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POPULATION POLICIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

Prepared by

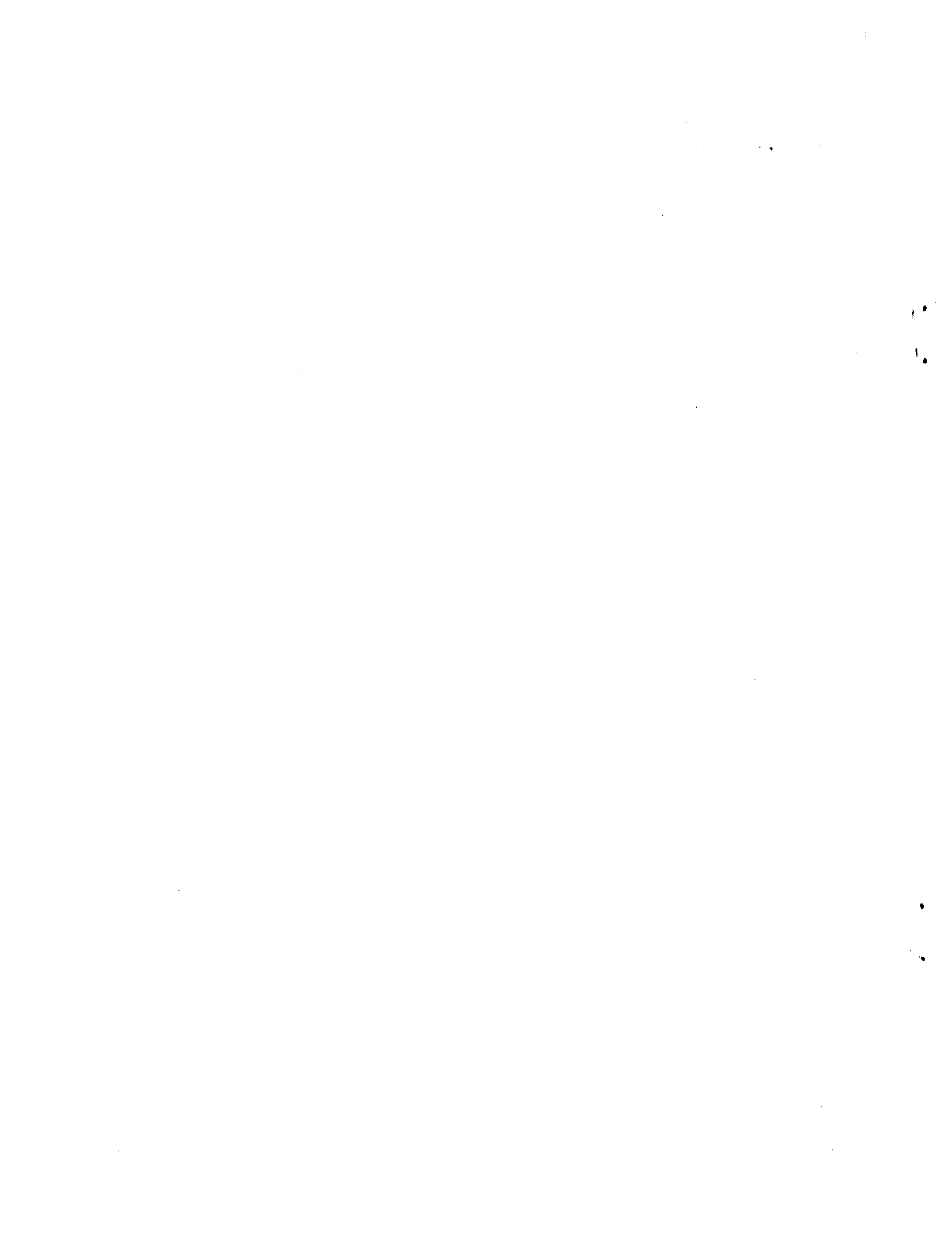
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POPULATION POLICIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

by Jack Harewood

This paper is restricted to the former British colonies in the Caribbean, including Guyana, Belize and the Bahamas. They include a number of independent or self-governing countries which, with the exception of the Bahamas, share a basic common population history.

