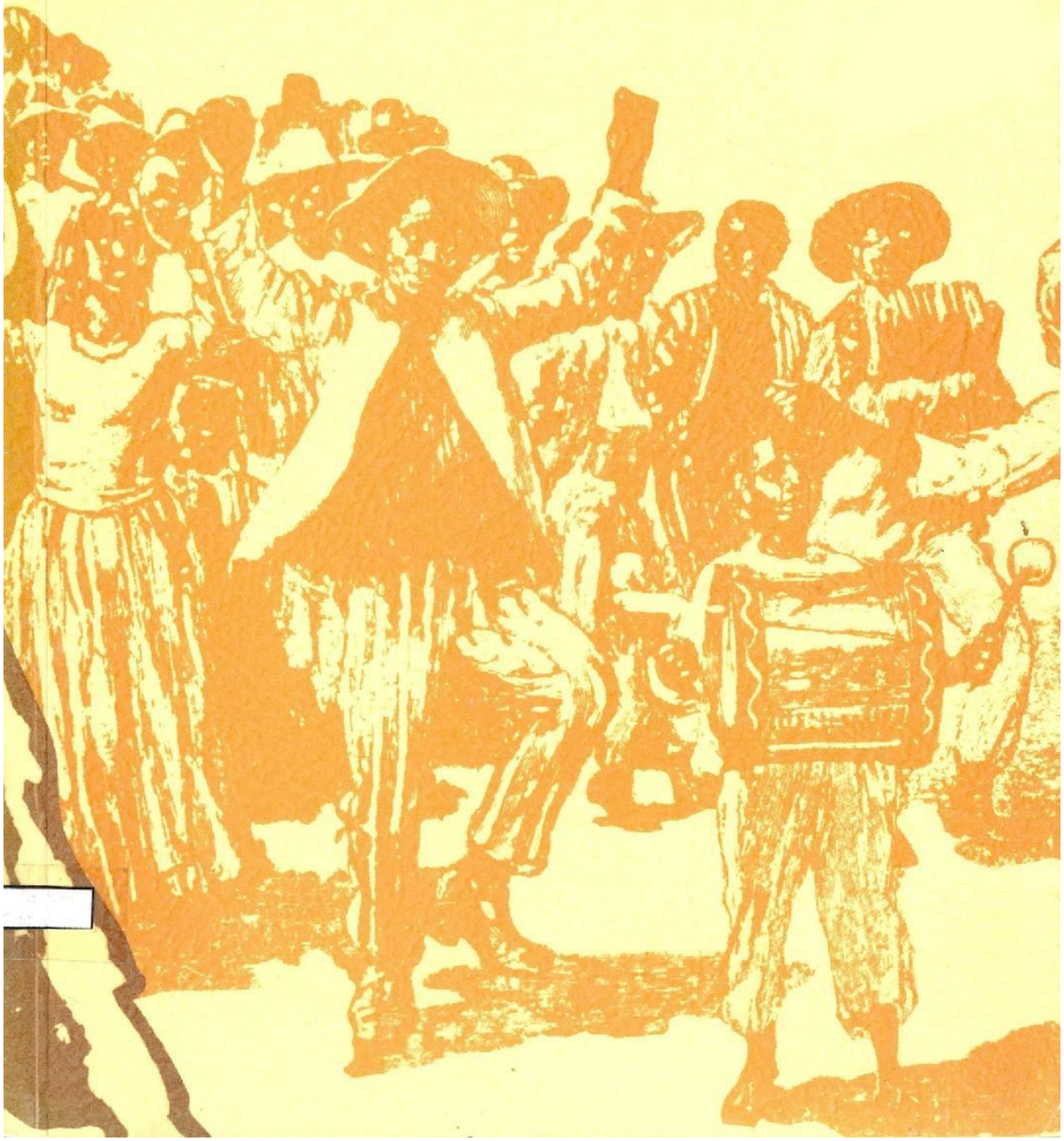
Emancipation III

A series of lectures
to commemorate
the 150th anniversary of emancipation

Sponsored by
the national cultural foundation and
the history department of
the university of the west indies, barbados



EMANCIPATION III

Aspects of the post-slavery experience of Barbados

Lectures Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Emancipation, delivered In February and March 1987

Edited by

WOODVILLE MARSHALL

Sponsored by
National Cultural Foundation
and
Department of History, U.W.I., Cave Hill

Bridgetown, Barbados
1988

Typeset and printed in Jamaica by
Montrose Printery Limited, Kingston, Jamaica.

Contributors

GEORGE BELLE is a Lecturer in Government at U.W.I., Cave Hill.

NEVILLE DUNCAN, is Senior Lecturer in Government at U.W.I., Cave Hill.

PATRICK EMMANUEL is Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Social and Economic Research at U.W.I., Cave Hill.

KEITH HUNTE is Principal and Pro-Vice Chanellor at U.W.I., Cave Hill.

WOODVILLE MARSHALL, is Professor of History at U.W.I., Cave Hill.

ROBERT MORRIS, is a Member of Parliament and a Deputy General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union.

Contents

Introduction

Emancipation III is a collection of the lectures which were delivered at the Steel Shed in Queen's Park in February and March 1987 as a contribution to the commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of slave emancipation in the Commonwealth Caribbean. These lectures, like those that were published as *Emancipation I* and *Emancipation II,* were organized by the Department of History at U.W.I., Cave Hill and by the National Cultural Foundation, and were designed to focus popular attention on the legacies of slavery and on the nature of the post-slavery experience in Barbados. Judging by the size and response of the audience, these lectures, like the earlier ones in the series, appear to have realized that objective; but it is hoped that their publication will not only strengthen that awakened interest in Barbadian History but will provide accessible historical material for those who may have missed the lectures either in their original presentation or in their broadcast form.

There is a second reason why these lectures should be preserved in this more permanent form. To a greater extent than the earlier ones, these lectures contain the results of current research by the lecturers themselves. Therefore, the publication of the lectures is effectively the *first* publication of new work, particularly on village formation, the nature of the "riots", the formation and functioning of political parties. Hopefully, then, this publication will be more than a evansecent contribution to the historical literature.

The focus of these lectures was mainly on the processes of political development during the first four decades of this century. Broadly speaking, the lectures illustrate, mainly through an examination of village formation, early political party and trade union organization, demonstrations in force, how possibilities for a more genuine participation by the mass of the people in economic activities and in the decision making

at the work-place and in parliament became more evident. The lectures suggest that such possibilities were created by a convergence of forces: international economic depression, the spread of anti-colonialist ideology, sustained local effort by both middle class and 'barefoot' politicians and labour organizers. At the same time, the lectures clearly place these developments in their regional setting, indicating that the historical experience in sub-region may have been basically similar, and that a sense of this was seeping into the consciousness of more Barbadians.

This publication has been made possible through the financial assistance of Shell Antilles and Guianas Ltd. and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. On behalf of the Department of History, I wish to express our deepest sense of gratitude to Shell Antilles and Guianas Ltd., whose Managing Director, Mr. Peter Lane, very promptly responded to our appeal for funds to facilitate this publication. I also wish to acknowledge once again the impressive contribution made by the staff of the National Cultural Foundation to the successful presentation of these lectures, through their efficient handling of all the technical and publicity arrangements associated with the event.

WOODVILLE MARSHALL
U.W.I., Cave Hill, 1988

1

Villages and Plantation Sub-Division

WOODVILLE MARSHALL

The main focus of this talk will be post-1890 when plantation sub-division began on a major scale, when land speculation was firmly established as a main route to profit-making and social mobility, and when several major villages were established and others were considerably extended. But, if these developments are to be placed in proper perspective, we need some background information on aspects of the Barbados environment, its settlement history and residential patterns.

Environmental Features

Two should be noted. First, Barbados possesses open terrain which made it ideal for agricultural exploitation. There are no high mountains or deep valleys to impede movement, to check settlement or obstruct agricultural activity. The second feature slightly qualifies the first. Only about half of the soil is of good quality – fairly deep, with good drainage and with adequate rainfall of 50 to 80 inches annually. This prime agricultural area exists in the St. George Valley and in the areas of Grey Brown, Yellow Brown and Red Brown Association which cover all of St. George, St. Thomas and St. Peter, most of St. John, about half of St. Philip, St. Michael and St. Lucy, and a small portion of Christ Church. Most of the remainder of the soil is of much poorer quality. Some of it is the "rab land" (now selling at a premium) of the south and east coasts; much of it is the shallow black soils of Christ Church, St. Michael and St. Lucy, coastal St. James and the eroded slopes of the Scotland District. In most of these areas, the combination of shallow soil and low

rainfall impose constraints on highly profitable plantation-based agricultural activity. Therefore, we might expect the sugar plantation to be firmly entrenched in the prime agricultural area, but perhaps maintaining a less secure hold on the shallow black soils when prolonged drought intervened or when the market for the staple became weak, as it did between 1884 and 1915 and from 1925 to 1939. This particular environmental feature was, however, of little consequence during the first two hundred years of plantation existence. A strong demand and a guranteed market for sugar ensured that all sugar plantations, wherever located, made good profits.

Settlement History

What the settlement history reveals is the speed and completeness with which the sugar plantation controlled the Barbadian land resources. David Watts suggests that, by 1655, the forest, except Turner Hall's Woods, had been cleared and that "the Barbadian landscape was essentially open, dominated by large sugar estates set in a man-controlled environment." However, Ronnie Hughes, in his search of planters' wills and inventories, has found considerable evidence of the existence of substantial woodlands on many plantations in the north-eastern parishes up until 1700. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that within seventy-five years of the arrival of the European settlers and about fifty years after sugar had become the main export, the Barbadian agricultural resources were being fully exploited. More than that, the combination of small land area, open terrain and high export earnings ensured that the plantation held a virtual monopoly of the land. The only areas which remained exempt from intensive monoculture were the sea-coast plains and the slopes of the Scotland District. Therefore, Barbados presented a sharp contrast to many Caribbean territories where topographical variety and difficult terrain created a land reserve and distinct regions, which together ensured that crop diversification and non-plantation existence and activity were possible.

Early Residential Patterns

There was no comprehensive Barbados census between 1680 and 1844, but it is easy to deduce where most people lived. They lived on the plantations. This is, of course, very obvious for the period of slavery. But it is also the answer that has to be given fifty years after the ending of slavery, because the plantations controlled the land and therefore controlled residential patterns. Let us try, however, to be more precise about which people lived where. Let us start with the period of slavery.

We might expect to find people living in any of three locations: plantations, towns, villages. The estimated population of Barbados in 1832 was about 102,100, of which about 82,000 were slaves, about 14,800 were whites and about 5,300 were freedmen (Free Coloureds). On the basis of the 1832 Slave Register (census), I offer a guesstimate (Table 1) of the distribution of that population.

TABLE 1: Population Distribution, 1830

	Plantations	Towns	Villages
Slaves	73,000	9,000	–
Whites	11,000	3,000	800
Freedmen	1,000	4,000	300
Totals	85,000 (83.3%)	16,000 (15.6%)	1,100 (1.1%)

It is possible that more whites and feeedmen lived in the towns and villages, but even if we located all the freedmen in the towns and three-quarters of the whites in the towns and villages, the plantations would still be the residence of more than seventy-five per cent of the total population.

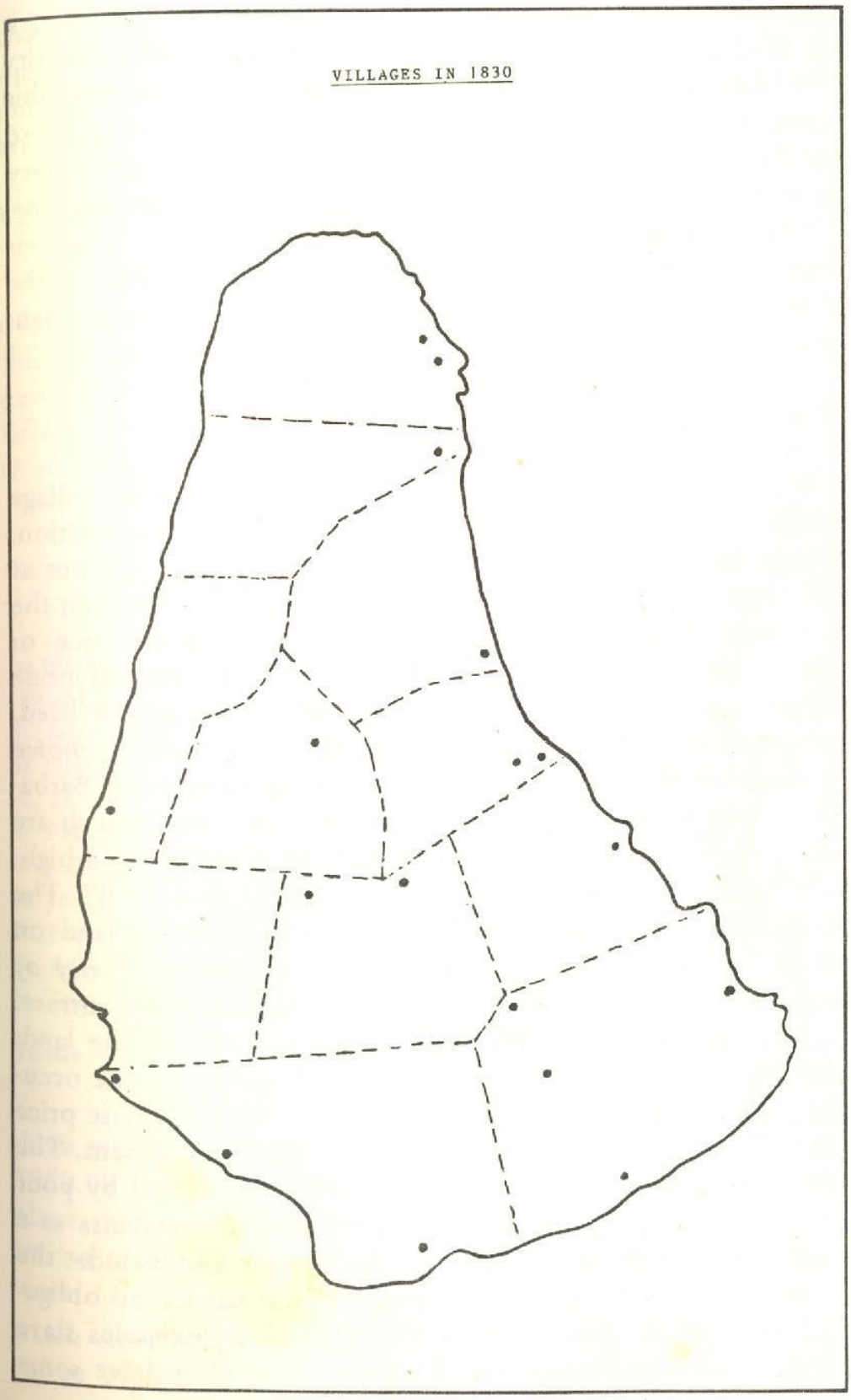
Villages by 1830

Not surprisingly, on any calculation, villages remained the least significant feature of the residential pattern. Villages were the residences and refuges of that minority of persons who were not tightly tied to the dominant plantation: the poor whites

who probably numbered more than 8,000 in 1832 (about 60% of all whites) and, to a lesser extent, the freedmen. Given the marginality of these groups, the dominance of planters and the plantation's monopoly of land, village existence and development were bound to be severely constrained. By 1832, there were probably sixteen or eighteen village clusters in existence, most of them located on the "rab land" of the south and east coasts. This point is well made by the place names: *Below Rock* and *Bath Village* in Christ Church; *Foul Bay* and *Marley Vale* in St. Philip; *Below the Cliff* (Martin's Bay) in St. John; *Crab Hole* and *Surinam* in St. Joseph; *Chalky Mount* in St. Andrew; *Boscobel* in St. Peter; *Cave Hill* and *Pie Corner* in St. Lucy. Note how rock and sand predominate. There were in addition about five inland villages: *Six Cross Paths* and *Church Village* in St. Philip, *Sweet Bottom* (now inappropriately re-named Sweet Vale) and *Market Hill* in St. George, and *Irish Town* in St. Thomas.

The history of the origins of these early villages is still being pieced together; but we must notice the uniqueness of Sweet Bottom. This village is significant for at least two reasons. It is one of the oldest, dating from 1777; and, unlike most villages, it is located in a very fertile area, in the deep bottom land of the St. George Valley. It originated in the bequest of Francis Butcher (1712-1777), owner of the Golden Ridge plantation, to seven of his slaves who were doubtless his own children by favourite slave women. Under his will, twenty acres of land were to be divided in five four-acre lots, and stone houses with shingled roofs were to be built on each lot; and the beneficiaries were to receive cash and livestock and to enjoy access to the plantation for water. The oral tradition in Sweet Bottom which links the village to Golden Ridge and surviving residents to the Butcher family is a graphic illustration of the continuities in our history and constitutes a compelling case for the deliberate preservation of *all* the place names mentioned in that story.

We might also briefly note that the case of the vanishing village – Irish Town. This was apparently one of the earliest villages, most probably a 'poor white' village, established by the 1640s near Canefield plantation in St. Thomas. There is clear


VILLAGES IN 1830

evidence of its existence up to 1883 but, after that date, it seems to survive mainly in the memories of the residents of Airy Cot, Canefield and surrounding areas. The most probable explanation for its disappearance is that its residents were flooded out during the 1898 hurricane and that they then sought safety by moving their houses to the higher ground at nearby Airy Cot.

The pre-emancipation history of villages therefore identifies some of the key constraints on early village development: the immobility of the vast majority of the population and the plantation's control of most of the land.

What is a Village?

Before we look to see whether the constraints on village development were eased in any way by slave emancipation, it may be necessary to define the term "village". I am not at this stage concerned with the nature of relations between the residents of any particular area, nor with the presence or absence of community spirit, or of particular institutions inside the given area. I am more concerned with where people lived. My working definition stresses geographical location and *choice* in residence and employment. I am talking about what Barbadians refer to as *districts,* that is, clusters of houses which are not located on estates but can usually be found along a highway, around a cross-roads or on a piece of "rab land". The occupants usually own the houses and *control* the land on which the houses are located, that is, they have *security of tenure* as a result of freehold titles or clear lease-hold contract. Usually, agricultural activity is possible on some of the land; but occupancy of the land imposes no obligation on the occupant other than the payment of instalments of purchase price (where land is not bought outright) or payment of rent. The definition therefore includes all those clusters formed by poor whites, by freedmen, by ex-slaves and their descendants as a result of the purchase of small lots of land; it also includes the urban tenantries because occupancy of these carried no obligation to work for the landlord. The definition excludes slave villages and estate tenantries because, while these have some

characteristics of villages, the residents are not free to take their labour or their persons wherever they wish. They are immobilized by their legal status or by conditional tenancy arrangements.

Village Development after Emancipation

The greater mobility and earning power of the vast majority of the population which came with Emancipation did not, for the first ten or fifteen years, have any significant effect on the development of villages. Between 1838 and 1850, probably fifteen new villages were founded, increasing the total to around thirty (see Table 2). In general, it would appear that most of

TABLE 2: Barbados Villages, 1830 to 1930

	1830	1850	1880s	1930
St. Michael	–	2	10	25
Christ Church	3	5	13	22
St. James	1	2	7	14
St. George	2	4	10	17
St. Thomas	1	5	8	10
St. Philip	4	6	14	17
St. John	1	1	7	12
St. Joseph	2	2	10	12
St. Peter	1	3	5	8
St. Andrew	1	1	8	9
St. Lucy	2	2	10	12
Totals	18	33	102	158

these villages were created as a result of the sale at prices of $350.00 to $400.00 per acre of small and marginal portions of plantation land (Black Rock, Cave Hill, Reid's Bay, Long Bay, Indian Ground). The most note-worthy of these new villages were:

Black Rock and *Cave Hill* in St. Michael, representing the first "Free Villages" formed in that parish; and the four new villages

of St. Thomas, *Rock Hall, Bridgefield, Arch Hall* and *Redman's Village.* Rock Hall and Bridgefield, like Sweet Bottom, were the consequences of a bequest. Reginald Alleyne Elcock, the owner of Mt. Wilton plantation, made a bequest in 1821 of $24.00 annually to each adult slave. This bequest eventually enable several ex-slaves from Mt. Wilton plantation to invest in the purchase of small lots of land which were the genesis of free villages between 1840 and 1842.

The explanation for this slow increase in the number of villages was obvious to Governor Sir William Colebrooke who he noted in his Annual Report for 1848 that "the general occupation and high value" of land were obstacles to the formation of free villages. Therefore, by 1850, the plantation's land monopoly was still unbroken, and this, combined with a rising demand for land by ex-slaves, ensured the persistence of high land prices, another key constraint on village development.

However, between 1850 and 1880, the situation altered significantly. About seventy villages were formed, with all parishes, except St. Thomas and St. Peter, recording impressive increases. St. Michael, Christ Church, St. Philip, St. Joseph and St. Lucy led the way with eight each, but St. Andrew with seven, St. George and St. John with six and St. James with five were not far behind. Urban tenantries (Station Hill, Carrington Village, Dalkeith Village and Britton's Hill) were appearing, and inland settlements could be found in most parishes (Sarjeants Village in Christ Church, Workmans in St. George, Endeavour in St. James, Nursery in St. Philip, Massiah Street in St. John, St. Silvan's in St. Joseph, Diamond Village in St. Peter, St. Simon's in St. Andrew, Crab Hill in St. Lucy). In addition, at least ten villages boasted populations in excess of one thousand (Black Rock, 2,000; Hoytes, 2,000; Blades Hill and Marley Vale, 3,000).

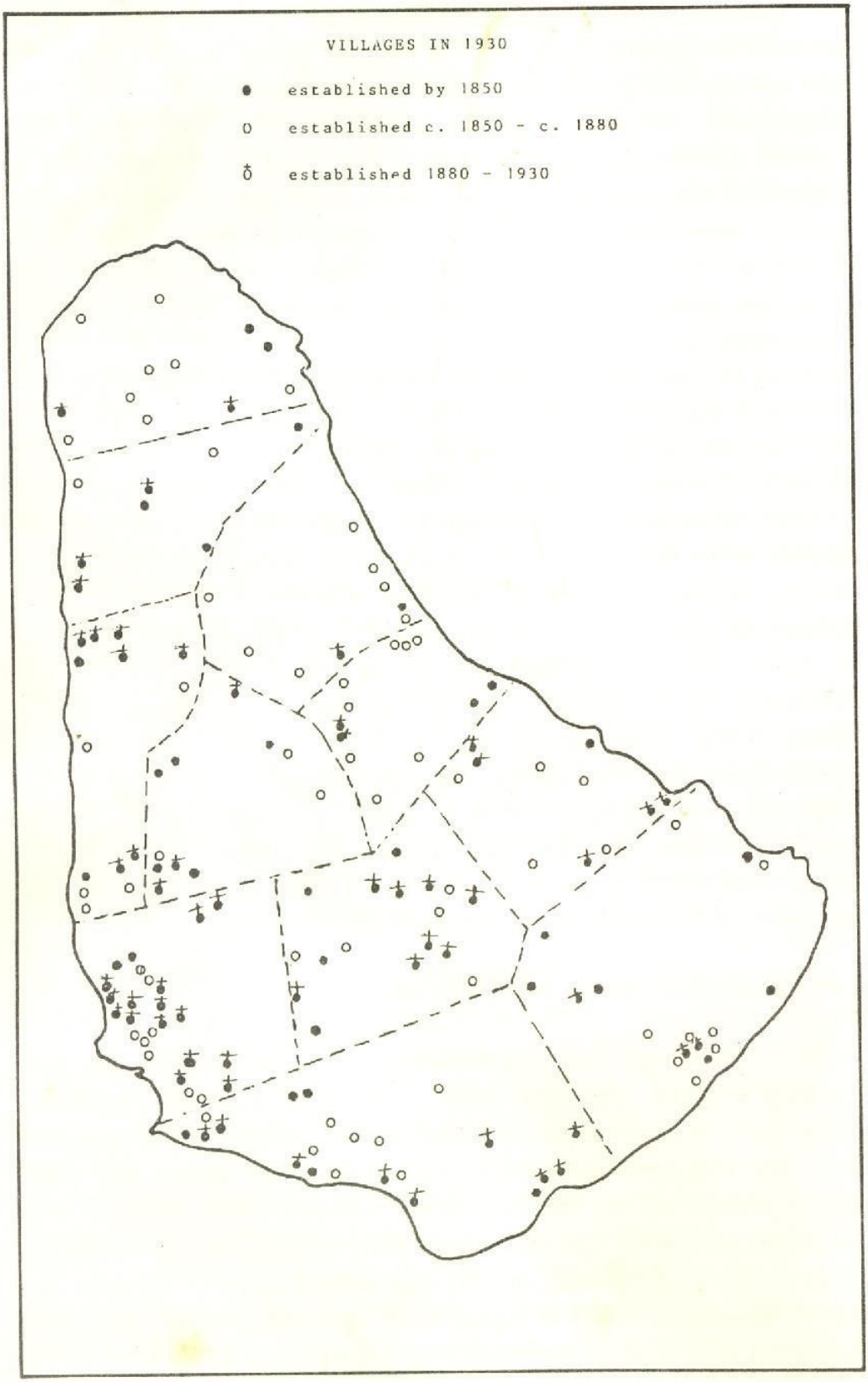
What was principally responsible for this rapid increase in the number of villages and in the growth of existing villages was a limited opening of the land market to small purchasers. Plantations had regularly been offered for sale ever since the eighteenth century, but nearly all transactions had been conducted inside a narrow circle of planters, merchants and lawyers. The "crisis"

precipitated by the Sugar Duties Act of 1846 and by the Commercial Depression of 1847-8 forced some heavily indebted planters to sell plantations; and in consequence at least fifteen plantations were partially sub-divided. What prompted this partial sub-division was doubtless the sharp fall in the price of sugar and the unpromising prospects for sugar; investors started to look around for alternatives to sugar production. Land speculation in these circumstances was clearly one possibility, and some entrepreneurs siezed the opportunity to make profitable investments.

