NASCENT UNIONS: A STUDY OF TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO JAMAICA, ANTIGUA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts
Memorial University of Newfoundland
October 1973

ABSTRACT

In this study of unions in the English-speaking Caribbean, the emphasis is placed on the social, political and economic factors that have contributed to the development and growth of the labour movement. It examines the historical basis of the structure of Caribbean society in an attempt to explain the social, political and economic factors that have shaped the character of contemporary Caribbean unions. Rather than presenting a chronological account of union growth and development, the focus has been placed on the principal factors and events that have created and maintained worker solidarity throughout the region.

Chapter I discusses aspects of Caribbean history which help to explain the distinctive development of trade unionism in this region. Chapters II to IV examine the development of unionism in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua with some emphasis on their similarities and differences. In Chapter III the racial and cultural heterogenity is emphasized since it poses obvious difficulties for organized group action. In Chapter V aspects of the industrial relations system are examined and the problems of union organization and regulation are explored.

The Caribbean, like many of the underdeveloped regions of the world which have recently emerged from colonialism, now faces the crucial task of nation building. Intellectual modernization, cumulative technological change, heavy foreign investment and the

virtually unrestricted flow of ideas are some of the principal forces which create and sustain conflict in industry, government and the labour movement. The desire for rapid development and growth introduces into the industrial relations machinery new procedures for dealing with industrial conflict. Whereas Jamaica has strengthened its conciliation and arbitration machinery, Trinidad has adopted more stringent legislation to regulate union activity through the provisions of the Industrial Stabilization Act of 1965 and the Industrial Relations Act of 1971. The operation of the industrial relations system is examined in Chapter V.

In the final chapter, some of the current theories of nascent unions are examined and evaluated in the light of Caribbean experiences. The more extreme forms of union control are rejected in preference to broad institutional changes which, it is hoped, will create a climate where innovative labour administration can more adequately assist in the struggle for economic development and social progress.

PREFACE

The area designated as the English-speaking Caribbean is included in the chain of islands stretching from the south-eastern tip of Florida southward to the northeastern portion of the South American mainland. Also included in the above designation are the mainland countries of British Honduras in Central America and Guyana (formerly British Guiana) in South America. Of the three countries which form the basis of this investigation, Jamaica is by far the largest with an area of 4,411 square miles and an estimated population of 1.8 million people (see Appendices I and II). Trinidad and Tobago is located near the northeastern tip of Venezuela and encompasses an area of 1,908 square miles and an estimated population of 970 thousand people. Antigua, on the other hand, is small, even by Caribbean standards, with an area of 108 square miles and an estimated population of 64 thousand.

With the exception of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, commercially exploitable mineral resources are notably absent in the area. Historically, the Caribbean area has relied heavily on plantation exports, namely sugar and its by-products, and after the abolition of slavery in 1834, on bananas, citrus and coffee in Jamaica, and on citrus and cocoa in Trinidad. Despite declining contributions of agriculture to gross national products (particularly in view of successful exploitation of oil and asphalt in Trinidad and bauxite in Jamaica), agriculture continues to dominate the Caribbean area. In Jamaica and Trinidad,

employment in agriculture has been reduced from 48 per cent and 25 per cent respectively of the labour force in 1946 to 39 per cent and 21 per cent in 1961.[1]

Towards the mid-1950's, Jamaica, Trinidad, Antigua and other Caribbean islands experienced rapid expansion in the tourist industry. This industry has afforded an expanding labour force alternative employment opportunities, but not nearly sufficient to absorb the annual increase in the labour force. With rates of natural increase averaging about 3.0 per cent annually, population densities are increasing while unemployment and underemployment remain high and pose obvious threats to political stability. Moreover, the uneven distribution of rainfall throughout the area poses a perennial threat to farming in some areas, notably in Antigua where the mean annual precipitation is about 40 inches.

The economic unit around which Caribbean economies have traditionally revolved is the plantation. In defining plantation economies, the fundamental preoccupation of academics appears to be its commercial characteristics, its relatively large-scale production of primary commodities and the labour-intensive nature of production. William Jones, in the International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences,[2] defines a plantation as "... an economic unit producing agricultural commodities ... for sale and employing a relatively large

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[1]William G. Demas, The Economics of Development in Small Countries with Special Reference to the Caribbean (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1965), p. 180.

[2]William O. Jones, "Plantations", Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968).

number of unskilled labourers ... whose activities are closely supervised." Other scholars, such as Eric Wolfe, view the plantation "as an instrument of force weilded to create and maintain a class structure of workers and owners connected hierarchically by a staff of overseers and managers."[3]

In this study both these concepts will be utilized and elaborated. The plantation system in the Caribbean will be viewed not only as an economic unit but as a socio-political unit as well. In other words, the plantation system in the Caribbean will be defined not only by the way it functions as a production unit in a purely technical sense, but also "by the distinctive mechanisms of labour-force-control which emerge from it."[4]

Some of these 'distinctive mechanisms' in the Caribbean resulted from over two hundred years of black slavery. Many cultural values in the Caribbean emanate from the plantation system with its historical basis rooted in slavery. The post-emancipation society was characterized by pre-emancipation patterns of social stratification, the most obvious being social stratification along racial-ethnic lines. Morphological characteristics became important in establishing criteria for mate selection and in awarding wealth, power and status. These factors are further reinforced by status endogamy resulting in the dominance of the instruments of power by an all-white upper class which, although numerically small, constituted the basis of legitimate authority and completely dominated the non-white middle and lower classes.

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[3]Quoted in J.R. Mandle, "The Plantation Economy: An Essay in Definition," Science and Society, XXXVI, No. 1 (Spring 1972).

[4]Ibid., p. 58.

It is within this socio-economic configuration that the drive for trade unionism and political independence from Britain emerges. The trade union movement in its formative years was the advocate of broad macro-social reforms required to modernize colonial societies. Colonial situations are often incompatible with the imperatives of modernization. Progressive socio-economic changes are only possible to the extent that the indigenous peoples recognize the 'ceremonial' aspects of colonial societies for what they are and renounce them.

Because of the complexity of Caribbean colonial societies, my approach to the study of trade union development in the British Caribbean is interdisciplinary. Human responses to external stimuli defy exclusive categorization in terms of specific academic disciplines. There is, I believe, some truth in Gunnar Myrdal's assertion that "... in reality there are not economic, sociological or psychological problems but simply problems and as a rule they are complex. The one and only type of concept that is permissible to keep vague is the meaning of terms such as economics, sociology, psychology and history since no scientific inferences can ever depend on their definitions...."[5]

This study relies heavily on unpublished materials on Caribbean unions. I have attempted to concentrate on the main trends which have shaped union organizations in the area as well as their implications for the challenges posed by the imperatives of economic development.

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[5]Gunnar Myrdal, Objectivity in Social Research (New York: Parthenon Books, 1969), p. 10.

In a sense, this presentation is also a study of economic and social change. The trade union in the Caribbean has been both the agent and the index of social change. The internal and external pressures on the Caribbean labour movement are varied and it is perhaps premature to speculate about new forms of trade unionism that are likely to emerge.

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF LABOUR PROBLEMS

Plantation Agriculture, Slavery and Emancipation

The British Caribbean labour movement cannot be understood outside the context of the area's past history of slavery and exclusive reliance on plantation exports. Close association with rival colonial powers has influenced a number of institutions in the islands of the English-speaking Caribbean. As early as 1650 Britain successfully challenged Spain's hegemony in the Americas and established herself as a "permanent" colonial power. The motive for British expansion was the great profitability of the sugar culture, a potential which was vast by comparison with the relatively small volume of world trade at the time. But the success of such an operation depended on a large and well disciplined labour force capable of clearing the land and maintaining sugar production. For these reasons, the indenture system was inaugurated early in the seventeenth century whereby Europeans were transported to the Caribbean to provide labour services for periods ranging from three to seven years. In return, indentures received on successful conclusion of their contract, a grant of land which enabled them to establish themselves as small farmers or entrepreneurs.

Free land, therefore, was the primary incentive of the indenture system but with the rapid expansion of land holding by the more influential settlers, available supplies of land were rapidly

exhausted. Simultaneously, the flow of indentured labour dwindled and ceased. Parry and Sherlock write:

> Every conceivable method of propaganda was employed to recruit labour in Europe, especially in North Germany where the Thirty Years' War left thousands homeless, ready with the credulity of utter misery to go to the West Indies or anywhere that offered a ray of hope.... Transportation became a regular punishment for vagrants, for political prisoners and many convicted felons.[1]

Neither persuasive nor compulsory measures were successful in recruiting sufficient labour for the tropics and an efficient solution was soon found in negro slavery.

Originally financed by Dutch and Portuguese traders, the Transatlantic Slave Trade was extended to the British who maintained the monopoly of supplying her Caribbean colonies with slaves. Of an estimated 20,000,000 Africans brought to the Americas, about one-quarter was concentrated in the West Indies.[2]

Slavery and the plantation system in the Caribbean gained momentum during the middle of the seventeenth century. Although the term 'slave labour' has gained some prominence in literature on slavery, it is obvious from the planters' method of accounting that slaves were not accounted for as labour, bur rather as a form of mobile, multi-purpose capital which was the most valuable part of a plantation's assets. As

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[1] J.H. Parry and P.M. Sherlock, A Short History of the West Indies (2nd edition; London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 68.

[2] F.R. Augier, et. al., The Making of the West Indies (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1960), p. 67.

early as 1807 an act of the Jamaican legislature permitted "making slaves assets for payments of debts and legacies."[3] The sugar industry in the British Caribbean could therefore be considered as a capital intensive industry. Professor Douglas Hall explains:

> In short, slaves gave labour, but so did cattle. Neither slave nor cattle was a 'labourer'. Both were part of the purchased equipment of the estate and as far as the inventories, valuations and accounts were concerned they were reckoned as such. Clearly, any discussion of the comparative cost of slave labour and free labour was in reality an examination of the comparative cost of capital equipment and labour.[4]

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the institution of slavery faced considerable opposition from a variety of humanitarian organizations in Britain. Coincidental with the growth of British humanitariansim was the gradual maturation of British industrial capitalism and the emergence of the new industrial bourgeoisie. In challenging the old mercantile class (which had hitherto dominated the British commercial scene) the new industrial class successfully demonstrated the 'extravagance' of British slavery in the Caribbean and with the humanitarians promoted the eventual abolition of slavery in 1834.[5]

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[3]Brian Edwards, The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British West Indies (5th edition; New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 288.

[4]Douglas Hall, "Slaves and Slavery in the British West Indies", Social and Economic Studies, XI (4), 308. See also Alfred Conrad and John Meyer, "Economics of Slavery", Journal of Political Economy, LXVI (2). The authors, utilizing neo-classical economic theory to evaluate slave profitability in the ante-bellum South, defined slavery in terms of two production functions: 1) inputs of negro slaves (and the cost of maintaining them) related to the production of the final output, mainly cotton; 2) production of an intermediate good: slave labour.

[5]Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), Chapter 7.

The British Caribbean Social and Economic Structure

The slave society which existed in the British West Indies on the eve of emancipation was a "singularly interdependent structure".[6] Both the social and socio-technical relationships between master and slave rested on certain sanctions which were embodied in both customs and laws. These conferred on slave owners exclusive rights over their property and correspondingly emphasized the obligation of slaves towards their masters. The slave society was therefore characterized by a paraphernalia of ceremonial etiquette emphasizing a hierarchy of domination-subordination relationships.[7]

Leonard Broom, writing on the social differentiation of Jamaica, traces the origin of the contemporary system of social and economic relationships to the historical process of slavery. Broom, however, cautions the observer against viewing the social stratification system as an uninterrputed continuum of status positions since whatever empirical criterion is employed, one would invariably encounter gross discontinuities. The Jamaican society on the eve of emancipation was described as follows:[8]

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[6] C.V.D. Hadley, "Personality Patterns, Social Class and Aggression in the British West Indies", Human Relations, II (4), 351.

[7] See Mrs. Carmichael, Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1833).

[8] Leonard Broom, "The Social Differentiation of Jamaica", American Sociological Review, XIX (2), 18. See also Lloyd Braithwaite, "Social Stratification in Trinidad", Social and Economic Studies, II (2,3); R.E. Christ, "Changing Cultural Landscapes in Antigua", American Journal of Economics and Sociology, XIII (2).

i) at the top of the social hierarchy stood the invisible man - the absentee landlord, the executive; the resident creole planters and the top representatives of overseas companies — all whites;

ii) estate attorneys and agents and well-to-do Scottish and Jewish merchants; some professionals — all whites;

iii) other merchants and urban specialists including some coloured; a few coloured planters and professionals;

iv) coloured artisans, tradesmen and seni-professionals;

v) brown slaves not in field labour;

vi) black slaves working in the field.

What is clearly indicated in this social pyramid is the correlation between colour, status and power. Although not a perfect correlation, the slave society, as did the post-emancipation society, exaggerated the importance of whiteness as the key to learning, wealth, power and sophistication and correspondingly equated blackness with being undesirable or synonymous with the slave status, predial labour, ignorance, laziness and slavery. Promotions were often awarded in the form of 'elevation' of the black worker from field labour to domestic labour and this, under the slave regime, was a primary incentive for slaves.

Colonial society typically represented a scarcity of white women so that extra-marital liaisons were contracted between white males and black slave women. Such unions produced a large coloured population who were manumitted at birth if paternity could be

ascertained.[9] The laws of the slave society were often less restrictive towards the 'gens de couleur' and many were allowed to acquire property and occasionally an education at European educational institutions. Their African ancestry, however, precluded their incorporation in the upper class of whites and their position was often uncertain and intermediate. The 'gens de couleur' became increasingly hostile to the whites whose positions and perquisites they envied, and to the blacks whom they resented.

Although the Emancipation Act of 1834 conferred legal freedom on the slaves in the British Caribbean, the Act failed to incorporate those instruments necessary for the construction of a free and viable society. The Emancipation Act did not provide unconditional freedom of slaves. It involved a period of apprenticeship which stipulated that the former slaves were to provide labour services for the duration of six years for field slaves and four years for domestic slaves. In return, they were to receive wages for work performed in excess of forty hours. Estimated wage rates in the 1850's were reported as follows:

Antigua	Nine pence with cottage, grounds and medical care
Montserrat	Four pence with cottage and grounds
Nevis	No money wage, but the labourers got a share of estate produce
St. Kitts	One shilling
Barbados	Nine pence with cottage and grounds

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[9] In the British West Indian slave society, it was taboo for a 'planter of means' not to set free his offspring with slave women.

Dominica	Nine pence with cottage and grounds
Grenada	Eight pence with cottage and grounds
St. Vincent	Eight pence with cottage and grounds
St. Lucia	One shilling and six pence with cottage and grounds
Trinidad	Two shillings
British Guiana	Two shillings
Jamaica	One shilling and eight pence with cottage and grounds

Source: Augier, et. al., The Making of the West Indies, p. 189.

The differential wage rates among the islands partly reflected the demand and supply conditions for labour. In Antigua where there was little supply of arable land, there was no scope for the development of an independent peasantry and consequently wage labour on the plantations constituted the only source of livelihood. For these reasons Antigua was able to grant unconditional freedom to slaves in 1834 without the threat of disrupting the existing agricultural production.

In Trinidad and Jamaica and the other larger islands where large tracts of virgin land were available, labourers, despite severe anti-squatting legislation, began the cultivation of crown lands. Squatting, therefore, became an alternative to plantation labour which was avoided if feasible alternatives existed. Also, independence from the plantation regime improved an individual's status in the social order. Planters were, therefore, temporarily coerced into paying higher wages in order to coax extra supplies of labour into the market.

The Apprenticeship System sponsored by the British government (as part of the Emancipation Act of 1834) was designed to facilitate

the transition from slavery to freedom and ostensibly to inculcate in the working class the habits of regular industry. This experiment failed disastrously. The planters who survived the 'great ruin of freedom' retained an enormous amount of economic and political power. Armed with such power they enforced a series of legal (and extra-legal) encumbrances which seriously restricted the mobility of labour both vertically and horizontally. On the conclusion of apprenticeship in 1838 the sugar barons were in control of the instruments which crucially affected the life of the wage earner.

One can reasonably argue that in Antigua and the smaller islands, emancipation rendered the position of the working class more precarious by exposing them to the arbitrary decisions of powerful and often unscrupulous landowners. Many plantation workers retained the provision grounds and cottages allocated to them during slavery and were liable to summary eviction for any 'serious' breach of contract or custom. A variety of social services, the principal of which was medical care, depended on the goodwill and economic sense of the rich planters. Withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of such vital services was, within the colonial context, sufficient to ensure conformity. The frustrations of the post-emancipation era are vividly illustrated by the words of Joseph Zobel who ascribes them to a fictional slave.

> When I woke up after a druken joy of finding myself free, the hard reality that stared me in the fact was that nothing had changed for me or for my friends who'd been in chains with me.... Like the other negroes, I was still here in this accursed country, the bekés still owned the land, all the land in the place and we went right on working for them as before.[10]

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[10] Quoted in Daniel Guerin, The West Indies and their Future (London: Dennis Obson, 1961), pp. 50-51.

This degree of dependency was to some extent less severe in Jamaica and Trinidad where large tracts of virgin land and forest cover provided a home for those squatters who were successful in eluding the plantation law enforcement agents. Moreover, plantation owners in time realized that the process of search and apprehension of illegal squatters was a rather difficult and expensive operation. In these islands labour became a scarce commodity and workers often had to be cajoled into offering their services to the plantations. In any case, the post-emancipation period highlighted the urgency of establishing a viable system of industrial relations for West Indian society.

It is evident that as early as 1832 the British Government had anticipated the labour problems which would accompany emancipation. Lord Howick, then Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, summarized the official position in these words:

> The great problem to be solved in drawing up any plan for the emancipation of the slaves in our Colonies, is to devise some mode of inducing them, when relieved from the fear of the Driver and his whip, to undergo the regular and continuous labour which is indispensable for carrying on the production of sugar.... I think it would be greatly for the real happiness of the Negroes themselves, if the facility of acquiring land could be so far restrained as to prevent them on the abolition of slavery from abandoning their habits of regular industry....[11]

The result of this official metropolitan policy was the creation of a landless rural proletariat where compulsion and necessity dictated the labourers' decision to provide labour services to the

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[11]Cited in Eric Williams, History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), pp. 86-87.

plantations. Land ownership would deprive plantations of the badly needed supplies of cheap and regular labour and further aggravate the severe economic conditions of the sugar islands. This colonial policy was largely successful in the smaller Caribbean islands, but Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana spelled trouble for the local plantocracy. The local administration experienced some difficulty in enforcing laws prohibiting land ownership, and the plantocracy, heavily encumbered by debt and falling sugar prices, were unable to raise the wage rates in order to attract sufficient labour supplies.

The wage differentials among the British Caribbean islands did attract modest supplies of labour to Jamaica and Trinidad but in insufficient quantities. Eventually the local planters, assisted by influential lobbies in Britain, managed to persuade the colonial government to permit the immigration of Asiatic and European poor white labour. Their justification for this policy was:

> ... the paucity of the labouring population which prevents competition among them; and they are enabled to make more money than is good and advantageous for them.... It is impossible for any moral improvement to take place in a community where the want of a good character and a good reputation interpose so serious an obstacle to a man gaining lucrative employment.[12]

By the mid-nineteenth century immigration provided substantial numbers of Portuguese, Chinese and East Indian labourers. Of the variety of ethnic types introduced into the Caribbean area, the indenture of the East Indian was numerically the most significant.

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[12]Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 86.

Between 1838 and 1917 an estimated 500,000 Indians were introduced into the islands with Jamaica hosting about 36,000, Trinidad 143,000 and British Guiana 238,000.[13]

The relatively small numbers of immigrants into Jamaica adequately reflects the colony's economic and financial position. With many estates on the verge of bankrupcy, the local plantocracy was unable to finance an immigration scheme on a scale similar to those of Trinidad and British Guiana. In addition, a serious cholera epidemic in 1852 further discouraged any immediate plans for massive Asiatic immigration.

The terms of the indenture contract required five years service on the plantations in return for a stipulated wage, and a return passage to India on the conclusion of the contract. A brief summary of the provisions of the Immigration Ordinance is provided by Williams.

i) Provision was made for general inspection of premises, hospitals, etc. by the Protector of Immigrants.

ii) The appointment of public officials with powers to investigate complaints by immigrants and to ensure the non-separation of families.

iii) Provision of rations (by the employer) for twelve months for which no more than six cents were to be deducted from the day's earnings.

iv) Employers were obliged to maintain a hospital - four beds for every forty immigrants; five beds for from 40 to 70; ten beds for 70 to 100. Neglect for not

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[13] Williams, History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 101.

for not sending an immigrant to hospital when required would carry a penalty not exceeding $24. On the other hand, immigrants contravening hospital regulations were liable to a penalty not exceeding $4.80 or imprisonment for not more than 14 days.

v) Immigrants able and willing to work and not provided with a full day's work were nevertheless entitled to a full day's pay.

vi) The work week was fixed at six days per week except for public holidays. The working day was fixed at 9 hours per day with a half hour daily for eating and resting. This was to be taken after 4 1/2 hours of work.

vii) The legal daily wage was fixed at 25 cents (minimum) for an able-bodied adult male.

viii) Refusal to work without 'reasonable' excuse, or work improperly done, could upon conviction make the indentured immigrant liable to a maximum fine of $4.80 or 14 days imprisonment on the first ofence and $9.60 and one month imprisonment for the second. Estate constables were empowered to apprehend deserters.

ix) Indentured immigrants were entitled to a free pass if they earned at least $1.25 for two consecutive weeks. A leave of absence from the estate required a pass and immigrants without a pass and who were more than

two miles from their estates were liable to apprehension and imprisonment.[14]

Poor supervision of the provisions of the immigration ordinance produced a number of abuses. As a result the living conditions of the Indians deteriorated. Trinidad in 1895 reported 28,688 admissions to hospital; 165,816 man days of labour were lost through sickness or a loss in wages equivalent to £8,000.[15]

Kloosterboer explains the life of the indenture as follows:

> A contract labourer was liable to a fine or two months hard labour for a) absence without a good cause; b) refusing or neglecting to carry out orders; c) drunkenness during working hours; d) using threatening or abusive language to his superiors, etc. This regulation went coupled with another decreeing that the labourer could, as well as the above, also forfeit his wage for work done badly or not completed. And it was not necessary to bring such cases before the Magistrates since the supervisors on the plantations were entitled to impose this forfeiture themselves - meaning in effect that labourers were entirely dependent on their bosses.
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> For desertion - here defined as absent from work for seven consecutive days - a contract labourer was liable to a penalty twice that pertaining to unlawful absenteeism or to a prolongation of service by a period twice as long as the period of desertion....[16]

The entry of contract labour into Trinidad generated considerable animosity between black labour and East Indian labour, the

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[14] Ibid., pp. 102-105.

