● PSF State Dept.: Taussig Report 1941

File Personal

Taussig Report I

PSF: State Folder 2-41

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

May 12, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

It has been impressed upon me by your memorandum of April 30, as well as by what you said at last Cabinet meeting, that you are disinclined to send me that part of the Taussig report which emits conclusions. I know when someone has landed on my chin, and if I had had any conception of the power behind the fist, I would not have ventured to ask for the conclusions, even although I suspect that these would be particularly interesting to me, because, in a general way, I knew some of them.

I have not asked to be "'in' on any investigation or facts resulting therefrom." I was merely expressing an interest in what had resulted from an investigation of an area that includes Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, as to which I had been distinctly "out". It appears that Mr. Taussig has taken others than myself into his confidence with respect to at least some of his conclusions. I rarely hear of him except in connection with some act that would hardly be regarded as friendly.

I gathered from the physical appearance of the Taussig report of "facts" that it was written in the Department of State. I understand that the Department of State has graciously unbent toward me to the extent that it is willing to name for me on the International Commission, or whatever may ultimately be set up on the basis of the Taussig report, a representative of this Department.

I think that I do understand.

Sincerely yours,

Harold L. Ickes

Secretary of the Interior.

The President,
The White House.

State Folder
2-41

April 30, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Dear Harold:-

Most certainly I will not send you that part of the Taussig report which draws conclusions. The reason is that the question of conclusions at this time is neither here nor there. What we are dealing with is an investigation of facts. We have not even reached the stage of recommendations.

Most certainly, also, you ought to be "in" on any investigation or facts resulting therefrom. I myself have not read the conclusions because I have not sufficient facts. The fact end must be further developed before any one of us lets his mind arrive at the conclusion stage.

I think that the facts of the Taussig report are extremely interesting and they should be further developed. When that time comes, we can all get together and listen to all kinds of suggestions relating to something to do about the facts.

I know you will understand.

F. D. R.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

April 28, 1941.

My dear Miss LeHand:

I am sending back to you a copy of what was sent to me as the report of the Taussig Committee on the West Indies. This report seems to be incomplete. That part which contains the conclusions which I understand the Taussig Committee formulated and which necessarily constitutes the most important part of the report, was not forwarded.

Will you be good enough to supply me with the balance of the report. I am anxious to see what these conclusions were.

Sincerely yours,

Harold L. Ickes

Secretary of the Interior.

Miss Marguerite LeHand,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Enc.

I understand
Sumner Welles spoke
to you about this.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

4-21-41

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

Sumner Welles phoned that he has information that the Secretary of the Interior has asked for a copy of the confidential report of Charles Taussig on the Caribbean Sea.

Sumner Welles thinks that the President should not let this confidential copy leave the White House for the time being.

E.M.W.

E.M.W.

Monday

Grace: If you have this confi. report please hold until Sumner Welles has stated his objections to Pres. - Tuesday

E.M.W.

originally filed downstairs 2/21/41

F 2/24/41

~~#318~~

REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION TO STUDY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES, APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON NOVEMBER 13, 1940

#

CHARLES W. TAUSSIG, CHAIRMAN

x W.C.

x PP7/644

LT. COL. A. F. KIBLER

x

LT. COMM. W. S. CAMPBELL

x

x 396

x West Indies

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Chapter I

Purpose and method of inquiry.

On November 13, 1940, the President of the United States designated Mr. Charles William Taussig as Chairman of a Commission to proceed to the British West Indies to study social and economic conditions in those colonies. The other members of the Commission were Lt. Colonel A. F. Kibler and Lt. Commander W. S. Campbell. Mr. E. R. Pierce accompanied the Commission as clerk-stenographer.

We sailed from New York on the S. S. BRAZIL of the American Republics Line on November 15, 1940, and arrived at Barbados on the morning of the 20th of November. On November 23rd we left Barbados on the U. S. S. SAMPSON for Trinidad. After spending several days at Trinidad we continued on the SAMPSON, calling at the following islands:

Grenada	Nevis
Carriacou	St. Kitts
St. Vincent	Anguilla
St. Lucia	Tortola
Dominica	St. Thomas
Montserrat	St. Croix
Antigua	Puerto Rico

At San Juan we left the destroyer and proceeded to Jamaica by Pan American Airways and from Jamaica we flew to Nassau via Miami by Pan American plane. A complete schedule will be found in the appendix. The Commission

visited

visited all of the British colonies in the West Indies with the exception of British Guiana, British Honduras and Bermuda.

Objectives of the Commission:

Due to the limited time we had to make our inquiry and the small size of the Commission, we did not attempt to make a detailed study of all the social and economic problems in the British West Indies. We confined ourselves to a survey of the various factors in the life of these colonies which might affect directly or indirectly the government and people of the United States of America. This included, among other things:

1. The attitude of the people and governments towards our acquisition of bases in the Caribbean.

2. The general attitude towards the United States of America.

3. The possibility of revolt, riots and other disturbances in the islands that might affect the stability of the Caribbean area.

4. The possibilities of subversive activities in the islands that might have direct or indirect repercussions in the United States or in South America.

5. Military, social and economic factors that might prove important if, in the event of the defeat of Great Britain

Britain in the present war, it became necessary for the United States to occupy these islands.

6. Social and economic trends in the islands, particularly as they relate to the recent policies in the same fields adopted by the United States.

7. British experience in colonial government that might be useful to the United States in its Puerto Rican and Virgin Islands problems.

8. The possibilities of exchange of information between the government of the United States and the various colonial governments in matters pertaining to agriculture, housing, resettlement projects, subsistence farming, police information, and other matters in which an exchange would either bring added knowledge to the various governments or prevent duplication of effort.

9. Consideration of the scope and effectiveness of our present foreign service in these islands and whether there should be any increase in our consular representation or any additional diplomatic representation to the islands.

10. Problems pertaining to transportation and communication.

Methods of pursuing inquiry:

During the course of our inquiry we interviewed approximately 150 individuals (see attached list). Every facility

of the

of the Colonial Governments was afforded us in the pursuance of our investigation. In several places we were given the opportunity to meet with the Executive Council of the Legislature. In some of these conferences we used the "round table" technique, which was particularly useful in bringing about a clash of opinion by local people. This, of course, broke down all official reserve and offered us an opportunity to study conflicting points of view. In many places we were offered the opportunity to hold formal hearings with a stenographer to record the proceedings. In such cases we politely rejected the offer, feeling that it would have been an imposition for a foreign mission to carry on such procedure.

We had lengthy and satisfactory discussions with all the Governors of the Colonies we visited, with the exception of Sir Hubert Young, Governor of Trinidad, whom we did not see excepting on the occasion of our official call. (However, we received the most cordial and helpful cooperation from all of the officials in Trinidad, from the Colonial Secretary down). In several cases the Governors arranged for private talks with the Chairman. Such conversations were particularly valuable as restrictions normally placed on the Governors by the Colonial Office were forgotten. We had discussions with substantially all of the labor leaders of the various islands

we visited.

we visited. Some of these had been previously arranged by personal letters from negro leaders in the United States which expressed confidence in the sympathy and integrity of the Chairman and urged complete frankness in discussions. These letters proved in several instances very helpful and enabled the Chairman to acquire information that he might not otherwise have been able to secure. We talked with prominent planters, merchants, educators, medical men, heads of employers' associations and presidents of chambers of commerce. The Commissioners of Police and C.I.D. officers were particularly helpful. In Trinidad, the entire dossier on contacts between possible subversive elements in the United States and elsewhere with people in the island was put at our disposal.

We also had opportunity to talk to individual small farmers, peasants and laborers. We visited schools, hospitals, work projects, agricultural schools, youth work projects with related education, relief projects, prisons, insane asylums, military and police establishments, churches, and private homes. We saw large areas of all the islands we stopped at, using as conveyances automobiles, airplanes, motor launches, and horses, depending on which best suited our purpose.

Chapter II

Broad aspects of the West Indian problem.

Any generalization concerning the British West Indies is likely to be misleading. Perhaps the most common is that their major problem is over-population. The defeatist attitude, which is not uncommon, is that the only solution is birth control and that is impossible because of Church opposition and the apathy and ignorance of the people.

If by over-population is meant that there are more people than the present economic "system" of the islands can support, then, in truth, the islands do suffer from this ill. But we must not overlook the possibility that the fault lies in the economics of the islands and not in the birth rate.

It is difficult to visit those islands, as this Commission has done and then conclude that the aggregate social and economic mechanisms in operation there can be termed a "system". We have found a wide variety of economies operating in the islands, ranging from relatively pure Communism in a part of the British Virgin Islands (which dates back to the abandonment of the estates at the time of emancipation and the acquisition of the land by the freed slaves on a basis of communal ownership) to the

plantocracy

plantocracy of St. Kitts. In some of the smaller islands such as Tortola, Anguilla and Carriacou, we found a primitive peasant economy. In most of the islands there is a combination of peasant land-ownership, large estates, small merchants, absenteeism and, in Trinidad one must add industrialism as represented by the large oil developments and refineries. We think it fair to say that by former standards of British colonial development the British West Indies are currently a liability, excluding, of course, their possible economic value in the present war. The bulk of exports from the islands can normally be purchased by Great Britain in the world market at lower prices than is paid for West Indian produce. Sugar, the principal agricultural commodity, is subsidized to several times its value in the world market. Bananas are protected, as are several other lesser commodities. Sea island cotton, which at the moment is in demand for the construction of barrage balloons, is now bought at an artificially fixed price.

In all the islands that produce relatively large cash or "economic" crops there is a major conflict of policy. Should food crops be substituted for cash crops and thus make the islands self-sustaining from the standpoint of subsistence? The planters naturally resist such a change. The importers and small merchants dealing in flour, rice,

salt

salt fish and other imported food products, are not friendly to putting the islands on a subsistence basis. Should the subsidy and protection for sugar and other cash commodities be withdrawn it is quite evident that the islands would have to grow their own food or starve. Parenthetically, there is little evidence of starvation in the islands at the present time but the incidence of deficiency diseases and the reports of Imperial medical commissions indicate malnutrition is widespread.

The Royal Commission has taken a stand in favor of increased subsistence farming, going so far as to advocate condemnation of estate lands for this purpose when necessary. Lack of foreign exchange has forced some of the colonies to require by law that a certain percentage of arable land be used for food crops and in all of the colonies there is much propaganda aimed at producing more home grown food.

The trend is definitely toward converting some of the surplus population into peasant farmers. The ultimate goal is for them to diversify their crops in such proportion that they will produce enough food for their families and devote the rest of their land to domestic food crops for local sale and to exportable cash crops. As long as certain commodities are highly subsidized the peasant will continue

to raise

to raise these export cash crops in preference to food.

Nowhere can one see more dramatically than in the relatively simple agricultural economy of these islands the need for a world economic accord nor the many obstacles to such agreement. One can pick at random almost any local colonial government official and hear the statements; (1) "We have to make this colony self-supporting and independent of any financial aid from the mother country", (2) "We must not agree again to curtail our sugar production but rather substantially to increase it", and (3) "We must have adequate preference and subsidies so that we do not have to compete with the world market". There apparently is something more moral in a hidden grant in the form of a sugar subsidy than in a direct grant-in-aid for adequate social services. This attitude is not confined to government officials.

In Trinidad we talked to a farmer. He was a carpenter by trade, with opportunities for employment. He had purchased one acre of land from the government on a twenty-year payment plan. He was supposed to work at his trade and use the land to grow food crops for himself and family. He had abandoned his trade and was endeavoring to grow local cash crops on this single acre. A government official was with us

us. The farmer complained to him that he was only getting a dollar and a half a bushel for his corn (more than twice the world price). He claimed not to have sufficient protection against imported corn and asked to have the duty raised. The man was obviously a hard worker and independent. He was not looking for handouts but regarded a duty or subsidy on his crops as being as natural as sun, rain and fertilizer.

Some of the worst cases of malnutrition are found in families who have adequate land to raise their own food but who prefer to raise subsidized cash crops and purchase imported foods on which they have to pay a duty and which have far less nutritional value than the produce of their own soil.

We visited the island of Anguilla, an island of five thousand inhabitants, substantially all of whom are peasants. The island has no communication, either in the form of steamship service, radio or cable. It has poor soil, deficient rainfall and inadequate water supply. There is practically no money on the island. People there have an extremely hard struggle for existence yet on this island we found far better houses than on the relatively wealthier islands; we found a happier people; more family life; far less illegitimacy and much less disease. Frequently,

because

because of drought, their food crops are a total failure yet they have learned from necessity what has not generally been learned in the other islands -- how to preserve their food. The rooftops of this island are covered with corn, which they dry. They raise goats, some cattle and take advantage of the plentiful supply of fish. The islands which produce "economic" crops, for the most part do not fish or raise enough cattle and consequently have a diet greatly deficient in protein.

Based on observation rather than statistics it would seem to us that if these islands set out first to sustain their population by providing sufficient food and secondly to produce exportable commodities in such quantities as the outside world required and agreed to take they would not only be able to sustain their increasing population but also to produce wealth for the world and to acquire a moderate amount of that wealth for themselves.

The question of increasing birth rate might also adjust itself. Where promiscuity decreases, the birth rate also decreases. It is the experience of the islands that where peasants live under reasonably decent conditions the accent is on the family unit and where this is the case there is less promiscuity.

Population is not well distributed in the British West Indies. Again they run to extremes, from Barbados, the

most

most densely populated country in the world, with about two hundred thousand people on one hundred and sixty-six square miles of land, to the under-population of British Guiana, British Honduras and the Bahamas. No solution to the West Indian problem is likely to be found without at least a moderate re-distribution of population within that area.

Although there has been no major reorientation of fundamental economic policy on the part of Great Britain for the West Indian colonies, there has been a startling and vigorous effort since the disturbances of 1935-37 to eliminate some of the more shocking social evils.

There is little doubt that these riots; the reports of the various local and Imperial commissions that investigated the riots; and, most important, the recommendations of the West Indian Royal Commission, have caused a change in attitude comparable only to that which took place at the time of the Emancipation. The most limiting factor in the proposed changes in the colonies and in the social activities now under way, is lack of funds. The Royal Commission said "There is a pressing need for large expenditures on social services and development that not even the least poor of the West Indian colonies can hope to undertake from their own resources".

resources". It was obvious to us, however, that their recommendation of a grant of a million pounds annually for twenty years is totally inadequate to accomplish any far-reaching results. Mr. J. D. Harford, Administrator for the Presidency of St. Kitts-Nevis, told us that until recently the policy of the Colonial Office was to have each colony be self-supporting, in fact, they were urged to accumulate a Treasury surplus, which most of the colonies did at the expense of their social services. This policy has been recently modified to the extent that they are asked no longer to accumulate surpluses but merely to balance their budgets. Many of the colonies have returned to the Imperial Exchequer half of their accumulated surpluses for prosecution of the war.

