mr. T.A. Earle, former head of lands and surveys, Dr Leslie Ramsammy from the PPP/Civic and Mr. Haslyn Parris for the PNC/Reform. They set about finalising the methodology and procedures for the GFTE. A house to house survey of almost 22,000 randomly chosen persons from 40 different age clusters across all ten administration regions was proposed. Each survey team would include a GECOM official and scrutineers from the PNC/Reform and PPP/Civic. This arrangement, needless to say, did not satisfy the other parliamentary parties or those outside parliament. Desmond Trotman, Chief Scrutineer for the WPA, called for a "third eye" – a third scrutineer nominated from the so-called third parties. However the idea was not accepted by GECOM on grounds of cost (the whole GFTE was not part of GECOM's original budget or plan). The GFTE began on 23 October 2000 and ended in mid December. The purpose of GFTE was to establish the accuracy of the data listed on the NRR.

By mid September 2000 most registration staff had been trained and evaluation had taken place. It was by this stage that GECOM came to a final decision on the method of establishing a voter's identity. Previously the 1997 election commission had used special Voter ID cards. These were photo ID cards that were produced by the voter at the polling station to verify their identity and were deposited in the ballot box. They were also subject of many claims of irregularities and as such had been impounded by the court in the Esther Pereira election petition along with all other voting materials. At this stage it seemed unlikely that the court would release the old cards for distribution for an election on 15 January, the preferred date of the election. Furthermore it was questionable whether stakeholders would have had any confidence in them. Thus after some debate GECOM decided on 21 September and re-photograph every person on the Preliminary Voters' List (PVL) and produce a new National ID card. The number of names on the PVL at that stage was recorded as 516,049 each party, on publication, would receive a "hard" copy of the PVL and a copy on CD ROM.

The PVL was to be published prior to the "claims and objections" period scheduled for the first two weeks of October. However the two sides in GECOM could not agree on what should be done with regard to people listed on the PVL who did not come forward to be photographed. Eventually a consensus was reached over the issue in that GECOM would instruct the Commissioner for National Registration through the relevant registrar investigate whether the persons existed and are entitled to be listed. If, after publishing the names of these people and after the investigation has been completed, the person cannot be located then the CNR may remove the name from the list. If they come forward and prove their identity prior to the publication of the Official List of Electors to a Registrar then their name can be included on the list[12]. President Jagdeo signed this into law on 12 October and publication of the PVL followed on Monday 16 October 2000.

[12] *Regulation No. 5 of 2000 The National Registration (Residents) (Revision of Registers) Regulation, par 9.*

Thus from an original plan for an early publication of the PVL and a two week period of claims and objections GECOM had now committed itself to a field test survey of the original data, a photographic exercise and production of a new National ID card and a complex process for checking and potentially removing names from the PVL.

7.2 Claims and the Photographic Exercise, 16 October to 10 December.

The task facing GECOM was monumental. Cameras and recruitment and training of operatives had to be vastly increased furthermore some of the trained Deputy Registrars and Divisional Registrars were unable to be released from normal activities or had opted out leaving GECOM with a shortfall. Already the process had been stretched by additional work and was running two weeks late. The new timetable anticipated claims and the photographic exercise to be concluded by 31 October and the last date for objections to be lodged by 7 November and to be heard by 12 November. Thereafter GECOM planned to produce a Final Voters' List by the end of November or beginning of December.

It became clear by the end of October that GECOM's efforts had been beset with numerous administrative mistakes and a shortage of cameras and forms. The PPP/Civic in a series of public pronouncements raised concerns that large numbers of would be electors were being "administratively disenfranchised" by GECOM. It was certainly true that GECOM did not have sufficient cameras at the beginning of the exercise and some photographic centres did not open on time or did not have cameras or film or staff. It should be remembered that the decision to massively increase the photographic exercise had only be made four weeks previously until then only one hundred and eight cameras were available. Furthermore observers noted that divisional registrars in some centres struggled with the plethora forms available for the various transactions anticipated. By 30 October GECOM recorded that only 39% of those on the PVL had come forward to be photographed. Much blame for the poor take up was aimed at the public information campaign – "Check the List" – running at the time and an additional advertising company was bought in to assist. In such circumstances GECOM decided to extend the periods for claims and objections and the photographic exercise. The latter scheduled to end on 12 November and objections to made by 19 November.

Observers had however noted significant discrepancies in the data retrieved from registration staff. Our own figures indicated higher take up. At the time the observer group believed the disparity between the data to indicate slippage in communications from the field to the centre. Later it became clear that the data issued by GECOM during the first period of claims and objections and the photographic exercise were woefully inadequate. All the data gathered for claims, corrections, transfers and objections was recorded (sometimes inaccurately) on specific forms (CAO S-1, CAO R-2 & CAO R-2). There were no such forms for the photographic exercise or any instruction in the manuals for this exercise to record the data daily or weekly. The photographic data announced was collected by Deputy Registrars but only it seems of an adhoc basis. It is likely therefore that the numbers photographed by 31 October could well have been far higher.

The first period of claims and objections also revealed alarming problems with communications and poor administration. Region 4, in particular, was beset with such problems. This in part reflects the sheer size of the population and also the desperate lack of systems and resources. However the numerous and repeated mistakes made in the region – the same photographic centres not opening, centres consistently running short of relevant forms and film – does seem to indicate a level of maladministration verging on the chronic.

Although region 4 seemed to have a disproportionate number of problems they were not alone in recording mistakes. Observers noted complaints in every single region. In the hinterland the lack of cameras and information on there whereabouts significantly reduced

confidence in the process as would be electors arrived at centres only to find the camera team were elsewhere. Along the coast observers noted that registrants would sometimes have to visit stations on multiple occasions just to ensure they were listed and photographed. The system clearly was over bureaucratic, suffered from a lack of planning and poor administration.

In the second phase Observers noted that the incidence of maladministration declined and the process seemed to run more smoothly. Staff seemed more able to deal with the public and seemed better prepared. By 12 November 72% of those listed on the PVL, according to GECOM's data at the time, had been photographed. GECOM, citing Regulation No. 5, decided to once again to give the remaining people the opportunity to come forward for a "last chance" photographic exercise. This final period of the exercise would be staggered over a period of weeks ending on 10 December. GECOM intended to publish the names of the persons not photographed in the press and actively target areas were there was significant shortfalls. The last chance photographic exercise started with the hinterland regions. However the plans for the coast had to be amended as the cost of printing names of tens of thousands of non-photographed persons proved exorbitant (estimated at G$ 189,000,000). Instead divisional registrars and the party scrutineers agreed lists of people not photographed and published their names locally. Resources could also be targeted and the result seemed to be encouraging. No one would know the true level of success or otherwise until all data had been reconciled.

7.3 Objections to Entries on the PVL

Any person within a division can object to a name listed on the PVL in their division and any Party can object to any person listed anywhere in the country. The legislation requires that the objector must prove their claim before a hearing in front of a Registrar or their Deputy. There was very little guidance in the law for Registrars as to how conclusive the evidence required must be. Observers noted that registrars used different standards in almost every region. Some would require production of death certificates and other official documentation to prove migration others would rely on witness and oral evidence. The disparity of the methods used is reflected in the proportion of cases granted (see table 6 below).

Table 6: Data for Objections by Region

Regions	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	**6.**	**7.**	**8.**	**9.**	**10**	**Total**
Received	541	307	270	629	136	1678	161	76	293	185	4276
Granted	187	198	170	67	3	389	117	37	224	15	1407
%	35%	64%	63%	11%	2%	23%	73%	49%	76%	8%	33%

Source: GECOM Operations Department

The emphasis in the legislation at the time (which was to be changed on 13 February 2001) was largely based on individual objecting to entries. The total number of objections – 4,276 – was a very small proportion of the total number of entries on the PVL (0.83%). If this process had been the only legal means of 'cleaning' the list then the number of persons on the list would have barely altered. Although no data was available to the long term observer group for the number of objections granted in 1997 there was plenty of anecdotal evidence that indicated that similarly small numbers of would be electors were objected to in 1997. In other words the data on the list was principally the information gathered four years earlier in the 1996 door to door enumeration. GECOM reported to the observation missions that the data available to the NCR for deaths and emigration was woefully inadequate and inaccurate. It is therefore reasonable to assume that neither the official channels nor

objections would have identified all those persons who were not available to vote either due to death or emigration.

On 13 November PNC/Reform objected to 4,179 names on the PVL in accordance with the powers given to parties under Regulation 5 to object to any number of persons on the list. An initial analysis by the long tem observation group of objections by region and by category revealed that over half (57%) were listed in Region 4 and over half (52%) were allegedly "non existent". Furthermore the majority (88%) of those objected to in Region 4 were objected to as non-existent. On Friday 17 November a group of 30 Indo-Guyanese whose entries had been objected to by the PNC/Reform as non-existent turned up at the office of the Registrar in Region 6 protesting that they did exist and displaying stubs to prove they had been photographed. Furthermore the PPP/Civic on the same and following days began producing photographs of persons they claimed the PNC/Reform had objected to as "non-existent".

At the last minute of the last day for registering objections the PNC/Reform handed in a list of some 33,000 names of persons they wished to object to. Unlike the earlier list no reason was given for each individual objection and often the list was purely a series of crosses against entries on the PVL. The PPP/Civic in turn objected to the mass objection claiming that the objection had been handed in early in the morning of 20 November after the deadline.

Although the regulation allowed for Parties to make objections no one had foreseen or planned for this eventuality. GECOM began the process of first reconciling the mass objections against persons who had applied for a transfer and other objections granted. The intention was to ensure against knowingly disenfranchising an elector. It was, however completely unclear how GECOM would proceed following the reconciliation of transfers against the mass objection. These procedures remain unclear and if this system of registration and the current regulations remain in force then GECOM will have to draw up proper procedures for adjudicating on mass objections. Fortunately GECOM were not put through this test as the PNC/Reform withdrew their mass objections following a meeting of GECOM in early December.

7.4 The GECOM Field Test Exercise (GFTE)

In late November the preliminary results of the GFTE were made available to the Parties and public. The initial report from the Co-ordinator of GFTE, Mr. Earl, indicated that the NRR did have some persons on it who were "unknown" (7%) as well as some who had died (4%) or migrated (5%) since 1997. The preliminary report of GFTE indicated that if the data was extrapolated than the voters' list should have 428,172 electors. The final report was submitted to GECOM in January. In summary the results of the survey implied that of the 516,046 names listed on the NRR only 422,000 (82%) exist. If the size of the NRR was 422,000 then a maximum size for the Official List of Electors that was at least 95% accurate would be approximately 445,000. Obviously any figure closer to 422,000 would in theory be more accurate. However this implied that very large numbers of names listed on the PVL (92,000) were either no longer in the country, had died or could not be identified by the name on the NRR.

7.5 Reconciliation of Claims and Objections and the Revised Voters List

On 18 December GECOM agreed to give any remaining persons listed on the PVL one last chance to come forward an be photographed between 27 December and 4 January. GECOM declared[13] that;

[13] *GECOM Advisory 20 December, 2000*

"..the Official List of Electors shall be comprised as follows:

1. *Those persons whose names are on the Preliminary Voters List whose particulars are verified and whose photographs were taken both during the claims and objections period and the extended seven-day period for the taking of photographs.*
2. *Those persons on the Preliminary Voters List who have not been photographed during the above mentioned periods but who by January 4, 2001 have satisfied the Commission as to their identity and eligibility."*

Once these persons had satisfied the requirement as to their identity and eligibility they would then be photographed an receive a temporary National ID card which would be retained at the place of poll by the Presiding Officer. A further 980 people came forward to be photographed during the period 27 December to 4 January.

A few days later after the GECOM meeting PNC/Reform withdrew their mass objection. Clearly there was no need to proceed with it once GECOM had decided to exclude from the voters' list anyone who had not been photographed. At this time GECOM believed that some 415,000 persons had been photographed.

Reconciliation of data from the field began in earnest immediately after the last chance photographic exercise on 10 December. Registrars and Deputy Registrars were bought into Georgetown to undertake this exercise. This took a considerable time as original forms had to be located and transfers effected from these forms. Region 4 again had particular difficulties reconciling their data. In many cases transfers had not been filed out correctly or had been assigned incorrectly as "new" claimants. Information of forms was sometimes missing and basic errors had been made. Up to 47,000 people had applied for a transfer according to GECOM. The reconciliation exercise also revealed that 438,636 people had been photographed (85% of the PVL) and that almost 1,000 people either inadvertently or otherwise had multiply registered. Fifty two cases were referred to the Commissioner of Police who returned the file to GECOM for lack of evidence and requested more information. No further action was taken to investigate these names.

Each person's entry on the database would have to be encoded by the Information Systems Department. Every correction, change of address, objection, and all those who had been photographed would require encoding. In effect every single one of the 438,636 entries or so would require attention. Encoding began slowly and required the personal intervention of the Chairman to speed things up. All encoding had to be completed prior to the publication of the final voters' list on 31 January. This would require encoders working around the clock to ensure that over 16,000 entries were completed each day.

