

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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EAB to monitor Local Government elections

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has announced that it intends to monitor the upcoming Local Government elections and hopes to serve as observers on election day.

A bureau statement said that its Project Director, Mr Chaimont Lye and Project Officer, Mr Lawrence Latchmansingh, met with Elections Commission Chairman, Mr Edward Hopkinson and outlined the programmes the group plans to implement.

It also said that with the publication of the preliminary voters list, the EAB will once again set up its Election Hottlines for general information, such as for persons who want to know if their names are on the list.

Mobile information units will be deployed in the rural areas without easy telephone access, it said.

The Bureau also plans to scrutinize both the preliminary and final voters lists, as it did for the 1992 general elections.

With legislation having recently been passed to permit local observers at the coming polls, the EAB has also applied to the Elections Commission for observer status.

Hopkinson not sure about diskette for EAB hotline

ELECTIONS Commission Chairman Mr Edward Hopkinson says he does not know if a computer diskette with the preliminary

voters list can be made available to the Electoral Assistant Bureau to operate a hotline.

The EAB, which

played a major role in voters registration in the 1992 General Election with a similar hotline, has requested a diskette for the local government elections.

"The political parties have not asked for diskettes and so no decision has been made whether they will be supplied," Hopkinson told reporters on Friday.

"And our computer expert (Mr Ely Lee) is still out of the country. We do not know whether we can

posses."

Reacting to criticisms of the EAB from one section of the press as having created chaos in the last elections, Hopkinson emphasised: "The EAB has written us asking if they can work along with us and I have indicated we will accept assistance from them whenever we need it."

"We have issued a statement that the only official information will be issued by the Elections Commission," he stressed

Elections hotline diskette decision expected by today

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) is to know today whether it will be given the computer diskette with the voters list so that it can start its 'telephone hotlines' by this weekend.

According to sources, the matter was scheduled to be tabled and a decision made at yesterday's meeting of the Election's Commission.

Chairman of the Elections Commission, Edward Garnett Hopkinson, yesterday confirmed that a

decision was to be taken yesterday afternoon on the matter. He said that his impression was that the process was "a long, drawn-out one," but noted that he has since been disabused of that idea.

Sources say that the Elections Commission is concerned that the EAB, if it gets the diskette, will want to print its own copies. This, according to the source, has been a matter of concern to the Commission since "If the EAB prints and distributes its own list ... which will be the official list?"

But sources at the EAB claimed this was not the case and stressed that their intention was to use the information on the diskette to establish their hotlines.

The hotline has been often been touted as being very helpful in the October 5, 1992 elections. Persons who want to make enquiries about their names and other particulars on the Voters List usually call in on the hotline and are given the necessary information.

In the event that there is a problem with the caller's name, the EAB

would make the necessary recommendations to the Election's Commission for the changes.

The source pointed out that the EAB was offering a service since "many people may be unable or reluctant to go to the various centres in their community to verify the information on the list."

The source noted many busy persons often use the EAB's hotlines to ensure that their names are on the list and to correct any mistakes which may be on it. (Mohamed Khan)

Ballots printing plan scrutinised

SECURITY arrangements for the printing of ballots locally have been deemed adequate as preparations for the upcoming municipal and local government polls intensify.

Commission Chairman Edward Gamett Hopkinson yesterday told Stabroek News that a two-man team from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) together with Commissioner of National Registration Stanley Singh, Elections Commissioner Moen McDoom and Commission Executive Secretary Lance Ferreira visited the Guyana National Printers Limited.

At the end of the visit, Hopkinson said the team came to the conclusion that the security arrangements were adequate and the ballots are most likely to be printed there. The Commission has agreed that Hopkinson will decide what the security mark for the ballot paper will be. As many as 71 different ballot papers may have to be printed depending on the permutations of groups and parties contesting elections in each area. The various ballots will have to be transported to the different areas.

Hopkinson said the total number of voters

-no diskette for EAB

85 per cent of the 387,000 eligible voters for the 1992 elections and this number of ballot papers plus 10 per cent will be printed.

Meanwhile, the Commission yesterday advised the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) that due to technical reasons a diskette containing the Preliminary Voters List (PVL) could not be made available to the group.

The EAB had requested the list to conduct checks as it did for the 1992 general elections.

Hopkinson said the Commission had come to the decision that the diskette should in principle be provided to the EAB on the condition that it could only read the list and not be able to print it. Hopkinson said this condition was being insisted on since the Commission did not want to be blamed in a situation

where incorrect lists could start surfacing if for some reason something went wrong with the EAB diskette.

The Commission Chairman said the decision to supply the EAB was overtaken by information from computer expert Ely Lee that it was not possible to provide a diskette since the list was in the "Oracle" format and could only be accessed by computers which had similar hardware. The list was also not contained in one file and this made it more difficult to accommodate the EAB. The list had been in a different format for the 1992 general elections.

Hopkinson said that registration for the municipal polls, which are most likely for July, is coming along fairly well. He again rejected claims

by Good and Green for Georgetown municipal candidate Hamilton Green that there is insufficient time for voters to be registered. "We have never had any long queue (during the registration period) and people complaining they can't register", Hopkinson said referring to the ongoing process.

He said a difficulty which has surfaced relates to claims by persons that they do not know which registration centre to visit.

He pointed out that the National Registration Centre has set up two hotlines to deal with such queries and any other registration matter. These are 62421 and 62424 between the hours of 7 am and 9 pm. He said a macro list in alphabetical order is available to guide voters.

EDITORIAL

The call should be picked up

THE Elections Commission is pressing ahead with preparations for the Local Government and Municipal elections this year but there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm by some groups towards this vital plank in the consolidation of democracy here.

Commission Chairman, Mr Edward Hopkinson and members are on a series of public meetings around the country, trying to drive home the importance to all eligible voters that they must ensure they are registered for the polls.

The Commission has posted up copies of the Preliminary Voters List at registration centres in the areas where the polls will be contested and it is using all means available to convince people they must ensure their names are on the roll.

Those whose names are not included, will not be allowed to vote.

The Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), which has pledged to support the process, has joined the appeal for people to check the list and to ensure they are registered.

Although it has not received the computer diskette of the Preliminary List from the Elections Commission, to help field queries from the public (because of technical reasons), the EAB has called for full support for the process.

It is appealing to all groups, including political and religious organisations, to assist the process of local government elections by urging all eligible voters to ensure their names are on the list.

"We ask that emphasis be given to the importance of these elections as another tool towards the building of a truly democratic Guyana", the EAB said yesterday.

This call should be picked up by those who have signalled they plan to contest the polls but there has been only silence and criticism, so far.

Mr Hopkinson says the Commission is "adequately prepared" for the registration of voters and the elections but the impression from some groups is that they are not so ready.

