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Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry was About Justice Delayed

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Cover Page Footnote

This statement was originally published by Demerara Waves (<http://www.caribnewsdesk.com>).

WALTER RODNEY REMEMBERED

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Government Ministers should not disparage and denigrate, Cabinet should govern

This statement was originally published by Demerara Waves (<http://www.caribnewsdesk.com>)

The Justice for Walter Rodney Committee has been following with interest the statements of the current government of Guyana through its spokespersons, Ministers Basil Williams (Attorney General) and Raphael Trotman (Governance Minister). From the statements attributed to these officials, their comments demonstrate that they are on a campaign to disparage, denigrate, and thus create the impression that the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry did not accomplish anything of substance. It is not clear why this would be in the interest of the government of Guyana.

One of the objectives of the Commission of Inquiry was to get to the truth as to the circumstances that led to the death of Walter Rodney on June 13, 1980. It will be in the interest of the government of Guyana that the Commission completes its work so that all of the evidence and the hearings can be placed in the public domain.

It will be important at this point for the entire government to make it clear that this Commission of Inquiry should be able to complete its work. By making the recommendation to cabinet to disallow more time for the testimony of crucial witnesses to allow for a smooth and proper completion of the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry, Mr. Williams is seeking to mold the public's perception on the real historical meaning of this Inquiry. There are still crucial witnesses who should appear before the Commission and the Justice for Walter Rodney Committee is calling on the government to allow the Commission to complete its work in a timely manner.

As lawyers Mr. Williams and his Cabinet colleague Mr. Raphael Trotman should understand the importance of crucial material witnesses before a commission of inquiry. It is therefore unfortunate that the Cabinet seemed to have accepted Mr. William's recommendation without regard to due process that he Mr. Williams and his colleague Mr. Trotman are now arguing for in the court of public opinion. Lawyers make their arguments in court. We are concerned about the statement attributed to Minister Trotman as reported in the Guyana Chronicle because it is not based in facts. If Ministers Williams and Trotman were indeed following the proceedings of the inquiry, they and the Cabinet would have known that the inquiry was not a waste of time. Commissions of inquiries are established to find the truth and this inquiry was no different. The world is waiting on the findings of this commission.

Rather than allow the continuation of the hearings for two weeks upon the request of the commissioners, and other interested parties, the cabinet voted against due process. Mr. Trotman's characterization of the "collective decision taken by cabinet" to disallow the continuation of the hearings for two weeks in his words, that is according to the report in the Guyana Chronicle

of July 30, 2015 was not only to save the money of taxpayers, but also what he called “further embarrassment” is particularly disturbing.

As a global committee of activists interested in fairness, equality, and social justice for Walter Rodney we are appalled by any attempt to play with the truth in order to dismiss a commission of inquiry headed by a distinguished Caribbean Jurist, and which comprised two other acclaimed jurists. Non-Governmental persons and organizations cannot compel government, we can petition government. And the response of governments to petitions produces for the public at large a deep sense of the character of government. As such to make the claim without evidence to back up the claim that the extension sought by the eminent panel of Caribbean jurists, that is the three commissioners; the lawyers representing the WPA, Donald Rodney, and the Rodney family would not deliver anything that is earth shattering is very perplexing. May we remind Ministers Trotman and Williams that the proceedings of this inquiry are being closely followed by Guyanese and non-Guyanese across the world. Among those paying close attention to the inquiry are lay people, academics, media people, jurists, at least one chief justice in an important global jurisdiction, members of parliament in several locations of the world, Prime Ministers in several countries, and others.

It is disturbing that senior spokesperson of a government that came to power on the banner of national healing and reconciliation would be involved in this kind of desecration of the Walter Rodney enquiry. Walter Rodney is a national hero of Guyana.

National reconciliation cannot arise in a vacuum. It can only come about through truth telling. The inquiry is about truth telling.

Justice for Walter Rodney Committee
August 15, 2015