The principal land speculator of the period was Peter Chapman, who had been marginally involved in the formation of the Rock Hall village in 1840. During the 1850s, he sub-divided at least three St. George plantations – Airy Hill (1853), Campion Castle (1854), Workmans (1856), out of which villages with the same names were formed. Other plantations sub-divided by speculators during the period included Cherry Grove (by James Brown Mapp) in 1853, Rumpus Hill and Piper's Hill, portions of Rock Dundo (St. Michael), Good Intent, Waverley Cot and Newbury in St. George. By this process, it is estimated that about 6,000 acres passed into the hands of ex-slaves and their descendants by the 1880s. Equally important, land prices of $350.00 to $600.00 per acre secured impressive profits for the speculators because they seldom bought entire plantations for more than $200.00 per acre. By the 1880s, then, one key constraint on village development was being loosened.

Large Scale Plantation Sub-Division

1890-1930 saw an intensification of the trends we have noticed for the 1850s to 1880. During this period, probably *sixty* new villages were created while older ones expanded. Most by this new formation occurred in the urban and semi-urban areas: in St. Michael where fifteen new villages were founded; in Christ Church where nine new ones can be identified; in St. James and St. George where a total of fourteen could be found. What is particularly note-worthy is the extent to which the coastal corridor and escarpment from Charnocks


VILLAGES IN 1930
established by 1850
established c. 1850 - c. 1880
established 1880 - 1930

and Chancery Lane in Christ Church to Lower Carlton in St. James were quickly covered with villages. All these villages were located on the thin black soils which were becoming marginal for profitable plantation exploitation. All these villages replaced plantations of the same name: Wilcox, Rockley, Kensington, Spring Garden, Thorpe's, Rock Dundo, etc., etc, Equally noteworthy is the fact that few new villages were formed in the prime agricultural area. Probably fifteen plantations located in this area were sub-divided in the period, but most of them were small in acreage. These included Salters, Greens and Ellerton in St. George; Bush Hall and Haggatt Hall in St. Michael; Arthur Seat and Welchman Hall in St. Thomas; Sherbourne and Venture in St. John. Therefore, 1890-1930 witnessed *both* the advance of villages and small-hold settlement *and,* more particularly, the consolidation of the plantation in the prime agricultural area.

The simple explanation for this impressive new development is obvious. Failing and/or marginal plantations were sub-divided to make way for villages. In all, probably one hundred and twenty plantations disappeared from the list of plantations during this period; but not all of them were "sacrificed", as the *Agricultural Reporter* put it, on the altar of speculators' greed. Research to date indicates the sixty-two were either wholly or partially broken into small lots. St. Michael led the way with fifteen, followed by St. James with twelve, Christ Church with nine and St. George and St. John with five each.

TABLE 3: Plantation Sub-Division 1890-1930

St. Michael	15
St. James	12
Christ Church	9
St. George	5
St. John	5
St. Thomas	4
St. Andrew	3
St. Peter	3
St. Joseph	2
St. Lucy	2
St. Philip	2
	62

It seems likely that most of those unaccounted for were amalgamated with other properties as owners tried to cope with prolonged depression in the sugar industry through economy in management and by centralization of milling operations. In any event, this most recent transfer of land from the plantation sector to the peasant farming and residential sectors, probably amounting to 10,000 acres, meant that the plantation monopoly of the vital resource for village and small farming development had been weakened if not broken by the early twentieth century. What had caused this?

Basically there was a complex interplay of factors and pressures, involving prolonged depression in the sugar industry, displacement and migration of segments of the labour force, remittances from out-migration and the activity of land speculators, and occurring over a long period of time. Indeed, it is probable that the process has not yet stopped, only become more complicated.

First, low prices for sugar in 1884 to 1915 and again from 1925 to 1939 crippled plantation enterprise. Profit margins were destroyed, property values tumbled and debt accumulated. Neither the Court of Chancery nor the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank could cope effectively with this sustained pressure on resources; and some planters and the Court of Chancery were forced to consider alternatives to planting – abandonment of sugar cultivation or the sale or lease of the plantations to whoever had the means. Major land transfer outside the traditional circle had therefore become possible. Blacks' interest in land acquisition and their eventual control of some supplies of cash helped to convert this possibility into reality. Ever since Emancipation, many blacks had tried to buy land but, as their representatives told the West Indies Royal Commission in 1897, they had been frustrated by planters' refusal to sell, by the "exorbitant" and "fancy" prices that were current and by the "settled policy" or conspiracy among the planters and the Court of Chancery to defeat their objective. What they wanted, they said, was abolition of the "rotten" Chancery system and the establishment of a government-sponsored land settlement scheme by which plantations in Chancery would be sub-divided and sold

in lots not exceeding five or ten acres. The Royal Commission did admit that this was a viable solution to some of the problems created by economic depression but, clearly impressed by the argument from the elite groups that peasant agricultural production was uneconomic, refrained from making a positive recommendation.

Internal migration and the remittances from outmigration ensured that the blacks' demands could not be forever denied. From the 1880s onwards, the rural work force responded to wage cuts and reduced employment by moving towards Bridgetown, clearly hoping to find work and/or opportunity to emigrate. Between 1871 and 1921, the population of St. Michael increased by over fifty per cent, and this put pressure on residential accommodation in and around Bridgetown. It was this pressure which led to the development of the sizeable urban tenantries at Carrington Village, on Station Hill, in Brittons Hill and Dalkeith, around My Lords Hill and at Bay Land and Kensington. This urban drift had by itself created "extensive villages", as the compilers of the 1911 and 1921 censuses reported.

Substantial supplies of cash, estimated at about $10m between 1901 and 1920, provided by emigrants to Panama and USA, ensured that the process of sub-division would be quickened and made permanent. Bonham Richardson has demonstrated that emigration became a "valuable foreign investment" because the cash controlled by the returning migrants and relatives of migrants was used to spark a variety of economic and social adjustments – increased savings, extension of the activities of Friendly Societies, capital for small and large business enterprise, and new investment in land.

Land speculators presided over this investment in land and, of course, profitted from it. In the absence of any government land settlement scheme of the type that was being instituted in several British Caribbean territories, the land speculators became the main agency of land transfer. It was a situation tailor-made for exploitation: *speculators, being white and otherwise connected with the planter class, had easy access to what blacks wanted, but could not directly acquire.* With abundant

supplies of cheap plantation land either lying idle in the Court of Chancery, or awaiting a purchaser who could offer some return to the indebted owners, the speculator only needed cash or the promise of cash to place himself in a position to service the urgent demands of both sellers (planters) and potential purchasers (migrants and migrants' relatives).

Their mode of operation was simple and, in some respects, familiar. Using their own cash or bank loans, they bought estates out of the Court of Chancery or in private sales at the depressed prices dictated by the economic depression. They surveyed them, cut them into one- and two-acre lots, and offered these for sale on a five-year instalment plan at prices ranging from $100 and $150 per acre at Kirton's in St. Philip, $400 at Pilgrim Place, $500 at Welchman Hall in St. Thomas, and $600 at Goodland and Bush Hall in St. Michael. Indeed, some of the house-spots on the front land at Goodland (on Deacons Road) sold at a rate of $2,400 per acre. These prices were, on average, lower than those of the preceding period, but they were high when compared with the current prices of plantation land. For example, John Baeza paid about $120 per acre for the entire Charnocks plantation in 1911, but he sold the lots in 1915 at $300 per acre. Perhaps the speculators' high prices were an insurance against default in the payment of the instalments of the purchase price; but one cannot escape the conclusion that speculators who charged as much as $600 or $800 per acre for land that cost them no more than $200 per acre were intent on cashing in quickly on an investment opportunity.

Who were the speculators?

It is possible that some planters did turn speculator, recognising, as one insensitively said, that it was more profitable "to plant niggers than cane"! But, in general, speculators do not seem to have been planters. They were merchants, lawyers, entrepreneurs. C.J. Greenidge, who designed the Mutual Building in Lower Broad Street, is usually given the credit for initiating this splurge of speculation and plantation sub-division. He bought the Ivy in the late 1880s, and in 1890 offered lots for

the construction of houses of $1,000 or more in value. Greenidge was no mere land speculator, interested in quick turn-over. He clearly was a *developer* who intended the Ivy to be a middle class residential area. He even offered, as an inducement to the would-be purchasers, to donate a sufficient quantity of grit and sand for the construction of houses 'of any size' to all those who took up lots within a year of his advertisement.

Among those who followed Greenidge's lead were Sam Manning (Bay estate, 1904), John Baeza and George Evelyn (Mt. Clapham, 1912-18). But, from the available information, the princes of speculators were Challenor Lynch and Athelstan Watson. They may have sometimes operated in partnership, but it would appear that Christ Church was Watson's main area of exploitation while St. Michael was Lynch's. Lynch sub-divided Bush Hall and Bank Hall in St. Michael, while Watson sub-divided Pilgrim Place, Maxwell Land, Enterprise and Wilcox in Christ Church and Welchman Hall in St. Thomas. By 1929, Watson estimated that he had sold about 1,600 acres in his sub-divisions. What these speculators did was threefold: they facilitated the transfer of some plantation land to blacks, they made profits, and they acted as a conduit for much of the new supplies of cash into the economy.

Response to sub-division

As far as we can judge, those for whom the sub-divisions were made welcomed the development. They made their down-payments, they built houses and sometimes farmed the land. Some of them, particularly those dependent on remittances, may have had difficulty in keeping up the payment of instal-ments, and therefore may have lost the land and their initial investments. Others may have been stung by the high prices – but they had no choice but to accept them. No doubt, too, the original owners of the sub-divided property were not unhappy about the development. While they made no large profits on the sale of their property, they managed to salvage something from a losing investment.

But the elite groups were distinctly unhappy about t

development. Even before plantation sub-division was fully launched, they argued against it. Leading planters and officials told the 1897 Royal Commission that there was no persisting demand for land in small lots and that peasant agriculture was inefficient and uneconomic and its encouragement would damage the island's economy. Other witnesses stressed the difficulty of recovering the purchase price from small purchasers. Chief Justice Sir Conrad Reeves was convinced that, since investment in land was not a paying speculation, nobody would buy small lots. The Governor felt that the small-holders' lack of resources and technical skills would retard agricultural development and therefore damage the interests of the island.

The opposition was even more strident once sub-division became established. By 1911, the *Agricultural Reporter* was lamenting the fate of "fine estates" which had been sacrificed to speculators' "greed for money". It warned that "the destruction of sugar plantations was a dangerous procedure" because of the loss it would inflict on the export economy, that sub-division demoralized some of the labourers, diminised the agricultural value of the land and encouraged praedial larceny. For these reasons, it supported a call for legislative action to prohibit sub-division of areas larger than ten or twenty acres. Other voices raised in protest included those of the Civic Circle, an organization of well-to-do- do-gooders which included Lady Carter, wife of a former governor. Bonham Richardson points out that, by 1917, the group was particularly concerned about the unsightly state of tenantry housing in Carrington's Village, and was agreed that, 'to remedy this evil', legislation should be adopted to prevent blacks from acquiring any more land.

However, qualified support for estate sub-division and for the creation of a black proprietary class came from a perhaps unlikely source. The *Barbados Advocate,* while not wanting to see the island "altogether converted into a peasant proprietary", could not share its contemporary's desire for "a community of only large owners and labourers", and argued instead that there was room for "a robust middle class". More positively, it dismissed the suggestion that sub-division was a "social danger" by arguing that limited sub-division was good for social health:

> The occasional cutting up of an estate affords a safety valve to the thrifty, or to those of their number who have accumulated a small amount, either here or abroad, and desire to establish competency for themselves and for those they may leave behind them.

It seems undeniable that, in this instance, the *Advocate* showed an appreciation of the nature of social dynamics that its rival could not equal.

This debate continued into the 1920s and beyond, no doubt fuelled by envy of the speculators' profits and by some legitimate concern both for the probable exploitation of blacks by some of the speculators and for the clear threat to public health posed by the uncontrolled sprawl of urban-type tenantries. Fortunately for village development and for the prospects of black land-ownership, the elite groups failed to find enough political support to outlaw all plantations sub-division and only succeeded, through amendments to the Public Health Act, in checking the growth of the urban tenantries.

Significance of Developments

Briefly, I would suggest five points for consideration:

1. Plantation sub-division during the period of economic depression may have helped to ease the social/racial tensions long existing in the community, but which would have been heightened by wage reductions and reduced employment, and which were expressed in potato raids and migration. The acquisition of a house-spot and/or a small farm would have given the striving members of the underprivileged majority a stake in the soil and a sense of success, a permanent investment and a sense of enhanced status. Moreover, it would have encouraged social cohesion by involving the non-elite groups in what was seen as elite activity, and by holding out the hope that more of the under-privileged could share in that activity. This point is well illustrated by the unfortunate decision made by some Barbadian migrants to Panama to invest, between 1941 and 1943, the relatively large sum of $250,000 in the purchase of five failing plantations. It is therefore perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that Barbados may have purchased a reprieve from

intense social conflict during the early 20th century at the cost of a few thousand acres of plantation land.

2. Acquisition of land would, as Richardson points out, have given striving blacks a security they had not known before. Their own land gave them the basis for alternative employment and insulated them against the threat of eviction which had been suspended over them while resident in plantation tenantries. Village residence gave them bargaining power with potential employers on the estates.

3. The villages, being the residences of the upwardly mobile working class, may be regarded the cradles of our black middle class. Village residence provided the material and psychological base for further upward social mobility. Therefore, the growth and prominence of the black professional class can be closely tied to the emergence of villages.

4. Villages were crucial in the democratization of the political processes of the island. Village development meant the creation of new centres of population, the possibility of communal action, the emergence of community interest groups articulating concerns about the provision of amenities or about the rate of rent. All this carried the potential of political impact. Acquisition of land meant that more men qualified under the $24.00 franchise, and the presence of more voters would in time attract the notice of some of the politicians. The suggestion is that the Democratic League, the Progressive League and the Congress Party could start the re-structuring of the politics of Barbados, even before adult suffrage, only because of the significant increase of black voters, who were the residents of the villages. This is clearly demonstrated in the lists of registered voters. St. Michael had 356 qualified voters in 1900, of whom only 43 could be identified as residents of the new villages. But, by 1930, the number of voters had increased to nearly two thousand of whom about 40% were residents of the villages. Actual voters in all the constituencies increased from 2,308 in 1920 to 5,159 in 1930.

5. Villages help to strengthen our sense of identity by establishing continuities through time and by providing us with connections to particular spots in the environment. In particular,

the names of villages tell us some important things about the past: what struck previous generations about features of their environment, give us some indication of their sense of humour, inform us which plantations were replaced by villages. Therefore, if we are to be fully conscious of the continuities, and if we want to hear some of what previous generations say to us about *our* land, we must avoid a false *gentrification*, reject the attempt to sanitize our place names, and insist on Penny Hole and Sweet Bottom, and Crab Hole and Jack ma Nanny Gap. After all, what do Gemswick, Wavell Avenue, Sunny Meadows, Sheraton Park or Paradise Heights tell us about our own rich historical and linguistic heritage?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

S.M. Greenfield, *English Rustics in Black Skin. A Study of Modern Family Forms in a Pre-Industrialized Society*. New Haven, 1966.

H.Halcrow and J.M. Cave, *Peasant Agriculture in Barbados*. Bridgetown, 1947.

R. Hughes, "St. Elizabeth's Village, St. Joseph", *The Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* (BMHS), 36: 1, 1979.

R. Hughes, "Sweet Bottom, St. George: An Early (1777) Non-White Freehold Village", *BMHS*, 36: 3, 1981.

Proceedings of the West India Sugar Commission. Bridgetown, 1929.

Report of West India Royal Commission, 1897. London 1897.

B.C. Richardson, *Panama Money in Barbados, 1900-1920*. Knoxville, 1985.

C.C. Skeete, *The Condition of Peasant Agriculture in Barbados*. Bridgetown, 1930.

O.P. Starkey, *The Economic Geography of Barbados*. New York, 1939.

2

The Struggle for Political Democracy: Charles Duncan O'Neal and the Democratic League

KEITH HUNTE

The Barbados to which a steady trickle of migrant workers, World War I veterans and professionals returned in the early 'twenties was a colony that was securely in the economic and political grip of a planter-merchant ruling class. The commitment of that class to the preservation of the "old representative system" of government was total and without qualification. The virtue of defending the constitution of the colony was espoused by generation after generation of local legislators. The Confederation crisis of 1876 had served only to reinforce that tradition. The "old representative system" of government was a convenient arrangement under which the Barbadian ruling class shared political power with the imperial government and effectively excluded from participation in the political process the vast majority of the population. It was the proud boast of many a defender of the system that it was a superior form of government to the Crown Colony system which had replaced it in other Caribbean colonies in the post-emancipation period. It is evident that it was peculiarly well suited and responsive to the interest of the propertied classes. Accordingly, they remained wedded to Burkean concepts of "virtual representation" and "fitness to govern", conveniently ignoring the mounting tide of democracy which had submerged those theories as Britain proceeded through a succession of measures of franchise reform towards adult manhood suffrage and universal adult suffrage.

What was even more significant, however, was the belief of several of those who espoused the cause of the underclasses that the "old representative system" of government could and should be made responsive to the interests of all classes in the society.

Clennel Wickham, Charles Duncan O'Neal, Chrissie Brathwaite, Erskine Ward, Grantley Adams and H.A. Vaughan shared that belief at some time or other between 1919 and 1936. These were some of the more conspicuous names drawn from a much longer list of persons who sought in various ways to commit government to the service of the majority. Their efforts in that regard succeeded in raising the level of political consciousness of the masses and, notwithstanding the early success of the ruling class in retaining control of the instruments of power, those efforts constituted the first phase in an irreversible process of democratisation.

This post-war movement did have its antecedents. Throughout this country a network of grass-roots organisations, the Friendly Societies, provided workers and their families with the opportunity and the means to articulate group objectives through co-operation. The Friendly Society, though seemingly apolitical and dedicated to the attainment of social and personal objectives, was the bed-rock of political organisation and development. It was concerned with upholding human dignity, by using a system of enforced savings to provide a degree of insurance and social security for its members in moments of crisis. There is evidence that many a Friendly Society provided a forum for discussion and debate on live issues.

Robert Morris has provided us with glimpses of other antecedents including the Barbados Labour Union founded by Reggie and Marcus Wilson and the Ulotrician World Wide Union, the local branch of which was established by S. Arlington Newton.

In 1919, the same year that Inniss and Wickham launched the *Herald* newspaper, a branch of the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was formed in Barbados at the initiative of John Beckles. The development of Black consciousness and identity was an important element underpinning the democratic movement. Not all black political aspirants associated themselves with the UNIA, but on several occasions in the course of a political campaign natural alliances among these kindred organisations were struck, and they co-operated in order to try to achieve a common goal. The main objectives of UNIA were:

(i) to bring about the unity of the Negro;
(ii) to assist and advise them how to obtain the best wages possible for their labour;
(iii) to keep them out of the law courts;
(iv) to raise funds for the Black-Star Line;
(v) to establish and operate Black business ventures.

The strong emphasis on pride and industry was also at the core of the work of Rawle Parkinson, the legendary Head-teacher of Wesley Hall, who, accompanied by Washington Harper and Elliott Durant, had attended a Conference at Tuskegee Institute in 1912.

Prior to 1924 there was no party or group that was making a sustained effort to effect political change in Barbados. The *Herald*, with the encouragement of its founder and proprietor, C.A. Inniss, provided a medium through which its Editor, Clennel Wickham, poured trenchant criticism on the political behaviour of the local oligarchy and called attention to social ills that needed to be remedied. Not surprisingly, therefore, soon after O'Neal returned to Barbados from Trinidad in 1924, he made contact with Wickham at the *Herald*, and through that contact met with kindred spirits who launched the Democratic League shortly thereafter.

Contemporaries attest to the importance of O'Neal's role in establishing the League, in formulating its programme, and in winning popular support for it across the country.

Charles Duncan O'Neal was born in St. Lucy in 1879. His father, Joseph O'Neal, had a varied and interesting career. At one time a blacksmith, he became a shopkeeper and, after his marriage to Catherine Prescod of Trinidad, he was able to purchase certain properties in Roebuck Street, Bridgetown, and in St. Lucy. When his son was placed second in the Barbados Scholarship examination in 1899, he was well able to provide him with a paternal scholarship which took the young O'Neal to Edinburgh University, where he studied medicine. He made good progress at university and performed with distinction in Surgery.

While at University O'Neal was attracted to the Independent

Labour Party of Kier Hardie. He adopted the political philosophy of Kier Hardie and became an active member of the party. After graduation, O'Neal moved to Newcastle where he established his practice. There he put his medical skills at the disposal of the coal-miners and other workers. In time, O'Neal accepted an invitation to run for local government office and he was elected to the County Council of Sunderland.

O'Neal returned to Barbados in 1910. He left shortly after and, following a brief sojourn in Dominica, moved to Trinidad. There he established a good practice and gained the spotlight from time to time through his incursions into politics, or from the performance of his race horses. It was during his sojourn in Trinidad that he became a friend and fellow traveller of Captain Cipriani. Upon his return to Barbados in 1924, O'Neal evidently missed the excitement in which Cipriani and his "barefoot men" were generating. The decision to launch the Democratic League was an attempt to harness the energies of progressive forces and "agitate" for representation in government of the interests of the underclasses.

In May 1924 O'Neal led a delegation, comprising John Beckles, C.W. Wickham, J.A. Martineau and J.T.C. Ramsay, which called on the Governor and requested him to take steps to ensure that the Education Board exercised its powers under the Education Act to ban child labour. Appeals of this sort directed to the Governor and to the Legislature were made at regular intervals over the next twelve years, but to little or no avail. The greater part of the year saw the founders of the Democratic League fanning out across the island recruiting members and establishing a communications network for the party.

Prior to the establishment of the Democratic League, election campaigns in Barbados were a rather staid ritual. There were relatively few contested elections at constituency level. Mass meetings were rare. Shortly before nomination day each year, candidates established and/or renewed contact with their constituencies, visiting influential constituents; paid canvassers did much of the necessary leg-work and solicited votes on behalf of their candidate. On nomination day, in the Vestry Room candi-

dates were formally nominated and seconded for the twelve double-member constituencies across the island and the opportunity was taken to give account of stewardship, make promises, field questions from electors attending; and then a vote of thanks to the Sheriff would be moved and seconded, and he would be congratulated on the smooth handling of the ceremony. Since quite often not more than two (2) nominations would be received per constituency, the results of several of the twelve constituencies would be declared at that time. On polling day, electors would return to the Vestry Room to cast their ballots in cases where three or more candidates had been nominated. Each constituent had two votes. He was free to vote for two candidates, or to exercise one vote only and "plump" for his favourite candidate. The latter move gave the preferred candidate a decided advantage.

The Democratic League introduced a new style of campaigning. Where candidates normally tended to eschew party affiliation and projected themselves as fit and proper persons to represent the electors, candidates who were members of the League identified themselves as such. Secondly, they raised issues in public meetings and promoted a programme.

The organisers of the party appreciated the importance of scoring an early victory at the polls. They seized the opportunity of a bye-election in the constituency of St. Michael in December 1924 to put up their candidate, Chrissie Brathwaite, who was vying with C.L. Chenery of the *Advocate* for the seat. On Nomination Day the Democratic League candidate espoused populist causes. Speaking in support of compulsory education, Mr. Brathwaite said "No amount of money should be considered too much to spend in educating the people." Further, he declared: "No amount should be considered too much to make the people happy by giving them cheap water. For many years the people of Bank Hall were crying out for water. . ." He was willing to sacrifice his life for his people. Then as now it proved necessary for a popular candidate to deny that racism was any part of his platform. The *Advocate* reported Braithwaite to this effect:

> "It was said in some quarters that he hated white people. It was a damnable statement. . . Had he not – he and Mr. Challenor – drunk together? It was only last month that he knocked glasses with Mr. Challenor with a whiskey and soda and it went down very smoothly too. . ."

When Charles Chenery addressed the meeting, he had to field a series of well-timed questions which were directed at him by Martineau, Ramsay and other supporters of the League. Asked to indicate where he stood on the issue of banning child labour, Chenery observed that such a move would have to be preceded or accompanied by compulsory education – indicating that there was a significant cost element that would have to be dealt with.

On polling day, Braithwaite received 390 votes to Chenery's 291. Shortly before the victorious Braithwaite was lifted shoulder-high and carried up Constitution Road by a cheering crowd, he openly thanked the members of the Democratic League, and claimed: "My friends, the fight is o'er; the battle won!"

Other similar successes were long in coming, however. In order to understand Braithwaite's victory and the string of failures that awaited other candidates of the League in successive elections, it is important to examine the character and composition of the electorate.

Under the Representation of the People Act – 1901, there was an income qualification of $240.00 per annum and a freehold qualification with respect to land producing profits of not less than $24.00 per year (or approximately one (1) acre of land).

Between 1911 and 1921, when overall population in the island declined, the size of the electorate increased in 4 constituencies (significantly in St. Michael, and in Bridgetown, St. Philip and St. Joseph) and declined in all other constituencies. Between 1921 and 1937, however, the electorate grew out of all proportion to the overall population increase. While the total population increased by 22.15% in 1921-1937, the electorate grew by 186.52%. The phenomenal growth in the size of the electorate in all constituencies between 1921 and 1937 was substantially a reflection of the increase in the number of pro-

GROWTH OF ELECTORATE, 1911 – 1937

Year	B'town.	St. Michael	Ch. Ch.	St. Philip	St. George	St. John	St. Joseph	St. Andrew
1911	472	544	230	157	84	43	71	45
1921	599	719	195	212	69	84	123	56
1931	671	1,499	755	308	255	119	142	276
1936	868	1,814	804	290	316	124	192	226
1937	1,026	2,012	1,169	312	306	191	253	272

perty owners coincident with the spread of villages (see Woodville Marshall's Lecture).