After about 24 years, Guyanese are again getting a chance to directly choose those they think best qualified to direct affairs at the town, village and community levels.

Obstacles should not be put in their way and those who believe they stand a good chance at the polls, should help the electors ensure all the requirements for casting their votes are met.

There have been enough delays and only those who fear the outcome would throw up further obstacles.

EAB urges voters to check lists

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) says its plans to help disseminate information about the forthcoming Local Government and Municipal elections, will be hampered without a computer copy of the Preliminary Voters List used by the Elections Commission.

In a statement yesterday, the non-government EAB said this will "curtail to some extent" its plans to disseminate information, especially through its telephone hotline service.

The group however urged all eligible voters to check the lists which have been posted up in various electoral areas.

According to the statement, the Commission has "agreed in principle to share the PVL with the EAB. However, the absence from Guyana of Mr Ely Lee, the Elections Commission's computer expert, has been given as the reason for the Commission's inability to share the PVL with

the EAB."

Commission Chairman, Mr Edward Hopkinson had said the body will not release the diskette with the names on the PVL, if it cannot prevent it from being used to print a list or change names on it.

He had told the Chronicle that even if the EAB gives an undertaking about the use of the diskette, there is "nothing to stop somebody from surreptitiously removing it, doing what they want and putting it back."

Hopkinson had further explained that if the Commission was not absolutely sure that nothing could happen to the diskette, it would seem impossible to give it to the EAB.

In its statement yesterday, the EAB said it was "satisfied" that the Commission and its Chairman have made every effort to assist the group and the electoral process, given the constraints under which they operate.

It added that this experi-

ence "highlights the importance" of having trained, local computer personnel at the Commission. "We dare not imagine what would happen if Mr Lee for one reason or another could not return to Guyana", the group said.

Notwithstanding this development, the group said it looked forward to receiving the PVL on Lee's return to Guyana and restated its desire to be supplied with the final voters list when this becomes available.

The EAB also backed the Commission's call to all organisations across the country, including political and religious groups, to assist the process of local government elections by urging all eligible voters to ensure their names are on the voters list.

"We ask that emphasis be given to the importance of these elections as another tool towards the building of a truly democratic Guyana", it urged.

EAB wants fresh list diskette

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau's (EAB) hopes for a 'clean' diskette to operate a hotline in the run up to local government elections were dashed yesterday as computer expert Mr Ely Lee is not due until April 18.

The EAB, which already has a 1992 final voters list diskette from general elections, is opposed to using it, because of past criticisms from the PNC. It also noted the recent PNC claim that the 1992 final voters list being used in the claims and objection period this year is not the same list which was used for the general elections.

The EAB, in the run up to the 1992 General Elec-

tions, was accused of disseminating wrong information.

EAB project officer Lawrence Lachmansingh told Stabroek News: "We prefer to start with a clean slate or we may open ourselves to fierce questions."

He said while the EAB has the 1992 final voters list diskette, it does not want to risk "muddying up the water."

"It is better to be safe than sorry," Lachmansingh argued. Pressed on the logic of having a 1992 final voters list diskette, while still requesting another, he insists the body stands to lose more by using the old diskette.

Lachmansingh said if Lee does not show up in a week, a hotline will no longer be on the cards.

Commission Chairman Edward Hopkinson yesterday said Lee is due on April 18, to facilitate the compilation of the final voters list. Lee had been due on March 28 but this was put off to April 11, the last day for voters registration.

But the EAB is providing an information desk service on the number available for the hotline - 60976. It has also started a mobile campaign with a public address system, to get Guyanese out to register.

Lachmansingh suggests the Commission itself can provide a hotline service once it has a list in alphabetical order. The EAB cannot have such a list as it is difficult to prepare, he said.

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EAB still hoping for list diskette

EAB project officer Lawrence Lachmansingh said the acquisition of the diskette is important for a number of reasons. It has been suggested that the EAB utilise the diskette containing the final voters

list for the 1992 general elections which it was given and which is supposed to be identical to the 1994 PVL.

Lachmansingh told Stabroek News yesterday that the EAB wants to compare the 1994 PVL diskette with the 1992 final voters list diskette to determine if they are indeed identical.

The diskette will also help the EAB to tell interested members of the public whether their names are on the list.

In addition, Lachmansingh says the EAB wants to do its own analysis of the list including looking at the projection made for the number of new voters on the list.

The request by the EAB for the diskette was the subject of intense discussions in the Commission last month and it was finally agreed that the EAB should have it. One condition was however at-

tached to it, that the diskette be read only and not printed by the EAB. Lachmansingh said that the EAB had no difficulty with this.

Following the decision to grant the diskette request, the Commission was told by Lee, who had returned to the United States, that it could not be

done in the current format. Lee is expected to facilitate the diskette on his return and the EAB may be able to use it for the last days of the registration process. This period ends on April 25.

Lachmansingh said the EAB is meanwhile in contact with persons who may act as observers for it whenever the municipal and local government elections are held.

Hopkinson satisfied with registration numbers

-computer expert's return put back again

ELECTIONS Commission Chairman Edward Garnett Hopkinson yesterday declared that registration for the upcoming municipal and local government elections had gone well although he said it was his personal view that there could have been more activity in Georgetown.

Registration for the overdue polls ended on Monday and yesterday, Hopkinson said incomplete figures show that there had been 19,729 transactions. These include new registrations and inter-divisional transfers. The final tally should be available today.

There have so far been 1,063 objections to names on the preliminary voters roll.

The last day for objections is May 3rd and all of these objections are expected to be heard in two weeks.

A breakdown of results so far show that in Georgetown there had been

4,943 transactions up to yesterday.

Hopkinson adverted to a number of areas where he said there had been heavy last minute registrations.

In the Canals Polder, Hopkinson said that at April 24 (almost six weeks into the registration period) there had been 759 transactions while on Monday alone there were 376.

In Leguan, there had been 215 transactions at April 24 and 147 on Monday. In New Amsterdam, the April 24 figure was 809 transactions while on Monday the figure was 101.

For Crabwood Creek/Moleson, on April 24 there were 707 transactions while on Monday there were 298.

"The registration went well though I personally felt that Georgetown may have had more transactions because people had complained of being disenfranchised (at the 1992 general elections)", Hopkinson yesterday said.

Noting that Geor-

getown comprises about one-fourth of the voting population, Hopkinson said it appears that most of the transactions in the capital city pertain to persons who have attained the eligible age.

Hopkinson says he anticipates that the final voters' list could be completed in four to eight weeks and this will be within the Commission's projection of the last week in July being the earliest date at which elections can be held.

The four to eight week period will be required to double-check prospective entries and for the inputting of the data.

Meanwhile, the Commission has deferred the arrival of computer expert Ely Lee again. He had been expected to arrive on Monday, the last day for registration. Hopkinson yesterday told Stabroek News that the US-based expert is now scheduled to arrive here during the early part of next month and towards the end of the period for objections.

