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SOCIAL STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN ST. LUCIA

Social Structural Changes in St. Lucia

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F O R E W O R D

The present monograph is the first of a series of studies mandated by the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee, which decided that "the diversity of situations existing both between member states of the Committee and within the countries should be classified and analysed. These studies will assist in the formulation of a policy for social development". (E/CEPAL/1039, p.32). In view of the limited resources at its disposal and within the frame of the policy orientation of the Committee, the Secretariat of the CDCC has requested and obtained assistance from the United Nations University, whose project on Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World is precisely designed to unearth the historically constituted specificities of different societies. This worldwide collective attempt to increase the visibility of endogenous intellectual creativity has been of assistance to the CDCC Secretariat both intellectually and financially.

The fact that all Caribbean countries have been, during the twentieth century, subjected to foreign intervention has affected seriously the processes of national self-identification and pride. A strong ethos is not easily verbalized and operationalized, in spite of the undeniable feelings of national and Caribbean identity. In fact, the problem of a common heritage to be proud of, is not actually hampered by difficulties in appreciating local inventiveness; the Caribbean still faces the issue of perceiving domestic creativity and its validity in relevant fields of social intercourse.

In that connection, the project on Social Structural Changes aims at researching on a continuous basis, the key role played by the local population, as protagonist of such changes. In the Caribbean, the history of the interrelations between the colonial states and the nations conceals the unfolding of popular inventiveness, of domestic, unofficial and usually disparaged institutions. One has to unravel the structure of social groups and classes and to identify the mechanisms of collective adaptation to an environment inimical to self-reliance. Social conflicts

carried out by the "little people" and usually referred to in colonial historiography as "riots", become the cornerstone of sociological analyses oriented towards the assessment of one's creativity and contribution to mankind's progresses. The search for the rationale and dynamics of relevant domestic institutions precludes the emergence of a full-fledged national culture, source of values and guidance for policies consistent with the Caribbean way of controlling and transforming fruitfully the social and natural environment.

The study on Social Structural Changes in the Caribbean is an attempt to unearth the main characteristics of social intercourse in the region, and to find out in what aspects it differs from other underdeveloped areas. The basic purpose of the attempt is to design the frame from which specific policies of social development can be drawn. The literature on Caribbean societies is sufficiently broad to offer enough elements for this endeavour. Nonetheless, it normally focuses on the largest and richest societies, or it pays attention to the dominant areas of economic life. A closer look into the archipelago reveals an important role played by non-plantation-like activities in the makings of the society, and a rather large variety of historical evolution to justify an island by island approach.

The study on Social Structural Changes in the Caribbean is of set methodological purpose subject to much re-formulation. On the one hand, it will be seen that basic concepts of social sciences - such as wages and profits - are sometimes used by sheer analogy, obscuring the specificity of local phenomena. One has to attempt efforts of a theoretical nature, which have to be spelt out in order to ease revision and confrontation. On the other hand, sociological reflection is lagging far behind the wide-ranging collective assertiveness in social history being achieved in no insignificant measure through the obstinate and self-reliant efforts of the Association of Caribbean Historians. The present monograph is not inserted in the production of what would be a School of Caribbean Sociology dedicated to foster the emergence of a local social science. Dialogue among social scientists has not yet been institutionalized on a genuinely Caribbean basis and thus the by-products of the progresses in social history lie unexplored. The present monograph remains, by force of circumstances, tentative on both theoretical and substantive grounds.

The study will not attempt to write or to summarize the history of the region or of individual countries, but to analyse available historical data in search of the peculiar deployment of local societies.

It wishes to offer a preliminary formulation of the logic of Caribbean evolution, using as empirical data what has been presented in available historiographic production. Therefore, each relevant historiographic discovery may in principle call for a re-formulation of the findings. The end product of the effort should be to expose the primacy in the making of individual nations and of the Caribbean of domestic structures expressed in concrete daily practices and conflicts. One is interested in discovering how forms of living created by the Caribbean people come gradually to grasp with the modern world, i.e. how the region is building itself and emerging in the society of nations with its own and distinctive note and with the assistance of whatever resources are genuinely autochthonous. It will be understood, that the monograph on St. Lucia, as it is the first, will generate comments and criticism which will assist in completing it.

PART I

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The effective occupation of St. Lucia by non-Amerindian populations was consolidated in the eighteenth century during the period of rivalries between French and British colonial empires. The island changed hands 'some thirteen times, until 1814; ^{1/} which indicates the inability to establish a stable triangular trade, an important characteristic of plantation colonies. Moreover, the history of the island can only be understood if one takes into account that its settlement and agricultural exploitation were thwarted by the ongoing processes of colonial development of neighbouring islands.

Up until the decade of the 1760's, St. Lucia was a society of small farms^{2/} owned by settlers from Martinique and Barbados. It is reported that French colonists had settled in St. Lucia since the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The crops cultivated were coffee and cocoa on a small scale. Following the 1723 declaration of neutrality of the island,

"... most of the French colonists who had settled in St. Lucia during the last twenty-five years or so continued to work the estates which they had acquired. Soon moreover, they were joined by other settlers from Martinique." ^{3/}

Settlers, the majority of whom were French, began to establish farms in the Windward areas of the island by 1728. French settlements were so well established by 1745 that the island was divided up into districts and parishes - 'quartiers'.

The nature of these settlements by the middle of the century

^{1/} St. Lucia at independence, St. Lucia: Voice Press, 1979, p.10

^{2/} Data on acreages not available

^{3/} Charles Jesse (Rev), Early Days, 1493-1763, St. Lucia Miscellany, Vol. 2, Castries, St. Lucia: the Saint Lucia Archeological and Historical Society, 1969, p. 25.

suggests that the labour organization must have been based, (besides family labour) on white indentees and black slaves.^{4/}

The original settlement was carried out with little or no metropolitan sponsorship. The minimal sponsorship it obtained was very unstable while at the same time it had to reckon with the opposition of the dominant classes from the neighbouring islands. The planters of the prospering French and British plantation colonies exhibited active opposition to the development of an eventual rival:

"In 1770 the British West Indian planters objected to the annexation of St. Lucia unless the island was expressly forbidden to grow cane and instructed to grow cocoa." ^{5/}

Note must therefore be taken of two facts. Firstly, St. Lucia in the eighteenth century was located on the frontiers of two colonial empires and its economic institutions denoted a notorious lag during that golden age of plantation economy in the Caribbean. The history of agricultural development of the island, even though initiated in quite a similar way to that of the majority of Caribbean colonies - with the typical unit of production being the small farm with the tendency towards self-sufficiency - was a whole century in arrears, in terms of colonial exploitation. Secondly, and because of this very fact, while the levels of oppression were highly developed in slave plantations, social intercourse between the St. Lucian farmers and their slaves and indentured workers was relatively less strenuous. In this context, the predominance of French settlers over British ones must be underlined, as well as the lack of formal administration and military forces. Further development of social relations in the island, and most particularly of plantation economy, caused a modification of this original class situation.