In the 'twenties and early 'thirties there was enough of a residential small property-owning and artisan class in certain constituencies to give Democratic League candidates some prospect of success at the polls. Candidates were therefore presented in Bridgetown, St. Michael, St. Thomas, St. Lucy, St. Philip, and Christ Church. The movement of people into the urban area had the effect of making St. Michael a relatively safe pair of seats for progressive candidates.

The newly enfranchised property owners and wage-earners were often constrained in exercising their right to vote by bread-and-butter considerations. Their sense of economic insecurity as they sought to gain access to jobs, loans and mortgages, made them extremely vulnerable to pressures exerted by members of the ruling class. Hence, voting patterns reflect significant blurring of class-lines. This phenomenon was a source of considerable frustration to members of the Democratic League. It drove men like Wickham by 1935-36 to write off the middle-class as a broken reed and to insist that democratisation of society would come only as a result of the organisation of working-class people committed to their own self-emancipation.

Braithwaite's victory in St. Michael in 1924 clearly benefitted from the demographic changes which were taking place in that parish and also from the identification of new voters with at least some of the objectives of the League. The following year in St. Thomas, Dr. Hugh Gordon Cummins also presented himself as a Democratic League candidate. In addition to declaring himself in favour of the abolition of child labour and of free compulsory education, Cummins called for "the reduction of duties on some of the necessities of life in order to give the people cheaper food and . . . clothes . . ." When the polls closed Cummins had been narrowly beaten by the junior representative, S.C. Thorne. It seemed that he lost because several of the votes seemingly intended for him were deemed spoilt. In the City, O'Neal allowed himself to be nominated, but he withdrew before polling-day. He took the opportunity of his candidature to deny that his politics were in any way racist.

In its early days, the Democratic League concentrated on voter registration and on motivating the enfranchised to exercise their vote. O'Neal, openly defiant of charges that the organisation was Bolshevist and racist, bared his political soul in a pamphlet which was circulated in 1924, captioned "My Brother – An Open Letter to a 'Respectable' Friend". In that tract, he compared the capitalist class to gamblers in the casinos at Monte Carlo "who manage to live without working". He argued that the teaching of "real History and Economics" in this society could not be other than disruptive, for the poor unfortunate students, by asking questions, would be able to "look the past in the face" and understand "the principles governing the distribution of wealth." O'Neal observed that because of the potentially subversive effect of such curricula if offered locally, persons like his estranged friend and himself had to learn their History and Economics abroad.

O'Neal advocated a political creed that was based on the "simple, plain, direct principles laid down by Christ, unadulterated by any of the confusing isms"; those principles that emphasize the honouring of social obligations among members of human society; the taking of a holistic view of society in which the interests of the field-labourer, mason, carpenter, blacksmith, and governor were equal.

O'Neal called on the Legislature to make strenuous and sustained efforts to provide the most humble member of society with the bare necessities of life:- food, clothing, shelter. He called attention to the high incidence of infant mortality, child labour, malnutrition, and noted that children, denied "a good start", were doomed to a life of poverty and degradation. Above all, O'Neal saw it as his mission to awaken the social conscience of the local decision-makers.

This pamphlet and other statements by O'Neal placed him in the tradition of the Christian Socialists and the later Fabian Socialists who had abiding faith in the efficacy of the parliamentary system and an aroused social conscience as the springboards for ameliorative action aimed at eliminating inequalities in society.

In the context of Barbados, he exphasized with equal strength

the importance of workers' organising themselves, the better to advance their economic and social interests. Not all of his political colleagues in the League felt as he did about the importance of the Workingmen's Association as the industrial and business arm of the League. The Workingmen's Association was started in 1926. The Articles of Association indicated that shares would be available to prospective members at a cost of $4.80 each. With offices located at the corner of Baxter's Road and Reed Street, the Association attracted membership from several parishes. Membership included a wide cross-section of artisans. The Workingmen's Association was the parent body for two entities, the Barbados Worker's Union Co-operative Company and the Workingmen's Loans and Friendly Investment Society. The former ran a store at the same intersection on Baxter's Road. The Loans and Friendly Investment Society was run along the lines of a Friendly Society.

These ventures seem to have met with a good response initially! At one stage, membership of the Association was estimated to be in the vicinity of 7,000. It was difficult however to sustain a high level of activity in the political, industrial and economic fields, given the serious resource constraints of a membership, handicapped by high unemployment and underemployment, low wages, absence of credit and lack of experience in the management of a business.

The strike of the dockworkers in April 1927 exposed the critical weakness of the industrial base. In the situation where trade union activity was neither recognised nor protected by law, it was not possible for the striking workers to sustain their protest action in the teeth of hostility from employers and the lack of sympathy from the establishment. Critics, including colleagues, were quick to disassociate themselves from the stand taken by O'Neal in accepting the invitation of the dockers to represent their cause, and the collapse of the strike was quickly followed by enactment of the Better Securities Act which was aimed at punishing all who planned and executed strike action in particular ways.

Thereafter, the Workingmen's Association, in concert with UNIA, continued, at least in Bridgetown to provide a forum for

discussion and debate. In 1931, and again in 1932, the Workingmen's Association organised a programme of activity on Emancipation Day. On August 7, 1933, members and friends of both organizations met at the Workers' Hall at the corner of Baxters and Passage Roads at 2:00 p.m. and led a march around the City along Baxter's Road, Broad Street, and Constitution Road. They stopped outside the Governor's Gate on Government Hill, sang "Auld Lang Syne" and "God Save the King"; and returned to Baxter's Road via Bridge Road, Bank Hall Cross Road and Eagle Hall. This was followed later that night by an indoor ceremony which attracted a full house.

Since Braithwaite's first electoral victory in 1924, a string of defeats confronted other candidates. Braithwaite however gained re-election year after year and was sole standard-bearer of the League in the House of Assembly until he was joined by Erskine Ward in 1930 representing the City. Braithwaite was unflagging in his efforts to keep certain pressing issues on the agenda of the Legislature. Addressing a meeting of the Workingmen's Association in July 1929, he invited all unemployed persons from the urban area to meet him in Queen's Park and there sign a petition which would be presented to the Governor. People responded.

By year-end the leader-writer for the *Advocate* was attesting to evidence of transformation of the political scene especially in relation to electioneering. Under a caption that read "The Awakening", the article stated, "Such a flood of political oratory has not been let loose upon the constituencies since the turbulent days of 1876, and for the first time in local politics candidates are vying with each other in impressing upon the electors, the excellence of their platforms and their own merit." The greatest surprise, however, was caused by the announcement that Mr. H.B.G. Austin intended to hold a political meeting, and, as a wag remarked, "Mr. Austin was probably the most surprised man of all." Interestingly enough, it was at this time that the Special Jury upheld the libel suit brought by the Bridgetown merchant, W.D. Bayley, against Clennel Wickham, which resulted in the termination of Wickham's editorship of the *Herald* and the change of ownership of that newspaper.

The battle lines between Conservative and other political camps were now more or less clearly drawn. Sometimes previously S.C. Thorne had been critical of the high profile of certain school teachers in the electoral politics of St. Thomas. The Education Board now issued a circular urging managers of the several schools (Anglican, Methodist and Moravian Ministers respectively to deny leave to teachers on nomination day and polling day. As the *Advocate* reporter observed, that action was unfortunate because several teachers were seen to be performing an important civic duty by participating in public discussion of the issues. They were perceived as excellent platform speakers who were in great demand and who on the whole "exercised a wholesome educational influence on politics. . ." In taking that action, the Board was also failing to notice that teachers were to be found on platforms from both sides. In St. Joseph for several years the two planter candidates, Williams and Yearwood, were nominated by Messrs. Walcott and Burnett, Headteachers of St. Joseph's and St. Elizabeth Boys' Schools.

Erskine Ward's appointment to a magistracy and his withdrawal from active politics in early 1932 was a loss to the Democratic League. He might have been expected to press the case for lowering the franchise and enacting a Workmen's Compensation Bill, two issues which were currently high on the party's agenda.

In the general elections of 1932, there were contests in three constituencies only, the City, St. Michael and St. George. By this time Lee Sarjeant was well entrenched in Christ Church, and Frank Holder in St. Andrew. In St. Michael, Chrissie Braithwaite and W.W. Reece were able to stave off a challenge from D.L. Johnson. The progressive forces rallied around O'Neal and went all out to win him a City seat. Notwithstanding a string of electoral defeats and the passage of time, O'Neal had not mellowed. At a meeting in Queen's Park, chaired by Edwy Talma, the latter associated O'Neal with the following causes, promotion of emigration, compulsory education and extension of the franchise. O'Neal was reported to have told the large crowd that "his political policy was the same as that which he had expounded for the past thirty years. He still stood by the

Labour Party's Policy and he saw no reason through all the years to change one iota of his faith. Some persons changed their creed very rapidly and supported various issues at various occasions, but he stood on the same platform as thirty years ago. He believed that every man, woman, and child born into the world had the right to food, shelter and clothing. He was further convinced that it was the duty of every Government to provide those necessities of life for its citizens. The fact that the local government had ignored that responsibility did not detract from the greatness of the principle. He was certain that the House would some day be occupied by a majority of Labour members as the spread of education sounded the death-knell of plutocracy and aristocracy." The meeting was also addressed by Louis Sebro, H.A. Vaughan, J.A. Martineau and D.F. Blackett.

On Election Day, in an upset victory, O'Neal upset the favourite candidate, H.B.G. Austin, by one vote, (346 to 345) and benefitted from a large number of "plump" votes.

O'Neal was re-elected in the constituency of Bridgetown and retained his seat until his death in November 1936. His parliamentary career was methodical rather than brilliant. At the end of his first session in the Legislative Assembly, he confessed to having had to take some time to learn his a.b.c. He made certain predictions about a legislative programme in the following session, and those predictions proved to be wide of the mark. Still, his maiden speech in the House came during the debate on the Address in reply to the Governor's speech at the start of the session. He prevailed on the House to include a statement of regret that the Governor's address contained no measures for alleviating unemployment. Later in the session, he raised the issue of the persistent use of whips by drivers of the third gang and called for legislation banning the practice. He sought to expose and correct the abuse of privilege by those who allowed unauthorised persons to ride police horses, and those who authorised the engagement of the labour services of prisoners at private residences.

Surviving members of the Democratic League experienced a growing sense of frustration in the early 'thirties. They continued to participate in electoral politics, making alliances with liberal-

minded groups and associations. Elected members, by tabling questions in the Legislative Assembly, by drafting petitions and submitting them to the Governor, by introducing bills in the House and supporting others, tried to advance the cause. But, by 1936, the record of achievement – in terms of social legislation, political reform, economic measures – was distressingly low. That this was the period of the Great Depression, when the social and economic conditions of the working-class were steadily deteriorating, only served to heighten their sense of disillusionment.

The perceptive Wickham, writing in January 1935, saw the need for mobilisation of the workers as the basis for the democratic movement: "Till the working class is organised to provide the guts for the democratic movement political and social conditions will be what they are."

What was the experience of the survivors of the Democratic League? What was their assessment of the prospects for effecting change? How realistic was that assessment?

The system of government provided apportunities for the elected representatives of the enfranchised to make representation to the Governor-in-Executive Committee on any issue. The nature and extent of Government's response to that representation was certainly beyond the control of a party or group that had a minority of seats in the House of Assembly. What was even more perplexing to the would-be reformers was that, even when such representation attracted majority support in the Assembly, there was no guarantee that the appropriate bills would be enacted, and/or where financial provision was required, that Government would take the necessary action to implement the policy desired by the majority.

As a result of this situation, measures that were introduced in the House to effect extension of the franchise, workmen's compensation, compulsory education, abolition of child labour under the age of 12, and creation of employment were either talked out, or approved by the House and killed by the action or inaction of the Legislative Council and the Executive. The experienced and conservative element in the Legislature monopolised key offices in the Assembly, in the Legislative Council

and on the Executive Committee. They could decide on the most appropriate tactic out of several options that would frustrate a measure which they deemed to be inimical to their interests.

On the issue of the extension of the franchise, the following scenario illustrates the point. In August 1930, a Bill was introduced in the Assembly aimed at lowering the income qualification for the franchise from $240.00 to $144.00 per annum and the freehold qualification from $24.00 to $14.40. It passed all stages in the Assembly but was thrown out by the Legislative Council. It was reintroduced in the Assembly in the following session but suffered a similar fate. In every election campaign since then the promise to renew the attempt to lower the franchise was made by 'progressive' candidates. In 1936, an identical Bill was introduced in the House, moved and seconded by Chrissie Braithwaite and D. Lee Sarjeant. It was referred to a Select Committee which failed to report by the close of the session.

Wickham argued with much plausibility that in voting against the measure in 1930 and 1931, the Legislative Council probably knew that the majority of the members of the House who had voted for the Bill would not have lost any sleep over its rejection. In fact, he suggested that in voting for the measure in the first place the conservative element in the Lower House probably knew that it would be rejected upstairs! In explaining his own resistance to the measure when it was being reintroduced in 1936, D.L. Pile, representing the "rotten borough" of St. John, recalled that in introducing the original Bill, the late H.W. Reece (St. Lucy) had argued that, if the franchise had not been extended by a reduction of the several qualifications, many persons suffering from falling income due to the economic depression would lose the votes which they had formerly enjoyed. Pile went on to demonstrate that the electorate had not contracted but had increased dramatically. As far as he was concerned, there was no case for proceeding with the measure.

Wickham's point that there may well have been collusion is well taken. On several occasions in the past when members of the Assembly felt that their own interests had been threatened by

the exercise of a negative vote by the Upper House, they had advanced the theory of the supremacy of the representative chamber over the nominated chamber. The question was, why not on this occasion? Well, their interest was not being threatened by the action of the Legislative Council. Rather, that body was protecting the common interests of the class from which its members were drawn – the planter-merchant class.

Similar tactics were employed to frustrate efforts to enact legislation dealing with Workmen's Compensation, Death Duties, and Compulsory Education.

Wickham understood that the situation called for continuing and increased agitation and mobilisation of the working-class. Some indication of the effectiveness of that approach was given when Chrissie Braithwaite, John Beckles *et al,* noting the failure of Government to respond to appeals from members of the Assembly to tackle the problem of unemployment, decided to take the activist approach. They held a mass meeting in Queen's Park, collected signatures from those who were unemployed and submitted a petition bearing 800 signatures to the Governor. The result was the establishment of a committee chaired by the Colonial Secretary with a mandate "to examine the causes and extent of unemployment which exist in the parish of St. Michael and to submit, as early as possible, proposals for the relief of such unemployment."

The restriction of the exercise to the parish of St. Michael calls for explanation. The standard response that came repeatedly from planters as often as attention was drawn to mounting unemployment was that work was available on the plantations. In fact, in an attempt to counter the public demonstration of the existence of large numbers of unemployed persons, a delegation of planters from plantations in St. Joseph and St. Andrew bordering the Scotland District, also called on the Governor and held the stage long enough to state that work was available on their estates. The planter interests were always on guard to arrest any action that could lead to a significant depletion of their captive labour-force – through large scale emigration or any such measure which the Democratic League had been advocating.

If mobilisation of the workers, whether employed or un-

employed, was being seen as the way forward, the importance of using the forum of the House of Assembly for articulating the case for reform was also appreciated. In this regard, the election of Grantley Herbert Adams to the House in 1934 and his demonstration of a willingness to confront the forces of reaction and conservatism were welcomed by members of the League. One of his early victories in that Chamber came in response to a question he put to the Executive with regard to the status of the document (which members of the police force were required to sign on the occasion of their joining the force) that included an undertaking that they would not exercise their franchise. When the reply came, it took the form of a statement to the effect that the provisions in that document would be reviewed so as to remove the offending clause or clauses. Hence, policemen would have their franchise restored!

In the debate on the Franchise Bill in 1936 Adams, strongly provoked by the unrepentant conversatism of Pile, spoke at length in support of the measure. He drew attention to the continuing effect of falling income on those whose franchise depended on their level of income: "Three hundred carpenters, chauffeurs and masons were struck off (the voters' list) on the grounds that their wages were $4.00 and they could no longer earn $5.00 per week. . ." Wickham welcomed Adams to the fold and noted with satisfaction that his political activity and his speeches in and out of parliament were making waves. Agitation was vital.

The Democratic League – An Assessment

Looked at from a narrow perspective, the founders of the Democratic League would appear to have taken on an impossible mission when they set out to effect the democratisation of this colonial society with the tools at their disposal and within the framework of legal, social and political constraints which the Conservative element in the society was determined to keep in place. Had they considered at length the odds against their success they might not have launched the effort aimed at making government responsive to the popular will.

They understood, at least in the early stages, the importance of involving the people, the enfranchised and the disenfranchised, in the discussion. One of the topics which members of the public were invited to debate at Carnegie Hall in Bridgetown (1924) was the moot, "This House regards political agitation as necessary for the remedying of social ills."

They understood, and they helped others to understand, that the "old representative system" of government had been fashioned to serve the interests of the propertied classes. They sought by the power of persuasion to modify that system so as to have it serve the interest of all classes. In setting that objective they underestimated the magnitude of the task. The Conservatives relied on the political doctrine of virtual representation of one class by another, in defence of the *status quo*. The Democratic League, while it was committed to shifting political power to the underclasses, yet pledged that the result would be equally fair to all classes. The debate on this issue continues unresolved.

O'Neal and some other leading members of the League understood that the struggle was not simply about political power but that it was equally about the restoration and preservation of human dignity and worth, that the ordinary man, woman and child had a right to make certain demands on the economy. They appreciated that trade unions and co-operatives, ownership of industry and access to the market for loans, credit, and exchange of goods were all equally important tools for achieving the desired objectives.

Once the Democratic League and Workingmen's Association had been launched, however, ideas which were clearly understood and appreciated tended to be obscured. Wickham recalls that there had been a strong commitment to anchoring the political effort on the base of working class organisations. He lamented the fracturing of that commitment. He lamented the marriages of convenience which had been made with middle-class professionals who were not genuinely committed to the long-term goals of the movement. In 1936, he looked beyond the current situation to the time when "organised labour" would constitute the guts of the democratic movement in Barbados.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

G. Belle, *The Politics of Development: A Study of the Political Economy of Barbados.* Ph.D. Dissertation. 1977.

Bruce Hamilton, *Barbados and the Confederation Question 1871-1885.* 1956.

F.A. Hoyos, *Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution.* 1974.

G.K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies.* 1968.

W.K. Marshall, "The Establishment of a Peasantry in Barbados 1840-1920". 1974.

G.W. Roberts, "Emigration form the Island of Barbados" in *Social and Economic Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 3, Sept. 1955.

Report of the Commission Appointed to enquire into the Disturbances which took place in Barbados on July 27, 1937 and subsequent days (the Deane Commission) 1937.

Report of West Indies Royal Commission, 1938-39 (the Moyne Commission) 1945.

3

The Effects of the Great Depression

ROBERT L. MORRIS

Features of the Depression

The great crash of the autumn of 1929, and the ensuing depression, devastated the economy of the United States of America for the following decade. As a result of the depression, there was a massive slump in production in the United States with the GNP falling by almost 50% between 1929 and 1932. By the latter year, there were almost 13 million unemployed in America, including several thousand Barbadians and other West Indians who had emigrated to America to better their life chances. Despite the reconstruction efforts introduced by President Roosevelt starting in 1933, the United States' economy showed no signs of improvement in the rate of growth between 1929 and 1938.

The depression occurred against a background of increasing structural fragilities in the economic and social life of the plantation economies of the British Caribbean, and can be seen as a significant precipitant of the disturbances which erupted in the region after 1934. This paper seeks to outline the structural weaknesses of the Barbadian economy and to assess the impact of the Great Depression on events in Barbados over the period 1929 to 1937.

At the outset, it must be asserted that the effect of the Great Depression was the last straw which broke the camel's back. Where the crash of 1929 might have been seen as heralding a remarkable and unprecedented crisis in American capitalism, this could not be said for the British Caribbean which had been experiencing the impact of crisis and depression from the

mid-nineteenth century, with isolated periods of prosperity.

The West Indian economic problem, exemplified by Barbados, was caused by the insecurity of an economy that was small, open, dependent and characterised by monoculture. The planting, cultivation and processing of sugar cane and the export of its by-products were the main sources of livelihood for Barbadians. Total exports from Barbados in 1928 were valued at $7,350,552.00 of which $5,888,491.00 or 80% of the total was accounted for by sugar and its by-products.

The mining of small quantities of manjak, the growing of sea-island cotton, the processing of cotton seed oil and bay-leaf represented the fledgling manufacturing sector.

In addition, the tourist industry, which was still in its infancy, brought in a respectable income for those who owned the few tourist establishments, and provided a limited number of jobs. As an airport was established only late in the period, the major form of transportation for tourists was by tourist ship or cargo vessel. The statistics below indicate the extent of the tourist trade between 1935 and 1937.

Year	Tourist Ships		Total Tourists
	No	Passengers	
1935	9	3,362	4,358
1936	10	4,407	5,482
1937	13	5,125	6,014

Agriculture and domestic service provided employment for the large majority of those who were able to gain employment. Relatively small numbers were employed in public works and in the public service. Some few persons were also employed in the commercial sector.

The domestic sector of the economy was extremely small and underdeveloped. Even the small-holders were tied into production for the export sector. Even though there were numbers of "hucksters" and "hawkers", the restriction of their markets provided them mainly with complementary income to their main activities. The problems of those in the domestic economy

were complicated by the lack of good markets to sell their produce. Traditional manufacturing such as dress-making and tinsmithing were coming under serious pressure from the influx of mass produced consumer items, particularly garments from Japan.

The financial sector was dominated by three private banks, Barclays, Royal Bank of Canada and the Canadian Bank of Commerce, which acted basically as bankers to the planters and merchants of the colony. Friendly Societies were the main financial intermediaries providing services for the Barbadian working man.

Financing of government activities was largely by way of direct and indirect taxation. Direct taxation took the form mainly of income tax, land tax and trade tax, while indirect taxation came through customs and excise duties. In 1935, revenue amounted to approximately $2,400,000.00 of which $1,920,000.00 was required to maintain government services. $1,074,715.00 was spent on social services, with poor relief, sanitation and health taking the lion's share of $436,800.00; Education was allocated $273,600.00; medical services $216,000.00; free water supply $129,600.00; and ecclesiastical matters received over $62,400.00.

Barbadians prided themselves on not having to depend on the Imperial Government for grants or other forms of direct financial supports, and relied mainly on imperial preferences for their major export crop. The central government practised national housekeeping with the main emphasis on ensuring that expenditure did not outrun income. Surpluses were put aside as reserves for difficult times. It was a period when national wealth remained static while the population continued to expand.

Two major concerns of the economy which led to serious structural problems were the weakness of the export sector, and the employment situation in the colony.

The performance of the sugar industry was a barometer to the entire economy. The plantation sector presented a perfect example of the skewed distribution of resources in the economy. Of the 106,000 arable acres, some 65,835 were under cultivation, of which 51,886 were cultivated as plantations owned by

a small number of families. Of those plantations, some 219 exceeded 100 acres, with nine over 500 acres; while almost 300 ranged between 20 and 100 acres. On the other hand, the small holdings were spread among a multitude of owners, with almost 14,000 small holdings of less than one acre, and only 308 between 5 and 20 acres. In all, about 15,000 acres were owned by small farmers. The majority of landowners grew sugar cane for processing into sugar, molasses and rum for the export market. Most of the sugar was sold to the United Kingdom, while molasses and syrup went to the Canadian market. The fortunes attending the production and sale of sugar therefore determined the well-being of the entire country.

From 1929, the West Indian economy seemed headed for a crisis reminiscent of that of the late 19th century. Again, the major factors were the proliferation of protective tariffs, bounties and subsidies which allowed certain countries to dump sugar on the market, thus forcing down the price of sugar. The prices which Barbadian sugar producers received per ton fell gradually from $73.20 per ton in 1927, until, in 1931, at the height of the crisis, it was at just over $41.52 per ton, and this price remained until the outbreak of World War II when prices started to rise again.

As prices started to fall, sugar planters in the West Indies requested the Secretary of State for the Colonies to send a Commission to enquire into the performance of the sugar industry. The planters claimed that the sugar industry was experiencing a great crisis; sugar could no longer be produced but at a loss; certain estates were going out of cultivation; there was a grave risk of some planters having to cease cultivation; serious distress would consequentially befall large numbers of the population; and the governments of the colonies would experience great difficulty in maintaining essential services.

Lord Passfield, Secretary of State for the Colonies, appointed Lord Olivier and Mr. Semple to lead a commission of enquiry to the British Caribbean. The Commission worked expeditiously. It was appointed in September, 1929, and by January, 1930, had reported its findings. The Commission found that the sugar industry was indeed in crisis largely as a result of over-production

and falling prices. It further accepted that some estates were operating at a loss, but found no evidence of estates going out of production in Barbados. It did conclude, however, that unless corrective measures were taken to remedy the situation, severe distress would be experienced, especially by the labouring classes in the colonies. As in earlier periods of crisis, the Commission explored the possible effects of reduced wages but concluded that such a measure could not be attempted without ruinous consequences for the colony.