BACKGROUND

The first population policy in the region involved the importation of labour from wherever they could be obtained (Europe, Africa, Asia) and under whatever conditions appeared at any given time most advantageous for the sugar plantations (free workers, slaves, indentured labourers). This extended over a period of about two and a half centuries. During the heyday of African slavery no attention was paid to the possible contribution of the other components - births and deaths - to increasing population, so that mortality (and morbidity) were high and fertility very low, though some limited attention was given to these towards the end of slavery. In those countries where there was still a shortage of labour for the plantations at the time of emancipation (particularly Guyana and Trinidad), there was recourse to indentured immigration mainly from India.

Since the single-minded purpose of this first population policy was to provide and maintain an "adequate" labour supply for the plantations, population settlement concentrated in and around the plantations, while there was a single important town which served as the sea-port and the banking and commercial centre. Peasant agriculture and small-scale business unrelated to the plantations were met with either unconcern or hostility.

During slavery and even after, there was strong opposition to the education at any level of the masses of the population since an uneducated and ignorant work-force was ideal for the plantations. Similarly there was strong opposition to any efforts to give religious instruction to the

slaves and later indentured workers. For the most part, the children of the white population in the colonies were sent 'home' to England for their education. To meet the demand for education for the children of the less wealthy white population, a few schools were started in the various colonies with grants from the planters and merchants. Children of the non-white population were accepted into these schools, particularly after slavery, as a means of providing the clerical and low-level administrative workers required.

The population history of the Bahamas is different. Efforts to develop the plantation cultivation of sugar during the eighteenth century failed because of the poor soils. Instead, significant population increases came as the result of a flight of 'loyalists' with their slaves to the Bahamas from the United States of America following the latter's war of independence. This was later augmented by runaway slaves from the non-British territories in the Caribbean and by Africans freed by the British from ships still plying the slave trade, after the abolition of slavery by the British.

After this brief historical background, we now look at the current population policies in the region.

POPULATION POLICY ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Immigration

Now that the region has shifted from one of a shortage of labour to having a critical labour-surplus (see below), immigration policy has shifted to restricting immigration of unskilled and relatively low-skilled workers which formerly formed part of an intra-Caribbean migration from the less prosperous countries. This action was first necessary on the part of Trinidad and Tobago which earlier had received large numbers of population from Barbados and the Windwards. Professional and highly trained workers traditionally came from the 'mother country', but with self-government and, in many countries, full independence as well as improving levels of education and aspiration on the part of the nationals; most countries have adopted a policy of restricting the immigration of foreign workers at all levels as far

as possible. To achieve this, would-be employers of foreign workers must obtain a 'work permit' for each such worker, and this is given only if no national competent to fill the particular post is available. In such cases, employers are often required to undertake to train nationals within some reasonable period so as to overcome this need for employing foreigners. In general this has not worked satisfactorily for a number of reasons, including an absence of genuine support of the policy on the part of employers, on the one hand, and the 'brain drain' and other factors affecting the supply of nationals, on the other. These are discussed below.

The two mainland countries - Guyana and Belize - which continue to have an overall low population density, with vast sparsely populated areas in their hinterlands, can still benefit from appropriate large scale immigration. They are both receiving some immigrants but would be interested in more rapid population growth to develop their hinterlands. There is, therefore, in each case, an absence of restrictions on immigration such as obtains in the islands, and a willingness to accept immigrants from anywhere if they are prepared to assist in developing the unused areas. Despite this, both countries, and more particularly Guyana, are losing population who are emigrating mainly to the U.S.A. and Canada.

In the case of the Bahamas, prior to 1967 when the newly elected national government introduced a hard-line immigration policy, there had been a tradition of a virtual open-door policy on immigration. There was a continuous stream of immigrant unskilled workers mainly from Haiti and to a lesser extent from the Turks and Caicos Islands. But the massive inflow of unskilled workers in the post-World War II period led to the eventual passing of the first restrictive immigration Act in 1963 which required deposits for unskilled workers. But there was also growing concern among Bahamians about the immigration at the higher levels as well, and the consequent increasing expatriate dominance of the economy and the high-level work-force. There have, therefore, been further restrictive legislative acts in 1967 and 1970 affecting immigration at all levels. This restrictive legislation has been associated with government campaigns

to deport illegal unskilled immigrants though the problems of illegal immigration continue.