[15] Ibid., p. 108.

[16] W. Kloosterboer, Involuntary Labour Since the Abolition of Slavery (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960), p. 12.

latter being accused of reducing the general standard of living by undercutting wage levels. For religious reasons, considerable hostility was generated against the East Indian communities accompanied by a variety of discriminating practices, the chief of which was forced conversion in order to avail themselves of a variety of services, among them education of East Indian children in schools operated by Christian denominational sects.

Discriminating practices were further reinforced by government's non-recognition of the legality of marriages performed by Hindu and Moslem priests. Demographically, East Indian immigration to the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean altered significantly the ethnic composition of Trinidad. In 1851 East Indians accounted for five per cent of the population. By 1891 it had risen to 35 per cent and by 1946 to 46 per cent.[17] This constituted a significant ethnic-cultural minority and a political socio-economic and political force.

Whatever the extent of social disabilities, the introduction of East Indians in Trinidad did achieve the dual objective of providing a cheap and stable agricultural labour force as well as competition for black labour. As an ethnic and cultural group they remained clearly differentiated from the remaining population. Consequently, divisions between East Indians and the negro-coloured elements remain deeper in Trinidad and Guyana than in Jamaica and the Windward Islands where East Indians are relatively smaller in numbers and have achieved a greater degree of assimilation with the black working class.

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[17] Williams, History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 106.

Colonial Administration in the British Caribbean

The political administration of the British Caribbean shifted from the Proprietory System of government in the seventeenth century to the Old Representative System in the nineteenth. The former was characteristic of the early years of colonization when a select group of influential settlers administered the local affairs of the colonies. The Old Representative System lasted until 1875 and (with some modification) was similar to that used in the North American colonies. It comprised an oligarchy of white planters and merchants who maintained effective control of the local administration and who were able, by reason of their power, to defeat individuals and local groups which threatened their privileged position. From the early eighteenth century these local officials were aided by powerful lobbies in England who prompted and encouraged legislation on behalf of the colonial plantocracy. In the process of enacting policy directives for the colonies, British politicians were often sensitive to the liberal criticisms of certain segments of British society, notably a variety of religious bodies and humanitarian organizations concerned with the welfare of colonial peoples. On the other hand, they could not afford to ignore the sentiments of other interest groups in Britain who might be harmed by a more liberal colonial administration. These latter groups included powerful parliamentary lobbies and absentee proprietors "in touch with vested interests in the colonies and which could embarrass the metropolitan government by raising issues through their supporters

in the House of Commons, the authority to which the Secretary of State was ultimately responsible."[18]

Colonial bureauocracy, therefore, functioned in a dual context of the metropolitan society and the indigenous West Indian society. Continual pressure from the British government and from within the local Caribbean societies coerced the local colonial administrations to extend political participation to the less powerful whites and coloureds. Fearing the eventual incorporation of the black masses into the political decision-making apparatus of the colonies, the ruling oligarchies in 1875 finally surrendered the administration to the direct control of the Colonial Office.

D.A.G. Waddell offers an illuminating account of Crown Colony Government.

> ... the colonial law-making body was a legislative council nominated by the governor and consisting largely of colonial service officials. Control was scarcely less complete when, at various times in the different colonies, the composition of the councils was modified to admit a number of elected members, as these could normally be outvoted by the governor's nominees, and were in any case elected on a franchise narrowly restricted by property and income qualifications. The adoption of the crown colony form of government by the action of the colonial assemblies themselves meant essentially that the white oligarchies sacrificed the traditions of colonial self-government and aspirations toward a greater colonial autonomy which seemed likely to be dominated by others than themselves, in favour of a dependence on a metropolitan government which they hoped to be able to influence.... The crown colony system was ill adapted to bring about any fundamental social or economic change, being heavily biased in favour of the maintenance

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[18] B.L. Hamilton, Problems of Administration in an Emergent Nation: A Case Study of Jamaica (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1964), p. 3.

> of the status quo. It generally failed to utilize the intimate knowledge and active concern of all but the most conformist and conservative of colonials.[19]

Waddell's description of the mechanics of crown colony government clearly demonstrates the monopoly of power by a select few and the exclusion of and insensitivity to working class sentiments. Disenfranchisement was accompanied by a political-legal system which stipulated the qualifications for voters and prospective legislators. A constitutional Reform Committee in Trinidad in 1899 recommended the extension of the franchise to males only, who were 21 years old and who satisfied the following conditions:

> 1. ... owned or rented a dwelling house within a Borough or Town district of the yearly value of $72 or upwards, or in an electoral district not including a Borough or Town of the yearly value of $48 or upwards, ... owned or occupied eight acres of land or upwards with a dwelling house thereon of the value of $96, or less than eight acres of land but more than one acre with a dwelling house thereon of the value of $240, or less than one acre with a dwelling house thereon of the value of $480.
> 2. No person could be elected to the Legislative Council who did not possess a clear annual income of $1,920 or was not the owner in his own or in his wife's right of real estate of the absolute value of $7,200.[20]

These reforms were expected to enfranchise from 12,000 to 15,000 Trinidadians from a population of some 200,000.[21] Similar legal enactments were enforced in both Jamaica and Antigua. British

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[19] D.A.G. Waddell, The West Indies and the Guianas (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 102.

[20] Williams, History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 171.

[21] Ibid., p. 172.

Caribbean society by the first quarter of 1900 had inherited a political system derived from British precedents and adapted to local colonial conditions. Also inherited was a system of social stratification based on race, colour and income and with the instruments of power residing in the hands of a white upper class. Bierstedt, in his analysis of social power, identifies three major sources of power; these are numbers, resources and social organization.[22] To the extent that a group controls those resources necessary for the achievement of group goals, it becomes less subject to control by other groups. The numerical minority of whites in the Caribbean does not invalidate Bierstedt's observation.

Recent Economic and Social Developments

One of the most striking features of British Caribbean economic history is the rise and decline of the sugar industry. Already encumbered by large debts in the 1820's, many of the less efficient estates went out of production with emancipation. In Jamaica, for instance, the number of estates in operation fell from 513 in 1848 to 211 in 1877 and to 77 in 1910. Similarly, labour requirements were reduced from 30,000 in 1860 to 20,000 in 1910. By way of contrast the population increased from 441,000 to 832,000 during the same period.[23]

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[22] Bierstedt defines resources to include "money, property, prestige, knowledge, competence, deceipt, fraud, secrecy, supernatural powers, and all the things usually included in the term 'natural resources'." Robert Bierstedt, "An Analysis of Social Power", American Sociological Review, XV (December, 1954), 735.

[23] Parry and Sherlock, A Short History of the West Indies, p. 242.

The Leeward Islands managed to maintain production largely because the labour force had no alternative to performing wage labour on the estates. Here sugar represented 75 per cent of the total value of exports whereas in Jamaica sugar exports had declined to 18 per cent. The economic position of Trinidad, initially threatened by labour shortages and by obsolete production methods, recovered slightly through utilization of immigrant labour. In addition to these vicissitudes Caribbean sugar faced serious competition from European beet sugar with its relatively lower production cost and heavy government subsidies. This situation was aggravated by Britain's adoption of Free Trade principles which necessitated purchasing commodities in the cheapest market. Consequently, British imports of colonial sugar fell from 63 per cent in 1861 to 14 per cent in 1886 and finally to two per cent in 1900. The selling price of sugar fell from 29 shillings per hundredweight in 1881 to four shillings and nine pence in 1896.[24] The misfortunes contributed to the decline of many estates followed by the amalgamation of the survivors into larger and more efficient units.

This reorganization rendered the industry more efficient despite the labour intensiveness of the sugar industry. Indeed, it was precisely this kind of rationalization of production techniques that was required some fifty years previously and which was circumvented in favour of cheap labour. The gradual recovery coincided with an attempt at rapid diversification in order to reduce the dependence on sugar as the principal export crop. Diversification efforts were more successful in Jamaica and Trinidad. The former increased commercial production of

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[24] Ibid., p. 242.

bananas and citrus and later with North American capital and technology exploited her rich reserves of bauxite. East Indian labour enabled Trinidad to expand sugar production from 20,000 tons in 1850 to 67,000 tons in 1879. During the same period, cocoa production trebled from 4,000,000 pounds to 12,000,000 pounds.[25] Oil discoveries in the 1930's provided a boom to the Trinidad economy and along with increased production of asphalt, citrus and cocoa rendered Trinidad the most diversified of the Caribbean economies.

Despite such developments, the region is faced with chronic unemployment. This is not offset by expansion in manufacturing and mineral extraction since such operations tend to be capital intensive. Table I-1 illustrates the extent of unemployment in the region.[26] The occupational structure is conveyed in Table I-2, indicating the region's dependence on export crops.[27] The agricultural component shows its highest concentration to the Leewards (49 per cent) and Windwards (49 per cent) and the lowest in Trinidad (25 per cent). The interpretation of Table I-2 requires some caution, especially the industrial components which are usually overstated to include such categories as seamstresses and dressmakers who are often engaged in non-market production.

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[25] Ibid., p. 238.

[26] Unemployment rates are often higher than reported. The criterion 'actively seeking work' is meaningless in areas where unemployment is endemic. Jamaica reported 35 per cent of the labour force employed for 11 weeks, 36 per cent employed between 12-27 weeks, 17 per cent between 28-39 weeks, and only nine per cent between 40-51 weeks.

[27] See Appendix III.

TABLE I-1

UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES, 1946

	Total Labour Force	Total Unemployed	Total Unemployed in Agriculture	% Unemployed of Total
Total Excluding Bahamas	1,119,832	180,889	41,860	15.11
Barbados	93,664	7,259	513	7.75
British Guiana	147,481	3,731	367	2.53
British Honduras	20,335	1,151	35	5.66
Leeward Islands	48,684	2,414	593	4.96
Trinidad & Tobago	218,784	15,241	816	6.97
Dominica	21,934	1,519	445	6.93
Grenada	28,239	1,549	366	5.49
St. Lucia	32,813	3,234	1,092	9.86
St. Vincent	22,954	1,178	427	5.13
Jamaica	559,248	143,137	88,981	25.59
Cayman Islands	2,780	249		
Turks Islands	2,916	227		

Based on the 1946 census of the British West Indies and the Jamaican census of 1943.

TABLE I-2

PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS EMPLOYED IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES, 1946*

Occupation	Total	Barbados	British Guiana	British Honduras	Leewards	Trinidad & Tobago	Dominica
Agriculture	39.19	27.63	41.82	29.13	49.94	25.27	53.40
Quarrying and Mining	1.07	.45	2.83	.04	.08	3.18	.01
Fishing and Hunting	1.18	1.63	.98	1.65	2.65	.75	3.23
Forestry	1.27	.06	3.35	10.13	.30	1.56	1.40
Manufacturing & Repairs	14.32	20.03	15.88	12.67	12.48	17.78	11.70
Construction	7.62	8.65	4.96	5.36	5.72	10.14	10.42
Transportation & Communication	3.45	3.52	4.24	4.50	3.42	6.00	1.85
Commerce and Finance	8.29	13.56	8.24	8.52	6.00	8.84	4.43
Recreation Service	.25	.32	.44	.26	.05	.42	.04
Professional Service	2.62	2.84	3.61	4.09	2.87	3.61	2.50
Public Service	3.84	3.23	4.09	6.74	4.27	8.24	1.76
Personal Service	13.22	17.53	8.79	9.33	11.41	10.59	8.72
Ill-defined	3.68	.55	.77	7.58	.78	3.62	.54

	Grenada	St. Lucia	St. Vincent	Jamaica†	Cayman†	Turks†
Agriculture	45.03	50.18	49.80	48.83	38.23	11.38
Quarrying and Mining	.03	.21	.06	.12	-	-
Fishing and Hunting	1.79	3.17	2.03	.85	6.47	2.49
Forestry	.49	.69	1.51	.57	-	-
Manufacturing & Repairs	14.42	14.89	10.68	11.86	7.62	17.42
Construction	12.09	9.67	12.09	6.76	3.35	5.02
Transportation & Communication	2.32	1.75	2.51	2.23	6.73	26.79
Commerce and Finance	8.27	4.09	6.05	7.90	4.13	4.94
Recreation Service	.09	.09	.10	.17	-	-
Professional Service	3.16	1.93	3.13	1.81	1.75	2.25
Public Service	2.06	3.76	2.55	2.15	1.00	.47
Personal Service	9.46	7.29	8.96	16.11	13.35	18.85
Ill-defined	.79	2.18	.53	5.64	17.37	10.39

*Based on the 1946 census of the British West Indies, 1946.
†Based on the census of Jamaica and its dependencies taken in 1943.

The above conditions have been aggravated by a population increase ranging from one per cent to three per cent per year. Density statistics are indicative of this population pressure and estimates per square mile range from 257 in the Leeward Islands, 282 in Trinidad, 294 in Jamaica, 306 in the Windward Islands, to 1159 in Barbados.[28] These high densities accompanied by the declining available acreage per person further reduce the standard of living.[29] High birth rates are also accompanied by high dependency ratios and this is compounded by the high cost of government services in small island economies, since the benefits of economics of scale are absent.

Attempts at alleviating the distress in the British Caribbean islands included modest expenditures on a variety of social services. Such expenditures were inadequate and the programmes too slowly inaugurated to satisfy the demands of an expanding population with considerable pressure on the geographical and economic limits of the country. William G. Sewell, who toured the Caribbean islands throughout the 1850's, noted with apprehension the squalor and apathy prevading Jamaican society. He writes, "I know of no country in the world where prosperity is so strangely subverted and destroyed as ... in Jamaica."[30] In Kingston, the capital city, Sewell observed "not a

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[28] W. Arthur Lewis, "The Industrialization of the British West Indies", Caribbean Economic Review, XI (L), 1.

[29] Provision of an adequate diet requires an estimated minimum of 2.5 acres per person. The potentially available acreage is estimated in Jamaica at 0.5 acres; Leeward Islands 0.55 acres; Barbados 0.3 acres; Windward Islands 0.55 acres; and Trinidad 0.6 acres. See Mary Proudfoot, Britain and the United States in the Caribbean (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 314.

[30] William G. Sewell, Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 169.

house in the city in decent repair ... not a wharf in good order."[31] The absence of an adequate social infrastructure seriously weakened the productive capacity of the inhabitants. Commenting on the conditions of the Jamaican people, Sewell again observed:

> They perish miserably in the country districts for want of medical aid; they are not instructed, they have no opportunities to improve themselves in agriculture or mechanics; every effort is made to check the spirit of independence.[32]

Despite these social disadvantages, the rural population of peasant farmers increased their share of total agricultural output. The total number of land-holdings of five acres or less increased from 36,376 in 1880 to 108,943 in 1900. In 1930, 153,406 acres or 82 per cent of all land settlements ranged from one-half to five acres. Similarly, the free holders' share of exports quadrupled from 1850 to 1890 and by 1930 accounted for 40 per cent of Jamaican exports.[33] The increasing economic importance of the peasant farmer was one of the principal factors promoting the growth of working class consciousness.

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz, Jamaica: An Historical Portrait (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 157-58.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONISM IN JAMAICA

The Beginnings of Working Class Discontent

Working class unrest in Jamaica manifested itself in the 1860's and was the direct result of emancipation which legally transformed slave labour into free (i.e. wage) labour. Emancipation, therefore, established an indigenous working class, anchored to the plantation and with few alternatives for upward mobility and personal achievement. The colonial ruling class with its local supporters stubbornly resisted any agrarian reform which would deprive sugar plantations of cheap labour. In addition, the profit level of many plantations fluctuated with the adoption of the Free Trade Principle in the United Kingdom which encouraged competition from the relatively cheaper beet sugar from Europe and slave-grown sugar from Cuba and Brazil. This meant that the wages of agricultural and auxiliary workers fluctuated with the changing fortunes of the sugar industry. Table II-1 indicates fluctuations in wage scales for a variety of occupational and professional types. With the exception of the two professional categories, the majority of whom were part of the colonial establishment, considerable fluctuations are evident. These are further illustrated by Eisner's estimates of relative income shares in Table II-2. Table II-2 demonstrates a downward movement of income shares for the statistically dominant occupational group, the plantation labourers. A similar trend

TABLE II-1

WAGE RATES OF PREDIAL WORKERS, TRADESMEN
AND DOMESTIC SERVANTS AND
SALARIES OF PROFESSIONAL WORKERS

Year	Predial (per day)	Tradesmen (per day)	Domestics (per week)	Professional (per annum)
1832	-	£26 (per annum)	-	£500 Lawyers £609 Doctors
1836	1s 10d - 2s 5d	3s 7d	11s 0d	-
1838	7d - 1s 2d	2s 4½d	-	-
1841	1s 2d - 1s 9d	2s 6d	-	-
1843	1s 0d - 1s 6d	-	-	-
1848	1s 6d	7s 6d (per week)	N/A	-
1850	9d - 1s 0d	N/A	N/A	£500 Lawyers
1854	9d - 1s 7d	1s 6d - 2s 6d	3s 0d - 10s 0d	£300 Doctors
1861	1s 0d - 1s 6d	2s 6d - 6s 0d	6s 0d - 12s 0d	-
1870	1s 0d - 2s 0d	1s 3d - 2s 6d	3s 0d - 6s 0d	£300 Lawyers £500 Doctors
1890	9d - 1s 6d	2s 6d - 6s 0d	5s 0d - 10s 0d	£600 Lawyers & Doctors
1910	6d - 1s 6d	2s 6d - 6s 0d.	3s 0d - 12s 0d	£600 Lawyers & Doctors
1920	3s 6d	7s 3d	5s 9d	-
1930	2s 6d - 3s 6d	12s 0d - 26s 0d (per week)	8s 0d - 10s 0d	£800 Lawyers
1932	1s 9d	12s 0d - £1 (per week)	8s	£700 Doctors

Source: Gisela Eisner, Jamaica, 1830-1930 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 379.

TABLE II-2

INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN JAMAICA, 1832-1930

Professional & Occupational Group	% 1832	% 1850	% 1890	% 1930
Agricultural labourers wages	12.8	17.5	6.2	7.2
Small settlers gross profits	16.8	26.8	36.5	34.8
Planters gross profits	26.8	5.5	7.8	6.7
Other wages and salaries	21.4	24.0	22.0	26.1
Merchants gross profits	11.1	13.4	14.1	14.8
Professional profits	4.1	4.6	1.9	1.7
Independent workers profits	7.0	8.5	11.2	8.7
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Gisela Eisner, Jamaica, 1830-1930, p. 379.

is indicated for owners of large plantations and professionals, while a reverse trend is indicated for own-account workers. In the absence of labour organizations and legislation stipulating the procedure for wage cuts, the principle of constrained maximization which guides business behaviour is not likely to adequately resolve problems of equity. It is unlikely that labourers would submit passively to arbitrary wage adjustments that substantially lowered consumption levels. The economic vicissitudes of the sugar industry provided the first stimulus for worker protest. In the absence of institutional mechanisms to facilitate the emergence of labour organizations, worker protest was therefore manifested in work stoppages, absenteeism, careless handling of property and sporadic outbursts of violence. These forms of protest characterized the period of Jamaican history from 1840 to 1860.

The thrust for economic and social reform came initially from influential individuals, notably some members of the press and a few clergymen. These diverse groups functioned on the margin of colonial society in the capacity that Hagen calls "cultural brokers",[1] that is to say, in the capacity of social innovators to the largely illiterate masses. Their demands for social reform, particularly the important issue of land reform, were largely ignored by the colonial establishment. By 1865 the situation was ripe for a major confrontation. On behalf of the labouring class, demands for economic reform were increasingly articulated by two central figures: Dr. Underhill, a Baptist missionary, and George William Gordon (educated son of an

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[1] Everet E. Hagen, On the Theory of Social Change (Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1963).

estate attorney and a former female slave), a progressive member of the Jamaican House of Assembly. The latter was also the chief political opponent of the incumbent Governor, Edward Eyre.

In 1864 Dr. Underhill, in a dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, submitted detailed proposals for reform, among them the encouragement of diversification of agriculture, tax incentives to encourage investment by local entrepreneurs, and the abolition of government restriction against land ownership. Underhill's letter was in turn referred to Eyre who refuted all allegations of suffering and injustice and invoked the age-work 'theory' of inherent laziness of the black population as the cause of poverty. In June 1865 the Secretary of State for the Colonies replied to Underhill's letter,[2]

> I have received Her Majesty's command to inform them [the petitioners] that the prosperity of the labouring classes depends, in Jamaica, and in other countries, upon their working for wages, not uncertainly, or capriciously, but steadily and continuously, at the times when their labour is wanted, and for so long as it is wanted; ... and they may be assured, that it is from their own industry and prudence, in availing themselves of the means of prospering that are before them, and not from any such schemes as have been suggested to them, and they must look for an improvement in their condition....

This arrogant reply, later known as the "Queen's Advice" triggered off the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. Led by a black Baptist preacher, Paul Bogle, groups of labourers marched on Morant Bay Court House to protest grievances over the land question and maladministration of justice. Rioting broke out and in the reprisals that followed 600 men and women were killed,

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[2]F.R. Augier and S.C. Gordon, Sources of West Indian History (London: Longmans, Green and Company), p. 230.

600 flogged and over a thousand homes destroyed.[3] Gordon was arrested, court-martialled and hanged for complicity in the riots, although the charges were never clearly proved.

The Morant Bay uprising was an expression of working class resentment against poverty and injustice. It was neither a nationalist movement nor a working class revolt and therefore failed to establish an ideological basis favourable to the evolution of trade unionism. Widespread illiteracy and high seasonal unemployment also contributed to the lack of working class solidarity. Worker protest was typically expressed in the form of "non-cooperation, and occasionally of riotous behaviour, but it was instinctive and spontaneous rather than organized and directed."[4]

One important result of the riot of 1865 was in redirecting colonial attention to the urgency of social reform in the British Caribbean. By the turn of the century a number of Royal Commissions appointed after the Morant Bay uprising to investigate and make recommendations for the areas were unanimous in their view that such incidents were caused by "the want of a good labour law and tribunals suited for easy settlement of labour questions. It was, it may be said, a crisis in which modern difficulties arising out of the relations of the landlord and tenant and of employer and workman were mixed up with the old conflict of race and colour."[5]

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[3] Parry and Sherlock, A Short History of the West Indies, pp. 240-41.

[4] G.W. Roberts, Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1964), p. 12.

[5] St. J. Orde Browne, Labour Conditions in the West Indies, Report (London: HMSO, 1939), p. 77.