In January 2001 the Information Systems Department (ISD) identified over 10,000 forms with names of persons who could not be found on the PVL. This figure was subsequent reduced to 5,744 people "not listed, not found" after the divisional registrars and parties had managed to identify almost half of these people – married women who were originally listed under their maiden name or people who gave an intermediary address rather than their 1997 address. An analysis by the Long Term Observation Group of the "not listed, not found" revealed that over two thirds (69%) were located in Region 4.

ISD also discovered at this time a fault in the computer software. Initial reconciliation of data encoded and data supplied seemed to indicate that approximately 18,000 entries were "missing". At first GECOM thought that this was another example of persons "not listed, not found" however on closer inspection it seemed that the problem lay in the software. A report from one of the International Technical Advisors and one from the Technical Oversight Committee concurred. The reporting tool within the database had a logical fault, which was failing to report accurately the number of "new" registrants

On 15 January Justice Claudette Singh delivered her judgement on the Esther Pereira case[14]. Although the implications of this case were far reaching for the rule of law, GECOM was particularly concerned over the implications it might have for the use of the new National ID cards to identify electors. Consequently the commission's Legal Consultant and Statutory Officer were required to undertake a thorough review of all actions (and potential omissions) of the commission to date and those planned. In the process they advised GECOM that the commission would have to produce a Revised Voters' List whish would have to be available for inspection in certain locations for 21 days.

All GECOM's planning was predicated on the advice until that point that once they had revised the PVL following claims and objections they could publish the Official List of Electors. It was on this basis that plans were laid for the production of ID cards following publication of 31 January. Instead a RVL was published on this date and ID cards would be produced from the data on the RVL not the Official List of Electors as planned.

RVL it was decided would not include the list of persons "not listed, not found" as they still subject to verification nor would it include the 980 persons photographed during the 27 December to 4 January period. Thus a total of 433,478 persons were listed on the RVL a net reduction of 82,571 on the numbers listed on the PVL.

Table 7: Number of Persons Listed on the Revised Voters List

Region	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Total
On RVL	11322	25700	60578	190029	30203	72093	9279	4280	8706	21288	433478

Source: GECOM, 16 February 2001

The RVL was drawn up, based on the Supplementary Lists provided by the Registrars, and posted on 31 January. Copies of the RVL on CD-ROM were given to the Parties for inspection. The public and the Parties have 21 days to apply to the National Commissioner for Registration to amend entries of the RVL. Initial review of the RVL revealed significant number of people who were photographed and undertook some form of transaction (claim to entry, correction and transfer) whose details are either inaccurate or more worryingly were missing from the list. Deputy Chief Elections Officer (Operations), Mr. Calvin Benn, informed the parties that 10,983 entries were defective at the GECOM meeting with Chief Scrutineers on 8 February. Of these the vast majority were persons who had applied to transfer but their details had not been effected. On that date the number of defective entries on Region 4's list was 2,217 (includes corrections, deletions and additions). By Wednesday 14 February the number of additions required for the list in Region 4 had risen to 13,229 – a 596% increase. Table 8 gives details of the number of entries of the RVL that needed to be corrected by 16 February. The Long Term Observation Group were unable to ascertain what the final data would have been by the end of the 21 day period for inspection of the RVL (which was extended to 26 February).

Table 8: Number of Transactions to be Adjusted/Added or Deleted on the RVL

Region	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	Total
Adjust	633	1765	2171	13574	1029	2279	587	157	133	1177	23505
Delete	30	228	156	607	102	512	194	54	56	2	1941

Source: GECOM, 16 February 2001

The level of professed error rapidly undermined confidence among stakeholders. Furthermore some errors seemed completely unwarranted and on the surface unexplainable. For example the PNC's former General Secretary Winston Murray was listed in a completely

[14] *Esther Pereira vs. Chief Elections Officer et al, case 36P 1998 Demerara.*

different division from where he resided. Later a PNC/Reform candidate, Mark Kirton, was listed on the Official List of Electors in a village in Region 9 when he had registered at the station near his residence in Region 4. Furthermore the CD ROM given to the parties seemed to be faulty. Searches on the CD ROM by name or address gave out conflicting and in accurate information although searches by Master Registration Card number did not. Bizarrely the original CDROM with the PVL given to the Parties did not suffer from this problem. On 14 February the PNC/Reform issued a memorandum requesting GECOM to explain the variations in data supplied by GECOM. In the memorandum PNC/Reform requested explanation as to why the estimates and published data for "new" registrants varied so much (originally GECOM estimated only 6,000 new claimants, actual data revealed 22,184 "new" registrants) and why the date from the verification done in the field varied with the persons listed on the RVL.

Furthermore all stakeholders professed deep concern over the production and delivery of the new National ID cards which would be based on the RVL. PNC/Reform, in particular, had highlighted both this issue and the number of new claimants in a statement on 4 February.

GECOM, in response to concerns over the errors in the RVL, provided the Parties with a list of corrections to the RVL. Furthermore local staff were busy checking these errors and attempting to locate the people concerned. In many cases individuals would appear in person to verify their details and seek corrections to their entries. However forms for such were not made available until the middle of February and many corrections were made in the field without corroborating evidence secured. The period for checking the RVL was further extended to 26 February. Once this period had ended then the corrected data was to be sent back to Georgetown to be verified and corrected on the database. According to legislation the Official List of Electors had to published and posted on 5 March.

7.6 Production and Delivery of the National Identity Card

Thomas de la Rue Ltd had been contracted by GECOM to provide equipment and expertise for the production of new National ID cards. The de la Rue consultant returned to Guyana to oversee production on 20 January 2001.

On Friday 26 January GECOM began production of the new National ID cards. Initial production was beset by a number of teething problems – slow image capturing of photographs, thumbprints and signatures. By 31 January these problems had been solved and production was beginning to hit the target output of 15,000 cards per day.

Card production was hit by another administrative problem. Once produced the cards must be batched according to polling station and be matched with the Master Registration Card (MRC) for that person. The ID cards are not identified by registration division or polling station (sub division) therefore to verify each ID card staff must find the relevant MRC for that person. In a small region like region 8 with only 4,280 electors this was relatively simple if a little labour intensive, but for the larger regions like region 4 GECOM would be faced with an almost impossible task. For several days two departments debated how to solve the problem. Finally, following the intervention of the Chairman of GECOM, a solution was reached. Post Office staff were enlisted to sort Master Registration Cards by division to ensure that ID cards could be matched up by division, thereby allowing the ID cards to be batched accordingly.

However this solution would not deal with the problem of errors on the RVL which could affect batching and distribution and the data captured on the ID card. Secondly the MRCs may not have been stored in the correct canisters of with the correct corresponding lists. Consequently the verification of ID cards, MRCs and the RVL has proved problematic. The distribution of the first ID cards to Region 1 exemplified the problems. Some canisters did not have all the MRCs and consequently too few ID cards were distributed. In some cases some

family members received their cards whereas others have been told to wait for the next delivery.

Delivery of ID cards was staggered across the country. The plan[15] was for distribution to begin in the hinterland regions 1, 8, 9, and 7 first, Region 4 and 6 next, then Regions 2, 3, 5 and 10. Distribution of cards to Returning Officers in regions 1 and 8 was completed by 31 January. Distribution to the Returning Officer in region 9 was scheduled for completion on 3 February 2001, the remaining regions would receive their cards once they had been produced and collated.

Each region was expected to recruit, usually from the pool of people identified for polling station duties, and train distribution clerks prior to receiving ID cards. This ad hoc arrangement relied therefore on clear communication between the centre and the regions and precise dates for arrival of cards in the region. Neither of which were forthcoming. Region 6 for example were originally told to expect delivery of their cards on 24 February, arrangements were made and training given, however the cards did not arrive in the region until 10 March – nine days before polling.

On 7 March the DCEO (Operations) informed party agents that 418,628 person's data had been captured and 410,439 cards had been printed and that production should be completed by 12 March. At that time GECOM had data for the distribution of cards in regions 1,2,7,8,9 and 10 only. Region

Table 9: Partial Distribution of National ID cards

Region	Cards Produced	Cards distributed	% distributed
1.	11,010	9,290	84%
2.	24,203	14,8090	61%
7.	8,905	7,287	82%
8.	4,202	3,535	84%
9.	8,328	7,205	87%
10.	20,534	17,733	86%

Source: DCEO (Operations), 7/03/2001

A proportion of ID cards had been distributed to regions 4 and 5 on this date but not the total amount. Region 4 received cards for East Bank Demerara and South Georgetown first. GECOM debated employing the post office's registered mail service to deliver the remaining cards to residents in Georgetown on 13 March. However there was not a majority in favour and so procedures remained unchanged. On both weekends prior to polling day most of the polling staff in region 3, 4, and 5 concentrated on deliver of ID cards and training scheduled for those weekends was lost. Even the trial run for the delivery of election results materials scheduled for the weekends of 3rd and 10th March were abandoned in region 4 in favour of delivery of the cards. Only region 6 undertook a full trial run.

It should be noted that the huge effort put in by staff in the regions to meet the deadline to deliver ID cards before polling day took place during a period when appointments were still being debated by stakeholders. The uncertainty over appointments and pay lead in a few cases to industrial action, in region 10 temporary staff struck over a misunderstanding on payments for polling day and distribution of ID cards. A similar incident happened in region 6, which was also quickly resolved by regional staff. Whatever the reasons for these disputes staff morale had been sapped by the level of uncertainty.

On 16 March, 3 days before polling, observers were informed that only 428,581 persons data had been captured for ID production of which 426,809 had been printed. This marked a

[15] *Presentation to Chief Agents, 31 January 2001 by CEO (Acting) and DCEO (Operations)*

dramatic reduction in the levels of productivity – an increase of 9,953 images captured and only 16,370 additional cards printed in 9 days – which had reached a daily rate of 17,000 cards printed per day. The Long Term Observation Group had been aware of the slow down in production and had received unconfirmed anecdotal reports from sources within GECOM that difficulties had been experienced in recovering Master Registration Cards.

On 5 March the Official List of Electors had been published and once the Addendum had been included the number of persons listed had reached 440,185 by 16 March. Later that day GECOM would announce a number of other ways in which polling station staff would be able to establish the identity of voters. As a result the importance attached to the production and distribution of the remaining ID cards became largely irrelevant as other forms of ID could be used to establish a voters identity of those on the Official List of Electors. Whilst this late amendment to the voting procedures represented a pragmatic response to the need to address problems of ID card distribution, it also highlights clear administrative failures in the process.

7.7 From Revised Voters List to Official List of Electors and the Addendum

Analysis of the RVL by both regional staff and the Political Parties and the direct representations of concerned electors indicated that the revised list had substantial errors as a result GECOM was under increasing criticism from all stakeholders. GECOM produced a list of "corrections" based on information supplied by Returning Officers and the Parties. A substantial proportion of which were transfers (see Table 8 above) which either had not been completed or had resulted in electors being placed on the voters' list for another division (or in some cases completely non existent divisions). At the time if was believed that this was a result of poor fieldwork during the claims and objections period whereby divisional registrars had either not completed all the relevant paperwork or had filled in the wrong forms. The period for inspection of the RVL was extended to allow citizens to inspect the list and make representations to the appropriate Deputy Returning Officer.

ISD then had from 26 February until 4 March to make the corrections to the database and produce the Official List of Electors in time for publication on 5 March. This was a substantial task in the time allowed given the number of errors identified (of which table 8 represents preliminary data). To ease the task GECOM decided, and informed the public, that textual errors on the list would not need correction prior to polling day and that these people would be allowed to vote. Thereby reducing the number or corrections to be made to the database.

The Long Term and EU Observation Mission understand that the list of "corrections" and some accompanying forms were then passed to ISD by the Operations Department soon after 26 February for encoding. It transpired that not all the entries on the list had the necessary accompanying forms. In many cases Deputy Returning Officers had made a recommendation to correct the list based on oral interview with the person concerned and did not have the necessary forms available. It should be noted that forms for making corrections to the RVL had not been provided initially as this eventuality had not been anticipated by GECOM. As a result ISD did not enact these corrections, as there was no accompanying evidence on an official form. The Long Term and EU Observation Missions were unable to ascertain exactly how many persons fell into this category.

On 5 March GECOM published the Official List of Electors (OLE) with 438,940 entries. The increase of 5,462 electors reflected the inclusion of most of the persons "not listed, not found" and those who were photographed between 27 December and 4 January. This group would not be entitled to receive a new National ID card prior to the election but should have been issued with a Temporary ID card to be retained in the polling station.

However problems persisted. The Observation Missions were also led to understand that persons who had been shown on the RVL in "non-existent" divisions were inadvertently excluded from the Official List of Electors (OLE). We understand that this was due solely to the computer software, which was unable to "recognise" these entries and amend them. This problem was only noticed *after* the Official List of Electors had been published on 5 March.