Lack of appropriations may well nullify the many social reforms and advances now being undertaken, in which case a resumption of riots and revolt is only a matter of time.

The improvement in labor relations is gone into in some detail in this report. Labor officers have been appointed in most of the colonies and islands. Trade union laws paralleling somewhat those in the United Kingdom are being enacted. Participation in the Welfare Fund is dependent on the passage of such laws. His Royal

Highness

Highness the Duke of Windsor told us that the Bay Street merchants of Nassau had successfully blocked all attempts to enact protective labor laws of the sort recommended by the Royal Commission and as a consequence the Bahamas are the only colony that will not participate in the Imperial "Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies".

Education generally has been backward in the British West Indies, due to many causes, including conflict between public and parochial schools and to an attempt to follow the more classical type of English education rather than to bring it more into relation with the environment of the children and the needs of the community. There has in the past several years been some progress made in manual and agricultural teaching for boys and domestic training and child welfare instruction for girls. In Jamaica there have been established three projects for the purpose of giving agricultural and work experience to young boys, supplemented with related education. The Commission visited one of these projects, known as Holmwood, which is similar to some of the better projects of this type in the United States operated by the National Youth Administration.

Reactionary planters and merchants expressed to us

their

their opposition toward educating the negro on the ground that if the black population becomes educated it will become the governing class. We asked Bishop Bentley of Barbados, who is in charge of education for that colony, how prevalent this attitude was. He said that there were many people of that opinion. He further stated that his belief was that negroes should continue to receive more and better education until they did become the ruling class, which in his opinion was the ultimate destiny of the black man in the West Indies. We repeated this conversation to Governor Waddington, who is a decided liberal. He commented laughingly that "His Lordship will hear from his parishioners on that subject".

Attention is now being given to the formulation of a long-term health policy and some slight progress is already being made in the matter of general sanitation, improved housing and the education of the people in matters pertaining generally to health and nutrition. A program of housing is now under way in several of the colonies. The most outstanding are in Barbados and Trinidad. The Housing Commissioner and Town Planner in Trinidad is Mr. W. A. Grinnell, an American. He is doing an outstanding job with extremely limited funds.

The

The present program calls for the building of six thousand houses. The various projects got under way in September, 1940, and when we visited them in November a thousand houses were already under construction and two hundred completed. These houses range in cost from a low of about $350 for a 3-room house to a high of slightly in excess of a thousand dollars. The houses in St. Croix and St. Thomas cost from $1,000 to $1,500 a room. Some allowance must be made for the fact that the Virgin Islands of the United States are in the hurricane zone whereas Trinidad is not. An exchange of information and experience between Trinidad and the Virgin Islands of the United States might prove of mutual value.

An attempt at an ambitious resettlement project providing for the emigration of urban Barbadians to Vieux Fort in St. Lucia is being undertaken. This was the most disheartening project we saw of all the new social developments in the British West Indies. Lack of funds, improper planning, improper selection of émigrés and no preliminary education of the settlers contribute to what promises to be a tragic failure.

In the field of agriculture great interest is being shown in the prevention of soil erosion, which is becoming a serious problem in many of the islands.

Sir Frank

Sir Frank Stockdale, the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, and who himself is an agricultural expert, was in Washington some time ago and arranged for the Department of Agriculture to send information on soil erosion to all of the colonies. Everywhere we visited grateful comments were made on the cooperation of the United States in this important problem. Efforts are also being made to eliminate share cropping by substituting various programs of land settlement. Increased work in eradicating the various diseases that have been ravishing banana and cocoa culture is now under way.

All of these efforts are having a quieting effect on the unrest in the islands and for the time being, with some notable exceptions, there is a relative era of good feeling.

Negro leaders are constantly agitating for a more representative form of government. The local legislatures are made up of elected and appointed representatives. There is a property and income qualification for enfranchisement. This limits the electorate to relatively few. In Barbados, with its two hundred thousand population, only about six thousand are qualified to vote. In some of the other islands the

proportion

proportion is even smaller. It will be interesting to compare the two systems now in effect in the Virgin Islands of the United States and the British West Indies. Under the Organic Act of 1936, the Virgin Islands of the United States have universal franchise.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The development of the British West Indies in recent times has been affected by two important events; the abolition of slavery in 1834; and the riots and disturbances in several of the islands in 1935-37.

With the abolition of the slave trade in 1808 the lucrative triangular trade in rum, sugar, slaves and molasses, between North America and Africa - Africa and the West Indies - and the West Indies and North America - came to an end. The cessation of this trade and the inability to acquire additional supplies of negroes was a contributing cause to a general disruption of the economy in the islands. To this must be added the heavy mortgages and general indebtedness of the planters. There was a degeneration of plantations in progress when emancipation came in 1838.

At this time in many of the islands plantations were abandoned and the land turned over to the freed slaves. There is some disagreement among authorities as to whether the abandonment of plantations at the time of emancipation was due to the inauguration of free labor or was the culmination of previous years of poor management

and

and increasing indebtedness. The preponderance of evidence would indicate that the latter was the primary cause, for in such colonies as Barbados, where plantation management had been good, an era of greater prosperity came with emancipation.

Investigators of social and economic conditions in the British West Indies within a few years after emancipation questioned many of the successful planters as to their preference to slave labor or free labor. The answer invariably was that free labor was more efficient and economical and that they would not wish to return to slave labor. It is interesting to note that in our inquiries we asked employers whether they preferred the system of individual bargaining with their employees that was in effect prior to the disturbances of 1935-37 or the present system of collective bargaining with labor unions. Substantially all of the employers so questioned stated that collective bargaining was preferable.

Many of the social and economic problems in the West Indies today have as their basis the still undigested transition from slave to free man. The institution of slavery had existed in the West Indies for over two hundred years and the customs and laws governing the

relation

relation of master and slave were pretty well established. The laws differed in various colonies but in general took care of the minimum needs of the slaves. Where laws were not adequate the self-interest of the planter imposed upon him a certain responsibility for the maintenance of his slaves in a reasonable state of health.

With emancipation came the freeing of hundreds of thousands of black men and women from servitude. Laws were hastily passed giving them a reasonable amount of protection in their new state.

Education, of which there was little during the slave period, was slow to get started and many of the fundamental problems of today can be laid to the lack of preparation of the negroes for freedom. Although there has been considerable advance in the various islands the quantity and quality of education during the past 100 years has not been adequate to prepare the masses for a complete assumption of their responsibilities as free men.

Where estates were abandoned at the time of emancipation and the lands divided among the freed slaves, transforming them into peasants, there developed a primitive but relatively happy and stable society. In his

book

book "The Ordeal of Free Labor in the British West Indies", published in 1861, William G. Sewell says, "Where the estates were not abandoned at the time of emancipation the slaves were left in possession of their houses and allotment lands, which they continued to occupy after their term of apprenticeship had expired. In Barbados the tenant worked for his landlord at 20 per cent below the common market rate and his service was taken as an equivalent for rent. The practice produced endless difficulties and disagreements so another system was introduced. A laborer was given a house and land allotment on an estate, for which he paid a stipulated rent but he was under agreement as a condition of renting to give the estate a certain number of days labor for stipulated wages, varying from one-sixth to one-third less than the market price. The rate of wages for field labor in Barbados was about 24 cents a day but the laborer, fettered by the system of tenancy, was compelled to work for his landlord at 20 cents per day. He was therefore virtually a slave, for if he resisted conditions of his bond he was ejected by summary process".

With modifications and some additional protective laws this condition in principle still exists in many parts of the West Indies. The wielding of this potent

weapon

weapon of dispossession was a complaint made to us by several of the labor leaders whom we interviewed. It also has some bearing on the generally poor housing conditions that exist in almost all of the islands for in many cases only the land is provided by the estate, the worker has to supply his own house. He therefore builds it of the lightest construction so that it can be moved at a moment's notice to some other estate. Frequently, the ability of a laborer to transport his house represents his only weapon against an oppressive employer.

In some of the islands many of the freed slaves acquired land and set up an independent peasant existence. Others became artisans, some became shopkeepers and merchants, some ultimately became wealthy and they themselves became employers of labor. This diversion of agricultural labor into other pursuits at times created a shortage of labor or caused a balance between supply and demand for labor so that there was a tendency for wages to increase. It was because of these factors that a substantial importation of coolie and East Indian labor took place in several of the islands, notably in British Guiana and Trinidad. Sewell writes, in his "Ordeal of Free Labor in the British West Indies", "The

planting

planting interest of these islands may be characterized as one of unqualified selfishness. But it has not the merit of being a prudent, sagacious, or far-seeing selfishness. Extravagant in all that pertained to their own ease and luxury; penurious when the improvement, moral, social or political, of the people was in question; tenacious of their aristocratic privileges, opposed to reform, and behind the age in political, agricultural and mechanical science, the planters themselves have done all they could to retard the progress of the West India colonies, and to aggravate the evils which an ill-planned and untimely scheme of emancipation entailed upon the islands. Theirs was not the broad, grasping selfishness of a powerful oligarchy wise enough to combine their own aggrandizement with that of the nation at large; but it has been from first to last a narrow-minded selfishness that pursued crooked paths to gain at the expense of the public weal, and to the infinite detriment of the colonial credit".

Until the early part of the 20th century the type of colonial official that was sent by the Home Government to the West Indian colonies was generally mediocre, if not worse. This also added to the difficulties of adjustments from slavery to free labor.

The

The "sugar islands" as the British West Indies were formerly called, have usually prospered or languished at the touch of international sugar politicians. Government action in England, Europe, Canada and the United States has at one time or another had a beneficial or malign influence on the financial position of the West Indian sugar industry, and sugar has always been the backbone of West Indian economy. In the earliest days the Islands enjoyed a monopoly of the English market and handsome profits were made. But between 1840 and 1903 the beet sugar cartels and export bounties of the European beet producing countries lost for the West Indies part of their exclusive English market.

The Dingley tariff bill of 1897 gave the British West Indies a partly protected market in the United States but this market was lost when the United States entered into a close trade partnership with Cuba. Under the protection of the United States, Cuba developed her sugar exports, not only to the United States but to other countries as well, at a rate that was later to embarrass the sugar producing countries of the world, including Cuba herself. The Brussels Convention of 1902 did away with the bounties for beet sugar in most European countries but Great Britain was pledged not to give preferential duties to her colonies and was not released from

this

this obligation until 1918. The Imperial Government then granted tariff concessions to the British West Indies which in 1925 were stabilized at three pounds and fifteen shillings per ton. To this was added in 1933 Imperial certificates worth approximately one pound per ton.

In 1898 Canada gave a preference of twenty-five per cent to British West Indian raw sugar and additional assistance was later given under formal trade agreements. As a result Canada developed into an important market.

In 1937 an international conference agreed on export quotas with a view to bringing about an advance in market values. The price fell, however, and further restrictions on exports were put into effect. The present war has put an end to the international agreement and the British West Indies are presently engaged on a vigorous program to increase sugar production to the limit of their ability.

In considering the current problems of the West Indies one is impressed with the cumulative effect of social and economic errors of by-gone days. Whether these acts were committed through ignorance, expediency or greed, they have all added up to create the basis for the present day dilemma of the British West Indies.

CHAPTER IV

"DISTURBANCES" OF 1935-37

Disturbances involving casualties occurred in Jamaica, St. Kitts and St. Vincent during the year 1935 and in the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad in 1937. The total casualties in the three years were 39 killed and 175 injured. Probably the most important document on these riots is the report of the Commission appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1937 to inquire into the trouble which started in the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago on the 19th of June, 1937.

We had opportunity to discuss the disturbances, not only in Trinidad but also on the other islands, with eyewitnesses and participants. It will suffice for the scope of this report to quote the following two paragraphs from the Report of the Commission to Investigate the Trinidad and Tobago Disturbances of 1937:

"We have evidence that some employers have manifested a due sense of responsibility for the material well-being of their workpeople; others, particularly some of those engaged in the sugar industry, appear to have displayed lack of regard for the well-being of their labor which has clearly been such as to create an

underlying

underlying current of resentment. In no direction is this lack of regard more apparent than in the deplorable conditions in which a large number of the laborers and their families are housed. It is sufficient here to observe that it would be unreasonable to expect anything but discontent in such surroundings.

"While as we have indicated above, it is true that there are today employers who are giving a lead in the adoption of a more enlightened policy, the fact remains that the present condition of a large section of agricultural workers justifies the view that many managements display a surprising indifference to the welfare of their labor. The consequent undercurrent of discontent could not fail to find expression among a large section of the workpeople when the outbreak of disturbances at Fyzabad (Trinidad) on 19th June awakened in them a more or less conscious sense of common interest in the removal of common disabilities".

The immediate cause of each disturbance was some "agitator" inciting a mob; in some cases over what appears in retrospect a trivial matter. The fundamental cause was a revolt against intolerable conditions that had been accumulating over a period of many years. When we refer to intolerable conditions we have in mind

unsatisfactory

unsatisfactory relationship between employer and employee; housing of unspeakable filth and squalor; absence of sanitary facilities, not even the crudest kind of privy; hourly wages for agricultural workers that average below a shilling a day if women and children's labor be included; annual wages that were frequently less than $50 per annum; malnutrition that was generally prevalent; inadequate education; and almost the full catalogue of social and economic ills. These evils still exist, but efforts are now being made to correct many of them.

There appears to be no spontaneous revolt against these conditions by the masses themselves. They are in general placid, docile and kindly, probably unaware of their low estate. However, their leaders, many of whom are highly educated, make no effort to conceal their purpose of arousing the people to a thorough understanding of their low standard of life. The general complaint of some leaders to whom we talked was the difficulty of stirring the people to the point of vigorous protest. This they attribute to the large percentage of illiteracy; general ignorance; and low vitality due to malnutrition. Their appeal to the masses, therefore, is usually an emotional one, the basis of which does not

necessarily

necessarily have to be factual or truthful. Government officials who are sufficiently liberal in their attitude to discuss with the negro leaders problems of the colonies on an intellectual plane show considerable irritation at the methods employed by these same leaders to gain a following.

Prior to the culmination of the disturbances in 1937, the planter, merchant and industrialist seemed totally oblivious to both the manifestations and the causes of unrest. Their philosophy could be summed up in the well known phrase "the white man's burden" and all that this implies. This situation was personally observed by the Chairman of this Commission in a trip that he took through the islands just prior to the 1937 disturbances. He returned to the islands within a few months after the disturbances to find the upper classes in a state of astonishment that such things could have occurred. There was more evidence of shock than of resentment. There had been numerous hearings and inquiries, both by local authorities and by the Home Government. Whereas the results of these investigations showed some variation in their reports of what had actually occurred and the immediate causes of the outbreaks, they were unanimous in condemning the basic social and

economic

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economic conditions which were at the bottom of the trouble.