Emigration

Since World War II, with the rapid population growth, many Caribbean governments have seen emigration as the quickest means of controlling an over rapid population growth, and more, particular, of dampening the high levels of unemployment and under-employment. A variety of measures have been taken to encourage emigration either on a permanent or a temporary basis. These include bilateral agreements for the recruitment of persons from the region to work in the U.S.A. and Canada as domestic servants and other categories of unskilled workers including seasonal agricultural workers. There was serious concern on the part of most countries of the region when Britain introduced its first legislation in 1962 which virtually ended the large-scale emigration to that country that was then taking place.

More recently Canada and the U.S.A. tended to encourage qualified and highly skilled workers rather than unskilled workers. This, along with the other well known reasons why developing countries tend to lose high-level manpower to developed countries, have led to the emergence in the region of the 'brain-drain' of professional and highly trained personnel. In an effort to get skilled and qualified nationals to return home, a number of countries, notably Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, have sponsored official visits to some metropolitan countries and through other avenues such as extensive advertisement in the technical journals and the newspapers in those countries, have sought to encourage such nationals to return home and make their contribution to the home country's development. These appeals do not appear to be backed up in all countries by administrative arrangements for prompt action to take advantage of responses to these appeals.

In recent years, because of world economic problems and new concern about immigration on the part of the U.K., the U.S.A. and Canada, migration to these countries from the Caribbean is becoming once again extremely difficult. As a result, once again there has developed important streams of intra-Caribbean migration, particularly from the poorer islands to Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados.

Internal Migration/Rural Development

Most governments of the region have a policy, either explicit or implicit, of trying to slow down the rate of growth of the principal urban centre (in terms of the "greater" city rather than the much more restricted "legal" city) in an effort to obviate problems related to over-rapid urbanization. The principal measures taken to effect this policy include: conscious efforts to develop the rural areas in terms of amenities (e.g. electricity, roads, secondary schools, etc.) and in terms of employment opportunity outside of agriculture principally through the re-direction (through encouragement) of industries. In addition, for reasons of population distribution but also of food production and of employment, efforts are being made to upgrade agricultural employment in the minds of the population through the inclusion of training in agriculture in both primary and comprehensive secondary schools and other means including repeated exhortation.

In a number of countries, including Jamaica and St. Lucia, for example, special government organisations have been set up to deal with the important matter of rural development. As indicated earlier, Guyana and Belize are especial cases in that they have an extreme pattern of settlement with most of the population residing in very small proportion of the area of the country and the bulk of the country remains virtually uninhabited. Moreover both of these countries are faced with territorial claims from neighbouring countries (Venezuela and Suriname in the case of Guyana and Guatemala in the case of Belize) which emphasize the risks associated with these vast, unused territories in their cases. Guyana is actively seeking to encourage significant migration by its citizens to the hinterland in addition to considering the possibility of encouraging immigrants from neighbouring Caribbean territories already discussed.

Family Planning

The countries of the Caribbean have long faced a variety of serious social and economic problems that are seen as in part resulting from rapid population growth. These include: high and increasing levels of unemployment and under-employment, land shortage, low and

unequal incomes, malnutrition and poverty associated often with large families. The traditional popular response to these problems, as is shown elsewhere in this study, has been large-scale emigration, either to less unfortunate countries within the region, or to countries outside of the region. The Government response, in recent decades has been to seek to speed up national social and economic development as the only final solution of these problems. Increasingly, however, the people and the Governments, usually in that order, have been acknowledging that the reduction of the very high birth rates and of the large family size which have existed in the region, could make an early impact on some aspects of these problems both at the national and at the family level.

As a result, family planning programmes now exist in all countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean except Guyana. The introduction of these programmes has, in almost every case, been the subject of much controversy and serious opposition by certain sections of society. The most consistent objection, in earlier years, came from the Roman Catholic Church. However, while this source of objection undoubtedly delayed the introduction and obstructed the progress of a programme in Trinidad and Tobago, in the case of the smaller islands, family planning programmes were started in the Catholic Windward islands, St. Lucia and Grenada earlier than in the non-Catholic Leeward islands.