Early Craft Unionism

The earliest record of trade union organization dates from the year 1898 with the formation of the Artisans' Union comprising carpenters, bricklayers and painters. In the absence of an established industrial relations system, the goals of the Artisans' Union were modest. During its formative years it constructed a schedule of wage rates for the respective trades, and urged island-wide implementation of those rates. It was essentially an urban based organization with limited influence around Kingston and its environs. In scope, the Artisans' Union simulated the functions of non-union bodies.[6] Among its major projects were the establishment of a technical school in Kingston for the purpose of securing occupational training for potential members in cooperation with a variety of social objectives usually subsumed under the caption 'Investment in Human Capital'. It emphasized

> That the necessity for such a school is made clear from the absence of a current schedule of wage rates of labour in the island, the unskilled manipulation of tools by certain classes of tradesmen, the absence of a proper certificate of competency from a reliable source for first class men....[7]

An integral part of its programme was the provision of "sick and death benefits, compassionate allowances, loans on a 90-day acceptance to members, weekly lectures on handicrafts ... free library books on mechanics, elementary drawings, etc."[8] Such an extensive programme for

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[6]George Eaton, "Trade Union Development in Jamaica", Caribbean Quarterly, I (8). Eaton suggests that in the absence of any trade union law in Jamaica, the organization may have registered under the friendly society law.

[7]Ibid., p. 46.

[8]Ibid.

a new union with a total membership of under 100 persons proved to be too vast for its resources, and the organization collapsed in 1901.

In Jamaica, the absence of laws accrediting trade unions inhibited their expansion along the lines of modern trade unions. Internal dissension and depressed economic conditions also contributed to trade union instability. Other craft unions operative during the early 1900's included the Printers' Union and Workers in the Tobacco Industry but apart from sporadic strike activity to enforce wage demands there appears to be little trade union organizational drive between 1901 and 1918. Although this period is characterized by the absence of overt government or employer hostility, the fear of reprisals exerted a powerful restraint on trade union activity. Moreover, demands for improved working conditions were often ignored and the resulting frustration encouraged migration of many skilled tradesmen, many of whom were the most articulate and perceptive members of Jamaican society.[9] Non-action on the part of the government and employers became a very powerful instrument of control and the alternative of migration seriously weakened group cohesion.

Despite the unsuccessful efforts of the early craft unions, the labouring classes were, however, converted to the notion that protest and agitation worked for their benefit. The approximate correlation of race, colour and status bred considerable frustration

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[9]G.W. Roberts, The Population of Jamaica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957). Roberts estimates that between 1881 and 1921 total net migration from the island was as follows: 46,000 to the USA; 45,000 to Panama; 22,000 to Cuba; and 43,000 to other areas.

even among the Jamaican middle class who were often relegated to 'inferior' positions in the colonial bureaucracy or to positions subordinate to the local white aristocracy. With such restrictions on vertical mobility, the coloured middle class re-evaluated their roles in Jamaican society and articulated working class protest.

From June to December of 1918 several strikes occurred in Kingston. The waterfront workers were the first to strike. Soon after sanitation workers and agricultural workers in the sugar, banana and citrus industries went on strike. These strikes resulted in modest wage increases followed by the passage of the Trade Union Law of 1919. The objectives of the Trade Union Law were specified:

> ... the purpose of any trade union shall not, by reason merely that they are in restraint of Trade, be deemed to be unlawful, so as to render any member of a trade union liable of criminal prosecution for conspiring or otherwise.[10]

The law of 1919 also provided for compulsory registration of trade unions, qualifying them to deal in property, to bring and defend action in a court of law, to amalgamate and dissolve. It further required the submission of union accounts to its members and the government for scrutiny. Two important defects were inherent in the Trade Union Law. The first was the lack of union protection from liability for damages which resulted from strikes; the second was the failure of the Act to legalize peaceful picketing.[11] Despite these omissions, however, the Trade

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[10] O.W. Phelps, "Rise of the Labour Movement in Jamaica", Social and Economic Studies, IX (4), 419.

[11] Ibid., p. 420.

Union Law of 1919 provided the first legal basis for trade union activity in Jamaica.

The Growth of Modern Unionism, 1921-1950

There was certainly no feeling of urgency which occasioned the Law of 1919 and it may have been a number of external factors which influenced the local colonial administration to promote the Law. Labour disturbances in the United States, the United Kingdom and other areas of the British Empire were given extensive coverage in the local press, and these accounts were often accompanied by appeals to the Jamaican worker to similarly emulate militant action. Other factors may have been the election in England of a liberal government dedicated to post-war reforms in the colonies. Finally, the return of large numbers of servicemen and contract workers from overseas, bringing with them the principal ideals of western democracy, was an important contributing factor. These groups were militant advocates of 'justice' and 'freedom' for their homeland. The post-war cost of living index was steadily climbing upwards with estimated increases of 45 per cent in food, 100 per cent in clothing and 100 per cent in furniture between 1919 and 1938.[12] This factor in particular is a potential source of labour discontent especially in situations where wage rates lag excessively behind cost of living increases as in Jamaica at that time.

Despite the legalization of trade union organizations, the period between 1924 and 1933 was relatively free of trade union

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[12] Ibid., p. 421.

activity except for a few sporadic strikes which later erupted into violence. From 1934, however, several major confrontations swept not only Jamaica but also the entire English-speaking Caribbean.[13] The first of the labour revolts of May 1935 saw the emergence of the Jamaican Workers and Trades Union. Led by an ex-serviceman, A.G. Coombs, the organization was a composite of differing occupational types. In particular the organization became the centre of political activity for the agricultural worker. Two years later the registration of the Jamaica Hotel Employees Association as a trade union brought the total number of organized workers to an estimated 1080, less than one-half of one per cent of the labour force.[14]

The second phase of labour unrest came during 1938 and was perhaps the most momentous for the Jamaican labour movement. Apart from the violence and casualties which were characteristic of the riots, the movement produced two central figures, Alexander Bustamante, the owner-manager of a small loan company catering largely to low-income customers, and Norman Manley, a Rhodes scholar and barrister. During the rioting, both A.G. Coombs and William Grant, then the principal labour spokesmen, found themselves incapable of enforcing union discipline. In addition, during the initial period of union organization, Bustamante preferred confrontation as an organizational technique to conciliation or mediation. His speeches were violent

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[13]The chronological order of the riots was as follows: Trinidad - July 1934; St. Kitts - January 1935; Jamaica - May 1935; British Guiana - September-October 1935; Jamaica, St. Vincent - October 1935; Trinidad - June 1937; Barbados - July 1937; Jamaica - May-June 1938; British Guiana - February 1939.

[14]George Eaton, "The Development of Unionism in Jamaica, W.I." (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, 1961).

tirades against employers and government as exploiters of the working class and were often mixed with self-serving statements about his personal sacrifice for the union. His slogan "More for Labour" attracted thousands of followers and before the end of the disturbances he was recognized as the leading figure in the Jamaican labour movement, completely dwarfing Coombs who had originally introduced him to labour politics.

Not surprisingly, government authorities responded to disorder by imprisonment of labour leaders, among them Bustamante and his associate, William Grant. But as in many colonial situations, incarceration increased the popularity of indigenous leaders and served to vindicate their allegations against colonial rule. Out of the chaos of the 1930's sprang numerous groups bearing the name of trade unions, some of which were short-lived. This situation was symptomatic of the extent of social disorganization which preceded the riots and further indicates the magnitude of the tasks facing potential labour leaders bent on creating permanent and stable labour organizations.

Bustamante's period of imprisonment left much of the early organizing work to his colleagues who founded the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (B.I.T.U.) in 1938. In the following year the B.I.T.U. was registered as a legitimate union.

The Union was a 'blanket type' organization covering a variety of occupational categories. Organization along craft lines was impractical since the skilled component of the labour force was too small to permit large scale organization of this type. It was perhaps the overwhelming response from agricultural workers to the recruitment

efforts of the B.I.T.U. that finally persuaded Bustamante to abandon the idea of craft unions in favour of the blanket type organization. Bustamante celebrated the registration of B.I.T.U. in January 1939 by calling an island-wide general strike to protest alleged employer sabotage of his union through victimization of members, lay-offs of union officers, etc. Governor Richards immediately proclaimed a state of emergency, banned all meetings and demonstrations and the strike was eventually called off. Despite the failure of the strike, the union established itself as a force to be reckoned with.

The attempted general strike introduced a new element into the Jamaican labour scene. Norman Manley, who had originally provided conciliation services during the disturbances, reappeared with a new organization, the Trades Union Advisory Council, later renamed the Trades Union Council (T.U.C.). His objectives were carefully spelled out.

> ... to rally all volunteer efforts on the part of persons willing to assist in the orderly and progressive development of the trade union movement, to prevent frivolous strikes, to unify policy, to eliminate strife amongst the workers organization and between labour and capital and to pool all the labour resources of the country for the common good.[15]

In an interview with the Daily Gleaner, Manley bluntly admitted that his intention was "to help Bustamante run his unions".[16] The new organization was promptly endorsed by the governor who was obviously dissatisfied with Bustamante's policy of confrontation.

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[15] Phelps, "Rise of the Labour Movement in Jamaica", Social and Economic Studies, IX (4), 445.

[16] Ibid.

Bustamante was, however, skeptical of this new organization, charging that it was a potential strike-breaking agency. For this reason he refused affiliation with the Trades Union Council.

The colonial administration, encouraged by the alternative approach to trade unionism, acted on the recommendation of the Moyne Commission (a body sent out from the United Kingdom to investigate the cause of the labour unrest) and established a Department of Labour with the following terms of reference:

1. ... setting up conciliation boards in any parish when and where necessary, with the obligation to report to the head of the Labour Department;
2. The hearing of disputes in the first instance where desirable, with full powers to subpoena persons and papers, hold hearings publicly and privately, administer oaths, etc.;
3. To give publicity to such proceedings as above if desirable, or to keep any information or testimony confidential;
4. To carry on certain routine activities such as
   (a) collection and recording of unemployment data and cost-of-living data;
   (b) maintenance of a Labour Bureau for the registration of unemployed persons;
   (c) enforcement of safety and labour legislation generally;
   (d) the making of inquiries regarding minimum wages;
   (e) any of the duties prescribed by government in the fields of employment.[17]

Trade Unionism and Politics

The different approaches to trade unionism in Jamaica introduced elements of competition for the loyalty of the mass of

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[17] Ibid., p. 446.

Jamaican labourers. With the growth of trade unionism (as demonstrated in Table II-3) both leaders launched political parties affiliated with their trade unions, Manley establishing the People's National Party (P.N.P.) and Bustamante the Jamaican Labour Party (J.L.P.) in 1943. Both political parties appealed to the loyalty of their respective trade unions in an attempt to gain control of the legislature which, under the new constitution granted by the Colonial Office in 1943, was elected under the newly introduced conditions of Universal Adult Suffrage. Table II-4 provides a more detailed account of the membership of the two major rival unions. It also indicates political affiliation and the shifts of political allegiance to the rival political groups.

Some caution should be exercised in interpreting these statistics (particularly those in Table II-4) since total membership indicates not only 'paying members' but supporters of the political-labour leader. Indeed, union membership as defined by North American students of the labour movement is relatively uncommon in the English-speaking Caribbean. Owing to this characteristic along with the high level of political involvement, Caribbean unions have been described as 'political unionism'.

During the first general election in December 1944 the J.L.P. won overwhelmingly with 23 out of 32 seats in the Jamaican House of Representatives and Manley himself was defeated by a J.L.P. candidate.

The rivalry between these two central figures established a stable two-party system (similar to the British party system) which has since dominated Jamaican politics. The evidence can be partially

TABLE II-3

GROWTH OF UNION ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP IN JAMAICA, 1918-1945

Year	Estimated Wage-Earning Labour Force	Number of Active Unions	Number of Union Members	% of All Wage Earners
1918	199,300	0	0	-
1933	245,500	2	80	.03
1937	261,700	4	1,050	.40
1938	266,300	7	8,500	3.00
1939	270,900	11	12,600	5.00
1940	275,500	11	10,700	4.00
1941	280,100	13	24,000	9.00
1942	284,600	16	35,000	12.00
1943	289,200	23	46,000	16.00
1944	293,800	34	56,400	19.00
1945	298,400	27	57,700	19.00

Source: Jamaica, Department of Labour, Trade Unionism in Jamaica, 1918-1946 (Kingston: 1950), p. 2.

TABLE II-4

GROWTH OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN JAMAICA, 1938-1957

Year January	Union	Membership	Paying Members	Per Cent of the Total for the Year
1939	BITU	6,500	-	-
	Other	N/A	N/A	
1940	BITU	10,007	3,271	81
	Other	2,317	N/A	19
	Total	12,324		
1941	BITU	8,133	5,200	-
	Other	N/A	N/A	
1942	BITU	20,612	13,741	-
	Other	N/A	N/A	
1943	BITU	28,762	18,498	88
	Other	3,907	3,725	12
	Total	32,669	22,223	
1944	BITU	37,112	23,868	81
	Other	8,828	5,905	19
	Total	45,940	29,773	
1945	BITU	46,538	29,930	85
	Other	8,534	3,587	15
	Total	55,072	33,517	
1946	BITU	46,671	30,658	82
	Other	10,539	3,662	18
	Total	57,210	34,320	
1947	BITU	52,331	33,654	82
	Other	11,846	4,599	18
	Total	64,177	38,253	
1948	-------- Identical with 1947 Estimates ----------			
1949	BITU	59,722	35,734	85
	TUC	4,045	1,851	6
	Other	6,259	2,888	9
	Total	70,026	40,473	
1950	BITU	63,576	32,788	71
	TUC	12,405	8,570	14
	Other	13,484	9,296	15
	Total	89,465	50,654	
1951	BITU	64,859	33,429	73
	TUC	23,513	8,764	26
	Other	1,228	917	1
	Total	89,600	43,110	

continued...

TABLE II-4 - Continued

Year January	Union	Membership	Paying Members	Per Cent of the Total for the Year
1952	BITU	64,679	33,339	69
	TUC	26,560	10,628	28
	Other	2,388	1,873	3
	Total	93,627	45,840	
1953	BITU	66,692	49,804	70
	TUC	20,540	6,300	21
	NWU	5,025	2,658	5
	Other	3,309	1,804	4
	Total	95,566	60,566	
1954	BITU	66,689	49,804	66
	TUC	18,670	6,300	19
	NWU	10,633	2,658	11
	Other	4,797	1,804	4
	Total	100,789	60,566	
1955	BITU	64,164	45,876	62
	TUC	24,361	8,961	24
	NWU	12,840	5,540	12
	Other	2,183	1,220	2
	Total	103,548	61,497	
1956	BITU	65,154	46,601	53
	TUC	41,517	12,502	34
	NWU	12,840	5,440	11
	Other	3,015	1,874	2
	Total	122,526	66,417	
1957	BITU	74,109	N/A	48
	TUC	66,013	N/A	43
	NWU	11,230	4,108	7
	Other	3,000	N/A	2
	Total	154,352		

Source: Calculated from Jamaica, Island's Record Office, Annual Reports, 1939-1957; National Workers' Union, Annual Reports, 1954-1957; Voice of Jamaica, February 15, 1958, p. 5.

adduced from the returns of three general elections held since the adoption of universal adult suffrage.

TABLE II-5

DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL SUPPORT IN JAMAICA, 1944-1955

Year	Party	% of Votes
1944	Jamaica Labour Party	41.4
	People's National Party	30.0
1949	Jamaica Labour Party	42.7
	People's National Party	43.5
1955	Jamaica Labour Party	39.0
	People's National Party	50.5

Source: Phelps, "Rise of the Labour Movement in Jamaica", Social and Economic Studies, 455.

The establishment of a two-party system successfully challenged the colonial government and influenced a number of reforms especially in the area of labour legislation. Political competition also fostered jurisdictional rivalries among unions often resulting in costly disruption of production. Nevertheless, the immersion of trade unions into politics accelerated the political and economic development of the island. New instruments were created to deal with the urgent issues (hitherto ignored) such as education, agricultural development, et cetera.

CHAPTER III

TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT IN TRINIDAD-TOBAGO

Post-Emancipation Developments in Trinidad-Tobago

The Emancipation proclamation of 1834 provided the legal basis for the freedom of slaves in Trinidad and other British West Indian islands. Like Jamaica, the terms of freedom were restricted by the provisions of the Apprenticeship System,[1] an experiment ostensibly designed to accustom free men to the habits of regular wage labour on the plantations. Despite the efforts of the stipendary magistrates who administered the scheme, the experiment led to a series of abuses since the overriding concern of the planter class was the procurement of cheap labour to offset increasing competition from slave-grown sugar in Brazil and Cuba and from European-grown beet sugar. In both Brazil and Europe the cost of production was sufficiently low to enable sugar producers to sell their output at prices below those of British West Indian sugar producers.

Several factors, however, differentiated Trinidad from the other British West Indian islands. Of primary importance was Trinidad's relatively late entry into the British Empire, the island having only been ceded to Britain by Spain in 1797. Effective British

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[1] Under the terms of the Apprenticeship System, the ex-slaves were to apprentice themselves to their former masters for four years during which time they were to work for wages on terms prescribed by the planters and the Colonial Office.

administration of the territory which began in 1802 seriously conflicted with Spanish notions of justice and good government. There was, too, a large component of French nationals, primarily refugees who fled from Haiti on the eve of the outbreak of the Haitian revolution in 1797. Both national groups were unanimous in their opposition to British administration; in particular they resented a Protestant colonial office exercising control over a Catholic Trinidad. However, the clear-cut differentiation between national groups also provided the basis for social stratification of the colonial whites and this prevented group action to extract from Britain the type of colonial administration compatible with the varying national characters present in the colony. A crude estimation of the Trinidadian population on the eve of Emancipation is provided in the following table.[2]

TABLE III-1

POPULATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO IN 1800

	Whites	Free Coloureds	Slaves
English	663	599	
Spanish	505	1751	
French	1093	2925	
			20,464
Total	2261	5275	20,464

[2]For an extensive introduction to the heterogenity of Trinidad, see Williams, A History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago; Wood, Trinidad in Transition; M.G. Smith, The Plural Society of the British West Indies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

This cultural heterogenity seriously weakened any consolidated efforts by whites to improve the technology of their plantation agriculture.

These events were compounded by the fact that on the conclusion of the Apprenticeship System, black labour left the plantation en masse to become the future labourers or independent peasants. Low paid agricultural labour under a despotic plantation régime was a constant reminder of their former status as slaves, and therefore represented the least viable alternative to other forms of wage labour. The increasing labour shortage promoted the foreclosure of several estates which were heavily encumbered by debt. Moreover, the plantocracy was often unwilling to experiment with novel ideas that would involve endangering the status quo. The British abolitionist James Stephen sums up the character of the planter class as follows:

> Their lives are passed in a contracted circle amidst petty feuds and pecuniary embarrassments. There is no civilized society on earth so entirely destitute of learned leisure, of literary and scientific intercourse or even of liberal recreations.[3]

Such a colonial élite living in an atmosphere of cultural sterility could hardly envisage the benefit to be gained from upgrading their workers and improving estate husbandry, factors which combined to accelerate the exodus of black labour from plantation work on the terms prescribed by the planter. Sewell provides a penetrating observation of the behaviour of the Trinidadian labourer in 1861.

> The labourers, as soon as they were free, asked and for a time received, higher wages than the planters, encumbered as their property was with debt, could

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[3]Quoted in Williams, The History of the Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 90.

> afford to pay; and when this rate of wages was subsequently reduced, the majority of the emancipated deserted the estates to better their condition and seek a more independent livelihood. A very large number purchased small tracts of land and began to plant for themselves; a few squatted on crown lands, of which the government holds an enormous proportion; while many took to trade, and setting up as petty shopkeepers in the towns, pursued a calling more congenial with their tastes and inclinations. The planters vainly endeavoured to remedy the evil; in vain they adopted the most stringent measures to prevent the increase of small proprietors, and keep up by such unnatural means, a sufficient labouring force for the estates. They imposed heavy taxes on all lands and buildings except those devoted to sugar manufacture. But their measures were futile.[4]

Asiatic Immigration as a Solution

The history of economic legislation in Trinidad under the planter-controlled system was one of vigorous support of the sugar interests and neglect of the small farmer-businessman and wage earners. At a meeting in Port-of-Spain in April 1839, the Trinidad Agricultural and Immigration Society was formed with the principal aim of increasing the supply of agricultural labour. This policy was clearly enunciated in the November edition of the Port-of-Spain Gazette in 1842. Its guiding principle was the dictum that "Public wealth is under the control of three immutable laws: labour, the right of labour and competition"[5] and in the 1840's the most significant of these immutable laws was competition.

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[4]Augier and Gordon, Sources of West Indian History, p. 212.

[5]Wood, Trinidad in Transition, pp. 62-63.

The planters argued that immigration would create competition among the creoles for jobs, thereby increasing the supply of labour and depressing the real wage. Savings from the wage bill could be used for estate improvement, thereby rendering sugar operations more competitive.

In 1884 the Immigration Ordinance was passed, permitting the Legislature to raise £250,000 on the London money market for the purpose of securing contract labour from Asia. What is significant here is that the major portion of the fund was financed by the Trinidad government by way of excise taxes and imports. This meant that the Trinidadian labourer was taxed to support a scheme which would involve delaying improvements in their wages and working conditions.

Under the terms of the Immigration Ordinance of 1844, the Trinidad government in conjunction with the Colonial Office permitted the importation of some 2500 Chinese in the hope of partially satisfying the plantations' requirements for cheap labour. This brief experiment failed since the Chinese immigrants, like the blacks before them, vacated the plantations on the first opportunity to become artisans or small businessmen. Economic conditions were rendered more serious in Trinidad because of the financial crisis plaguing the British economy at this time. The result was a disastrous slump in sugar prices between 1847 and 1850 and the dwindling away of credit opportunities. The sugar industry was on the verge of ruin.

Large scale immigration from India was adopted as a final solution for the island's economic ills. Between 1844 and 1917 an estimated 145,000 Indians were introduced into Trinidad as indentured

workers, compounding the ethnic-cultural heterogenity and the socio-cultural implications of such heterogenity. The social problems emanating from Indian indenture were largely ignored by the European-dominated élite who sought to mould the East Indian behaviour into a pattern that would make them more tractable.

Attempts at creolization of the East Indian met only with partial success. In the sugar belt where Indians settled in large numbers, settlements were created with a distinctive Indian identity. This does not imply, however, that there has been no dilution of Indian culture, but simply that where Indians created their own communities the degree of East Indian culture retention was considerable.[6]

In addition, Indians occupied the lowest positions on the occupational hierarchy; the attendant stereotypes attributed to them by other nationalities served to reinforce their low status. Indian labour accelerated the exodus of black labour from the plantations towards the urban centres, creating an urban proletariat of black workers. The social consequences of Indian immigration severely undermined the growth of working class solidarity despite innumerable common grievances. Perhaps the East Indian community thought that their period of indenture would be brief, after which they would be repatriated, and thus this factor may have prevented mass action.