1763 - end of the second Seven Year War between France and England - marked the recorded extension of sugar plantations in St. Lucia.

^{4/} Eric Williams, From Columbus to Castro. The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969. London: Andre Deutsch, 1970 p. 186-187. Reference is made to enslaved Africans in St. Lucia in 1734.

^{5/} Ibid., p.129

Between 1763 and 1778, the French controlled St. Lucia and during this period 'plantations were extended, sugar establishments were formed, and trade was developed' ^{6/}. There were concomitant changes in labour organization.

Nevertheless, in this period and later, St. Lucia never matured as a plantation colony in terms of numbers of plantations and acreages. Physical expansion of the plantations was limited because of the island's topography and soil conditions. The island is very mountainous with the only available areas of suitable undulating and fertile land being the few valleys and coastal areas.

Numerous events also retarded plantation development in this early period. Apart from the hurricane in 1780, the plantation system was also thwarted by difficulties in the sugar market in the decade of the 1780's - 'sugar could hardly find buyers' ^{7/}. The sequel to this was an abandonment of plantations and the closure of sugar factories to such an extent that there existed 40 instead of an original 100. In 1789, reports maintained that 'unlike Jamaica and Barbados, St. Lucia was a country of small estates of which only six are above 100 carrés or about 360 acres' ^{8/}.

At the beginning of the last decade of the century, development of the plantations was severely affected by the abandonment of the estates by African labour, further sanctioned by the first emancipation in 1793. The Africans struggled to gain and to maintain their freedom - a return to the plantation system meant re-enslavement - as guerillas or otherwise. This period in St. Lucia's history strengthened the orientation towards self-sufficient agriculture, mainly 'peasant agriculture' ^{9/} in the case of the African labour force.

^{6/} C. Jesse and B.H. Easter, A Short History of the Town and District of Vieux Fort (St. Lucia). Castries, St. Lucia: The Saint Lucia Archaeological and Historical Society, 1971, p.9.

^{7/} B.H. Easter, St. Lucia and the French Revolution. St. Lucia: The Voice Publishing Co., Second Edition, 1969, p.4.

^{8/} C. Jesse and B.H. Easter, op.cit., p.19.

^{9/} Concept 'peasant' will be discussed later.

After a long period of war, the British officially took control of St. Lucia from 1813. Slave plantations were reinstated but the system continued on the decline which had set in during the War. Records suggest that this period of plantation development was not successful. The decline in the level of production of sugar in St. Lucia during the period 1793 to 1833 indicated the maturing of the contradictions of such a system of economic and labour organization. Throughout the British Caribbean, sugar production declined but St. Lucia showed the steepest decadence.

"Between 1813 and 1833 Jamaica's production declined by nearly one-sixth, the exports of Antigua, Nevis and Tobago by more than one-quarter: St. Kitts by nearly one-half: St. Lucia's by two-thirds: St. Vincent by 10/ one-sixth: Grenada by almost one-eighth"

Records of the Mortgage Office in St. Lucia revealed "a situation of virtual bankruptcy of the plantocracy by 1831: the 81 sugar estates were encumbered previous to this, in 1818"^{11/}. The mortgages were estimated at the sum of £21,199,000. But in St. Lucia, an Estates Act forestalled the immediate collapse by facilitating the transfer of encumbered property: "69 of 81 estates had either changed hands or acquired new titles between 1831 and 1843"^{12/}. (Available data does not permit an identification of this new group of estate owners. One could, however, assume that, as in other colonies in the Caribbean, merchants as creditors played an important role here).

Forced labour (slaves) attained the status of apprenticed labour in the period just prior to the second emancipation. In the post-emancipation period the 'free' labour force attempted again to establish an independent existence but were once more thwarted by the deliberate efforts of the planters and the British Administration, in the form of legal measures, to maintain a labour supply for the plantation, prohibiting as much as possible the establishment of a peasantry.

^{10/}Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1964, pp.150-151 (our emphasis).

^{11/} Woodville K. Marshall, The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, 1838-1865 (Thesis Ph.d): Cambridge University, 1963 p.16.

^{12/} Ibid., p.16

Nevertheless, in spite of all the obstacles, there was a steady rise in freeholders and leaseholders along with squatters.

The Metayage system flourished in the period of 1840 to 1860 as a sort of compromise between the demands of the planters, and those of the would-be peasants. Peasant economic organization evolved within the limitations set up by the plantation requirements and contributed to the maintenance of that institution. At the same time, the system did not allow "free" labour to have access to land even though temporarily and to afford at least a semi-independent status.

By the end of the nineteenth century, freeholding, leasing and squatting had increased as a peasant type society continued to evolve. Acreage for sugar cane plantations declined even further from 3,411 acres in 1859 to 2,086 in 1897, i.e. by approximately 39%. It appears that by the end of the nineteenth century the colonial government's hostility and indifference to peasant development abated only when the sugar plantations seemed in danger of total extinction. ^{13/} The threat of this came from European beet sugar production. But to no great extent did this affect the peasantry in any positive way, in spite of the favourable report of the Commission of 1897. ^{14/}

Plantation agriculture continued alongside peasant agriculture during most of the twentieth century. In 1928, there is evidence of a rather diversified agricultural output. Sugar remained the predominant crop, but citrus and other fruits and vegetables were responsible for a sizeable part of total exports. At the beginning of the second half of the century, the economy reversed to monoproduction for a short period, the sugar industry becoming the main employer and money earner

^{13/} W.K. Marshall, Peasant Movements and Agrarian Problems in the West Indies, p.36

^{14/} There was investigatory commission into the sugar industry in 1897. This commission recommended peasant type agricultural activity.

of the country. By the last decade of the 1960's though, banana industry replaced the cultivation of sugar cane, and sugar produce ceased by 1964. With the predominance of banana production, plantation economic organization suffered an important modification, and peasant and peasant-like enterprises initiated relations with the marketing agency, Geest Industries Limited, through the intermediary of the Banana Growers' Association. The arrangement between the growers, their association and the exporter is presently under revision and the set of relations to be institutionalised should become more consistent with the actual equilibrium of social forces.