Usually, the provision of contraceptive supplies was started in the various countries by voluntary workers who soon after have come together to form a family planning association. In the absence of Government support in the early years, with a few notable exceptions indicated below, the local programmes have relied heavily at the beginning on external support, mainly from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The national associations have also received important advice and guidance as regards their programmes from the IPPF. While the larger associations (Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago) have held full membership of the IPPF for many years, the associations of the smaller islands have been receiving financial and other support from IPPF without the benefit of membership. These islands associations (Antigua, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent) came together in 1972, with some of the French

and Netherlands Caribbean countries, to form the Caribbean Family Planning Affiliation (CFPA) with unit membership to IPPF. The CFPA has been involved in providing training to critical staff, advice and assistance as regards education and information programmes and more generally on all aspects of their programmes to the members of the affiliation.

More recently, in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Dominica, the Government has become involved in a national family planning programme with the objective of lowering the level of fertility. This has meant that considerably more funds have become available for the programme not only from the Government itself, but also through the Government from international organizations such as UNFPA, the World Bank, USAID and others in addition to the IPPF which was continued and in many cases increased their support. Two general tendencies for national programmes are:

- a) that the Government increasingly takes over responsibility for the clinics while the voluntary association concentrates on education and information and related services; and
- b) the clinic services are provided at general health clinics and are increasingly integrated into the national health service.

There are plans for such integration in Barbados as well. Integration has meant that contraceptive supplies and other family planning services have become available much more widely over the country and not in selected areas as previously. On the other hand, there is a danger of some reduction in the quality of the service as persons seeking such service must take their place with all other users of the clinics, particularly in those cases where the added burden has not yet been balanced by an increase in these clinics' staff and resources.

In most other countries in the region, there is a voluntary family planning programme which receives financial and other support from the Government. This is the case in most Windward and Leeward Islands.

The contraceptive supplies most popularly provided by these Government and assisted programmes are 'the pill', the condom, the IUCD, and especially through the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council in Trinidad, advice on the use of 'temperature' and other more advanced methods of 'natural' contraception through more accurate determination of the 'safe' period. The programmes in the various countries extend beyond the providing of advice and services at clinics. In Barbados, for example, there are in addition, an 'outreach' programme which takes information and education, services and follow-up to youth groups, church organizations, schools and other such institutions. The programmes in many of the other islands are organised along somewhat similar lines.

In addition to the contraceptive supplies and methods mentioned above, both male and female sterilization are performed in Trinidad and Tobago and will soon be available in Barbados through the voluntary programme. Amid growing demands for modification of the existing abortion laws in the region, Barbados will soon be introducing a bill to legalise abortion, while both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica are giving consideration to modifying their laws.

For the reasons already given, there is no official family planning programme in Guyana and the voluntary programme, started in 1974, is concerned with fostering better family life and not with contraception. In the Bahamas the contraceptive pill and other devices are provided at Government clinics and hospitals to persons who request them but because of some still strong religious opposition the Government has not formulated any official family planning policy.

Human Resources

For all countries of the Caribbean, with the exception of the Bahamas and the British Virgin Islands, there has been a remarkable twist in their human resources situation in that from being countries reportedly very short of labour and needing to import labour for much of their modern history, during the past fifty years or so, and more particularly since the end of World War II, they have become countries of massive unemployment (13-25 per cent of the labour force in most countries) and even higher

under-employment. In the case of the Virgin Islands and the Bahamas this phenomenon of a high level of under-utilization of manpower is very recent. There are a number of reasons for this "twist". One is that the plantations, in the days of the importation of labour, were interested in obtaining not an adequate supply of labour, but rather a surplus labour supply, as this assured low wages and more docile work-force. Moreover, they were interested in their surplus labour supply at sugar cane crop-time, so that in the off-season there was always high unemployment or under-employment. Added to this, more recently the countries of the Caribbean have experienced their own "population explosion" as indicated earlier and hence, particularly since the end of the Second World War the numbers requiring jobs has been increasing rapidly. Furthermore, there has also been an "explosion" of attitudes and expectations so that increasingly persons, particularly young people, are turning away from agriculture, from self-employment in marginal occupations, and in general from low-income and low-status employment, so that the availability of such jobs does nothing to reduce the high levels of unemployment.

