

# Desmond Hoyte 1929-2002

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## They will miss the one who has passed on

Posted December 31st. by Eusi Kwayana

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### PNC Tribute to Desmond Hoyte

Hon.Mr..Hugh Desmond Hoyte, SC, former President of Guyana, passed away when the country least expected it, and without the agony of confinement. In a way his passing was in character. It came at a time when all were eager to see what his next stand would be on a series of issues, among them the reconciliation of Guyana if the chance arose.

He came into politics from the top, and joined the political directorate without a personal political tradition, not because of grassroots engagement, but because of needed resources of mind. He was studious at a time when volumes of paper had become a main tool of administration, A marked feature of his tenure of political leadership, as many have noted, has been his capacity for big changes, often at short notice.

He discontinued the overseas vote, which had been a bone of contention. A few years later, he agreed to fundamental changes in the composition of the Elections Commission in time for the 1992 elections. He halted and reversed the tide of nationalisation, and started the move to privatisation. He agreed to break the monopoly of the state-owned daily newspaper and to encourage competition in news coverage and in printed opinion. On Jan Carew's recommendation he reserved nearly a million acres of Guyana's rain forest, Iwokrama, for the health of Planet earth. Each of these was controversial but each was a big decision.

He symbolically removed a bar on the prosecution of one notorious political ally of the PNC, allowing him to face trial. Some would say he ordered the prosecution. He passed away in the midst of a controversy over prosecution of friends of the present government.

Political scientists may find on this random evidence that Mr. Hoyte as President had what they most love to prescribe, "political will." The stress of electoral defeats exposed Mr, Hoyte to opposite pressures within the constituency of his supporters. His effort to balance these forces took its toll of his health and of his standing in the eyes of many. It will be unfair to judge him without reference to the internal forces which he tried, I believe unsuccessfully, to hold in balance. Those who are elevated as a result of the gap in the PNC caused by his passing will miss one resource in responding to pressures. They will miss the one who has passed on. I had intended to find a way to express my sympathy to Mr.Benschop on the tragic loss of his son in a fire. Now I find myself faced with a national tragedy; for, unless there is a miracle, that is what faces Guyana. I seize this moment to offer in public my sympathy to Mrs. Joyce Hoyte and the executive and members of the PNC-Reform. When President Jagan passed away several years after President Burnham, everyone felt that new era in relations should open as both leading contenders had gone. We may soon find that the fault is not merely in our Presidents, but in ourselves, who cheer them on.

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**Hoyte's Euology: Let the work not delay, time and arm not waste**

Posted December 28th. 2002 by Dr. C. Kenrick Hunte Ms. Mildred Lowe and many others.

As the soft and gentle rains kiss the Guyana soil, springing new life in its wake, so too must we place the memory of Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte in fertile ground, for he has indeed left us a strong, forward-looking legacy. The Guyana Prize for Literature is one such contribution he has championed. His approval of the Iwokrama Rain Forest Project is a clear expression of his concern for the environment.

His bold move to reorient the economy and to set it on a prosperous path can be empirically verified. His steadfast commitment to a united and well functioning CARICOM for all its citizens cannot be denied.

His personal resolve to lead Guyana in 1992 in a different political direction is a clear indication of his belief in the will of the people. And above all else, the recent proposal for an adjusted system of governance is a position that can only be claimed by a visionary and worthy patriot. Let us therefore claim this legacy as our own, putting it into action for the betterment of Guyana, for the foundation he has laid can only be built upon by all those who, like him, have a strong commitment and love for Guyana. Permit me now to quote from a speech Mr. Hoyte delivered at the Square of the Revolution on May 23, 1986: "... we do not have to prove anything to ourselves.

We know what we can do. We have the self confidence .... We have no need to adopt rigid, inflexible postures or indulge in idle rhetoric, for this is the refuge of those who cannot think for themselves, those who are confused, lacking in self-assurance and incapable of looking ahead. ... Let the work not delay. Time and arm not waste; Let the clay be dug from the pit, Let the saw cut the stone.... Let us look to the future with faith and confidence. ....

Each of us then to his task". Finally from a grateful nation, a word of thanks to Mrs. Joyce Hoyte, who has unselfishly over many years shared Mr. Hoyte with us, especially his laughter, his prose and his intellect. What a steady, clean and trustworthy hand he has been.

We join you in your sorrow, but we rejoice in our hearts, knowing that Desmond is at rest, for his work is done.