The crisis in the sugar industry was a very real threat to the country. An indication of the growing distress facing the planters can be appreciated by the increasing number of borrowers who were being called upon to use the facilities of the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank. There was a massive rush for advances as the weight of the depression accelerated. While in 1925 there were 99 borrowers seeking advances of $710,760.00 on the bank, by 1930 there were some 140 borrowers seeking $1,262,400.00. One year later, demands were made for advances of $1,584,000.00, as planters found it more difficult to provide advances for crop cultivation out of their own resources.

The Olivier Report found great favour among the plantocracy. The Report recommended an increase in British preference and further duty free access to imperial sugar. It also proposed that imperial sugar be purchased by a single agency at $72.00 per ton, which would have ensured the profitability of almost all sugar producers in Barbados.

The Olivier Report did not find a great deal of favour with the British government, however, and concessions were only made after much lobbying. In the meantime, during 1930, sugar producers in Barbados were almost ruined through attempts at speculation on the impact of the imperial government's budgetary proposals on the price of sugar.

While sugar was normally shipped between March and May, the planters decided to hold back all their sugar until June, when they expected a better price. Unfortunately, the reverse occurred. Whereas the price of sugar was around $2.10 to $2.15 per 100 lbs in the traditional period of export, by June, the price had plummetted to $1.95 per 100 lbs.

The result was vividly summarised by the Hon. R.G. Cave, a merchant who had little sympathy for the planters. Speaking before the Legislative Council in 1931, he stated:

> Bridgetown, on the 3 June last, was practically speaking, in a state of panic . . . there was sugar to the value of £400,000 ($1,920,000.00) stored up in warehouses, shops, alleys and by-ways and in places that had never seen sugar before within a mile radius of Nelson's statue. The Banks, naturally, were getting rather anxious about their heavy over-drafts; the lightermen were lying idle and, practically speaking, not a speck of sugar had been shipped, and his Excellency the Governor was on the verge of leaving Barbados to attend the Colonial Conference in England.

The miscalculation in marketing the sugar took a tremendous toll on the island's economy.

The following year, 1931, was equally grave. The crop that was reaped was characterised as merely a half-crop, giving rise to fears of a lack of money, as well as a shrinkage of customs and excise duties.

In January, 1931, Governor Robertson set up a commission to enquire into and report on the conditions of the public finances of the colony. The commissioners were extremely conscious of the impact of the state of the sugar industry, which was being compounded by the impact of the depression, of which much will be said later. The panic in the island can further be understood when it is noted that two other local commissions were set up in 1932 and in 1935 to report on the progress of the sugar industry.

The Committee which reported in 1935 was appreciative of the special preference granted to imperial sugar in 1932 and 1933; the opening of the Canadian market to syrup; and Nature's aid in the form of bountiful crops in 1933 and 1934. However, the committee reported in bleak pessimism:

> The future prospects of the sugar industry are viewed with the utmost anxiety in Barbados, since there seems little doubt that world conditions and markets are worse than they were in 1929.

The report went on to show the falling prices of raw sugar in the United Kingdom markets. While raw sugar was earning

$3.09 per cwt in 1927, by 1934 the price was $1.14 per cwt. It was further stated that black soil estates had been marketing sugar at a loss for the previous five years, with a range of loss from $6.37 per ton in 1931 to $0.45 in 1934.

The declining sugar industry had a tremendous impact on the value of the total trade of the economy. There was a sharp drop invalue from $15,969,124.00 in 1929, comprising $9,790,085.00 of imports and $6,179,040.00 in exports to $12,267,336.00 in 1931, comprising $7,159,891.00 in imports and $5,107,445.00 in exports. As can be seen, the decline was sharp in both exports and imports. Recovery in volume and value imports did not begin until 1936 but, even by 1937, imports had not again reached the 1928 level.

An analysis of the reduction in imports during the period showed that the areas most under pressure where those that affected the labouring classes – products such as oilmeal (cattle food), corn meal, flour, rice, bran and pollard, cotton clothing, salt beef and salt pork. These articles, which were imported mainly from the USA, took a severe cut. For instance, whereas the value of corn meal imported in 1929 was $124,536.00, by 1936 it was $49,013.00. The value of salt beef imported was reduced from $17,366.00 in 1929 to $2,966.00 in 1936, and the value of salt pork was reduced from $103,963.00 in 1929 to $29,520.00 in 1936.

Figures for Revenue and Expenditure for the colony during the period are also very instructive. There was a massive drop in revenue and expenditure between 1930 and 1931. Whereas revenue for the colony at the end of 1930 was $2,178,250.00, by the end of 1931 it had fallen to $1,941,864.00. Corresponding expenditure had fallen from $2,163,341.00 to $2,059,886.00. Thereafter, the extension of the preference and cost cutting measures introduced by the government were able to retrieve the situation. Revenue began to pick up again after 1933; however, government continued to hold a tight rein on expenditure, which only started to increase after the Disturbances.

In spite of the difficulties facing the planters, the Olivier Commission had remarked on the signs of capital accumulation among the planters and merchants. Writing in 1935, Macmillan

stated: "In Barbados and Jamaica numbers of merchants, planters, and others live comfortably and their standards are quite high" (p. 36).

The Deane Commission also stated that even with prevailing low prices a well managed plantation with its own sugar works was a fairly lucrative concern. Normal profits ranged between 4% -7% of capital employed.

Condition of Workers

I turn now to examine more directly the situation of the workers in the Barbadian economy. The Annual Blue Book for 1925 gives the following breakdown of the active labour force. There were 34,157 workers employed in agriculture, supposedly working 6 days of 9 hours each per week; 23,682 employed in manufacturing, building and mining; 25,255 in domestic service; and 1,175 were employed in the government service.

The facts of employment in Barbados were that almost the entire working population was directly or indirectly dependent on the sugar industry for a living. Out of a population estimated at approximately 167,953 at 31 December, 1929, almost 100,000 persons could be considered to be directly dependent on the industry. Sugar was king, and it exacted a harsh price from its minions.

Writing in 1935, Macmillan stated:

> These colonies are a poor 'vent for manufacturers' . . . the spending power of the average black in the West Indies is little greater than in a predominantly black corner of Africa like Nyasaland, or perhaps Uganda. A social and economic study of the West Indies is therefore necessarily a study of poverty (p. 37).

Most of the commentators on the poverty of the Barbadian worker pointed to the apparent high fertility rates of its adult population, and its capacity to reproduce at a remarkable rate, a human cause of the poverty. Barbados has always had a reputation for over-population.

The Deane Commission estimated that, by the 1930s, the island's population exceeded by 20,000 the number which the

island was able to support. The result was widespread unemployment and underemployment. In addition, certain endogenous factors were leading to further difficulties. These included a drift from the rural to the urban parishes during the 1910s and 20s, and mechanisation of sugar production which had reduced the crop season from five to three months. The high birth rate was itself an important cause of over-population. As we shall note later, this was to be aggravated by an excess of immigrants over emigrants during the period.

The large pool of surplus labour gave planters the power to keep wages depressed. Evidence given before the Moyne Commission by the late H.A. Vaughan suggested that the wage rates of agricultural workers had remained stable over the previous century. The Colonial Office Reports give an indication of wages and salaries paid to the majority of the working class. Wages for estate labourers reportedly ranged between 36 cents to 48 cents per day for males; for females the range was 20 cents to 16 cents per day; while for children the pay was 12 cents to 16 cents per day. These figures were severely challenged by evidence given before the Deane Commission. The Commissioners said:

> The evidence given by several plantation proprietors proves conclusively that the average day's pay of even the best agricultural labourers does not exceed 30 cents per day, and in the parish of St. Lucy, according to one attorney, the highest wages earned by the best paid worker on one group of plantations for one year was $92.57 which is equivalent to an average weekly wage of $1.78 (1s 3d per day).

In looking at the cost of providing food for one male per day, the Commission went on to say, the "prisoner is better fed than the lowest grade of agricultural labourer. The average daily cost of feeding inmates of the local goal during the years 1930 to 1936 is 7.60 cents". In looking at the wages of a labourer, and his ability to look after a household including a wife and three children, the Commission was moved to comment that the wages received by labourers could not maintain them.

If times were hard during the crop season, the difficulties were particularly acute in the off season, when artisans and

other skilled persons suffered severely along with the agricultural labourers.

The Commission also discussed the decline in planter paternalism towards workers. During the crop-time workers were no longer allowed to take sweet liquor from the boiling house. The Saturday allowance of syrup and molasses was withdrawn; the liberal policy towards taking fodder for animals was changed, as was the sale of estate food crops at preferential rates. In examining the situation of the agricultural worker, the Deane Commission concluded:

> After a careful review of all the facts connected with wages we feel it our duty to state emphatically that in our opinion there can be no justification short of the bankruptcy of trade and industry for the maintenance of so low a standard of wages . . . we have been impressed by the high dividends earned by many trading concerns in the island and the comfortable salaries and bonuses paid to the higher grades of employees in business and agriculture.

The picture of the working life of the agricultural worker would not be complete without examining the housing conditions in which he existed. While more than half of the agricultural workers owned their houses and rented house spots, mainly in plantation tenantries, the evidence points generally to poor housing standards.

Wages in domestic service were also poor. Most domestics were in the category of housemaid, nursemaid and gardener. The weekly wages for these categories were $1.44 to $1.92; $1.44 to $2.40; and $1.92 to $2.40 respectively. Cooks, butlers and chauffeurs were the elite in the domestic service with weekly wages of $2.40 to $2.88; $2.40 to $3.60; and $4.80 to $7.20 respectively. Artisans were generally in the range of wages paid to butlers, whereas foremen earned wages equivalent to those of chauffeurs.

For the few who were able to gain employment in the public sector, wages for a junior cadet was $240.00 per annum; for police constables $336.00; and for postmen $144.00 to $240.00 per annum.

Generally speaking, the working class in Barbados did not depend solely on wages to maintain its standard of living.

Many of them utilised remittances from abroad to enjoy a reasonable life, to purchase consumer durables and to gain access to suitable clothing, housing and the purchase of land.

Impact of the Depression

We have so far examined the broad parameters of the situation in Barbados during the period when the depression was at its worst. An attempt will now be made to show the impact of the depression on Barbados and, ultimately, on the working class.

Evidence has already been led to show the decline in the total trade of the colony, and particularly in the imports which were staples in the life of the working class. The impact of this was reflected in rising prices for the workers of Barbados.

Giving evidence before the Deane Commission, H.O. Emptage, a provision merchant, pointed to a sharp increase in prices between December 1936 and June 1937:

> Undoubtedly foodstuffs have advanced in price in the last year. I have a few figures roughly made up. Corn meal had advanced 50% in the last year. Flour has advanced recently during the last few months . . ., oil meal advanced 20%; sugar about 15-20%; biscuits about 30%; salted fish about 25%; butter 15%; pickled beef about 10%; oats about 50%.

This evidence was supported by the Rev. F.G. Stanton who stated:

> The prices charged by the country shops for articles of diet on which the people mainly subsist have so increased during the last few months as to be equivalent to a reduction of the labourer's pay to the extent of around 25%.

The evidence is crystal clear. Consequent on the depression, trade in goods from the United States of America was greatly reduced. The merchants in turn increased the prices of these staples to the workers whose wages were so depressed already that they were unable to supply the basic necessities of life. The irony of the situation was that at this period sugar production was beginning to increase, with a likelihood of increased work, even though the wage rates were depressed. However, the massive increase of the cost of living at that time must have

fuelled the anger of the masses of oppressed workers.

A careful study of Post Office reports also indicate that the depression impacted seriously on the remittances from persons who had migrated to the United States of America, the Canal Zone and Cuba. A number of indices can be used to chart this decline. An analysis of registered articles received from the USA, the Canal Zone, and the US Virgin Islands between 1928 and 1937 shows that whereas 43,353 registered articles were received in 1928, by 1937 this had dropped to 19,878 articles. Another indicator is the number of parcels received between 1930 and 1937 from these same areas. The number had dropped from 245,037 in 1930 to 14,226 in 1937.

The money value of parcels received from overseas dropped from $237,859.00 in 1928 to $125,467.00 in 1937. As for money orders cashed at the Post Offices, the values dropped from $433,910.00 in 1928 to $205,560.00.

While it is true that there had been some shift in remitting money directly through the bank rather than through money orders, there is conclusive evidence of a massive fall-off in remittances from Barbadians who had migrated to the USA and other areas, but who, as a result of the depression, were unable to remit the traditional level of income which was of tremendous value to their dependents in the island.

Another effect of the depression was on the employment situation in the island. Even before the Great Crash first manifested itself in October, 1929, the United States government, diagnosing certain weaknesses in its economy, and motivated by other considerations, had passed the Immigration Act of 1924, sometimes known as the Quota Act. The main effect of this Act was to slam the door in the face of potential immigrants from the Caribbean. For countries which had traditionally exported their unemployment, this was a severe setback.

Indeed, the depression caused a marked reversal in traditional migration trends, for during the late 1920s and in the 1930s immigration exceeded emigration consistently. Figures provided from the Colonial Official Reports suggest that, between 1925 and 1937, immigrants exceeded emigrants by over 14,000. However, Kuczynski, in looking at a wider period, challenged

these estimates. He noted that while the reported excess between 1921 and 1938 was 16,351, his own assessment placed this excess at nearer to 43,000 persons. The net result was that those returning to the island generally swelled the ranks of the unemployed and helped create the explosive situation which was detonated in July 1937. Fitz Baptiste, in his pamphlet, *The US and West Indies Unrest, 1918-1939*, has concluded:

> It seems to us that in assessing the cause of the outbreak of disturbances in the British Caribbean in the mid-1930s, the immigration factor must be considered.

I accept this conclusion, and suggest further that the depression had a serious impact on the high incidence of immigration over emigration during the period.

A faltering performance in the major export, cuts in imports, rising prices, reduced income from remittances, and growing unemployment, were all direct effects of the depression. These in turn had various indirect effects.

The working classes, under severe economic pressure, displayed two characteristics which appear contradictory, but which are normal reactions in periods of acute economic depression.

On the one hand, workers turned more and more to their Friendly Societies. The evidence suggests that, between 1927 and 1937, the number of Friendly Societies fell from 225 to 199. At the same time, membership grew from 41,045 to 54,484 during those ten years, and total contributions grew from $234,259.00 to $333,259.00. At the same time, while there was a growth in contributions, there was a marked increase in withdrawals, which increased from $86,270.00 in 1930 to $138,907.00 in 1936. There was a definite period of heightened activity in this movement during the period under study, as smaller Societies fell by the wayside and the larger ones consolidated their position. It is important to note that the Democratic League formed a Friendly Society which was the main area for organising the working class during these depression years. Because Friendly Societies are based on contributions, we can assume that they catered to the needs of the workers during this period.

For the large number of the unemployed, many were forced to swallow their pride and accept poor relief. Evidence was given to the Olivier Commission in 1929 to the effect that 32.7% of the population or some 50,000 persons in the community were on poor relief costing the government over $192,000.00.

The depression and consequent drop in incomes for workers led to a fall-off in the ability of members of the working class to exercise the franchise based on an income qualification of $240.00 per annum. In fact, H.W. Reece, in proposing the bill to extend the franchise in 1930, gave this as his main reason. His argument was accepted by almost all in the Lower House where the bill was passed. However, when the bill reached the Legislative Council the argument was accepted, but that did not ensure the passage of the bill.

The depression years were hard years for the beleaguered working class people of Barbados. As is not uncommon in such periods, police statistics suggest that the population of the prisons increased. Whereas there were 831 prisoners in 1927, by 1935 this number had jumped to 1,124. Most of the imprisonment was for larceny and crimes against the persons, all indicators of the darkening mood within the country.

Responses to the Crisis

This review would not be complete without examining the responses of the various interests to the situation, particularly the Imperial Government, the plantocracy and the workers.

The Imperial Government was obviously bored by a colonial legislature, dominated by a planter class, which would not vary from its traditional attachment to monocultural production. In the early 1930s, there was a virtual contest between in the island's legislature and the Colonial Office over the direction which the economy should follow.

In 1930, the colonial parliament put a proposal to the Colonial Office for three basic support services:

1. no reduction in preferential duty;

2. a stabilised price for sugar on a basis of $72.00 per ton c.i.f. London;
3. stabilisation funds to be provided by a loan raised in London, to be repaid at a moderate rate.

While granting the first proposal, Lord Passfield was not in favour of the continued protection of sugar. He replied:

> It must unfortunately be recognised that not withstanding all the assistance that may be available, it may not be found possible that the whole of the areas in which sugar is now produced should continue in the cultivation of that crop, and that in some cases the substitution of that crop may be necessary. I am confident that the help of the Colonial Fund will be liberally extended to support such measures to facilitate the substitution of other crops as may commend themselves to you and to my agricultural advisers.

The planters counter-attacked. A committee was established to compose a reply. The majority changed their tactic and called on the British Government to guarantee losses to the value of $1,200,000.00 on the Sugar Industry Agricultural Bank, for a period of five years. A minority report called for the establishment of a sugar board, a guaranteed price to the sugar producer, fixed prices for the sale of sugar, and taxation on income and from customs to relieve the sugar industry of its difficulties.

Britian was adamant in refusing to accept the pleas of the planters. Yet, its lack of seriousness was shown when the colonial legislature made application to the Colonial Development Fund for aid to finance a programme of public works. The major demands made were:

$78,221.00	for the establishment of a market in Bridgetown;
$1,036,800.00	for road reconstruction;
$694,560.00	for improvement and extension of water supply;
$420,000.00	for sewerage plant;
$480,000.00	for housing development;
$19,200.00	for a venereal disease and auxillary clinics;
$10,560.00	for a TB ward.

When Lord Passfield replied, he approved only a $78,240.00

loan for the market. He later approved the $19,200.00 for the venereal disease clinic but regretted that there could be no prospect of an early decision as to the other schemes.

Nonetheless, the colonial government, between 1933 and 1937, embarked on a number of public works schemes designed to improve the island's infrastructure and to combat the rising unemployment. During this period, the following projects were developed: improvements at Bowmanston pumping station, extension of the Public Market in Bridgetown, building of the Central Venereal Clinic, improvements to the extension of the water supply, building new rooms at the Mental Hospital, constructing a tuberculosis hospital in St. Michael and one in Christ Church.

Other strategies were developed by the colonial government. The Governor zealously pursued emigration outlets for Barbadians within the Caribbean, but these efforts were unattended by success. In 1934, an Employment Agency was established, and this played a major role in selecting workers for the public works projects. In 1937, the located labourer system was changed, which released the agricultural worker from the dual bondage of being servant and tenant to the plantocracy.

In the meantime, the working class reacted to the situation by giving support to the attempts at organising their labour and protesting the conditions facing them. The Workingmen's Association led by Brathwaite, Sebro and Miss Manning ably represented the cause of the workers before the Olivier Commission in 1929. The workers banded together in the Workingmen's Association and in the UNIA, and when they were approached by Clement Payne who articulated their feelings with empathy, they gave wide support to his attempts at organising a trade union and bringing the force of the workers together. The vanguard of the working class took the lead in the 1937 disturbances. One of the outstanding leaders was Ulric Grant who had returned to Barbados during the depression years.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that the pauperisation, immiseration, and marginalisation of the workers, which resulted from the deleterious effects of the great depression, played a

significant role in the accumulation of resentment which exploded in the disturbances of July 1937.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

F.A. Baptiste, *The U.S. and West Indies Unrest, 1918-1939*. 1978.
J.K. Galbraith, *The Great Crash, 1929*. 1954.
W.A. Lewis, *Economic Survey, 1919-1939*. 1969.
W.A. Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies*. 1936.
A. Rollins, Jr. (ed.), *Depression, Recovery and War, 1929-1945*. 1966.
Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Disturbances (the Deane Commission). 1937.

4

The Struggle for Political Democracy: The 1937 Riots

GEORGE A.V. BELLE

Method of Analysis

I do not intend to describe the events of 1937; the story is essentially known already. My task, as I see it, is rather to advance explanation and understanding of the political significance of the revolt, and place it in the context of the struggle for political democracy in Barbados.

I will pursue this task in the following way. I will first briefly outline my method of analysis; secondly, I will give a synopsis of the disturbances; thirdly, I will analyse the causes of the revolt; fourthly, I will analyse the rebellion itself; fifthly, I will examine the outcome, what developed immediately as a consequence of the disturbances; and, sixthly, I will suggest some parallels between the 1937 period and the contemporary situation and make some final conclusions.

With respect to my method, I bring to this lecture the orientation of my training as a political scientist. As a political scientist, I am less concerned with painting a detailed description of the "disturbances" and more with increasing an understanding and explanation of what happened in terms of its political significance. I think it is necessary to say this because at this point in this lecture series on post-emancipation Barbados, I believe there is a break from the line of lecturers that have gone before. I believe that every lecturer so far has been a historian. The last three in the series this year will be all political scientists, and I am the first one.

Our discipline's orientation is different from that of a historian's and so our concerns, our research, etc. are different from that of the historian. In fact, I began my research on this period

back in 1973 as a post-graduate student, and the research involved building and identifying a theory of development for Barbados and in testing various developmental theories. So, I looked at the 'disturbances' with this concern in mind rather than as a task in historical investigation. Therefore, my concern is less to give you more details about what happened and more to seek to increase your perception of what happened.

My method is also intended to demonstrate not just the uniqueness of the event, for that in my view would distort its reality by isolating it, but to identify the parameters of causation and the interrelatedness of the event with wider happenings regionally and internationally and the place of the event in terms of process, both in terms of the social development of mankind generally and the historical process within Barbados itself. My method also seeks to identify and relate the impact of many actors, individual and mass, on the event and its outcome; and not to build analysis around any one personality. I will show the inter-connectedness and interactions of these actors one upon another and the implications of their collective input upon the developments. Further, my method involves identification of the qualitative features of the rebellion through subjecting the revolt to analysis informed by political theory in order that our comprehension and knowledge concerning its significance may be heightened. Finally, my method is also to empirically illustrate significant features relevant to the nature of the disturbances.

Description of Disturbances

I move now to a synopsis of the disturbances. This is intended to remind you of what happened. W. Arthur Lewis gives a brief but, I think, accurate description of the events. He was commissioned by the Fabian Society as a research student at the London School of Economics to do this, after the revolts.

He first of all starts off by saying that Barbados is "a tiny island". Its plantations were almost entirely in European hands, and its government at the time was one of the most reactionary in the West Indies. Then, in March 1937, one Clement Payne arrived in Barbados. He was a friend of Uriah Butler, the man

who later was to lead the oil-field workers' strike; he came from Trinidad, this Clement Payne, to urge upon the working classes of Barbados the virtues of organisation. He held a number of meetings and got a good hearing and the government therefore looked around for some reason to suppress him. They found it in the formalities associated with his entry into the colony. For Payne was the son of Barbadian parents and had grown up in Barbados, but had been born while his mother was in Trinidad, and, on entering the colony, he had stated that he was born in Barbados. So the police charged him before a magistrate with wilfully making a false statement as to his place of birth. This happened, Lewis says, soon after the disturbances in Trinidad which clearly affected the consciousness of the Barbadian people. Huge crowds followed Payne to and from the trial and when, on 22 July, he was convicted and fined $48.00, he appealed and announced his intention of leading a procession to the Governor's residence, to protest against his conviction. Lewis tells us, the police refused to let him see the Governor, and, as he persisted, he and a number of his followers were arrested and an order issued for his deportation. On 26 July, the Court of Appeal quashed his conviction on the grounds that he might not have known that he was born in Trinidad.

However, the efforts by counsel to rescind the deportation order were unsuccessful and on the same day he was deported. His supporters were furious at this treatment, Lewis says, and a large crowd assembled on the wharf where Payne was expected to embark, but the police sent him off at another point. When the people learned of this, they became very excitable and out of control, a coronet was sounded, they assembled in the Lower Green and Golden Square where they were "harangued", as the official report says. The mob then spread through the city in bands smashing motor cars and electric street lamps, and when the police tried to stop these outrages, the mob rained showers of stones and bottles upon them in a fray in which Sgt. Elias had two fingers fractured and three other police constables received injuries. The official report says that the police, only armed with batons, succeeded with the greatest difficulty in restoring some sort of order, but they were unable to make a

single arrest. Lewis points out that, on the following morning, the orgy continued with smashing of shop windows and cars, and that the disturbances spread quickly, by groups of people commandering cars and buses which carried the news throughout the country where looting started in shops and raiding in the potato fields. The official report states that lawless acts committed in the country were "more purposive" than those committed in Bridgetown and it would appear that hunger or the fear of hunger coupled with the news of the disturbances in Bridgetown were chief causes of the outbreak in the country districts. In attempting to restore order, the police were forced to fire, killing 14 and wounding 47, and over 400 arrests were made and many persons imprisoned for sedition.

Causes of the Disturbances

What were the causes of the these disturbances? Some of them have been touched on in preceding lectures. I wish to start by identifying the fact, mentioned by Lewis, that there was a most reactionary regime in place in Barbados in terms of its politics. We were under what is called the "Old Representative System", but it really had little about it that was representative. If you look for instance at the individuals who were present in the Assembly and the Legislative Council and on the Executive Committee and the Executive Council, you would see many names associated with Barbados Shipping and Trading. You would see names like Leacock, Manning, Pile and Gardiner Austin. So, the economic elite of Barbados also controlled its parliament. They had significant influence and power over the Governor. In fact, the class had always been a quite strong class; they in a sense kept the British colonial power very often at bay.

Indeed, the preservation of the "Old Representative System" in Barbados came out of a struggle between the British attempt to impose Crown Colony Government at the end of the 19th Century and the successful resistance to it by the Barbadian plantocracy. So, they remained very much in command of Barbados even to a greater extent than most of the other similar classes in the rest of the Caribbean.