The policy of all governments of the Caribbean has been to seek to reduce the extremely high levels of unemployment and under-employment, with full-employment as the ultimate, even if difficult, objective. To this end, governments have tried different measures, including attempted industrialization through invitation to foreign investors to set up industries in the region. This approach received considerable impetus from the successful efforts of Puerto Rico in this regard, but it has now been realised that Puerto Rico's success was in large measure associated with its special relationship with the United States, and also that in any case industrialization has not succeeded in reducing the unemployment and under-employment problems of that country. In a number of countries tourism has been encouraged as a "labour intensive" industry and one which has benefitted from political problems or political differences with the United States in previous tourist centres in the region (e.g. Haiti and Cuba). Despite these and other

efforts to create genuine employment opportunity, there has been no improvement in the employment situation, and in fact unemployment rates at the 1970 Census of Population were generally appreciably higher than at the 1960 Census. Faced with such stubbornness of unemployment, governments have attempted to provide some relief through the provision of jobs of special public works programmes. This method of course depends on the availability of government funds for special works programmes. To try to spread the employment to as many persons as possible, governments have often limited the number of days' work that can be given to one person under the scheme. Special works programmes have been particularly important in Trinidad and Tobago and in Jamaica. In Trinidad and Tobago the government has in fact instituted an "unemployment levy" on the profits of business and on the taxable income of individuals where this taxable income exceeds \$10,000 (TT) per year (approx. \$4,000 US). In Jamaica a similar measure was introduced in late 1976, and the levy is paid on taxable income exceeding \$10,000 (J) per year - approx. \$8,000 US.

These measures have provided some income to persons but have not had noticeable effect on unemployment as many of the persons employed in the special works programmes have been persons who were employed in low-income and probably low-status occupations previously. In this sense the special works programmes have probably reduced under-employment rather than unemployment. Moreover, they have tended to reduce the supply of labour for agriculture and small non-agricultural establishments and, in addition, are blamed by many for an apparent erosion of the work ethic.

In the midst of the high level of unemployment and under-employment, however, there is a serious scarcity of skilled and highly qualified manpower in most countries. For this reason permission has had to be given to employers to employ non-nationals but, as indicated earlier, this is generally tied up with a "work permit" programme aimed at ensuring that employers take active steps to train nationals to fill these posts. In addition governments have been paying particular attention to education and training programmes with the hope that it would be possible to ensure that school-leavers would have the necessary qualification to fill most of

the skilled and high-level occupations. Here the concern is as much with national needs for such persons as with alleviating the employment problems.

Education

In the post-war period, with the countries of the region achieving internal self-government and in many cases, full independence, there has been a remarkable increase in the importance of education for the masses in the view of the governments and of the people themselves. Moreover, education is now seen as a vital instrument for achieving the maximum fulfilment of the nationals and the economic and social development of the society in each country.

All of the countries have, for some time, had laws which make schooling of children compulsory at the primary level. It is generally believed that the region's achievement in the field of primary education is tolerable, although problems such as the shortage of school places and inadequate facilities in schools are among the serious problems now being faced in the light of the large increase in the school-age population in the post-war period. Throughout the region primary education for the general population was first introduced by the various Christian churches and these have continued to play an extremely important part in providing such education in most countries. In Trinidad and Tobago and in Guyana in more recent times the non-Christian religions (e.g. Hindu and Muslim) also became involved in education at this level. In all countries the Government has made large contributions to the church organizations with respect to their schools. With the increasing financial assistance and direction from Governments denominational involvement in primary education has been reducing. Secularization of the schools was completed in Guyana in 1976. The policy of all Governments in the region is to ensure that free primary education is available to and used by all children.