By common consent, up until the time of the disturbances certain conditions of labor were not talked about, and in fact were generally unknown, for example, in Barbados if one inquired about agricultural wages the figure of a shilling a day was generally used. This low rate was deplored but the blame for it was placed on the low price of sugar. The hearings relating to the Barbados disturbances brought out unrefuted testimony that the basic wage for male labor was a shilling a day but that the wages for women and children in the fields ranged from four pence to eight pence per day and that two-thirds of the labor employed on the plantations were women and children. These facts, unpalatable as they were, made a deep impression on the people of the upper classes, as well as the government. Hours were taken up in Parliament discussing and debating the problem of the West Indies and it was finally decided to send a Royal Commission to make an investigation of all of the West Indies and to make recommendations.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WEST INDIA ROYAL COMMISSION

The West India Royal Commission was appointed by a Royal Warrant dated August 5, 1938, with the following terms of reference: "To investigate social and economic conditions in Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands, and matters connected therewith and make recommendations". Right Honorable Lord Moyne, D. S. O., was Chairman and Sir Edward Stubbs, G.C.M.G., Vice Chairman. After taking some preliminary evidence in London the Commission left England in October, 1938, for Jamaica. They concluded their investigations in Trinidad toward the end of March, 1939.

Evidence was heard in twenty-six centres from three hundred and seventy witnesses or groups of witnesses and seven hundred and eighty-nine memoranda of evidence were received and considered. Visits were paid to Cuba, Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, Saba, Guadeloupe and Martinique. On their return to Great Britain they proceeded to take further evidence, mainly on technical points which had arisen during their inquiries in the West Indies. The report,

which

which was unanimous, was completed and submitted to His Majesty on December 21, 1939.

It was decided not to publish the report. Two reasons given to us for this, neither of which may be wholly accurate. One was that the findings were of such a depressing nature that it was inadvisable for them to fall into enemy hands. The other reason given was that it would have been too expensive at the present time to publish the report, which covers some seven hundred pages.

Recommendations of the West Indian Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission noted that there was a pressing need for large expenditures on social services and development that not even the least poor of the West Indian colonies could hope to undertake from their own resources. They recommend the establishment of a West Indian Welfare Fund to be financed by an annual grant of one million pounds from the Imperial Exchequer for a period of twenty years, and of a special organization to administer this fund under the charge of a Comptroller. The fund has already been set up and some monies have currently been appropriated.

Sir Frank Stockdale has been appointed to head this organization under the title of Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. The objects of the

fund

fund are to finance schemes for the general improvement of education, the health services, housing and slum clearance, the creation of labor departments, the provision of social welfare facilities and land settlement, apart from the cost of the purchase of land. The Royal Commission considered it essential that the new organization should be set up within the West Indies but be independent of the local governments. The Comptroller is constantly to review the social problems of the West Indies; be available to advise the colonial administrators on their problems and to submit an annual report which would help to focus public attention in the mother country on progress in the West Indies. The Comptroller should be responsible to the Secretary of State for the colonies and has the right of direct access to him. His principal duties are:

1. To work out with the aid of experts long-term programs of social reform for submission to the Secretary of State.

2. To consider similar schemes submitted by local governments.

3. To control the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies and to approve grants

grants from it for expenditure by West Indian governments.

4. To supervise the administration of these grants.

5. To submit annually to the Secretary of State a report for presentation to Parliament.

The Comptroller will have on his staff experts on education, finance, health, housing, income tax, labor and social welfare, a civil engineer and a statistician. He will make use of a new official appointed also on recommendation of the Royal Commission, known as the Inspector General of Agriculture, who will coordinate the agricultural activities of the British West Indies but will not be attached directly to the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies.

It is expected that administrative expenses of the Welfare Fund will amount to one hundred thousand pounds per annum. This expense is to be borne by the Imperial Exchequer and is not to come out of the million-pound annual grant.

In view of the low rates of taxation on income in the

the British West Indies the Royal Commission recommends that they be raised at least to the pre-war rates payable in the mother country and in this way help defray the cost of the Welfare Fund. They specifically recommend that no further burdens should be laid on the payer of indirect taxation. The Royal Commission makes certain recommendations regarding social services in the British West Indies. These include:

Education:

A. Adequate training of teachers.

B. Improvement in school accommodations.

C. Provision for playground space.

D. Free textbooks and physical training equipment.

E. Changes in curriculum to bring education more into relation with the environment of the children. This should include formation of habits of clear and connected speech; instruction in hygiene and diet; manual and agricultural teaching for boys; domestic training and child welfare instruction for girls. They also recommend that more junior secondary schools be established giving training in practical subjects.

F. The use and production of educational films and

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the use of radio instruction.

G. The use of schools as centers for adult education; for instruction in agricultural work and for hygiene and for lending library services.

H. There should be general provision for school meals free where the economic circumstances of the children warrants it. The schools should also supply clothes for poor children, some of the clothes to be made at the schools.

I. Schools at present managed by Denominations should be completely under government control in staff matters if the salaries are paid by the government.

Public Health:

A. The Royal Commission recommended the appointment of a medical adviser to the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. Sir Rupert Briarcliffe has already been appointed to this position. Our Commission had an opportunity to meet him in Montserrat and at Antigua. His function is to advise on health problems for the West Indies; the unification of medical services and the

coordination

coordination of other health activities. They recommended the centralization of certain medical institutions - not only within each colony but as between neighboring groups of colonies.

B. The creation of at least one school of hygiene in the West Indies for research; teaching of preventive medicine and for the training of sanitary inspectors and health visitors.

C. The formulation of long-term health policies.

D. Immediate action on certain definite preventive measures, which include improved housing; general sanitation; control of malarial areas; development of maternity and child welfare work; venereal disease clinics; school medical services; and the better education of the people in health, including nutrition, both in and out of school.

E. Providing a better balanced diet for the population in general, with close cooperation between public health, agriculture and education departments. To effect this reform it will be necessary to increase the output of meat, milk, poultry, eggs, fish and fresh vegetables.

Housing:

A. A substantial program of housing to be undertaken under

under the general advice of the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, who is to have on his staff an expert to organize inquiry into methods of building certain types of houses.

B. A permanent advisory officer with wide knowledge of town planning.

C. An officer in charge of the actual building, having initiative, drive and experience of large scale building in the United Kingdom.

D. They recommended that the various colonial governments acquire powers, where they do not now exist, for determining sites for new housing; to condemn and clear bad slum housing. They recommended that in cases of condemnation no compensation be paid except in cases of proved and extreme hardship and then only under rigid safeguards. Also that West Indian governments should have easily applied powers for the compulsory acquisition of land or houses.

E. In the case of estate housing estates should provide the land, including vegetable plots and give reasonable security of tenure, and the houses should be built under approved schemes financed by

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the government at low rates of interest; rents being charged against a corresponding increase in wages in those cases where, as is usual, rent is now only nominal. A survey of estate housing should be made and where possible peasant housing should be included in it. The demolition of peasants' houses should not be ordered unless either the peasant can afford to replace or the government is prepared to help with rebuilding.

Labor and Trade Unions:

They recommended:

A. The enactment of laws to protect unions from actions for damages as a result of strikes. The legalization of peaceful picketing; compulsory registration of trade unions and audit of their funds.

B. Until such time as trade unions are developed to the point where they can play a decisive part in the regulation of wages and the conditions of employment, action should be taken by the various governments in this direction through the medium of labor departments or labor officers. Such organizations should be assisted by advisory boards representative of employers and employees, with an impartial chairman.

C. The

C. The staff of the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies should include a labor adviser, who should maintain close liaison with the labor officers and departments in all of the West Indian colonies. The man to assume this office has already been picked. He is Mr. F. A. Norman, O.B.E., now the labor officer at Jamaica. We spent considerable time with him while in Jamaica. He is a man of wide experience, extremely able, and has the confidence of both labor and employer.

D. A Labor Department should be established in the Colonial Office and a Labor Advisory Committee appointed, composed of persons of expert knowledge of labor and colonial questions.

E. Wage boards should be created in colonies in which they do not now exist. The enactment of satisfactory legislation providing for the establishment of such boards should be a condition of the participation of any colony in the arrangements proposed for the assistance of the sugar industry. Any benefits paid to individual concerns should be dependent upon the full execution of the decisions of the wage boards. An industrial court should be established for the West Indies as a whole.

F. Consideration

F. Consideration should be given to establishing unemployment insurance.

G. There should be adequate factory inspection and factory legislation closely coordinated with laws and regulations relating to public health. The West Indian governments should consider carefully the possibility of enacting workmens' compensation laws.

H. The government of each colony should be invited to take early steps in consultation with sugar producers with a view to the imposition of welfare levies at the rate of two shillings per ton of sugar produced, to finance welfare schemes similar in the main principles to those organized in Great Britain by the Miners' Welfare Committee.

Agriculture:

They recommended:

A. As previously mentioned, the appointment of an Inspector General of Agriculture, not a member of the staff of the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies, but available for consultation with the Comptroller on any schemes having an agricultural bearing; the assumption by the Director of Agriculture in Barbados of responsibility for work in the Leeward and Windward Islands;

and

and by the Director in Jamaica for British Honduras; also the holding of agricultural conferences every two or three years.

B. Provision should be made for the following inquiries: a comprehensive soil survey; a topographical survey to settle questions of land ownership; a survey of peasant agriculture for the purpose of devising better systems of peasant farming based on mixed farming and increased use of livestock; investigations with a view to improved methods in connection with soil erosion; maintenance of soil fertility; marketing of produce; husbandry practices; and particular emphasis should be laid on the necessity for increased production of nutritious foodstuffs such as milk, fish, eggs and green vegetables.

C. In addition to the need for the foregoing there also exist certain local needs in the various colonies for which the Royal Commission recommends assistance, to be paid for by allocation from the Imperial Exchequer. These projects include the intensification of the campaign against the banana disease in Jamaica; the displacement of share-cropping by land settlement in Nevis on the basis

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of mixed farming, with sugar as the chief crop, together with the erection of a small sugar factory; an increased subsidy to the Trinidad cocoa industry; and the extension of assistance to the cocoa industry in Grenada.

In general, they pointed out that the outstanding need in the West Indies is increased production of food.

Land Settlement:

A. The Royal Commission recommended that, inasmuch as the primary purpose of the land settlement scheme is an improvement of the number and yield of peasant holdings, the first step be an effort to improve the husbandry of the existing smallholders, followed by the improvement of existing land settlements and the establishment of new settlements.

B. That the various colonial governments experiment with both freehold and leasehold tenures, making the grant of freehold rights subject to appropriate conditions to safeguard observance of methods to prevent soil erosion and maintain soil fertility.

C. That, where needed, powers be acquired for the compulsory acquisition of agricultural land needed

for

for land settlement.

D. That care be taken to impress on settlers that government credit facilities will be extended only to facilitate the initial stages of these projects and the ultimate success or failure of the individual will depend on his own efforts.

Communications:

A. The Royal Commission recommended that on a return to normal conditions consideration be given to the establishment of a regular passenger service under the British flag to the West Indian colonies; that two small ships be provided by His Majesty's Government for trade between the smaller islands; a regular air service be provided between St. Kitts and Trinidad, covering Barbados and the principal Leeward and Windward Islands.

B. That telephone services; wireless telephone services; and telegraph facilities be expanded and improved; that, if necessary, this be done by concession to private companies. That the Empire services of the British Broadcasting Corporation be supplemented, particularly as regards educational broadcasts, by the establishment of a wireless transmitter or transmitters in the Caribbean area, the initial

cost

cost being met by His Majesty's Government and the maintenance costs by the colonial governments jointly.

Constitutional and Political Recommendations:

The Royal Commission did not support either of the extreme proposals submitted to them: (1) for the grant of immediate and complete self-government, based on universal suffrage, or (2) for a wide increase in the authority of governors, which would convert the existing system into a virtual autocracy. They pointed out that the policy of the West Indian colonies should be directed toward political federation but emphasize that this, in itself, will not meet the pressing needs of the West Indies. We have noted with interest how influential W. M. McMillan's book "Warning from the West Indies", has been. He also commented that political and legal rights have done little to help the masses in their economic struggle; that while freedom of political expression is at once a stimulus to good government and an indispensable check, much more is needed to build a great society in these backward colonies than votes and individual ownership of land.

They also recommended:

A. That care should be taken to insure that all important sections and interests of the community

receive

receive adequate representation in the Executive Councils.

B. That consideration should be given to the adoption of a committee system on an advisory basis to give elected representatives an insight into the practical details of government.

C. That official representation in Legislative Councils should be confined to the Colonial Secretary, the Treasurer and the Attorney General, and the resulting vacancies filled by nominations in the spirit recommended in (A) above.

D. That in order to secure that the elected element in Legislative Councils shall be as truly representative as possible, the object of policy should be the introduction of universal adult suffrage. Some of the members of the Royal Commission held that this should be introduced forthwith; others that it should be reached by gradual stages and to this end recommended the appointment of local committees to consider the extension of the franchise, both for local and for central government. Such committees should keep in close touch with their counterpart in other West Indian colonies, and should consider carefully, whether, as is strongly desirable,

desirable, their recommendations would assure substantial equality as between the sexes.

E. That in all West Indian colonies a careful examination should be made at an early date of the possibility of reducing substantially the margin between the qualifications for registration as a voter and those for membership of the Legislative Council, the latter being in many cases unnecessarily high.

F. That a practical test of the advantages of federation should be made by combining the Leeward and Windward Islands in one federation on the lines of that existing in the former groups.

G. That means be found for devoting more Parliamentary time to the discussion of colonial affairs, to devise means for the association of delegates from the colonies concerned with the work of that Committee.

There were many other recommendations unnecessary to enumerate in this report. They included the formation of a social welfare committee; greater participation in the affairs of the colonies both officially and unofficially by women; an organized campaign against promiscuity; an improvement in the penal system; and suggestion to the press on the value of restraint and moderation to avoid inciting color prejudice and color discrimination.

CHAPTER VI

THE SITUATION OF LABOR

To one who has been visiting the West Indian colonies over a period of years the most startling change has been the great advance in the field of labor relations. Many of the recommendations of the Royal Commission are now in full swing. The development of trade unions is being actively encouraged by the various colonial governments. Trade unions, certainly responsible trade unions, were almost unheard of in the West Indies colonies two years ago. Bills are before the local legislatures to protect unions from actions for damages as a result of strikes; for the legalization of peaceful picketing; for the compulsory registration of trade unions and the audit of their funds; for adequate factory inspection and protection of labor through workmens' compensation. Many of these bills have already been enacted into law. Where such laws have been on the statute books for years but have never been enforced, enforcement is now under way. Most of the colonies now have labor departments headed by a labor officer.

We met the labor officers in all of the colonies we visited. With possibly one exception they are men of outstanding ability and experience. Most of them have been sent out from England. In some cases, however, they are

local

local men of color.