This was the political system which dominated us. It excluded the majority of the people on the basis of a restricted franchise. Some Black people had penetrated the Assembly by the beginning of the 20th Century. Of course we had Samuel Jackman Prescod from soon after Emancipation of the slaves. But this system excluded; it could therefore hardly represent. This was one of the major causes of dissatisfaction in the society, not only among the working class, but also among the middle class. These felt they should have more say in the direction of policy.

The Old Representative System was at the same time an example of similar forms of colonial government throughout the Caribbean. So when we say we had the Old Representative System in Barbados and there was Crown Colony Government in Jamaica or Trinidad, you are very much dealing with an elite dominating a local parliament; and it is an instrument and extension of the colonial government in the metropole, Britain; and politically it is one of the serious causes of resistance throughout the region.

There are a number of persons who, very early on, demonstrated their ideas on what should be done about the conditions political, social and economic, prevailing in the West Indies at the beginning of the 20th century. I wish to illustrate the influence of some of these individuals.

If we start at the lower qualitative level, but nonetheless an important level, with Cipriani in Trinidad, you have Captain Cipriani who is in fact a white man in Trinidad, coming back from the War and from the effects of the War, seeing what West Indians did, seeing what they were required to do in the 1st World War as soldiers for the Imperial armies. He feels something should be done about the desperate conditions within the West Indies. Cipriani becomes known as "the Champion of the Bare-foot man" in the West Indies. His movement eventually develops into the one which Butler leads and he recedes into the background; but he early on demonstrates a consciousness of the conditions and what should be done about them.

He is an early contributor to provision of organisational skills in leadership for the working people, something they hardly had an opportunity to experience before because of the absence of

political parties, a consequence of the restriction on the franchise and the exclusion of the masses from politics. So, even though the franchise is still affecting his party's capacity to influence politics, he, nonetheless, by having a presence, passes on these experiences to people who are participating with him.

He also develops a programme which it is possible to use to identify some of the problems which existed and some of the suggestions that were being made on how to overcome them. We will find that, later on, some of his positions are retained in the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress which carries the programmes of the wide labour leadership of the Caribbean before the Moyne Commission of 1938-9.

Cipriani is saying in the early part of the 20th century that he wants to have Workmen's Compensation; he wants to have a minimum wage; he wants the eight hour day; he wants statutory restrictions against the use of child labour. (Now if you want statutory restrictions against the use of child labour, it means that child labour was a feature of the conditions of the 1930s, in the West Indies.) You want compulsory education; you want priority of appointment of local men in the public service, rather than expatriates. You want the democratic control of native economic resources and heavier taxation against foreign corporations exploiting national resources. He wants a social welfare policy and universal suffrage. These things, these ideas, these expressions, these programmes, they filter into the consciousness of the people naturally, having been expressed organisationally. So they become a part of the building up of feelings, of critique, of a direction to go, in the early years of the 20th century.

There are other people paralleling him in these early years of the century. Another notable figure is Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the Jamaican. One is a Trinidadian, the other a Jamaican; you cannot isolate the Barbadian rebellion from these people. It is not just created in Barbados. Barbadians are hearing about Cipriani and they most certainly are also hearing about Garvey; and Garvey is indeed very significant. Garvey is one of the most significant West Indians in the history of the West Indies.

Garvey, a West Indian, is able to organise, to set up an organisation that becomes international, that affects continents. It is affecting Africa, it is affecting Central America, it is affecting

the United States of America. Between 1916 and 1922, Garvey built an organisation with a membership of several million in the United States, Latin America and Africa. The character and intensity of his organising, his attempt to prepare people to carry out functions in every part of society, in terms of his conception of what would have to be done in the rebuilding of Africa and the rebuilding of her people as a great people, that is reflected in his organisation. If you look at the way he organised the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), you see that he has to deal with religion, the African Orthodox Church; for people with that aptitude, they have something to work through. He has the Universal African Legion. It is para-military. He has the Universal Black Cross Nurses. He has the Universal African Motor Corps and the Black Flying Eagles; and in 1924 he had established the Negro Political Union, the political arm of the UNIA. He also has a weekly newspaper, the *Negro World,* which is carried around the world by seamen, in particular, distributed in Africa, Central America, South America, the West Indies and Barbados. He has a commercial arm of the UNIA, the Black Star Line, the Black Star Steamship Company, and he has the Negro Factory Corporation.

At its first Congress in 1920, the UNIA get delegates from twenty-five countries and twenty-five thousand people attend the opening ceremonies. So you are dealing with a formidable organisation and a formidable political programme produced by the activity of Marcus Mosiah Garvey; and you are going to find that many of the grass-root leadership of the revolt throughout the West Indies are ex-Garveyites or active Garveyites. They are bringing a consciousness of Pan-Africanism, a consciousness of pride in black history and in black civilisation and they are also getting skills in leadership and organisation and practice in politics. In the West Indies this is important for people who are excluded from the political process, excluded from leadership positions. Most of these people who become leaders within the various Garvey organisations would otherwise be labourers in the oppressive system under which they lived. They could not express their talents or their intelligence; but Garvey is giving them the opportunity to develop these skills, and they

put them to good use in the revolt that develops. So, Garvey makes a qualitative and significant contribution to the rising of the resistance of the West Indian people. So we have to remember Garvey, and what he has done.

The Commissions which inquired into the revolts of the 1930s did not stress the national and racial question as a cause. The main cause was identified as the economic depression and material deprivation. Revolutionary theory and the experiences of people as they have struggled to change their society support a recognition that there is no direct correlation between the impoverishment of people and social rebellion. In fact, sometimes with increased impoverishment and material deprivation, the confidence, the ability to resist is diminished; these can create dependency and prostitution of people and very often revolt and resistance happen on the up-take, when an economy is on the up-take, when things are improving. People get back some pride and some confidence and a material base on which they can fight.

But the Commissions wanted to obscure the race factor. Some questions were asked about what was the effect of Abyssinia on the West Indies. They were attempts to diminish the impact of Abyssinia, i.e., the invasion by Mussolini and his Fascists of independent, sovereign Ethiopia. In Jamaica, for instance, a whole "Ethiopianism," the pride and resistance of the blackman developed around the observation of what had gone on in Ethiopia. It fitted in with Garvey's work. So we have to examine very carefully if in fact there was not this sharp race consciousness in the revolt as well; if in fact it was not something embarrassing and even dangerous to be recognised by the Commissions. Certainly some people (e.g. Walter Rodney), have described the West Indies as "the laboratory of racism". So it is difficult to see, if that is said even today, why it was not true at the beginning of the 20th century when the racial situation would have been far more serious.

Likewise, I wish to say that the question of the role and influence of significant revolutionary events at the beginning of the century have to be recognised. What was the impact of the Soviet revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union? Now,

in my view, an important event like that could not have but reached the ears of working people. It is like when the discussion on the abolition of slavery was going on in circles in Europe, the slaves got to hear about it and they started saying that there are some people up there saying that we should be free. Likewise, if an event like a set of workers and peasants overthrowing their king and then saying they are establishing workers' power, if an event like that happened, I am sure that working people were going to be listening.

But we can go beyond that because there is evidence in the security files of the time, evidence of conscious attempts by black communists, black Marxists, to reach their black fellow workers in the West Indies in the 1930s. The West Indies was identified by them as "a region in problems", "Trouble in the West Indies".

There are pamphlets that were coming out of Hamburg in Germany, where George Padmore, a black Trinidadian, with international prestige in the Marxist movement, internationally recognised as an outstanding communist, was consciously sending information to the workers of the Caribbean on how to organise, and how to throw off colonialism and establish democracy. Likewise, the Communist Party of the United States, in which there was a high proportion of black people, was also sending out information to the working people of the Caribbean, to agitate for the end of colonial domination and for democracy.

So, when you examine those files, you find pamphlets like "The West Indian Organiser" published by the West Indian Workers' Progressive Society on "How to organise the Struggle"; pamphlets addressed to "the workers and oppressed peoples of the West Indies", by the West Indian American sub-committee of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers, and you have the "Negro Worker" coming out of Hamburg, Germany with articles in it such as "Trouble in the West Indies", requesting the establishment of an anti-imperialist movement.

There are instructions in some of these pamphlets which the Governor knew were reaching the working people of Barbados;

some of them directly spoke to the Barbadian working people. They told them tasks and aims: how to "agitate", organise and educate the working masses; how to "build revolutionary unions"; how to "link the struggle of the workers in Panama, Honduras, Guatemala and other Latin American countries with the islands"; how to "expose reformist misleaders like Cipriani" in Trinidad; how to popularise the work of the Latin American Confederation of Labour and of the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of Hamburg, Germany; how to fight against "Imperialist War", because they were predicting that another World War would come; how to "defend the Soviet Union" and the "Chinese masses" who were "up in revolution".

These pamphlets were being read. The Governor was very nervous about it. He was sending telegrams down to the Governor of the Leeward Islands to tell him that ships were coming down and that they were distributing pamphlets which he called "these inflammable seditious rags".

Therefore, at a concrete agitational level, the methods of Marxist revolutionaries were reaching the working people. But this does not mean you had Marxists in Barbados, leading the revolt. In fact, in looking at the period we can only identify explicit Marxists in the movement in Jamaica, in the cases of Hugh Buchanan and Richard Hart. Internationally you would have had Padmore, but he is away; you have C.L.R. James, but he is also away.

You can have, on the other hand, Marxist-inspired leaders, and these Marxist-inspired leaders are inspired by the agitation and by the literature which they can read; by the fact that what is suggested relates to what they are experiencing and can be put into action. And I think what we find as a synthesis in the leadership of the revolt is a combination of Garveyism *AND* Marxist agitational methods. You see this, not in the higher intellectual or Fabian socialist leadership, but in the "grassroots" leadership which in fact was the most outstanding leadership and which was suppressed and was removed and was pushed into the background after the revolt. You see it in Clement Payne. You see it in Butler. You see it in Hugh Buchanan in Jamaica. These people do not lead the process after the revolt.

A lot of them are in jail for sedition, and then techniques are used to see that they do not re-emerge. But we do have that evidence of that linkage.

We can come more local and recognise our own Barbadian, Charles Duncan O'Neal. He is doing locally for us what Garvey was doing internationally. He is bringing organisation to the island, which must impact on the political culture, because it is something different. You don't have it before; the only thing coming close to a party in Barbados before Charles Duncan O'Neal's is the attempt by Samuel Jackman Prescod in the 1840s to establish the "Colonial Union of the Coloured People" and that is mainly at the level of an idea he attempts to carry forward. He is operating in far more difficult conditions than would O'Neal be in the early 20th century.

So O'Neal gets the chance to be the first one to actually establish an organisation. Much of Prescod's work had to be underground. Prescod went into Trade Unionism, but he had to be very secret about it. He couldn't demonstrate that at all. But, nonetheless, he was organising strikes in the cane fields when the Masters and Servants Act was being brought in soon after the end of Apprenticeship. But O'Neal is bringing organisation, giving people the chance to develop leadership skills and he is putting out a programme which can identify with the conditions they are living under.

He is making a linkage, also, with the development of socialism as expressed in Britain, the socialism of the Independent Labour Party, Fabian socialism. But it is an alternative to anything that had gone on in Barbados before. The presence of the organisation is restricted by the franchise. It is restricted by the fact that most of his supporters are not going to be able to demonstrably support him. They cannot vote. But, just by being present, that changes the culture; it qualitatively impacts on the political culture. It is different. It has to be recognised and it goes into the consciousness of the people; that is a reality of human social development. You see something for the first time, you experience it, and people are participating in it; and they grow in relation to their interaction with and reaction to it. They carry that on as an experience. It never disappears again.

It is something they have gone through. It becomes a part of them and it becomes a part of the people they come into contact with. It becomes a part of the culture. The culture qualitatively changes because of the presence of this new feature. That is the contribution of O'Neal, even if he never got his party to last, even if he never got his party to actually win power in Barbados, which he hardly could. The point is that he made that qualitative impact on the political culture of Barbados; so that it never change back to what it had been before he came on the scene.

At the intellectual level, at the level of arguing the positions, we have the case of the outstanding Clennel Wickham, a hero of Barbados. When I mention Wickham, it leads me to say that any time we consider putting up a statue of anybody, we must remember to recognise three personalities representing different levels of struggle; but no one personality can be said to be more important than the other. Though my party did not agree with me in proposing to re-name Trafalgar Square, Golden Square (they said that it should be 26th July Square), I feel that it should be called Golden Square. They said that if you mention Golden Square, that Golden Square has to be out by the Fire Station; so re-name the Empire Cinema, Golden Square Cinema. But I would call Trafalgar Square, Golden Square and I would put Wickham, O'Neal and Clement Payne up in Trafalgar Square. And the moment that you call Trafalgar Square, Golden Square, Admiral Lord Nelson would have to get down, because he could not take it. He would turn in his grave if he were standing in the square of the insurrectionary working class of Barbados. He was the hero of the slave masters, and the hero of the slave masters could not live comfortably with the heroes of the insurrectionary working class.

Wickham is very important, and Wickham is tragic in terms of what happened to him. He was destroyed by the planter class and he was destroyed by, at the time, the misguided Grantley Adams. So, in Barbados, we have people building up the struggle as well. We have the international impact, the international intervention, and you have people who are here locally active. You have O'Neal, you have Wickham, you have Payne. You have people that are Garveyites, who are organising;

you have Israel Lovell and Ulric Grant; they are paralleling those people who are active in the other islands. They are acting in Barbados too.

It is because Barbados is not that unique. Every country has its unique features, but there are certain objective structures that make countries similar, and people act then in relation to those similarities in similar ways. This is why things are happening all over the place. It is not because of any plan, any master plan. It is the "feeling that making people move" like that. They are feeling the same thing and they are responding in the same way. They are getting similar responses, and they are growing in the same way. And you get the revolt coming through from 1935, every island, coming right down into Guyana as well. Barbados is not left out. If it were so unique there would have been no 1937 in Barbados.

These are some of the causes. The most outstanding feature of cause officially identified, as I have mentioned, related to the Great Depression and the serious economic conditions that were present in the island at the time. Indeed, I am saying that this condition was identified comfortably by the Commissions of Inquiry to be the main cause. But we have seen all these other things that were acting there, until we get the culmination of the revolt.

The British policy at the time did nothing to ease those conditions, particularly economic conditions, which were aggravated by the Great Depression. In fact, British policy was that "the colonial government should not embark upon any undertakings" that are not "absolutely essential"; "for the present it is imperative that every colonial government should if possible balance its budget by reducing expenditure"; and "a conservative financing policy is dictated by necessity of the times". So that, at the very time when things are getting harder, the British government's instructions are that you should restrict ameliorative reforms in relation to the economy or support-activity to help people out of their suffering.

Some features of the economic conditions in Barbados can be noted so that you can get a picture of the situation. The Deane Commission, which was set up after the 1937 revolt as

our local Commission before the Royal Commission comes out under Lord Moyne, demonstrated that it was not possible to have a "living wage" in Barbados. They tried to work out a working man's weekly budget. They said (it would sound low for you, but it was a serious thing at the time) that food would work out at 51.09c, clothing at 44.64c, medicines at 8.30c, washing at 24c, fuel and light at 17.05c, house rent at 39c, subvention to a Friendly Society at 12c. These are things they assumed that working people would spend money on. And it all came out to 196.53c per week. And when they calculated the best worker's wage on a plantation, they came to the conclusion that the wage would reach $1.78c. So that it was not possible, for even the best paid worker, to maintain what they felt was a reasonable budget for a working man. While the Commissioners were identifying the working man's budget, they were able to state that the sugar factories were still profitable operations and could have paid better wages.

We can look to other examples of working class conditions in 1937, as identified by the Deane Commission. There was the case of the Central Foundry where before the Commission it came to light that the Manager was using his apprentices to do contract work. In some cases, they had been working for a long time, but were still paid the wages of apprentices. Some had served five years, others, four years. They were receiving three cents an hour, others two cents an hour, etc. The manager, on the other hand, was saying that he was doing a favour for these people; for, if they didn't get this kind of work, they would not have any work. A kind of paternalism on his part therefore surfaced. He was also very angry at what had happened in revolt. He said it was because of certain communistic ideas which had taken root in the minds of some; and also because of the utterances of cheap political orators, who said things that excited the minds of working men.

Some of the relationships between employers and workers suggest almost pre-capitalist relations; a working class person is not supposed to function like that under capitalism. It is really a trailing over from slavery; a slave form of domination continuing under new economic relations, which are not quite

able to develop because of the restricted political system which holds down economic activity. The whole attitude of the employer class is one of either paternalism or total containment of workers. Of course, you don't have any trade unions. It is illegal in Barbados to have a trade union at this time. The stevedores are identified in the Deane Commission Report as having made, between January to August 1937, some one thousand pounds in profit.

There is the case too of the bakers which is a good illustration of these backward relations. Some of these bakers were asked to work 11 to 18 hours per day, and sometimes as much as 22 hours. The economic conditions are affecting the middle class as well. Some of the persons giving evidence before the Commission indicate that the middle class is having a hard time. Mr. E.D. Mottley, who later became Mayor of the City and was a politician in the City, said that he had found that conditions were very desperate among the middle class, and he is supported in this by others.

Comments in the legislature by Grantley Adams in the 1930s relate to his observation of the slum conditions in the city. We have the benefit of an investigation which possibly responded to the bad conditions after the revolt and to the reports of the Commissions. It gives us something of a picture of what these conditions were like. In places like Chapman's Lane, Cats Castle and Suttle Street, you had a very desperate situation. The survey recorded that in Chapman Lane there were 345 houses in which 360 families lived or the equivalent of 1,161 people; 53% of these houses were owner-occupied while 47% were rented. Ninety-one of the families in Chapman's Lane were seen as being in an overcrowded situation. Some 173 houses were deemed unfit for habitation. In Suttle Street, you had a situation where there were 76 families or 140 people occupying one acre of land. There were 21 houses in Suttle Street, 14 of which were rented. Fourteen out of the twenty-one houses were condemned as unfit for habitation. The rents in Suttle Street were $3.75 per month for "flats", $2.60 per month for rooms. This is a brief illustration of the harsh conditions at the time.

The Disturbances: riot, revolt or revolution?

I wish to move now into the rebellion itself and an analysis of the rebellion. I wish to look at this through the concepts of "riot", "revolt" and "revolution", since I hear these terms being thrown around a lot today. The traditional description is of course "riot". Even the topic as presented to me for discussion tonight specified "riots". Some other people are telling you that it was a revolution. So, to the extent that it was a "revolution", then I hope everybody here knows that we are all revolutionaries! that we have a revolution in Barbados which is being built on now; that, starting in 1937, we have "revolutionary Barbados". I have not, however, heard about its recognition internationally. So I don't know if all of the people who go into these things and identify revolutions, I don't know if, because of the "uniqueness" of Barbados, they cannot identify "revolutionary Barbados". But there is supposed to be "a revolution" that was "started in 1937". I suspect that the same people who were calling it "riot" are calling it "revolution" now; for the same reason, to ensure political obfuscation.

What is a riot? A riot is like when, some years ago, a man who was not black, kicked a man who was black in Swan Street, and the people spontaneously reacted against that; because it is very insulting to kick somebody, and with our social history of racism and the feeling and emotion on race, they responded instinctively. To say: they are going to do something about it, and they are not caring about any policeman telling them anything; that is a condition of a riot. You can quickly identify a condition of riot when you personalise it between a policeman, the main representative of authority in a situation of breakdown of order, on the one hand, and the people, on the other. A policeman usually gives instructions and, resting on the whole socialisation process and the acceptance of the authority of the system, he is expected to be obeyed. He says "move and keep moving" and you move and keep moving. In a condition of riot, when he says move and keep moving, you don't move. And when he moves at you, you move at him. That is a condition of riot, and it is a very strange condition for a policeman. He meets

those conditions not when dealing with normal citizens, but with criminals. Usually, then, all the same, the criminal will run. But, in a condition of riot, the people often will move at the police. But it is an isolated event, as we saw in Swan Street.

We saw it also in Independence Square in 1966. I was very young then, but I saw it because I was there. So I know how it happened: because the people wanted to hear and they could not hear, and they wanted to see better, but they could not see. There was something blocking them. So, a very limited programme was developed. A riot has a limited programme. It dosen't have any big programme. In the case of Swan Street, it was "we going to get the man that kicked that man". In the case of Independence Square, it is "we want to hear and we are going to see that we hear". So you move forward. You start to walk forward. There were chairs between the people and what they wanted to see and hear. So they moved the chairs. And people who were on the stage had to get off the stage and go into fishing boats and go down the careenage. And the police who were there, who were the representatives of law and order and the state, they put up a white flag; and at that point they obviously said that they had to get help. So it is at that point that I observed, for the first time, some other policemen coming across the Swing Bridge, with big hats and big basket-like things on their arms and long sticks. And I went home.

But a lot of free bread was shared out that night in Fairchild Street. Bread carts were overturned. And there were people walking up and down saying, "we free now, we free now"! But that was not a programme. There wasn't any build-up like what we were seeing before. There wasn't any Duncan O'Neal, any Clennell Wickham, there was no Garvey to make that thing happen in Independence Square. It was simply that the people could not hear and they could not see and they wanted to hear and they wanted to see and chairs were blocking them. Simple programme. Move forward, push everything down. Simple programme, isolated, unique in itself.

But the 1937 revolt in Barbados is not unique. There are riots right through the Caribbean. There is a programme that is built up over time. There is a consciousness that has developed.

The people have an idea of where they want to go. They are not too clear on it, but they have an idea and people have worked out programmes, suggested programmes of ways to go forward. So, you have to put it in the context of all of that which is going on: strikes, industrial unrest, riots not only here but elsewhere, the international influences, the rising of the consciousness. It is a revolt. It is a part of a rebellion that is taking place.

It is not any revolution either. I am going to the experts on revolution who are, in this 20th century, Marxist revolutionaries. I am going to the leader of the Bolshevik revolution, and he is an authority on revolution. I don't think you can say otherwise. His name is Lenin. And Lenin is identifying what is a "revolutionary situation", not just a "revolutionary condition". For a Marxist, "a revolutionary condition" was in place from the end of the 19th century. But because you have "a revolutionary condition" it does not mean you have "a revolutionary situation". "A revolutionary situation" is a very special thing for the people who are really serious about revolution. You have to identify it and you don't deal with that in a dogmatic way. If some critical features are not present, then you know that really it is not possible to accomplish certain things, or that certain things will not likely happen. But Lenin tells you most of what should be there and we can examine these to see whether some of these things were present in 1937.

Lenin is saying:

> For a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realize the impossibility of living in the old way. For a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old ways. It is only when the lower classes do not want to live in the old way, and the upper classes cannot carry on in the old way that the revolution can triumph.

This, he says, can be expressed in other words:

> ". . .revolution is impossible without a nation-wide crisis, affecting both the exploited and the exploiters. It follows that for a revolution to take place it is essential first that a majority of the class conscious, thinking and politically active workers should fully realise that revolution is necessary and that they should be prepared to die for it. Second, that

> the ruling classes should be going through a governmental crisis which draws even the most backward masses into politics.
>
> Symptomatic of any genuine revolution is a rapid ten-fold and even hundred-fold increase in the size of the working and oppressed masses, hitherto apathetic, who are capable of waging the political struggle, weakens the government and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to rapidly overthrow it.

You must clearly study this thing, because some people read a few books on Marxism and then start to criticise Marxism. Many more don't even read. But if you are a revolutionary and a Marxist revolutionary you study Marxism as a science.

There were conditions present in 1937 in Barbados which suggested a developing "revolutionary situation", but there were many critical qualitative features which demonstrated otherwise. One of the very important features identified in a "revolutionary situation" as outlined by Lenin is the "division in the ruling class"; and that cannot be observed in terms of a "governmental crisis" in 1937; because again you can't isolate Barbados. The government of Barbados is also the government of the United Kingdom. It is the colonial government. So there had to be a crisis up there too. When the Haitians made their revolution, France was in revolution.

So any time you made a revolution in Barbados in 1937, you had to take on the British military forces. That is what you would have to take on; or their ruling class would have to be in crisis. But, even locally, you can't really identify any serious crisis in the local ruling class. If you go back to 1876, to the Confederation Revolt (which is erroneously described as the "Confederation Riots") there was a condition of civil war. You can identify a crisis in the government of Barbados at that time. There were other conditions which made a revolution not possible at that time too. But, in 1937, there is no crisis in the ruling class and in the colonial government on the scene.

We are going to find that there are a few people in the grassroots leadership whose consciousness is very high; and who are "prepared to die". There is certainly an "increase in the political activity of the masses". A lot of people are active who would not normally be active. But when Lenin talks about "a majority

of the class conscious thinking and politically active workers should fully realise that revolution is necessary", he is talking about the consciously organised workers, those who are leading the struggle; and we are not going to identify that either in 1937.

We are going to identify embryonic organisation. In fact, it would seem that the analysis of many of the "Marxists" to whom earlier I referred, their view of what happened in the 1930s in the West Indies is that the insurrection broke out too early, before the movement had matured, before the leadership could have consolidated its relationship with the masses and their political education, and before the development of instruments to carry forward the struggle. And, in any event, they were not aiming at revolution. For the Caribbean Marxist in the 1930s the programme is not revolution in any event. This is another confusion that many people have; in applying Marxism you identify programmes in relation to the stage of struggle.

The programme of a Marxist at that time is the programme of Garvey. It is anti-colonial, and democratic. It is support for trade union organisation to build up the organisational experience of the working class and to build up an instrument of defense; organisationally, these are not offensive tactics. But, again, it must be emphasised that insurrection is not created by the revolutionaries. The people make the insurrection. They decide when they are going to rise up. If you understand the social laws of society, you prepare for the insurrection. But you also carry out a whole lot of programmes before that. But nobody is going to be able to get up and tell anybody "rise up now". You can go off shouting all over the place "rise up now", and the people are not going to rise up until they are ready to rise up. And then they rise up when you don't expect them to rise up, as they rose up in 1937. A lot of people thought that the revolt would not reach Barbados. But the revolt did not demonstrate any organised political leadership sufficient to suggest "a revolutionary situation". We cannot find that organisation, we cannot find the division in the ruling class, we do not find other features. But those are important, and we have the colonial state.