So far, most countries have not been involved in pre-primary education (3-5 years). Recently, the two 'socialist' governments - Guyana and Jamaica - have become involved but no other governments appear likely to become involved in the immediate future.

The principal concern in the post-war period has been to provide adequate secondary education, and other-post-primary education. Formerly the proportion of children advancing to post-primary education was very small. This has completely changed with the considerably increased demand for secondary education from the population, on the one hand, and the high priority given to it by the governments on the other. This greatly increased official concern with secondary education stems, in large measure, from the awareness that a better educated and trained manpower is essential for national social and economic development in the context of independence. The three principal objectives of policy here have been:

- a) to make secondary education available to all children of appropriate age in the shortest time possible;
- b) to enable all children to take advantage of this post-primary education by making this education free. Since such education is not yet available for all, most governments provide free education to all or most of those who attend these schools on the basis of selection through a competitive examination at about the age of 12 years;
- c) to modify the secondary education system including the curricula, to make them relevant for the society. This is particularly important in the light of the origin of this education already discussed.

Serious problems still remain in all of these areas. Because of the much larger school population it has been difficult to provide the school buildings, the facilities and the teachers to meet the demand for secondary education. In place of the complete dominance of grammar school education that existed in the past, much attention is now being given to comprehensive and other non-grammar secondary schools. Also, particular attention is being given to expanding the secondary school curricula to include technical and vocational subjects. These efforts are still far from being fully successful for a variety of reasons, one of which is the resistance to such changes on the part of the older schools and the parents.

There has been considerable expansion in University education in the region. Before 1948 all university education had to be obtained outside of the region. The University of the West Indies was set up in 1948 and the University of Guyana in 1963. The University of the West Indies now has

campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, and Extra-mural departments in the other Commonwealth Caribbean countries which contribute to its support. As the campuses and faculties have increased over the years, so have the number of students receiving post-secondary education.

But the proportion of the population with university education is low, being 1 per cent or less in the different countries, and hence there is concern about increasing university attendance. At the same time, the governments are concerned at the high cost of university education, and at the tendency to over-production of graduates of some faculties, e.g. Arts and Social Sciences and the reverse in other faculties, e.g. Agriculture and Engineering. This concern is no doubt accentuated by the proneness of Arts and Social Science students and faculty at the University to be involved in political and related activities in opposition to the government in power. For these and other reasons, the Heads of Governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean at their Sixth Meeting held in 1972 affirmed the need for an assessment of requirements for trained manpower at the professional, administrative, managerial and sub-professional levels in the region in order to provide a firm basis for determining how the University and other post-secondary education facilities should be expanded. The larger countries all have institutions of technical training at the tertiary level and there is a feeling that these facilities for technical training need to be particularly expanded and developed in countries where they do not exist, while at the University it is the technical faculties (medicine, engineering, agriculture, etc.) that should be given particular attention.

KNOWLEDGE REGARDING POLITICAL PROCESSES
AND THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY^{1/}

There is little precise information on the extent to which the population in the Caribbean is aware of the political processes by which population policy is formulated, or of the development and

^{1/} The remainder of the paper is taken from Jack Harewood (1978b).

implementation of such policies. The evidence is that in the Commonwealth Caribbean there are a number of factors which contribute to a fairly high level of knowledge. These factors include:-

- a) the relatively high level of general education, the proportion of the population 10 years old, and over with at least 4 years of primary schooling being just over 95 per cent in 1970;
- b) the small size of the countries, the country with the largest effective size being Jamaica with its 11,000 square kilometres, as so large a proportion of the mainland countries are uninhabited;
- c) the efficiency of communication, a point related to both (a) and (b) above, and to the availability of radio to most persons throughout these countries and the availability of television to a fair proportion in the countries which have television;
- d) the tradition of political democracy inherited from Britain which requires general elections to be held about every five years and results in both governments and the non-government political parties being continually involved, but especially at election times, in providing information to the population as part of their campaigns to retain or gain political ascendancy.

Of the areas in which we are particularly interested, publicity and information is good in the area of fertility control, where there is an official family planning programme, and in the areas of employment creation and education. Where special organisations exist to encourage or direct rural development, or to organise emigration schemes publicity and public relations are again fairly good though in general this has been less than with respect to fertility control and human resources. Nationals are in general aware that there are restrictions on immigration in the many countries where such restrictions exist but since these do not directly affect nationals details of these policies and measures are less well-known.