The existence of non-agricultural activities must also be taken note of in St. Lucia, even though these avenues of employment have only expanded in the twentieth century. The significance of the strategic position of Castries resulted in the establishment of a coal bunkering station towards the end of the nineteenth century and continued for about four decades (1880's to 1920's). The construction industry has also drawn St. Lucians away from agricultural undertakings. That type of economic activity was generated as a result of the reconstruction of Castries after the fires in the years 1927 and 1948. The establishment and servicing of the United States' military bases at Gros Islet and Vieux Fort during the Second World War, provided the same transitory employment opportunities.

In the latter part of the century, urban employment has become more diversified as a result of expansion of the urban sector. The decades of the sixties and the seventies witnessed much development of manufacturing industries and tourism in the island. Attendant service industries such as banking and insurance, have also mushroomed, along with commercial ventures. Another significant avenue of urban activity has been employment in the Civil Service, which has also expanded rapidly in the past three decades. The increase in the wage-earning opportunities in the urban sector has greatly influenced the patterns of internal migration.

Transformations within the economic system has been concurrent with transformations in the political system. St. Lucia, which was subjected to British Crown Colony government during the nineteenth century, progressively evolved to the status of an independent nation within this century. During the first half of the century minor concessions were made towards some form of representative government. However, the franchise remained limited, and effective control of the administration

was entrusted to appointed administrators. Not until 1951 was Universal Adult Suffrage introduced and the wider St. Lucian population had an opportunity to participate in the electoral process, and elect those whom it wished to make representations on their behalf. In 1956 more effective participation in the governing process was granted to the people's representatives, when a full Ministerial system was introduced. Another decade passed before self-government was granted, in 1967. Full independence was achieved in 1979.

CONSTRAINTS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PLANTATION SYSTEM

The International Context

The gaps in the historiography of St. Lucian society are numerous. Important facts have still to be unearthed before one can understand fully the logic of social relations in this country. The background of the society took shape during the eighteenth century mainly under the influence of French inhabitants. The nineteenth century witnessed the upsurge of domestic social structures capable of obstructing the British influence, while these last eighty odd years seem to indicate a progressive movement toward the control of the social and economic milieu by locally evolved institutions.

The eighteenth century rivalries between France and Great Britain, which originated within the European context, had serious consequences for the Caribbean, in view of the relevance of a metropolitan connection for the fullfledged exploitation of key economic institutions, based on the Triangular Trade - the exchange of goods from Europe for human cargo in Africa, which in turn was sold in the West Indies as slave labour, and tropical products purchased for sale in Europe. From 1701 - 1713, the succession to the throne of Spain was the basis of conflicts between England and France; from 1741 - 1748, these fights referred to the succession to the throne of Austria and from the 1770's onwards, the North American and the French Revolutions provoked a series of military confrontations which affected Caribbean equilibrium. Certain islands, particularly St. Lucia, were transferred from one metropole to the other and their populations had to organize their living in the midst of this constant disorder.

Up to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, the settlement of French possessions in the Caribbean was entrusted to various Trading Companies which were responsible for providing settlers, indentured or enslaved workers, food supplies and capital goods, and for ensuring "law and order". Uninterrupted settlement of St. Lucia by Europeans started in this period. By 1725, the bourgeoisie of France's sea ports were beginning to take advantage of the structures laid down by the

Trading Companies. It would appear then that the subsequent settlement of the island took place during the decline of such Companies, with no clear external financing and consequently no organized linkages and markets. Around the same time, the islands seized by Great Britain were already well established as plantation economies.

The absence of an overt external sponsor, meant a lack of political support - suffice to think of the owners of the Trading Companies - and ready services of strong and well equipped armed forces. By the same token, the colony could not expect a regular flow of white indentured labourers, nor of enslaved Africans. Its population would have necessarily to rely on its own initiative for foodstuff and to entertain social relations which departed from what was common in eighteenth century plantation societies.

At the beginning, most manual labour in St. Lucia was mainly carried out by white indentures. The terms of the 1723 neutrality treaty seemed to evidence the planters' difficulty to control employment of the indentured labour force, since provisions were made to return those who had escaped and might have sought refuge in the island or in Martinique. Existing police forces were then not sufficient to ensure what could be called "order". The limited development of St. Lucia's plantations is linked also, to this functional requirement of a plantation society, in addition to the limited area of the flat lands. The weakness of repressive forces would also explain the fact that the windward districts stayed closed to Europeans until 1725^{15/}.

The inability of colonial authorities to hinder the initiatives of the population was evidenced by certain regulations, edicted during the second quarter of the century:

"In St. Lucia in 1734 slaves were expressly forbidden to sell coffee, with or without their masters' permission; slaves found in possession of coffee were to be arrested and imprisoned. In the following year^{16/} the prohibition was extended to the sale of cotton".

15/ C. Jesse, op.cit, p.25

16/ Eric Williams, op.cit, pp. 186-187

By mid-eighteenth century 400 Frenchmen "fit to bear arms", 1600 women and children plus two or three dozen British are reported in the island by C. Jesse.^{17/} The levels of living of planters in some Caribbean islands were generally quite low,^{18/} but it was even worse in the case of St. Lucia. Descriptions of the eighteenth century urban settlements - Castries and Vieux Fort - reveal nearly total deprivation.^{19/} The roads between one estate to another did not deserve their names. If one takes into account that the second half of the century witnessed the period of prosperity of the French territories questions have to be asked on the type of persons who accepted the St. Lucian adventure. In fact, the Europeans who settled in the island were economically and socially disadvantaged, including those who had been dislodged from Martinique and the neighbouring English possessions, accompanied by a sizeable minority of the coloured and freed men, unable to resist the expansion of "private" enterprises.^{20/} "In 1769, there were 100 colonists at Vieux Fort, against 126 at Carenage^{21/} ... and 151 at Soufriere".^{19/} The conflict of interest between big and small planters within the Caribbean would explain the opposition of the neighbouring islands to any diversion of resources oriented towards fostering St. Lucia's development.^{22/} This would assist

^{17/} C. Jesse, op.cit.; p.26

^{18/} G. Debien, Les Grands Cases des Plantations à St. Domingue aux XVIII et XVIII Siècles, Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Martinique, Annales des Antilles, No. 15, 1970, pp. 1-39.