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[6]For an elaboration of the creolization of the East Indian see Morton Klass, East Indians in Trinidad: A Study of Cultural Persistence (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961); Arthur and Juanita Kiehoff, "East Indians in the West Indies", Publications in Anthropology, VI (1960); Krishna Bahadoorsingh, Trinidad Electoral Politics: The Persistence of the Race Factor (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1968).

Sociologists have emphasized that one of the major functional prerequisites of successful problem-solving in a society is the recognition of shared cognitive orientations.

> In any society the members must share a body of cognitive orientations which (a) make possible adaptation to and manipulation of the situation; (b) make stable, meaningful and predictable the social situations in which they are engaged; and (c) account for those significant aspects of the situation over which they do not have adequate prediction and control in such a way as to sustain and not destroy motivation.[7]

In Trinidad, ethnic-cultural heterogenity prevented organized political action and was a major contributing cause of delayed worker agitation and working-class consciousness. Black workers resented the East Indian worker and identified him as the villian responsible for undercutting wage levels.

Early Attempts at Trade Unionism

Resentment in Trinidad against the crown colony system of government with its exclusive monopoly of power accelerated the drive for mass working-class action against the ruling élite. Also, the depression of sugar prices in the late 1890's created widespread unemployment and gave birth to two working-class organizations: the Working Men's Reform Club and the Trinidad Workingmen's Association.

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[7] D.F. Arbele, A.K. Cohen, A.K. Davis, et. al., "The Functional Prerequisites of a Society", Ethics, LX (January), p. 107.

The Working Men's Reform Club attracted attention by submission of grievances to a Royal Commission in 1897. The organization represented groups of artisans, dockworkers and boatmen in the Port-of-Spain area. The group agitated for improvement in employment opportunities and led a protest against heavy taxation. This organization apparently was short-lived since there is no further record of its activity after 1900. The Trinidad Workingmen's Association dates from 1890 and comprised skilled craftsmen as well as labourers. It functioned both as a friendly society with trade union aspirations and as an association for liberal political reform. After attempts to organize a waterfront strike, the organization collapsed in 1902.

In 1919 Captain Andrew Cipriani, a white ex-serviceman of Corsican descent and a successful cocoa planter, revived the organization and created a stable body for agitation and reform. His social consciousness was awakened quite fortuitously during the 1914-1918 war when he witnessed many of his black countrymen relegated to menial jobs in labour battalions in Egypt. After demobilization, Cipriani led the Trinidad Workingmen's Association and became the leading advocate of the rights of the 'barefoot' man. Broadly, the aims of the Association were as follows:

1. The improvement of wages and working conditions of labour, in particular the creation of social insurance programmes to provide relief during periods of unemployment; the establishment of a legal minimum wage; the relaxation of restrictions against the purchase of land and the accelerated diversification of Trinidad's economy.

2. Rapid improvement in the constitutional status of Trinidad. To this end the T.W.M.A. fostered opposition to colonialism, growth of national pride, and assisted in the promotion of social discontent into rational political activity.

3. The promotion of compulsory education and universal suffrage. In particular, Cipriani attacked the widespread use of child labour, especially in the Indian areas of the sugar belt.

4. Local control over mineral resources, especially oil, along with proposals for increases in tax for oil companies, thereby finding a substitute for colonial grants-in-aid for the sugar industry.[8]

The success of the T.W.M.A. during its operation was due primarily to its representation encompassing labourers, small businessmen, peasant farmers and artisans. This provided a broader base for political action than had been the case with its predecessor. The structure and aims of the organization facilitated communication between different occupations and group interests. The extent of increased political awareness often led to unofficial strikes and sporadic outbursts of violence. Government officials were obviously disturbed by the rising tide of discontent and consequently proposed the establishment of an industrial court in 1920. Its function was "... to settle any industrial dispute which may be referred to it for settlement, and also to advise the governor on any industrial or economic question which he may refer to it for advice."[9]

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[8]Gordon K. Lewis, The Growth of the Modern West Indies (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1967), p. 205.

[9]Royal Commission on Trinidad and Tobago Disturbances, 1937, Report (London: H.M.S.O., 1938), p. 47.

The composition of the Industrial Court provided for a president, representatives of employers and employees (or individuals), all of whom must be appointed by the governor. The Industrial Court remained inoperative from its inception. No workers' organization took advantage of its services. This was probably due to the fact that Cipriani's primary interest was in creating a political party and in so doing avoid the liabilities inherent in the Trade Union law. Therefore Cipriani accepted the advice of officials of the British Trade Union Congress and renamed the organization the Trinidad Labour Party. Thus, the organization was able to circumvent the law which rendered trade unions liable to damages arising from strike activity. The immersion of the Trinidad Labour Party into local politics permitted Cipriani's election to the legislature in 1925 where he sought to influence legislation on behalf of the labour movement.

Several factors appeared to have influenced the climate of industrial relations at that time. The principal factor was the discovery of oil in 1901 and its consequent exploitation by Shell, Texaco and British Petroleum. This provided not only expansion of employment but also introduced structural changes in the economy. The new industrial effort also demanded from both the local colonial élite and the Trinidad worker new concepts and attitudes that would accomodate and encourage industrialization. Initial industrialization efforts often create new tensions not experienced by hitherto non-industrial workers and these induced tensions require a level of sophistication in order to minimize industrial conflict. These qualities were hardly present in colonial Trinidad. For example, the exposure of workers to machinery created numerous disputes over the issue of workmens'

compensation. This issue was only resolved when the colonial legislature recognized the legitimacy of the workers' grievances and passed the Workmens' Compensation Ordinance of 1926. It stipulated that an employer is not liable to pay compensation in respect of any injury which does not result in total or partial disablement of the workman for a period exceeding ten days. Furthermore, the Ordinance did not apply to agricultural workers, the numerically dominant occupational group, except those employed in any connection with machines. A local government commission proposed inclusion of all workers but the proposal was rejected by the Agriculture Society of Trinidad and Tobago which felt (with some justification) that this would impose a heavy burden on large numbers of peasant proprietors. A compromise was later established limiting compensation to injuries "arising out of defects in machinery or plants, etc., or negligence on the part of the employer or his agents."[10]

The Growth of Modern Trade Unionism

In 1926 the Trinidad Workingmen's Association reported a membership of 125,000 but despite such an impressive following, trade unions were slow to emerge. Among the reasons for trade union inactivity were the following:

1. the absence of a legal-constitutional setting to promote the development and recognition of trade unions by employers;

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[10] Ibid., p. 50.

2. the high degree of what Selig Perlman refers to as the "resistance power of capitalism" whereby employers and their allies in the colonial legislature could successfully undermine trade union aspirations;[11]

3. the extent of social disorganization which precluded common action by all workers. This was in part due to Trinidad's cultural heterogenity, a mosaic comprising "French creole, plantocrat and Chinese merchant, Spanish cocoa farmer and Grenadian oil worker, English expatriate and mulatto peasant."[12] Working class members of this mosaic jealously rivalled each other, denying themselves the opportunity of developing a common identity.

Nevertheless, the aims of trade unionism had considerable appeal for the working class. In 1935 the complexion of the Trinidad Labour Party was altered by the membership of Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler. An immigrant from neighbouring Grenada, Butler was employed in the oil fields where he sustained an injury that left him permanently lame. He quickly rose to prominence within the party and became famous for his militant anti-colonialist speeches until his expulsion from the party in 1936 for political extremism. Butler then formed his own organization, the British Empire Workers' and Citizens' Home Rule Party,

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[11]Workers complained that they were being victimized by employers by means of the 'Red Book' procedure. The 'Red Book' was operative in the oil and asphalt industries and was issued to workers on termination of employment. The book provided information on movements on the worker from one company to another.

[12]Lewis, The Growth of the Modern West Indies, p. 211.

advocating violent revolutionary strategy to end colonialism. His reference to co-workers and followers as "warrior workers" and his subsequent self-conferred title, "chief servant of the Lord", demonstrates his revolutionary intent. F.W. Dalley, in a summary of Trinidad's union history, observes

> His [Butler's] speeches and literature issued by his party becomes conspicuous for their violent character and his following included - as subsequent events confirmed - many who were prepared to adopt violent methods... I have referred to him as a 'curious phenomenon' and certainly in his personality, his phenomenal egocentricity, his wordly shrewdness and his crude speeches and leaflets with their biblical and religious references, he would appear to be more akin to a 17th century 'Fifth Monarchy' man than a twentieth century trade union leader.[13]

Indeed Butler was a curious phenomenon, but it should be obvious from the enthusiasm he engendered that there were deep underlying issues to which both government and employers were oblivious. This new political party was a vehicle for agitation and was the principal organization in the oil fields riots in 1937 and later in 1947 on the plantations and the docks, in the oil fields and the public service. The riots of June 1937 resulted in some injury and death and later led to Butler's conviction for murder and conspiracy. After serving two years the sentence was revoked on a technicality. His imprisonment for subversive activities during World War II denied him participation in political life. On his return from prison, however, he found the oil field workers organized into the Oil Field Workers' Trade Union with a young East Indian lawyer, Rienzi, as its first president-general.

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[13] F.W. Dalley, Trade Union Organization and Industrial Relations in Trinidad: Report (London: H.M.S.O., 1947), p. 14.

In recognition of his former services, Butler was given an organizing post but was later expelled because of his inability to submit to organizational discipline. Consequently, he established his own organization, The British Empire Workers', Peasants' and Ratepayers' Union, with himself as president-general. His island-wide organizational drive involved him in several jurisdictional disputes especially with O.W.T.U. where many of his fellow Grenadians were members. Jurisdictional rivalries and occasional rioting characterized the period of Trinidad's union history from 1938 to 1956.

The Foster Commission which investigated the rioting in the 1930's attributed the causes to

i) General dissatisfaction for which there were no adequate means of articulation through the recognized machinery of collective bargaining.

ii) Little regard of the employers for employee welfare.

iii) Rise of the oil industry creating social ferment in an agricultural society.

iv) Minor grievances such as favouritism in job opportunities and lack of an ambulance service.

v) A general restlessness caused by the influence of radio, cinema and labour disputes in the United States.[14]

The new unions which emerged from the riots of the 1930's have been described as "youthful, exuberant, impatient, desiring drastic action, having some irresponsible leaders and looking on strikes as the only form of union action. There was considerable overlapping of unions

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[14]William H. Knowles, Trade Union Development and Industrial Relations in the British West Indies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), p. 78.

and competition for membership with half the unions claiming jurisdiction over all workers."[15]

On the conclusion of the rioting in 1938 there were sixteen registered unions along with the Trades Union Council of Trinidad and Tobago, but the latter was often successful in resolving jurisdictional disputes. The successful introduction of the 1943 Trades Disputes and Protection of Property Ordinance providing immunization from liability as a result of strikes further promoted union stability. The most successful unions were the following:

OIL FIELD WORKERS' TRADE UNION
(O.W.T.U.)

Originally influenced by Butler who promoted the riots in 1937 and later in 1947, the O.W.T.U. has emerged as the strongest union, both financially and organizationally. It consisted of fifteen branches and ten district committees representing some 12,000 skilled and semi-skilled workers largely in the employ of the three main petroleum companies, Shell, Texaco and British Petroleum.[16]

SEAMEN AND WATERFRONT WORKERS' TRADE UNION
(S.W.W.T.U.)

This union is also well organized and financed and in 1965 reported a membership of 5792. Like O.W.T.U., it is based

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[15] Ibid., p. 79.

[16] U.S. Department of Labour, Labour Law and Practice in Trinidad and Tobago (Washington: Bureau of Labour Statistics, 1967), p. 24.

on a specific industry which enjoys year-round employment and comparatively good working conditions.[17]

AMALGAMATED WORKERS' UNION
(A.W.U.)

This union is a catchall of some 7000 workers including government workers and clerks, some transport and manufacturing industry employees. Efforts to organize agricultural workers have involved the union in costly jurisdictional disputes with other unions. In 1965 the A.W.U. formed the Amalgamated Workers' Investment Company for financing housing units for members in Carenage, Port-of-Spain.[18]

ALL-TRINIDAD SUGAR ESTATES AND FACTORY
WORKERS' TRADE UNION
(A.T.S.E.F.W.T.U.)

This union has achieved exclusive bargaining rights in the sugar industry and represented about 14,500 workers (mainly unskilled). It is not as strong as O.W.T.U. or S.W.W.T.U. owing to the agricultural base and irregular employment in estate agriculture. Despite the introduction of the check-off system, the union finances have been generally weak.[19]

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 25.

Trade Unions and Political Parties

One of the distinguishing features of Trinidad unionism is the relative absence of control by political parties in the sense that this phenomenon operates in Jamaica. This is primarily due to the fact that relatively 'stable' unions preceded the establishment of stable political parties. The Cipriani-Butler confrontation of the 1930's, in which by and large the young trade unions were not actively involved, divided the population into competing political and ideological camps.

Cipriani, on the one hand, with his philosophy of gradualism towards political independence was an ardent admirer of the British gentleman class. He is reported to have remarked in 1933 to a visitor "... if the mother country could send us her best brains to govern us, we should have nothing to say; but she does not."[20] Cipriani lacked the intellectual capacity to place the colonial problem in historical perspective and his confrontation with the ruling English élite on their terms delayed the development of modern trade unionism. On the other hand, Butler's untutored radicalism frightened the colonial élite but his scanty knowledge of revolutionary strategy isolated many segments of the working class.

In retrospect, Butler's and Cipriani's contributions lay in the fact that they precipitated the rise of trade unionism which eventually became independent pressure groups in their own right. In

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[20]Lewis, The Growth of the Modern West Indies, p. 207.

addition, both leaders were instrumental in initiating the working class into political action against the colonial élite. When the practice of collective bargaining was firmly established in the mid-1950's, the unions were better organized than the political parties themselves.

So disorganized were the political parties that during the general elections held under conditions of universal suffrage in 1946, 1950 and 1956, none of the competing political parties could exercise effective political leadership. Lewis observes,

> ... so for that entire period [1946-56], the local political scene was a wild circus of electoral independents and trade union 'czars' having nothing to unite them in a national front (despite the so-called United Front of the 1946 campaign) save a common passion for the spoils of office.... It all portrayed a scandalously low level of political intelligence and a complete failure to think out in any coherent way long range answers to the colonial problems, and it cried aloud to be replaced with a rational party system based on mass political education, firm and clear cut ideology after the fashion of the Jamaican PNP.[21]

It was not until the establishment of the People's National Movement under Dr. Eric Williams and its dedication to a 'revolution of intelligence' that a successful party system emerged. Although Trinidad's unions have supported both of the two main political parties (The People's National Movement and the Democratic Labour Party) since 1956, they have successfully resisted partisan control of their organizations in contradistinction to the Jamaican and Antiguan experience.[22]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 208-209.

[22] The relationships between Trinidad's trade unions and the major political parties (particularly the PNM) will be explored in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONISM IN ANTIGUA

From Plantation Slavery to the Latifundia

The distinguishing feature of Antiguan post-emancipation politics was the Antiguan Legislature's declaration of unconditional freedom for slaves in 1834. The diminutiveness of the island[1] and early British colonization led to extensive land utilization. As early as 1830 an estimated 155 estates of an average size of 365 acres were reported in operation.[2] This meant that of the estimated 26,000 acres of arable land, 25,575 acres were under sugar cultivation. There was no virgin land to provide a retreat for the newly liberated slaves as had been the case in Jamaica and Trinidad. Since former slaves had no alternative to performing wage labour on the sugar plantations, the Antiguan Legislature (unlike other governments in the British Caribbean) did not require periods of apprenticeship leading to full emancipation.

The Antiguan Legislature in a memorandum to the governor in 1833 summed up its attitude to freedom and spelled out its motives for the suspension of apprenticeship. Among the reasons cited for this were

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[1] Antigua encompasses an area of 108 square miles, measuring roughly 20 miles long by 15 miles wide.

[2] Lowell J. Ragatz, The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1783-1833 (New York: The Century Company, 1928), p. 405.

> the all-important and paramount one of utter dependence, from peculiarity of climate and the absence of unoccupied lands, except for those of absolute sterility, of the labourer on the proprietor and capitalist for the means of procuring food; and a large portion of the population, whether bond or free could not hope for the means of subsistence except by some labourious occupation in one of those frequent periods of long drought especially to which we are almost annually subject.[3]

Consequently in June 1834 the legislature proclaimed the unconditional freedom of slaves and also formulated legal guidelines for the conduct of such freedom. The conditions of freedom were to be constructed within this framework.

> First - that their condition will be no longer that of reliance on their masters for food, house-room and clothing; their new position will remove them from this close connection with their former owners, and they will have to depend for the necessities of life on the honest and industrious labour of their own hands.
>
> Secondly - that whilst the utmost benefit of the laws, and encouragement from the owners of plantations will be given to those who labour industriously and live soberly and honestly where they are permitted to reside, the magistrates will be by law empowered to order to be taken up and brought to deserved punishment, all such as shall wander about in idleness, or attempt to make a living by robbery, theft or any dishonest means: and the masters who are required by the Act just passed not only to establish unrestricted freedom, but to let their steady, orderly and reputable dependents remain in undisturbed possession of their present habitations or houses, for twelve months to come, may, nevertheless, avail themselves of the right which the same Act gives them, namely, to expel from their estates such as be guilty of insubordinate, quarrelsome, disorderly or riotous behaviour, or drunkenness, theft, trespass, or other gross delinquency.[4]

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[3] Augier and Gordon, Sources of West Indian History, p. 198.

[4] Ibid., p. 199.

In other words, the colonial legislators, who were largely drawn from the plantocracy, perceived those deserving of freedom to be those individuals who demonstrated their willingness to accommodate the plantations' political and economic organization or those who at least refrained from actions that might endanger or otherwise undermine the authority of the dominant planter class.

The virtual absence of alternative sources of income for the Antiguan working class, the absence of idle arable lands and the mechanism of colonialism all combined to produce a situation of complete dependence on the plantation system. The provision grounds on which slaves had produced most of their food during slavery were retained by plantation workers after emancipation and this encouraged the practice of residence on and around the plantations. The plantocracy could therefore avail themselves of cheap labour as well as maintain surveillance over residents who dared to challenge the status quo. The absence of available fertile land further delayed the development of an independent peasantry in contrast to Jamaica and Trinidad where land was plentiful and enforcement of anti-squatting laws was difficult. Grass-roots political power was distinctively absent and political aspirants were often discouraged by economic sanctions and a variety of property and income qualifications for both the franchise and office. For these reasons the Antiguan work force was considerably more 'proletarianized' than its counterparts in neighbouring islands. In short, the plantation system constituted a powerful political and socio-economic system exerting a considerable influence on the social and economic life of the plantation worker.

Post-emancipation legislation defining the conduct of labourers and capitalists reached its climax in 1836 with the passing of the Contract Act. This act could be adequately described as a primitive 'labour code' which prescribed the following terms for employment:

i) If a labourer was absent from work for half a day or less without good cause, he forfeited his wage for a whole day;

ii) If he was absent for two consecutive days in fourteen he was liable to a week's imprisonment to up to three months hard labour;

iii) For negligence of various kinds during work he could be convicted to up to three months hard labour;

iv) The employer was liable to a breach of contract to a maximum fine of £5.[5]

Because of widespread illiteracy among the working class, verbal contracts conducted in the presence of two witnesses were considered legal and subject to enforcement by a court of law. By 1840, the legal basis for the latifundia-type relationship was established and the 'labour code' was for all intents and purposes synonymous with the Criminal Code. Infractions in the sphere of work made the worker liable to prosecution as a criminal.

The Bankruptcy of Sugar

The degree to which the post-emancipation laws were enforced is questionable since evidence of their successful application

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[5]Kloosterboer, Involuntary Labour Since the Abolition of Slavery, p. 5.

is scanty. One factor which is evident is the fact that Antigua, like other British Caribbean islands, lost its privileged position in the British sugar market, primarily as a result of the Free Trade principle adopted by Britain in 1847. This was compounded by the perennial droughts which plagued the island and aggravated the losses on sugar operations. Towards the 1890's and early 1900's many estates went bankrupt and several others were amalgamated, thereby concentrating them into larger units. Factory operations which were hitherto confined to wind-propelled sugar mills were replaced by a modern steam-powered central sugar factory which began operations in 1905. The bankruptcy of sugar is further indicated by the decline of the white population from 9.4 per cent in 1911 to 3.2 per cent in 1921.[6]

This ailing monoculture established and maintained by English colonialists affected the Englishman at critical periods in ways similar to those experienced by the black working class. A bankrupt planter in Antigua had few alternatives for maintaining the type of conspicuous consumption which differentiated him from his social and economic inferiors. In short, the dilemma of the planter was complicated by the fact that he too had few economic alternatives. Manual labour, and specifically agricultural labour, was taboo for the Englishman in the tropics. It was an occupation relegated to individuals at the base of the island's social pyramid.

An indication of the sectoral distribution of labour and an estimate of the unemployed is provided by Watkins for the year 1924.[7]

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[6] Frederick H. Watkins, Handbook of the Leeward Islands (London: West India Committee, 1924), pp. 140-41.

[7] Ibid., p. 141.

Agriculture	9,775
Industries	3,246
Domestic Service	2,637
Commerce	1,022
Public Service & Professions	406
Unemployed, including children	11,776
Total	28,862

The interpretation of the above requires some caution. It is unclear whether Watkins included children in the labour force (a practice not uncommon at that time) or whether the unemployed component plus the children yielded the number 11,776. In any case, the inclusion of adolescents and children in the labour force statistics, crude as it may seem, indicates the structure of the organization of work in an island dominated by a single-crop economy. Here children enter into the production process by working in supervised 'small gangs' despite the provision of an act of 1890 prohibiting employment of children under nine years of age. Moreover, the high participation rates deductible from the above statistics indicate the household's urgent ca cash requirements.

This pseudo-feudal economic environment which developed after emancipation resulted from three overriding factors:

i) A lethargic and indifferent colonial legislature pre-occu occupied with maintaining pre-emancipation levels of sugar production in the face of aggressive competition from European beet sugar and slave-produced cane sugar from Cuba and Brazil;

ii) The changing fortunes of West Indian sugar in the British market;

iii) The scarcity of agricultural land forcing the labourer to depend almost exclusively on estate employment for the means of sustenance.

During this period the latifundia system became institutionalized and rigid in the sense that it tended to foreclose more viable alternatives for development.

The Making of a Union

Antigua in the early 1930's was described as "a land of misery and depression, an island of slums and hovels, of barefoot and unkept people".[8] The intellectual apathy which such a system engendered proved antipathetic to the growth of political consciousness and the development of a viable trade union organization. But as E.P. Thompson points out, similar conditions in England in the early nineteenth century did not preclude the growth of working class consciousness.[9] In Antigua, a cooperative movement among the working class gave rise to the establishment of lodges and friendly societies, chief among them the Ultrochian Friendly Society and its affiliate, the Household of Ruth. The lodges were instrumental in providing sick and death benefits to its members as well as providing a forum for resolving community conflict.