Some indication of the level of awareness can be gleaned from a study of the participation and involvement of Jamaicans in the General Election of 1972 (Carl Stone (1974)). This study found that 82 per cent of the electorate listened to party speeches on the radio, 48 per cent attended mass political meetings, and 43 per cent read party advertisements in the daily newspapers, while 53 per cent are recorded as discussing the election

with other voters. A study in connection with the 1976 General Election in Trinidad and Tobago also indicates a high level of awareness of political issues. Since the surveys referred to relate to general elections they are not directly indicative of knowledge about the political processes relating to population policy. Furthermore, it is to be expected that awareness and involvement in political issues would be much higher at the time of a general election than is normally the case. Despite these points, the two surveys can give us some indication of this knowledge as we would expect persons with a high interest and involvement in general political issues would also be aware of specific matters of importance to themselves. In this connection, the study by Stone compares a number of the above and related indicators with the level of participation in the United Kingdom and the United States in general elections of 1964 and 1966 respectively. Apart from "watching party speeches on Television", for which the proportion in Jamaica is appreciably less than in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, the indicators for Jamaica are as high as and for many indicators significantly higher than for the other two countries.

The level of knowledge is much higher in Barbados than in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago because of the smallness of the island (431 square kilometres), and the higher proportion of persons with some education, while it is believed to be lower in most of the Windward and Leeward Islands.

A point worth stressing here, is that popular knowledge of the political processes or of policies does not necessarily result in popular support for or even acceptance of such policies. There is evidence that where there is popular support for a policy it is often for reasons different from those which prompted the policy. An example of this is fertility control where those governments that have adopted a fertility control programme have done so because of the national problems associated with too rapid population growth, while the population have embraced the programme because of individual and family problems related to too many children. On the other hand, policy decisions taken in the best "national interests" are sometimes

not accepted because they do not appear to be in the best "personal/family interests" of the population. One example here is the effort to increase technical education, including Agriculture at the secondary level in preference to the earlier preponderance of emphasis at the secondary education level of grammar school type education, in the interest of national "economic and social development". However, for persons of African origin, and those of Indian origin in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago where this group is very large, grammar school education has been and continues to be the one means of getting their children out of Agriculture and other "technical" occupations into the highly-paid and high status jobs (in the professions such as Medicine and Law and in the top administrative posts in Government and large non-Government establishments) formerly reserved for the white, the half-white and the lucky black. To them, secondary education is not a means of up-grading occupations in agriculture and technical fields, but a means of getting away from them. The lesson from the above and other examples that can be quoted is that much more attention needs to be given, both by policy makers and researchers, to the values, attitudes, habits and aspirations of the population, both in terms of formulating policies which take these into account, and in terms of undertaking necessary educational and public relations programmes to change these values, attitudes, etc. where this appears necessary.

OTHER ELEMENTS IN THE "TRANSLATION" OF RESEARCH
FINDINGS INTO THE POLICY FORMULATION PROCESS

Problems relating to the "translation" of research findings into the policy formulation process in the Caribbean are not unique. They arise, in large measure, from the fact that the individuals and agencies undertaking relevant research, whether in government, the universities or elsewhere, are not usually directly involved in policy formulation or in advising on policy formulation. Furthermore, except in special cases, e.g. where the research is specifically requested for that purpose, the release of results of research do not necessarily coincide with the periods when policy is being formulated or reviewed. This means that at the

critical periods in policy formulation and review, pertinent research which has been completed may not be brought to the attention of the policy makers. Another point is that for the most part the policy makers are not persons with academic backgrounds in the particular fields and the results of research are too often presented in a form and length appropriate for the information of other academics rather than busy policy makers. A related point is that to the extent that the researcher is divorced from policy making and administration, as is often the case, the researcher usually pays inadequate attention to factors outside of the research which are vital for the policy maker administrator and for this reason the research findings tend to be unrealistic in the eyes of the policy maker.

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