One of the outstanding labor officers whom we met was A.G.V.Linden, in Trinidad. Linden was formerly connected with the Ministry of Labor in England and was a subordinate to F. A. Norman, who is now labor officer in Jamaica and who will shortly become labor adviser to the Comptroller of the Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. Mr. Linden spent a great deal of time with us in Trinidad. Through him we met substantially all of the labor leaders and a number of the important employers in the oil industry and also some of the planters.

In the case of the oil industry Linden has the complete respect and confidence of both the representatives of employers and employees. He is accepted as an impartial conciliator when controversies arise. There has been a substantial increase in wages in the oil fields and in the oil refineries and both the employers and the labor heads express satisfaction over their current relationship. We specifically asked Mr. F. L. Melvill, the manager of Trinidad Leaseholds, Inc., whose company was heavily involved in the riots of 1937, and Mr. H. V. Lavington, the head of the Oil Industries Association, whether they preferred the present system of collective bargaining with a recognized and well run labor union or the former method of individual negotiation. Both of them said they would not go back to the former system.

Adrian

Adrian C. Rienzi, the leader of the labor union, who two years ago was regarded as a dangerous Red and who was on the verge of going to jail on several occasions, is regarded today by the Labor Officer and by many of the employers as a stabilizing factor and almost indispensable toward maintaining good relationship between employer and labor.

The situation in regard to agricultural labor in Trinidad and for that matter, in the other colonies, is not so satisfactory. In Trinidad substantially the same labor leaders head the agricultural union. They are frank to admit that agricultural labor is difficult to organize. They blame it largely on illiteracy, apathy and general lack of education. They do not overlook the planter in placing the blame for the difficulty of organizing. The planter instinctively opposes labor organizations and because of his power to dispossess the labor that is tenanted on his lands he is able to exert considerable influence in holding down agricultural organization.

We heard the word "plantocracy" used frequently both by labor and by government officials. The planter's complaint is one heard generally throughout the tropics, where negro or colored labor is employed; lazy, lacking in ambition; those on day's wages not giving a full day's work; those on a task basis (what we call piecework in the United States) knocking

off

off after they have earned what they think is adequate for their immediate needs. Task workers work rapidly and sometimes complete a day's task in from three to six hours, after which they cease to work. The planter, particularly of sugar, claims that wages are as high as they can afford, considering present prices of sugar.

Basic daily agricultural wages have risen since the disturbances, from a shilling a day for male labor to about one and three pence, to which must be added the so-called war bonus, which ranges from ten to fifteen per cent. The war bonus is an increase in wages which theoretically corresponds to the increase in the cost of living. In some of the colonies the figure now computed by the government for the increased cost of living is twenty-five per cent over the pre-war period.

The labor leaders are not unwilling to concede lack of energetic work but they lay this to the wretched conditions of housing; lack of family life; and to physical inability of the men and women to do hard labor for any great length of time. Our observations would put some weight on the labor point of view and the many reports of government medical authorities on deficiency diseases and general malnutrition would substantiate the claim of lack of physical endurance.

Labor objects to the use of the word "bonus" in conjunction with the war bonus. Their argument is that a

bonus

bonus is a gift. They consider that quite aside from the right of bargaining for wages that labor has an absolute right for increased compensation due to increased cost of living and that it should not be put on a bonus or gift basis.

As regards the low price of sugar the labor leaders in Trinidad are unwilling to accept this generalization. They point out that the sugar industry is an artificial one, fed by bounties, preferences and, this year, by a fixed basic price of, in round figures, $2.25 per one hundred pounds, against a world price of $0.75 per one hundred pounds. They do not feel that labor should be considered second to the planter and the factory owner. They feel that labor should have its share in the various benefits handed out by the Imperial Government. The Royal Commission supported this point of view when they recommended that any benefits paid to individual sugar concerns should be dependent upon the full execution of the decisions of wage boards. This is, consciously or unconsciously, modeled after the principles provided for in the United States Sugar Act of 1937.

A. C. Rienzi complained, as did some of the labor leaders in the other colonies, that labor was given no opportunity to check the plea of poverty made by the sugar companies; that they had no access to their books and that they were entitled to study the cost of producing sugar.

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A sugar wage board has been formed in Trinidad. A sub-committee of this wage board, on which there were no representatives of labor, was given access to the books of the sugar companies, but they were not made available to the entire board. This naturally is a source of irritation to labor. It is now contemplated to determine the value of all sugar properties for the purpose of learning what the actual investment is and thus find what constitutes a fair return to the sugar companies. In our opinion this procedure is doomed to failure and is likely to create additional controversies. The large sugar companies are owned in the United Kingdom and the whole sugar problem of the British West Indies is hopelessly entangled in London sugar politics and world sugar chaos.

We had luncheon with Mr. G. B. Westwood, Manager of the Ste. Madeleine Sugar Factory and Plantations. This is perhaps the largest sugar estate in the British Empire. It is owned by Usines, Ltd. They produce about thirty-five thousand tons of sugar. Mr. Westwood complained of labor and labor unions and was of the opinion that the old system of direct negotiation with his employees was the better. Ste. Madeleine estate is run with a considerable degree of benevolence and for some time they have been engaged in an excellent program of housing for their employees.

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There does not seem to be any immediate probability of better feeling in Trinidad between the sugar estates and labor. Labor has also taken up the cudgels in Trinidad for the small "cane farmer", whom they say is not getting a fair price for his cane.

In St. Kitts the labor situation is in bad shape. There is considerable ill feeling between the labor leaders and the planters and the central sugar factory. St. Kitts is one of the more prosperous of the British West Indies. The soil is fertile, rainfall good and the cane fields well cultivated. There are a number of large sugar estates whose agricultural practices are reasonably up to date. The crop that will be cut in 1940 will be the largest in history, amounting to about forty thousand tons, all of which will be ground in the central sugar factory, owned in England.

Notwithstanding evidence of prosperity there is much discontent in the island. Housing ranks with the poorest in the entire British West Indies. Last year at the beginning of the grinding season there was a seven weeks' strike at the factory. This threw practically the entire island out of work as there was no other place to grind the cane. The strike was finally settled with a compromise. The factory gave notice that any of the men who did not

immediately

immediately come back to work would be laid off indefinitely. As a result one hundred men are still out of work. Naturally, this does not help the present situation. Another strike is now under consideration. W. S. G. Barnes, the Labor Officer, stated that he expected "Serious trouble when the crop opens".

In an effort to avert this trouble a Labor Advisory Board is being formed. It will consist of six representatives of the Trades Union; six representatives of capital, five of whom will be nominated by the Sugar Producers' Association. A prominent educator will be attached to the Board as an independent member and there also will be a representative of the shipping interests. A retired Judge will be President of the Board.

As a result of last year's strike wages have been increased on the average of between 16 and 17 per cent. The Union is now asking for a fifty per cent increase and that the fifteen per cent war bonus be taken out of its bonus category and made part of the wage. Barnes, the Labor Officer, talked to us at considerable length regarding the present unrest. He had formerly been in Antigua, where he had difficulty with both the employers and the employees and was transferred to St. Kitts. He told us quite frankly that he did not have the confidence of labor, which created a most difficult situation. He said the prevailing relationship

between

between labor and the planter was still the old master-and-slave relationship; that the planters and the sugar factory resented the Union. He also said that the planters were generous. He did not elaborate on this remark, which seemed paradoxical considering his other statements. It is a fair assumption that the attitude he referred to was that of the generous master to the loyal slave. He further stated that when a laborer complained of his conditions he was fired. He also stated that the St. Kitts Sugar Factory was earning two thousand per cent per annum on its original shares. This statement we did not have an opportunity to investigate.

We talked to the three labor leaders, all black or colored; E. O. Challenger, head of the Trade Union; J. M. Sebastian, local labor leader; and Joseph M. France, Secretary of the Trades Union. They confirmed more or less what was said by the Labor Officer. They said that the planters received a bonus based on the profits of the sugar factory but of the bonus one-third was supposed to go to labor and two-thirds to be retained by the planters, but complained that it was a most unsatisfactory method of distribution; that the planter was under no obligation to distribute the one-third to labor and frequently didn't. They further pointed out that eighty per cent of the villages in St. Kitts were on estate land. The laborers paid a penny a month rent

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and were given a certain amount of land on which to raise provisions. When the planter was dissatisfied with his labor for any reason he ordered him to quit the land. This was a potent weapon of oppression and raised race and class feeling. We were not impressed with the ability of the Labor Officer.

In Barbados there are two principal labor leaders, both colored. Grantley H. Adams, barrister and a member of the House of Assembly, and H. M. Springer. We had a long talk with Adams, a man of considerable education and intellect.

Substantially all the arable land in Barbados is planted in sugar cane, very little is devoted to food crops, although during the war period from five to ten per cent of the land must be made available for the production of food. Barbados is predominantly an island of estates, with relatively small peasant holdings. The basic labor conflict in Barbados is the insistence on the part of the laboring classes that considerably more land be used for food gardens and the opposing view of the planters that the land remain in cane.

Barbados is probably the most conservative of all the British West Indies. Even now there is no recognized labor organization although there is one in the process of formation under the direction of Adams and Springer. Governor Waddington informed us that there was some rivalry between these two gentlemen. The Labor Officer, S. J. Perrin, was only recently

appointed

appointed and has not had time to get under way. Agricultural wages have been advanced since the 1937 riots from a shilling a day for male labor to one and three pence, and for women and children from four to eight pence to about nine pence per day. These figures, as well as most of the figures for agricultural wages for the other colonies, can only be used to indicate a trend, as considerable labor is employed on a task basis. It would require a detailed investigation to determine how much labor earns daily on a task basis and what the annual wage amounts to. The following labor acts have been passed in Barbados:

An Act to provide for old age pensions,
November 21, 1937.

An Act to make provision for the fixing of a minimum wage for labor.
May 6, 1938.
(This, we understand, has not as yet been enforced - but will be one of the first duties of the new Labor Officer.)

An Act to carry out certain conditions relating to the employment of women, young people and children.
July 13, 1938.

An Act to make provision for the appointment of a Labor Officer.
August 3, 1938.

An Act to provide for the supervision of the weighing of sugar cane.
January 18, 1939.

An Act relating to trade unions.
December 27, 1939.

An Act to amend the employment of women, young persons and children Act, 1938 (1938-42)
October 25, 1940.

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In addition to these Acts there is a workmen's compensation bill before the Assembly at the present time. There is a fight over this bill because of the insistence of labor that agricultural workers be included and the opposition to this of the planters.

There is little need to go into the details of the labor problems on the other islands. Their problems generally are the problems we have thus far outlined. Those islands that have large estates and industries have the most labor troubles. Labor problems diminish more or less in proportion to increase of peasant holdings. Such islands as Carriacou, Anguilla and Tortola, that are almost purely peasant, have practically no labor problem.

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CHAPTER VII

LEFT-WING POLITICAL AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

We have accumulated the names of a large number of organizations in the West Indies and in the United States, and to a limited extent in South America, which, to a greater or lesser degree, maintain contacts in all or some of the islands. A list of these organizations is appended. All of them may be innocuous. That some of them are being used as transmission belts from the United States to the West Indies; from the South American continent to the West Indies; and among the various islands of the West Indies, we have direct information. Whether they are used for subversive purposes we have no information, except in a few cases. That they could be used for such purposes is obvious.

We met with and had frank discussions with the various police commissioners and C.I.D. officers on the principal islands we visited. Generally speaking, they were not troubled either with actual subversive activities nor with potential activities of this nature. The police commissioners in the British West Indies maintain communication with one another, in fact, this seems to be

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the only regular contact among the colonies by any of the government departments. However, they do not appear to transmit local information unless it has some obvious relationship to another colony or island. For this reason the sum total of the relatively harmless activities reported to us by each of the police commissioners paints a somewhat different picture than the information in the hands of any single police commissioner.

Colonel Angus Muller, the Commissioner of Police at Trinidad, turned over his entire dossier to us on subversive and suspected subversive activities. These were so voluminous that we had not the time to go over them. He promised to send copies of all of them through confidential channels to Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles. He told us that they had intercepted German propaganda entering Trinidad via newspapers printed in Syrian. The papers were: Diario Syrio, of Sao Paulo, Brazil; La Natura, of Buenos Aires; and Al Alem el Ariba, of Buenos Aires. An invitation sent out by the American Youth Congress to attend the Pan-American Youth Congress in Havana last September was sent to Captain A. A. Cipriani, Adrian C. Rienzi, and to the Negro Welfare Cultural Association in Trinidad.

A similar

A similar invitation was sent to some organization in Barbados. These invitations were sent through the West Indies Emergency Council, an organization with headquarters in Havana. They were signed by the President, named Perez. The Secretary of the organization is W. A. Domingo. The Chairman of this Commission met Perez at the World Youth Congress at Vassar College in 1938. He represented an extreme left group. According to Colonel Muller this organization has changed its name to the West Indian National Council. Their address formerly was 209 West 125th Street, Room 218, New York City. Their present address is 2007 Seventh Avenue, New York City. They publish a paper called the Caribbean Review. The President of this organization is W. A. Domingo. A contributor to the Caribbean Review is Dr. Alcantara, a minister.

The one organization of American negroes that is on the "suspect list" of every police commissioner that we talked to is the Watch Tower of Brooklyn, New York, of which Judge Rutherford is the head. A great deal of literature from the Watch Tower is seized by the censor in the various colonies and never reaches its destination. None of the police commissioners had any evidence that this organization was

subversive

subversive but most of them said that the literature is anti-Catholic and attempts to stir up religious hatred. The organization's general approach is of a religious nature, which is a far more powerful appeal to the masses of the West Indian negroes than the intellectual.

It is not easy, particularly with the somewhat superficial study that this Commission has been able to give to the question of possible subversive activities in the West Indies, to develop a clearcut pattern of motives and objectives. Negro emotional and religious life in the West Indies ranges from the extreme mystical and primitive practice of Obeah through every phase of fanatical religion (much of which is imported from Harlem) down to the orthodoxy of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church. In political interest it runs from the extremes of internationalism, with its source in Moscow, through local colonial politics to the simple tribal and patriarchal systems that we heard of in parts of Tortola.

These

These lines of religious and political interest become at times so hopelessly intermingled that it would take considerable research by a competent investigator to untangle them.

What becomes clear even with a casual investigation is that there is a definite campaign in the West Indies for federation and self-government. This movement seems to vacillate between complete independence and a dominion form of government. The headquarters of this movement is apparently in New York City in the shape of the West Indies National Emergency Committee. H.P. Osborne is its Secretary. (It is understood that the name of this organization is now the West Indies National Council). Sometime during 1940, probably about July, it issued a pamphlet that apparently has been circulated not only in the West Indies but in South America, entitled "Declaration of Rights of the Caribbean Peoples to Self-Determination and Self-Government". The circular declares among other things: "Opinion is being developed in the United States of America**** advocating the sale, transfer, forcible seizure of, or establishment of trusteeship or mandate over, these Caribbean areas, but any such menace can best be removed by the integration of the West Indian peoples into the Pan-American family of peoples strictly on the basis of the right of self-determination. Only thus will it be possible to create an enduring foundation

for

for 'good neighbor' relations".