The Commission

Chairman said that Lee is available at the moment but the electoral body felt he could not be "optimally utilised" until the objections period was almost at an end.

Originally, Lee had been expected to return about four weeks ago. The Commission had however approved two extensions to the voter registration period and Hopkinson said it was decided to delay Lee's return. Lee's sojourn here will be financed by international agencies.

The Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has expressed concern over the arrangements for the computer expert pointing out that it cannot be provided with a copy of the 1994 preliminary voters' list diskette until Lee returns. The diskette is needed for the election hotline service that the non-governmental organisation provided for the 1992 general elections. The EAB has been given a 'hard copy' of the voters list but the diskette will enable more efficient scrutiny of the list.

EAB receives copy of voters list

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) on Wednesday received a 'hard copy' of the 1994 Preliminary Voters List (PVL) from the Elections Commission as it continues to await a copy of the list diskette.

EAB spokesman Lawrence Lachmansingh said the group was ap-

preciative of the printed out copy of the 1994 PVL but said it could in no way compare to the disk version in terms of what the group could do with it.

Lachmansingh said the EAB has begun manual cross-checking of the 1994 PVL against the 1992 general elections final list. These two documents are supposed to be

identical.

The EAB has been trying for sometime now to obtain a copy of the 1994 PVL diskette. But in the absence of computer expert Ely Lee, this has not been possible. The Commission has agreed in principle to provide the disk to the EAB provided the disk is read only and not used to print the list.

EAB gravely concerned over delayed computer poll expert

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) yesterday expressed grave concern over another delay in the expected arrival of computer expert Ely Lee and said the Elections Commission seems to have made no alternative plans in the event that Lee is unable to come.

Lee's arrival has been postponed four times already and Commission Chairman Edward Garnett Hopkinson yesterday told Stabroek News that he is expected to arrive on April 27, two days after the last day for registration.

In its statement yesterday, the EAB said it "considers the arrangement between the Elections Commission and Mr Lee to be unfortunate, to say the least, and express our grave concern that the entire future of our elections should hinge on the presence in Guyana of a single computer consultant. No contingency measures seem to have been made in the event Mr Lee should be unable to return to Guyana".

The EAB said that it had counted on Lee's arrival so that it could be given a copy of the

Preliminary Voters List diskette which it said was vital to its voter education programme and its Election Hotline which had been popular at the last general elections.

The EAB pointed out that it had only received a copy of the voters list on Wednesday, 38 days after it was published and said manual checking of this would take a considerable time.

Asked to react to the EAB's concerns over the arrangements for Lee, Hopkinson told Stabroek News "it is unsatisfactory, but that is not the fault of the Commission...it is probably the fault of the last commission that the (computer) programme (needed for the list) was not documented".

Hopkinson said the undocumented programme meant that Lee, who had worked with the 1992 outfit had a better idea of how to piece the elements together. Hopkinson said that even if an experience person had been recruited to do the job he would have taken a much longer time since he would not be familiar with the peculiarities of the local list.

He said that if for some

reason Lee was unable to return, the Commission would still be able to print the list and make the necessary claims and objections but it would take a little longer.

Hopkinson said he has been in contact with one person who had worked with Lee and said that person was confident that he

could perform the task if required.

The Commission chairman said emphasis is being placed on having Lee train local staff so that there would be no further dependence on overseas experts. He said he wanted a reservoir of trained persons who could be called upon.

Elections Commission to restrict information flow

LESS information is likely to flow from the Elections Commission following a decision that releases will only be made to the press as is necessary.

This was agreed at a meeting of the Commission on Tuesday when Chairman Edward Garnett Hopkinson reportedly came in for flak over a number of releases made on matters which some

commissioners felt should have remained internal.

Well-placed sources tell Stabroek News that the decision was also informed by a banner headline in the Guyana Chronicle last Saturday under the headline 'Mysterious happenings at Elections Commission' which incorrectly said that Commission computer expert Ely Lee had found on his return last week that a number of instructions required for the amendment of the Preliminary Voters List (PVL) had been erased.

Chairman Hopkinson, who is usually forthcoming on the results of Commission meetings, on Tuesday evening told Stabroek News that a press release would be issued on matters which were discussed and also on an earlier meeting that day with the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB).

The regular Friday Commission press briefing is unlikely this week and a source said these will be held "as is necessary". The Commission had however earlier indicated that the weekly briefings may not continue following the end of the claims and objections period.

Sources say that it was felt that Hopkinson's release to the press of information on the erasure of a number of instructions following the 1992 elections was a matter which was for the internal consumption of the Commission.

Meanwhile, sources say on Tuesday, the EAB outlined before the full Commission its planned programme for the up-

coming municipal and local government elections.

The EAB, which had played a vibrant role in disseminating information on the 1992 elections, told the Commission it was interested in receiving data on polling places for the elections and the final voters list.

The civic group also enquired about its application to be accorded observer status at the elections. The extant law permits this but the Commission has to discuss the scope that local groups will be permitted. The Commission has said it will consider this later.

The EAB also signalled that it was keen on issuing voter advisory slips to all voters telling them how to get to their designated polling places and providing other information.

Advisory slips were issued by the EAB for the 1992 polls and there was some controversy attached to this since some of the forms provided incorrect information.

Observers say such a task should fall under the purview of the Commission but if the body was not able to do this, the EAB was willing to help. The Commission is likely to discuss this further.

Still unresolved is a request from the EAB for a diskette containing the PVL for 1994. A single diskette cannot be provided and other means of providing the information are being explored.

EAB gets PVL data

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has received via computer from the Elections Commission what is believed to be the 1994 Preliminary Voters List (PVL).

The information was transferred on Thursday morning from a Commission computer to one belonging to the EAB.

The transfer culminates months of anticipation by the EAB over whether or not it would be provided with a computer PVL list.

An EAB source said that on Wednesday Commission computer expert Ely Lee informed it that the transfer of information had been approved by the body.

The EAB is currently checking the list transferred to ensure it is the 1994 PVL.

Initially, the EAB had requested a diskette containing the 1994 PVL. This request was later dis-

cussed by the Commission and it ruled that the EAB could be granted the facility provided that the list was read only and not printed.

It was then discovered that this could not be done since Lee, who was not in the country, was only person at the Commission who would be able to do so. Lee's arrival was deferred on four occasions.

Meanwhile, the Commission was given a hard copy of the 1994 PVL which though useful did not enable the EAB to execute the variety of tasks it was seeking to do.

On Lee's return earlier this month, it was discovered that the list could not be accommodated on one diskette and the computer expert then suggested the information could be transferred directly between the two computers. Lee conducted the transfer himself.

Elections Commission questions EAB

THE Elections Commission has written the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) responding to its request for local observer status by asking a range of questions.