I will quickly also refer to another authority on insurrection.

I refer to him as an authority in this specific context only. He is Leon Trotsky, a renegade from Bolshevism. But he was an excellent insurrectionist in the Russian Revolution. In this instance he is grounding his position on the work of Lenin himself. So he is seeing it as a Leninist position.

He repeats what I have just been saying to you briefly. He says that people do not make revolution easily any more than they do war, with the difference, however, that in war compulsion plays the decisive role. In revolution there is no compulsion except that of circumstances. A revolution takes place only when there is no other way out, and the insurrection, which rises above a revolution like a peak in the mountain chain of its events, can no more be evoked at will than the revolution as a whole. The masses advance and retreat several times before they make up their minds for the final asault.

He next considers the question of "conspiracy and planning" an insurrection. He says that the feature of "a plan", a "conspiracy", is often associated with revolutionary action. But the conspiracy and the plan which are isolated from the mass movement are not what he is speaking of. Such a form of conspiracy can take place in, for instance, "coup d'etat", and this can take place in almost any country given certain circumstances. But that will be something completely different from a popular isurrection. However, he points out, even though insurrection emerges out of the people, it is possible to prepare for it, to plan for it. It is possible to work out some ways of seeing what is coming, and developing it in this way serves to smooth the path and hasten the victory of the insurrection.

But, it is also possible for an insurrection to be successful to the extent of overthrowing the "old power" even without what he refers to as the conspiracy and the plan. You can have spontaneous strikes and demonstrations and then an outbreak and the overthrow of the old power. But the question of holding the power is another problem. Trotsky says that in most cases where there is just an insurrection, without this compensating organisational feature, that the power is transferred to other parties, even those who might have been opposed to the insurrection in the first place. For instance, in the context of an

anti-feudal revolution where there also happens to be a competition between a working class and what he would call the bourgeoisie i.e., the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie may win the power in such a situation not because it is revolutionary, but because it is bourgeois. It has in it its possession, property, education, the press, a network of strategic positions.

I want you to remember this in the context of the West Indian revolt in terms of what the middle class did. Our middle class is not the bourgeoisie, but in our context the middle class has skills, it had culture, cultural development. It had the capacity to deal with the British when they brought their "plan", the constitutional tutelage. They could say that the thing was too complicated for the working man to understand, and the working class itself was dependent on them because of its lack of experience in certain political activity. So, in a way, this is analogous to the feature Trotsky is speaking of in the context of the bourgeoisie and proletariat:

> The bourgeoisie may win the power in a revolution not because it is revolutionary, but because it is bourgeois; because it has possession of property, because it has education; it has the press, a network of strategic positions, a hierarchy of institutions. But, unlike them, the working class is deprived, in the nature of these things, of all social advantages. An insurrectionary proletariat can count only on its numbers, its solidarity, its cadres, its official staff, that is to say, its organisation and its party.

To win, to get victory, you need this feature of organisation. This is being suggested by people who made these things possible.

So, in summary, Trotsky is saying: "in order to conquer the power, the proletariat needs more than a spontaneous insurrection; it needs a suitable organisation, it needs a plan, it needs a conspiracy, such is the Leninist view of this question." The plan and the insurrection have to come together. The organisation and the insurrection have to come together; and the plan does not have any final control over the insurrection; but the plan has to be around by the time the insurrection comes. So you have to be working on that plan, on that organisation long before there is much probability of any insurrection.

The work by Communist and Marxist agitators in the Caribbean had started up at the beginning of the 1930s. Garvey had been active before that and into the 1930s. The results in some way were showing by the mid-1930s. But I said earlier that the Marxist view of the revolt was that in a sense it had come before the movement had consolidated. But there is another reason too, and we depart now from the theory on "a revolutionary situation" and the "art of insurrection". We raise the question: What was the nature of our society both before and after 1937?

If you look at the economy, the relationship to "monopoly capitalism" and the planter-merchant domination of the economy, the relationship of domination is in place before and after 1937. It is even in place now; that domination is the profoundly significant, qualitatively significant feature of 1937. The planter-merchant domination is not defeated. A whole set of forces come into play at the time including the British government. The British government helps to defeat the domination, politically, because it tells the plantocracy to get out of the way, that they must learn to concede in order to survive; in order that planter-merchant capitalism can survive, in order that monopoly capitalism can survive, you have to give up office. And the British, they know their own experience with their own working class from the 19th century. They have their own philosophers of liberal democracy such as John Stuart Mill writing in the 19th century and advising them what to do with their working class, how to make concessions, how to make reforms, how to give everybody, eventually, the right to vote, in order to survive the pressure coming from below, as the consciousness and sophistication of the workers and the culture of the society increase.

You have some "hard headed" people in Barbados, but they are told that they have to learn, and some of their own class then starts to teach them, like the Attorney-General, E.K. Walcott. You see him lecturing them in the House of Assembly: they have to let trade unions come in; they have to allow reforms; they have to let the vote be given to the people. Do it gradually, but do it, that is the way you will save yourselves. The British can tell them that, because the British know about

it from before. In 1946, in Barbados, the Governor is ahead of even the leader of the labour movement. The Governor is ready to give adult suffrage, and the leader of the labour movement is saying: "we not ready yet".

So you have a significant victory. But because you have a significant victory, because you have a profound victory, it doesn't mean you have a revolution. A revolution is something much more than that. And if you tell people you have a revolution, you are only trying to fool people. Because the revolution is yet to come! In terms of social change in the 20th century, the transfer of social power suggests the transfer of power to the working people and the working class. There is no transfer of this social power in the context of Barbados. The middle class wins through, in terms of a state office, in terms of their promotion in the bureaucracy, in terms of professional expression. Some of them think they have won the power, but they gain authority, they win "the shadow for the substance", but they go around boasting that they have power. But if they had power, in the last elections nobody would have to talk about "White Shadows", which is not to belittle what they had attained by that date.

But when it come to critical things, as is exemplified by the case of Michael Manley in Jamaica, when you are suggesting, even if you are not too serious, but suggesting that you want to carry out certain radicasl changes, and the other side they feel they are going to be affected and get nervous, you then see what real power is. So, in Manley's case, he then found himself without power. By the time he faced the electorate in Jamaica, he was powerless. He had authority but didn't have power. That is when the real thing comes to the fore, in periods of conflict. This is why it is useful to study periods of conflict, because they reveal the true nature of relationships. This is perhaps contrary to what most people will tell you. They will tell you, when it is stable you will see the real thing. But, when there is equilibrium, things are very often hidden, submerged, and component parts not sharply discernible. When disequilibrium and conflict emerge, the reality of the whole shows forth. And if a ruling class is very nervous, then they allow these features to be

revealed even when you are only saying and not even doing.

Now, just to illustrate quickly some of the features of militancy and consciousness among the Caribbean working class and the Barbadian working class, I want to go first to Jamaica as a means of illustration, for these Caribbean events are clearly inter-connected.

I want to deal with the question of the perceptions of the leadership and the state of consciousness of some of the people. One of the features we saw in the "revolutionary situation" is the willingness of the revolutionaries to die. Ken Post, who has done the most extensive analysis of a revolt in the West Indies in the period, *"Arise Ye Starvelings"*, on the 1938 Jamaican revolt, isolated one member of the Jamaican working class to demonstrate this point. He is a man called Daley. Post is using a situation similar to one I made reference to earlier, i.e., where a policeman in the execution of his duty says to you "move and keep moving". In this case, however, Daley and his gang are moving with sticks, and the police are moving with rifles. So, the police come up to Daley and tell Daley, "we want your stick", and Daley tells them: "No not a rass! You have your gun and I have my stick". Now if you tell a policeman with a gun "No", you must be prepared to die; and he died. Daley died. So he was prepared to die; and Daley died. The policeman with the gun killed Daley.

In Barbados, we have Israel Lovell, Garveyite, lieutenant of Clement Payne, leader of the revolt. The police are monitoring Lovell, and they are listening to the speeches in Golden Square. He is making these speeches after the case is brought against Payne, and Payne is threatened with deportation. Lovell is responding to that by speaking to the people. The police take down notes of this speech and use it as evidence against Lovell and he ends up in Glendairy on a charge of sedition.

Lovel is telling the people:

> They can't deport me. . .!

This is a seditious statement. If I were saying this in 1937, I would be quickly arrested.

> They can't deport me, they can only send me to jail. If you people had

> retaliated, the town would still be smoking and some of the policemen would be in the cemetery. If the people had used force, what the hell would this little island be tonight. . .

This is Barbados he is talking about and he is a Barbadian.

> So, if the government lets loose with ruthlessness, what the hell they leave the people to do! I know what is going to take place. I can die now.

He was prepared "to die" or he is saying so any how!

> Payne was brutalised this morning, but don't let us be afraid of what is happening. Let us organise and withstand violence. If we were organised. . .

He is suggesting that they were not organised sufficiently. He is making the point I made earlier. If they had the "organisation", they could deal with the "organisation" of the other side. The other side is organised. They are organised through the state. The "instrument of the state" that faces the people is the police. They are employed to do so, some are the brothers of the workers. In 1876, they joined the rebels; they put sugar into the ammunition. But they didn't do that in 1937. They killed fourteen Barbadians in one day.

If we were organised, Goddard [the Deputy Commissioner of Police]

> would have thought a thousand times before he touched Payne. There is no justice in Coleridge Street, for judges sit down and misjudge us. . .

So he deals now with the judiciary which also came up for examination in the Commission of Inquiry. He is saying that the judiciary is prejudiced against the working people, that it is not an impartial judiciary.

> Payne is no criminal. . .

There is a question of who is calling whom criminal.

> Payne is no criminal, we cannot steal from the white man. . .

This is some of Garvey coming through, I suppose.

> We cannot steal from the white man because, if we take anything, it would be only some of what they have stolen from our fore-parents for the past two hundred and fifty years. But Christ has been crucified

today. Awake friends, this is the beginning. Inspector Plunkett kicked a policeman's son; policemen have the wealth of this country in their hands and yet they are starving. If you want to see one negro beat another negro, give him a bunch of keys, a stick or make him a policeman. Let all the Goddards know, we are not taking things as before, and we want bread and butter just like Bowring and Darnley Dacosta. . . I am fighting this cause until death. Trinidad police is responsible for the violence in their strike. Goddard has given us a mission to do and we are going to do it.

That is the first speech for which Lovell was charged for sedition. In the second speech, he says:

The situation in Barbados is a funny one. We make the wealth of this country and get nothing in return. Our slave fathers were in a better condition than we are today. The world is against us, so let us unite in mass formation and stand up like men. Dickens the [Commissioner of Police] has a bunch of slaves under his command. Of course some of them were cowboys and they should know that they are servants. All of them are public servants. All of them from the highest to the lowest are rogues and vagabonds and if you people yesterday had a different temperament, by now Barbados would have gone up to heaven. Instead of Payne being in jail it should be Goddard. . .

So he had "a programme, to put the Commissioner of Police in jail!

If we were organised, before Goddard handled Payne yesterday, he would have bitten his fingernails. Or even if he had six-men-of war. . .

He is conscious of the British Imperial army and navy; they came sailing into the harbour. This might be a little bit of emotionalism and adventurism, but he is saying it nonetheless.

even if he had six-men-of war in the bay and all the policemen and volunteers with rifles, he could not be saved. If this thing ever happens again, don't run, for they don't have jails sufficient to hold all of us.

Which is a real point.

Now it is significant that, in the Jamaican rebellion, which lasted almost two and a half weeks, only eight people were killed. In the case of Barbados, where the disturbances lasted effectively two days and a bit, the official report says that, on 27 July, fourteen people were killed. This reminds us of some

of the points that were made in previous series of these lectures about the nature of the Barbadian state under pressure. So, I think that this is an indication of the intensity of the violence that came down from the state on little, conservative, docile Barbados. More people were killed in Barbados, with a smaller population, in a shorter time, than in Jamaica, which is supposed to be so "dread".

The outcome of the revolt can be examined through the programme of the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress of 1938 and the response to that by the Moyne Commission of 1938-39. What happened was that, on the one side, the labour leadership which had emerged put their position together in Trinidad and then went with a common programme before the Moyne Commission. On the other, the Commissioners in their report responded to their investigation of the disturbances. So, if you examine those two documents, you get a picture of what the interaction was like between the colonial power and the labour leadership which had emerged. But this was a leadership, however, which was not exactly the leadership that had led the revolt.

Arthur Lewis has conveniently enclosed in his pamphlet the resolutions of the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress, the programme of the labour leadership. This programme reflect reforms ranging across simple democratic reforms to revolutionary democratic reform, suggesting structural adjustments which, by extension, had sociopolitical implications for the ruling classes of the Caribbean at the time. So there is a mix in the propositions.

We have proposals such as that on constitutional reform. We have a request for extension of the franchise over time. Although it is not explicit in Resolution No. 2, they are asking for a movement in that direction. They are asking also for a Federation which is the mechanism through which they feel the West Indies can move to self-government. There is a significant Resolution No. 3, which is asking for the nationalisation of the sugar industry and which, if it were accepted, would have implications for the survival of the plantocracy, and which is objectively a revolutionary demand. There is a demand for co-operative marketing

and the development of co-operatives in the economy. There is a call for the nationalisation of public utilities. Then there is a section of the programme dealing with social welfare and social reform, requesting old age pensions, national health insurance, unemployment benefits. It asks for a forty-four hour week without reduction in pay; for minimum wages for all workers; workmen's compensation; for a trade union law.

There is a resolution asking for reform of the courts; for relaxation of political offences dealing with the interpretation of sedition. At that time, many people were in jail on sedition charges, which this leadership would have felt ought not to have been. There is a call for reform in the police force, especially in relation to the racial exclusiveness in the higher ranks.

There is a call for reform in relation to education and health services, for the development of diversification of the economy to remove dependency on sugar. There is a call for facility in emigration, which is seen as a natural part of the programme of labour at that period in time. There is a demand for a scientific investigation of the population, the precise nature of it, that is to say, a census. All this comes out of the revolt.

So, when I say there are some revolutionary demands in the programme, this is to recognise, in a sense, a response to that aspect of the revolt, which reflected either the rise of revolutionary consciousness and the militant pressures of the workers on this leadership, or/and, as Ken Post also says in his analysis on Jamaica, that in many ways the working people of the West Indies, the working class and the peasantry, were "revolutionary in spite of themselves." So, I have made the point that we do not see a revolution; but he is saying they were "revolutionary in spite of themselves" in relation to the demands they were making, such as the demands for "higher wages", "more land" and "more work". Because Post is saying that while the system could respond to the demand for "higher wages", it could not respond positively to the demand for "more work" and "more land" without structural adjustment and transformation.

Some of the demands were therefore objectively revolutionary because of what would be required in terms of structural adjustment in the society were they to be implemented. These

demands do not then emerge because of a revolutionary consciousness of the people. They emerge out of their natural experience, which is the way revolt builds. It is not built solely by the preaching of Marxism-Leninism or Garveyism. That is important, and that is going on and is helping the protest to develop, as I have already pointed out. But the people are responding to what they are experiencing in general. They are saying: "we want to live better." It is that which motivates the resistance. They want to live in peace.

Containment of the Revolt

Now, as I was suggesting, the British are also recognising the nature of the problem. And they have time to sit down and work it out. So, they respond through the Moyne Commission. This is an illustration of their response. They recommend the establishment of a West Indian Welfare Fund to be financed by an annual grant from the British government of one million pounds and to be administered by a special organisation independent of the local governments, which suggests the suspicion the British had of the local administrations. The money was to be used for schemes to improve education, public health services, housing, and social welfare facilities. You see the reaction of the British to the demands. In addition, the Commissioners recommended that steps be taken to encourage trade unionism. So that they recognise the need to make that concession to the working class. They recommended the promotion of agriculture and the settlement of people on the land as small holders. They are doing these things to appease the militancy, to cool the situation. They are recognising the need to give something in order to gain something else.

The trade union has a two-fold role. It is a defensive organisation for the workers, but it is also an institution for containment of the workers by the ruling class. Once a ruling class has reached the point of self-confidence and sophistication, which some of them in Barbados had not reached, they can make such a reform, grant that reform. The British already knew that. They had to teach it to the ones down here, and they then learned it

with the help of E.K. Walcott.

You promote agriculture and the settlement of land by peasantry. This is seen also to be helpful in cooling down things. As a matter of fact, the Jamaican rebellion was significantly affected, with respect to its cessation, by the Governor coming out and saying that he would give land to the Jamaican peasantry. And while the agricultural labourers had been uncontrollable before that, the moment land reform was mentioned the revolt cooled down. So, the significance of that reform was known. Give the people some land. But, of course, there is going to be a problem in implementing the reform, because if you are going to give land (in Jamaica it is easier than Barbados) certainly if you are going to give land in Barbados, somebody is going to have to give up their land!

Dealing with the political aspect, the Commissioners say that "Rightly or wrongly a substantial body of public opinion in the West Indies is convinced that far-reaching measures of social reconstruction depend both for their initiation and their effective administration upon greater participation of the people in the business of government". So, they are recognising the need to concede the right of participation. Moreover, they say:

> we are satisfied that the claims so often put before us that the people should have a larger voice in the management of their affairs represents a genuine sentiment and reflects a growing political consciousness which is sufficiently wide-spread to make it doubtful whether any scheme of social reforms, however wisely conceived and efficiently conducted would be completely successful, unless they were accompanied by the largest measure of constitutional development which is thought to be judicious in existing circumstances.

Now, they say a lot there that is really a reflection of the seriousness that they perceive in the nature of the revolt. They have observed the political linkage of the middle class, the working class and the peasantry; which is something that didn't happen in the 19th century. It happened in 1937. It is a political force the British cannot deal with easily. It is too costly if they try to deal with it in the wrong way. The British are saying that you have to reform, otherwise there will be problems for the Empire and they are not prepared to pay for that.

So you see clearly the response of the British. They then set out on a path of constitutional tutelage, which leads us up to the present and which we have ourselves experienced (or at least the older ones among us), and which leads to the development of the present liberal democratic system, with the right to vote, trade union rights, rights protecting the individual, rights protecting property, etc., and the assertion of liberty. These rights become a part of the growth of a political system and culture which we call today the Westminister model. The process reaches maturation with constitutional independence. Of course, with its own peculiar features, our state form is a frozen model of the British system which is itself a flexible system even if very stable.

This strategy of constitutional tutelage which led to the adoption of a frozen version of the Westminister model was a part of a wider imperial strategy, which was being implemented throughout the Empire, and it was a policy not perceived by all to be the most positive for a process of decolonisation. For example, C.L.R. James viewed this constitutional tutelage as a process of mis-education. For the British, it was a means by which they could contain and control developments and conflict in the West Indies by a strategy of institutionalisation of the conflict. In this way, development could proceed on their terms and could be channelled in conformity with British interests, so that local and British ruling class interests would not have much to fear from the West Indian labour movement. James states:

> By delaying the achievement of self-government, having to appoint a Royal Commission after the upheavals of 1937-1938 and by the mean and grudging granting so many the vote, so many to become ministers and all the palaver and so-called education by which the British government claimed that it trained the West Indian population for self-government, a terrible damage was inflicted upon us. In reality our people were miseducated, our political consciousness was twisted and broken. Far from being guided to Independence by the 1960s. . . the Imperial government poisoned and corrupted that sense of self-confidence and political dynamic needed for any people about to embark on the uncharted seas of independence and nationhood. . .

But this is what the British wanted and this is what they knew

that they would get if they could win the loyalty of the middle class, if they could "tutor" the West Indian people in "the art of government" and give them "the shadow for the substance". Without elaborating, then, that is more or less the rise of institutional features, rights, political system and culture out of the 1930s revolt. This process represents victories and defeats. We do not see at the end many of those leaders who were present at the beginning. Many of the programmes that were suggested are still to be implemented and in fact have re-emerged in the radical politics of the late 1960s, the 1970s and the present period. Some of those very programmes of the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress are a part of the programme of what are called the "subversive groups" today. These things were not implemented and the struggle continues.

But we have also to preserve those rights that were won by the blood of the working class in 1937. The issue is not to turn back those rights, but to build on them. We are not in a frozen situation. In 1937, the people at that time did not see the "Old Representative System" as something that could not be changed. It was "representative" the planters said. The working people at that time wanted it to be democratic and liberal. They gave their lives and their blood. They liberalised it and democratised it. This was allowed because it served the ruling class at the time to do so.

In these days we need more effective instruments to carry forward the needs of society and people living in it. We need to democratise further. Democracy is not a frozen thing. Democracy changes over time; it relates to the political culture; it relates to what become basic needs at one period in time as against another. The basic needs of 1937 are not the basic needs of 1987. Because somebody could accept a crocus bag or coal-pot in 1937 does not make it a basic need today. We need to recognise that the culture has changed, the basic minimum standard expected has changed, and the relative difference between that minimum standard and the riches obtaining in the country remains important. So that is why you still have people militant about "living better". So it is not a matter of saying whether "you living better than in 1937". We hope so. The issue is where

you have to go now; and what is your minimum standard now; and what can you see being produced as surplus from the surplus of your labour, and your recognition that you should have a greater part of it.

Lessons of the Past

Finally, I wish to stimulate some perspective on the way my method of analysis was used, since that method is also intended to help us analyse the contemporary situation. I am not saying that these points are particularly definitive positions in terms of commentary on development.

We could very well be living through a period of parallel accumulation of political energy, as was the case in the early 20th century. Such periods are recognised as features of social development. That is to say, society builds up in terms of inputs and then, like a kettle boiling, it then blows. You get hotter and hotter and then you boil. The boiling is the revolution or the insurrection. Suppose we ask, where is Garvey today? Does Jamaica have the influence it had in the 1930s? And we might well answer: there was a Jamaican called Bob Marley and there is Reggae and there is Rastafari, although Rastafari was around in the late 1930s in Jamaica as well. We might ask, where is the communist agitation and the Marxist inspired leadership? And we might answer: look at the so-called left-wing parties and at the Marxist-Leninist parties, which are present in the region at the present time, and at the impact of them on the political culture. You might ask: where are the riots?

But we must not look at this thing in a cyclical way all the same. I said that a part of my analysis is its recognition of process. So, I know that when you start doing this thing, some people say: "it is happening all over again". *It is not happening all over again.* Bob Marley is not Garvey and the Rastafari of 1987 is not the Rastafari of 1937. And the communist agitators of 1937 are not being repeated in 1987. Different people, different experience, even if younger, more experienced!

If you ask, where are the riots? Don't look for the little riots. Look for the 1970 rebellion in Trinidad, the rise and fall of

Michael Manley, the Grenada revolution. If you ask, where is the Democratic League? Look at what became of it. It is the Democratic Labour Party and Errol Walton Barrow. You might find another parallel for that! Where is "the Great Depression"? It is all around us! Where are the debilitating diseases? You can check out Aids and the illegal drugs. And where are the international influences that are telling us about the struggles of others as well as giving us colonialist ideology? We can watch CNN on mornings. We see both South Africa and Reagan. South Africa in revolt, in revolution, and Reagan in counter-revolution! And where is the Barbadian insurrection? Well, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of 1937 in 1987 and if you check the arithmetic between 1816, 1876 and 1937, you will see when the next one is due. For some reason, the accumulation periods are almost exactly sixty years minus one or plus one, since 1816. Every sixty years in Barbados since 1816 you have had an insurrection. We are now in the fiftieth year!

Finally, I am saying that it is good for us to examine an event as significant as the 1937 revolt because in doing this, and doing it in the way that I hope I have done it, we look to the past to see the future in the present. So, if this is a lesson for all in methodology, then the lesson for the working class is that, if it is to ensure a positive future, both for itself and for its children, it must learn to put its organisation in place well before the class rises in majority to decisively challenge the system.

"Persecution we shall face. Tribulations and trials we shall bear, but the longer the battle, the sweeter the victory"!

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

George Belle, *The Political Economy of Barbados.* M.Sc. Dissertation. U.W.I. 1974

George Belle, *The Politics of Development: A study of the Political Economy of Barbados.* Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Manchester. 1977

R.P. Dutt, *The crisis of Britain and the British Empire.* 1953

C.L.R. James, *Party Politics in the West Indies.* 1962.

V.I. Lenin, *Marxism and Insurrection,* Selected works. 1971

W.A. Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies.* 1938, 1977

Tony Martin, *Race First, the Ideological and Organisational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA.* 1976

Ken Post, *Arise ye starvelings.* 1978

Report of the Commission to enquire into the Disturbances (The Deane Commission). 1937

Report of the West Indies Royal Commission, 1938-39 (The Moyne Commission). 1945

5

Shifts in the Balance of Political Power: Unions and Parties

PATRICK EMMANUEL

Introduction

In point of time, the focus of this lecture will be on a period of some three decades, 1937-1966, i.e. from events immediately following the riots of 1937 up to the achievement of independence by Barbados.

The period under review witnessed the laying of the foundations of the present political system in Barbados, characterised as it is by political independence, a constitution modelled along British lines, two dominant political parties, and an established system of trade unionism, the notable feature of which is the persistence of the umbrella dominance of the Barbados Workers Union.

Previous lectures, covering the period up to 1937, would have necessarily dealt with a relatively rigid or static socio-political and economic order when compared with the post-1937 developments. But the seminal events of 1938-1951 had definite roots, certainly at the level of leadership, in the quiet changes which occurred before, the best known of these being the emergence of Charles Duncan O'Neal and the formation of his Democratic League in 1924. The events of 1937, as were similar occurrences between 1935 and 1938 in several other Caribbean countries, represented watershed developments in the struggles of black peoples of the Caribbean for a more meaningful emancipation. They signalled the bankruptcy of the neo-slavery society long extant, and represented a clear demand for real rather than cosmetic change.