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### **OAS eulogizes former Guyana President, Desmond Hoyte**

Posted December 24th. 2002

Assistant Secretary General Luigi Einaudi has written to Guyana's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rudy Insanally, expressing the condolences of the Organization of American States (OAS) on Sunday's passing of Desmond Hoyte, a former president of Guyana, who was leader of the opposition Peoples National Congress/Reform at the time of his death.

Speaking as well on the Secretary General's behalf, Ambassador Einaudi recalled that Hoyte assumed the mantle of the Presidency of Guyana in 1985 at a critical time in the country's history, asserting that he would be remembered for his courage in changing the economic and political system.

In the letter to the Guyanese Foreign Affairs Minister, Einaudi went on to note that despite resistance from members of his own political party, Hoyte's "great courage" led him to champion those changes, which culminated with the historic elections of October 5, 1992.

He said Hoyte had "traveled the same road taken by the giants of Caribbean statehood and political leadership, many of whom are recalled for their contribution to the struggle for the self-determination of the peoples of the Caribbean.

"We join the people of Guyana in mourning the loss of the former President and leader of the

## **CMC NEWS BULLETIN FOR DECEMBER 22, 2002 NEWS HEADLINES: Desmond Hoyte is dead**

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC - Opposition People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) Leader, and former Guyana President, Desmond Hoyte died Sunday morning at his 14 North Road, Bourda, Georgetown home.

According to information from Congress Place, Sophia, Headquarters of the PNC/R at about 8:00 a.m. Sunday, Hoyte was taking breakfast to his wife Joyce "when he slipped, fell and hit his head."

He was 73.

Hoyte was born in Georgetown on March 9, 1929 to Gladys Marietta Hoyte and George Alphonso Hoyte of Georgetown.

He received his primary education at St Barnabas Anglican School and went to Progressive High School both in Georgetown.

After leaving school in 1948, he began his career in the Civil Service. He was also a teacher and taught at home and subsequently outside of Guyana, at the Grenada Boys Secondary School.

In 1950, Hoyte passed the external examinations and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of London.

Later, he proceeded to London to read law and in 1959, obtained the LLB degree from the University of London, completing his professional examinations the same year and was called to the Bar at the Honourable Society of Middle Temple.

Hoyte returned to Guyana in 1960, entered private practice, and played an active role in the Guyana Bar Association, of which he was the Secretary for many years.

His legal career was marked with success, and in 1964, he became a member and Chairman of the Legal Practitioners Committee, the statutory body dealing with disciplinary matters related to the legal profession.

In 1966, he was appointed to the National Elections Commission.

From 1966-1968, Hoyte served as Chairman of the Customs Tariff Tribunal. In 1967 he was appointed Chairman of the Timber Grants Wages Council. The same year he was also elected Vice-President of the Guyana Bar Association.

In 1970, as a result of his successes and leadership at the Bar, he was appointed Queens Counsel (QC) and in 1970 when Guyana became a Republic, he was appointed to the new dignity of Senior Counsel (SC).

Hoyte was also actively involved in the Trade Union Movement, being Legal Advisor, from time to time, to the Guyana Trades Union Congress (TUC) and several other bargaining bodies.

He also represented the bargaining agencies at conciliations and arbitration proceedings and in wages and other negotiations.

Hoyte's keen mind, academic prowess, and his sense of commitment to his country, all contributed to his election to Parliament in the People's National Congress (PNC) government in 1968. This was the beginning of his active political involvement and his subsequent rise to prominence.

He held a number of key portfolios in the PNC. He was a member of the General Council since 1962, and became a member of the Central Executive Committee in 1972. He was also legal adviser to the General Secretary from 1973, and Chairman of the Production Sub-Committee of the Central Executive Committee in 1984.

As a Minister of the Government, he held the portfolios of Home Affairs Minister from 1969-1970; Finance Minister 1970-1972; Works and Communications Minister 1972-1974; and Economic Development 1974-1980.

In 1980 he was appointed Vice-President with responsibility for Economic Planning and Finance, and in 1983 he was re-designated Vice-President, Production.

In August 1984 he became Prime Minister and First Vice-President, a post, which he filled with dignity and a high level of political maturity projecting his indomitable will as well as his clear insights, on national and international issues.

The following year, he was appointed President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and PNC Leader on Tuesday August 6, 1985 after the death of President Forbes Burnham and less than six months after his two children died in a road accident on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway.

Literature and Historical Research were among his special interests. Hoyte also liked reading, music, swimming and walking.

He led the PNC to successive general election defeats in October 1992, December 1997, and March 2001.

He has left to mourn his wife Mrs Joyce Hoyte.