Observers yesterday expressed surprise at the questions posed by the Commission saying they could be considered demeaning since they include queries about the ra-

cial composition of the non-government group and the source of its financing.

EAB Project Director Clairmont Lye yesterday confirmed that the Commission has asked eight questions but he declined to identify these. He said the Commission letter is being studied.

Sources close to the Commission say the questions include whether the EAB is perceived by the

electorate to be genuinely neutral in domestic affairs, whether it has a presence nationwide, whether it could mobilise resources throughout the country, whether it is multi-ethnic in its directorate, how it is funded and to whom does it owe its allegiance.

The letter from the Commission comes three months after the EAB had tendered an application for

observer status. Sources say this is the first formal response by the Commission to the EAB application.

Observers point out that it is clearly not possible to answer some of the questions posed by the Commission, for example how the EAB is perceived by the electorate.

It was not possible to obtain clarification from the Commission yesterday on the letter dispatched to the EAB. Contacted on the progress in the preparation of the Final Voters List and other matters, Commission Chairman Edward Garnett Hopkinson told Stabroek News "the Commission feels that everything issued should be in writing".

The Commission has altered the mode by which it supplies information.

A source close to the Commission says the questions to the EAB, which played an important role in providing voter information for the 1992 general elections, may not have the unanimous support of the watchdog body.

Danns joins EAB Board

UNIVERSITY of Guyana Professor Dr Ken Danns has been appointed to the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) board to replace Fr Malcolm Rodrigues.

A release from EAB said that at its Council of Management meeting on Thursday, it was decided that Danns would take the place of Rodrigues who

will be abroad for the next six months.

The questionnaire the Elections Commission sent to EAB after it requested observer status at the forthcoming local government elections was also discussed and answered. The organisation is now waiting for the Commission to respond.

EAB said that in addition to its plans to observe the voting process on election day, it hopes to mail

advisory slips to voters notifying them of their polling places. For this reason three months ago EAB applied to the Commission to be provided with the appropriate computer data, the release added.

The EAB directorate is now Chairman Dr Makepeace Richmond, Project Director Clairmont Lye, and members Eileen Cox, Nigel Hughes and Dr Danns.

EAB to monitor elections

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) hopes to field 100 observers for the upcoming municipal and local government elections.

Sources say the non-government group is expecting each of its six sponsors to co-opt 15 observers each with the EAB

providing the other 10.

According to an EAB release, approval was granted to it by the Elections Commission on Wednesday to observe the polls.

The EAB release said the approaching August 8 elections will represent the first occasion in this country's electoral history

that Guyanese will be officially permitted to observe and report on the process.

The EAB, which is sponsored by the Anglican Church, the Central Islamic Organisation, the Clerical and Commercial Workers' Union, the Guyana Bar Association, the Guyana Central Arya Samaj and the Roman Catholic Church, says it expects the presence of observers will boost voter confidence in the electoral process.

Approval from the Commission came after a number of questions to the organisation inquiring about a host of matters including how the EAB was funded and how it was perceived by the public.

A source said the EAB, which played a key role in the 1992 elections, was offended by the questions and had considered withdrawing its bid to monitor the polls. The body, according to sources, later decided that the need for a local observer presence at the poll was much more important than the process which the EAB had to endure.

The EAB is also seeking information on the final voters list so it can prepare advisory slips for all eligible voters.

EAB to log intimidation reports

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) says it has asked parties and groups contesting forthcoming municipal and local government elections to report any instances of intimidation in the run up to the polls.

The EAB in a statement yesterday said over the past week it has

received reports of intimidation of prospective candidates in the approaching polls scheduled for August 8.

No details were given on these reports but the EAB said it considers that a "basic democratic right is eroded if an individual is not allowed freedom of association on account of threats or any other form of intimidation".

The EAB said that as part of its brief as official observers of the electoral process it has asked parties and groups to report incidents of intimidation to it.

The statement from the EAB follows an allegation by The United Force that several of its members were threatened by supporters of the ruling PPP/Civic. A PPP/Civic spokesman has however denied this.

Green criticises structure of EAB

About 400 persons flanked the Kitty Market square on Sunday evening for a "Good and Green Georgetown" meeting, which began almost one hour after the scheduled time.

Leader of the body, Hamilton Green criticised the structure of the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), during his address which continued until 9:00 pm.

Green questioned the Bureau's contribution to democracy, contending that it had a political bias. He stressed that he was not accusing anyone personally. "I met Lye and Latchmansingh and I found them both to be pleasant, but what I have a problem with is the structure of the EAB," he said.

The list of candidates for the upcoming elections

was also criticised by Green, who dubbed it as "flawed". He publicly named a number of persons who swore that they voted at the National Elections in October last year, but whose names did not appear on the new list "when there wasn't a re-registration."

Green argued that there had been 'racialism' involved in the earlier proposed plan for the supervision of the elections.

He said at first it was only arranged for elections in Georgetown and Linden, where the Afro-Guyanese population is large, to be supervised "but now they have shifted from this and all six of the municipalities will be supervised."

Still on the supervision of the elections, Green argued that among the persons designated to observe are one from the Catholic, one from the Anglican

church, one from the Muslim and one from the Hindu church, "but what about the other churches?"

Also speaking at the meeting was Harold "Lightweight" Kisson, who condemned the People's National Congress (PNC) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP), arguing that they were the ones who allowed the city to degenerate.

He stressed that a new group is required to run the city effectively and that is the GGG.

EAB prepares for its monitoring role

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has announced that, following its accreditation as official observer, it will monitor the August 8 municipal and other local government elections in all six towns and some neighbourhood councils.

In a statement, earlier this week, the non-governmental organisation said, because this

is the first time such an exercise will be undertaken, it is "cautious in not over-extending itself by trying to monitor more areas than could be done efficiently".

It is now in the process of finalising logistical arrangements for August 8 and will be holding training sessions, this weekend, in Anna Regina and New Amsterdam. Other orientation programmes, for

volunteers in Georgetown and Linden, will be held in the city on August 6, the EAB said.

The statement added that voluntary observers will be advised, very shortly, on venues and training schedules.

Meanwhile, the Bureau said it is awaiting a decision by the Elections Commission about the scope of the monitoring exercise, which will be conducted in Anna Regina,

Georgetown, Linden, New Amsterdam, Rose Hall and Corriverton.

Local, overseas observers ready for Municipal Elections

OVER 180 observers from the Electoral Assistance Bureau together with others from the local diplomatic community, from Colombia, and the United States, are all expected to monitor the upcoming Local Government elections on August 8.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, based in the United States has written to the Elections Commission requesting official observer status for three to five persons, while the Elections Commission of Colombia has also asked for some observers from that country to follow the electoral process here. The Elections Commission is said to be willing to accede to both requests.