^{19/} C. Jesse and B.H. Easter, op.cit., p.6

^{20/} These settlers are described by F. R. Augier and S.C. Gordon in Sources of West Indian History (Longman Caribbean Ltd., 7th Impression 1973), pp. 61-62

^{21/} Le Carenage was the old name for Castries. Founded in the 17th century, the town was re-established on the present site around 1763. The town was renamed Castries in mid-1780's.

^{22/} C. Jesse, op.cit., p.26

in understanding why, during a turmoil provoked by the French Revolution, England and Spain were opening their doors to French planters, and paradoxically St. Lucia was deserving of the title Ste. Lucie la Fidèle, because of her revolutionary fervour. It is known that the necessity of defending her possessions against her rivals and her inability to divert sufficient military forces to maintain "order" in her colonies had forced France to acknowledge the political and civil rights of the coloured people and later to sanction the de facto emancipation of the enslaved. Civil and political rights of the coloured were sanctioned by the metropolitan legislature in April 1792, while the general freedom of the enslaved was voted in 1793.

The planters of St. Lucia differed then from the dominant strata of the neighbouring islands due to the larger predominance of small planters and among them coloured ones. Several St. Lucian planters welcomed the Revolution and the subsequent "Regime de Terreur", which were not directed against them and could only serve their economic and political interests. The Regime of Terror and the use of the Guillotine referred to by Jesse must have been directed here as in Guadeloupe against the Royalists and the Roman Catholic Church. It is recorded that in 1745 the island was divided into parishes and lands were given to the Church in each parish in support of her activities.^{23/} The land occupied by the Church, before the expansion of plantations, would have presented certain attractiveness to the small and rather poor planters. In this same connection, the dissemination of Freemasonry in St. Lucia would indicate a further strife within the European sectors, opposing the presumably Jacobin planters to the powerful religious institution and the Royalists.

Period of Enslavement

The experience of enslavement of St. Lucians was undoubtedly different from that of larger and/or more intensively exploited sugar plantation colonies. Monopolisation of the best agricultural lands was overtly supported by a colonial policy dated from around 1763. About 400 estates of

^{23/} C. Jesse, Outlines of St. Lucia's History, Castries, St. Lucia: St. Lucia Archeological Society, 2nd Edition, 1964), p.29

various sizes already existed in 1760.^{24/} In Dauphin, a valley to the north of the island, a report registered 79 proprietors by 1780.^{25/} In the popular sugar growing area of Vieux Fort, there were reportedly 60 estates.^{26/} Along with this expansion in the number of estates, there was a simultaneous increase in numbers of enslaved - from an estimated 5,000 in 1764 to 16,000 in 1777.^{27/}

It is at this late stage that the society experienced profound changes in labour organization. Nevertheless, the management of larger numbers of enslaved did not reach the complexity and sophistication of classical plantation colonies, such as Barbados and Martinique. In the midst of severe difficulties, the system lasted approximately six decades interrupted by natural disasters and metropolitan wars, which curtailed the maturing of the system and of its accompanying labour organization.

St. Lucia then entered the nineteenth century with a dominant strata of the society which lacked experience in administering and ruling the enslaved population with propriety and efficiency. The new inputs into plantation development patronised by England would have also implied the imposition of new colonial administrators, relegating the former slave masters to secondary roles. Their already low status among the Caribbean establishment incited them to an ambiguous alliance with the new rulers.

^{24/} Bishop C. Gachet, A History of the Roman Catholic Church in St. Lucia, Trinidad 1975, p.18

^{25/} B.H. Easter, op.cit, p.4

^{26/} C. Jesse and B.H. Easter, op.cit, p.9

^{27/} C. Gachet, op.cit, p.57

The inhibitions to plantation development - unfortunate from a colonial viewpoint - afforded avenues to the population which, to the extent possible, extricated itself from bondage. During the last decade of the eighteenth century, the labour force took advantage of the increased opportunity to leave the plantations and had presumably established itself in alternative forms of economic organizations, that is to say, multi-crop peasant-like agriculture. Re-enslavement under British rule - even though shortlived - must have been a traumatic experience for those who had known an independent existence backed by organized maroons.

Little data are available on maroon settlements in St. Lucia. However, one can assume that in the situation of large areas of unoccupied land and a weak administration prior to 1763, that maroon settlements were inevitable. It is said that a number of the enslaved took advantage of the declaration of neutrality in 1748 to leave the estates.^{28/} Mention has also been made of the existence of Maroon Negroes in the latter half of the 1780's. They must have occupied land in the interior of the island and had to be self-sufficient, since they existed in an environment hostile to freedom.^{29/} This affirmation is supported by the attempts at thwarting such a development between the period 1784 to 1789 when there was "restoration of order among the Maroon Negroes",^{30/}

The opportunity for mass abandonment of the estates increased in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The occurrence of the French Revolution (1789) had an immediate effect on the plantation system as early as 1791. It meant a curtailment of the labour supply and disruption of "discipline" on the plantations. Labourers deserted the estates prior to the formal declaration of "emancipation", which in fact was simply a strategic manoeuvre

^{28/} C. Gachet, *op.cit.*, p.18. He made reference to Commandante de Longueville's letter of 18 November 1749 which records this.

^{29/} C. Jesse, *Outlines of St. Lucia's History*, p.26

^{30/} Some descendants of maroons are said to exist in the village of Au Leon in the west of the island. Because of the situation of the village in the mountains there has been little contact with outsiders.

of France. 1793 marked the first formal dissolution of slavery in St. Lucia as in other "French" islands.^{31/}

From 1795 until the end of 1797, self-freed slaves and freed men allied with French planters and French soldiers waged battles against the British. They created L'Armée Française des Bois, which carried on a guerrilla warfare for many months.^{32/} However, this alliance cannot be perceived as a collusion of interests,^{33/} the enslaved workers having taken themselves off to the hills, initiating the disruption of colonial order. Opposition to the seizure of the island by the British happened to be a defence of "les Droits de l'Homme", acknowledged by the French Revolution as perceived in the colony; it was, in other words, an opposition to eventual re-enslavement, an opposition to eventual loss of political and civil rights achieved during this Revolution, and an opposition to economic and ideological monopoly by the Roman Catholic Church and the Royalists.