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[8] Novelle H. Richards, The Struggle and the Conquest: Twenty-five Years of Social Democracy in Antigua (Portsmouth: Gosvenor Press, 1967), p. 1.

[9] E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 781-915.

The upper class, too, maintained a lodge, the Free Masons, which provided a rendezvous for influential businessmen.

The series of riots which swept the British Caribbean in the mid-1930's occasioned concern in Antigua where it was assumed that similar disorder was imminent. Among the members of the Royal Commission which visited Antigua in 1939 was Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the British Trade Union Congress. At a meeting with a group of small businessmen and labourers, Citrine suggested the formation of a labour union to combat the extensive poverty and apathy among the working class, which the commission cited as the major causes of political unrest across the Caribbean.

The small businessmen who were present at the meeting decided on the formation of a trade union. Not only would this improve the incomes of the working class to whom they catered, but also counterbalance the monopolistic power of the plantocracy whose influence and power dominated the social, economic and political affairs of the island. The members of the new group turned to the lodges which could provide the administrative personnel for a labour movement. Initially the lodges resisted the raiding of their membership and viewed the emerging movement as a political competitor for the loyalty of the working class. Eventually, however, the working class lodges identified their objectives with those of the new movement and Lionel Stevens, noble patriach of Odd Fellows Lodge, was elected president of the union.

Stevens was a successful jeweller in St. Johns and at first expressed fears that association with a mass working class movement

would jeopardize his business relations with the upper and middle classes. However, once committed, he encouraged all lodge members to support the organization.

In March 1940 the Antigua Trades and Labour Union was registered under the new Trade Union Act of 1939, which repealed the Trade Union Act of 1931 and removed the criminal conspiracy clause. The A.T.L.U. was a blanket organization drawing membership from all occupational (and professional) types. In particular it provided the means for mass political action by the agricultural labourer. The intense organizational drive which accompanied the formation of the A.T.L.U. brought the young organization into collision with the deeply entrenched sociological contradictions inherent in the colonial system. The attempt to provide sectional leaders in the rural areas met with resistance since many rural residents who possessed the leadership qualities were reluctant to associate with the new movement for fear of reprisals from management.

The plantation dominated the life of the rural worker in a variety of ways:[10] (i) his dependency on the plantation for cash; (ii) on the estate manager for land where a variety of food and cash crops could be grown to supplement household incomes; (iii) on the estates for a variety of privileges, the most important being the rearing of livestock and the collection of firewood on estate property; (iv) on his employment by the estate which permitted him to obtain credit against future wages.

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[10]For an extensive account of the paternalist 'protection' and arbitrary 'benevolence' of sugar barons and the sanctions which political participation encouraged, see Sidney Mintz, Worker in the Cane (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

To compound matters, some members of the plantocracy were also the most influential government officials and this restricted legislation in favour of the labour movement. Despite these disabilities, the A.T.L.U. by March 1940 reported a membership of 750 members which expanded to 2860 by April of the same year. This rapid increase in membership indicates dissatisfaction with the economic and political circumstances which were in existence at that time.

Britain's involvement in the Second World War in many respects prompted government action on behalf of the young labour organization. In an attempt to avoid disrupting sugar production, the colonial authorities assumed a more permissive attitude towards labour. Moreover, colonial authorities played a more active role in subsequent negotiations between the A.T.L.U. and the Antigua Sugar Factory. The A.T.L.U. secured in 1940 a 50 per cent increase on all daily wages plus a further increase on a sliding scale from one per cent to 10 per cent on all wages payable to the workers at the end of the crop season, provided a minimum of 14,000 tons of sugar was harvested.[11] In addition, advisory boards were set up to advise on all matters affecting wages and working conditions, specifically conditions of employment in sugar manufacture and production and the employment of labour on the waterfront.[12] In other areas of the economy, notably the service sector, union successes were less impressive.

During this phase of union development, two factors restricted the expansion of unionism. First, the ban on strike activity

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[11] Richards, The Struggle and the Conquest, p. 15.

[12] Ibid.

during the war years meant resorting to binding arbitration, the results of which were not always favourable to the union, thus the consequent loss of interest and membership. The second was the construction of United States military bases on the island during which time sugar operations were severely curtailed by the 'migration' of workers from agriculture and sugar processing to construction and equipment maintenance. Workers were attracted primarily by the relatively higher wages and status associated with construction and a variety of skilled and semi-skilled operations. With wage rates above the prevailing union scales, the trade union movement fell into the doldrums. In addition, the A.T.L.U. executive were "dogged on all sides by the advice 'Do nothing to impede the war effort', 'Give all you can to the war'. As a result the union became almost ineffectual, a condition which suited the employers and nerved them for greater fights which were to come later on."[13]

Several redeeming factors of profound sociological importance resulted from the American occupation. It presented a unique opportunity for the black working class to observe white men performing manual labour and consequently refuted the myth (long propagated by the resident white ruling class) that white men were intrinsically incapable of performing manual labour in the tropics. The American presence also fostered high entrepreneurial and operational standards, raising the expectations of the working class and also of small businessmen.

The changing perception of the white man's 'superior' capacities partially restored the confidence of the working class.

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[13] Ibid., p. 18.

The migration of labour from agriculture to construction presented a unique opportunity for the labourers who had remained on the estates (now fewer in number) to reassert their demands for a variety of improvements in working conditions. The election of Vere Bird, a Salvation Army preacher and drummer, to the presidency of the A.T.L.U. ushered in a new era of labour politics and with the formation of a political arm, the Antigua Labour Party, the union expanded the objectives from specific trade union issues to open challenge of the local colonial administration.

The new era of political activism produced substantial gains for the A.T.L.U. and the Antigua Labour Party (A.L.P.). The cessation of hostilities in Europe and the election of a labour government in Britain in 1946 accelerated a variety of constitutional reforms in the British Caribbean. In Antigua, such reforms included increases in the electoral component of the legislature, improved education and training for teachers and community leaders, improved medical care facilities, etc.

The success of the A.L.P. at the polls in 1946 increased the scope of the legislation affecting labour as well as increased public participation in a variety of developmental projects. Also in the same year the labour movement signed its first 'comprehensive' collective agreement with the Antigua Planters' Association, the bargaining agent for the sugar producers. It agreed that from the commencement of grinding operations in 1946 the following conditions should be observed:

a) The basic rate of wages shall be increased by 7½ per cent.

b) The cost of living war bonus shall be 52½ per cent of actual earnings.

c) The bonus will be paid on hourly, daily and weekly wages.

d) The bonus shall not be paid on overtime earnings.

e) The bonus shall be paid weekly on the day when wages are normally paid.

f) Overtime work shall be paid in respect of all work performed outside the normal day or shift and shall be at the rate of time and one-half of the rates paid for normal working time.

g) Overtime rates shall be payable for work performed on the following days: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Whit Monday, August Monday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Sundays.
At the end of the 1946 crop, a period of six days holiday with full pay shall be granted to all workers who have worked satisfactorily throughout the crop.... As from the start of the crop in 1946, all workers other than those employed on shifts shall receive one half-holiday every week. A shilling per ton of all sugar produced in 1946 shall be paid by the factory to the Welfare Fund for the benefit of the workers in the sugar industry. This fund shall be administered by a committee representative of the employers, the workers and the government.[14]

In terms of its coverage, the 1946 agreement was more comprehensive than any agreement yet signed. Hitherto, the focus had been almost exclusively on increasing wage levels in the sugar industry. Subsequent constitutional reforms gradually entrenched the A.L.P. into the island's political life, the A.L.P. monopolizing all the elected seats in the legislature until January 1970. The years 1948 to 1955

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[14] International Labour Office, Labour Policies in the West Indies (Geneva: 1952), p. 156.

witnessed a period of prolonged disputes with a variety of firms operating on the island. The issues were primarily over dismissals, severances, lay-offs, although wage issues were also featured. It appears that during this period both the union and management had failed to reach agreement stipulating the procedure in the case of dismissals, etc. However, such procedural aspects have loomed large in subsequent collective agreements.[15]

The extension of universal suffrage to the colonies partially accounted for the high level of political consciousness in Antigua. Officers of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union became the principal political spokesmen. Workers, too, perceived the trade union as the training centre for would-be politicians and any political contestant who dared to 'speak for the people' without having 'graduated' from the A.T.L.U. was summarily censured. The union established a number of sections based on occupation and regional lines to facilitate administration of the organization. The union's political affiliate, the Antigua Labour Party, established a number of village councils to promote rural development. In practice, however, the village councils were staffed principally by sectional union officers. Issues that are not normally trade union issues in a North American sense were often submitted to the union for settlement. Rottenberg's observation of this phenomenon in Grenada was true for Antigua as well.

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[15]See, for example, Memorandum of Agreement between the Leeward Islands Air Transport Services, Limited and the Antigua Trades and Labour Union, December 1966; and Memorandum of Agreement between Messrs. Joseph Dew, Division of Dantzler W.I. Limited and the Antigua Trades and Labour Union, October 1964.

> The union's function comprehends the settlement of adjustable conflict outside the limits of the formal relations of employers and workers. The union, thus, simulates the judicial functions of the state.
>
> Disputes are enormously varied. The union's grievance book is filled with them. There are complaints about cows doing damage to gardens; unjust accusation of theft of coconuts; the cutting into land by road builders; their failure to compensate for danages suffered by collision with vehicles; attacks by dogs and the like.[16]

The A.T.L.U. had by 1962 successfully unionized 90 per cent of the island's labour force of 19,000. The A.T.L.U. had become almost indistinguishable from the A.L.P. Cabinet ministers, legislators and government advisors all retained their union positions creating a monolithic employee organization in response to monolithic employer units.

The Trade Union and Politics

The immersion of the A.T.L.U. in the political life of Antigua has created indirect problems for the government as well as for the unions' administrative units. Diversification introduced new areas of conflict in the economic system and consequently in the monolithic union-political party structure. The expansion of tourism, the introduction of oil refining, of small manufacturing and processing units and the partial mechanization of the sugar industry all represent government attempts at modernization and the reduction of the exclusive dependende on sugar.

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[16] Simon Rottenberg, "Labour Relations in an Underdeveloped Economy", Economic Development and Cultural Change, I (4), pp. 254-55.

Modernization, however, often produces goals which compete with union objectives. The increasing impact of American life styles introduced new needs and aspirations. In addition, American-Canadian trained personnel were rapidly replacing the 'old guards' trained in British institutions. The labour government under Vere Bird faced increasing unrest from within its ranks as several of its principal lieutenants under the leadership of Secretary-General George Walter openly challenged the administration in 1967. By 1968 Walter and his colleagues had established a new union, the Antigua Workers' Union (A.W.U.), and a new political arm, the People's Labour Movement (P.L.M.). The fight for recognition of the Antigua Workers' Union continued throughout 1968, disrupting the island's economy through strikes, political demonstrations, etc. Table IV-1 provides some detail of the major work stoppages during this year, of which about 85 per cent arose from failure of employers to recognize the new union.

Knowles has shown that there is a tendency for the West Indian worker to display blind allegiance to the union leader-politician irrespective of the issues involved. A Grenadian banana worker is reported to have said,

> I was born on this estate and I have worked on this estate for twenty years. All the time the driver could give me unfair tasks, cheat me out of my pay, and deny me work. If I complained, the driver would threaten to put me off the land and the overseer would threaten to put me in jail. Now Mr. Leader come along and they can't do me no trouble. I don't care if Mr. Leader is a crook. He won't let the driver kick me around no more, so I join his union and vote for him.[17]

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[17] William H. Knowles, "Supervision in the British West Indies: Source of Labour Unrest", Industrial and Labour Relations Review, XVIII (4), p. 576.

TABLE IV-1

DETAILS OF PRINCIPAL STRIKES DURING 1968

Employer	Nature of Employment	Causes of Industrial Dispute or Strike	Date of Commencement	Date of Settlement	Strike Duration in days	No. of Workers Actually Involved	No. of Man Days Lost	Nature of Settlement
Eagle Garment Factory	Sewing Garments	AWU General Strike	15/03/68	23/03/68	Approx 6½	28	182	Govt. gave complete recognition to AWU.
		Requesting Recognition	07/10/68	08/10/68	Approx 1	26	26	Workers advised by AWU to return to work.
Curtain Bluff Hotel 1	Hotel	AWU General Strike Requesting Recognition	15/03/68	15/03/68	1	24	24	Govt. gave complete recognition to AWU.
Pan American World Airways	Airline	AWU Requesting Recognition	15/03/68	23/03/68	8	62	496	Govt. gave complete recognition to AWU.
Geo. W. Bennett Bryson Limited	Retailing Administration Transport Insurance	AWU General Strike Requesting Recognition	15/03/68	20/03/68	6	438	2628	Govt. gave recognition to AWU.
Brown & Company Limited	Business House	AWU	12/02/68	12/02/68	1	25	25	Govt. gave recognition to AWU
		Demonstration Island-wide Political Strike AWU	15/03/68	20/03/68	5	23	115	

continued...

TABLE IV-1 - continued

Employer	Nature of Employment	Causes of Industrial Dispute or Strike	Date of Commencement	Date of Settlement	Strike Duration in Days	No. of Workers Actually Involved	No. of Man Days Lost	Nature of Settlement
The WIOC Oil Refinery	Refinery	Missile Throwing by Marine Superintendent at Mechanic Employee	05/09/68	06/09/68	Approx 1	40	25	Termination of service of marine Foreman and Mechanic Engineer.
The WIOC Oil Refinery	Bunkering	Termination of Service of Marine Foreman and Marine Engineer	29/08/68	27/09/68	26	2	52	Reinstatement.

Source: Taken from the Annual Report of the Antigua Labour Department (St. Johns, Antigua), 1968.

This attitude is gradually being replaced by those consistent with the rising expectations of workers and there is a growing tendency to offer political-union support in return for a union-party's pledge to improve the general standard of living. For instance, the People's Labour Movement in the 1971 election pointed out that despite the impressive wage gains of the A.T.L.U. many families have been made poorer by the impact of tourism which has raised the price level and made the distribution of income more inequitable. Families not directly connected with the tourist industry have been faced with rapidly diminishing purchasing power due to the increase in the price level. Once again these macro-social and economic problems became the centre of controversy between two rival political union groups. This conflict was resolved after the 1971 general election which brought the People's Labour Movement to political power.

CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

The Machinery of Industrial Relations

Historically, the management of labour in the West Indies has been either authoritarian or paternalistic. Occupational mores essential for the maintenance of a slave society were, after emancipation, forced to function in changing socio-economic configurations. Laws designed to restrict labour mobility proved difficult to enforce at a time when influences from abroad and domestic agitation were raising the level of political awareness. Despite the restrictions imposed on the non-white labouring class, emancipation encouraged dissent and dissatisfaction with the existing colonial structure in the West Indies, thereby coercing the colonial authorities to inaugurate industrial relations machinery for the resolution of conflict in the labour market.

Government policy in the English-speaking Caribbean followed the policy recommendations of Major Orde Browne and the West India Royal Commission of 1938-39 in regard to labour supervision and industrial relations. Since 1938, successive governments in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean have sought to construct the machinery within the framework of the British industrial relations practices and concepts. The term 'machinery of industrial relations' includes three distinct types of organizations often with competing objectives. These organizations include

i) Government and labour administrative services concerned with the 'management' of industrial relations;

ii) Workers and employers represented by their respective organizations;

iii) A variety of ad hoc boards of a bi-partite or tri-partite nature concerned with industrial relations. In some Caribbean islands where the shortage of trained personnel is acute, 'influential' individuals enjoyed the respect of the bargaining parties assume the functions of the boards.

The establishment of labour departments or special staffs to deal with labour problems dates from 1934, but the extent of authority and responsibilities varies among the islands. The predominance of labour-based political parties has improved labour legislation as well as expanded the functions of labour departments. The portfolios of labour ministers include labour inspection, trade disputes, arbitration and conciliation, trade unions, wage councils, labour market education and research, factory inspection, etc.[1]

A variety of 'management' associations preceded the formation of labour unions. The increasing influence of the labour movement and labour-based political parties in government encouraged the reorientation of a number of employers' organizations. Their

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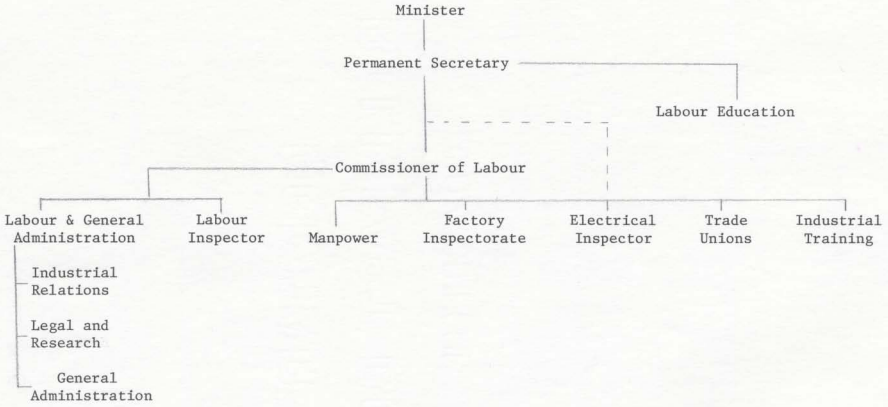
[1]For an indication of expanding functions of labour departments of Trinidad and Jamaica, see Organizational Charts I and II.

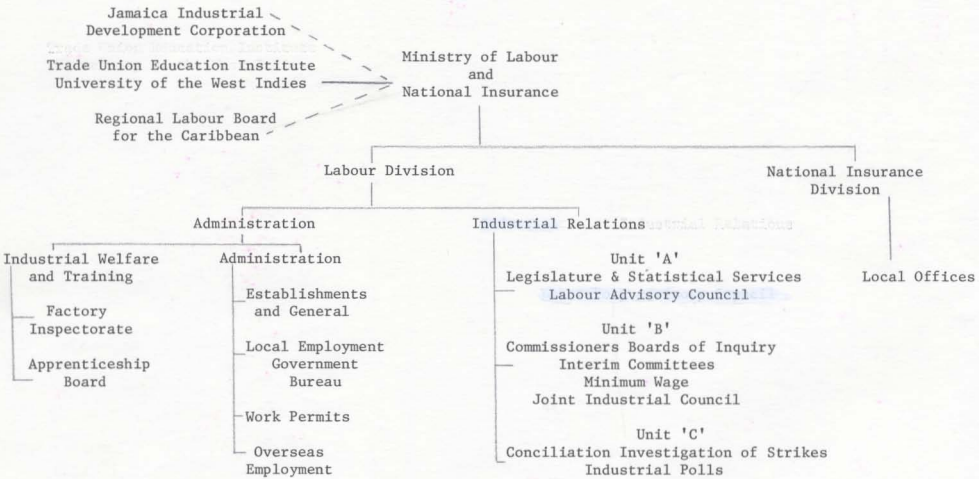
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART I

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, JANUARY 1967



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART II

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL INSURANCE, JAMAICA, JANUARY 1967



attitudes in relation to labour unions have shifted from outright rejection or hostility to varying froms of accomodation. Basically, the management organizations are of three types:

i) Associations established to promote and protect the trading interest of members and to promote general trade, for example the Junior and Senior Chambers of Commerce;

ii) Employers' associations acting in the capacity of bargaining agents for member employers such as the Antigua Employers' Federation;

iii) Other employers' associations concerned with industrial relations generally, for example, the Employers' Consultative Association (E.C.A.) of Trinidad.

This latter organization functions as a clearing-house and coordinating centre for the participating members in the field of industrial relations.[2] The Employers' Consultative Association of Trinidad has also been instrumental in conducting a number of management training seminars in order to improve the quality of the manpower involved in industrial relations.

This collective action was the employers' eventual response to the trade union challenge. Individual employer bargaining has been greatly reduced in the face of rising trade union strength.

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[2]United States, Department of Labor, Labor Law and Practice in Trinidad and Tobago, pp. 23-24.

At an inaugural meeting in 1957, the objectives of the Jamaican Employers' Federation were enumerated as follows:

a) To safeguard and promote the interests of employers in all matters affecting relations between employers and employees;

b) To make available to members from time to time information as to policies, conditions, facts of wages and general and specific practices in the field of employment.... and all matters affecting employment and industrial relations, with a view to assisting members to maintain a knowledgeable, progressive and constructive outlook in matters of employment in their various undertakings and to promote and maintain stable, peaceful, harmonious and progressive relations with their employees;

c) To facilitate, promote and provide for joint consultation between members;

d) To act as a consultative and advisory body on any question of difficulty or interests submitted for consideration and advice for any member or any matter of general concern to members;

e) To collect from members and from other appropriate sources ... such statistical and other data as to wage rates and related matters as may be deemed necessary and desirable for continuous study of the wage structure and conditions of employment;

f) To promote amongst members such coordination of action as may be necessary or desirable for the purpose of:-
   i) avoiding or remedying industrial disputes between members and their employees;
   ii) achieving collective bargaining on an industry-wide basis whenever members so desire;
   iii) considering and making recommendations with regard to any legislation or proposed legislation affecting or likely to affect relations of employers and employees, whether directly or indirectly.[3]

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[3] From the Constitution of the Employers Federation, cited in George Eaton, "The Development of Trade Unionism in Jamaica, W.I.", pp. 584-86.

The Jamaican Employers' Federation has also been active politically on behalf of its members, advocating the import of duty-free raw materials, exemption from tonnage tax, the abolition of preferential tariffs on specified imports, quantitative restrictions on imports and higher tariffs to reduce foreign competition against local industry.

One interesting feature of industrial relations in the West Indies is the apparent similarity to those of the United Kingdom; the industrial relations laws of the former having been derived from British precedents. Until recently there has been no legislation regulating collective bargaining except aspects of such legislation which encourage the parties to bargain 'in good faith' and to maintain 'human dignity' in the work place, but these terms have never been precisely defined and their interpretations are based more on custom, as defined by accepted work norms, rather than on law. Consequently, collective contracts in the West Indies (with the exception of Trinidad) are not civil contracts and are therefore not enforceable by a court of law.