"The Committee appeals to all who uphold democracy and to every true lover of liberty in America and indeed throughout the world, to support the rightful causes of the peoples of the Caribbean and adjacent areas to self-determination and self-government".

"Let the solemn warning of events be heeded and the inexorable logic of the present critical situation be fairly and squarely faced."

In an appendix to the "Declaration" excerpts of petitions for self-government of a federated West Indies are published. The various petitions are said to have been presented by: "Large numbers of people in the British Virgin Islands, supported by a petition of the natives of these islands residing in the United States of America". Among other organizations who are said to have presented petitions are the Antigua Progressive League, Inc., of New York, the Jamaica Progressive Society, of New York, and the Barbados Progressive League. The document also speaks of the desire for self-government on the part of the French Caribbean colonies and the Netherlands colonies. The circular also quotes the report of the People's National Party of Jamaica, made at its first annual conference on December 21, 1939, which declared: "The Party's policy on the question of constitutional reform has been laid down at the April

convention

convention and that policy was that the country should ask for nothing short of self-government."

The People's National Party is headed by Norman W. Manley, prominent colored barrister and labor leader of Jamaica. In a letter written by V. L. Arnett, Secretary of the People's National Party, a copy of which was given us by Manley, appears the following paragraph which we quote to show the connection between this local Jamaica party and the West Indies National Emergency Committee in New York: "The People's National Party has been in close touch with the West Indies National Emergency Committee on this matter and the following claims are put forward on the suggestion of that Committee and with full support of the People's National Party".

The avowed purpose of the West Indies National Emergency Committee for self-government is a proper aspiration of the West Indian. Certainly it is representative of the desires of the intelligent negro leaders whom we have met. And even if it were improper it would be a matter that concerned Great Britain rather than the United States. However, it would appear that various groups with many different motives have rallied to the support of this aspiration. It probably will be found on closer investigation in New York and other parts of the United States that among these groups are those

which

which are operating in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the American Virgin Islands.

During the time when there was talk and rumors about the United States acquiring bases in the Caribbean, but before any action was taken, the West Indian negro leaders vigorously opposed the idea. Now that it is an accomplished fact, they have changed their policy. Adrian Rienzi told us in Trinidad that not only were they pleased to see the United States acquiring bases in the Caribbean but that they hoped and expected that it would eventually lead to the United States taking over the islands. He said that the interest of the islands lay with the United States rather than with Great Britain. He said that he expected when and if the United States took over the West Indies that it would give them a dominion form of government and ultimately complete independence. He further stated that he hoped that the color prejudice that existed in the United States and the segregation of white and colored that existed in the South would not be extended to the West Indies. Rienzi was the most outspoken of all the native leaders on this subject but through innuendo we acquired the same impression from most of the others.

The attitude of the various leaders towards the United States did not give us the impression of spontaneity but

rather

rather of a well-discussed and studied policy. We do not feel that we are precipitous in drawing conclusions when we say that this policy has as its first objective breaking the ties with the British Empire and that they feel that it would be easier to acquire their ultimate freedom from the United States, a country that has not a long and steadfast imperial and colonial tradition. Paradoxically, there seems to be considerable loyalty on the part of both the negro leaders and the masses towards Great Britain's war effort. We discussed this at some length with Rienzi and he pointed out to us that even the ignorant people of the islands were aware of Hitler's racial policies and of the Ethiopian conquest by Italy. There is no question but that the intellectuals among the negro leaders adhere to the Communist ideology. That, of course, does not necessarily signify that they are political adherents of the Soviet.

In our conversation with E. O. Challenger at St. Kitts, after he related to us his bill of complaints against the present order in the West Indian colonies we asked him if he favored drastic action to remedy the situation. He replied definitely no, that the time was not ripe for that; that the labor movement was not a local thing but a world movement. He likened the situation to that of a great army that could only move as rapidly as its slowest troops.

During

During a luncheon conversation with Manley in Jamaica, we observed that in the smaller islands we had visited where there was a relatively pure peasant economy the people appeared to be happier; that their life was developed around the family unit; that this could be observed in the better type of houses, greater individuality in their construction and the fact that illegitimacy in the smaller islands was about forty per cent against an average of sixty-five to seventy-five per cent in the larger islands. Manley stated that he opposed the development of a peasant economy. He drew a parallel between the West Indian peasant and the kulak of Russia. He said he favored collectivism and hoped some time to visit the Soviet Union and make a study of collective farming, which he said he understood was a great success.

For the most part the attitude of the Governors of the British colonies and the other officials toward the intellectual negro leader is one of respect, personal like, mystification, and a tinge of fear.

Norman W. Manley is light-colored, probably principally of East Indian blood. He is to a large extent an ascetic, confining his food to fruits and vegetables. He is regarded as the ablest barrister in Jamaica, white or colored. He is a quiet, gentle man of striking personality and charm.

Governor Richards talked to us at great length concerning Manley. He said he had an extremely high regard for him and

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a personal affection. He frequently invites him to Government House for luncheon or dinner. Notwithstanding many long philosophical discussions that they have had together the Governor admits that he does not fully understand Manley. Politically they usually are opponents and yet the Governor says that he is able many times to get valuable assistance from him in the Legislature. They discuss the ultimate world revolution and Manley has expressed his willingness at the proper time to incite bloodshed for the ultimate and greater good of mankind. He has told the Governor that great social and political changes for the benefit of mankind cannot be accomplished without suffering.

In Jamaica there is practically no social barrier between white, colored and black, although there is some feeling of social superiority on the part of the colored people in their relations with the blacks. Most of the exclusive clubs in Jamaica draw no color line. Governor Richards said that he draws no color line at Government House but that he avoids inviting certain whites who have prejudice when he has colored guests. He said that in a conversation that he had with Manley one evening on the subject of race he had emphasized to him his acceptability in all Jamaican society. Manley conceded the point as applying to himself and some other acceptable colored people but claimed that it was only superficial, that racial antagonism existed just the same. He

gave

gave as an example his experience in the tourist hotels at Montego Bay. He said that no matter how empty they were he could not get reservations, the excuse always being that they were filled to capacity. This feeling on the part of Manley probably prompted a statement he made to the Chairman that the tourist trade was detrimental to the best interests of Jamaica.

In appraising any of the negro leaders in the British West Indies, even where to all extents and purposes they are accepted as social equals with the whites, the latent under-current of racial prejudice must be accounted for as a potent motivating influence on their actions.

Alexander Bustamente is another outstanding negro leader in Jamaica. Unfortunately we were unable to meet him as he is at present in jail, having been sent there by the Governor under his extraordinary war powers, because of a violently seditious speech. Bustamente is an entirely different type of man than Manley; vain, self-seeking, a fiery orator and rabble-rouser. The principal Union in Jamaica, the Bustamente Union, is named after him. We were informed by Mr. Norman, the Labor Officer, that it was probably the only Trades Union in the world named after its leader. Notwithstanding its leader, Bustamente, is in jail, the Union is recognized by the Government and at the moment is closely cooperating with it.

This

This is not the first experience that Bustamente has had in jail. He was also imprisoned two years ago. Prior to his going to jail the Governor had been seeing Bustamente about every two weeks. He found that by having him at Government House and consulting with him and appealing to his vanity he could be made useful. On at least one occasion the Governor appealed to Bustamente to prevent an imminent riot. To this Bustamente agreed and made good his promise. It must not be assumed from this narrative of the close personal relations of the Governor with Bustamente and Manley that he temporizes with rebellion. He has a reputation of using the mailed fist when necessary. He has, however, the ability to maintain his philosophical and intellectual interest in the ideological conflict now being waged in the West Indies and at the same time carry out his duties as Governor. He told us that he had once remarked to Bustamente that he, with his powers as Governor, and Bustamente, with his ability to lead the mob, could, if they joined forces, accomplish anything they wanted to in Jamaica.

Adrian Rienzi, who has apparently supplanted Cipriani as the principal labor leader in Trinidad, is an East Indian who received his law degree at the Chicago Law School. He is General-President of the All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union, which is an affiliate of the Congress for Industrial Organization. He is a quiet, soft spoken

spoken, eloquent man of culture and intellect. He gives one the impression of being a moderate leftist. Notwithstanding the fact that two years ago he was regarded as a dangerous Red and was on the verge of being sent to prison he is now quite acceptable to the employers. The change has probably been more in the employer class than in Rienzi as there is evidence of a swing toward liberalism on the part of many upper class people. Rienzi was a difficult man with whom to make an appointment as he was usually in Port-of-Spain at Government House closeted with the Governor, Sir Hubert Young, with whom he is apparently on close terms. Rienzi is a member of the Legislature. According to Linden, the Labor Officer, Rienzi has become something of a social climber and for that reason has lost much of his radical fire.

All of the important leaders of the masses in the British West Indies are colored or black, with the exception of Captain A. A. Cipriani, member of the Legislative Council of Trinidad. Cipriani is a white West Indian of Portuguese descent. He was Mayor of Port-of-Spain until recently. A former firebrand, he is regarded as moderate today, which probably accounts for his loss of prestige with the masses. However, he still vigorously and eloquently fights their cause in the Legislature and on the platform.

We asked Cipriani about the British West Indian Labor Party, with headquarters in Guantanamo, Cuba, of which his

name

name appears on the letterhead as President. He claimed to know very little about it. He said that he is frequently asked to permit the use of his name, which he usually grants but that it is often taken advantage of.

During our interview with Rienzi in his office at San Fernando, Trinidad, we asked him if he ever took steps to repudiate the support of apparently irresponsible organizations in the United States. He said no, that labor in the West Indies was not well enough organized to check into all of these groups, besides which he looked with favor on almost any organization that could give them publicity in the United States.

Ralph Mentor, who is second to Rienzi, is a mulatto, sullen, suspicious and sarcastic, but obviously a man of power and mentality. He has not the suavity and grace of such intellectuals as Adams of Barbados, Challenger of St. Kitts, Manley of Jamaica, or Rienzi. McDonald Moses of the same labor organization is a young man of intellectual attainment, who has come into the good graces of the government because of his pamphlet "This War and After", which supports Britain's war effort.

E. O. Challenger, head of the Trade Union in St. Kitts, is a mulatto who ranks with the best intellects in the West Indian labor movement. He is a graduate of City College in New York and took a postgraduate course at Columbia. It is

rather

rather interesting that the employers and planters of St. Kitts, as well as the Labor Officer, W. S. G. Barnes, refer to Challenger in deprecating terms; saying that he is irresponsible and probably a little touched in the head. Our impression of him was of a man of the highest intellectual attainments, quiet and profound, definitely motivated by Communist doctrine, a man who, in a major revolutionary movement, would be extremely dangerous. Like all of the genuine intellects among the negroes his conversation and rhetoric indicates a high degree of education and culture. It is not difficult to detect the pseudo-intellects and upstarts among the negro leaders by their florid and embroidered prose, whether spoken or written. The probable reason for the belittling characterization of Challenger on the part of the planters and Labor Officer was their inability to understand him.

J. M. Sebastian, who belongs to the same organization as Challenger, is a coal black pure African negro, eloquent even in a quiet uncontroversial discussion, apparently more interested in accomplishing the immediate purposes of his union than in indulging in dreams of world revolution.

We did not meet James Nathan of St. Kitts, who Major Brown, Commissioner of Police in Antigua, described as: "So radical and so hopelessly Communistic and uncontrollable that Sebastian and Challenger have disowned him." Nathan

leads

leads a definite minority in the Antigua Trade Union, as well as a large following of the worst labor element at St. Kitts. He is a definite trouble-maker, who has never been known to be reasonable. He is under suspicion and closely scrutinized by both Antigua and St. Kitts police. He is definitely anti-white and anti-planter".

The present situation in St. Kitts is well illustrated by the following: Challenger published a circular addressed to St. Kitts labor, in which he called attention to a law passed in St. Kitts in 1798 which provided that slaves were to get certain quantities of food per day, enumerating alternative foods such as maize, yams, fruits, etc., and providing that in the event the master was unable to provide these foods in the prescribed quantities the slave was to receive in lieu thereof four shillings per day. The purpose of this, of course, was to show that conditions had retrograded since slave days. In the circular Challenger sent out he apparently neglected to state that the list of foods was alternative and added them together, making a total of about seventeen pounds of food per slave per day. He also neglected to say that the four shillings were Antigua shillings and equivalent only to a total of six pence calculated in the terms of the current shilling. The circular was turned over to the Crown Attorney and law books dating back to the 18th century were pored over. The Government is seriously

considering

considering arresting Challenger for circulating inflammatory material; for defamation of the character of the planter and other charges. Should the Government take such action the result may be a serious disturbance.

At Antigua we met R. H. Lockhart, barrister and labor leader, R. St. C. Stevens, President of the Antigua Trades and Labor Union and a member of the Legislative Council, S. Richards, Secretary of the Trade Union, and Bird, a local labor leader. The meeting was arranged by Governor Lethem at Government House. He sat in on most of our conversations and then left us by pre-arrangement so that they would not be embarrassed and would talk freely. They discussed local labor conditions and problems pertaining to our naval bases.

We did not meet Randolph James, of Antigua, who is described by Major Brown as "Very Communistic and radical, the type that would burn cane fields and incite racial prejudice." He is being closely watched by the police at Antigua and is affiliated with James Nathan of St. Kitts. James was educated in the United States and also worked there for some time.

Grantley H. Adams of Barbados, barrister, labor leader and member of the House of Assembly, is another leader of high intellectual attainment. It was our impression that he occupies himself more in the conservative community in which he functions in the field of local politics, in which he is adept, than in the realm of world-shaking political and social philosophy.

We

We met many other labor leaders who definitely deserve some mention but they all fall under one of the several categories which we have already described. Their names and offices are on the list of people whom we interviewed, which appears in the appendix.

CHAPTER VIII

LABOR PROBLEMS TO BE FACED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CARIBBEAN NAVAL AND AIR BASES.

There are two important reasons why it is in the interest of the United States to adopt a well considered labor policy during the period of the construction of the Caribbean bases.

One; such a policy is necessary to the rapid and efficient construction of the bases.

Two; it is essential to any friendly and cooperative relationship between the United States and the governments and peoples of the British West Indies.