Success of the Armée "which the disaffected of every class and colour" - French planters, subjected to control from Martinique, free coloureds wanting equality with the whites, and the enslaved population hoping for freedom - had understandably joined,^{34/} would have meant a political, social and economic revolution, a total restructuring of this society and possibly of the neighbouring ones. The fact that 12,000 troops of the British army were dispatched to St. Lucia in

^{31/} Re-enslavement fostered by the Government of Napoleon in what was left of the French Caribbean Empire is sufficient evidence of the political interests beneath the grandiloquence of the 1793 emancipation.

^{32/} B.H. Easter, op.cit, p.8

^{33/} The divergent interests inherent in the unique organization of L'Armée Française des Bois was only paralleled in the composition of Toussaint L'Overture's and André Rigaud's forces during the Haitian independence wars at approximately the same period.

^{34/} C. Jesse, Outlines of St. Lucia's History, op.cit, p.26

April 1796^{35/} while the total population recorded in 1788 was slightly above 20,000^{36/} souls - gave evidence of the power of the Armée: its internal power together with its external influence.

This fact should stimulate some historical research on the conditions in which the Armée was defeated. Re-enslavement in other Caribbean islands has simply meant genocide. Not much data is available in the case of St. Lucia but Jesse gives enough idea on the virulence of the Armée to allow some inferences on the victorious reactions of the English army:

"two thousand Republicans laid down their arms on the 26th May... and marched out as prisoners of war. Morne Fortuné had surrendered, the rest of the island remained unsubdued. The "Guerre des Brigands" began: slaves, demagogues, virulent Republicans, retired to the woods, determined to hold out to the last against British authority. They murdered, plundered, burned ... before the end of 1797, the whole of the "Armée Française de Bois"^{37/} had laid down their arms and surrendered".

The alliance of "the disaffected of every class and colour" was inevitable given the history of the island. Together with re-enslavement of the Africans the defeat of the Armée meant loss of civil and political rights achieved by coloured planters, and brought a major social structural involution, the consequences of which also deserve to be studied.

The historiography of St. Lucia has not clarified the specific situation of the coloured planters. Statistics as are available for St. Lucia show that by 1769, the number of free coloured (233) in St. Lucia was much less than that of whites (851). By 1790, however, the number of free coloureds had increased more rapidly to 1,636. The number of whites had expanded to 2,170. Their numerical strength soon exceeded that of the whites, as recorded in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Their place and role in St. Lucian society

35/ Ibid. p.27

36/ N.J.O. Liverpool, The History and Development of the St. Lucia Civil Code, Occasional Paper No. 5 I.S.E.R., U.W.I., Barbados, 1977, p.26

37/ C. Jesse, Outlines of St. Lucia's History, op.cit., p.27

in 1760 can be surmised from the following description of their economic and social activities:

"Some of them owned small estates, but most of them were merchants, tradesmen or were employed as overseers or drivers on the estates. Many of them were members of the local 'milices' whose duty it was to maintain law and order among the negro slaves in the various quarters".^{38/}

Indication of discrimination against them is registered in the following quotation by Liverpool:

"(...)Although this class (coloured) for many years were refused an entrance within the circle of refined society, and although the law denied its members as being illegitimate, an inheritance, the present suit is the only attempt I have ever heard of to deprive them of their progeny of a name, and this after thirty years of emancipation..."^{39/}

Between 1763 and 1778 the development of a plantation society, seemed to have reached a peak. The existence of 12,000 enslaved African workers is documented,^{40/} and one had to infer a deployment of repressive forces either in the form of militia, police or military build-up. The hurricane of 1780 destroyed a substantial part of these achievements and affected particularly the smallest planters. There are indications of a shortage of labour force. One could think in terms of an increase in the number of self-freed Africans which would explain the actions taken by Laborie against the Maroons from 1784 to 1789. But independently of this possibility, the weakening of the St. Lucian end of the Triangular Trade implied a decrease of exports and a reduction in the imports of foodstuff

^{38/} C. Gachet, *op.cit.*, p.56. By mid-nineteenth century, they represented a substantial proportion of the population. Sewell estimated that 4,603 of the coloured inhabitants were paying direct taxes (1859). W.G. Sewell, *op.cit.*, pp.92-93.

^{39/} N.J.O. Liverpool, *op.cit.*, p.10

^{40/} C. Jesse, *Ibid.*, p.24

and enslaved labour force.^{41/} The decade preceding the French Revolution therefore must have been initiated with a further strengthening of inward oriented agriculture, involving both small planters and dominated classes.

Commercial linkages with the metropolises must have been at their lowest point from 1789 to 1803, when England completed the last conquest of the island. Exports of staples and imports of enslaved came to a standstill.^{42/} And only a further development of self-sufficient agriculture would have made life livable. In this respect, the Armée Française des Bois could not have resisted many months without some backing from an independent strata of labourers. Progress in the historiography of St. Lucia will clarify whether squatters had proliferated in maroon societies or early metayage system had been organized. The facts of the matter are that the existence of St. Lucia during the eighteenth century can only be understood on the basis of an important development of inward oriented agriculture, interesting disaffected planters and enslaved. While the interests of the planter were mainly circumstantial and due to the lack of external support, the strive of the enslaved toward independent ventures was a basic political position unrelated to ideological development in France.

Transition to Nowhere

The integration of St. Lucia into the British colonial empire, concomitant with the dismemberment of France's influence in the archipelago, meant for the population the loss of certain relative advantages which originated from the unique position of the country on the economic frontiers of two empires. From this moment onwards, the St. Lucians needed to reorganize their available resources according to trends of development embracing the entire British West Indies. But it must be remembered also in this respect, that England, entering during the nineteenth century, a period of intense industrialization, required very little in the way of inputs from its Caribbean "possessions", which allowed some leeway to St. Lucian creativity. The population of St. Lucia found itself, during the nineteenth century, participating

^{41/} Sewell reported that in St. Lucia, as in the other islands, there was a decrease in the slave population prior to emancipation and subsequent to the suppression of the slave trade. In 1816, there were 16,285 registered slaves, 20 years afterwards (1836) there were only 13,291. W.G. Sewell, Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies, London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1968 p.92-93

^{42/} B.H. Easter, St. Lucia and the French Revolution, op.cit., p.16

in a decadent plantation economy, with few plantations. The social structure of the island reflected two needs - to contribute to the empire's economic system in exchange for goods and services coming from the metropole, and to develop some degree of self-sufficiency.