The Parliamentary Parties picked up their CD ROMs and hard copies of the OLE on 6 & 7 March. They began to check the entries on the list and found once again that the CD ROM was faulty. This might have been due to a fault in the search engine on the CD ROM or it could reflect problems within the original database software. What was certain was that a search by name (text) would derive different address after each search! On 8 March the PNC/Reform issued a statement complaining that despite "..many assurances given that errors and flaws detected in the RVL would have been corrected, many flaws remain"[16]. Most significantly a number of persons who had been listed on the RVL were now "missing" from the OLE. Somehow their entries had not been recorded (flagged) on the OLE.

In response to stakeholder criticisms GECOM promised to issue an Addendum to the OLE. In a statement on 10 March the commission said it "…has taken action to reduce their (the number of errors) incidence". In a full-page advert GECOM described the evolution of the list from PVL to OLE. It pointed out that of the original number listed on the PVL 99,293 names had been deleted and that 22,184 "new" registrants had been added. The latter group included persons who had reached 18 by the prescribed date (31 December 2000) but were not picked up in the 1996 door to door enumeration and persons who had not previously been registered (returnees and previously unregistered).

On 11 March a PNC/Reform delegation met with GECOM and the Joint International Technical Assessor (JITA)[17] to raise their serious concerns over the accuracy of the OLE. So significant were there concerns that according to some sources within the PNC/Reform there had been discussion of the party boycotting the election. During the meeting the PNC/Reform raised numerous concerns over the accuracy of the list. For example, Mark Kirton, one of the candidates for the Party, had been correctly entered on the RVL in Georgetown only to discover that he had been removed from the list in Region 4 and added to the list in a village in the hinterland Region 9. The Party detailed examples of person's who allegedly had two National ID cards, multiple entries, transfers that had not been completed and most significantly persons who had been listed on the RVL but removed from the OLE. Although the numbers quoted in evidence by the Party were small they believed that these errors were but the tip of a much larger iceberg. GECOM hoped to reassure the PNC/Reform that every effort would be made through the production of an addendum to correct these errors. In statement a few days later the Party stated it would not make any final decision on the veracity of the list until they had received a copy of the addendum.

The Addendum to the OLE was published 16 March 2001. The total number of electors listed on the final voters' list was 440,185, up 1,245 on the OLE published 11 days earlier. These changes we were told were made on the basis of a comparison of records submitted by the Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers, submissions by both PPP/Civic and PNC/Reform and individual letters received by the commission and PES.

[16] *Statement by Mr. Robert Corbin, Chairman of PNC/Reform, 8 March 2001.*

[17] *The JITA, Mr. Keith Hathaway, had been nominated by the International Community under the terms of the MoU with GECOM and the Government of Guyana. He had been in country since July 2000 and was responsible for making a technical assessment of preparations prior to election day and if necessary point to modifications that may need to be made to ensure that GECOM met the international standards it had acceded to. His regular pre election reports were submitted to both the donors and GECOM who in turn passed them to the Government for circulation.*

Table 10: OLE and Addendum

Region	OLE	Deletions	Additions	FVL
1.	11,454	38	57	11,473
2.	26,212	78	100	26,234
3.	60,927	127	220	61,020
4.	192,806	670	1,446	193,582
5.	30,613	79	165	30,699
6.	72,583	150	216	72,649
7.	9,511	61	47	9,497
8.	4,359	4	16	4,371
9.	8,708	9	58	8,757
10.	21,767	65	201	21,903
Totals	438,940	1281	2,526	440,185

Source: GECOM, 16 March 2001

Furthermore GECOM enlisted the assistance of another computer specialist, Mr. Lance Hinds of Software Dynamics, to make an evaluation of the software. His report was not available to the Long Term and EU Observation Mission prior to departure on 5 April.

GECOM's original concept was to compile a voters' list acceptable to all stakeholders before moving to phase two of the operation – preparation for polling day. In reality these two originally separate operations had to act in parallel and under those circumstances the staff in the NRC/PES became over stretched. Furthermore the desire to ensure that the list was acceptable to all stakeholders meant that GECOM would add to the burdens of their staff both nationally and regionally. Often this meant that instructions would emanate from Georgetown to the regions, which were diametrically opposed. For example on the weekend of 10 March officials in Region 6 were told to "drop everything" to get the ID cards distributed whilst at the same time being told that nothing should divert their attention from polling day preparations.

There is an often-quoted maxim among election administrators that an election should be managed centrally but delivered locally. GECOM and the NRC/PES only became a permanent institution constitutionally in April 2000 and became operational in May of that year. Although GECOM may devolve its powers to officers of the commission the trust of legislation is such to encourage the development of a centralised administration. Secondly as stakeholders and others made greater demands on GECOM their reaction would more often than not be to try and solve local problems centrally. Sometimes this was totally justified, however the consequences of an over centralised body with few established procedures and structures caused greater confusion at the point of delivery. For example Deputy Registrars and Presiding Officers would ask how "Georgetown" was able to decide whether a correction to the RVL was needed when the evidence was often provided in person. Consequently numerous corrections to the RVL were not made in Georgetown because encoders in ISD had no accompanying evidence to confirm the correction proposed by a Deputy Returning Officer.

Notwithstanding these administrative criticisms GECOM did succeed in producing a voters list, which was 95% accuracy (in proportion to the eligible electorate). This was no small achievement. Secondly they did succeed in deriving a procedure to check a-would be voters' identity that was reasonably capable of deterring widespread impersonation. It may not have been the most elegant solution but it did work.

However if elections in Guyana are to become more credible in the future the current system of compiling the voters' list will need to be significantly amended. Following the dictum that elections should managed centrally and delivered locally, then the new National

Assembly should give consideration to an annual updating of the electoral rolls administered by permanently appointed Registrars based in the regions. Secondly, it was eminently clear that Region 4 cannot be administered by one Registrar/Returning Officer and their team. Consideration should be given to splitting Region 4 into four districts – East Bank Demerara, South Georgetown, North Georgetown and the East Coast – each with its own fully staffed registration/elections office. Whether there is a need to retain a Returning Officer for the Region purely for the purpose of declaration of results would need further thought.

8. Election Campaign

8.1 Introduction

Over thirty years of supposedly ethnically divisive politics dominated by two major parties and marred by allegations of electoral malpractice had clearly left its mark. Politicians from both sides were deeply suspicious of each other's motives. Neither felt they could trust each other and some harboured a visceral hatred of their opponents. As polling day loomed these deeply ingrained emotions would lead both sides' suspicion to increase disproportionately.

The 2001 election would not formally begin until the dissolution of parliament and the nomination of candidates in reality the campaign had begun almost as soon as the last election had ended. Every activity or manoeuvre was viewed with an eye on the forthcoming election. Since the last elections two new parties had appeared on the scene – Rise Organise and Rebuild (ROAR) led by Ravi Dev, and the Guyana Action Party (GAP) led by Paul Hardy. The rise of ROAR was reminiscent of the evolution of the PPP in the late '40s and early '50s. ROAR actively supported the formation of Guyana Sugar Workers Union, which would challenge the existing Guyana Agricultural Workers Union for recognition in the sugar industry and backed the Essequibo Rise Producers Association, which would contest the role of the Rice Producers Association on the Essequibo river. GAP had never previously contested an election but had been active allegedly in the hinterland communities since 1991. The evolution of ROAR and where it seemed to gather support from led many commentators to conclude that they were an Indo-Guyanese party and would pose the greatest threat to the incumbent PPP/Civic Government. Certainly many of their activists were former PPP supporters. GAP, by association, were perceived to be an Amerindian party although they would refute such claims pointing to their support for all hinterland communities. They too were perceived to be a greater threat to the PPP/Civic.

A total of twenty eight parties had registered an interest in contesting the 2001 elections with GECOM. Of these twenty two nominated scrutineers to attend GECOM meetings and to be a contact point with the election authorities. If attendance at GECOM's regular scrutineer meetings prior to Christmas were indicative of parties likely to contest elections then no more than thirteen parties seemed likely to be on the ballot.

The pre nomination day campaign was overshadowed by differences of opinion on the veracity of the PVL and who would govern the country after 17 January. The commonly held belief was that the eventual number of electors on the final voters' list would have significant bearing on the outcome, particularly if one took the view that the election was largely an ethnic census. Thus the parties contested every change in the list believing that their opponents were deliberately attempting to disenfranchise their voters. Furthermore, although there was no reliable evidence to prove this, some believed that larger numbers of Indo-Guyanese had emigrated since 1997 than Afro-Guyanese. It should be noted that almost every politician calculated differential changes in the electoral register in terms of seats lost or gained. One seat it was believed could be won on little more than 4,500 votes (which

approximated to one quota of votes under the PR system). Thus a relatively small net change in the ethnic balance of the voters' list, it was supposed, could have significant implications in a closely run election.

The second burning issue prior to Christmas concerned the implications of elections held after 17 January – the date set in the Herdmanston Agreement for a new poll. The Opposition argued, with the exception of TUF and ROAR, that it should not be "business as usual[18]" after 17 January. As has been recorded above an All Party Committee nominated by the parliamentary parties then debated the whole issue at length. The committee discussed various options from voluntary restrictions on the existing Government to a fully fledged transitional Administration. Just prior to New Year the committee came close to agreeing on legislated for restrictions on Parties and Government similar to those outlined in the Indian Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct. Agreement remained elusive as a result the committee could not reach a consensus. The existing Government therefore voluntarily limited its actions in four fields (see section 3.3 above). In the end the issue was effectively resolved through Justice Claudette Singh's consequential order of 26 January 2001.

Following former President Hoyte's speech in mid November there had been a noticeable increase in tension as Indo-Guyanese residents of Georgetown in particular feared a repetition of the events following the 1997 election. Furthermore the debate over the allocation of seats to the new geographical constituencies had soured what were poor relations between the Government and Opposition parties. The decision of GECOM to effectively remove all those named on the PVL who had not come forward to be photographed coupled with the PNC/Reform's withdrawal of their mass objection seemed to have solved one outstanding problem. The meeting of the parliamentary leaders with the President and their decision to establish the All Party Committee further helped reduce political tension. Although the committee had been unable to resolve the issue the mere fact that the public knew the Parties were holding discussion helped reduce public anxiety. In the lead up to January 17 the PNC/Reform consistently urged their supporters both in private and publicly to remain calm.

8.2 Launch of the Party Campaigns – Pre Nomination Day Campaigns

On January 14 the PNC/Reform publicly launched their election campaign at large public meeting in the Square of the Revolution. Speaking to a crowd of some 20,000 supporters the PNC/Reform's leadership called on the supporters to concentrate on the election day and to avoid any confrontation. It was noticeable at that meeting that the PNC/Reform's long list of speakers included a significant number of Indo-Guyanese speakers and an even split between men and women. This coupled with their campaign slogans "Ready to Rescue the Nation" and "Putting Guyana First" were clear indications that the Party wished to present itself as national party. However Hoyte's attacks on the PPP/Civic Government and Party were vituperative claiming the Government had created deep seated racial tension and that the Party was "steeped in evil".

The judgement of Justice Singh was obviously a point of considerable political debate. In his televised address to the nation, former President Hoyte claimed that the country faced a "constitutional crisis". This was theme that he and others picked up at the Party's second large rally[19] at which the PNC leader unveiled his policy of "slowfire" whilst warning supporters to avoid public protest –"do not go helter skelter into the streets". References to slow fire seemed reminiscent of calls made by the late Forbes Burnham in the early sixties during which protesters took to the streets and the public services ground to a halt through strikes. However Hoyte's call for "slow fire" was never clearly enunciated with exception of his

[18] *This phrase was first used by former President Hoyte during his party's rally on the Square of the Revolution on Thursday 16 November.*
[19] *PNC/Reform rally in Linden 20 January at which observers estimated a crowd of some 8,000.*

speech at the Party's third large rally in New Amsterdam[20]. This speech came after Justice Singh had given her consequential order on 26 January.

Public and political reaction to the outcome of Esther Pereira's case was divided. Bewilderingly both Parties claimed to be "satisfied" with the result of the case. The PNC/Reform argued that the vitiating of the election justified their allegations of massive irregularities and their argument that the Government could not claim any legitimacy from the election. The PPP/Civic argued that the Judge had refused to speculate on the impact of the "massive irregularities" (see section 3.2 above) and concluded that the elections were null and void on a technicality. A technicality that, they hastened to add had been agreed by all Parties.

Reaction to the Judge's consequential order was again mixed. The crowd at the court of mainly PNC supporters was angry and confused. They could not understand how the Government could remain in office when the election had been declared null and void. The legal argument of the 'doctrine of necessity' was not one that was comprehensible to PNC supporters. Following this the PNC leader more clearly defined the object of "slow fire". He told supporters in New Amsterdam that weekend that it meant "the withdrawal of labour and services from the Government" and restricting Ministerial access to government owned buildings and property. He once again warned the Army and the Police to be circumspect in following the commands of the "illegitimate" Government and said that ultimately it was the will of the people that they should follow.

Despite these veiled threats observers did not witness any such actions and the Government did not break its promise to keep to its voluntary restrictions. Slow fire, although a popular slogan with some supporters in the capital, did not materialise during the election and public references by PNC/Reform leaders to it dwindled after a few weeks.