President Jagan announced that foreign diplomats have also been invited to be observers of the elections. The Catholic Standard understands that the names of diplomats who wish to monitor the poll have to be submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who will in turn forward them to the Elections

Commission for approval. It is not yet known how many diplomats have indicated their intention to take part in this exercise.

The Electoral Assistance Bureau has in the mean time issued a release stating that it has taken the decision to monitor all six municipalities: Anna Regina, Corriverton, Georgetown, Linden, New Amsterdam, and Rose Hall as well as some neighbourhood councils.

The release says since this is the first time that the organisation has undertaken such an exercise, it is cautious about not overextending itself by trying to monitor more areas than could be done efficiently.

Meanwhile sixty-five different ballot forms amounting to a total number of 400,000 all have already been printed. The number of ballot papers is less than the number of regions in which new officials have to be appointed because in eight of the 73 areas the PPP is the only party or group contesting and therefore will be unopposed.

Observers represent cross-section of society - EAB

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has submitted a list of 400 persons to the Elections Commission for accreditation as local polling day observers.

The Bureau in a statement said it was satisfied that its volunteers represent a broad spectrum of Guyanese society. The EAB says included among the volunteers are housewives and doctors, farmers and lawyers, clerks and engineers, students and persons from other categories.

Also among the volunteers are 114 women. The EAB said it is particularly heartened at this in light of the general absence of women in participatory roles in national organisations.

In addition to monitoring the polls in the six municipalities, the EAB says it will also have a presence in several district council elections.

"In the face of seeming apathy among voters, EAB hopes that the indirect message being sent by all its volunteers will encourage persons to come out and vote at these elections, the first of its kind in 25 years", the statement said.

EAB volunteers in Georgetown are to attend

orientation sessions at the Bishops' High School Auditorium at 9 am tomorrow.

Green has serious reservations about ballot paper and EAB

By Patrick Denny

GOOD and Green Georgetown's Hamilton Green has expressed serious reservations about the design of the ballot paper to be used in the Georgetown elections and the ethnic composition of the list of observers being used by the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) to monitor Monday's polls.

He said that the ballot papers should be withdrawn and new ones printed recalling that Jimmy Carter had said that no cost was too high for democracy and rejecting Commission claims that it had no money to reprint the ballots.

Green warned that the GGG was not prepared to sit idly by while moves were made to put it at a disadvantage.

He is also concerned that proper arrangements are put in place to allow those members of the Disciplined Services who were unable to vote last Tuesday, through no fault of their own, to be able to do so.

The Group has also accused the People's National Congress (PNC) of dirty tricks, pointing to leaflets that had been circulated alleging that he had secret meetings with the People's Progressive Party (PPP).

The Group also indicated that it had had a writ issued to prevent the New Nation from continuing publication of an article alleging that Green had been chased out of Tiger Bay.

Green told a press conference yesterday that he had expressed his concern about the ballot paper being used for the Georgetown Municipality, charging that it was "unfortunate, unacceptable and wrong".

He said that notwithstanding the undoubted integrity of the

Chairman of the Elections Commission, it is an accepted principle that in an election "nothing should be done which would appear discriminatory to any group".

Green said that he was extremely upset at the design of the ballot paper with a watermark which highlighted the PNC, the PPP/Civic and the National Republican Party and attracts attention to them.

He said that while he accepted the word of the Chairman of the Elections Commission that the design was not deliberated, he remarked that "nothing happens by accident." He alleged that there could have been some conspiracy between the two Commissioners who supervised the printing, and contended that the parties saw the GGG as the common enemy.

Green also expressed a difficulty with the list of names of the people who were going to monitor the elections on behalf of the Electoral Assistance Bureau.

He also expressed concern that those members of the Disciplined Services who were unable to vote last Tuesday would not be able to do so on Monday, pointing out that no absolute guarantee had been given by the Elections Commission that they would be able to do so.

Green said that so long as "one person was denied the opportunity of exercising his/her franchise, the process was not democratic".

Of the list of over 400 names, the majority was of one ethnic group. Also that some of the non-Indo-Guyanese, whose names were on the list, did not in fact agree to serve as observers. He cited the example of Attorney-at-Law Lance Ferreira (Jr) who, he said, had denied he had agreed to be an observer.

EAB spokesman Lawrence Lachmansingh told Stabroek News that Ferreira's name was sub-

mitted by the Guyana Bar Association and remains on the list. He said the EAB has a letter from the Bar Association nominating Ferreira.

Odinga Lumumba, who chaired the conference, said that in looking at the list, he could detect from the names some 250 Indo-Guyanese.

Green said that, as composed, the EAB observers would not be welcomed where the GGG was contesting, as it would

not be part of a process that was manifestly unfair. He noted, however, that in response to his concerns, the EAB had indicated that efforts would be made to adjust the list.

He expressed concern about the dirty tricks campaign, alleging that he was having secret meetings with the PPP.

Green re-asserted that he would cooperate with any group in the interest of the Georgetown, but denied that he had met

secretly or had any plans to meet secretly with the PPP.

He also rebuked the New Nation for carrying a story, which claimed he had been chased out of Tiger Bay. Green stressed that neither he nor any of the leaders of the GGG had been in Tiger Bay on the day in question, and that the vehicle he was alleged to have been in had not

been used by him for some time now.

Election observers informed about role and rights at seminar

By Alim Hassim

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) yesterday conducted a one-day orientation seminar, during which over 100 observers were detailed on their rights and the role they are expected to play in tomorrow's local government and municipal elections.

Present for the session were Chairman of the Elections Commission Edward Hopkinson, who had to depart after a brief word to the observers because of another appoint-

ment. EAB's Project Director, Clairmont Lye, EAB's Chairman, Makepeace Richmond, EAB's Senior Member, Leon Rockliffe and Senior Counsel Miles Fitzpatrick, among other notables.

Chairman of the session, Lye, elaborated on the rights of the observers, noting that not more than two of them are permitted to observe the elections at one polling place at any one time.

He said observers will be officially recognised as observers by displaying, at all times, a badge issued by the elections commission and signed by the chairman. They will be provided with adequate seating accommodation within hearing and visible distance of the Presiding Officer and other polling officials.

Ballot boxes may be inspected by them at the same time as the polling agents, but they would not have the right to place a seal or other mark on the ballot boxes at any time.

While observing the voting, the observers are permitted to make such notes or records as they deem fit without being obligated to disclose those notes to any elections official.

It was often stressed during the seminar that the observers are not permitted to make any objections or in any way interfere with the voting process. They may, however, speak quietly to polling officials without disturbing the voting.

Lye stated that they have the right to witness the closing of the ballot boxes when voting ends.

The observers present were told of their right to speak to voters outside the polling place only after they (the voters) have voted. They were told that they could speak to one voter at a time and are not allowed to encourage a crowd.