Enslavement was followed by the institution of Apprenticeship established by an Act of (the British) Parliament, whereby labourers (former enslaved) over six years of age became "apprenticed labourers" from 1 August 1834.^{43/} The 'learning' process which the word "apprentice" conveys, did not refer to any training in given trades, but to the initiation of the labour force into a labour market consistent with the economic viability of nineteenth century plantations. Payment of wages in exchange for tasks performed was instituted, but at the same time, framed by imposed regulations favourable to the contractors. For instance, apprenticed labourers, in several cases tied to their estates, would be paid in cash or in kind depending on the whims of the planters.

There was the creation of three categories of apprenticed labourers: first, predial, attached; second, predial, non-attached; third, non-predial. The first and second categories were given longer apprenticeships. These two groups included all labourers engaged in cultivation or in the manufacture of sugar. Their period of apprenticeship was intended to last for six years, ending in 1840.^{44/} The third category included domestic workers who were given a four-year apprenticeship period, ending 1838. The Moyne Commission, one century later, registered that wage earners in agriculture and domestic workers constituted the bulk of the labour force in the Caribbean.^{45/}

^{43/} F.R. Augier and S.G. Gordon, op.cit, p.141

^{44/} Ibid, p.143

^{45/} West India Royal Commission Report, presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, July 1945, pp.190-192, hereinafter referred to as The Moyne Commission Report

Data does not permit a discussion of the specific situation of the apprenticed labourers in St. Lucia. It would nonetheless be noted that the procedures designed to facilitate the advent of a "free" labour market consisted in precisely restricting the freedom of the labour force, freedom of movement and bargaining. The entire system lasted only four years and ceased on 1 August 1838. While it could not have had a serious impact on the labour force, on the one hand it proves the point that the planter class was prepared to allow the participation of the population in the productive process, within definite economic, political and legal limitations. Wage and other economic relationships between the planters and the "free" labour force of St. Lucia have had no characteristic of a free market system.

On the other hand, it would appear that the need to promulgate and the attempt at implementing measures coercing the free will of the population through apprenticeship is a clear indication that the St. Lucians did not share the colonizers' outlook of the society and of the role of its individuals. The current views on St. Lucia, the St. Lucians, the activities they should carry out and how they should do so, pointed in directions rather different from what Great Britain and the planters were desperately trying to impose. This basic cleavage is still evident in the Malone Commission Report (1952) which views the bulk of St. Lucians as ignorant people.^{46/}

One can summarize the interrelated factors contributing to the unique experience of St. Lucia during this period of the plantation system: firstly, the small size of the plantations; secondly, the brevity of the period, in comparative terms, which never allowed the labour force to become deeply enveloped by inhumane exploitation; thirdly, the possibility of setting up alternative forms of existence due to the concurrence of geographical and historical phenomena; and fourthly, the constraints originating from metropolitan rivalries on the frontiers of their respective empires. Social intercourse in St. Lucia has to be assessed on the basis of the underlying fact that its human

^{46/} Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Stoppage of Work at the Sugar Factories in March 1952, and into the Adequacy of Existing Wage-Fixing Machinery in that colony, Castries 1952, para.22

and natural resources were never fully harnessed by foreign powers and subjected to the harsh rule of the sugar plantation colonies. St. Lucians were able from the very beginning to safeguard some spheres of autonomy in the political economy of plantation America.

A PLANTATION SOCIETY

Frame of Reference under British Rule

Data available on St. Lucia's history show that however strong the metropolitan country was during the nineteenth century, it did not actually gain control of this tiny island by a simple military victory. It has been seen that the 1789 Revolution put into the open the strife between the two factions of the dominant classes residing in St. Lucia: on the one hand, the Republicans, presumably small and coloured planters, on the other hand, those against whom the Revolutionary Tribunals and the Regime of Terror was instituted, presumably the Church and the Royalistic planters. It has also been documented that occupation of the island started in May 1796 by the surrender of 2,000 republicans originally in control of Mt. Fortuné, while the "Guerre des Brigands" continued in the "rest of the island". From 1794 to 1803, in spite of numerous advances and retreats of the two rival metropolises, social relations were regulated by French courts and laws.^{47/} Finally, after the last capture on 21 June 1803, and in terms of its ratification at the Treaty of Paris on 30 May 1814, it was expressly stated that the "French civil laws should continue to be the law of the island".^{48/}

This situation reveals the conditions under which the British took over the island. St. Lucia was conceived as a conquered or ceded Territory and supposed to be ruled by local laws. Liverpool quotes a jurist of this early period:

"the Civil Law of the island, besides the Local Ordinances, the Maritime and Commercial Law, are nearly the whole of the French Laws anterior to 1789, which are scattered over a great number of authorities, such as the Coutume de Paris which is a part of the ancient 'lex non scripta' of France, the Ordinances, Edicts, and declarations of the French Monarchy, the Code de la Martinique..." ^{49/}

^{47/} N.J.O. Liverpool, op.cit., pp.2-3

^{48/} Ibid., p.3

^{49/} Ibid., p.8

The colony appears, therefore, during most of the nineteenth century, as a kind of protectorate, ruled by the heirs of the Ancien Régime, the Royalists and the Church. Both interest groups "were in large part directly responsible for what local government there was in rural districts. Planters also dominated the Judicial system..." ^{50/} and the Legislature.

The strength of the creole planters was further increased by the non-existence of any written copy of the applicable laws in St. Lucia. Those who professed to know the laws could then keep the British relatively dependent. ^{51/} Moreover, up to 1825, "Integrity, zeal and a good judgement were all that were required of these gentlemen (the judges) who were often chosen amongst the most influential planters". ^{52/}

It took thirty-nine years, from 1803 to 1842, to impose the English language in the Courts, as well as the English Commercial Law, the English Law of Mortgage, English rules of practice and evidence in criminal matters,... and, interestingly enough, the English currency. ^{53/} But even at this point in time, the conflicts between the French creoles and the British authorities were not over. Only in 1879 was St. Lucia endowed finally of a text containing the applicable Civil Code and Code of Civil Procedure. The last opponents to these changes were two significant social groups: the merchants and the Roman Catholic clergy. The first one opposing the abolishment of imprisonment for debt, the second on the provisions relating to Civil marriage. ^{54/}

^{50/} Weirs Agricultural Consulting Services, Small Farming Study in the less Developed Member Territories of the Caribbean, Vol.1(a) Country Reports. Prepared for the Caribbean Development Bank, 1976, p.5, hereinafter referred to as Small Farming Study (CDB).