Which brings us to a brief consideration of an important dimension of controversy in much of the literature addressed

to the upheavals of the 1930s in the Caribbean. This dimension is posed broadly in the question as to whether the upsurges constituted movements of *revolution* or of *reform*. This question is of considerable importance because one's response to it shapes the judgements made about the political leaderships which came to be dominant at the time. In the case of Barbados, the issue has been most sharply posed in the debate as to whether Grantley Adams "betrayed" a (potentially) revolutionary movement, opting for accommodation and reform within the existing imperial order.

At a more general level, the question of *why* men rebel has long been a most vexing one in studies of socio-political upheavals and ideological consciousness. The 'why' of rebellion necessarily combines and raises questions as to what is being rebelled against as well as what is being sought in rebellion. These lead us further to examine whether popular rebellion involves "revolutionary" leaders dragging along "reformist" masses, or "revolutionary" masses being trammelled and frustrated by "reformist" leaders. Were the Barbadian masses of 1937 prepared to settle for "welfare capitalism" or were they more resolutely seeking "socialism" as some have urged? What, indeed, was the level or levels of consciousness about goals at the specific time among masses and leaders? How much homogeneity can be detected in demands of different sections of the "masses" and different status groups and individuals among the leaders of the time?

In tracing the events of the period assigned to this lecture, we can identify several pertinent evidentiary indicators relevant to scholarly efforts at answering these questions. But, if I might hazard a preliminary and perhaps frustrating judgement, I suspect that at the end of the day the jury will still be out.

Our approach on this occasion will not be strictly empirical in the sense of a chronological treatment of events. The chronology is necessarily fundamental, but we will also attempt to look at some thematic concerns in the process of *democratization* of a socio-political order.

The title of the lecture is somewhat optimistic in assuming the existence of "balance" in the allocation of power in the Barba-

dos of the 1940s. The truth of course was that there was a virtual monopoly of power in the hands of a racial oligarchy in league with the colonial official power. The focus of our presentation then will be to show the extent to which power came to be transferred and organized *on behalf of* or *in the name of* the black majority. We need to keep in mind a vital distinction between 'power to the people' and 'power for the people'.

At the outset, then, let us briefly identify a few basic concepts in political sociology which can serve to organize and illuminate the empirical record.

There is, centrally, the notion of *power* seen as the ability to enforce one's will or to withstand assaults on one's interests. One of the key issues in discussions of power concerns whether or not power is indivisible. To illustrate: the marxian approach to power suggests that he who monopolizes economic power *ipso facto* monopolizes political and cultural power as well. Other approaches suggest that power over wealth does not automatically involve impotence for those groups without wealth. Mass political parties and trade unions can accumulate power to countervail capitalist power.

Closely associated concepts are those of *authority* and *legitimacy*, which together raise issues about the moral basis of power. Is power invested with the "consent of the governed", be the power-holders governor or planter?

We shall also see in the course of our treatment that we need also to keep to the fore such other ideas as *charisma*, a much abused term, *bureaucracy*, *culture*, *ideology* and *personality*, this last in its socio-psychological connotation.

Principal Landmarks

At this juncture, it is appropriate to identify the principal events of the period which give it lasting historical significance. I would suggest basically four categories into which these developments might conveniently be classified. What is important however is the factor of interplay, of the dynamics of the record.

Thus, in the formal political system there were changes in the

constitutional rules, both by way of written and unwritten routes. In the non-official political system there occurred *political mobilization and institutional formation.* Clashes between the formal and emergent political orders were expressed in concrete *policy issues,* the approaches to which were shaped by the *ideological dispositions* of given political figures.

In this context the most significant developments can be identified chronologically as:

1938: the formation of the Barbados Progressive League (BPL) and the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Congress.

1939: passage of a new Trades Union Act strengthening union rights.

1940: BPL won 5 of the 24 Assembly seats.

1941: registration of the Barbados Workers Union; formation of the Conservative Electors Association.

1942: BPL won 4 seats to 20 for Conservatives.

1943: reform of the franchise including enfranchisement of women; liberalization of trade union legislation.

1944: formation of the Congress Party by Wynter Crawford and others.

1946: the introduction of the Bushe experiment affecting leadership in the House of Assembly and composition of the executive;

occurrence of engineers' strike giving the BWU its first major victory in an industrial conflict;

BPL (now re-named Barbados Labour Party) won 9 seats, Congress Party 7.

1948: curtailment of the powers of the Legislative Council in line with similar occurrence with British House of Lords; BLP won 12 seats, Congress 3.

1951: introduction of adult suffrage;

BLP won 15 seats to 4 for Conservative Electors Association, 3 to Congress Party and 2 independents.

1954: introduction of office of Premier and embryonic ministerial system.

1955: formation of the Democratic Labour Party, resulting from major schism within BLP.

1956: BLP wins 15 seats to 4 for DLP, 3 Conservatives and 2 independents.

1958: introduction of Cabinet system;

inauguration of West Indies Federation with Adams as Prime Minister.

1961: first victory of DLP over BLP, 14 seats to 5, with Conservatives 4 and independents 1.

1966: achievement of independence;

DLP wins elections with 14 seats, BLP 8, Conservatives 2.

This record essentially highlights changes which occurred in the formal constitutional system as well as in the wider political order. A more detailed treatment will help to indicate how these changes at different levels were inter-related.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the constitutional framework of Barbados remained essentially the old "Assembly" or "Representative" system that had been introduced in the 17th century. Barbados, unlike most of the other West Indian colonies, had not opted for or been reduced to the "Crown Colony" status which had been introduced throughout the region after the Morant Bay riots of 1865 in Jamaica.

Essentially, in terms of the distribution of executive and legislative powers, there were four key agencies in the system:

(a) a Governor appointed by the Colonial Office as Head of the Executive comprising the Colonial Secretary, Attorney General and persons appointed on the advice of the Governor;

(b) a Legislative Council of nine members appointed by the Governor with veto powers over Bills;

(c) a House of Assembly of 24 members elected on a limited franchise from 12 double-member constituencies;

(d) an Executive Committee, established in 1881, to serve as a link between Executive and Legislature and hence comprising the Governor as Chairman, one member of Executive Council, four Assemblymen and one Legislative Council member, all chosen by the Governor. This Committee was a Cabinet in embryo but purely advisory, the Governor being under no obligation to follow its advice.

What was particularly significant about the Executive Committee was that its members drawn from the Assembly were chosen by the Governor and not by the Assembly itself. This provision was workable in the absence of parties with teams of representatives in the House. But once party formation began, difficulties would arise particularly where autocratic Governors chose to ignore significant party interests in the House. In any event, one of the real difficulties of the system prior to 1946 was that the Governor's nominees to the Committee were felt to be unrepresentative of majority interests in the House.

The system as a whole was seen to have other major defects including the contradictory position of the Attorney-General who, being an ex-officio member of the Assembly, could support official policy at Executive Council and criticise it in the House; the financial powers of the House which could be applied to frustrate official measures; the quasi-independent character of several public boards controlling education, health and transport which made it difficult for the Government to direct operations in the public interest; and the consistently reactionary character of the Legislative Council, or "House of Lords".

In these circumstances, the Governor, Sir Gratton Bushe, announced in October 1946 a decision to effect changes in the rules governing key constitutional functions relating specifically to the House of Assembly and the Executive Committee. The principal changes, which came to be known collectively as the Bushe Experiment, were;—

(a) the House would select a leader able to command majority support therein;
(b) the majority leader would select the members of the House to sit on the Executive Committee. These would assume a

semi-ministerial status and would resign if they lost the confidence of the House;

(c) the Committee, due to be chaired by the Governor, would accept "collective responsibility" for public policy;

(d) the House would be under pain of dissolution if it defeated a key policy measure of the Committee.

The changes altogether reflected a concern, in the spirit of the times, to make the formal governmental system more respectful of changes going on in the wider socio-political order, principally seen in the emergence and development of leaders, parties and political mobilization encompassing not just the still highly restricted electorate but, quite deliberately, the whole mass of adults in the population – workers, unemployed, petty proprietors, etc.

Indeed, the early difficulties with the Bushe Experiment stemmed as much from clashes between leaders in the emerging populist order as from opposition from the old order of reaction. The highlight of the former clashes was the often bitter conflicts which surfaced between Grantley Adams and Wynter Crawford, leader of the Congress Party which had been formed in 1944 by defections from the Progressive League. The experiment was also frustrated to some extent because the reactionary Legislative Council continued to exercise its veto powers over bills passed by the Assembly. We need now to trace the process of emergence of leadership and parties and to identify the main issues and ideological proclivities over which conflict occurred.

At its foundation in 1938, the Barbados Progressive League (BPL) elected the following persons as its first Executive Committee:

C.A. Brathwaite	–	President
G.A. Adams	–	1st Vice President
J.A. Martineau	–	Treasurer
Dr. H.G. Cummins		
W.A. Crawford		
C.E. Talma	–	General Secretary
H. Seale	–	Assistant General Secretary

Adams had been chosen in its absence, being then in St. Lucia

on professional business.

The BPL declared its basic purposes to be

> to provide political expression for the law-abiding inhabitants of the colony, to equip them with the sort of political education that would enable them to participate in the development of democratic institutions, to promote their social and economic improvement and to assist in the extension of all principles of good government.

The principal elements of its programme were identified as adult suffrage, self-government and West Indian federation; land reform involving the break-up of the plantation system, state-ownership of sugar factories and minimum wages set by law. The League soon launched a campaign of mass public meetings, attracting large numbers of workers and unemployed to its banner.

Almost from the foundation, there were schisms within the BPL, featuring differences in approach and substance between Adams on the one side and primarily Seale and Crawford on the other. Seale, an associate of Marcus Garvey, had shortly succeeded Talma as General Secretary of the League, and he pursued a militant strategy, fomenting strikes and demonstrations to bring about an end to economic and racial exploitation. Adams accused Seale of employing methods which were hurting the causes of the League. Adams' cautiousness in relation to aggressive agitation is reflected in his view of the 1937 riots as expressed in one of a series of reminiscences entitled "Blunders, Struggles and Regrets' published in the *Advocate* in 1971:

> . . . my mind was filled with gloomy foreboding. The progressive cause seemed to have foundered on the shoals of discontent and violence. Barbados, an island long known for its law-abiding character, had blown up in an explosion. (January 31, 1971)

Adams, in the event, won the first round. In 1939 he undertook a programme of mass meetings, whipping up support for his more cautious brand of protest, and won the presidency of the League.

But conflict was to continue mainly with Crawford who was, at best, suspicious of Adams' claims to be a champion of working class interests. Adams' acceptance of the Governor's nomination to the Executive Committee seemed to confirm Crawford's

concerns. He was identified as a friend of the official establishment and a "tool of the capitalists". Shortly, just prior to the 1944 elections, Crawford, supported by Chrissie Brathwaite, Talma and J.E.T. Brancker, among others, left the League to form his West Indian National Congress Party. The party, proclaimed as having a "vigorously socialistic programme", significantly won as many seats (8) as the League in the 1944 elections.

Rivalry between the two organizations continued to the end of the 1940s. Adams apparently did attempt some reconciliation. On the occasion of the 1946 elections in which the League won 9 seats to 7 each for Congress and the Electors' Association (and 1 independent), he announced an intention to coalesce with Congress in the Executive Committee on the grounds that both organizations shared a "socialist" outlook. He looked forward indeed to their amalgamation. Thus he proposed, following the Bushe reforms, that his four nominees from the Assembly to the Committee would be himself and H.W. (now Sir Hugh) Springer for the League and Crawford and H. Blackman from Congress. But Crawford who had most vigorously criticised Adams in the campaign, soon ran into collisions with him and, in 1947, declined further membership of the Committee.

After 1946, the Congress Party effectively went into decline. The party's representation in the House dropped to three in 1948 and to two in 1951, the occasion of its last outing. By contrast, the BLP's fortunes rose to give it complete majority status by 1951. The foundations of its hegemony were the introduction of adult franchise in that year, bolstered by the patient and fruitful work of the Barbados Workers Union from ten years previously.

Undoubtedly, a fundamental goal of *political* emancipation was to secure the right of all persons, irrespective of race, colour or economic condition to full participation in political life, an essential component of which was the rights to the franchise and candidacy in elections. These were cornerstone demands of the League from its inception.

At the beginning of the 1940s, there existed in Barbados, as in the rest of the Caribbean, economic and sexist qualifications

for both voting and candidature which restricted the rights of political participation to little more than the white male socio-economic elite. In Barbados, the minimum qualifications for voting were:

(a) ownership of property of a rateable value of $24.00 per annum, or
(b) payment of taxes of $9.60 per annum in the city and $4.80 elsewhere, or
(c) income of $240.00 per annum or $72.00 from (each) real estate or dividends.

The even higher minimum qualifications for membership of the Assembly were:

(a) ownership of property valued $7,200.00, or 30 acres of land plus a house of $1,440.00 annual value, or payment of property rental of $720.00 per annum; or
(b) income of $960.00 per annum.

These qualifications applied only to adult males; women, even the wealthiest, being totally excluded from formal political participation.

The abolition of economic criteria for the exercise of the franchise and membership of the House was one of the main aims of the Progressive League. But, in the early years, reactionary opposition to reform held the day. In 1940, a motion introduced by Adams to abolish the restrictions was rejected in the House.

However, three years later, and partly due to the stance adopted by the Moyne Commission, franchise liberalization occurred. In 1943, franchise qualifications in Barbados were lowered to permit persons earning $96.00 per annum to vote. Importantly, women meeting this financial criterion were enfranchised for the first time in the island's history. Paradoxically, there was no parallel reduction in the qualifications for membership. The elite were prepared to expose itself to the judgement of a poorer electorate, but not to allow any members of it to enter the House!

The immediate effect of the incorporation of lower strata into the ranks of the enfranchised was a substantial decline in

the number of Conservatives in the House and a corresponding increase in representation from the League, as well as from the new Congress Party. In the 1944 elections, as we have seen, Conservatives declined from 20 to 8 seats, the League doubled its seats from 4 to 8 and the radical Congress took the other 8 seats in its first showing. By 1946, the electorate had expanded to some 20,073 persons, being 10.4 per cent of the total population, and only 18.2 per cent of the population 20 years and older.

At that time, as the Census of the year recorded, of a total population of 192,800 persons, blacks constituted 77.2 per cent, persons of mixed race 17.5 per cent, whites 5.1 per cent and Asiatics 0.1 per cent. Interestingly, 49.0 per cent of employers were blacks as against 28.0 for whites. But blacks made up 81.0 per cent of wage and salary earners, with whites at 5.0 per cent. Furthermore, 78.0 per cent of the self-employed (farmers, skilled trades, artisans, etc.) were blacks, 20.0 per cent mixed, and 2.0 per cent white.

The franchise reforms would have considerably increased the black and coloured composition of the electorate and thus the effective support for candidates and parties attacking the structure of quasi-apartheid represented by the social order.

It appears passing strange that Barbados was then to wait for another eight years until all economic restrictions on voting and elected membership were removed. The former Crown colonies, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, gained this status in 1944 and 1946 respectively, whereas Barbados graduated in 1951 at the same time as the Crown colonies of the Windward and Leeward islands. The Bahamas and Bermuda, which shared a similar and much vaunted constitutional history as Barbados, had to wait even longer to see this fundamental measure implemented.

Compared with the other West Indian colonies, the sequence of constitutional change in Barbados was somewhat reversed in that progress towards more effective roles for elected members in the executive *preceded* democratization of the franchise. The Bushe Experiment was unique to Barbados and it seems plausible to calculate that the seducements and inter-personal

rivalries it generated (Adams and Crawford *et al*) might have slowed the momentum of the agitation for universal suffrage. The politics of stable gradualism prevailed over the movement for rapid democratization.

The fact that the historic 1951 general elections produced a *single* majority party and that that party was the BLP under Adams' leadership paved the way for steady steps to self-government thereafter. Barbados continued to make progress in the ministerialization of power more rapidly than the countries which had gained the mass franchise before it. 1954 saw the creation of the offices of Premier and five ministers appointed by him. Four years later, the Cabinet system was formalised. In 1964, the old bastion of reaction, the Legislative Council was replaced by a Senate. And in 1966 the country became formally independent. By this time, with the emergence of the Democratic Labour Party from 1955, a stable two-party pattern became discernible as the electoral strength of the Conservatives gradually waned.

The formation and growth of the Barbados Workers' Union were central to the success of the BLP, both before and after mass enfranchisement in 1951. The BWU, as the trade union arm of the Progressive League, was registered in 1941, with Adams as President and Hugh Springer as General Secretary.

Legislation permitting the formation of trade unions had been slow in coming to Barbados, compared with places like Grenada, Trinidad and Jamaica. It was only at the end of the 'thirties, and not earlier (in 1933), as occurred in other territories, that legislation legalised trade unions and provided for the settlements of disputes. Again, the recommendations of the Moyne Commission assisted in overriding the power of reactionary domestic forces in and outside of the parliamentary chambers.

In those early years, the principle and practice of a united political trade union front had already become entrenched in the region among the anti-establishment political community. This phenomenon manifested itself in Jamaica, Trinidad, and later in the Leewards and Windwards. It is important to understand however that in those countries it was the *unions*, not the parties, that were the key founding institutions. Bustamante,

Bird, Bramble, Bradshaw, Butler – the five great Bs! – emerged as trade union leaders, later to develop political apparatuses as the arms of their unions.

In Barbados, the sequencing and prioritization were somewhat reversed. The League, the embryonic Labour Party, fathered the union. Adams was not a trade union leader who entered politics. He was a politician who entered trade unionism. His social background and education also distinguished him from the Bs in ways which told on later political fortunes.

Adams, of course, appreciated the need for unity of party and union. He saw that, in Trinidad, Captain Cipriani's Labour Party had gone into decline against the up and coming Tubal Uriah Butler, because Cipriani had failed to organize a union there. Looking to Jamaica, he also regretted the absence of *monopoly* by one party-union combination as Bustamante and Manley split to develop two opposing apparatuses, JLP-BITU and PNP-NWU. As he reminisced (in 1971):

> It became more than clear that the best way to preserve the unity of the labour movement in Barbados was to have one organization, as the parent political party and a trade union working together in close harmonious relations. (*Advocate News,* February 14, 1971)

Thus, for a time, this perception of the need for unity was personified in Adams being the president of both organizations. This was fully consistent with entrenched thinking and practice in the rest of the region. But, then, in 1954 Barbados parted company. On the occasion of his appointment as Premier of Barbados, Adams decided, or was persuaded (?), that he should resign the presidency of the Union. No other Premier in the Caribbean has ever done that. But we shall return to this significant act shortly, in our overall assessment of Adams.

As we have asserted, the development of the BWU was fundamental to the fortunes of the BLP. But its significance went beyond that. And its umbrella character also exhibited features that were somewhat special to Barbados.

In terms of structure, the BWU was from the inception designed to be an umbrella, islandwide organization with divisions covering all the various trades and occupations in the island.

According to such scholars as Professors Francis Mark and Gordon Lewis, this design had been proposed by Sir Walter Citrine (a British trade unionist who was on the Moyne Commission). According to Lewis, by adopting this approach, the

> Barbadian leadership had the advantage of a united Owen-like type of a general union – on the advice, interestingly, of Sir Walter Citrine – thus avoiding the fratricidal rivalry of different warring factions so characteristic of the Trinidadian labour scene. (*The Growth of the Modern West Indies*, p. 235)

It might be observed here, though, that this observation covers over a central question: why indeed has the BWU remained so united? Why, as has happened all over the Caribbean, have not alternative unions arisen to successfully challenge the BWU's hegemony? An organization does not sustain hegemony simply because its founders wished it to be so.

A search for an answer to the maintenance of BWU hegemony might conceivably look to the democratic implications of its divisional structure and, relatedly, the relatively non-charismatic nature of its bureaucracy and leadership. Leaders like Bustamante and Gairy were hostile to any semblance of internal structuring, with its threat of dissipating tight personal control. Committees are cancerous to charisma. A General Secretary of the education and outlook of a Hugh Springer could not but put emphasis on systematic organization and worker education. As Francis Mark saw it, in Springer's time, "the Union was the offspring of the League, a mighty infant that soon overshadowed its declining parent. This was the period of the search for recognition, of the amateur experimentation, of the selling of the idea of unity, discipline and organization among the workers, of the patient cautious push for progress through respectability". (*The History of the Barbados Workers' Union*, p. 131).

Ultimately, the divisional structuring, notwithstanding the historic authoritarianism of the society, gave the Union greater internal flexibility – in a limited sense making it, to adapt existing Trinidadian political slang, a "union of unions"!

What is also significant is that by the time the DLP was formed in the mid 1950s, the BWU had already split with the BLP, and it was therefore not necessary for the Dems to be

tempted into forming its own union. Compare this with experience in Jamaica, as well as in Antigua which saw George Walter and colleagues forming a rival Antigua Workers Union when they broke from the hitherto hegemonic Antigua Trades and Labour Union in the late 1960s. Perhaps the best test of the resilience of BWU came in 1963-64 on the occasion of the so-called "Windfall crisis". Efforts by the BLP to take advantage of this opportunity to form a rival union were to meet with defeat.

The continuity of BWU strength is personified in the continuance in office of only its second General Secretary, Frank Walcott, who succeeded Hugh Springer in 1947. Here again is a bit of Bajan uniqueness. Walcott's style, variously tough and conciliatory, appears, in the long view, to have meshed satisfactorily with the psychological and ideological temper of the Union's membership over these years. How else could Walcott have survived and grown considerably in power and prestige over such a long period?

What is also curious, at least, is that the hegemony of the BWU went hand in hand with a relatively placid industrial relations climate. As Francis Mark has noted,

> Increased organization of workers has been marked mainly by the growth in size and strength of the Barbados Workers Union, and by the widening area of its activities to cover almost every sector of employment in the island.
>
> The maturing of the industrial relations system in Barbados is evidenced by the degree of harmony which has governed employer-trade union relations since 1950. There have been in the last sixteen years (1950-66), only four major strikes. . .
>
> For this maturity and stability, credit must be given to the major role played over the past twenty-five years by the Barbados Workers Union . . . (*The History of the Barbados Workers Union*, pp. 75-76)

It does appear that there is need for a deeper probing of the industrial disputes which arose over this period than Professor Mark was able to provide if only to document the basis for the award of the accolade of "maturity"

One of the factors which needs to be considered is the process of bureaucratization of the Union which grew after Walcott's

appointment as General Secretary in 1947. The expansion of the Union called for the recruitment and training of professional staff, a development for which indeed the BWU is now famous in the Caribbean, and now concretely represented in the existence of the Labour College at Mangrove.

Bureaucratization, for reasons different to charisma, is also capable of producing oligarchical tendencies. Francis Mark identified clashes between Union administrators and elected council members in the 1950s and subsequently. Full-time Union administrators, for all their devotion to the cause, might not be as exposed to the vicissitudes of the wider economic system with its possibilities of unemployment, unfriendly employers and the like. The inculcation of professional expertise tends to encourage a yen for negotiation, for inducing discussion around the table, for carrying the briefcase rather than the big-stick. These "sophistications" are not cultivated in the canefield or imported on the docks.

Notwithstanding, by and by, the early BLP-BWU cooperative worked for socio-economic endowments for the working people with first small, later larger success. Demand followed demand for changes in law and custom in such specifics as enforceable wage agreements, workmen's compensation, holidays with pay, factory supervision, shorter shop-opening hours, higher pensions; free and compulsory education, free books, free school meals!!; promotion of peasant agriculture; slum clearance and housing development; state ownership of public utilities, oil and natural resources.

By 1966, this agenda had been substantially addressed through the exertions of the two major parties and the prevailing Workers Union. The rest has been Any Other Business, to which we return at the close.

In political terms the period from 1951 to 1966 was marked

(a) at the level of the *State,* by the orderly transfer of power to elected representatives of a fully enfranchised populace culminating in the achievement of legal independence;

(b) at the level of the political system, by the not so orderly experience of alignment and realignment of political forces to

BARBADOS: DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES AND SEATS IN GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1951-1971

Election	BLP	DLP	Conservatives	CP	Other Parties	Independents
			VOTES			
1951	53,321 (54.5)	X	29,131 (29.8)	5,228 (5.3)	X	10,212 (10.4)
1956	48,667 (49.3)	19,650 (19.9)	21,060 (21.4)	X	1,695[a] (1.7)	7,552 (7.7)
1961	40,096 (36.8)	39,534 (36.3)	24,015 (22.1)	X	X	5,263 (4.8)
1966	47,610 (32.6)	72,384 (49.6)	14,801 (10.1)	X	598[b] (0.4)	10,661 (7.3)
1971	39,376 (42.4)	53,295 (57.4)	X	X	X	
			SEATS			
1951	15 (62.5)	X	4 (16.7)	2 (8.3)	X	3 (12.5)
1956	15 (62.5)	4 (16.7)	3 (12.5)	X	0 (0.0)	2 (8.3)
1961	5 (20.8)	14 (58.3)	4 (16.7)	X	X	1 (4.2)
1966	8 (33.3)	14 (58.3)	2 (8.3)	X	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
1971	6 (25.0)	18 (75.0)	X	X	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

[a]PPM

[b]PPM

[c]PPA

eventually materialise in the eclipse of Conservative party organization, the emergence of BLP-DLP twindom and the transit of the BWU to alignment with the DLP. Data for the results of general elections between 1951 and 1971 show how the party system evolved. The shares of the vote and seats going to BLP and DLP together went from 69.0 per cent and 79.0 per cent respectively in 1956 to effectively 100.0 per cent each by 1971.