The counting of the votes will be done in the presence of voters, but they are not permitted to make any objections or in any way interfere with the counting process. They will also be present for the counting of the disciplined services' votes.

The gathering of observers was told of each one's right to receive from the presiding officer a copy of all the official reports and results which are required for delivery to the polling agents.

According to Lye, the ballot boxes may be followed by observers in the vehicle transporting them if there is room available. They were instructed to extend fullest cooperation to Presiding Officers to ensure that the voting takes place in an efficient and fair manner.

The rules that apply to the local observers also apply to the three foreign observers from Nepal, the Gaza Strip and Albania.

Fitzpatrick, giving a brief history of elections in Guyana, noted that the biggest lacuna in 1992 National Elections was the absence of local observers.

EAB resources should be channelled to Commission - GGG

A SPOKESMAN for a Good and Green Georgetown told Stabroek News yesterday that it is not its intention to stop any observer from the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) from monitoring the elections.

The group however fears that it cannot support the EAB's activities and feels that the resources it receives should be channelled to the Elections Commission. It has made these views known to the representatives of the Washington DC-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) here to monitor the poll.

The group has difficulties with the list of observers being used by the EAB pointing out that the list provides no information as to who these people are.

It also refers to the "hastily put together training sessions" over the last few days, contending that if this was intended to be a serious exercise, the training would have been done over a much longer period.

EAB spokesman Lawrence Lachmansingh rebuffed the contention saying that the reason the training sessions seemed hastily put together was two-fold. First, the Commission was late in granting permission to the group to observe the polls. As a matter of fact, the terms of reference for the observers were only finalised late last week, he said. The EAB also wanted to schedule the sessions in such a way that the training would be fresh in the minds of its observers. Lachmansingh said that all of the Commission's training material had been prepared well in advance.

The GGG spokesman pointed out that the list originally provided to the Elections Commission was ethnically biased though to the EAB's credit, it has since moved to correct the imbalance.

Lachmansingh said the first list provided to the Commission had to be revised because some of its personnel had opted to take positions as elections officers. The revision had nothing to do with balanc-

ing its list ethnically.

The GGG also has problems with the role of the EAB whose mandate it said expired in October 1992.

The spokesman said that the EAB was born out of the trust to obtain free and fair elections and its activities then was to ensure the removal of the People's National Congress from office.

To the contrary, Lachmansingh noted that the EAB's memoranda of association describes the group's objective as the fostering of the democratisation of Guyana. In the first instance this involved free and fair elections, local government elections and voter education among other things.

The GGG spokesman said that the EAB had initially only intended to monitor the Georgetown poll but decided to extend it to other areas after a meeting with the GGG at which it was pointed out that its activities run the danger of being viewed as prejudicial.

But he said that though the EAB has expressed its

intention to monitor the elections countrywide, it has not the resources to do so properly and may yet end up monitoring Georgetown alone. Lachmansingh said GGG should reserve such comment for August 9th.

The Green group, the spokesman said explained its position to the representatives of the NDI with whom they met on Saturday evening and suggesting that the resources being made available could be more usefully utilised if channelled to the Elections Commission.

He claimed that the Group was informed by the NDI that the Elections Commission has made no request for assistance.

The Green group has also questioned the sponsorship of the EAB pointing that the Anglican and Catholic Churches, the Clerical and Commercial

Workers Union (CCWU) and the two groupings representing the Hindu and Moslem religions were not reflective of the political and cultural tendencies of the country.

We are here to observe



Two observers from the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) presenting their credentials to the Presiding Officer at the Kingston Community High School yesterday morning. The EAB is observing the polls.



TRANSPARENCY: Counting of the ballots at St. Sidwell's School, Georgetown. (George Lee photo).

EAB declares poll 'Free And Fair'

The Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) has declared the Municipal Elections for Georgetown "free and fair" and is presently collecting reports about the conduct of polling from its observers across the country.

EAB's Coordinator Mr Clairmont Lye, at a press briefing he shared with Elections Commission Chairman Mr Edward Hopkinson and members of the Commission, said

the EAB observers witnessed 25% of the opening and closing of polling stations, and 80% were monitored throughout the day.

He noted that the stations had the full complement of officials and cooperated fully with observers.

EAB described the conduct of voters as "orderly" and found that no one was deliberately disenfranchised.

Mr Lye said it was the first

free and fair Local Government Elections in 25 years to be "devoid of violence" and the process advances the principles of democracy which was won on October 5, 1992.

Campaigning by the parties and groupings, the EAB Coordinator added, was not on issues, but on personalities, pointing out that this could have been responsible for the low voter turn out in Georgetown.

Rose Hall, New Amsterdam voting fair - EAB

THE voter turnout in Rose Hall and New Amsterdam was over 50 per cent compared to the average 33 per cent in Georgetown at the August 8th polls.

Declaring polling in Rose Hall and New Amsterdam to be free and fair, the independent Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) yesterday said turnout in the two areas was 52 and 55 per cent respectively.

The EAB has already declared voting in Linden and Anna Regina, two of the six municipalities, to be free and fair.

The Rose Hall poll, the EAB says, was monitored by one observer. Six of the 10 polling locations were observed.

Polling started exactly on time at those stations monitored. Officials and polling agents reported

that voting at the other stations commenced 15 minutes before the scheduled opening time of 6 am.

Officials were found to be familiar with the voting process and identification procedures were adhered to, the EAB said.

The conduct of voters was orderly and the EAB representative was accorded full rights as an observer.

The New Amsterdam poll was monitored by a 13-person team and 90 per cent of ballot box locations were checked during the day.

In several cases, presiding officers wiped voters' fingers after inking but this was altered after the correct procedure was drawn to their attention.

Despite rigorous protests from polling agents present, one person was allowed to vote at a station despite the fact that

voting was officially declared closed.

With one exception, the EAB said that the conduct of the police on duty was above reproach.

Conduct on the part of polling officials at two locations was deemed to be "unprofessional and less than serious". In one case no action was taken by the presiding officer or policeman on duty against a voter in the booth who openly advised voters for whom they should vote.

EAB head feels Poor voter turnout is message to politicians

The poor voter turnout in the City at Monday's Municipal election, showed that the electorate is sending a message to politicians. Project Director of the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) Mr Clairmont Lye contended yesterday.

His assessment came at a press briefing he shared with the Elections Commission yesterday afternoon at the GTV 10 studios on Homestretch Avenue, Georgetown.

Out of 82,054 eligible voters in Georgetown, a traditional stronghold of the Minority People's National Congress (PNC), only about 26,701 cast ballots. Commission results showed.

This represents a turnout of some 32.54 per cent.

In most areas outside the

City, 40 to nearly 70 per cent of the voting population exercised their franchise.

Lye speculated that most of the parties concentrated on personalities instead of issues while Chairman of the Elections Commission, Mr Edward Hopkinson, felt that outside Georgetown, the groups campaigned mainly on issues.