^{51/} N.J.O. Liverpool, *op.cit.*, p.10

^{52/} *Ibid.*, p.36

^{53/} *Ibid.*, p.23

^{54/} *Ibid.*, p.28

It is recorded that the clergy were more determined in their opposition and it is noteworthy that their arguments were based on the Proclamation of 1803 which granted applicability to the laws, previous to 1789.

While the role of the merchants can easily be understood, in an economy where the main activities are subject to substantial variations, it is necessary to explore further the economic and political activities of the clergy in St. Lucia. There is no doubt that the Catholic Church was one of the largest single landowners as well as one of the largest single employers of *métayers*. ^{55/} It will be recalled that since 1745, before the period of the increased development of plantations, the Church had been given land in every parish of the island. "In several cases the piece of land was quite extensive and gradually a great part of 'bourg' was built on parish land," ^{56/} for example, at Vieux Fort, Laborie and Dennery. As a result of the continuous shortage of priests in St. Lucia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, church property and assets were the responsibility of the parish and parochial assemblies.

There were a number of matters which caused some conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the British authorities in nineteenth century St. Lucia. ^{57/} Field research in St. Lucia provided further insight into the conflict situation. According to an interviewee - to the British, the Roman Catholic Church was seen as "a symbol of French domination in St. Lucia".

^{55/} An interview conducted in St. Lucia in Nov. 1980 substantiated this. It was not until the 1970's that the Church made an attempt to dispense with much of the land which had been idle for long periods of time, by selling, leasing or giving it away. This was done through the strong influence of young, mainly St. Lucian born, clergy.

^{56/} C. Gachet, *op.cit.*, p.52. Reference is also made to the fact that, in French islands, the Clergy either received a government grant or had estates for their financial needs. As the former was not the case in St. Lucia, we can only assume that rent from Church lands was a main source of income.

^{57/} These interpretations are provided in an interview with a member of the Roman Catholic Clergy in St. Lucia in November 1980.

Since it was the British who reimposed slavery, "the masses of people were anti-British" and regarded the French as their champions. The presence of the French was epitomised in the Roman Catholic Church.

The British objected to the control of the Church, through parish assemblies, in the local districts. Attempts were made to superimpose Civil commissaries in order to undermine the autonomy of the assemblies which were determined by the circumstances of the eighteenth century. The British also objected to French priests in the "English colony" and attempted unsuccessfully to influence the increase of priests of British birth or connections.

The interpretation provided in a recent interview informed that the perpetuation of patois is integral to an understanding of the political conflicts between the Church and the British-controlled administration. The use of patois as the main means of communication was the most important bond between St. Lucians and the Church, and undoubtedly excluded the British.

Further conflict was manifested in discriminatory salaries which were paid to protestant priests to encourage the expansion of the Protestant Church. The ecclesiastical grant of 1842 ensured that higher salaries were paid to protestant clergy. Control of education was another bone of contention between the two parties. To the administration, control of education was vital to further dominance on St. Lucia, beginning with the imposition of an official language. It is to be noted that the British were the first to introduce formal education to St. Lucia, through the Mico schools, from 1838.

W.K. Marshall reported that in 1856 and 1862, the clergy took an active part in the elections to effect a swing in their favour^{58/} and to increase their influence on education grants in the face of a threat of increasing Anglican influence. The Church, through the stable institution of parish assemblies, has always played an important role in local government and civil administrative matters, such as levy of taxes^{59/}.

^{58/} W.K. Marshall op.cit., p.510

^{59/} Small Farming Study (CDB) op. cit., p.7

Such influence lasted until the middle of the twentieth century.^{60/}

In conclusion, the process of remodeling the St. Lucian society according to the pattern of English colonies could not be completed before the last quarter of the nineteenth century in view of a stiff resistance posed by the remnants of the eighteenth century dominant classes. They successfully delayed any modernization of the country or originating from outside, i.e. from the British administration. This remained one of the rare cases where systematic and deliberate efforts were made to carry deep into the capitalish era the precepts of the Ancien Régime.

In the meantime, while the descendants of the enslaved were trying to survive under such circumstances, the white population of the island was decreasing steadily, in spite of some effort of promoting immigration. In 1788, 2,157 French whites living in St. Lucia represented 10% of the population; in 1814, 1,210 whites would amount to only 7% and in 1869, 900 whites would equal 2.5% of the total inhabitants.^{61/} In less than a century the French creoles of St. Lucia had reduced to approximately 42% of their group size at the eve of the 1789 Revolution. Those data quoted by Liverpool and consistent with the estimates of Sewell may still not be too accurate, but they do express the inability of the French creoles to set up a social organization which would enable them to reproduce themselves demographically. This weakening of French creoles by the latter half of the nineteenth century revealed itself further in the later progress of peasant development in St. Lucia.

^{60/} Ibid., p.7 The CDB report further adds: "Also, the Church has always owned a sizeable amount of land, from which they collected rent, and on which many of the rural schools now in existence are located. This has of course facilitated the position of control that the Church has long held in the educational system. Indeed, the Official power of the Clergy in the rural areas was not successfully curbed until 1945 when the Local Government Ordinance abolished the system of management by Church wardens".

^{61/} N.J.O. Liverpool, op.cit., p.26

As for the upsurge of popular inventiveness, the collusion of interests between the French creoles and the colonial authorities debarred any real possibility for its full development. Nonetheless, the discriminated people of African descent, whose number had multiplied steadily during the same period of time ^{62/} did find a mechanism to bypass the monopoly on local resources patronised by the colonial authorities in favour of the planters and the merchants and religious associates.