PNC had changed its name at its previous congress in late August 2000 to PNC/Reform. However this was more than just a name change as it slowly emerged during the Autumn that Reform intended to be an alliance of non party members who were sympathetic to the PNC. They had been drawn together by businessman Stanley Ming and had developed a programme of large scale infrastructure programmes called Guyana 21. On 29 December PNC and Reform issued publicly a compact between them. However the compact, meant as an agreement between equals, made it clear that PNC/Reform was firmly under the leadership of Desmond Hoyte. On 27 January Reform launched their programme of modernisation at the Meridien Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown at which former President Hoyte gave the keynote address. The relationship between the two entities came under some strain during the campaign and particularly after polling day.

The PPP/Civic took a different approach to the pre nomination day period. Whilst the PNC/Reform held large public rallies the PPP/Civic built up to their launch with a programme of 95 small and medium scale public meetings throughout the coastal regions and around Linden. Surprisingly this first set of such meetings did not concentrate on the so-called PPP/Civic heartlands. For example at least a quarter of their meetings were held in region 10, normally considered a PNC stronghold. Turnout at these meetings varied considerable some attracting large crowds of 500, such as the meeting at Mon Repos on 23 January to none in Bartica a few days earlier on 21 January. The underlying message from the PPP/Civic echoed what would become their main campaign slogan – "Let Progress Continue". Although the content would vary most speakers would contrast the "destruction" of the twenty eight years of PNC rule with the "achievements" of the eight years of PPP Governments. Almost every speaker warned their audience against "wasting" their votes on third parties like ROAR, GDP and C.N. Sharma's Justice for All Party (JFAP). Clearly the Party took the threat to their core support from ROAR seriously. Speaker after speaker would

[20] *Held on 28 January at which observers estimated a crowd of some 12-15,000.*

remind their audiences of how the TUF "helped" the PNC to power and argued that a vote for any other party would be a vote for the PNC.

The PPP/Civic's launch on 4 February was once again[21] held at Kitty Market attracting an audience of 8-9,000 enthusiastic PPP/Civic supporters from across the coast. Speakers, including President Jagdeo, once again returned to the Party's core themes of trust and their "achievements" in government. Criticism of the PNC's past was tempered by calls not to alienate PNC supporters. However attacks on former President Hoyte were far from muted as were the verbal onslaught on ROAR's presidential hopeful Ravi Dev.

The PPP/Civic continued their series of launch rallies at Linden on 11 February and Anna Regina on 17 February. Both were well attended with crowds estimated by observers of 3,000 and 4,000 respectively.

The PPP/Civic issued a code of conduct requiring party members to restrain from inciting racial violence, to respect the law and peaceful political activities and to refrain from slander and personalised attacks. Furthermore the Party's code committed the Party "to reprimand Party members and activists who are in breach of the above (code)". Although this was a laudable attempt to regulate Party activists and members it could never substitute for a legally enforceable code of conduct for all parties. Primarily because voluntary codes like this one could only be policed and enforced by the Party itself and the Party was not always willing to enforce their own Code if it restricted its' campaign activity. For example the code calls on Party members to avoid making slanderous or personalised attacks. On Sunday 18 February the Party's General Secretary in a heavily personalised attack on Ravi Dev told his supporters that Dev and his Party "..talk about God but every night the sons of bitches lie on TV". Later during this rally at Stewartville the Party's presidential candidate, President Jagdeo, urged his supporters to treat the PNC like "donkeys". This was widely perceived by the audience as a call for activists to chase away PNC supporters. Unfortunately, and unknown to the President, some of the crowd, the worse for drink, were busy at that time taunting and abusing local Afro-Guyanese villagers living at the bottom of the Sideline Dam.

The Long Term and EU Observation mission wrote to all twenty six parties inviting them to meetings on arrival and met with sixteen of the parties registered with GECOM. Many of these parties decided not to contest either the National Assembly or the Regional elections.

ROAR had held a number of public meetings throughout the autumn, beginning with their launch rally in early September 2000. These meetings attracted differing size audiences who came more to listen that to enthuse. Most of their meetings were held in Regions 2,3 and 6 and targeted the sugar workers and rice farmers accordingly, which the Party clearly viewed as most sympathetic to their message. At one meeting at the Night School Square Herstelling on the East Bank Demerara the Vice-Chairman of the Herstelling PPP branch attempted to set light to the ROAR banner. He was subsequently arrested although it was never clear whether the Director of Public Prosecutions prosecuted the case. ROAR claimed that this was part of a systematic attempt by the PPP to hinder their campaign.

In the pre-nomination period the observation mission received a number of serious complaints from ROAR of alleged intimidation of activists and supporters. These included allegations of sacking of an activist due to their political activities, and the threat of disciplinary proceedings against another. The most serious allegation made was that the murder of the father of one of their activists was a "political assassination".

Mr. Mohan, a resident of Bush Lot on the Essequibo, was murdered and his son seriously injured by Mr. Haimant Budhan on Sunday 12 November whilst his other son was addressing a ROAR meeting at Port Mourant on the Berbice river. Later that night Police gunned down

[21] *The Party launched both the 1992 and 1997 election campaign from Kitty Market in Georgetown.*

Mr. Mohan's assailant not far from the family's home. The observation mission discussed the allegations of political involvement in this horrendous murder with numerous local sources and was unable to verify the claim.

The mission also investigated the claims made by ROAR activists referred to above. It was certainly true that the threat of disciplinary proceedings had been made in writing to one activist for his involvement in the GSWU, and that another had lost his job when his work colleagues had received severance instead. However neither case were clear cut examples of political intimidation and at no point could the mission find evidence of direct involvement of either the Governing Party or a Minister. Despite the lack of evidence connecting the event to the Government or the PPP/Civic these ROAR activists *believed* that they had suffered because of their political activities. To the Party this was yet another signal that the Governing party would attempt to suppress support for ROAR.

In February the Party launched its blueprint – "Strong Leadership for a New Guyana". In it ROAR proposed radical constitutional reform to create a federal state based on a consociational system.

GAP's campaign was quite different that those of the other parties. Its long developed roots in the hinterland communities were used assiduously by the Party to organise informal local meetings. Few of the other Parties ventured into the hinterland until closer to polling day, primarily because of the high cost of transport leaders and campaigners from the coast. Although GAP's campaign seemed very low key observers noted that it seemed to be extremely successful, as many people in the communities would discuss the prospects of GAP becoming the pivotal party if no party secured a majority in the new National Assembly.

In the meantime a number of the smaller parties both in the 1997 parliament and outside held discussions to form an electoral alliance. Initially the National Front Alliance hoped to include not only the two parties that formed its core – the National Republican Party and the National Democratic Movement – but also some of the other extra parliamentary parties. The newly formed People's United Party, led by Peter Ramsaroop, also joined the front, only to leave a few weeks later when their leader joined Reform. ROAR, GAP, and GDP also joined the discussion but ultimately they did not bear fruit.

However just as it seemed that most of the smaller parties seemed intent on fighting the election separately GAP and the Working People's Alliance (WPA), led by Rupert Roopnarine MP, formed a pact. The WPA had contested the 1997 election in alliance as the Alliance for Guyana. This time they joined forces with GAP. On 17 February GAP/WPA launched their manifesto and renewed their campaign in the hinterlands and along the coast, targeting mainly the Amerindian communities.

8.3 Campaign Finance and Advertising

Campaign finance rules in Guyana are very limited. Each Party contesting the elections must submit accounts following the election. These accounts were not available at the time of the departure of the mission on 5 April, although it is hoped that they were submitted in due course and the details of which can be made known to the public.

It was very much apparent that substantial amounts of money were spent during the election, particularly by the two major Parties. Neither of who had to declare how much money had been donated nor need they declare from whom they had received their financial support. Many commentators presumed that both expatriate Guyanese and the local business community provided substantial donations to a number of political parties.

From the middle of January until polling day the Guyanese electorate were bombarded with TV and Radio adverts on all channels. Once again the adverts mirrored the campaign

themes of the parties and attacking their opponents. The Long Term Observation Group monitored the amount of time and the content of paid advertising in the both print media and five television channels (both publicly and privately owned). A copy of the product of this monitoring is attached to this report in Annex 2. Not only does this show the proportion of advertising on each channel and newspaper paid for by the parties but also it indicates the style of the advertising employed. Unsurprisingly the PPP/Civic was the largest purchaser of advertising space with the exception of *Channels 7 and 6* on which PNC/Reform placed most of their advertising. Analysis of *Channels 7 & 6* reveals the level of mainly negative coverage afforded President Jagdeo by PNC/Reform. PPP/Civic was the largest buyer of advertising on *Channel 14/65*. In contrast their the tone of their advertising on this channel was largely positive about their own candidate and rarely mentioned or attacked former President Hoyte. Advertising on *Channel 28* was fairly evenly balanced between the two major parties although the tone of the advertising is more negative indicating a more aggressive style from both parties on this channel. Both parties advertised in the two major newspapers, although PPP/Civic were the larger purchaser (second to GECOM). What was noticeable about these ads was the larger coverage of Hoyte, which had a substantial negative tone indicating again a more aggressive ad campaign in the press, particularly in the *Stabroek News*, by the PPP/Civic.

The final outstanding point of this analysis was the infinitesimal amount of advertising purchased by the so-called third parties. Of these GAP/WPA were the most prolific buyers but in comparison to their bigger rivals they spent far less. All media outlets confirmed with the observation mission, which was verified with the parties, that they charged the same rates to every party for the same space at the same time. No preference was given to one over the other. However the mission was unable to confirm whether the parties actually paid those amounts for this advertising, which would only become apparent with the publication of party accounts.

The media's own code of conduct stated that the signatories to it would "provide equal access and opportunity to all political parties without discrimination, to purchase space and prime time on radio and television stations to promote their respective views during the period of electioneering". Moreover, the media "may not censor or edit materials submitted by parties, or their agents, for either free, or paid for, publication or broadcast". However, the media reserved the right to reject such materials "in favor of good taste and a respect for public safety and decency" if they were likely to be "hateful, ethnically offensive, promote public disorder or threaten the security of the State."

On January 10, 2001, the *Guyana Broadcast Corporation* (*GBC*) rejected an advertisement submitted by the PNC/Reform promoting its rally scheduled for 14 January 14. In their initial (oral) response, *GBC* allegedly found the PNC/Reform political advertisement contained too much "politicking" and failed to advertise the event sufficiently. In their official response, *GBC* found the text of the proposed advertisement to be "obnoxious, and likely to be objectionable to other political parties." Therefore, the of *GBC* adhoc advertising review committee*,* referring to an earlier draft of the Media Code of Conduct, asked PNC/Reform to review the text of the commercial suggesting they bear in mind that it was supposed to advertise a rally. The troublesome part of the commercial *GBC* was objecting to appeared to be a sentence claiming: "We won in `97 and they stole it. We will win again". Whilst the *Code* provides for the media houses to refuse material, only if such material was "likely to be hateful, ethnically offensive, promote public disorder or threaten the security of the State". Regrettably, the State funded radio *GBC* effectively censored the spot based on rather a subjective judgment that the advertisement was "factually incorrect". It should be noted that this was prior to the courts judgement on the 1997 election result and the PNC had consistently claimed the results to be flawed.

That weekend the *Stabroek News* also edited an advert submitted by ROAR, which it claimed could be offensive as was factually incorrect. Furthermore they feared that such ad

could leave the paper subject to a writ of libel. The fully fledged version was printed in the *Guyana Chronicle* on the same day. The differences were marginal but again revealed how the Code allowed editors to make a subjective decision of the content of paid political advertising. In this case however the party agreed to amend the advert. Similarly this paper also persuaded the PPP/Civic to amend on of its paid adverts at this time. If the laws of libel are such that a paper can be joined in action over the content of a paid political advert, which are often notoriously tendentious, then this leaves editors with little choice but to persuade parties to amend the advert. Unfortunately this is open to abuse and subjective analysis of what is or is not libelous.

8.4 The 2001 Election: Nomination Procedures

In order to qualify for participation in the National Assembly elections, political parties had to contest a minimum of six of the geographic constituencies, with the cumulative total number of seats contested being at least 13.

All nomination papers, including the list of names of candidates and accompanying signatures of voters had to be submitted to GECOM on 15 February. If GECOM found any errors in the submissions they were at liberty to enable the party to rectify the shortcomings.

On 15 February some 13 political parties submitted their nomination papers. However based on an initial assessment by GECOM, only 11 of the 13 qualified to compete in the national election. After a more detailed scrutiny, GECOM announced on Tuesday 20 February that only eight political parties would be competing in the national election (see Table 11 below).