Labour Relations and Dual Economies

The primary test of any industrial relations system is its effectiveness in resolving the central issues of the labour-management relationship, namely, wage determination, working conditions and grievance handling.[4] The West Indian industrial relations system is to

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[4]Peter Kilby, "Industrial Relations and Wage Determination: Failure of the Anglo-Saxon Model", Journal of Developing Areas, I (4), p. 496.

some extent a reproduction of metropolitan institutional patterns functioning within the context of chronic seasonal unemployment and occupational pluralism in the agricultural sector on the one hand, and steady year-round employment in the modern sector on the other. In short, the economy of the West Indies displays those features characterized by Nurkse, Lewis, Ekaus, Libenstein and Mellor,[5] namely low levels of productivity manifested in entreprises such as agriculture and a preponderance of petty retail trading, and a modern capital-intensive sector with accompanying high levels of productivity. In general, however, West Indian economies face an over-supply of unskilled labour and this is compounded by the historical connection of agricultural or manual labour with the non-white labourer. These factors have often encouraged feelings of hostility and resentment by non-whites struggling for upward mobility.

On the other hand, there are the developing capital-intensive primary and manufacturing sectors employing relatively smaller components of skilled manpower at relatively higher wages. This dual character of West Indian economies has influenced the pattern of labour relations throughout the islands. Furthermore, the historical institutions of negro slavery and indenture have profoundly affected worker and management perceptions of each other and have influenced occupational choice, family patterns, ethnic-racial relationships, work attitudes, trade union and management organizations.

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[5] Charles H.C. Kao, Kurt R. Auschel and Carl K. Eicher, "Disguised Unemployment in Agriculture: A Survey", in C.K. Eicher and D. Witt (eds.), Agriculture in Economic Development (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

Since the West Indian islands are high-cost marginal producers of sugar in highly competitive world markets, wage increases cannot be passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices. Wage demands therefore have to be related to fluctuations in world market sugar prices over which no group in the West Indies exercises any significant control. Therefore, collective bargaining in West Indian agriculture is often conducted in an atmosphere of bitterness and distrust. Rottenberg's observation of the Grenadian situation is illuminating in that it highlights this aspect of West Indian society from which such tensions emerge. He writes,

> Employers are a social class. Class values and class interests intervene in labour relations and complicate the relationships of workers and employers.... Custom is a powerful influence and change which redefines inter-class relationship is either not accepted at all or accepted in bad grace.
>
> In this system, employers are 'cultured' and workers are primitive. Employers have created a father image of themselves and believe that they know best what is good for the people; workers are children, irresponsible, indolent and prodigal, who prefer leisure and rum to worthy material goals. Therefore a paternal relationship between workers and planters, in which the power of decision is a monopoly of the 'better' classes, is the condition set for a stable society and well-being for the workers.[6]

With the achievement of self-government and independence, there have been impressive improvements in labour relations and such attitudes, although not eliminated, are less openly hostile.[7] Wages

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[6] Rottenberg, "Labour Relations in an Underdeveloped Economy", p. 253.

[7] Commission of Enquiry into all Aspects of Labour Relations in the Sugar Industry and Matters Incidental Thereto, Report (House Paper No. 4; Trinidad and Tobago, 1963); George Eaton (ed),

have however remained steady while profits in agriculture enterprises range from excessively high profits in good periods to extreme losses in others. Consequently, profit sharing schemes proposed by trade unions have met with employer resistance. After an interview with West Indian planters, William Knowles concludes that planters view profit sharing schemes with some apprehension, since according to West Indian sugar producers, "averaging-out periods of high losses with those of high profits, estates earned about 10 per cent which was inadequate considering the size of their risk."[8]

Management instead has opted in favour of the production bonus system because wages vary with the ability of establishments to pay. In addition, the production bonus plan also reduces labour turnover and absenteeism. Workers, too, support the production bonus plan since the rewards are relative to the size of the crop and bonuses are paid in the off-crop season when employment is scarce and the households' need for cash is most urgent.

The fear of aggravating the already high rates of unemployment has created different behaviour patterns between North American unions and West Indian unions. Whereas North American unions attempt to acquire standard rates within each industry, West Indian unions "charge what the market will bear and so maximize the total wage bill without jeopardizing employment opportunities.... Where unemployment is endemic,

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Proceedings of Industrial Relations Conference (Jamaica. November 1962); Antigua, Labour Department, Reports (St. John's: 1958-63).

[8]William Knowles, Trade Union Development and Labour Relations in the British West Indies, pp. 158-59.

workers accept the proposition that wage differentials between employers should be based on their ability to pay."[9]

The Jamaican Sugar Agreement of 1960, for instance, classifies estates into three categories, each with a different structure of wage rates. Similar patterns can be observed in other West Indian islands and among different agricultural entrepreneurial units. Trade unions are therefore assisting in maintaining reasonably low operational costs and so delay the complete mechanization of agriculture.

Turning to the capital-intensive sectors outside agriculture, one finds close approximation to the North American pattern of labour-management relations. Workers and management are 'skilled' and there is increasing emphasis on professionalism and the practices of conflict resolution approximate those obtaining in North America and other industrial centres. Increasing American investment in the Caribbean has also increased American participation in trade union organization in the form of seminars, training schemes and financial support. The American role has been primarily in an 'advisory' capacity and efforts are aimed at creating a climate of industrial peace as well as providing a counter-force to the presumed ubiquitous communist challenge. For instance, the National Workers' Union (N.W.U.) of Jamaica (the organizational body and bargaining agent of bauxite workers) maintains close ties with the National Maritime Union of America (A.F.L.-C.I.O.), the Canadian Steelworkers' Union and the United Steel Workers of America (A.F.L.-C.I.O.). The motives for American and Canadian participation

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[9] Ibid., p. 165.

are not wholly philanthropic since a stable bauxite industry in Jamaica involves fewer disruptions in the supply of raw materials to the industrial heartlands of North America and consequently improved employment opportunities for North American workers.

Specifications for improvements in working conditions have become less controversial issues between labour and management. One probable explanation is the expansion of labour departments with jurisdictional authority to ensure safety in factories and on plantations or in undertakings where exposure to machinery involves risk to workers. For example, factory and electrical divisions provide inspection services in connection with electrical wiring of buildings and sanitation and proper ventilation of buildings. Provisions are also made for the licensing of wiremen and related trades. Periodic shortages of administrative personnel have, however caused neglect of many areas of worker safety. This is particularly true of small family-owned establishments and rural entreprises.

Despite problems of American involvement, both labour and management in Jamaica[10] have indicated reasonable satisfaction with the industrial relations system.

Procedures for handling grievances have now become integral parts of collective bargaining agreements. Despite the introduction of shop stewards to provide worker representation services, unresolved problems at the 'plant level' are often the source of much of

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[10]Eaton, "The Development of Trade Unionism in Jamaica, W.I." Also, Eaton, Proceedings of Industrial Relations Conference.

the industrial unrest, in particular, industrial unrest emanating from labour supervision. In the agricultural sector, procedures for handling disputes are often vague and unspecified. This problem is further complicated by vestiges of slavery when manual labour was often viewed as undignified and degrading. Supervisory positions therefore provide some prestige and superior status in West Indian societies. Thus for many workers in plantation agriculture there is a feeling of exploitation and this results in unwillingness to take advantage of whatever formal procedures are stipulated in the collective contract, with respect to the handling of grievances. Consequently, agricultural entreprises have been plagued by strikes (many of them wild-cat strikes) over a variety of peripheral rather than central issues of wages and working conditions. The peculiarities of trade union organization in the West Indies have also aggravated this problem. There is the tendency for trade union officers to organize unions with a view to constructing a power base for partisan politics. Devotion of energies to political pursuits often leaves the rank and file ignorant of trade union practices and procedures which pertain to the handling of grievances on the job.[11]

Third Party Intervention in Industrial Relations

The commitment of Caribbean governments to improve the living standards in the area has assigned to government leading roles in the economic development process. The pattern and extent of government

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[11] Rottenberg, "Labour Relations in an Underdeveloped Economy", p. 255.

intervention varies among the islands but certain common characteristics can be identified. Briefly, government participation has been in three major areas: (a) legislative and/or regulatory; (b) investigatory and/or advisory; (c) educational, directional and adjudicatory. The departments of labour constitute the major instruments of government intervention. Units of the departments exercise authority with respect to labour inspection; in addition, they ensure compliance by employers and employees with industrial legislation, advise governments on legislative reforms and prosecute for breaches of existing legislation.

By its very nature, "economic development is not a process which breeds social contentment."[12] Both workers and management often make demands of each other which lead to open manifestations of grievances, labour disputes, strikes and lockouts. With a view to fostering a spirit of mutual obligation in industry, the Jamaican industrial relations system provides for two approaches to the resolution of disputes. In the private sector, most disputes are settled at the factory level by procedures outlined in collective agreements. For instance, the grievance procedure outlined in a recent collective agreement between the National Workers' Union and the Caribbean Cement Company provided for the aggrieved worker to present his case to his immediate supervisor. If the case is not resolved, the complainant can then request a meeting with the personnel officer, the supervisor and his union field officers. Lack of further progress at

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[12]Robert Heilbroner, The Great Ascent: The Struggle for Economic Development in Our Times (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 18.

this point requires a further meeting with the managing director of the company. If the dispute is not settled satisfactorily either the complainant or the company may invoke conciliation services provided by the Ministry of Labour and any further deadlock involves submission of the issue to arbitration.[13]

Industrial relations in the public sector are constrained by the provisions of the Trade Disputes (Arbitration and Inquiry) Law of 1939 which provides for appointment of an arbitration tribunal by the Minister of Labour if he thinks such measures are warranted and if the parties to the dispute so consent. This method is rarely used, since both parties have consistently requested the voluntary arbitration system. Furthermore, under the provisions of the Public Utility Undertakings and Public Services Law of 1939, strikes and lockouts are prohibited in the essential services[14] unless the dispute has been properly reported, fourteen days have elapsed since the date of the report and the dispute has not been referred to the Ministry of Labour for settlement. Such cases are usually referred to an arbitration tribunal and the decision is binding on both parties.

In recent years, however, Caribbean governments and businesses have expressed some concern about the high rate of strike activity. In Jamaica, all sectors between 1945 and 1949 were plagued by a high level of strike activity,[15] as these years represent the

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[13] United States, Department of Labor, Labor Law and Practice in Jamaica, p. 35.

[14] Such services include water, sanitation, hospital, transport, police and fire services, etc.

[15] See Table V-1 and Table V-2.

TABLE V-1

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INVOLVING STOPPAGE OF WORK ACCORDING TO INDUSTRY, JAMAICA, 1945-1949

Industrial Group	Year	Number of Disputes	Number of Strikes at Beginning of Year	Workers Involved			Man Days Lost		
				Number	% of Total	Average per Strike	Number	% of Total	Average per Strike
All Industries	1945	154	97	11,619	100.0	120	91,655	100.0	945
	1946	110	76	15,605	100.0	205	238,540	100.0	3,139
	1947	27	25	13,414	100.0	537	258,700	100.0	10,358
	1948	23	19	3,185	100.0	167	10,347	100.0	370
	1949	7	-	356	100.0	51	2,656	100.0	379
Agriculture	1945	59	41	6,189	53.3	151	61,280	66.8	1,494
	1946	38	29	9,229	59.2	318	140,699	43.9	3,610
	1947	12	12	11,560	86.2	963	245,540	94.9	20,462
	1948	7	6	1,603	50.3	267	3,866	37.4	644
	1949	3	-	175	49.2	58	12,363	89.0	788
Manufacturing	1945	48	28	2,526	21.7	90	14,207	15.5	507
	1946	33	21	1,262	8.1	60	3,012	1.2	143
	1947	7	7	884	6.6	126	11,967	4.6	1,710
	1948	11	8	1,177	37.0	147	2,170	21.0	271
	1949	3	-	61	17.1	20	173	6.5	58
Construction	1945	6	5	203	1.7	41	1,986	2.2	397
	1946	7	6	1,573	10.1	262	6,317	2.7	1,053
	1947	1	1	206	1.5	206	69	-	69
	1948	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1949	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

continued...

TABLE V-1 - continued

Industrial Group	Year	Number of Disputes	Number of Strikes at Beginning of Year	Workers Involved			Man Days Lost		
				Number	% of Total	Average per Strike	Number	% of Total	Average per Strike
Transportation & Communication	1945	30	17	2,081	18.0	120	9,347	10.2	550
	1946	13	10	2,028	12.9	203	68,913	28.9	6,891
	1947	1	1	427	3.2	427	427	0.2	427
	1948	2	2	191	6.0	96	3,680	35.6	1,840
	1949	1	-	120	33.7	120	120	4.5	120
Trade	1945	2	2	200	1.7	100	1,800	2.0	900
	1946	4	2	160	1.0	80	1,096	0.5	548
	1947	1	1	45	0.3	45	405	0.2	405
	1948	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1949	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Services	1945	8	4	420	3.6	105	3,035	3.3	759
	1946	15	8	1,353	8.7	169	54,503	22.8	6,813
	1947	4	1	292	2.2	97	292	0.1	97
	1948	3	3	214	6.7	72	931	6.1	210
	1949	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The Economic Development of Jamaica (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1952), pp. 226-27.

TABLE V-2

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INVOLVING WORK STOPPAGES ACCORDING TO INDUSTRY, JAMAICA, 1953-1962

Year	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing			Mining and Quarrying			Manufacturing			Construction		
	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost
1953	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	3,391	37,848	1	889	29,337
1954	-	-	-	1	17	34	12	1,771	28,769	1	249	2,490
1955	5	395	...	...	...	...	7	7,340	129,060	9	...	...
1956	2	395	...	-	-	-	3	851	10,969	1	...	...
1957	35	9,152	1,765	1	922	3,400	18	1,799	7,055	14	24,581	199,481
1958	14	6,531	570,765	1	911	30,974	21	3,944	43,900	5	14,521	4,129
1959	12	9,301	91,930	-	-	-	20	16,132	311,621	3	92	812
1960	20	6,145	40,364	-	-	-	26	2,579	28,759	3	661	1,126
1961	18	-	-	-	-	-	10	1,216	8,489	7	1,047	18,021
1962	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	1,570	8,873	38	5,751	28,916

Source: International Labour Office, Yearbook of Labour Statistics (Geneva: 1958-1962).

beginning of trade union consolidation in that country. After 1949, however, the volume of strike activity both in terms of the actual number of strikes and the number of man days lost have decreased sharply. No statistics are available for Trinidad before 1950, but the subsequent period between 1953 and 1962 indicated a higher rate of strike participation than Jamaica, mostly as a result of jurisdictional disputes.[16] These levels of strike activity may be comparatively mild by North American and European standards but in view of the size of most Caribbean islands, prolonged strikes often impose serious inconveniences on the public.

This concern has given rise to two related varieties of responses. Jamaica has endeavoured with a large measure of success to improve her conciliation and arbitration machinery, but as Eaton recently observed, "there has been a pronounced drift ... towards 'legalism' in industrial arbitration."[17] Several factors have been responsible for this new direction. Jamaican employers accuse trade union negotiators of protracted negotiations in the interest of retroactive wage settlements for union members. Consequently, there appears to be a stiffening of employer resistance against the principle of retroactivity. Furthermore, if an employer demonstrates effectively his inability to pay, union negotiators often invoke the arbitration process, hoping for some wage increase retroactive to the date when negotiations became deadlocked. In addition, lump-sum payments may

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[16] See Table V-3.

[17] George Eaton (ed.), Proceedings of Industrial Relations Conference on the Theory and Practice of Arbitration (Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1962), p. viii.

TABLE V-3

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES INVOLVING WORK STOPPAGES ACCORDING TO THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, TRINIDAD, 1953-1963

	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing			Mining and Quarrying			Manufacturing			Construction		
Year	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost
1953	1	400	40,000	1	26	244	1	120	5,760	1	200	75
1954	2	2,390	129,950	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	50	25
1955	2	260	19,160	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1956	3	10,894	244,110	-	-	-	2	98	-	-	-	-
1957	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	90	75
1958	-	-	-	1	46	40	2	301	3,650	1	400	400
1959	...	1,164	2,714	...	2,900	4,931	...	1,141	2,693	...	1,395	6,145
1960	7	323	42,379	6	58,310	153,230	2	250	4,250	2	...	445
1961	6	1,565	94,218	-	-	-	2	363	21,014	7	1,130	8,990
1962	7	8,018	124,852	33	1,864	9,320	3	117	1,266	12	1,765	6,260
1963	10	3,115	23,760	8	6,394	126,487	6	758	2,515	12	3,935	33,332

Source: International Labour Office, Yearbook of Labour Statistics (Geneva: 1958-1969).

disguise the fact that unions have won much less than promised for their members, and union members welcome the arrangement which provides them with instant cash for large household purchases.

Jamaican trade unions counter these allegations by arguing that employers are not adverse to protracted negotiations of this type since an arbitrative process may award no wage increases, award less than the union proposed or less than the employer was prepared to concede. Moreover, "the arbitrator may also shorten the period of retroactivity of the wage award, in which event the employer would have secured an advantage at the expense of his workers."[18]

There tends to be an element of truth in both positions although it may be an exaggeration to claim that Jamaican workers view the quality of their union representation primarily by the size of retroactive payments. An alternative interpretation could be that a lump sum of money from retroactive payments represents a form of 'forced saving' which accrues to the worker for having endured the financial inconveniences of a protracted negotiation. The worker, having been forced to work for months under the terms of an old contract, considers a sizeable retroactive settlement adequate compensation for earnings denied him from the time of expiry of the old contract and the conclusion of the new. Employers, on the other hand, may, for reasons of strategy and advantage, protract negotiations. In view of the blanket structure and personalized leadership of Caribbean unions in which the principal negotiations are handled by a small 'clique' of key personnel, the employers' strategy to protract negotiations is an advantage in that

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[18] Ibid.

delay encourages dissatisfaction among the diverse groups that comprise the union. As Eaton observed, it is not unknown in Jamaica for workers to refuse to recognize agreements which were not concluded by particular union personnel.[19] The claim of disenchantment with the arbitration procedure by both management and labour is not taken seriously since neither party appears to be willing to avoid a process which it alleges to be disadvantageous.

The Trinidad position represents a more extreme case of the departure from the traditional voluntarist philosophy of collective bargaining. The government, drawing extensively on industrial disputes statistics, demonstrated that between the years 1960 and 1964 Trinidad recorded 230 strikes involving 74,000 workers with a loss of 809,000 man days.[20] Since approximately one-half of the strikes occurred in the two principal industries, sugar and petroleum, the government interpreted that such a volume of strike activity is injurious to national well-being.

Consequently, the Industrial Stabilization Act was introduced into the industrial relations system in March 1965. Briefly, the Act provides for compulsory recognition of trade unions and associations representing the majority of workers for the settlement of disputes, for the regulation of prices and commodities, for the conclusion of industrial agreements and for the regulation of strikes and lockouts. Under the Act no employer may declare to take part in a lockout and no trade union may take part in a strike, unless the dispute has been duly reported to

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[19] Ibid., p. 19.

[20] Eric Williams, Reflections on the Industrial Stabilization Bill (Port-of-Spain: P.N.M. Publishing Company, 1965), Part 4, p.3.

the Minister of Labour who then fails to refer the issue to the Industrial Court (established for that purpose) within 21 days of the date on which the dispute was referred to him.[21]

Protection for the worker against discriminatory practices by the employer is provided for and an out-right ban on strikes is declared for the essential services. Penalties including fines and jail sentences are imposed for infractions of the Act. The I.S.A. established an industrial court empowered to hear and determine trade disputes, to register industrial agreements and to hear and determine complaints relating to the prices of goods and commodities. The industrial court is to be guided by the following considerations:

a) the necessity to maintain a high level of domestic capital accumulation with a view to increasing the rate of economic growth and to providing greater employment opportunities;

b) the necessity to maintain and expand the level of employment;

c) the necessity to ensure to workers a fair share of increases in productivity in entreprises;

d) the necessity to prevent gains in the wages of workers from being affected adversely by unnecessary and unjustified price increases;

e) the necessity to preserve and promote the competitive position of products of Trinidad and Tobago in domestic markets as well as overseas markets;

f) the necessity for the establishment and maintenance of reasonable differentials in rewards between different categories of skills;

g) the need to maintain for Trinidad and Tobago a favourable balance of trade and balance of payments;

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[21] Ibid., p. 7.

h) the need to ensure the continued ability of the government of Trinidad and Tobago to finance development programmes in the public sector.[22]

During the first four months of operation, fifteen major decisions were handed down by the Industrial Court, thirteen of which were in favour of labour and two in favour of employers in the petroleum and sugar industries; and of the thirty-six rulings or conciliations made in the first year only three were in favour of employers. The effect of these decisions was to temporarily cool the opposition against the Industrial Stabilization Act. But the Act has also fostered greater consolidation of the existing unions by reducing their numbers. The anti-I.S.A. campaign was initially a low-keyed performance in view of the majority of decisions in favour of labour. Even the Vanguard, the official organ of the militant Oil-Field Workers' Trade Union (O.W.T.U.), conceded that "the Court has done a fine job and has replaced the conference table as a place for negotiations."[23] But this attitude of passive resistance did not give way to acquiescence. The Trade Union Congress of Trinidad and Tobago, which had long supported the People's National Movement (P.N.M.) under the leadership of Dr. Eric Williams, the prime minister, was not consulted during the drafting of the I.S.A. In particular, the labour movement resented those provisions of the I.S.A. which prohibited strike action and which made all adjudications binding on both parties subject only to points of law.

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[22] Ibid., Part 6, p. 3.

[23] Quoted in Selwyn D. Ryan, Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago: A Study of Decolonization in a Multi-Racial Society (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 411.

The considerations which were intended to influence court decisions imposed severe hardships for a judicial body with limited resources and by 1969 the Court indicated to the government that its machinery was being strangled under the burden it was intended to assume. Its crowded schedule was expensive and frustrating to the unions and court personnel alike. Union leaders and intellectuals remain critical of an industrial relations system which, they allege, allows employers to take advantage of union leadership rivalries,"to divide workers and prolong negotiations in the hope of having the dispute referred to the Court which has a long backlog of undelivered judgements."[24] A Trinidad critic of the I.S.A., George Bowrin, notes:

> Frustration has bred an attitude of indifference which produces effects on industry which cannot be measured in loss of man-days, or in loss of millions of dollars, which Dr. Williams is so fond of doing.
>
> The Doctor is concerned with the appearance, the 'image' of stability. He does not give a damn about the reality which has resulted in a fall off in production, a worsening in industrial relations and a consequent increase in labour militancy. These cannot be measured in terms of strikes or man-days lost, or dollars and cents lost, etc. But maybe that is a logical consequence of the Doctor's pragmatism.[25]

This kind of frustration erupted into open defiance of the I.S.A. in 1970 with strikes, work slow-downs, political (and union) demonstrations, etc. In January 1971 there were fifteen work stoppages compared with fifty-five for 1971, many of which were in the public sector.[26] Government punitive action only increased labour militancy.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

The Trinidad government's response to civil disorder was to create a new legal framework for industrial relations rather than redirecting the system. The draft of the new Industrial Relations Act (I.R.A.) of 1971 was published for public scrutiny. It leaves intact the economic philosophy and rationale which prompted the I.S.A. but yielded to popular opposition against the total ban on strikes. The I.R.A., however, has not generated much enthusiasm from labour and the more radical groups within the academic community since it retains the principle or binding arbitration and limits trade unions' rights to strike. The retention of the industrial court with expanded personnel, the streamlining of procedures for demarcating jurisdictions between unions, and the promise of greater government-union collaboration have not reduced labour opposition. The Council of Progressive Trade Unions (C.P.T.U.) has objected to the I.R.A. on the grounds that it "abrogates the rule of law for all workers by giving the Ministry of Labour sweeping powers to intervene in all recognition claims, industrial disputes and collective bargaining agreements, as well as the power to decide if workers may go on strike."[27]

In Antigua, the labour party under the leadership of Vere Bird faced similar opposition after proclamation of the Essential Services Act in 1970 which prohibited strikes in what politicians deemed to be essential services. An industrial court was also established as a judiciary body whose decisions were binding on both parties. Subsequent opposition and the eventual defeat of the Antigua Labour Party at the polls in 1971 has led to the repeal of both laws thereby reinstating the principle of voluntarism in industrial relations.