This, he surmised, may have contributed to the better voter turnout in the rural areas.

Minority Leader and Head of the PNC, Mr Desmond Hoyte, yesterday declined to speculate on the reasons for the poor turnout in Georgetown.

Hoyte, whose party got the second highest number of votes in the Georgetown area, said the results need careful analysis before any conclusion could be

drawn.

A spokesman for the ruling People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/Civic) felt the turnout in Georgetown reflected a major rejection of the PNC and the Good and Green for Georgetown (GGG) group by their traditional supporters.

GGG is led by former PNC Deputy Leader Mr Hamilton Green. He was expelled from the party for alleged misconduct shortly after the PNC lost the October 5, 1992 General Elections.

According to PPP/Civic estimates, they captured between 68 to 70 per cent of the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs).

The party spokesman acknowledged that voter turnout was low but considered their

strategy at Linden and New Amsterdam reasonable given the results of the 1992 General Elections.

Party officials said they are looking into complaints of voting impersonations, methods used to allow persons to vote and how genuine some of the voting proxies were.

Green could not be reached for comment up to late yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Elections Commission is to submit recommendations to the Government for improving the election process here.

The Commission will propose that the Barbados procedure of continuous registration be adopted.

This system, Lye said, is ideal for the Caribbean.

City polls

Parties ponder options

THE guessing game was still on yesterday as the three main contenders in Monday's Municipal polls in Georgetown pondered their options from results that gave no outright winner.

Sources said the top brass in the ruling People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/Civic) was last night scheduled to meet to consider the issue but there was no clear indication which side in the split PNC they would favour for an alliance.

Ousted PNC Deputy Leader, Mr Hamilton Green, following his good showing in the polls, was still awaiting a response to his overture for a "modus vivendi" with the PNC.

Spokesmen for the Minority People's National Congress (PNC) were not available for comment on Green's Wednesday letter to party Leader, Mr Desmond Hoyte, seeking an accommodation.

Green, who formed his 'A Good and Green Georgetown' (GGG) group to contest the Georgetown polls and demonstrate he is still a political force to be reckoned with, took the most seats (12) in the elections.

The PNC came in second with 10 and the PPP/Civic scored eight in the battle for the 30 seats on the City Council.

Green is his group's mayoral candidate but he would need support from either the PNC or the PPP/Civic councillors in the election for the top post when the new Council meets after it is

formally convened.

GGG sources said initial reaction from the PNC to Green's courtship was not encouraging but they expect a clearer picture by today - either from their former comrades or the PPP/Civic.

Green was expelled from the PNC for alleged misconduct after the party lost the October 5, 1992 general elections. He is challenging the expulsion in court.

Sources in the PPP/Civic, asked yesterday which way the wind was blowing, demurred. "The wind is not blowing any way", one senior member told the Chronicle.

There were signs, however, that the PPP/Civic hierarchy was evenly divided on which side could get the nod.

One source said there was a slight edge in favour of going with the GGG but cautioned: "Important voices have to be listened to."

PPP/Civic members were also trying to feel out groups on which option they favoured and there were suggestions that a rotation of the Mayor's position among the three contestants might be the best way to go.

The Mayor is elected by the Council, which has a three-year tenure, for a one-year term and the three parties can each have a one term shot in the top seat, sources suggested.

PNC top members were reported in a meeting at their Congress Place headquarters yesterday but most of them were

at a funeral of a party member in the afternoon and could not be contacted.

GGG sources said they have given the PNC up to today to respond to the Green "modus vivendi" overture (an arrangement whereby those in dispute can carry on pending a settlement.)

Meanwhile, the Elections Commission yesterday said the PPP/Civic won the Local Government polls in 47 areas, while community groups gained the most votes in 18 locations.

The party contested the August 8 elections in 64 local authority areas, in addition to six municipalities.

But it had a walk over victory in eight communities which were not contested by any other group.

In the latest results to come in, the PPP/Civic won the elections in the Macedonia/Joppa area, where it gained 670 votes, while the People's Action Committee (PAC) got 492.

In other outstanding results, the Matarkai Pro Democracy League won in the Port Kaituma/Mathew's Ridge/Arakaka area, with 444 votes. The PPP/Civic scored 388.

Elections Commission Chairman, Mr Edward Hopkinson said no information has been received on whether the members of the Disciplined Services in interior locations voted Monday.

Proxy papers were sent to those stationed at Camp Jaguar, (turn to centre pages)

Parties ponder options

(From page one)

New River, Monkey Mountain, Arakaka and Orinduik and their votes would have been included with those of the civilians.

The Chairman said the Commission's immediate priority would be to "tie up loose ends" in the wake of the polls, which were held here after an absence of 24 years.

He said officials will look at reports on voting in the various areas to determine if everything went according to electoral procedures.

Such an analysis will help in the smooth running of elections in the future, he added.

Hopkinson confirmed that a report has been sent to the Returning Officer by the Independent Organisation for Development (IOD) of Mocha-Aracadia, com-

plaining about voting irregularities by the Progressive Neighbourhood Committee (PNC) in the East Bank Demerara district.

He said officials have to meet representatives of both contesting groups in that area and if the Commission feels the matter deserves attention, it will be looked at.

Mr Julian Clyne, of the IOD, has written the Commission alleging malpractices during voting Monday, claiming that officiating personnel were "open supporters" of the PNC.

He alleged they opened ballots of certain voters, presumably those of IOD supporters, and some people were seen directing voters to mark their 'X' next to the PNC, using actual ballot pa-

pers as examples.

Clyne also claimed that polling staff, supporters and candidates of the Committee voted more than once. They also reportedly conspired to get people to vote under wrong names and Clyne alleged that this was prevalent in the N - Z polling area.

On the other hand, he claimed persons who had no form of identification were denied the right to vote, especially IOD supporters, while those of the PNC were allowed to cast their ballots.

The PNC has emerged the winner of the polls in the area, with 363 votes, against the IOD's 295. Clyne is protesting the results and is asking for an investigation by the Commission.

He said the irregularities occurred between 3 pm and 6 pm

after observers had left and a copy of the letter of complaint has been sent to the Electoral Assistance Bureau.

The EAB fielded 400 local observers for the polls and there were 33 foreign monitors, including diplomats of the embassies here.

A US Embassy officer said the American team did not stay long at polling centres but moved around different parts of the country.

He supported the EAB's earlier statement that the elections were free and fair and free from violence. While a few minor irregularities were observed, he said these were to be expected in any election.

The observer also commended the Commission staff for doing a "very, very fine job".

Mr Kirk Gregersen, of the US-based National Democratic Institute, was part of a four-member

team which split into two groups to monitor the elections.