Our conversations with United States government authorities in St. Thomas and Puerto Rico, as well as with Panama Canal authorities who were in Jamaica recruiting labor, indicate that even now work is being interfered with by shortage of skilled labor and strikes. Admiral Spruance, Commandant of the Tenth Naval District in Puerto Rico, Commander Johnson, who will be in charge of the construction work on all of the naval bases in the Caribbean and who is at present in charge of the work in Puerto Rico and St. Thomas, and Lt. Commander Johnson, who is directly in charge of the work in St. Thomas, all told us that a general conference, which should include the Governors of the British colonies or their representatives, various

colonial

colonial Labor Officers, representatives of labor and the proper representatives of the United States Government, is of importance. The problems involved include:

1. Shortage and maldistribution of skilled workers in the Caribbean area.

2. Problems of emigration of both skilled and unskilled workers. At the present time workers are coming to St. Thomas from Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. There are about 300 Tortolians now working at the air and submarine bases in St. Thomas. About 150 of these will probably have to be deported because of illegal entry. About 75 workers have been brought to St. Thomas from Puerto Rico and there are skilled white workers that have come from the United States. Some seven or eight hundred Jamaicans have been sent to the Canal Zone and it is contemplated using up to 3,500 Jamaicans in that area. Jamaica will be unable to supply a sufficient number of skilled workers. There are certain islands in the Caribbean where common labor is of a superior type and who would like to participate in work on the bases. Among these islands are Barbados, Carriacou, Anguilla and Tortola.

Uncontrolled and unplanned emigration is likely to cause social and economic unbalance. As an example, Dr. Wailing, the Commissioner of Tortola, pointed out to us that emigration of the best skilled workers from Tortola to St. Thomas was already causing a shortage in that island and a slowing-up of necessary local projects. A sudden

emigration

emigration of a large number of workers from any one area thus temporarily relieving them of part of their over-population and a sudden return of all of these laborers after the work is through would be a disruptive force that would be difficult for that area to adjust itself to. This happened with disastrous effect in Barbados during the construction of the Panama Canal and during the great post-war sugar boom in Cuba.

3. Wages, hours, and conditions of work. It is unnecessary to go into detail regarding this problem as it does not differ very much from those of normal labor relations. There is, however, one factor peculiar to this particular problem and that is the relationship of wages of one area to another. Labor leaders throughout the Caribbean keep in close touch with one another. Any great disparity of wages among the various areas is likely to cause difficulty. At the present time the labor organizations in Jamaica would probably agree to the now prevailing wage scale in the Canal Zone for Jamaican labor. If the matter is not settled while there is a minimum of friction they are likely to demand the highest prevailing in continental United States.

4. Political aspects of base construction labor. The Governors of the colonies involved hope the United States will point the way toward a general and moderate increase in wage standards. The planters and local merchants and

industrialists

industrialists want no disruption in present standards. In some areas labor leaders hope the United States will lead the way to a revolutionary increase in wage levels. Intelligent handling of this problem can have the most beneficial effect on the stability of the Caribbean area and in its relationship to the United States. Mishandling of it may well have serious reprecussions.

5. Subversive influences. There is reason to believe that even now efforts are being made by certain groups to create disturbances. A group of Jamaican laborers, each of whom had signed contracts witnessed by a magistrate, sailed for the Canal Zone recently on the United Fruit ship DARIEN. Upon reaching the Canal Zone they refused to work, claiming that they had been promised higher wages before they left Jamaica. We checked into this situation with some care. There is no question that they understood the terms of their hire before they left Jamaica and that they went voluntarily. It is equally certain that no agitator in the Canal Zone could have reached this group between the time they landed and the time that they declared a strike. It is unlikely though not certain that whoever influenced the men was not one of the emigres. The probability is that it was someone that had been planted on the ship either among the crew or as a passenger.

We will not undertake here to describe the system used by

by the Jamaican Government to assist the Canal Zone authorities in recruiting the proper labor and in safeguarding the interests of the United States. The system is well worked out and is apparently functioning smoothly. We are attaching to this report a letter dated December 17, 1940, addressed to the Chairman by Charles W. King, Acting Labor Agent for the Panama Canal, at Kingston.

6. Problems of race and color. It is essential that the United States give this matter the most careful consideration in order to avoid unnecessary friction and disturbance. The relationship of white people to negroes and of colored people to black people varies in each island. That relationship has been established through long years of tradition and custom. In some colonies there is no social intermingling of negro and white. In other colonies, Jamaica, for example, no sharp line is drawn. Governor Richards pointed out the importance of selecting white supervisors for base construction work there who will be willing to conform to the local customs. They will be in constant contact with colored or black officials. These officials will probably invite them to their homes. A refusal to accept the invitation may well cause unpleasant relations. Admiral Spruance and Commander Johnson also felt that these matters should be given careful consideration. In one of the islands the Chairman received a personal and confidential letter from one of the most potent

and

and intelligent labor leaders in the West Indies. A paraphrase of some of the comments are as follows:

"1. The great majority of West Indians of the working class welcome the deal in regard to the bases. It is partly the prospect of more work but there are other factors. I prefer to say nothing of them. (We have dealt with some of these 'other factors' in Chapter VI of this report.)

"2. All thoughtful colored West Indians are worried at the possibility of an intensification of color problems. There is a very real and difficult color question here. Oddly enough it is more intense between fair and dark colored people than anywhere else. We don't want to make it worse and we think it can be solved if nothing comes in the way."

It would be unfortunate if Americans with extreme color prejudice and antagonism were placed in important positions in the construction of the West Indian bases. A very unpleasant and difficult situation could be created by mishandling of the problems above presented. On the other hand a conference which would result in a general understanding of how these various questions were to be handled would serve to eliminate a lot of unnecessary friction.

CHAPTER IX

POSSIBILITIES OF ENEMY ESPIONAGE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS.

Notwithstanding mail and cable censorship in practically all of the British islands, patrolling of the Caribbean by the United States Navy and a small remnant of the former British West Indies squadron, it should be easy for any subversive group to have access to the islands. We checked carefully with police officers and others concerning the possibilities of illegal inter-island communication. We were told that there was considerable emigration of deserters from the French forces in Martinique (followers of De Gaulle) to St. Lucia. They come over in canoes and local fishing sloops. These French troops are welcomed, taken care of, and whenever possible sent to England to join the De Gaulle forces. We inquired whether it would be possible for less desirable illegal emigrants to get to St. Lucia undetected. The answer was that they had never been able properly to control smuggling and that with all the bays and coastal indentations it would not be difficult.

The same situation exists in Dominica, which is near both Guadeloupe and Martinique. Montserrat and Antigua have had their emigrants from Guadeloupe. At Antigua we

learned

learned that two wireless operators who deserted from the JEANNE D'ARC, which is at Guadeloupe, landed there and were sent to England. We were told that the French troops in Guadeloupe had not been demobilized.

The distance from Anguilla to the French-Dutch island of St. Martins is only five miles. Anguillans constantly go to St. Martins to sell produce and fish. No passport requirements are necessary. We were advised by the Magistrate at Anguilla that there had been some trouble between the French and the Dutch on St. Martins before the fall of Paris because of certain pro-German activities of the Dutch. What the present situation is there we did not learn. Natives of Anguilla and of Carriacou in the Grenadines travel back and forth between those islands and the Dutch island of Aruba and also San Domingo.

It seemed to us that the entire Caribbean area is wide open in this respect. Although our naval patrol is undoubtedly adequate to detect any large-scale enemy movements, under present conditions it would be almost impossible to detect individuals landing in local sloops, particularly at night.

Challenger in St. Kitts emphasized to us that it was difficult to maintain communication between his group in St. Kitts and friendly groups in other countries because

of

of the censorship. However, from the way in which he made this remark there was an implication that they had ways of avoiding or evading the censor.

The regular communications among the British islands are very poor. This applies generally as to steamship service and on many islands as regards telegraph and wireless communication. All of the officials and businessmen we met complained about the inadequate steamer service.

Before we left Grenada on the destroyer SAMPSON we decided to visit Carriacou, which is about 30 miles from St. George, the capital of Grenada. Carriacou has a population of about nine thousand. The Administrator in Grenada said he would telegraph the Commissioner at Carriacou advising him of our intended visit. We arrived at Carriacou about sundown and waited for some little time for the authorities to board us. No boat appeared so the Commission and Captain Phillips of the destroyer went ashore in the Captain's gig. When we approached the dock we found about half the town waiting for us. They told us that they had heard of a German raider operating in nearby waters and had assumed that the American warship anchored offshore was it. The Commissioner, Mr. Patterson, met us at the dock and explained to us that he had had no word from Grenada of our impending visit. This was the first

visit

visit of a warship in two years; the last one being the visit of the DUNDEE with the British Royal Commission. There had been no steamer in Carriacou since 1933. Patterson explained to us that they have a wireless with limited hours that can communicate with Grenada via Barbados. However, the wireless station was closed down that afternoon. Apparently the schedule of operations is not known in Grenada. They also maintain a communication by heliograph between Carriacou and Grenada but there was a rainstorm between the islands and the heliograph could not get through. When we arrived in St. Vincent we received a message of apology from the Administrator at Grenada, who explained that he had tried to communicate by heliograph but had failed.

Anguilla has no telegraphic communication of any kind. It depends for communication on a weekly schooner that plies between Anguilla, St. Kitts and Antigua. This service is not regular and sometimes two weeks elapse without any contact at all. None of these small islands have any adequate local defense. Governor Lethem of Antigua, who has jurisdiction over Anguilla, told us that there was no possible method to advise the Magistrate, who is the head officer at Anguilla, that we were stopping there.

The only way that he could have communicated with

Tortola,

Tortola, which is also under his jurisdiction, was to send a wireless message to the United States Naval Station in St. Thomas and have them send it by schooner or infrequent mail boat to Tortola. There is no wireless or telegraph on the island of Tortola.

We were advised by Colonel Muller, Chief of Police in Trinidad, that they had recently intercepted a small schooner loaded with cans of Diesel oil that was to go to Martinique.

Any minor enemy activity in some of these remote islands that have neither telegraphic or steamer communication could well go on undetected for a period of days or weeks.

Taussig Report

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

IV

April 24, 1941.

MEMO FOR TOI

Will you hold this section of the report until Secretary Ickes returns the rest of it?

G.

PSF
State

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It would be misleading to read this report with the thought that it is a well balanced survey of the British West Indian problem. Certain lines of inquiry appeared to us to serve the best interests of our Government. On these we concentrated our attention. Such important subjects as agriculture, education, health, trade and local government procedure we reported on superficially, although even in the limited time we had on each island we were able to gain more information than we have put on paper. But to record these matters in their proper perspective would have required more time than was available.

We have drawn a general picture of the social and economic conditions of the British West Indies, notwithstanding our own warning of the dangers of generalizing. The special circumstances and problems of the individual colonies and islands we have glossed over.

We feel warranted, however, in drawing certain conclusions from our study of this area and in making some recommendations:

1. The Caribbean countries, working as a regional unit,

unit, would have great influence in any world economic conference, particularly in the matter of certain tropical agricultural products.

2. The time is now propitious to establish closer relations between the United States and the British West Indies, with a view of finding common ground for a cooperative approach to world economic problems. The President's visit to several of the colonies has engendered considerable good will. The same, we believe, may be said of our own mission.

With a few notable exceptions we found little evidence of the West Indians regarding their problems as world problems. The current trend is toward a narrow nationalism but the ground is fertile for work in the opposite direction.*

The "Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies" is considerable more than an advisory committee or a governmental philanthropic organization. It has prestige, political power and considerable authority for direct action. Close contact with this organization would be useful.

3. The problems of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands of the United States are so closely interwoven in the general fabric of the entire Caribbean area that it seems

advisable

*For such an exception see record of conversation with Governor Lethem of the Leeward Islands. Contained in the Appendix.

advisable for the jurisdiction of these two islands to be separated from the body that now controls Hawaii, Alaska, and other United States possessions that have little in common with the Caribbean.

4. The relationship of those who will be in charge of the construction of our Caribbean bases, with the various colonial governments, local officials and the people, will have an important bearing on our future relations with the British West Indies. The report goes into this matter in some detail.

5. In the event that Great Britain should lose the war and it became necessary for the United States to occupy the British West Indies it is obvious that friendly relations with the people and the civil and military authorities would be of great importance. Some of the recommendations that we make have this in mind.

The Commission does not feel it has sufficient knowledge of the functions of the various divisions of the Department of State, nor of the relation of that Department to other Departments of the Government to make specific recommendations concerning certain problems of the Caribbean area, without conferring with officials of the State Department.

The following general subjects are suggested in the

nature

nature of an agenda for such discussion:

1. Creation during the present emergency of an independent agency to have jurisdiction over Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, which shall report directly to the President. This would remove these two possessions from the Department of the Interior.
2. Transfer from the Division of Western European Affairs of the jurisdiction of the European colonies in the Caribbean to a newly created sub-division of the Division of American Republics. Such subdivision would have charge of all Caribbean affairs, including the Caribbean republics.
3. The closest cooperation between the independent agency for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and the Division of American Republics.
4. Creation for the duration of the emergency of an Advisory Committee for the Caribbean area to consist of a representative of the State Department; War Department; Navy Department; and the new independent agency for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The Advisory Committee should be able temporarily to attach to itself as consultants experts from the Department of Agriculture; Department of Labor;

Labor; Department of Justice; Federal Housing Administration; Tariff Commission; and any other Department or agency whose assistance it might require. In so far as it may appear advisable the Advisory Committee should be delegated similar authorities for promoting the welfare of the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico as those granted to the British "Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies". The Chairman of the Advisory Committee should represent the State Department and be given diplomatic rank. He shall be available for diplomatic missions to any part of the Caribbean area at the direction of the President or the Secretary of State. The Advisory Committee should maintain close cooperative contact with the officials of the British "Fund for Development and Welfare in the West Indies".

5. Cooperative research on agriculture, labor and the social services, between the United States and the British West Indies, to be initiated jointly by the United States Advisory Committee and the British Welfare Fund.

6. The Advisory Committee, with temporary additions from the Army and Navy, could be used for conferences

with

with the colonial authorities with a view to establishing a basic labor policy for the construction of the United States Caribbean naval and air bases.

7. Consideration should be given to augmenting our consular service in the British West Indies.

8. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a steamer feeder service from San Juan, Puerto Rico, through the Leeward and Windward Islands, to Demerera.

9. Consideration should be given to the extension of commercial air service through the British West Indies.

10. The possibility of establishing portable naval radio stations in some of the smaller islands of the British West Indies, where there is now no communication, should be considered.