Table 11: Political Parties Contesting 19 March Election for National Assembly

Party	Presidential Candidate	Contested Regions
Guyana Action Party / Working People's Alliance (GAP/WPA)	Paul Hardy	1 - 10
Guyana Democratic Party (GDP)	Asqar Ally	2,3,4,5,6,7,10
Justice for All Party (JFAP)	C.N Sharma	2,3,4,5,6,10
National Front Alliance (NFA)	Keith Scott	3,4,5,6,7,10
People's National Congress / Reform (PNC/R)	Desmond Hoyte	1 – 10
People's Progressive Party / Civic (PPP/C)	Bharat Jagdeo	1 – 10
Rise, Organise and Rebuild (ROAR)	Ravi Dev	2,3,4,5,6,7,10
The United Force (TUF)	Mansoor Nadir	1 – 10

GECOM did not publicly give details on the reasons for the failure by parties, which did not meet the nomination criteria. However, the Chief Elections Officer indicated that the problems were that either the paper work was not in order, or that the candidate lists were short of the minimum requirement. He also indicated that some parties had problems fulfilling the gender requirement. It should be noted that nine party lists containing mistakes were rectified within the specified time.

The People's Republican Party challenged the GECOM decision to disqualify five of their lists (resulting in the party only being able to contest the elections for the Regional Democratic Councils), but the court[22] declined to overturn the GECOM decision.

In general the nomination requirements required of political parties by law are reasonable, and the nomination process was well administered by GECOM. However the Long Term and EU Observation mission received unverified evidence of a number of individuals who had signed affidavits claiming that they had not consented to stand for election. If true it would seem that the some parties had falsified statements of consent.

Furthermore substantial criticism was made over the new requirement for presidential candidates to have been ordinarily resident in Guyana for seven years. GAP in particular complained that the new constitutional amendment[23]would unnecessarily restrict the choice put before the electors and deny expatriate Guyanese who had returned from standing. In the event GECOM took the mature view that they would accept nomination papers from candidacies in good faith assuming their statements to be truthful and it would be for the parties to challenge a statement made by a nominee. Fortunately none did so.

8.5 The Campaign to Polling Day

The election campaign was very active and on the whole largely peaceful. A couple of incidents, discussed below, did somewhat tarnish the image of the campaign. However, it has to be stated that parties, and particularly the large ones, held hundreds of meetings all over the country, including both small neighbourhood meetings and large rallies, and the vast majority were peaceful. Political parties also engaged in massive poster campaigns as well as extensive TV advertising (see section 8.3 above). Observers noted that no party suffered administrative hindrance by state authorities in exercising their right to campaign freely throughout the country.

The Long Term Observation Group attended 86 of the 400 or more rallies and public meetings held by the political parties. Some critics complained that the number of meetings organised by parties had declined and claimed that this seemed to indicate a marked decline in public interest. Our own observations tend to repudiate that belief although the increasing access to television as a major medium of information will inevitably have an impact on the number of meetings held and attendance at them.

Over half of those attended (57%) were PPP/Civic rallies and just over a third were PNC/Reform meetings. Observers managed to attend only 5 meetings organised by other parties – mainly ROAR. The majority of the larger rallies attracted enthusiastic crowds of supporters. The smaller public meetings, usually held on street corners or by the roadside, had lower turnout than the larger rallies or those events at which the Party leader addressed. Estimates by observer placed an average turnout at the small-scale meetings at around 90.

In general the tone and content of these meetings tended to confirm with the pattern that emerged prior to nomination day. Speakers revelled in the opportunity to speak to the faithful (the audiences at either sides rallies rarely attracted interest from across the ethnic divide with a few notable exceptions) and attack their political opponents. Reports from observers revealed that speakers rarely used language that was intended to stir up racial hatred or violence.

8.6 Campaign Incidents prior to Polling Day

[22] *Nateram Das, representative of the People's Republic Party vs. GECOM, No. 26 Demerara 5 March 2001.*
[23] *Constitution (Amendment) (No. 4) Act 2000*

By and large these meetings were about motivating the party's core supporters to turnout and vote. They were largely attended by people who had made up their minds who to vote for many years before and were not really effective in trying to win over support. Neither party, however, accepted that their should be any "no go" areas. The PNC/Reform did hold meetings near to or adjacent to Indo-Guyanese villages. In general the reaction was bemused indifference.

The PPP/Civic, like wise held a number of meetings in almost predominantly Afro-Guyanese areas of Georgetown and Region 4. Often such meetings would attract a small group of hecklers who would vociferously rebut what said from the platform. On one occasion the Prime Minister engaged a group of hecklers to ask questions[24]. Although the group of hecklers surrounded him no violence was displayed. The PPP/Civic claimed that this was an organised attempt to disrupt their public meetings. Reports from these meetings did reveal that these groups of hecklers would have PNC paraphernalia – tee-shirts, posters, palms – which was widely available throughout the capital and does not necessarily prove that these hecklers were organised.

The police arranged for barricades to be placed around the speakers' podium following the throwing of a stone at the Prime Minister at a meeting in Festival City, South Georgetown. This initially seemed to provide adequate protection for the speakers and police would request hecklers to be quiet or leave[25].

On 21 February the PPP/Civic held a meeting at the turning point in Tucville, South Georgetown. Unfortunately this meeting did not pass off without violent incident. Speakers had rocks and stones thrown at them and eventually had to leave. For fear that this incident would spark of a reprisal or encourage further violence the Long Term and EU Observation mission decided to make a public statement (see Annex 3). The statement although referring to the incident made the more general point that; *"It is totally unacceptable that any party or its supporters should be confronted with violence or language that could inflame violence."* and called on all parties and their supporters to act with restraint and engage in the elections peacefully.

Inevitably supporters of various parties did come into conflict but these confrontations thankfully did not spiral out of control into a wider violence prior to polling day. On a number of occasions supporters either out pasting up their own posters or defacing their opponents' would clash. Three cases in particular highlight how these confrontations could get out of hand.

On 3 March a TUF activist, following a day of campaigning visited a friend's house in Good Fortune. He parked his vehicle outside the house, which still had his party's posters on the outside. Later that night a person was seen stripping the posters off the car, when challenged the person became violent and in the ensuing confrontation the TUF activist was assaulted and knocked to the ground. As a result he was hospitalised at the Demerara District Hospital.

On the night prior to the PNC/Reform rally in Charity (region 3), a clash took place between rival groups of PPP/Civic and PNC/Reform supporters. The PNC/Reform activists claimed that they came across PPP/Civic activists daubing slanderous slogans on the road and tearing down PNC/Reform posters. In the resultant confrontation the PNC/Reform alleged that a PPP/Civic activist drew his pistol. The PPP/Civic claim that their activist was attacked by PNC/Reform activists and reached for his pistol but did not draw it. The Observer Mission confirmed that the PPP/Civic activist did have a firearm license and did carry his gun on the night.

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[24] *North Ruimveldt, Georgetown 12 February 2001, Odinga Lamumba, presidential advisor on empowerment, did the same at Bagotville, East Bank on 29 January.*

[25] *Agricola, South Georgetown 14 February 2001.*

Also on the night of 3 March three ROAR activists, whilst pasting posters on a wall were fired at allegedly by PPP/Civic supporters. Their alleged attackers deny any such involvement although local people near Port Mourant in Region 6 confirmed they heard shots fired at the time. This matter along with all the others listed above were bought before the police who investigated but found great difficulty in finding reliable eye witness accounts particularly as the conflicting groups gave conflicting evidence.

These were not the only incidents of rival groups of supporters involved in unnecessary conflict. Party workers would go out most nights to paste up party posters. These night time activities would often attract the attention of another party's supporters. All to often the rival supporters would begin to shout abuse and begin to tear down each other's posters. ROAR for example complained on thirteen different incidents of this nature. ROAR, although making great play of this "harassment" in a press conference, failed to point out that its own supporters had been active in tearing down their opponent's posters as well.

There is one last incident that needs to be reported. On 13 March, the police at a peaceful demonstration outside GECOM arrested the controversial TV talk show host Mark Benschop. Benschop had urged viewers to protest outside GECOM over the late distribution of ID cards and the problems encountered with the Official List of Electors. His arrest and detention (the second time in as many weeks) sparked off a larger demonstration outside the Brickdam police station, where he was held. The stand off with the police eventually turned into violent confrontation as the crowd pelted officers in riot gear with stones, who in turn responded by firing tear gas and shots. A running battle between rioters and police ensued, only concluding later that night when the small crowds of demonstrators dispersed.

As election day loomed the parties and their supporters became more anxious and claims and counter claims over who was to blame became common place. Although many of these "confrontations" remained largely peaceful if slightly unpleasant for those involved, it reminded many of the troubles that had beset previous elections and added to an air of tension in the run up to polling day. It was, perhaps inevitable that such confrontations would detract from a campaign that was hard fought but largely peaceful.

9. Media

9.1 Structure of the Media

There are nineteen electronic outlets and around six print media companies in Guyana. Due to the absence of electronic media legislation, there are almost no guidelines to regulate the media and thus the majority of these media operate without valid licenses.

Radio is the one medium that can be heard throughout the whole country, albeit faintly in parts of the hinterland. Most TV can be seen in Georgetown and marts of the coast, which is also the main area for sales of the print media. The hinterland therefore is largely reliant on word of mouth, Radio and out of date copies of the newspapers.

The Government retains control over the publicly owned media through its Ministry of Information. The principle activity of this ministry is to provide the public with information about Government activities. Publicly owned media includes the three radio stations under the *Guyana Broadcasting Company (GBC)*, *Guyana Television (GTV)* and *The Guyana Chronicle*.

The Government monopoly of radio, the only nationwide medium, has been the subject of considerable criticism in the past as more than twenty requests for radio frequency authorisation have been turned down. Bizarrely the Government's reason for refusing to break the state's monopoly in radio broadcasting is due to lack of broadcast legislation governing their allocation[26]. The Opposition claimed that Government's tardiness to open up radio to competition is proof of the Government's desire to control the flow of information. Such claims hard to sustain given the mushrooming of private (largely unlicensed) TV stations.

Whilst the quantity of TV stations for such a small country remains high, the quality of their production is poor. In the absence of a Copyright Act, the vast majority of media houses take programmes and films from the U.S. satellites, producing almost exclusively only their own news and current affairs programs.

The publicly owned *Chronicle* and the privately owned *Stabroek News* and the weekly *Kaiteur News* are the main print media. Both major dailies have similar size readership, although the *Stabroek* seems to have benefited from the PNC's call to boycott the *Chronicle* after the 1997 elections and has a slightly larger readership. Both papers estimate reasonably that their readership is four times the number of sales. This would indicate that almost every household along the coast reads a copy of one or other paper's Sunday edition.

Audience and listernership data for Guyanese TV and radio is almost non-existent. The Long Term and EU Observation mission did find some independent research on this, which indicated that news on channels *6, 7, 11, 14/65,* and *28* probably attract the largest number of viewers. Consequently the mission decided to monitor the output of these channels, *GBC*'s *Voice of Guyana news broadcasts* and both the *Chronicle* and *Stabroek News*. What is clear from the amount of time and money spent on TV and Radio advertising is that both the major parties recognise that the electronic media is fast becoming a significant source of information for most voters.

9.2 Results of Media Monitoring

The observation mission sought to evaluate whether the media provided objective and balanced coverage of the issues connected with the elections for voters to make qualified and well informed choice. The media were monitored from January 1 until 18 March 18, 2001, using qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Quantitative analysis measures the total amount of space and time devoted for elections related coverage on the *GTV (Channel 11)*, four private television *(Channels 6, 7, 14/65 & 28)*, *Voice of Guyana (VOG)* and the two national newspapers. Using qualitative analysis the observation mission could determine whether coverage was positive, negative or neutral in its content. The charts produced from this monitoring are included in Annex 3.

Television and Radio

Publicly owned media in particular should to provide voters with information about candidates and their programmes free from prejudice and preference. Moreover, all the publicly owned electronic and print media signed the Media Code of Conduct in which they agreed to maintain standards of impartiality and balance when reporting during the election period. The results of the mission's media monitoring clearly reveals that *GTV, GBC* and *The Chronicle* failed to meet these commitments.

The level of bias towards President Jagdeo was clear in the amount of time -1 hour 40 minutes – allocated on *GTV's* prime time news as well as in the tone of coverage. In contrast

[26] *In contrast the lack of legislation to govern TV frequencies has not stopped the massive growth of the private sector, where there are at least 18 private TV stations.*

his rival, former President Hoyte, received only 18 min. 28 seconds for the same period on the publicly funded TV. Whilst the state TV broadcaster provided extensive and full coverage of the PPP/Civic campaign, the information about PNC/Reform rallies and meetings was in number of occasions delayed and offered a distorted view of events. Moreover, there was a persistent problem with one-sided, inaccurate stories or even intentional omission of important facts.

Since the beginning of January 2001, *GTV* devoted almost a third (32%) of its coverage on prime time to the activities of the government and its achievements. Given the content of the PPP/Civic's campaign – "Let Progress Continue" – there can be little doubt that the substantial coverage afforded the Government and its achievements during this period was\ intended to bolster the PPP/Civic campaign. In addition, President Jagdeo, and the PPP/Civic's presidential candidate was given almost one fifth (18%) of overwhelmingly positive or neutral coverage. The party itself received 11% of *GTV's* coverage, which again was rarely critical. Although coverage of PNC/Reform (11%) matched the PPP/Civic's coverage, the tone of the coverage was mainly neutral in its tone. The amount of coverage afforded the other contestants on GTV was minimal, although it improved somewhat following criticism by GECOM's Media Monitoring Unit[27] (MMU) and the Independent Panel of Media Referees[28] (the Panel). However coverage of all other contestants never exceeded one twentieth (4%) of the total time.