Two members were in Berbice, while the others stayed in Georgetown and visited polling stations in Canal Numbers One and Two, West Bank Demerara, Mocha-Arcadia, Little Diamond and Herstelling, East Bank Demerara.

He said the process appeared "very smooth and slow" and a few cases were witnessed where people did not have identification cards but were allowed to vote.

The NDI team visited the Mocha-Arcadia station during morning hours and did not observe the alleged malpractices reported by one of the contesting groups there, Gregersen said.

He, however, pointed out that the irregularities reportedly took place during the afternoon and noted that this is a "good case" why local observers are useful.

Linden, Anna Regina polls fair - EAB

THE Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) yesterday issued statements declaring polling in Linden and Anna Regina on Monday to be free and fair.

In Linden however, the EAB said in far too many cases identification procedures were not adhered to.

The EAB, which was officially accredited as a local observer, said the Linden elections on Monday were monitored by 20 observers headed by a director of the body.

The team witnessed the opening and closing of 30 per cent of polling stations and monitored all 39 polling places during the day.

In about half of the places monitored, polling opened on time. At four booths, voting in Linden, won by the People's National Congress in a landslide, started one hour late.

"Polling officials were found to be generally familiar with voting procedures but identification procedures were carried out in far too many cases with considerable laxity or with the Presiding Officer using his authority to dispense entirely with prescribed methods of identification", the EAB said. There were also cases of persons without identification being identified by persons who had not voted at the same place, it added.

In many cases, voters' hands were not properly inspected before staining and in too many cases fingers were wiped after the inking was done, the EAB contended. "In one remarkable case a Presiding Officer who cast her ballot at her own station did not ink her finger, reportedly because it would stain the official documents", the EAB reported.

The EAB, which has declared Monday's polls to be free and fair, said

voting in Linden was orderly and "on the whole the police on duty behaved professionally".

The Anna Regina municipal polls, won by the PPP/Civic, were monitored by 11 observers headed by a director and all 20 locations were observed during the day.

At half of the polling stations, voting commenced on time, while it was 45 minutes late at the other locations.

Correct staining procedures, it was observed, were not followed early on in the day.

"It is worth of note that whereas in Georgetown and Linden there were too many cases of ignorance or deliberate disregard of identification procedures, there was only one case reported in Anna Regina where a voter was not required to take the necessary oath of identity", the EAB said.

Voting was orderly and the police performed professionally in Anna Regina, the group said.

Elections appraisal seminar planned

THE Elections Commission is convening a one-day seminar on August 27 at which the August 8 elections will be reviewed and recommendations thrown up for future polls.

Commission officials say the seminar will comprise all returning officers, party polling agents and the media among other groups.

Senior Commission managers are expected to present papers on various facets of the just concluded elections includ-

ing recruitment and training of officials, the voters list, registration and logistics.

Chief Election Officer and Commissioner of National Registration Stanley Singh told Stabroek News the participants at the seminar will be placed in five working groups to discuss specific areas.

At the end of the day, recommendations are expected from each group for incorporation into a document to be

presented to the Commission.

Singh described the seminar as a "post-election appraisal exercise".

Singh said that the Project Director of the

Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), Clai-
mont Lye, will be invited to deliver a synopsis of the findings of the independent observer group. He noted that a number of EAB suggestions had

been implemented for the polls.

Singh said such an exercise would have been ideal just after the 1992 general elections but it was not possible then.

Guyana needs new national register

GUYANA needs a brand new national register, says Project Manager of the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB) Mr. Clairmonte Lye, and to return to the use of identification cards as the means of voting.

Taking part in the post election appraisal workshop at NCERD building in Kingston yesterday, Lye said he considers it unfortunate that government did not agree to consult with the opposition on the need for a new registration system.

"They must be consulted now...we need a new national register," Lye urged.

He is of the view that the Barbados system, adopted from the Swedish system, is most comprehensive. The system is designed to ensure that each birth is recorded and death noted. When a child attains the age of 18, he automatically gets on the voters' list. The names of persons who died are scored off by the computer. Lists are printed each year and amended

- says EAB chief

each month.

"With a new national register we will not only get a new list, but it will be the first national data base this country can have," Lye, head of the first local observer mission, argued.

Albert Henry, a senior Elections Commission official, also urged that the use of ID cards be re-examined.

"Too many voters' names have appeared on the official list without any identification. This does not set the stage for good judgement and proper accountability. It leaves one to think the other way," he told participants.

Edward Williams, another Senior Executive Officer, recommended that a permanent Elections Commission be appointed with a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman and one full-time member. He suggested that the Commission comprise the Chairman, his deputy, two representatives of the ruling party and two from the opposition and three independent persons, drawn from a wide cross-section of society.

The Chief Elections Officer should be the Secretary to the Commission, he added.

Lye, listing the shortcomings of the recent local government and municipal elections, which were procedural, said Guyanese should be proud that the elections were without violence, the first time in 30 years.

In his recommendations, he said the voters' lists to the presiding officers should be merged — the main list and the supplementary list. He stressed the need for standardisation in future. Videos, he advised, can be

used for uniform training throughout the country.

The EAB head said it is the responsibility of the Elections Commission to send out voters advisory slips to ensure voters go to the right polling stations.

Lye is also confident that municipal elections in 1997 can be held with General Elections. Amerindian Council Elections can also be taken over by the Elections Commission.

The need for a permanent Commission, he said, is obvious and feels the Chief Elections Officer should be a permanent part of that team and be made the Chief Executive Officer.

Green wants expanded Elections Commission

CONVENOR of for a Good and Green Georgetown (GGG), Hamilton Green, wants representation on the Elections Commission to be expanded beyond the domain of political parties.

Green, whose group won the most seats on the Georgetown city council at the August 8 polls, says the Commission should at least include representation from local government authorities. He said he didn't want an unwieldy Commission but said representation should be broader.

Green opined that greater authority should be given to the persons identified to undertake the work of the Commission including the Chairman. He was of the view that current Chairman Edward Garnett Hopkinson was stymied in his work because he was not given the necessary authority.

Green, whose group observers believe will be transformed into a national organisation for the 1997 general elections, said he wants the Commission to continue working towards the task of ensuring that every eligible citizen is registered and allowed to vote.

He said he welcomed proposed plans to set up a National Register which will record all citizens from birth through death and which will automatically place all eligible voters on the elections roll whenever necessary. This system will not require fresh registration for elections and will permit snap elections to be called.

The GGG Convenor said he hoped that this model, patterned after the one in Barbados, is given all of the necessary financing and help by central government to ensure it becomes a reality.

Asked about his post-elections views about the non-government Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), Green says he is still of the opinion that a well-organised Commission can execute all of the functions which were undertaken by the group.

Green, who frequently criticised the EAB during the elections campaign, said "I still don't think the EAB has a significant role to play in our elections system".

The EAB has been lauded for its work by the current Commission.