11. Closer cooperation between F.B.I. and Colonial Police.

APPENDIX

1. Partial list of persons interviewed by the Commission.

2. Two opposing views on West Indian economy.

3. Random notes on Carriacou, Anguilla and Tortola.

4. Notes on conversations with H.R.H. the Duke of Windsor.

5. Notes on Governor Popham of the Windward Islands.

6. Detention camps in Trinidad and Jamaica.

7. Copies of correspondence between the Commission and the Department of State.

8. Copies of correspondence between the Commission and the Colonial Governors.

9. Itinerary of the Commission.

10. Some statistics on the islands visited.

11. Bibliography.

PARTIAL LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED BY THE COMMISSION DURING ITS VISIT TO THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

At Barbados:

The Governor, His Excellency Sir Eubele John Waddington, K.C.M.G., C.B.E.
Honorable Dudley G. Leacock, of S.P. Musson & Co.
Mr. Vere Edgehill, of Plantations, Ltd.
Mr. D. H. Roach, of Evelyn, Roach & Co.
Major H.W.C. Peebles, A.D.C. to the Governor.
Dr. S. J.Saint, M.Sc., Ph.D., F.I.C., Director of Agriculture.
Mr. S. J. Perrin, Labor Officer.
Mr. G. D. L. Pile, Planter and a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. J. DeL. Chandler, Planter and a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. G. H. Adams, barrister, labor leader, and a member of the House of Assembly.
His Lordship, the Bishop of Barbados, Rt. Rev. David Bentley, D.D.
Col. O. St. A. Duke, Commissioner of Police.
Captain Weems, C.I.D. Officer, Police Department.
Colonel Wilkin, Commanding Officer, Barbados Reserves.
Mr. John Beckles, local Charity Director.
Dr. E. M. Shilstone, Director of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society.

At Trinidad:

The Governor, His Excellency Sir Hubert W. Young, K.C.M.G., M.C.
The Deputy Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. S. Nicoll.
Honorable E. J. Wortley, C.M.G., O.B.E., Director of Agriculture.
Mr. A. C. V. Lindon, Industrial Adviser.
Mr. R. O. Williams, Deputy Director of Agriculture.
Mr. G. B. Westwood, Manager, Ste. Madeleine Sugar Factory.
Mr. F. L. Melvill, Manager, Trinidad Leaseholds, Inc.
Commander H. V. Lavington, R.N., Manager, Trinidad Petroleum Development Co., Ltd.

Mr. Ivan

At Trinidad:
(continued)

Mr. Ivan Smith, Construction Superintendent, San Fernando Housing Project.
Honorable Captain A. A. Cipriani, Member of the Legislative Council and labor leader.
Honorable Adrian C. Rienzi, member of the Legislative Council and labor leader.
Mr. Ralph Mentor, of the Committee for Industrial Organization, Trinidad Trades Union.
E. R. Blades, of the above mentioned organization.
McDonald Moses " " " "
John F. Rojas " " " "
Mr. R. G. Grinnell, Planning Commissioner, Port-of Spain, and Housing Commissioner.
Mr. Faulkner, Director, Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture.
Colonel Angus Muller, Commissioner of Police.

At Grenada:

The Administrator, Honorable C. H. V. Talbot.
The Chief Justice, Honorable J. Jarrett.
The Attorney General, Honorable F. H. Collier.
The Treasurer, Honorable R. Kelly.
The Senior Medical Officer, Dr. G. Cochrane.
Mr. J. E. Munro, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. W. E. Julien, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. J. B. Renwick, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. T. Lang, the Labor Officer.
Major Ormiston, the Commissioner of Police.
Mr. Gerald Smith, President of the Chamber of Commerce.
Mr. W. O'B. Donovan, Superintendent of Agriculture.

At Carriacou:

The Magistrate, Honorable Norbert Patterson.
Mr. F. B. Paterson, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. W. E. Haydock, a local planter.

At St. Vincent:

His Excellency Sir Henry B. Popham, K.C.M.G., M.B.E., Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Windward Islands.

The

At St. Vincent:
(continued)

The Administrator, Major W. Bain Gray, C.B.E.
The Treasurer, Honorable L. P. Spence.
The Attorney General, Honorable W. A. Date.
Mr. A. M. Frazier, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. Frank Child, a local planter.
Mr. F. A. Kassen, local businessman and planter.
Mr. Arnold Punnett, a member of the Legislative Council.
Mr. G. A. McIntosh, a member of the Legislative Council and local labor leader.
Mr. St. Clair F. Bonadie, local labor leader.
Mr. J. L. Cato, local labor leader.
Mr. G. E. Edwards, Commissioner of Labor.

At St. Lucia:

The Administrator, Honorable A. A. Wright, C.M.G.
Mr. L. A. Chase, Manager of Barbados Settlement Scheme at Vieux Fort.
Mr. E. T. Ward, Superintendent of Agriculture.
Honorable G. H. Palmer, Commissioner of Labor.
Honorable A. R. Lartigue, Attorney General.
Honorable G. Peter, a member of the Legislative Council.
Honorable G. M. Devaux, a member of the Legislative Council.
Honorable H. E. Belmar, a member of the Legislative Council.
Honorable A. E. Augustin, a member of the Legislative Council and a local labor leader.
Honorable R. G. H. Clarke, a member of the Legislative Council and a local labor leader.
Major William Lambert, Commissioner of Police.
Mr. N. Laurence Johnson, local business man.
Mr. C. L. Knight, local business man.

At Dominica:

The Administrator, Honorable James Scott Neill.
Honorable A. G. Forbes, the Attorney General.
Honorable E. E. Harney, the Treasurer.
Honorable Dr. C. N. Griffin, Chief Medical Officer.
Honorable F. G. Harcourt, Superintendent of Agriculture.
Honorable R. E. A. Nichols, Mayor of Roseau.
Captain C. B. S. Maiden, Commissioner of Police.
Mr. S. T. Jullion, Head of Board of Education.
Mr. W. S. Archer, local planter.
Mr. J. E. Knowlton, local planter.
Honorable A. S. Burleigh, Magistrate at Portsmouth.

At Nevis:

The Administrator, Honorable J. D. Harford.
The Warden of Nevis, Honorable S. E. Moir.
Mr. P. S. Nichols, Superintendent of Agriculture.
Captain J. H. Spence, Police Inspector,
Mr. King, local business man.

At St. Kitts:

The Administrator, Honorable J. D. Harford.
Mr. E. A. Evelyn, Jr., Secretary of the Administrator.
Mr. W. S. G. Barnes, Labor Officer.
Mr. R. E. Kelsick, Superintendent of Agriculture.
Mr. A. M. Reid, local planter and business man.
Mr. B. B. Davis, a member of the Legislative Council and Manager of St. Kitts Sugar Factory.
Mr. E. O. Challenger, a member of the Legislative Council and head of St. Kitts Labor Union.
Mr. M. J. Sebastian, editor of the "Union Messenger" and local labor leader.
Mr. Joseph M. France, Secretary, St. Kitts Labor Union.

At Antigua:

His Excellency Sir Gordon J. Lethem, K.C.M.G., the Governor.
The Administrator, Honorable Herbert Boon, M.B.E.
Major Brown, Commissioner of Police.
Honorable F. H. S. Warneford, M.A., B.Sc., A.I.C., Superintendent of Agriculture.
Mr. C. A. Gomez, Agricultural Development Officer.
Mr. R. H. Lockhart, barrister and local labor leader.
Mr.R. St.C. Stevens, a member of the Legislative Council and President, Antigua Trade and Labor Union.
Mr. S. Richards, Secretary, Antigua Trade and Labor Union.
Mr. Bird, local labor leader.

At Tortola:

Honorable Dr. D. P. Wailling, F.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Commissioner.
Honorable W. C.Roy, Superintendent of Agriculture.
The Reverend Davidson, manager of the Methodist Schools.

At

At Anguilla:

The Magistrate and Medical Officer, Dr. A. P. MacDonald, L.R.C.P. (Edinburgh) L.R.C.S., L.R.F.P.S.
Mr. A. E. Owen, member of the Legislative Council.

At. St. Thomas:

Honorable Lawrence W. Cramer, Governor of the Virgin Islands of the United States.
Honorable Rupert Emmerson, Chief, Division of Territories and Island Possessions, Department of the Interior.
Mr. Roy W. Bornn, Director of Public Welfare, St. Thomas.
Lt. Commander Johnson, United States Navy.
Colonel Rogers, Commandant, Marine Base, St. Thomas.

At. San Juan:

Admiral Spruance, Commandant, Tenth Naval District.
Commander Johnson, United States Navy, engaged in supervision of construction of U.S. air and naval bases in the Caribbean.

At Kingston:

His Excellency Sir Arthur Richards, K.C.M.G.
The Colonial Secretary, Honorable A. W. Grantham, O.B.E
The Labor Officer, Honorable F. A. Norman, O.B.E.
The Security Officer, Inspector S. V. Higgins.
The Information Officer, Mr. B. H. Easter.
Mr. Norman W. Manley, labor leader and head of the People's National Party of Jamaica.
Honorable Sir Alfred d'Costa, Privy Councillor and business man.
Mr. C. N. Hislop, Manager of United Fruit Company, Jamaica.
Mr. H. G. DeLisser, editor of the "Daily Gleaner".
Mr. Charles W. King, Acting Labor Agent for the Panama Canal, Kingston.
Mr. H. M. Shirley, local labor leader and Vice President of the Bustamente Union.
Mr. Ross Livingston, Solicitor of the Bustamente Union.
Mr. L. Newland, connected with the Bustamente Union.
Mr. T. P. Evelyn, Co-Manager, Sugar and Rum Manufacturers' Association.

At

At Kingston:
(continued)

Mr. D. J. Verity, Co-Manager, Sugar and Rum Manufacturers' Association.
Honorable E. A. Campbell, a member of the Legislative Council.
Honorable O. E. Anderson, a member of the Legislative Council.
Honorable P. Martin Cooper, O.B.E., Director of Public Works.
Mr. F. A. Glasspole, Secretary, Jamaica United Clerks Association.

At Nassau:

His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor, Governor of the Bahamas.
Honorable W. L. Heape, Colonial Secretary.
Honorable C. P. Bethel, Deputy Colonial Secretary.
Mr. A. K. Solomon, a member of the House of Assembly.
Captain Duffield, British Navy, commander of H.M.S. CARADOC
Captain Burnett, Royal Marines.

TWO OPPOSING POINTS OF VIEW ON WEST INDIAN ECONOMICS

Sir Gordon Lethem sees the agricultural problems of the British West Indies as part of the world problem. During the two days we were with him he personally escorted us all over the island of Antigua, during which time he expounded to us his point of view. He said "We have got to adapt ourselves to the world position". He gave us a copy of a letter which he sent to his Administrators and Commissioners under date of January 15, 1940. This is, in concise form, a resumé of his conversations with us.

Government House,
Antigua.
15th January, 1940.

HIS HONOUR
THE ADMINISTRATOR ANTIGUA
" ST. KITTS-NEVIS
COMMISSIONER MONTSERRAT
" VIRGIN ISLANDS

Food Production

I have now received replies from Presidencies to my minute of 7th December asking that this question of local food production be pursued with very special attention, and referring to my address to the General Legislative Council and to recent correspondence from the Secretary of State.

2. I have noted the action which has been taken and, as I said in the Council, in particular to the methodical steps taken in Antigua, and I have now a full memorandum from Montserrat.

3. I

3. I feel, however, that it is very necessary to stress that this matter of increase of local food supplies is not merely or even principally a course forced upon us by war economics or, as in Antigua, a part of unemployment relief, but that it is of much wider importance and, as it seems to me, demands now almost a re-orientation of agricultural policy.

4. It is the aspect of the question as one of future policy with which I am chiefly concerned. I am well aware of the point of view which has in the past appeared logical, but I am not at all prepared to accept the statement of policy for the future in terms so usual, that these islands should concentrate on sugar and cotton and be content with some moderate advance only in producing certain foodstuffs within certain conditions, in effect that attention shall not be diverted from sugar and cotton, and that the question of greater self-subsistence be largely left to be solved by increase of production in other islands such as Dominica. I have never ceased myself to advocate increase of local-grown foodstuffs, e.g. at Agricultural Shows and in Council, but I feel the time has come when we have got to ask for a very definite policy on the part of the Agricultural Departments and that food production be regarded as a primary object at least equal in importance to production of cash export crops and not merely subsidiary and secondary or to be relegated to peasants only or to spare land which cannot grow sugar and cotton.

5. It

5. It has of course been the hope of recent years that there would be such revival in world prices of primary products grown for export, for example sugar and cotton, as would enable the old economic position to be restored. But our depression has been going on for more than a decade and I think we are now driven to the conclusion, I believe it is and will be the conclusion of most observers who view from the wider angle, that there cannot be such a recovery in prices of sugar, cotton, cocoa, limes, copra, bananas, etc., as will enable such a purely agricultural community as ours to depend on imported foodstuffs and maintain a decent standard of living. There might be a temporary rise during the war. It is possible for the Imperial Government somehow or other to maintain artificial high prices. But I cannot think that such a system, i.e., maintenance of artificial high price for exports which would enable us to buy most of our foodstuffs from manufacturing countries, gives us a basis for the future on which any reliance can be placed. It is far more probable that after the war there will be another slump in the price of primary products for export such as sugar and cotton and world prices may reach new low levels. The problem is a world-wide one and not in any way peculiar to the West Indian Islands.

6. While, therefore, it is obvious common sense that any policy of greater self-subsistence can only be projected

for

for a large enough area, e.g., the West Indies as a whole and that coordination of possibilities as between parts of the whole is of the greatest importance and deserves every possible attention, that does not acquit even our sugar-growing islands of endeavoring to contribute their maximum to that policy.

7. Therefore, what I want from the Agricultural Departments is not all the many reasons why the past policy has been followed and thought sound, or all the qualifications and difficulties which might hinder food production or make it possible only at the expense of our valued export crops, but actual practical suggestions of the very maximum that can be done in each island. That does not seem yet to be fully realized. Nor am I prepared to admit that the estates which have given whole-time attention to export crops are not concerned. I believe the matter is going to be equally important for the benefit of the estates, taking the long view, as for the benefit of the peasants. It is the concern of the whole community. It may well be necessary for all estates to put a certain amount of land under foodstuffs and engage in a more diversified system of agriculture.

8. I cannot believe for one moment that had this problem been tackled seriously decades ago agricultural science would not have by now produced much more production of food crops that suited even Antigua, e.g., the varieties of corn

or

or millet or quick-growing crops which do not require a lengthy wet season. It is a matter of adaptation to circumstances and to climate which the communities have failed to make in these islands except as regards sugar and cotton and even as regards the latter a community intensely interested in this product as Montserrat has not reached conclusive success.

9. What I wish to emphasize is that we should not simply sit back and in the course of the next few months accept direction from outside. I cannot but believe that the orientation of policy is going to be urged upon us in the strongest and most compelling manner from outside and I would much rather be able to be in a position to have our contribution ready than to have something put up for us, to which we will then find every manner of objection.

10. I want, therefore, a reasoned memorandum from each Presidency making practical and maximum possible suggestions. Corn has been much mentioned and the finding of the right varieties of maize or millet is clearly a matter for study and experiment. I see little mention of stock in the memoranda. I believe that to be most important and a large increase to be possible and desirable, e.g., pigs, curing of pork, use of goat's milk. We have to think not only of existing low standards of nutrition but of much better standards. Coconut palms can grow in the islands, not of course as they do in other islands, but still the trees

grow

grow and produce coconuts and require extraordinarily little upkeep. There is no good reason of which I know why there should not be many thousands of coconuts produced in the islands and valuable use made of their products even though it would not pay to export nuts. It is not, however, my business here to take up all questions of the details of all products but the Agricultural Departments should be able to do so and now, so that we can make our contribution to any conference in the West Indies which may take place.