It is worthy of recall that it was schism within the BLP that largely transformed the party system both before and after 1951. We have seen how Crawford's ideological, programmatic and stylistic differences with Adams gave birth to the Congress Party. Similarly, if not identically, Errol Barrow and Co. broke with Adam's BLP to construct a more energetic, and radical, DLP. Simultaneously, sharp differences emerged between Adams and Walcott, who was not among the first Ministers nominated by Adams at the introduction of the ministerial system in 1954, and it is intriguing now to speculate on what effects Walcott's appointment would have had on his career, and not least on the growth, unity and political alignment of the BWU!

(c) at the level of the political culture, the period was marked by an exposure of successive electoral generations to kinds of participation in the political process, variously active or passive depending on the levels of political efficacy achieved by individuals, groups and classes.

Political participation has to be guaged on a continuum of passive to active participation. The level and quality of participation, in practice, is a function of the democratic or authoritarian character of the leadership. Authoritarian leaders trample on efforts of their rank and file to express dissenting views. Paradoxically, a political party, claiming to be championing the cause of democracy in the wider society can internally be a sort of political plantation. On balance, over time, the DLP, promoting constituency organization and regular meetings, seemed more concerned to promote a measure of internal democracy. But we cannot then conclude that internal structures of participation guarantee that dissenting opinion would frequently prevail.

In conclusion, a realistic stocktaking about the system of power by 1966 would need to take into account a number of considerations. There is a need to identify different distributions about power:

- power between races
- power between classes
- power between state, races and classes
- power within state, races and classes
- power within parties and union.

Adjustment in the power relations between races was most visibly manifested at the level of the *constitutional system,* where because of the democratization of the franchise and transfer of executive powers, black representatives were to take over the levers of government. This in itself was, in the context of centuries of white domination of the state system, a revolutionary transformation.

The arrival of blacks at the legislative-executive level of power was progressively bolstered by the proliferation of blacks at all, especially the senior levels, of the public service. As state functions expanded, there was a substantial increase in public service jobs in social services, teaching and other fields. This expansion took place at all levels, multiplying permanent secretaries, directors, heads, principals down the ladder to clerks, secretaries, office assistants, etc. And blacks achieved a virtual monopoly of this vast system.

So that while the economic order remained under white control. *This indeed became the historic compromise in Barbados,* whatever the virulence of the electoral rhetoric! It was clearly understood by the 1950s, that the plantation and commercial oligopolies would be left in private (white) hands, and that the politico/administrative turf would be the black inheritance, not to be challenged, not visibly so, by whites. Thus the conservative party put down the microphone and picked up the telephone. The promotion of "small business" and not large-scale black business, in private and/or state hands, was adjudged bipartisanly, as the best prescription for "stability and international confidence". The growing strength of tourism in the local economy was adroitly deployed to support the historic

compromise.

The regime of political competition and the rituals of parliamentarism joined in to keep things on even keel. Black parties would compete furiously for the vote, while white business competed quietly for the dollar. Vigorous electoral rhetoric in favour of Emancipation II, III, IV. . . provided a necessary balm. On the day after the elections, business returned to normal. Three-pieced parliamentary rituals, the kadooment of the Budget debate appear to satisfy the need for political circus. Seek ye first, and last, the political kingdom.

In closing, let me remark on the irony that the agrarian issue, the struggle for the breakup of the plantation system of the 1930s and 1940s, seems now so tragically betrayed by the political directorates. The plantation system in Barbados is on its death-bed today not because of any internal socio-political assault on it, but because of the same international forces of prices and competition with which it had so long battled. Consider how much more social progress would have been achieved if the agrarian reform demands of the Progressive League had been pushed to the finish. Consider the implications of early black ownership of plantation land for all the rhetoric and reality of persistent white power today.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

R. Cheltenham, *The Political and Constitutional Development of Barbados, 1946-66.* Ph.D. Thesis, 1970.

P. Emmanuel, *General Elections in the Eastern Caribbean: A Handbook.* 1979.

F.A. Hoyos, *The Rise of West Indian Democracy: The Life and Times of Sir Grantley Adams.* 1963.

F.A. Hoyos, *Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution.* 1974.

F.A. Hoyos, *Barbados. A History from the Amerindians to Independence.* 1978.

G.K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies.* 1968.

Francis Mark, *History of the Barbados Workers Union.* 1966.

Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into The Disturbances. . . (the Deane Commission). 1937.

Report of the West Indies Royal Commission, 1938-39. (the Moyne Commission). 1945.

6

Barbados and the Federation

NEVILLE C. DUNCAN

It is now twenty-nine years since elections to the Federal legislature. At that time many hoped that there was a West Indian nation in the making. Four short years later, in 1962, that experiment sputtered to a halt, with Sir Grantley Adams, in a long and rambling statement to the last sitting of the Federal House of Representatives, blaming Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago for its collapse. The role played by Barbados, through Sir Grantley, in this process loomed large in spite of the dominating presence of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. It seems right to begin to reassess the role played in this experiment by Sir Grantley because, in general, learned comments have not been too favourable to him. However, this presentation is not about amending this record, but about recounting some of what took place as it related to Barbadian expectations and attitudes. But it must be noted that a great deal more basic research will be needed before an adequate picture can be painted.

Looking back on both processes, it is simply astounding the amount of work put in by Chief Ministers, Premiers, Ministers, and technocrats into trying to establish a political union based on the federal principle. In regard to the 1958-1962 Federation, the striking feature was also the dominance of British civil servants in the deliberations as Chairmen, technical experts, and interpreters of what was agreed upon in the incredible number of specialist committees and their innumerable meetings. It is true that these territories were still colonies of Britain, but they were also territories contemplating either dominion status or full independence and fully expecting to evolve their own methodologies and ideologies.

Between 1945, when Colonel Oliver Stanley sent his despatch (14 March) to the colonies suggesting the possibility of a federation, through to the late 1950s, it was the British officials from London and from the colonies who dominated, supported by nominated representatives of the local legislatures. The local elected representatives of the Houses of Assembly, in spite of their immense national popularity, were obviously marginalised.

The Process Leading to the Federation

By way of a despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Cmd. 7120, Closer Association of the British West Indies 14 March 1945), the British colonies were invited to discuss in their legislatures the question of closer union and send representatives to a meeting of all concerned to set the process in motion. This request was given new impetus by the new Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Creech Jones, in 1947. Later that year, a Conference was held at Montego Bay in Jamaica. A Standing Closer Association Committee, to be headquartered in Barbados, was set up in which the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Chairman of Committee were, respectively, the Rt. Hon. A. Creech Jones, M.P., Mr. G.F. Steel, Assistant Under-Secretary in the Colonial Office, and Mr. A.M. Crawley, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Barbados was represented on this Committee by Mr. H.A. Cuke, O.B.E., Mr. G.H. Adams, and Mr. W.A. Crawford. Maybe it was the done thing at the time, but it was Mr. Cuke who asked permission to move a resolution in which the Committee humbly affirmed its loyalty and allegiance to the Person and Throne of His Most Gracious Majesty, King George VI.

This SCAC published its Report in 1950 and recommended Federation as the shortest path to self-government, and this led directly to the 1953 London Conference on West Indian Federation which reached agreement upon the federal plan. Apart from the usual interest which Barbados had concerning the actual form of and provisions in a Federal constitution, Barbados had two special interests to see to within this framework. One related to the siting of the Federal Capital, for which

Barbados was a front runner. The other, which was just as controversial, concerned the freedom of movement of persons within the federation, which Barbados saw as both logical and essential, especially as it considered itself to be overpopulated. Both these issues became very sore points between Barbados and the other territories and will be developed a bit more.

In March, 1955, there was a Conference to try and settle the migration issue which ended up with both Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago declaring reservations on the question of migration. Four pre-Federal Commissions were set up in 1955, three to report on fiscal, civil service, and judicial arrangements for the federation, and the fourth, headed by the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, Sir Stephen Luke, was established for the preparation of the Federal Organisation.

In February 1956, there was another Conference on Federation held in London which received various reports and settled outstanding amendments to the draft Federal Constitution. It was also agreed that delegations to the Conference should constitute a Standing Federation Committee to deal with outstanding matters and make arrangements for the Federation, and, after a Governor General was appointed, to act as an advisory body until the first federal elections took place. Royal Assent was given to the British Caribbean Act of the U.K. Parliament, and the Order in Council embodying the constitution of the West Indies was approved by both Houses of the U.K. Parliament in July 1957. In May, Lord Hailes was appointed as the first Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of the new Federation of the West Indies. In this way the Federation came into being. There was talk of providing for the greatest possible freedom of movement of persons and goods within the Federation, and there was the definite aim of establishing, as quickly as possible, a customs union, including internal free trade.

Major Issues and Questions for Barbados Concerning the Process

According to Dr. Eric Williams *(A New Federation for the Commonwealth Caribbean?)*, Barbadian planters objected to Federation with Crown Colonies and refused to surrender their

ancient constitution in 1876 and again in 1932. Sir Grantley Adams' position on the SCAC's proposed Federal Government was that it was "not much more than a glorified Crown Colony". Yet, he was, not too long after, to become the first Prime Minister of this Federation, forsaking the more advanced political status of his own country's constitution. He also noted that the Governor General would possess reserve powers denied to the Governor of Barbados. He was firmly opposed to the capital being in Trinidad, where, he argued, powerful entrenched commercial interests would exert too much influence on the Federation. Maybe this was a seriously held position, but he could scarcely have disguised his bitter disappointment that Barbados was not chosen as the site for the Federal Capital after the Sir Francis Mudie Commission had ranked Barbados above Trinidad and Jamaica.

A fair bit of rancour was generated on this question. Morris Cargill, a Jamaican journalist, had written that "colour prejudice, snobbery and smugness" would make Barbados a fatal location. Perhaps, it was because of this, that Sir Grantley, on the question of allocation of seats in the Federal Parliament, was later accused by noted Barbadian scholar, Mr. Richard B. Moore, of saying that "Barbadians are the most intelligent and industrious in the West Indies", comparing, inaccurately, illiteracy figures for Jamaica with those for Barbados, and that "the average Trinidadian would rather sing calypso than do any hard work". Initially denying having made these statements, Adams later passed them off as having been said in humour, asking "is a man deprived of the right to make a joke?".

In the wider Barbadian community it was an issue, and there was disappointment, but there was also acceptance. Mr. W.A. Crawford, speaking on the Supplementary Estimates, 1957-1958, wanted to move on and suggested that every effort should be made to have the headquarters of the West India Regiment located in Barbados, or in one of the smaller islands, but not in Trinidad or Jamaica. Mr. Frank Walcott, in the House of Assembly debate of Tuesday 8, 1957, felt that, given the present political climate in Barbados, "it would be a waste of time putting the Federal Capital here". He continued by saying,

"let the Honourable Premier take his creatures with him so that when they fail no Honourable members of the Opposition will have taken any part in the failure". The Sunday editorial of the *Advocate*, of November, 1957, however, expressed sorrow at seeing the Federal officers leave. "We had entertained hopes that Barbados would have been the permanent home and that in this island the Federation would have found the seat for its home."

Another important development for Barbados was the selection of Sir Grantley Adams as the first Prime Minister of the new Federation. This would normally have been a glorious event for Barbados and would have acted as a sort of compensation for it not having been chosen as the site for the Federal Capital. Nevertheless, the position fell to Adams only after Norman Manley of Jamaica and Dr. Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago had declined to serve. As it turned out, this permitted Sir Grantley and his Cabinet of lesser lights, relatively speaking, to harbour the most destructive suspicions about the personal ambitions of Manley concerning leadership of the Federation which further served to cripple his administration. As George Hunte had pointed out in an article in the *Advocate* on September 27th, 1959;

> Political power is only real when it is backed by money. And the money to run the federation now comes more than 80 per cent from Big Brother Jamaica and Ambitious Brother Trinidad.

No doubt Sir Grantley was ever conscious of this, and perhaps this helps to explain his subsequent peculiar and extremely damaging fixation with income taxation and the Federal Government's presumed power to impose it retroactively to the start of the Federation after the initial five years had passed.

Sir Grantley could definitely be described as one of the pioneers, since the 1930s, of the federal idea. Yet, given his forceful personality, he never sought to dynamatize the effort. Perhaps, the way he was drafted into the political movement in Barbados, which he came quickly to dominate, also characterized the way he entered the Federal Government. After

that, he became noted for his toughness, although he obeyed all the tenets of consultation, and for an acerbic tongue when angered. Maybe he had to develop these facets of his personality to deal with the "second eleven" representatives which he found had been elected from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. Sir John Mordecai in his book, *The Federal Negotiations,* stated the following:

> Resigning himself to his narrow field of choice, Sir Grantley selected his ten Ministers. Though grumbling incessantly on one ground or another, he was never to dismiss or change one Minister throughout four turbulent years, until the very end. None sought to resign.

He needed them, because they came from the Eastern Caribbean Islands mainly, and he needed them all the time as a loyal power bloc in his oftentimes personal struggles with Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. By the same token, he was therefore severely hamstrung, *ab initio,* in being a symbol of unity between countries manifesting significant differences in a wide number of areas of functioning. Incidentally, abstracting from the ambitions of a young Mr. Errol Barrow and a Mr. Frank Walcott, to name a few, this attitude of Sir Grantley would have encouraged their resignation from the B.L.P.

This attempt of toughness with colleagues who had their own power bases would not go down well. The Federal Government wanted to put the Federal Capital at Chaquaramas, and persons such as Chief Minister Bradshaw of St. Kitts and Mr. Manley has supported this move. Nonetheless, the Trinidad and Tobago Government, while sharing the nationalistic assumptions which underlay the choice, was not ready to press the USA Government to remove the military and naval establishment which it had established there under the 1941 bases agreement with Gt. Britain. Sir Grantley, anxious to confer some prestige to his administration and show Federal strength in matters related to external relations, kept Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica out of the discussion which preceded his acceptance of a U.K./U.S. proposal for a ten-year deferral of the demand. Dr. Williams saw this as a treacherous betrayal of Trinidad and Tobago, and subsequently went his own way in

renegotiating the terms of the 1941 treaty, and simply never sought accommodation with Sir Grantley again despite *pro forma* overtures by the latter.

In retrospect, one can share the continouous frustrations which Sir Grantley and his supporters had to face in trying to make something of this weak federal government and the weak governmental team which had fallen to him as a result of the federal elections. Yet, he undoubtedly exacerbated the situation by his inflexibility and by his style. His determination to show the potential strength of the Federal government led him to the hottest and most shattering dispute of levying income tax and threatening to do so retroactively. It is difficult to read the 1956 federal constitution agreement and find anything in it which permitted the Federal Government the right to levy income tax. This was directly contrary to this agreement. As Sir John Mordecai indicated, "there was not the remotest chance that the threats could be carried out".

As far as Sir Grantley was concerned, the Federal Government had this right, and he stated that "the Government of the West Indies wanted to levy income tax on the Federation before the first five years are completed, but in any event would do so after the first five years are over". After trying to gloss over his often repeated statements by saying that he did not intend to pass legislation without consultation with Unit governments, he stated that "we cannot hope to continue as a Government or as a Federation without control of our own resources". If this was power play, it was undertaken without power or political resources, and it is little wonder that this became another reason why Jamaica wanted to have more voting power within the Federal Parliament, anticipating full independence for it after five years. Sir Grantley did not help his case any by suggesting, incredibly, that "Jamaica's attitude would have been different had it not been for the forthcoming Jamaican elections". Not surprisingly, the Jamaican delegation walked out of the Inter Governmental Conference meeting where the statement was made.

As firm positions were taken on a variety of issues before the Conference and in between meetings, Mr. Manley and Dr.

Williams met secretly in Antigua to try and resolve their considerable differences in order to save the Federation. Sir Grantley saw this as a major conspiracy. The other territories were also suspicious as to what these two powerful states were cooking up privately, and it did not take much for Sir Grantley to whip up hostile feelings in them. After never having visited these smaller states, in spite of his extensive travels and the paucity of the sessions of the Federal Legislature, he started to do so in 1961. The *Daily Gleaner* of Jamaica saw the move as an attempt to assemble a small unit bloc against Jamaica, Trinidad and Antigua.

Sir Grantley, in reference to the Antigua meeting, stated that "they met like Pope and Emperor dividing the world between them". He also called on the smaller units in March 1961, when discussing the apparent Jamaica/Trinidad and Tobago agreement on what should be in the Reserve List, "to knock the revolver out of the hands which point it at them. Do not quiver and do not give in. We are not compromising on this. . . despite the treaty of Antigua".

A related issue emerged out of the White Paper which marked the consensus arrived at the 1961 Lancaster House Conference on amendments to the Constitution for full independence of the Federal Government. Sir Grantley asserted in all solemnity that he would go out of federal politics before he lifted a finger to support a constitution based upon the White Paper. Mr. Deighton Ward, M.P., from Barbados, saw the White Paper as an abortion and it should be unhesitantly rejected. As he saw it, Barbados would not take part unless the proposals were altered. The major cause for concern was that the House of Representatives would now have 64 members based on the population formula agreed by the Inter-Governmental Conference. This would have given Jamaica near veto powers. Indeed, it was agreed that Jamaica would hold 30 of 64 seats, Trinidad and Tobago 13, Barbados 5, Montserrat one, and each other unit territory two each. In addition, the way that legislative powers were divided up meant that the Federation would have a weaker centre than was originally envisaged.

The Responses of Barbadians at Home to the Issues of the Day

Some of these issues have already been alluded to in earlier statements. Mr. Cameron Tudor, speaking in the House of Assembly in 1956, offered another perspective:

> What has been happening to us in the last few years is this: a one-sided point of view has been given to the other participating territories concerning Barbadian views and up to now there has been no large scale debate in this island as a whole on all these major issues, because people, in the outside world, reflecting on the absence of opposition members on the various delegations which have represented Barbados cannot be quarreled with if they got the impression that the political life in Barbados was not mature. . . It is the ignorance of people of Barbados which is the most frightening thing in this matter and it may be that if our people were better informed Barbados might be able to approach Federation with much less hesitancy and reluctance.

Mr. Mitchie Hewitt, writing in the *Advocate,* on January 5, 1958, referred to the regrets expressed that the political leaders who have been founding fathers of the Federation were not finding it convenient to go to the Federal Parliament. Mr. E.W. Barrow, Chairman of the D.L.P. when his party presented candidates for the Federal Parliament on January 4, 1958, stated that it was regrettable that the framework of the Federation was slavishly copied from the Australian constitution. So he argued that it was most important for the D.L.P. to get into the federal structure and fashion it into something that was recognizable as their creation. The editorial of January 22, 1958, commenting on the first Federal government, noted that the acknowledged leaders in five out of the ten Units had turned their backs upon the baby whose birth was very much the result of their work.

On the question of the location of the federal capital, one correspondent wrote that the fact that Barbados was not the capital had certainly weakened her power as an umpire and guide. It had thrown her into the midst of a struggle in which she really had no share, making her to a great extent frustrated. In a memorandum presented to the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Iain Macleod, by a four-man D.L.P., delegation at Government House, in June 1960, there was the call for a re-examination

without delay of the location of the federal capital, and for Jamaica to remain and lead the Federation. A noted Barbadian, Reginald Pierrepointe, commented on the spectacle of a Governor General and Princess and their retinues of highly paid officials joy-riding around the Caribbean while a large majority of fawning political lackeys flaunted their obeisance at the people's expense as a fraud and a menace which could do tremendous harm to the cause of independence.

The first true sign of popular Barbadian response to issues arising out of the Federation manifested itself when in May 1961, Dr. Cummins, the Barbados Premier, led a revolt on the eve of the West Indies Independence Conference at Lancaster House in London. It was based simply on the issue of no Federation without freedom of movement. In early June, eight thousand people gathered in Lower Green to back Dr. Cummins.

All told, Sir Grantley had to try and deal with many issues which generated a tremendous amount of annoyance and suspicion. On many of the issues, much of the bitterness was self-generated. Most of these problems stemmed from the initial parsimony in the conception of Federal powers and status of the Federal Government. Sir Grantley was dealt a very poor hand with which to make something of the Federation. As to his motives, as he himself said, all he was trying to do was save the Federation. The colonial attitudes, the insularity, the economic poverty of most of the territories, and the poor diplomatic and governmental skills manifested gave credence to the British justification for not having granted full independence to the Federation in 1958. Britain's own attitude was as amazing as it was bad. The difficulties which Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica posed for the Federation in varying and contradictory ways could have been averted if Britain had not been so amazingly mean in its offer of financial assistance to the Federation. Implicitly, it was left to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to shoulder the economic burdens of the poorer states.

At the back of all the movements made by the two richer countries was a desire to preserve the insecure economic advance they had attained, while not wishing to turn their back on their Caribbean colleagues. Therefore, Sir Grantley and others were

in an untenable situation where even their best would not have been good enough. It is not easy to operate internationally in a Federation when what these territories really needed was sufficient time to attempt to build national political, economic and cultural systems. If, today, with that experience, these states are not rushing to deepen regional integration, it is partly because the memory of that early failure is still with us.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

R. Cheltenham, *The Political and Constitutional Development of Barbados, 1946-66.* Ph.D. Thesis. 1970.

F.A. Hoyos, *The Rise of West Indian Democracy: The Life and Times of Sir Grantley Adams.* 1963.

F.A. Hoyos, *Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution.* 1974.

W.A. Lewis, *The Agony of the Eight.* 1965.

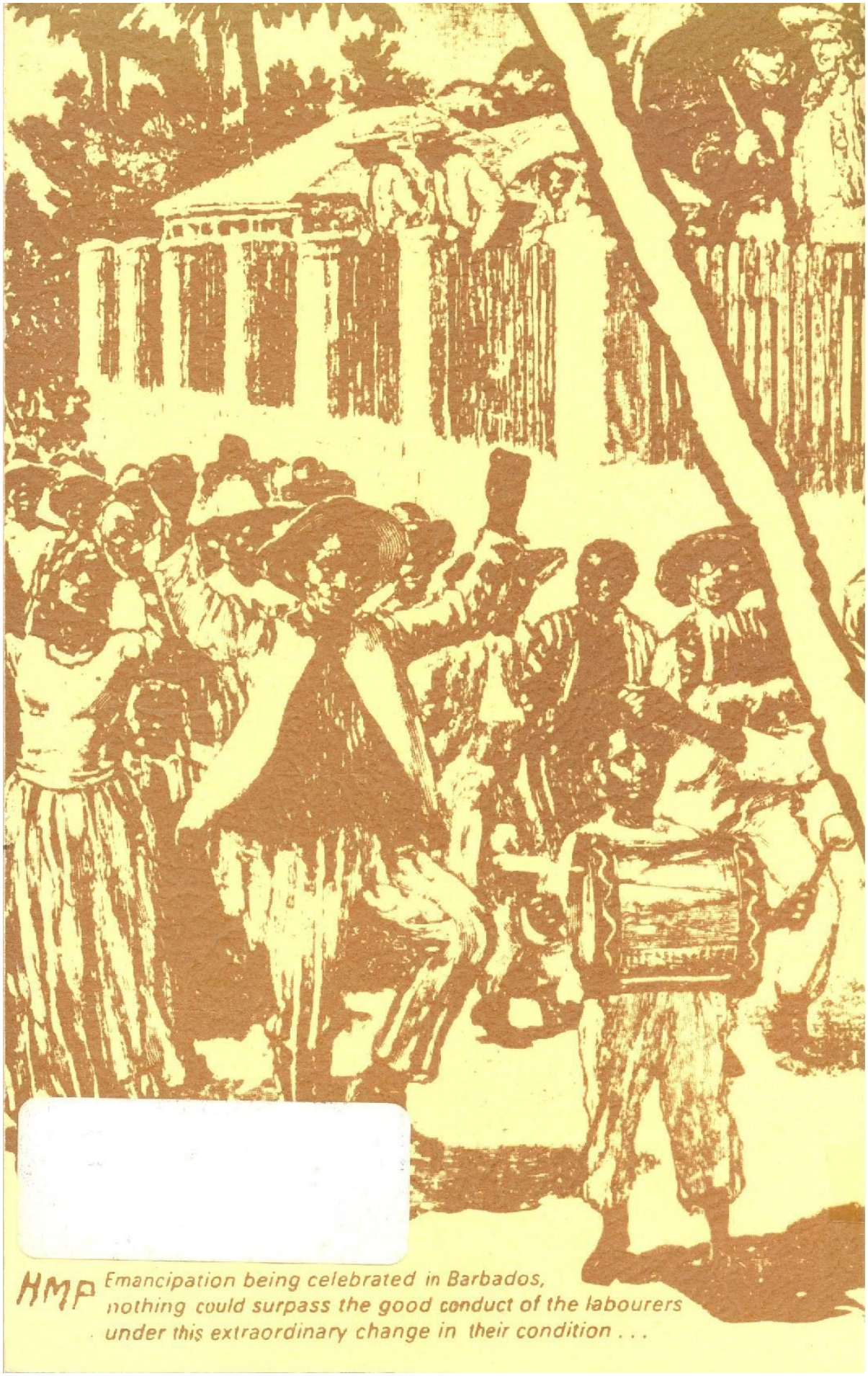
G.K. Lewis, *The Growth of the Modern West Indies.* 1968.

J. Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations,* 1968.

H.W. Springer, *Reflections on the Failure of the West Indian Federation.* 1962.

E.E. Williams, *A New Federation for the Commonwealth Caribbean?*

H.O.B. Wooding, "The Failure of the West Indies Federation", *Law Review,* vol. 5, No. 3.



HMP *Emancipation being celebrated in Barbados, nothing could surpass the good conduct of the labourers under this extraordinary change in their condition . . .*