GTV also failed to provide balanced coverage in its current affairs programmes. The ruling Party, President and his government were given over three quarters (77 %) of the elections related coverage. In comparison, PNC/Reform was secured only 10% of the coverage, which was mainly neutral or negative in tone. Despite criticism from the MMU and the Panel, the publicly funded TV continued to show "*This week with the President"* which gave a substantial advantage to the incumbent over his rivals. Such opportunity was never offered to any other candidate. Further, members of the Cabinet were given similar opportunity to present their achievements in long TV programs which members of the *Panel* called "free campaign commercials". No member of the opposition ever received an invitation to such programs.

GTV's only programme, which attempted to challenge the monopoly of views on the channel, was *"The Big Question"*. This programme was the only one in which divergent political views could be heard and was the only current affairs programme on the Channel, which met the goals of impartiality in the Media Code of Conduct.

News coverage on two of the four private TV channels offered viewers far more balanced coverage of the campaign although there was a discernable trend to balance the bias of the publicly owned media with marginally more favourable coverage of the PNC/Reform. In general *Prime News, Capitol News* and *Evening News* offered a level playing field for the main opposition party, and their stories about the ruling Party, President and government generally remained neutral. Monitoring of *Capitol News* revealed generally balanced coverage there was a detectable bias in the tone of some of its coverage of the PNC/Reform. *Channel 65* however showed clear bias in its news coverage in favour of PPP/Civic and the state administration, largely ignoring other political parties.

Prime News rents time for their news cast from *Channel 6*, which is owned by *C.N Sharma*, one of the presidential candidates and leader of the *Justice for All party*. Whilst Sharma used his appearances on his Channel's talk show "*The Voice of People*" to promote his own candidacy, *Prime News* was not persuaded to give favourable coverage to the owner

[27] GECOM established a large media monitoring unit with the support of the Canadian International development Agency and UNDP. This unit produced a number of public reports prior to and after election day.

[28] The Independent Panel of Media Referees was established with the agreement of all media outlets which supported the GECOM inspired Media Code of Conduct. The panel included two prominent media practitioners from the Caribbean. They too produced a number of public reports prior to and after polling day. The panelists were also funded by CIDA.

of the Channel. Over the period of three months, *Prime News* devoted a quarter (26%) of the elections related coverage to PNC/Reform showing the party mainly in a neutral or positive manner. Similarly, PPP/Civic, although receiving less time (14%) was portrayed mainly in a neutral or positive manner. The coverage of the Government totaled 13% of the *Prime News'* coverage, most of which was neutral or negative. Furthermore *Prime News* provided substantial coverage (28%) of GECOM during the period of monitoring.

This discernable "pattern" to balance the coverage of the publicly owned media was even more apparent on *Capitol News.* The largest amount of time on the news was devoted to cover activities of the PNC/Reform (22%), which was primarily neutral or positive in its tone. In comparison the PPP/Civic received just under a fifth (16%) of the coverage, which was mainly neutral or negative tone. The Government and GECOM were afforded 21% and 16% of the *Capitol News* coverage respectively and the information was once again predominantly neutral.

According to the limited information on audience figure available to the observation mission the most popular newscast is *Evening News* broadcast on *Channel 28*. *Evening News* afforded just under a third (31%) of its coverage to PNC/Reform that was mainly neutral (55%) or positive (40%) in its tone, whereas coverage of the PPP/Civic (21%) was predominantly neutral. Once again, GECOM received a significant amount (20%) of predominantly neutral time and the government received 12% of the total elections related time in which they were depicted in neutral or negative tone.

Channel 65`s prime news was an exception to the rest of the private media, in that it showed clear bias towards the incumbent PPP/Civic Government and largely ignored other parties. The coverage of ruling Party, its presidential candidate and his government came to over two thirds (68%) of the elections related news items, which was almost exclusively positive or neutral. In contrast PNC/Reform was afforded a miserly one twentieth (5%) of coverage and was portrayed in neutral or negative manner.

The incumbent Government retains monopoly on radio. In such circumstances there should be an even greater onus on this media to provide its listeners with balanced reporting of politics and the election campaign. *GBC's Voice of* Guyana is broadcast on all three radio channels. In contrast to what should be the role of a publicly funded broadcaster, *VOG* provided the ruling party, its presidential candidate and his government over two thirds (67 %) of its elections related coverage. These reports were overwhelmingly positive in tone. Unsurprisingly, therefore, PNC/Reform received only 8 % of the relevant time, which was mainly neutral in its content.

Print Media

The print media commands a substantial section of the marketplace and offers readers a clear choice. The *Stabroek News*, a privately owned paper, was the most balanced of the media outlets monitored by the observation mission, offering its readers balanced coverage of the major players whilst allowing space for the alternative views of the so-called third parties. The *Guyana Chronicle*, is a publicly owned paper (although it apparently receives no direct public subsidy), which, along with most of the rest of the publicly owned media, gave its readers with a far more one sided view. The observation mission began monitoring these two papers at the beginning of December 2000.

The *Stabroek News* devoted just under a third (29%) of its space to the Government, a fifth (22%) to coverage of GECOM, 14% to PNC/Reform and 10% to PPP/Civic. The reporting of these subjects was mainly neutral or positive. In its *Letters & Editorials*, the readers of *Stabroek News* could read and expressed their criticism of all the political parties including the Government and the incumbent President.

By comparison *The Guyana Chronicle* devoted almost half (44%) of its domestic political coverage to the Government and President Jagdeo. The PNC/Reform, in contrast, received only 9% of this coverage. Furthermore the reporting of the Government and President was predominantly positive or neutral in its tone. Moreover, in its *Letter & Editorials*, *The Chronicle's* editorial team published only those letters critical of PNC/R and its editorials were clearly opposed to a return to PNC/Reform rule.

Talk Shows

Whilst talk shows are an exciting opportunity for the expression of diverse ideas, if left totally without some balanced views, they can mislead, misrepresent and misinform many viewers. Although it could be dangerous to assign government the power to adjudicate "fairness" in the marketplace of ideas, it is even more dangerous if a talk show host does not allow for diversity of views. None of the talk shows on *Channel 9, Channel 6* or *Channel 69* offered their audience divergent views to those of the host and could be viewed more as one-sided monologues. They largely ignored the Code and failed to meet any standards of professional journalism or ethics either. Further, the talk show hosts presented inflammatory rumours, which were in most cases completely unsubstantiated allegations, as facts.

In presentation of his own perspective about the work and responsibility of a talk show host to provide evidence to such allegations and rumours, *Clem David*, the talk show host on *Channel 6* and prime ministerial candidate for *JFAP*, believed that "his role was not to provide evidence but to inform the government, the opposition, the police and the people, and their role was to investigate". Another talk show host argued that he "represented a counterbalance to what he saw as an unfair platform for the PPP/C", referring to extensive coverage of the state administration by the State media. Although most of the talk show hosts criticised the Government's control of the media, they all effectively censored any opposition views by cutting off almost all the viewers with different point of view to their own. For example, the *Channel 6* owner and host of *"Justice for All"*, Mr. C.N. Sharma whilst providing the opportunity for the poor to speak out would use their comments to promote his own political ambitions.

In their talk shows on *Channel 9*, Mark Benschop and Roger Moore showed by far the most irresponsible and inflammatory behaviour by clearly inciting people to racial hatred and unrest. Both were strong supporters of the PNC/Reform and harsh critics of the PPP/Civic Government and the President addressing them as the "illegal regime". Further, especially Benschop did not refrain from ridiculing people on the basis of race, sexual orientation, religion and physical or mental ability, which was in direct conflict with the Code. Consequently eight libel charges were filed against him.

Benschop was arrested on several occasions prior to election day. These arrests he contended were attempts by the government to silence him. If anything these arrests only seemed to add to his notoriety. Shortly before polling day his rhetoric became even more aggressively opposed to the PPP/Civic and the Government. His extensive "election day coverage" violated the silence period stipulated in the Code. In the immediate aftermath of the poll he talked excitedly of the need for "revolution". Given the highly polarized and tense situation in the country, such behaviour must be treated at least as extremely irresponsible. In their assessment, the members of the Refereeing Panel referred to the behaviour of the talk show hosts as "grossly irresponsible in a volatile political climate leading to a general elections which pushes the practice of free speech over the edge into anarchy".

Allocation of Free Time and the Presidential Debates

As has been noted earlier, the so-called third parties rarely, if ever, received coverage in the electronic media and only on occasion in the written press (with the exception of the *Stabroek News*). They had far fewer resources and thus could not compete with the blanket

advertising of the two larger parties. Therefore the allocation of a small amount of free time and the proposed presidential debates should have given them at least some time to advocate their opinions in the media.

GECOM proposed at a very late date to hold four presidential debates for representatives of the parties contesting the elections on television and radio. A simple but fair formula for allocating time to each party was drawn up. However due to delays in response from all the candidates and some confusion over who had agreed to take part only one debate was recorded. The debate, despite the entreaties of the Code of Conduct received minimal coverage.

Despite the vagueness of the Media Code of Conduct on the allocation of free time, each media outlet that had signed it had accepted the need to provide some free time on their channel or in their pages. Publicly owned media, which has possibly more reason to provide such time, gave no free time or space to the contestants. Private TV provided a minimal amount. Once again, only the *Stabroek News* met the challenge of providing clearly defined free space in its pages.

Given the importance of the media in providing parties with a platform for airing their views and the dominance of the two major parties over all others in terms of news coverage and paid advertising time, consideration should be given to providing all parties with the statutory right to a clearly defined amount of free time on the publicly owned media.

Regulatory framework

The *Constitution* of Guyana in its Article 40 (chapter III) guarantees the basic human rights and freedoms in conformity to generally acknowledged principles and standards of the international law. However there is a marked absence of any modern media legislation or regulatory bodies in Guyana. Consequently the media, with the encouragement of GECOM, drew up the Media Code of Conduct. In signing the Code, the media generally agreed to play impartial, fair and objective role in covering activities of all political contestants, particularly in terms of accurate and balance reporting.

The signatories to the Code based their acceptance and subscription to the Code on the fact that neither Government nor GECOM would impose any prior restraints or censorship on any publication by the media. Thus moral suasion, it was hoped, would provide sufficient deterrence to wildly inaccurate comment and biased reporting. To buttress this Code GECOM established its own Media Monitoring Unit, which provided the media with regular reports in the run up to polling day. Furthermore the independent refereeing panel envisaged in the Code was established and also produced a number of critical reports. Despite these entreaties, the evidence of the observation mission's monitoring clearly reveals that all of the publicly owned and some of the privately owned media largely ignored the Code and that the chat show hosts never attempted to live up to its fine words. In can only be concluded that moral suasion as a concept failed completely to deter wildly inaccurate commentary and biased reporting.

There is a clear need, therefore, for the new Government, in collusion with the media and the opposition parties, to bring forward fair and reasonable broadcasting legislation. Furthermore the election law should provide the media with clearer guidance on the period of an election and time "pending" an election and should obligate the publicly funded media (at the very least) to provide a statutory amount of time for free for all contesting parties.

10. Observation of Polling Day

Polling for ordinary registered voters was scheduled for 19 March. According to the law the Disciplined Services[29] may vote separately. They would vote one week before on Monday 12 March. The procedures for polling were similar with one major difference – procedures for identification of voters.

10.2 Discipline Services Polling

A total of 6,407 members of the Disciplined Services were placed on the official role for polling on 12 March. However as GECOM struggled to finalise preparations for the poll it became clear that a number of members of the Disciplined Services were missing from the roll. Further discussions were held with the respective GECOM ballot officers and their respective counterparts in the Disciplined Services during the weekend before polling. Following further enquiries another 615 eligible voters were added, giving a total of 7,022 electors.

Table 12: Disciplined Services Balloting

Disciplined Service	Official Roll	Addendum	Total
Police Force	4,351	257	4,608
Prison Service	339	8	347
Defence Force	1,717	350	2,067

Source: GECOM

The Long Term Observation Group collaborated with the other observer groups present at that time – CARICOM, Carter Centre, Commonwealth and OAS – to monitor Disciplined Services polling. Voting took place at sixty four polling places (of which 21 in region 4), of which twenty seven were to visited by airplane or boat. Observers were unable to monitor polling in the latter due to lack of space on the relevant transport, but did monitor polling in the majority of other sites (54%).

Polling was scheduled to begin at 06:00. However due to the confusion over preparations and the need to clarify the official roll some ballot centres did not receive their materials on time. Election materials for region 6, for example, only crossed the Berbice River at 06:30 and polling in Suddie Police Station in region 2 did not begin until 08:30. It was an inauspicious start to the day. These delays were further compounded by the delay in transporting the addendum to the list to ballot centres, the last of which was delivered at 14:00.