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[27] Ibid., p. 412.

From these three examples of 'creeping legalism' in industrial relations, it is clear that third party intervention insofar as it relates to Caribbean societies is fraught with difficulties. Third parties, whether in the form of judicial bodies or arbitration tribunals, experience difficulty in arriving at decisions which are compatible with the legal rights and the interests of the disputing parties.

CHAPTER VI

CURRENT VIEWS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON NASCENT UNIONS

The Contemporary Social and Economic Climate in the Caribbean

Any discussion which attempts to theorize on the process of economic development in the contemporary English-speaking Caribbean should observe carefully two fundamental characteristics. The first is the existence of political democracy based on the classical Westminister concept of democracy and the second is the existence of an independent trade union movement, sharing the objectives of unions in Western Europe and North America. The English-speaking islands of the Caribbean are also open societies in the sense that they permit with a minimum of restriction the flow of ideas and information from outside the region, influencing tastes, life styles and concepts of what constitutes the good life. The thrust for rapid industrialization had produced heavy foreign investment, mainly from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. In other words, the multi-national corporation is very much in evidence in the Caribbean. Labour associations with international interests have been given relatively free scope in the area of economic aid to local Caribbean unions with the emphasis on union administration and the development of effective collective bargaining practices.

The existence of affluent societies in the United States and Canada, along with the historical association of the Caribbean area

with the United Kingdom, has produced a number of chain effects which Horowitz identifies as follows:

i) the Demonstration Effect, where developing nations identify themselves as being engaged in an economic race with the advanced nations;

ii) the Fusion Effect, where developing nations, as a result of the will to develop, create experimental social and economic systems. That is, they lean towards a 'mix' rather than a 'pure' system;

iii) the Compression Effect, where developing nations desire levels of development similar to those of the industrial nations, with considerably less time to achieve them.[1]

A combination of these effects has resulted in varying attempts to diversify the economies of the Caribbean, but government policy appears to be one of encouraging foreign investment by offering a variety of industrial incentives to local and foreign financial interests willing to invest in the area. Agricultural land, the principal resource, is the area's largest source of employment; bauxite and alumina plus sugar and sugar products account for 76 per cent of Jamaica's exports while petroleum, sugar and their by-products account for about 90 per cent of Trinidad's domestic exports.[2] Export earnings therefore constitute a high percentage of national income. When tourism is included, the dependence on external sources of income is

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[1] Irving L. Horowitz, Three Worlds of Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 4-5.

[2] William Demas, The Economics of Development in Small Countries with Special Reference to the Caribbean (Montreal; McGill University Press, 1965), p. 103

even greater. This is particularly true of Antigua. An examination of employment by sectors (Table VI-1) reveals that agricultural employment in Jamaica and Trinidad in 1960 comprised 31 per cent and 21 per cent respectively of the labour force, and mining approximately seven per cent and five per cent respectively. Yet the contribution of these two sectors to the gross domestic product is 24 per cent in Jamaica and 42 per cent in Trinidad (see Table VI-2). The dependence on plantation and peasant agriculture, mineral extraction and tourism is further complicated by the absence of any real form of monetary management. The Colonial Currency Board System is, in its pure form, inflexible and requires 100 per cent backing in the form of sterling assets for local currency. Although Jamaica and Trinidad have now established central banks, there appears to be little departure from the status quo. The commercial banks (mostly Canadian branches) have been instrumental in providing local credit but the lack of effective monetary management permits them to create local credit independently of movements in the balance of payments.[3]

Demas provides an excellent outline of the principal features of the Caribbean economies. These are summarized as

i) the dichotomy between plantation and peasant agriculture, a peculiarly West Indian manifestation of dualism;

ii) a high-cost export agriculture, sheltered by special and other preferential arrangements in the U.K. and Canadian markets;

iii) a firm commitment by present leaders to full-blown political democracy and a free trade-union movement;

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[3] Ibid., p. 113.

TABLE VI-1

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR, 1960
(PERCENTAGES)

Sector	Jamaica	Trinidad & Tobago	British Guiana	Barbados	Leewards and Windwards
Agriculture	39.0	21.1	37.0	26.4	46.0
Mining and Quarrying	0.7	4.9	3.8	0.6	0.2
Manufacturing*	14.8	15.5	16.3	15.2	11.2
Construction	8.2	11.4	8.0	10.5	10.8
Transportation & Communication	3.2	6.2	4.8	5.2	3.7
Distribution	9.9	13.3	11.3	17.3	9.7
Other Services	24.2	27.5	18.8	24.7	18.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1

*Includes processing of mineral and agricultural products except in British Guiana where alumina processing is included under 'Mining'.

Source: Demas, The Economics of Development in Small Countries, p. 110.

TABLE VI-2

INDUSTRIAL ORIGIN OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
(PERCENTAGES)

Sector	1961 Jamaica	1961 Trinidad & Tobago	1960 British Guiana	1956 Barbados	1961 Leewards and Windwards
Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	12.7	11.8	27.2	33.7	38.6
Mining & Processing	8.6	30.8	8.6	0.6	} 1.9
Manufacturing	13.3	12.6	10.2	17.4	
Construction	11.2	5.0	11.2	7.6	9.6
Government	7.9	9.8	9.8	10.0	17.7
Public Utilities	1.1	3.5	0.9		†
Transport & Communications	6.9	3.8	7.0	6.3	2.2
Distribution	15.8	12.8	14.6	10.8	14.7
All Other Sectors	22.5	9.9	10.4	13.6	15.3

†Included in Manufacturing.

Source: Demas, The Economics of Development in Small Countries, p. 108.

iv) the pressure to generalize wage rates obtaining in the modern sector, but which are beyond the capacity of the less advanced sector to pay;

v) the sharply rising expectations of the population as a result of long contact with and proximity to the western way of life;

vi) the dependence on foreign capital for the development of the mineral-producing, manufacturing and to some extent the sugar industries and the consequent large gap between the domestic product and the national income;

vii) the nature of the public finance system is a consequence of large educational and other recurrent expenditures, revenue foregone through tax incentives and the diseconomies of scale in providing administrative services for small populations.[4]

Because of the multi-racial character of West Indian society, the social configuration is equally complex. No attempt will be made to analyze in any detail the sociological and political implications of this kind of heterogenity. However, since the study of labour economics is intermeshed with general sociological concepts of status and role, an attempt will be made to present a hierarchial model of Caribbean society as this system of social stratification affects the industrial relations system. The legacy of slavery, colonialism and Asian indenture has been the principal force shaping Caribbean institutions, resulting in a system of stratification based on income, property, race and colour. The basic pattern of race-colour-class relationships approximates the following hierarchy:

i) An upper class numerically small, comprising whites, coloureds and blacks holding key positions as

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[4] Ibid., p. 117.

planters or plantation executive personnel, entrepreneurs, professionals in medicine and law, and senior civil servants. These constitute the decision-making group.

ii) A somewhat larger middle class comprising mainly coloureds and blacks with a wide occupational range including shopkeepers, traders, small entrepreneurs, proprietors, government and business clerks and teachers.

iii) A working class comprising the majority of the population. This group consists mainly of black and East Indian agricultural workers, domestic workers, dock-workers, unskilled workers in government and business, wage labourers in industry.[5]

The colonial system of government which prevailed in varying forms since Emancipation tended to accentuate this white bias. Post-war colonial reforms concentrated on enfranchising the third class of working class West Indians and although many of the grosser forms of abuse have been eliminated and class distinction less precise, the task of integrating the majority of West Indians into a more genuinely egalitarian system has yet to be accomplished. It is within this socio-economic configuration that West Indian trade unions must function. It is primarily through the trade unions that the challenge against

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[5]For a more comprehensive analysis, see C. Paul Bradley, "Mass Parties in Jamaica", Social and Economic Studies, IX (4), pp. 383-85.

colonialism and the exploitation of labour was effected. But operating in the 1930's presented unique problems to unions organizational efforts. The presence of chronic unemployment, high rates of illiteracy, the fear of reprisals from government and business establishments and income insecurity among the majority of workers created an environment where the 'messianic' type of labour organizer could most successfully crystallize popular resentment against the colonial administration.

Two polar types have been common to the Caribbean region as a whole. First the messianic type, often prevalent during the formative years of the trade union movement and catering to a large uneducated and primarily agricultural working class. Bustamante of Jamaica is perhaps one of the leading examples of this type of leader. A character profile describes him as

> An untaught and uncouth histrionic, he spoke bad English, but he had uncommon gifts as an orator and political agitator and his eyes flashing, waving his arms, he would harrangue the crowd in a voice of thunder. His blatant demagogy, his mephistophelean silhouette, his verbal extravagance enabled him to impress a populace which still lacked political education and to which, like one inspired, he would cry: 'Believe in me and I shall save you'.[6]

Here, the messianic leader is thought to symbolize the struggle against colonialism and to embody the aspirations of an emerging society. Such leadership types emerge in all colonial situations where effective political mobilization depends on the charismatic appeal of

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[6]Guerin, The West Indies and their Future, pp. 121-22.

the leader and where a more sophisticated intellectual approach may be both ineffective and inopportune. Horowitz's observations that this personality type often emerges in the initial phases of nation building has some relevance to the Caribbean situation. He insists that "nearly every third world nation exhibits the powerful leadership principle, 'Führerprinzip', in which power is seen to reside first and foremost in the leader since within him is contained the sum and substance of the aspirations and sentiments of the whole people".[7]

Alternately, other personality types are evident, usually in conflict with the charismatic leader, but nearly all of whom espouse somewhat identical goals. A personality profile of Norman Manley of Jamaica described him as

> An eminent lawyer, educated at Oxford where he formed ties of friendship with Sir Stafford Cripps, has derived his impeccable manners and broad culture from the English leisure class. A mild though forceful speaker, flexible and reassuring, a born mediator skilled at winning the confidence of the wealthy and the esteem of the colonial administration, with a fondness for order and deep respect for protocol, hostile to violence and irregularity, but at the same time profoundly sympathetic and humane, animated by a sincere passion for social reform, endowed with a brilliant intelligence and subtle wit and with an aristocratic power of seduction...[8]

Between these 'polar' types of personalities there exists a variety of intermediate types each exerting differing degrees of influence on the unions they led. There are indications that

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[7]Irving Horowitz, "Party Charisma", Studies in Comparative International Development, I (9), 1965, p. 84.

[8]Guerin, The West Indies and their Future, p. 123.

contemporary Caribbean unions are emphasizing professionalism in labour management and the messianic type of leader has temporarily at least been sidestepped.

Some Economic Perspectives on Unions

In an attempt to construct theories of labour movements, economic theorists have concentrated on the relative merits and demerits of collective bargaining vis-à-vis political activity. Within the framework of classical and neo-classical economic theory, three main systems of thought have emerged. Karl Marx had emphasized the supremacy of political action in order to transform society and in so doing emancipate the proletarian class from the tyranny of bourgeois capitalism.[9] Marx defines a process of socio-economic change where the worker and capitalist constitute distinct classes in the process of which each class becomes more homogenious and polarized. Marx therefore sees the trade union as an organizing centre, a locus for consolidating the forces of the working class. An absence of trade unions meant exposing the worker to atomistic competition for available employment. Lozonsky restates the classical Marxian viewpoint:

> The trade unions developed originally out of the spontaneous attempt of the workers to do away with this competition or at least to restrict it for the purpose of obtaining at least, such

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[9]Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto (New York: International Publishers, 1968).

> contractual conditions that would raise them above the status of bare slaves.[10]

For Marx, the trade union antedates the revolution of the proletariat. which becomes the ultimate objective. Political action is therefore an indispensable feature of labour activity.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb start from different premises and propound an evolutionary (rather than revolutionary) theory of unionism. Their conclusions, however, have some elements in common with the Marxian perspective. Labour organizations in their view have as an objective the establishment of a "common rule" against "industrial parasitism". The fundamental objective of unions is "the deliberate regulation of the conditions of employment in such a way as to ward off from the manual working producers, the evil effects of industrial competition".[11] Later they write, "Trade unions having obtained the vote now wish to make use of it to enforce by legal enactment such of their 'common rules' as they see a chance of getting public opinion."[12]

Selig Perlman's well-known theory of the labour movement[13] defends a diametrically opposite view. The labour movement, explains Perlman, progresses from political action to economic action. This involves a change in working class attitudes from reform ideas to

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[10] A. Lozonsky, Marx and the Trade Unions (New York: International Publishers, 1935), p. 16.

[11] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Industrial Democracy (New York: Longmans, 1897), p. 807.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Selig Perlman, Theory of the Labour Movement (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

pragmatic aims of practical trade unionists. Trade union methods shift from political action to peaceful collective bargaining. Such changes are realized when labour organizations free themselves from the leadership of the intellectuals, when manual labour achieves some measure of self-confidence, and when labour organizations begin to emphasize immediate goals in preference to distant socio-economic changes.[14] He writes,

> It is the author's contention that manual groups ... have had their economic attitudes basically determined by a consciousness of scarcity of opportunity.... Starting with this consciousness of scarcity, the 'manualist' groups have been led to practicing solidarity, to an insistence upon an 'ownership' by the group as a whole of the totality of economic opportunity extant, to a 'rationing' by the group of such opportunity among the individuals constituting it, to a control by the group over its members in relation to the conditions which they as individuals are permitted to occupy a portion of that opportunity....[15]

These theories have several elements in common. There is an attempted fusion of 'analytical' and 'normative' thinking. The authors analyze 'known' situations and then postulate what unions 'ought to be doing'. In presenting them as universal models, the authors ignore the differing socio-economic configurations which their models were intended to explain. Such models, however, cannot account for the variety of existing union patterns. In addition, there are elements of determinism in all the above models which deny the process of continuous change in all levels of society.

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[14] Ibid., p. x.

[15] Ibid., p. 4.

When the above theories are projected against the historical development of trade unionism in the English-speaking Caribbean (and perhaps other developing areas), some aspects of the three theoretical positions are relevant. The polarization of classes in the West Indies based on racial-ethnic and economic lines made the exploitation of labour an easy undertaking for the colonial plantocracy. High unemployment, both seasonal and structural, encouraged the 'industrial parasitism' as described by the Webbs and the 'atomistic' competition' between labourers as enunciated by Marx. Selig Perlman's concept of job ownership is certainly a corollary which emerges from a situation where stable employment is a jealously guarded prerogative. Although the level of direct political involvement has declined somewhat since the 1930's, Caribbean unions have not abandoned political action. Contemporary Caribbean unionism appears to resemble more closely the features propounded by the Webbs although post-colonial developments have created some deviations.

More recent attempts by economists to characterize unions in developing areas have been virtually unanimous in their observations of some general characteristics. First, that nascent unions are essentially political rather than economic institutions; secondly, that they are poorly organized; thirdly, that they operate in a labour market that is unskilled, lacking in industrial discipline and only partially committed to regular employment. Labour's alleged partial committment to regular employment is explained in terms of the labourers' limited needs and aspirations.

These main generalizations have been summarized by Berg and Butler as follows:

> Trade unions in these countries are said to have developed more as political institutions than as collective bargaining agencies. They arose in response not to capitalism or industrialization as in the west but to the colonial situation. They have always been intimately involved in politics, most commonly subordinated to political parties and nationalist movements, they are party instruments. Although their numbers are usually small and their organization is shoddy, they have great influence, for wage earners form one of the few readily identifiable and mobilized groups in these societies.[16]

With respect to the Caribbean situation, some qualification is required. 'Political Unionism' and 'economic unionism' are alternate techniques employed by labour organizations which depend on the relative advantages of political action and collective bargaining. They are not mutually exclusive means of action but rather represent two aspects of organized labour patterns. The high level of political involvement by Caribbean unions in the 1930's and 1940's was a technique of achieving recognition, collective bargaining rights and improvements in the standard of living. But unions, because of the colonial structure, were unable to achieve any of their objectives without political action. Relying on their only resource — numerical superiority — they sought to change 'the rules of the game'. In the colonial era, unions tended to emphasize macro-social goals (economic, social and political change) in preference to micro-social goals (collective bargaining rights).

Observations of Caribbean unions have led to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

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[16] Elliot Berg and J. Butler, "Trade Unions", in J.S. Coleman and C.G. Rosberg, Jr. (eds.), Political Parties and National Integration in Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 340.

HYPOTHESIS I

In emerging countries (and specifically those emerging from colonialism where a white ruling oligarchy dominates or monopolizes the instruments of power and in so doing frustrates the attempts of the non-white indigenous peoples for upward mobility) trade unions emphasize macro-social objectives before the micro-social. In other words, in attempting to alter the economic and social environment, political activity must antedate industrial activity since the success of specifically industrial objectives is contingent on the acquisition of political power.

Jamaica, Trinidad and Antigua are clear illustrations of this process. West Indian entrepreneurs and their allies in the local colonial administration could not be relied upon to create a climate which would check the exploitation of labour without some form of coercion. Trade union or trade union sponsored candidates achieving political power created the legislation required for unions to operate with legitimacy.

HYPOTHESIS II

Unions in the English-speaking Caribbean do not ignore 'bread and butter' issues in preference to political partisan issues. Whenever this occurs, union leaders invariably build emphemeral organizations.

While not denying that union leaders in the Caribbean encourage the formation of unions as a base for their entry into politics, the evidence from Jamaica, Trinidad and Antigua does not suggest that this attitude will be permanent as the Trade Union movement matures. Whenever this occurs, such unions are often short-lived and their leaders' political futures uncertain. The experience of Jamaica provides one example of the type

of affiliation between union and political party. In 1938-39 Alexander Bustamante crystallized popular sentiment which followed the riots and formed the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (B.I.T.U.) while Norman Manley formed the People's National Party (P.N.P.). Following a split by the two leaders, Bustamante formed the Jamaica Labour Party (J.L.P.) while Manley brought together into a Trade Union Congress all worker organizations other than the B.I.T.U. In 1952 Manley registered the National Workers' Union and since then the essential political feature in Jamaica has been the political competition between the J.L.P./B.I.T.U. and the P.N.P./N.W.U. Both political organizations have alternated the control of the majority of seats in the Jamaican Parliament since 1944. This feature tends to be similar in Antigua and reflects the influence of organizers of the British Labour Party whose personnel and influence have assisted in shaping the characteristics of contemporary West Indian unionism.

An interesting feature of some unions in the United States is their characteristic similarity with the nascent unions of the Third World. Reference should be made to organizations where non-white workers predominate. The relative deprivation of black and Mexican-American workers compared with their white counterparts in industry is a major factor for increased political involvement. Labour associations in which these groups predominate tend to assume a more activist role than, for example, the more mature organizations of the American Federation of Labour. The rhetoric of Caesar Chavez, president of the Farm Workers' Organization Committee in the United States, is remarkably similar to that of Caribbean union leaders. When Chavez claims, "We make a solemn promise to enjoy our rightful part of the

riches of this land, to throw off the yoke of being considered as agricultural implements or slaves",[17] he is in fact envisaging a greater role for Mexican-Americans in American society in a manner similar to that which Bustamante, Manley, Butler and Bird anticipated for the workers of the Caribbean. The increased political involvement of black Americans in recent years indicates a similar process.

Is Union Control Inevitable?

It is one of the 'cultural universals' to expect some form of social control as an essential aspect of organized behaviour. Under the caption "Orbits of Coercive Comparison" Ross[18] has outlined some of the constraints imposed on labour unions. These include labour and product-market competition, centralized bargaining within unions, common ownership of establishments, government participation in the determination of collective contracts and rival union leadership, all of which are present in the Caribbean in varying degrees. Nowhere is the control of nascent unions advocated more strongly than in discussions involving trade union demands and the investment requirements of new nations. Commenting on the effect of trade unions on economic development in the English-speaking Caribbean, Knowles writes,

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[17] Quoted in "The Little Strike that Grew to La Causa", Time, July 4, 1969, p. 25.

[18] A.M. Ross, "The Dynamics of Wage Determination under Collective Bargaining", American Economic Review, XXXVII (December 1947), 801-12.

> Unions obstruct economic development to the extent that jurisdictional and internal instability disrupts the economy and frightens the investor. Unions also hinder economic progress if their wage policies place British West Indian producers at a cost disadvantage in world markets, and if the wage levels discourage foreign investment.[19]

Implicit in Knowles' statement is the institutionalization of some form of union control thereby preventing the types of wage drifts which discourage the incentive to invest. Karl de Schweinitz, after an exhaustive review of the development of trade unions in industrial countries, concludes that trade unions along with their affiliated labour parties create problems which threaten democracy and economic growth.

> If they are successful in securing a larger share of the national income and in limiting the freedom of action of entrepreneurs, they may have the effect of restricting the investment surplus so much that the rate of economic growth is inhibited.[20]

He proceeds to recommend the delaying of unions in less developed countries until the level of aggregate income is sufficiently high to create a bargaining margin. It is only then that investment can survive what he calls "wage appropriations".

Authors like Adolf Strumthal[21] draw extensively on the labour histories of the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States and demonstrate that during the Industrial Revolution, unions were

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[19] William Knowles, "The British West Indies", in Walter Galenson (ed.), Labour and Economic Development (New York: Wiley, 1959), p. 285.

[20] Karl de Schweinitz, "Industrialization, Labour Controls and Democracy", Economic Development and Cultural Change, VII No. 4 (July 1959), 388.

[21] Adolf Strumthal, "Unions and Economic Development", Economic Development and Cultural Change, III (January 1960).

constrained in those countries by legal, administrative and judicial devices. He suggests, therefore, that control of nascent unions is even more urgent in countries still in the 'pre-take-off' phase of development.