11. In the following paragraphs I attempt to make some brief précis of what appears to me the world position to which we have got to adapt ourselves. I would believe myself that the volume of our exports need not suffer. It need not be emphasized here that the development of scientific methods of cultivation, of all crops, by all growers, would remain of sovereign importance. The low level of peasant agriculture is an obstacle which must be surmounted.

12. The question is not primarily one of war emergency, nor peculiar to the West Indies. It is one of the local effects of a world phenomenon. These are:

a. The widening gap between the prices of agricultural and manufactured produce, resulting in

b. The increasingly one-sided dependence of agricultural areas upon manufacturing areas for support of their public services and their underremunerated population.

This position is most evident and serious in purely agri-

cultural

cultural areas such as the West Indies. But it is increasingly a matter of concern in mixed and wealthy areas such as the United States. It is to be observed in almost every economically developed country in the world, and is perhaps most marked in parts of the British Empire, less in such countries perhaps as Denmark.

13. There is no good reason now to expect or rely upon an ultimate rise in the price of agricultural produce in relation to the general price level. On the contrary, through the development of scientific research and of unintelligent political influences, increased production will probably continue to outstrip increased distribution and consumption.

14. Therefore the agriculturalist who continues to concentrate on his primary produce in exchange for imported subsistence and service must expect (a) either less money (or less purchasing power) and hence a lower standard of living, or (b) increased dependence and hence insecurity, minimum standards of living, and all the deterioriation that dependence implies.

15. The laborer and small holder feel this first, but the plight of the estate owner will in the long run be worse. (He has farther to fall.) The middle man will feel it next; the moneylender last. None can escape.

16. Agriculture, however, holds a very strong card and should use it. The industrialist must sell his produce or perish.

perish. The agriculturalist can, if he tries, support himself and his people without selling much, in tolerable comfort, though without motor cars and cinemas and fancy foods. (For example, the South Australian farmer during the 1927 slump and many a large estate owner in the U.S.A. at one time.)

17. The agriculturalist can also buy services, if he produces what those who perform the services need. Put it in its simplest terms, he cannot pay more than a negligible fraction of his doctor's bill with sugar, however much he has of it, but he can pay a good deal of his doctor's bill with poultry, vegetables and dairy produce. More accurately, he needs diversified production and lively internal exchange.

18. An agriculturalist who banks wholly on selling in export markets throws away his trump. He turns himself into an industrialist (with land instead of a factory) selling a product of falling value. He is at everyone's mercy. Alone among men he must ask "what is the price" both when he sells and when he buys.

19. He will never get a fair deal until he is put on equal terms in bargaining with the industrialist; until he is not, as now, dependent on the industrialist for his food. (How absurd this is a moment's reflection will show.) Essential food supplies must therefore be localized. His export crops, though possibly reduced in volume (he is already compelled to restrict some of them) will then represent

not

not bare necessities but amenities; and he will in time be able to talk firmly to the industrialist (who must eat).

20. In the production of meat, poultry, dairy and vegetable produce there is obviously at least as much room for the large as well as the small producer. In lively internal exchange there is an opening for business-like organization whether private or cooperative.

21. The choice before the West Indies, I believe, is between insecurity and inevitable decline for all concerned if an outlook of concentration on export cash crops remains dominant, or greater security and a much more solid and secure advance with a different outlook.

The community would be in a position, moreover, far more readily to take advantage of any improvement in world economics or politics, and would not be overwhelmed by their further deterioration.

22. If we choose the second course the difficulties are formidable enough of course but not insurmountable. Internal marketing, price and currency adjustment, storage, the education of the consumer as well as the producer, research to discover the best produce for the conditions of each place, coordination over the area in which unified control or cooperation are possible, are all evidently necessary.

23. But

23. But the difficulties can be exaggerated. Internal marketing is much more lively in some countries supposed to be more backward than the West Indies. Produce was stored centuries before modern methods of storage were imagined. People faced with more adverse conditions (e.g., those living on the edge of the Sahara) have managed to find crops and methods of cultivation to suit them; and scientific agriculturalists have in many instances found such crops more quickly.

24. The above paragraphs are intended as a general conspectus of a world position as applicable to West Indian conditions. For action, consultation between West Indian colonies for coordinated production and marketing is certainly all-important, but we must face the fact that in these colonies even the unlikely event of a genuinely unanimous decision is not likely to produce unanimous action. Representation of the Leeward Islands may perhaps be left to the Commissioner of Agriculture but his representations will be empty unless each island makes its primary contribution, namely:

(a) an understanding by its leaders of the importance for all concerned of a change of outlook on the relative importance of export and local markets;

(b) an earnest investigation by each island of its possible produce.

I confess that I do not see satisfactory evidence of either,

either, notwithstanding the praiseworthy efforts made in some quarters to increase local food production as a war measure.

25. In my view the war is not a primary motive for the change. But it gives an opportunity and incentive to accelerate the change, as I emphasized in my address to the General Legislative Council. I do not think that what I have written will be found contrary to the findings of the Royal Commission.

(Signed) G. J. LETHEM

(GOVERNOR)

The opposing point of view appears in the Annual Report of the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Jamaica, for the year 1938, published by the Colonial Office in Great Britain. The part from which we quote appears in Chapter 6, entitled "Natural Resources":

"Sugar:

99. The sugar industry has always held an important place in the Colony's agricultural programme. Recent years have seen a rapid expansion in production due partly to increased acreage as lands became useless for banana growing, owing to the presence of Panama Disease, but largely also to greater efficiency in field and factory practice. Centralization, the

adoption

adoption of chemical control in the factories, the growing of high yielding disease-resistant varieties of cane, the increased use of mechanically propelled implements for tillage and the institution of a factory statistical service all have played their part in the expansion of production.

"100. Perhaps the greatest value of the sugar industry of Jamaica as to other countries, lies in its capacity to employ labor. Consumers of sugar within the colony, therefore, contribute largely to the industry, paying a higher price for sugar in the Colony than is paid in England. This local price is controlled by law, and all sugar liberated on the local market is sold through the Sugar Manufacturer's Association of which all factory owners are members.

"101. Considerable expansion of production is still possible, and in view of the great importance of the industry to the Island it was not without misgiving that the Colony became aware of the proposal for international control of sugar produced in 1937."

RANDOM NOTES ON CARRIACOU, ANGUILLA, AND TORTOLA

A. On these islands where there is a peasant economy and few or no estates or industries there is little unrest and no probability of disturbances. Where there is no threat of trouble the British Government is niggardly in providing necessary social services.

B. Where there is a pure or nearly pure peasant economy we found:

1. Extreme money poverty.
2. Less malnutrition.
3. Most families owning their own homes with enough land for subsistence for farming.
4. Much better housing.
5. Less illegitimacy. About 40% as compared to 60 or 70%.
6. People more religious.
7. Less venereal disease.
8. More ingenuity in preserving and storing food.
9. Privation, which becomes acute in times of drought, accepted stoically and philosophically.
10. Communal system for exchange of labor. Rum the medium of exchange.
11. Little drunkenness.
12. Practically no major crime.

13. Considerable petty larceny such as stealing each other's produce.

14. Extreme conservatism in regard to any change in hereditary methods of agriculture.

15. No clocks, watches or sun dials. General idea of time based on position of sun.

16. Every evidence of happiness. People generally smiling.

17. Survival of African tribal superstitions, including practice of obeah.

NOTES ON CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DUKE OF WINDSOR

On Sunday afternoon, December 23rd, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor invited Mrs. Taussig and myself to Government House for cocktails. The only other person present was Major Phillips, A.D.C. I had about an hour's conversation with the Duke. A few days later Capt. Jervis Wood, another A.D.C., telephoned me, saying that the Duke would like to see me at 11 a.m. on December 28th. This meeting lasted one hour and fifteen minutes. The following is a resumé of the conversations:

The Duke discussed his visit with the President on the TUSCALOOSA. He was impressed with the President's knowledge of the West Indies and in particular his intimate knowledge of the geography of the Bahamas. He spoke of the President's decision not to build a base at Mayaguana. The Duke referred several times to the President's offer of cooperative effort by the United States in the development of the British West Indies. He referred to the President's discussion of the possibility of Jamaica growing rice and supplying it to Puerto Rico. He spoke of the President's talk of pooling information pertaining to agricultural and social problems. Almost at the outset of the first conversation the Duke referred to the President's remark about the United States taking over the British West Indies, quoting the President

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as having said "Why should the United States take over Great Britain's headaches?", and he referred to the President's reference to the United States' problems in Puerto Rico. The Duke talked at considerable length concerning the C.C.C. camps and his conversation with the President about them. He expressed considerable interest. I told the Duke about the National Youth Administration. I later presented him with a copy of "A New Deal for Youth", which is the story of the N.Y.A. The Duke said he contemplated a trip to the United States in the early part of the new year and hopes to tour parts of the South and visit C.C.C. camps and N.Y.A. projects. He particularly wants to see the work that these two organizations are doing with negro youth. The Duke asked me if I would accompany him on some of his visits to the N.Y.A. projects. He further stated that he was writing to the President and asking him for a suggested itinerary to visit C.C.C. and N.Y.A.

He talked at length about world economic conditions. He blamed much of the present world condition on economic warfare and tariff barriers. He said he always favored free trade, although when in England he had supported protection, but only because England was forced into it by the rest of the world. He mentioned, among other things, the high tariff barriers in the United States, although he seemed aware of the efforts of the present Administration

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to lower them. He referred to subsidies, particularly sugar subsidies, as being habit-forming. They were like taking laxative salts before breakfast; once you got into the habit you could not function without them. He referred to the report of the Royal Commission. He said it had not been completed until after the war commenced and that it was such an indictment against British colonial government in the West Indies that it was decided to keep the report secret. It was the sort of thing the Germans were looking for to arouse the colonies against Britain. He referred to the situation in India and their inability to govern themselves. He said the exploitation of the British West Indies was shameful and that the attitude of Great Britain had always been "What can we get out of them". He regarded the report of the Royal Commission as an extremely fine piece of work.

He talked of the jealousies among the various British West Indian islands and their non-cooperative attitude toward one another. He said of the Bahamians that they wanted to keep the people of the other islands out; particularly the Jamaicans, nor did they want any refugees. He talked of the reactionary attitude of the Bay Street merchants in Nassau, who controlled the local Assembly; the pettiness and selfishness of these people and the

difficulty

difficulty he has in getting progressive legislation passed. His knowledge of the out islands and their problems is considerable, considering the short time he has been here. He went into considerable detail concerning some of these problems.

The Duke pointed out that one of his problems as Governor was that the Bahamas was not a Crown Colony. He said that the three B's in the West Indies, Barbados, Bermuda and Bahamas, were not Crown Colonies, that the lower house, the House of Assembly, was elected but the upper house, the Legislative Council, was hand-picked by the Governor (he said they were picked before he arrived). The Governor has relatively little control over legislation because appropriations originate in the lower house. He further stated that he could express his wishes to the Legislature but that usually they did as they pleased. "They call that democracy." He then diverted to world affairs and remarked that the governments of the world could get together and reach a world agreement but that the people who vote prevent that. When he referred to his support of a protective tariff for the United Kingdom his initial statement was "I voted for it", then he corrected himself and said "I never vote". He referred to a local controversy now current. For years past Harbor Island has been the seat of government for the Island of Eleuthra, but since the local industry of boat-building

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has almost vanished the population has diminished from three thousand to one thousand. The government of Bahamas wants to shift the seat of government from Harbor Island to Spanish Wells, a larger community, but the rivalry between two communities has created a major issue. At this point he told me that he was expecting Mr. A. K.Solomon, a member of the Legislature from Nassau, who wanted to discuss some matters with him. He said that Solomon had been born in Harbor Island. He asked me to remain so that I could meet him. He said that he wanted to have me meet one of the Bahamas most prominent reactionaries; that Solomon could be most obstructive and was potent in blocking government legislation. He said he was cultivating him. A little later Solomon was announced. The Duke introduced me and arranged an appointment for me with Solomon. I had an hour's talk later with Solomon.

NOTES ON GOVERNOR POPHAM OF THE WINDWARD ISLANDS

The body of the report covers substantially all of our conversations with Governors Waddington of Barbados, Richards of Jamaica, and Lethem of Antigua. Little mention is made of Governor Popham. Popham is competent and liberal. His ideas covering the bases and the desirability of a conference to develop a labor policy coincide with the other Governors. He also favors some machinery for exchanging social and economic information between the government of the United States and the various colonial governments. Governor Popham was not at his seat of government in Grenada while we were there. We met him in St. Vincent. We commented that we had expected to find difficulty in making contacts with the liberal and left-wing leaders in the various colonies but that our experience had been to the contrary. We had met but few reactionaries. The Governor laughed and said "I think I can fix you up". "I will arrange for two planters to meet with you this afternoon, A. M. Frazier and Frank Child". He then invited us for cocktails later in the afternoon to get our reaction to his "reactionaries". That afternoon we were able to confirm to the Governor his good judgment.

DETENTION CAMPS IN TRINIDAD AND JAMAICA

We visited the detention camp in Trinidad. The camp was divided into two parts; in one section about 220 German-Jewish refugees were confined; in the other section there were about 16 non-Jewish English, German, Russian, and Trinidadian white internees. Originally all of the Jewish refugees had been confined but recently those from Poland and Czechoslovakia had been released. We were told that they had no specific evidence against the refugees but they were put there for purposes of precaution. Actually, none of these refugees were really under suspicion. Two or three of these refugees, for whom the others would not vouch, were confined in prison. The 16 non-Jewish internees were all definitely under suspicion. They were separated because some of the smaller group were definitely Nazi and there had been trouble between them and the Jewish refugees. The camp was operated on a self-government plan. The refugees elected a President, who assumed general responsibility for the conduct of the camp. They did all the necessary work in the camp, including the preparation of their own meals. The Government of Trinidad allowed each refugee 35 cents per day for food. Beyond that the camp was supported with money supplied by those refugees who had funds and by donation from the Joint Distribution Committee

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in New York. The Commandant of the camp, who has the rank of Captain in the Volunteer Force, is a social worker. He runs the camp more as a relief institution than a detention camp. The internees seemed as happy and contented as they could be under the circumstances.

Uriah Butler, who had been put in jail because of his part in the 1937 riots and who had been recently released, has been arrested again under the general war emergency powers and is a solitary prisoner on an island. We were told by Colonel Muller, Police Commissioner, that Butler was quite happy there and received a ration of one bottle of brandy a week.

In Jamaica they have a large detention camp, which we did not see. The reports of this camp varied depending on which official gave us the information. The number of internees ranged from several hundred to eighteen hundred. Several attempts at escape have been made by the internees.