Despite these early problems polling proceeded smoothly if a little slowly, primarily due to the need for each voter to provide proof of identity. These procedures were further hampered by a lack of ID. In some cases an Oath of Identity had to used to allow the applicant to vote. The use of oaths had not been foreseen and was a cause for concern to observers and prompted a letter of from the PPP/Civic who noted with concern the advisory provided to ballot centres by GECOM on the day.

Notwithstanding these problems most electors seemed satisfied. However as the day progressed it became apparent that a number of Disciplined Services electors were not included on either the Official Roll or the addendum. In many cases these service men and women were turned away although some clearly were given the impression that they would be allowed to vote on 19 March. This would be the cause of some friction on that day particularly in a polling station in Region 5. Observers were later informed that over 1,000

[29] *The defence forces, police and prison services.*

members of the Disciplined Services would be unable to vote as they had not been included on the list and would not be allowed to vote on 19 March.

Following the close of polls all ballot envelopes (each individual ballot paper is placed in an envelope) were packed and dispatched to GECOM forward onward transportation to the region in which the voter was listed on the Official List of Electors. The returning Officer would then pass these envelopes to specified polling stations for inclusion among the rest of that station's ballot papers. In a notice made under the RPA, GECOM announced which polling stations would receive Disciplined Services ballot envelopes. The notice named a total of forty one polling stations, twenty two of which were located in Region 4.

Given the relative complexity of this process and the additional administrative burden placed on GECOM, consideration should be given to allowing Disciplined Services time off to attend their own polling station or to vote using a certificate of employment or by proxy. Thus removing the need for separate Disciplined Service balloting.

10.2 Polling Day, March 19

Short Term Observers, under the joint administration of the Long Term and EU Observations missions, watched polling and counting in nine of the ten election districts. The missions co-ordinated their deployment structure with all other international observation missions present in the country (CARICOM, Carter Centre, Commonwealth and OAS). Thereby maximising the coverage by international observers and minimising the amount of duplication.

The CARICOM and the Carter Centre teams filled out the report forms designed by the missions. Consequently observer reports were received from all ten electoral districts. The Long Term and EU Observation missions received reports for a total of 627 polling stations (33.1% of the total number). In some cases Observers paid return visits to some polling stations, resulting in a total of 682 reports being submitted and processed. Furthermore Observer reports were received on 54 opening of polling stations and 54 counting in polling stations.

The mission received reports on the tabulation of results at both the Deputy Returning Officer level and Returning Officer level, as well as receiving observer copies or official copies of polling stations' and tabulated district results. Furthermore the Long Term and Carter Centre Observers were given access to review all statement of polls present at GECOM.

10.3 Opening of Polling Stations

Party agents from both major parties were present at all polling stations visited, with PNC/Reform present at 53 of the 54 and PPP/Civic at 49 of the 54. The majority of stations visited opened on time although a small minority (7.5%) stations opened late. However, later reports based on examination of poll books in polling stations visited throughout the day indicated that some 15% of stations did not open on time.

The main reason for the delay in opening appeared to be the lack of some election materials. Observers' reports indicate that key election material was missing in just under half (45%) of such stations affected. However, it is clear that the shortcomings were quickly addressed, allowing stations to open fairly soon after 06.00 in most cases.

10.4 The Voting Process

It is clear from the reports of observers that the voting process was administered in a generally competent manner. In fact 97.5% of observer reports classified the process as having no or only minor irregularities. This is a very positive rating, and is particularly pleasing given the concerns the observation mission had on the eve of the election, with regards the mixed quality of training and the very late appointment of many officials, particularly in Region 4.

The data collected also confirms the very high turnout (89%) figures recorded across the country and observers also confirmed that there were no reported cases of multiple voting or impersonation of voters. Polling agents of both the major parties were present in every polling station visited and the non partisan domestic observer group, the Electoral Assistance Bureau, were only present in 356 of the polling stations visited by international observers. The presence of both parties and non-partisan observers in polling stations is particularly important as their presence can provide greater reassurance for electors and the parties. The smaller parties were far less likely to be present and most observers only noted their presence in one in ten of stations visited.

The late changes to the requirements for establishing an elector's identity did provide some confusion in a few polling stations. However most voter's who came to vote did have either a new national ID card or an appropriate form of identification. In absence of ID presiding officers were happy to allow electors to swear an oath of identity accounting for some 20% of voters on the lists.

As the day progressed a more significant issue arose time and again at polling stations. Observers reported that a small number of people were coming to vote only to find that their name was not on the Official List of Electors (including addendum). In some cases these would-be voters had bona fide new national ID cards or receipt stubs from the photographic exercise. In general the polling station staff rightly refused to give these would-be voters a ballot paper. Observers' estimates of the number of people affected varied from place to place but was on average no more than two to three people at each polling station visited. Furthermore observers reported that this problem was common to all regions of the country and among all communities.

It had already been reported to the observation mission that GECOM had little confidence in the reliability of the stubs as evidence had been bought to their attention that the stubs were easily forged. Notwithstanding the possibility that some of these persons might have deliberately forged stubs, there were a significant number of would-be electors would had ID cards but were not listed. Furthermore these persons were found in all regions of the country and from all communities, which would tend to indicate that they were not victims of an organised attempt to disenfranchise them. It is deeply disturbing however to know that a significant number of persons who had been listed on the RVL had now had their names deleted from the OLE and were not included on the addendum. Their deletion from the voters' list is inexplicable.

The observation mission received representations from both the PPP/Civic and the PNC/Reform during the course of polling day, complaining that "their" voters had been disenfranchised. The PNC/Reform's headquarters in Georgetown was crowded with angry citizens who claimed that they could not find their names on the list at their polling station. The problem was made worse as the CD-ROM given to the PNC/Reform (and also to GAP/WPA) were faulty and kept giving incorrect information on the location of these people on the lists. Often a search on the CD-ROM by name or by address would give differing information on the location of that person's polling station. Although a search by MRC number, if known, did give the correct location, if the person was listed at all.

Shots of these scenes were transmitted on television during the news and on the talk show *"Straight Talk"*. Furthermore the Commissioner of Police wrote to the Chairman of

GECOM over his concern for public safety, warning the Chairman of the possibility of "riotous behaviour" in the event that nothing was done to placate frustrated would be electors.

In the late afternoon the Chairman of the PNC/Reform and former member of GECOM, Mr. Robert Corbin, made representations to the Chairman of GECOM. GECOM had sat the night prior to polling day (their meeting finished around 1:30 on 19 March), to debate whether a person issued with an ID cards but not listed should be allowed to vote. The Commission had decided, by a vote of 4 to 2, that only a person listed on the Official List of Electors as amended by the Addendum should be allowed to vote. Mr. Corbin asked, less than an hour before close of poll, whether this decision could be revisited.

The Commissioners were recalled to meet and discuss this issue once again. At 18:00 the spokesperson for GECOM, Mr. Hugh Chomedley, announced on radio and television that polling stations were to remain open until further notice. The observation mission, however, had already received calls from the field prior to this public announcement from observers in regions 3,4,6,7,9 and 10 that polling stations were receiving "instructions" to remain open for one hour and allow persons not listed but holding valid new National ID cards to vote. In fact observers outside PNC/Reform's headquarters had heard similar advice announced through loud hailers from within the PNC/Reform compound at 17:45. Furthermore observers in South Georgetown heard announcements made from minibuses touring the district at 17:50 informing people that they could vote if they had either an ID card or a stub. The observation mission called GECOM to seek confirmation whether instructions had been given for the polls to remain open. Neither the Deputy Chief Elections Officer nor the Head of Logistics could confirm or deny these reports.

Observers in Lodge, East and West Ruimveldt, Kitty, Victoria, Eccles, BV, Vryheids Lust reported that crowds had gathered outside polling stations demanding that the polls must remain open and that those with ID cards and stubs must be allowed to vote. Confrontation between polling station staff and police officers on duty and the crowds swiftly became threatening.

International observers in East Ruimveldt and Victoria received threats from the crowds. At 17:50 the observer team in East Ruimveldt secondary school moved to a quieter polling station situated in a nursery school in West Ruimveldt only to witness a minibus full with members of the crowd from East Ruimveldt Secondary School arriving and demanding the polling station there now remain open. Once again as more minibuses arrived the crowd became more aggressive. A woman alighted from one of these minibuses and informed staff that the polling station should remain open and allow voters with ID cards and stubs to vote. The person who made the announcement claimed to a GECOM staff member and did indeed have a GECOM ID card, but on closer inspection the observers noted that name of the person on the card was not the same as the woman. As the crowd was once again becoming more aggressive toward the international observers the team decided to leave.

The observer team in Victoria after some time also decided to leave the polling station as the crowd at that polling station had become more aggressive and was threatening the observers. These were unfortunate incidents were not symptomatic and in most cases observers recorded confusion among polling staff, many of whom ignored these "instructions" and closed their polling stations.

GECOM met and by 18:33 the commissioners once again confirmed their ruling that only those on the Official List of Electors as amended by the Addendum should be allowed to vote and issue a direct instruction that all polling stations should shut immediately. This message, however, took considerably more time to be communicated to polling stations, and the public announcement made by the GECOM spokesperson was far from clear.

In Lethem, for example, the polling stations closed then reopened at 18:30 and stayed open for another hour. Observers at Lodge Community High School in the capital stayed open until 19:30. The mission received a confirmed report that the last polling station in the Sofia district of Georgetown closed at 21:30. Despite the confusion over when to close the polls most observers reported that few people voted after 18:00 in polling stations that remained open.

In press conferences later that night both the Chairman and Chief Elections Officer asserted that they had not issued any official instruction permitting polling station staff to issue ballot papers to anyone in possession of either an ID card or stubs but were not on the voters' list.

10.5 Counting and Collation of Results

Counting of votes takes place in the polling station, the results are publicly posted outside and copies of the Statement of Poll are provided to party agents and others present. In the 1997 election a substantial number of Statement of Poll were either lost or were not signed by the Presiding Officer. Consequently the declaration of results of that election proceeded slowly and suspicion grew. GECOM therefore stressed to the prospective polling station staff the importance of signing, posting and delivering Statement of Poll during training. Furthermore an ambitious scheme for the speedy delivery of results to GECOM from polling stations through Deputy Returning Officers and Returning Officers was drawn up.

Reports from the small number of polling station counts observed reveal that the procedures were generally followed albeit slowly. The counting of a few hundred ballot papers for both national assembly and regional council elections took, on average, 5 hours to complete. The most time consuming part of which was the completion of polling station documentation and packing of the 29 different forms (some of which had to be completed in triplicate) into the correct envelopes. The conclusions most observers came to was that although polling station staff had a good grasp of how to conduct voting and counting, they were less well prepared to complete the very large number of forms.

The results were then to be transmitted and transported to the Deputy Returning Officer. The reporting system, designed in Georgetown, required Presiding Officers to telephone the results of their count through to their Deputy Returning Officer. Unfortunately most polling stations were not equipped with telephones and the cellular phones made available proved to be unreliable (the system does not cover the whole country or even all areas of the capital). Although GECOM had hoped that each region would test the reporting system, only one succeeded in doing so. All other regions were too busy delivering ID cards. Region 6 held its test the weekend before polling day. Their test revealed a number of significant flaws in the reporting system, which the Region could address before the event, however other regions remained oblivious to these problems.

On the night Presiding Officers often waited hours for a member of the regional staff to appear. Others packed up and found the most appropriate system of transport and made their own way to the office of the Deputy Returning Officer. The observation mission asked observers to be present at the office of a Deputy Returning Officer to witness the transmission of results whilst members of the long term observation group monitored activity in the Returning Officer's office. In general observers reported that the process although less transparent that it could have been was carried out as efficiently as possible in particularly difficult circumstances. Eventually results began to trickle in to GECOM by fax. By 8:00 on 20 March GECOM announced approximately a fifth of the results.

No further preliminary results were announced for another twelve hours. Clearly the whole system was, by this stage suffering from exhaustion. However the silence from GECOM began to create suspicion among the parties that the problems encountered in 1997 were

being revisited. In an effort to allay some of these fears all observer missions made representations to the Chairman of GECOM to produce whatever results were available. Unfortunately none were forthcoming until 20:00.

By Tuesday the situation still remain very unclear and small groups of protestors had begun to raise their concerns outside GECOM over the number of electors "disenfranchised". The Parties, who by now had received their own copies of the Statement of Poll, could not understand why there was such a delay in producing preliminary results. Observer reports indicated that most regions had scrapped the preliminary results reporting system and were busily collecting Statement of Poll and election materials from all polling stations with a view to transporting them as quickly as possible to Georgetown. By Wednesday afternoon large container trucks containing materials began arriving at GECOM. Envelopes containing Statement of Poll were unloaded and staff was asked to check each and collate the results. Finally on Thursday all Statement of Poll were available at GECOM. Once again Region 4 staff experienced the greatest difficulties as they struggled with the large number of results delivered from polling stations. In some cases staff had to search for copies of Statement of Poll as they had not been packed in the appropriate envelope.