These views share one element in common: the magical potency of capital is assumed to be the primum mobile of economic development. Furthermore, these authors implicitly assume that nascent unions demand wage scales irrespective of their effects on national development. They also restrict the function of a union to that of acquiring wage increases, with little or no emphasis on the non-wage function of unions. The excessive preoccupation with capital accumulation in the Lewis, Ranis-Fei[22] models would leave one to conclude that industrial wages should be kept constant until surplus labour from the traditional sector is eliminated. Labour is therefore treated in terms of quantitative units and little thought is devoted to labour's qualitative aspect and its effect on the dynamics of development. Similarly, it is often assumed that saving occurs only in the modern sector, therefore labour unions should be prohibited from expropriating the investable surplus.

There is no empirical evidence that Caribbean unions 'gobble up' the community's savings, and there is still less evidence that workers in the traditional sectors are dissavers on the margin. Whereas this may be true for some, it may not be true for all households.

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[22]W. Arthur Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour", The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies (May 1954); and G. Ranis and J. Fei, "A Theory of Economic Development", American Economic Review (September 1961).

A 'reasonable' increase in wages can have the effect of improving labour quality, if, for example, labourers invest such increases in self-improvement enterprises, such as obtaining more nutricious foods, better housing and medical care, etc. One should never lose sight of the fact that post-emancipation Caribbean economic institutions have been shaped by laissez-faire capitalist philosophies. Removal of the primary incentive for labour (i.e. improved wage rates) may frustrate economic growth and invite political extremism.

Trade union restrictions of the Trinidad-Tobago type would be justified (see Chapter V): (a) if unions seek and obtain higher real wage irrespective of economic conditions facing the country and the development programmes affected; (b) if the working classes — particularly those in the traditional sector — do not participate in the saving process; (c) if wages were unrelated to the productivity either individually or in the aggregate and if labour's share is unaffected by the quality of work produced; (d) if aggregate demand has no effect on output, i.e. output remains constant irrespective of the level of aggregate demand.[23]

The issue here is not whether unions ought to be controlled since some form of social control appears to be an integral aspect of all organized societies. Rather, it is the criteria which governments employ to justify such control. In the West Indies, whenever the issue of greater union control is debated, one often hears that the absence of such control (in the light of increases in wages)

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[23] F.I. Ojow, "Labour Organizations in Economic Development", Eastern Africa Economic Review, II (1), 1970, p. 29.

reduces productivity, imposes a disadvantageous cost imbalance for West Indian products and reduces the rate of capital accumulation. Eric Williams, the prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, has stated that such considerations necessitated the introduction of the Industrial Stabilization Act (I.S.A.) of 1965 (see Chapter V). Similar fears have been expressed by past Jamaican and Antiguan governments although they have resisted the type of legislation on a scale similar to that of Trinidad.

An editorial in a pre-independence issue of the Daily Gleaner[24] argued that declining productivity in the sugar and banana, mining and manufacturing industries were jeopardizing Jamaica's external trade and rising wage rates were assumed to be the immediate cause. A test of this assertion has revealed, however, that while all sectors have experienced substantial increases in mean wage rates between 1949 and 1963, the rates of increase have been uneven. For the economy as a whole, real wage rates increased slower than the physical or value productivity.[25] A similar study on wage-productivity relations for Trinidad between 1951 and 1964[26] has shown real wages lagging behind productivity levels for all sectors except public utilities and construction. For the economy as a whole, the average annual increase in productivity was

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[24]Daily Gleaner (Kingston, Jamaica), Editorial, January 16, 1965.

[25]Havelock Brewster, "Wage Price and Productivity Relations in Jamaica, 1957 to 1962", Social and Economic Studies, XVIII (1).

[26]Havelock Brewster, Wage Policy in an Underdeveloped Economy: Trinidad and Tobago (Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, 1969).

estimated at 6.9 per cent while the average annual increase in money and real wages was estimated at 11.7 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively.[27] Table VI-3 presents the wage-productivity movements between 1951 and 1964 as evidence that such claims are often highly exaggerated, if not altogether false. Besides, a high wage rate is not the only factor affecting productivity.

The openness of the Caribbean economies and lack of government committment to radical institutional changes aggravate the problems of union and management alike. In Trinidad, where restrictions are most stringent, unions have developed a remarkably consistent approach to the problem of wage/income restraint. Their position appears to be that a good case for wage/income fixation according to some agreed-upon formula would be accepted. But such a position would, in the interest of maintaining their membership, equally commit them to scrutinize 'excess' profits of the multinational corporations since past experiences have not proved that such excess profits make for domestic reinvestment. Therefore, their support of an incomes policy is contingent on the freezing of the profit/wage ratio and certainly preventing its movement upward.[28] The Trinidad government has attempted a number of price controls with limited success since prices for most consumer durables and foods are determined exogenously. Direct taxation and other forms of fiscal and monetary controls, together with a desire to experiment with new techniques, should constitute fundamental instruments of government policy. It appears

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[27] Ibid., p. 21.

[28] Ibid.

TABLE VI-3

AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES OF INCREASE OF LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY, MONEY WAGE RATES AND REAL WAGE RATES, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1951-1964

Sector	Average Annual Increase in Labour Productivity %	Average Annual Increase in Money Wage Rates %	Average Annual Increase in Real Wage Rates %
Combined Sectors	6.99	11.7	5.6
Agriculture (Other than Sugar)	4.0	-	-
Sugar	13.2	18.1	3.8
Petroleum	17.7	11.6	5.6
Manufacturing	5.7	10.5	4.8
Construction	2.6	8.0	3.4
Government and Public Utilities	0.4	14.7	6.8
Other Services & Distribution	9.5	13.7	7.7

Source: Brewster, Wage-Policy Issues in an Underdeveloped Economy, p. 21.

that trade unions will not be convinced that in small open economies where the greater proportion of private productive enterprise is foreign-owned, high productivity and hence high profit rates automatically create high rates of reinvestment.

The question of union control inevitably raises the question of the type of controls that should be instituted considering the contemporary character of Caribbean societies. With increased labour education and the continued active participation in the Institute for Trade Union Education of the University of the West Indies, the strengthening of the conciliation and arbitration mechanisms, as has been done in Jamaica, appears to be adequate. It is true that Trinidad between 1960 and 1965 experienced an unusually large number of strikes, as Table VI-4 indicates, but as Brewster shows that even after the passing of the Industrial Stabilization Act in 1965, the greater portion of these disputes did not arise from wage claims but were in fact mainly concerned with dismissals, retrenchments, employment conditions and conditions of tenure.[29] These problems are unlikely to be legislated away or eliminated by court decisions. Union control in the Caribbean therefore, should not be weighted against labour to the point where they feel compelled to enter actively into politics in order to remove abuses.

Union control should be preceded therefore by a thorough study of the conditions which initiate and sustain industrial unrest. One such condition is in the area of labour supervision. Knowles recalls the experience of a Polish industrial chemist in a Guyana sugar mill

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[29] Ibid., p. 23.

TABLE VI-4

COMPARATIVE RECORD OF INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES FOR
JAMAICA, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1951-1967

	Jamaica			Trinidad & Tobago		
Year	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost	Number of Disputes	Workers Involved	Working Days Lost
1951	4	N/A	N/A	13	881	6,868
1952	42	6,328	79,126	5	1,207	49,157
1953	18	4,641	71,035	7	N/A	N/A
1954	25	3,186	39,854	5	2,628	121,339
1955	28	8,219	132,271	3	435	20,660
1956	15	5,680	4,900	7	11,028	244,356
1957	105	20,336	612,146	6	530	812
1958	61	20,486	181,804	7	1,494	5,740
1959	57	33,273	376,721	13	1,751	13,425
1960	69	11,921	64,522	69	12,595	23,898
1961	61	13,298	98,951	31	20,898	178,173
1962	108	16,081	123,831	N/A	N/A	N/A
1963	45	10,728	204,056	48	17,799	204,971
1964	41	8,560	67,846	44	8,097	95,906
1965	37	23,316	290,162	4	7,160	88,051
1966	69	29,563	17,849	N/A	N/A	N/A
1967	95	180,628	173,587	5	648	3,070

Source: International Labour Office, Yearbook of Labour Statistics.

during the early 1950's who increased labour productivity by 30 per cent in a two-year period by working with his employees, demonstrating, explaining and discussing personal problems with the men under his supervision. Employees later confided in the chemist their feelings that most white men thought their workers stupid, so they acted stupid, taking orders literally and displaying minimal initiative and responsibility and devising ways and means of 'beating the boss'.[30] In another instance, Knowles contrasted a worker's perception of the attitudes of a local supervisor who refused to work alongside his men and those of an American oil exploration team. A Guyanese worker remarked, "When you see one of those Americans coming down the street in khaki clothes and muddy boots instead of white linen and polished shoes you know he means business; we need more white people who would pitch in and work...."[31]

One of the major problems resulting from the West Indies historical association with Great Britain is the transmission of the British notions of class distinctions and the accompanying social distance to reinforce such class distinctions. Traditions originating from slavery and colonialism place a low premium on manual work so that supervisors are often unwilling to assist with the job problems for fear of losing their self-respect. Supervisors often exaggerate their status by being excessively authoritarian and in doing so induce worker apathy

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[30] William Knowles, "Supervision in the British West Indies: Sources of Labour Unrest", Industrial and Labour Relations Review, VIII (1), p. 374.

[31] Ibid.

and resentment. Supervisors who attempt to enforce company goals without ascertaining the response of the work force under their supervision run the risk of alienating their work crew. Again these problems cannot be eliminated either through legislation or through court decisions.

Another issue is the frequent inability of managers, supervisors and trade unionists to overcome racial barriers. The historical circumstances which brought these two racial groups into contact with each other has resulted in stereotypes which, if employed in decision-making, contribute to industrial unrest. Executives of international corporations could find it profitable to invest in courses on race-ethnic relations before assuming duties in the Caribbean.

Recent attempts at the internationalization of the Black Power movement has resulted in increased vigilance on the industrial front. The younger generation of union personnel, many of whom have studied outside the Caribbean, and have been subjected to varying forms of racial discrimination, are unwilling to tolerate the slightest indication of racial resentment. Caribbean governments contemplating further union control should be reminded that excessive control could undermine the struggle for racial equality and invite political unrest.

Finally, in considering the types of union control, governments of the Caribbean should consider one fundamental constraint: the openness of Caribbean society. With unrestricted flow of ideas from outside the region, the more extreme forms of union control are undesirable. Caribbean labour organizations have long embarked upon interunion cooperation by the establishment of local trade union congresses. Regional cooperation is also evidenced by the existence of the Caribbean

Labour Congress (C.L.C.) and the Caribbean Area Division of the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (C.A.D.-O.R.I.T.). Relations have been developed with the World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.). Local Caribbean unions are likely to exploit their international connections in the event of excessive government regulation. This would inevitably affect the stability of the region.

The free exchange of ideas has not been an unmixed blessing. While it is true that an interchange of ideas facilitates desirable social change, at least theoretically, governments and unions tend to immitate foreign models rather than combine them in order to produce ideas more suited to the region. This tendency pervades all aspects of West Indian society. Professor Douglas Hall somewhat facetiously attributes the imitative character of West Indians to our being a nation of imports; first English masters and their indentured servants, black slaves and finally Asian indentures. Commenting on Jamaican society, Professor Hall bemoans our penchant for importing 'expert' opinion.

> If we want to fatten our pigs, we send for an expert. If we want to change a school curriculum, we send for an expert. If we want to build a dam, we send for an expert. There can be no objection in principle to the use of experts; but there seem to be very important guidelines to the proper choice and use of them. To begin with, in the employment of the 'expert', it is wise to examine carefully the mouth of the gifthorse. Free experts are often more free than expert. Secondly, it is nearly always better

> to send a good local man in search of information and advice than to invite some one in to give it.[32]

Commenting on the regional outlook on the eve of the West Indies federation in April 1958, Hall observes

> Our draftsmen spent long hours studying the constitutions of the Canadian, the American and Australian federations. They had not given much time to creative thinking based on Caribbean circumstances and needs.[33]

After the failure of the West Indian federation in 1961, Jamaica received her independence in August 1962. Again Hall notes

> The framers of our political constitutions for independence had, like their federal predecessors, displayed great energy and little if any creativity. With very minor deviations we readily assumed the garb of Westminister and our members of Parliament, bewigged and frock-coated, took their opposite seats as Her Majesty's government and Her Majesty's loyal opposition.[34]

These passages are quoted at length since they have serious implications for the conduct of government and trade unions alike. What is required is a redirection and a new approach to the problems of the Caribbean. Control of asynchronous elements within Caribbean society does not ensure economic growth or industrial peace.

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[32] Douglas Hall, "The Ex-Colonial Society of Jamaica", in Emmanual De Kadt (ed.), Patterns of Foreign Influence in the Caribbean (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 41-42.

[33] Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[34] Ibid., p. 40.

CHAPTER VII

PROSPECTS AND PROGNOSIS

The English speaking islands of the Caribbean have had only thirty-five years to develop their industrial relations system. No doubt the more extreme manifestations of political unionism cited in this thesis are transitional. But it would be undesirable, as well as politically destabilizing to attempt overly stringent control of unions. This in view of the traditional involvement of Caribbean unions in broad social and political issues would invite counter-productive results and union sabotage.

Most West Indians believe that the Caribbean is inexorably tied to the Anglo-American system and that these ties tend to restrict innovation and breed immitation. However, this perspective underestimates the peculiarities of the West Indian situation. For example, it is likely that West Indian trade unions would vigorously resist wage/income controls which do not regulate the profits of multinational corporations.

In the Caribbean, perhaps more so than in most other areas, there are obtrusive interconnections between labour policies and issues such as foreign investment, the alternative paths available in economic development, reform in educational philosophy, fiscal and monetary reform and, above all, the redirection of demographic variables. Unfortunately, these issues are too often evaded by officialdom with

its predisposition for cosmetic wage and price controls and other forms of repressive labour legislation.

Moreover, ritualistic repression of labour movements, tempting though this may be to many Caribbean governments, is likely to invite a counter-reaction from Caribbean labour's international affiliates. Addressing the 38th graduating class of the American Institute for Free Labour Development, Joseph Keenan, Secretary for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, urged the graduates to endeavour to unite all regional labour organizations against the multinational corporations' exploitation of cheap supplies of labour.

> In face of the multinational corporation and gigantic conglomerates on an international scale, we must now more than ever, unite in an unprecedented effort of worker solidarity to prevent exploitation of our fellow trade unionists in the form of low wages and sub-standard working conditions.[1]

Joseph Keenan stressed that labour organizations should not permit branch plants to shift production from one country to another and in so doing evade the "just and legal aspirations of workers".[2] This, if permitted, "is nothing more than plain old-fashoned union busting".[3]

Caribbean unions have traditionally been involved in a wide variety of social and economic issues. This tradition should not be discouraged as it has great innovative potential, both on macro and micro levels. One example is the decision by the Trinidad/Tobago Labour Congress to establish a Workers' Bank in December 1971. With share

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[1] Quoted in Caribbean Labour Congress, Information Bulletin, No. 64 (December 1971), p. 31.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

capital estimated at $9,000,000 (T.T.),[4] the experiment is expected to be successful despite the opposition which the union claims it has been subjected to from the traditional banking community. The successful establishment of a consumers' cooperative by the Grenada Trade Union Council[5] provides yet another example of what for the Caribbean constitutes innovative involvement in the social and economic development of the region.

The Caribbean labour movement, appears to be at a crucial stage in its development. Rapid change, both emanating from within the Caribbean and induced from abroad, is creating tensions and pressures throughout the social fabric. But governments should not be tempted to confront complex social and economic problems with simplistic solutions. In particular governments should avoid the temptation to over-regulate the trade unions by political or legal means. Caribbean unions should be allowed to develop into an independent force for mediation between industry and labour on the one hand and government and labour on the other.

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[4] Ibid., p. 3.

[5] Ibid., p. 4.

APPENDIX I

AREA AND POPULATION OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN NATIONS AND SEMI-AUTONOMOUS UNITS

Independent Nations	Area in Square Miles	Estimated Population
Jamaica	4,411	1,827,000 (1966)
Trinidad & Tobago	1,980	979,000 (1965)
Guyana	83,000	655,000 (1965)
Barbados	166	245,000 (1965)
Other Semi-Autonomous Units		
Antigua-Barbuda	171	64,000 (1965)
Bahamas	4,404	138,000 (1965)
British Honduras	8,867	109,000 (1966)
Cayman Islands	93	8,000 (1965)
Dominica	305	65,000 (1964)
Grenada	133	94,000 (1964)
Montserrat	32	14,000 (1964)
St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla	155	59,000 (1964)
St. Lucia	238	99,000 (1964)
St. Vincent	150	87,000 (1964)
Turks & Caicos Islands	202	6,000 (1964)
British Virgin Islands	59	8,000 (1964)

Source: Paul Blanshard, Democracy and Empire in the Caribbean (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 109.

APPENDIX II

THE AMOUNT AND RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH IN THE CARIBBEAN TERRITORIES SINCE 1900[1]

Former British Possessions	1900-1910 Amount		1910-1920 Amount		Rate[2]	1920-1930 Amount		Rate
Barbados			171,983	1911(C)		156,312	1921(C)	-1.28
British Guiana			296,041	1911(C)		307,391	1921(C)	.38
British Honduras	37,479	1901(C)	40,458	1911(C)	.80	45,317	1921(C)	1.18
Jamaica	755,730	1901(E)	831,383	1911(C)	1.00	858,118	1921(C)	.32
Turks & Caicos			5,615	1911(C)		5,612	1921(C)	- .00
Cayman			5,564	1911(C)		5,253	1921(C)	- .54
Leeward Islands								
Antigua	34,971	1901(C)	32,269	1911(C)	- .77	28,864	1921(C)	-1.06
Barbuda & Redonda						903	1921(C)	
St. Kitts-Nevis	46,446	1901(C)	43,303	1911(C)	- .67	33,984	1921(C)	-2.14
Anguilla						4,230	1921(C)	
Montserrat	12,215	1901(C)	12,196	1911(C)	- .00	12,120	1921(C)	- .01
Virgin Islands	4,908	1901(C)	5,562	1911(C)	1.43	5,061	1921(C)	- .88
Trinidad & Tobago	273,899	1901(C)	333,552	1911(C)	2.18	365,913	1921(C)	.97
Windward Islands								
Dominica	28,894	1901(C)	33,863	1911(C)	1.73	37,059	1921(C)	.94
Grenada	63,438	1901(C)	66,750	1911(C)	.54	58,506	1921(C)	}- .07
Carriacou						7,796	1921(C)	
St. Lucia	49,883	1901(C)	48,637	1911(C)	- .26	51,505	1921(C)	.60
St. Vincent			41,877	1911(C)		44,447	1921(C)	.60
Lesser Grenadines of St. Vincent								

continued...

[1]Based on census and other official reports. (C) indicates a census figure and (E) indicates an official estimate.

[2]Average annual per cent of increase or decrease.

Former British Possessions	1930-1940 Amount		Rate	1940-1948 Amount		Rate	1960 Estimates Amount
Barbados				192,800	1946(C)	.95	220,618
British Guiana	318,312	1931(C)	.35	375,701	1946(C)	1.20	444,039
British Honduras	51,347	1931(C)	1.32	59,220	1946(C)	1.02†	69,307
Jamaica	1,050,667	1931(E)	2.13	1,249,871	1943(C)[1]	2.10	1,778,958
Turks & Caicos				6,138	1943(C)		
Cayman				6,670	1943(C)	11.00V	39,342
Leeward Islands							
Antigua	34,123	1938(E)	1.06	41,757	1946(C)	2.82	60,864
Barbuda & Redonda	1,000	1938(E)	.64				1,147
St. Kitts-Nevis	31,852	1938(E)	- .35	46,243	1946(C)	2.89	99,157
Anguilla	5,717	1938(E)	2.00				8,835
Montserrat	13,670	1938(E)	.77	14,333	1946(C)	.55	15,476
Virgin Islands	6,364	1938(E)	1.50	6,505	1946(C)	.19	6,679
Trinidad	377,337	1931(C)	.31	557,970	1946(C)	2.55	794,949
Tobago	25,358	1931(C)					
Windward Islands							
Dominica				46,624	1946(C)	1.13	55,739
Grenada				72,387	1946(C)	.37	76,227
Carriacou							
St. Lucia	54,505	1938(E)	.34	70,113	1946(C)	3.58	114,493
St. Vincent	47,961	1931(C)	.81	61,647	1946(C)	1.13	72,128
Lesser Grenadines of St. Vincent							

[1]Estimate for December 31, 1946 equals 1,314,004 or a rate of increase of 1.71 per cent.

†Since 1931.

VSince 1934.

Source: G.W. Roberts, "Movements in Population and the Labour Force", G.E. Cunnper (ed), The Economy of the West Indies (Kingston, Jamaica: United Printers Limited, 1960), pp. 27-8.

APPENDIX III

GROWTH OF THE WORKING FORCE (BOTH SEXES), 1891-1943/46

Territory	1891	1911	1921	1943/46
Barbados	104,500	100,600	94,600	93,500
British Guiana	183,600	191,100	178,400	147,100
Jamaica	373,500	410,900	443,900	484,300
Antigua	22,000	17,000	17,200	18,600
Montserrat	5,500	6,900	6,400	6,600
St. Kitts-Nevis	26,700	21,700	19,300	20,800
Virgin Islands	2,200	2,000†	2,000†	2,000
Trinidad	136,600	192,600	208,600	213,100
Dominica	15,600	20,800	25,500	21,300
Grenada	27,500	33,500	33,700	27,600
St. Lucia	26,300	27,600	26,900	31,900
St. Vincent	22,100	20,600	21,600	22,700
Total	946,100	1,045,300	1,078,100	1,089,500

†Estimated

Source: Taken from G.W. Roberts, "Movements in Population and the Labour Force", in G.E. Cumper (ed.), The Economy of the West Indies (Kingston, Jamaica: United Printers Limited, 1960), p. 33.

APPENDIX IV

MOVEMENTS IN THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR FORCE, 1891-1943/46

Territory	1891	1911	1921	1943/46
Barbados	45,000	37,700	34,200	26,800
British Guiana	108,500	106,500	85,000	67,500
Jamaica	271,300	271,500	285,700	228,600
Antigua	12,700	-	9,400	8,500
Montserrat	4,000	-	4,600	4,000
St. Kitts	16,300	11,800	11,100	11,600
Virgin Islands	1,100	-	1,000†	1,200
Trinidad	70,700	97,100	95,600	58,800
Dominica	11,400	13,000	18,300	12,400
Grenada	14,600	18,000	17,400	13,100
St. Lucia	13,800	17,800	18,600	17,300
St. Vincent	13,800	12,300	12,800	12,100
Total	583,200	-	593,700	461,900

†Estimated

Source: Roberts, "Movements in Population and the Labour Force", p. 34.

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