The "preliminary" results were entered onto computers directly from copies of Statement of Poll. Once again exhaustion and poor supervision led to mistakes being made. For example, the publicly announced preliminary results for 4 polling stations in Georgetown (421133B1, 421133B2, 421133C1, and 421133C2) incorrectly attributed the votes cast for the PPP/Civic to the PNC/Reform. Copies of the Statement of Poll indicated that the results had not been entered correctly. Such mistakes only added to public mistrust of the whole computer system in operation and as a result GECOM decided to abandon the computer system and manually tabulate the results from the Statement of Poll.

The manual tabulation began on Wednesday and continued throughout the following day. Although international observers monitored this process, parties and their agents were not invited to be present. Finally at 4:00 on Friday 23 March the Chief Elections Officer in the presence of all members of the Commission announced the result of the manual tabulation publicly. The results revealed that the PPP/Civic had won the election with a reduced majority in the National Assembly. Later that day a member of the PNC/Reform, Mr. Joe Hamilton, filed in court for the public proclamation of the President to be postponed as he claimed that the CEO had not followed the correct procedure for declaring the results of the election.

11. Declaration of Results and Post Election Environment

The atmosphere immediately after polling day deteriorated rapidly. Initially the public vented their frustration through TV chat shows and on the streets through peaceful protests outside GECOM. However the sight of armed riot police outside the election commission was reminiscent to many Guyanese of the images associated with the post election violence of 1997 and tension grew. Unconfirmed reports were received by the observation mission that PPP/Civic election agents had been attacked and kidnapped on election night. Later that week allegations appeared in the press that PPP/Civic election agents were kidnapped and beaten by PNC supporters inside the PNC's headquarters.

Most alarmingly, a gang inside the compound of the PNC's headquarters viciously attacked Haslyn Parris, a PNC appointee to the election commission. Allegedly the gang had turned on Parris because he had endorsed the results declared by the Chief Elections Officer earlier that morning.

Further along the East Coast, residents of Buxton chased a man, who allegedly was attempting to remove a Statement of Poll from a polling station, into the local Post Office. When the Police came to rescue the man, the crowd attempted to stop them. Unfortunately this incident sparked a far more serious clash with the police as residents turned their anger towards the officers present. Within a short space of time burning barricades appeared a along the main East Coast road and violent clashes were reported between residents and riot police. Although an uneasy peace returned to the area within 24 hour, the vivid images of violent confrontation between members of the local community and burning barricades created public panic. In response the whole capital closed down, as shop-keepers and residents locked themselves at home fearing that further confrontation was likely.

The court therefore became the focus of public attention when it returned to the case on Saturday 24 March. Crowds formed in front of the court buildings and began to chant. However the protests, although vocal and occasionally forcing the court to adjourn, remained peaceful.

On 26 March, whilst the court heard arguments over the legality of the procedure for announcing the results, the election staff in region uncovered a mistake in manual tabulation of the results for the Charlestown and Albouystown sub district of South Georgetown. On 27 March the Chief Election Officer had to issue a revision to the results announced the following Friday morning. In tabulating the results for this sub district, the Deputy Returning Officer had inadvertently forgotten to include results for the Charlestown polling stations in the total for the sub district. A total of 2,881 votes were therefore added to the totals and the results recalculated. Although the number of votes to be added accounted for less than 1% of the total valid votes cast the impact was dramatic, underlining yet again how a small number of votes can have a disproportional impact on the final seat allocation. As result of this change TUF gained a seat at the expense of the PPP/Civic.

Table 13: Final Results of the National Assembly Elections

District	Reg. Voters	Total Votes Cast	Rejected Votes	Total Valid Votes	GAP/ WPA	GDP	JFAP	NFA	PNC/R	PPP/C	ROAR	TUF
1.	11,473	9,376	542	8,834	1,390	-	-	-	2,277	4,953	-	214
2.	26,234	24,018	461	23,557	467	143	70	-	6,667	15,605	523	82
3.	61,020	57,059	846	56,213	273	400	536	24	14,689	39,597	623	71
4.	193,582	178,257	2,423	175,834	1,430	409	2,021	267	95,894	74,501	961	351
5.	30,699	29,039	460	28,579	117	65	69	33	10,174	17,673	421	27
6.	72,649	67,725	1,489	66,236	530	274	86	44	16,370	47,701	1,155	76
7.	9,497	7,930	151	7,779	1,531	23	-	23	3,241	2,838	12	111
8.	4,371	3,565	150	3,415	869	-	-	-	1,194	943	-	409
9.	8,757	7,879	271	7,608	2,546	-	-	-	1,354	2,217	-	1,491
10.	21,903	18,886	425	18,461	298	31	43	26	14,006	3,985	-	72
Total	440,185	403,734	7218	396,516	9451	1,345	2,825	417	165,866	210,013	3,695	2,904
Seats					2	0	0	0	27	34	1	1

Source: GECOM, 5 April 2001

The court case continued throughout the week. Eventually, on Saturday 31 March, the case was concluded. Chief Justice Desiree Bernard rejected the Hamilton case to halt the swearing in of the President but did instruct the Chief Elections Officer to follow the legal procedure and inform Returning Officer's that they must ascertain and declare the results of each region in the presence of the Parties. As the legal obstacle to any swearing in had now been removed GECOM announced that the swearing in ceremony could now proceed. Simultaneously the Returning Officers in each region began the labourious process of declaring the results for each region. All parties were invited to attend, although observers reported that only the PPP/Civic sent agents to monitor this process.

Observers had also had the opportunity to independently examine each and every copy of the Statement of Poll in GECOM. The majority of which were available for examination

proved to be accurately completed and signed. However observers were concerned that not all copies of the Statement of Poll were available. Most notably 156 copies of Statement of Poll were not available in GECOM's filling system for observers to examine. However Observers were able to confirm that these Statements had been completed and signed, when they attended the declaration of results in Region 4. There were a very small number of Statement of Poll that were not available in GECOM because the GECOM copy had been inadvertently packed with the election materials in the ballot boxes. Furthermore Observers noted that a very small number of Statement of Poll lacked the signature of the Presiding Officer, although most had the signatures of party agents and other polling station staff. In general observers conclusions were that the problems associated with Statement of Poll in 1997 had not been replicated at this election.

Following the swearing in of the President and the declaration of results an air of normality seemed to descend on the city of Georgetown, although politicians from all sides were calling for discussion on making government inclusive. Sadly the peace was short lived and the following week saw Georgetown aflame.

12. Conclusions and Recommendations

GECOM are to be congratulated on their decision to undertake an independent external audit of the computer and other systems as recommended by the EU and Long Term Observation mission. It is hoped that this audit will provide GECOM and the Guyanese public with some answers to the inexplicable disappearance of some names from the OLE.

The elections although meeting most of the international standards acceded to, still left many questions over the efficiency and accuracy of the process. Much can be done to improve the administration of elections – devolving administrative decision making to more locally based officials, enabling local officials to recruit their own staff, improved lines of communication etc – however attention should be given to an early review of procedures and law. Such changes will require the consent of parliament and the parties.

Elections, however well administered, require at least a minimal level of trust from the contending parties. Whilst such politics remains so deeply divided, elections will always be the focus of dispute. These broader issues will need to be addressed by both the new Government and the opposition parties if elections are to achieve broad level of consent.

The EU and Long Term Observation Mission make the following recommendations:

For Government and National Assembly

1. To undertake a thorough review of existing election legislation and procedures in consultation with GECOM with object of simplifying procedures,

2. To consider a new formula for the appointment of members of GECOM to ensure that party political considerations can not influence policy,

3. To consider inclusion in the election law an enforceable code of conduct for parties, candidates and supporters,

4. To consider inclusion in the election law the requirement for broadcasters to provide some free time during an election period and clearly defined mechanism for the allocation of time to the various parties contesting,

5. To consider the adoption of a system of an annual review of voters' lists,

6. Following such review for election laws to be consolidated in a single Act,

7. To bring forward, in consultation with the media and relevant stakeholders, modern and fair broadcasting legislation,

8. To abolish State radio's monopoly by allowing access to market to private radio stations,

9. To consider exempting media from legal liability for libellous statements made by parties and candidates in paid (and free) political advertising.

10. To agree enforceable rules for government ministers and officials which ensure that candidates gain no unfair advantage or may use government resources to aid their campaign,

For GECOM

11. Mindful that elections are best managed centrally but delivered locally, to review current staffing levels, administrative structures, management systems and communications systems,

12. To review the system of recruitment, training and appointment of temporary staff such that the system is simplified and appointment precedes training,

13. To review all current recruitment policies of both full-time and temporary staff and develop new policies in which equal opportunities are central,

14. To review current voter information and education plans with a view to providing longer term education on elections and democracy for new voters,

15. To make such changes to the computer systems as required following the report of the external auditors,

16. To publish the results by polling station of both the National and Regional elections and provide such copies to stakeholders as reasonably required,

For the Media

17. Publicly owned broadcasters to develop a commitment to and culture of impartiality in the reporting of politics and elections,

18. Privately owned media to develop more rigorous and effective self regulatory code of conduct and commit themselves to abide by the decision of a new permanent press complaint committee (similar to the panel of independent referees),

For the parties

19. To commit themselves to a process of political dialogue with a view to providing a more stable political environment prior to, during and after elections,

20. To publicly declare expenditure made during an election campaign and the sources of significant donations,

21. To maintain regular contact and liaison with GECOM with a view to improving relations.

Annex 1: International Standards for "Free and Fair" Elections, Excerpt from the Copenhagen Documents 1990 and Related Commitments

(5) They solemnly declare that among those elements of justice, which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings, are the following:

(5.1) free elections that will be held at reasonable intervals by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, under conditions which ensure in practice the free expression of the opinion of the electors in the choice of their representatives;

(6) The participating States declare that the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government. The participating States will accordingly respect the right of their citizens to take part in the governing of their country, either directly or through representatives freely chosen by them through fair electoral processes. They recognise their responsibility to defend and protect, in accordance with their laws, their international human rights obligations and their international commitments, the democratic order freely established through the will of the people against the activities of persons, groups or organisations that engage in or refuse to renounce terrorism or violence aimed at the overthrow of that order or that of another participating State.

(7) to ensure that the will of the people serves as the basis of the authority of government, the participating States will

(7.1) hold free elections at reasonable intervals, as established by law;
(7.2) permit all seats in at least one chamber of the national legislature to be freely contested in a popular vote;
(7.3) guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens;
(7.4) ensure that votes are cast by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, and that they are counted and reported honestly with the official results made public;
(7.5) respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organisations, without discrimination;
(7.6) respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organisations and provide such political parties and organisations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities;
(7.7) ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications, or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution;
(7.8) provide that no legal or administrative obstacle stands in the way of unimpeded access to the media on a non-discriminatory basis for all political groupings and individuals wishing to participate in the electoral process;
(7.9) ensure that the candidates who obtain the necessary number of votes required by the law are duly installed in office and are permitted to remain in office until their term expires or is otherwise brought to end in a manner that is regulated by law in conformity with democratic parliamentary and constitutional procedures.

Annex 2: Media Monitoring Results

Monitoring of Paid Advertisements (one month):

Guyana Chronicle

Stabroek News

Channel 28/Evening News (before, during and after)

Channel 28 Prime Time (evenings)

Channel 11 Prime Time (evenings)

Channel 6 Prime Time (evenings)

Channel 6/Prime News (before, during and after)

Channel 7/Capitol News (before, during and after)

Channel 14/65/News Update (before during and after)

Channel 14/65 Prime Time (evenings)

Monitoring News & Current Affairs etc (three months):

Guyana Chronicle: News

Guyana Chronicle: Letters & Editorials

Stabroek News: News

Stabroek News: Letters & Editorials

Guyana Broadcasting Corporation: Voice of Guyana (news)

Prime News/Channel 6

Capitol News/Channel 7

6 o'clock news (GTV)/Channel 11

Channel 11 Current Affairs Programmes

Evening News/Channel 28

Channel 28 Current Affairs Programmes

News Update/Channel 14/65

Channel 14/65 Current Affairs Programmes

Annex 3: Long Term and EU Observation Mission Statement Condemning Violent Protest

Press Statement: 1 March 2001, Immediate Release.

INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS CONDEMN VIOLENT PROTEST AND CALL FOR RESTRAINT

Last night, Wednesday 28 February, international observers witnessed an incident of violence at a political meeting in Tucville, Georgetown, involving stone throwing. We strongly condemn any acts of violence and urge all Parties to call on their supporters to act with restraint.

There is no place for violence in a democratic election campaign. It is totally unacceptable that any party or its supporters should be confronted with violence or language that could inflame violence. Such actions are completely contrary to both the letter and spirit of international standards for democratic elections.

The international observers call on all Parties to restrain their supporters, and we urge the public at large to engage in the elections in a calm and peaceful manner.

For further information contact:

Simon Osborn
Observer Co-ordinator

Tel: 231 7227-9
Fax: 231 7228
Cell: 294 2658

Or

Mark Stevens
Deputy Observer Co-ordinator
& Head of the EU Observation Mission
Cell: 294 2933

Note for editors:

The Guyana Long Term Observation Group has been monitoring the elections since 13 October 2000 and will continue to do so through the election and until the successful candidates have been installed in office.