Evolution of Plantation and Wage Labour

St. Lucia had always had a problem in securing a steady supply of labour for its plantations. From 1789 to 1803, investments for the purchase of enslaved workers must have been brought to a low level by the constant state of war. Furthermore, the rival colonial authorities had had to declare and then to withdraw emancipation, creating much confusion in the institutional frame for absorbing plantation labour. In 1807, four years after England seized the island, the metropole started the implementation of the laws prohibiting the slave trade. In this new context, the demographic reproduction of an already scarce labour force rested mainly on the local forms of organization and this functional necessity constituted one of the fundamental aspects of the workers' bargaining power.

Avenues for the procreation of the enslaved had to be provided for and together with the tolerance of somewhat regular forms of family life, the system had to concede a minimum degree of privacy to shelter and to raise their offspring. ^{63/} Several laws for their protection were passed and implemented in 1825, 1831 and 1832. It was necessary to punish and to imprison merchants and planters who disobeyed these laws.

^{62/} Population statistics for the period indicate this.

^{63/} In this respect, it would be important to investigate when and how the sex ratio of the enslaved population reached its equilibrium, since this would help us to understand the early features of the St. Lucian family.

Moreover, Marshall documented the "rage" of the re-enslaved to purchase their freedom,^{64/} and referred to the efforts made by the planters to use their political dominance to block the political and social consequences of emancipation. These measures were viewed by the creole élite as an encroachment on its privileges and bred conflicts with the British administration, which manifested themselves with more violence during the period of apprenticeship. Both in St. Lucia and Tobago, legislatures had to be coaxed and cajoled into following the example of the other islands and into "heeding the British Government's recommendation"... the British administration had "to intervene in St. Lucia to ensure the final acceptance of the Abrogation Act".^{65/} The aftermath of this was the St. Lucia Humble Petition - a protest on March 26, 1838.

The transition from a slavery-based economy to some kind of market economy concealed certain processes which took place during the whole of the nineteenth century and explained the social structure of the country. Three main actors were involved in these complex negotiations, each of them with their own interests and objectives. The first one can be disposed of easily, being an external agent. Any direction imposed upon St. Lucia had to bear some consistency with Britain's progress toward industrial capitalism. The colony had to rely on a given organization of its resources, and to produce a surplus of merchandise to be exchanged against metropolitan goods and services.

In the subsequent discourse attention will be paid to the second actor of these negotiations, the would-be-wage-earners. They happened to have had their own ideas about life and only a small number of the labour force actually became wage-earners, or a small part of their time was actually exchanged for a salary. Earlier attempts have been made to depict the evolution of the French creoles, the third actor of St. Lucian nineteenth century history. These creoles, stagnated in the eighteenth century outlook. They, at no point in time, had any economic interest in "free labour". Precisely, these words as well as expressions such as "free market", "private initiative", or entrepreneurship had no correspondence in their common practices nor their concrete frame of reference.

^{64/} W.K. Marshall, The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands... op. cit., p. 76

^{65/} Small Farming Study, (CDB) op. cit., p.53

By legislation, wage labour was the sequel to slave labour and in St. Lucia, as elsewhere, measures were enforced to ensure its institutionalization; on the one hand impediments to migration away from the estates were numerous, and on the other hand, accessibility to land was made difficult. Severe restrictions were imposed by means of legislative measures. St. Lucia, being a Crown Colony, was in principle subject to more direct control by the British Parliament and the British Colonial Office, through an Administrator. All land area outside of plantations and other privately owned land were declared Crown lands and were not available for settlement and exploitation without much red tape, with no inner logic as far as St. Lucian labour force was concerned. There were other measures to prevent acquisition of land in small acreages, including legislation against squatting. The planters could then extend their own plantation acreage to the limit permitted by the Crown. Planter, Church and State ownership resulted in the virtual monopolisation of all available land areas.

Further legislation was used to maintain a supply of labour on the estates. In 1836, 1838 and 1839, several laws forbade vagrancy, that is to say, internal migration.^{66/} The Crown and/or the creoles imposed highly restrictive regulations and practices on tenancy, labour contracts, emigration and the sale of land. Land taxes were also used as a prohibitive measure. The objective was to debar the population from all resources but its labour force, and to impose upon the St. Lucians the necessity of wage employment.

Planters initiated further measures to maintain an adequate supply of labour through their control of the basic elements of life - food and housing. There was always the threat of eviction from houses and plots tenanted on the estates. Marshall referred to the use of the "mischievous truck system" - the estates shops - which were widespread in St. Lucia in the early years of emancipation.^{67/} The system of continuous credit in these shops kept labourers indebted to the planters. Workers were therefore compelled to honour their debts by working for wages.

^{66/} For example, an Ordinance of 1836, amended in 1839, limited other occupational opportunities.

^{67/} W.K. Marshall, The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, op. cit., p.114

Another measure was to threaten to curtail extra allowances in the form of foodstuffs (drinks, saltfish, sugar) and rum. Apparently labourers depended heavily on planters for their supply of these commodities. Marshall supplied some information on the wages of first class labourers in St. Lucia between 1838 and 1846 which he argued were very much lower than those of the domestic service or trades and low in comparison with the profits from provision cultivation (independent production).

1839	1s 3d - 1s 8d
1840	1s 3d - 1s 8d
1841	10d - 1s 8d
1842	10d - 1s 10d
1843	10d - 1s 3d
1844	1s 3d - 1s 8d
1845	1s - 1s 10d
1846	1s 3d - 1s 8d ^{68/}

Records reveal that wages never increased over a seven year period with even a depression in the middle years. The meagre wages were insufficient for the subsistence of the worker and his family.

The series of regulations described earlier are indicative of the relative scarcity of labour in St. Lucia, revealing some bargaining power of workers. Planters competed heavily for labourers in the period following the second emancipation. Two categories of workers were created, based on the differences in status vis à vis the plantation, and the differences in remuneration. There were the "resident estate labour" and "non resident (stranger) estate labour". The second category of labourers were able to display more bargaining power.

The demand for labour influenced the discrimination in wages paid to these two groups of workers. Labourers who had removed from the estates - the non-resident - had to be hired out of necessity and were able to negotiate higher wages. This created some hostility among such non-resident and resident labourers having still a semi-independent status. By 1840 however, the character of the labour

^{65/} Ibid., p. 111

force was predominantly non-resident, even though mention is made of resident labourers again in 1849.^{69/}

Apart from this situation, however, the low price of wage labour meant that the plantations maintained a supply of cheap labour. The low wages paid, however, triggered off open conflicts as early as 1846 and 1850. The British had to intervene to support the planters against so-called excessive demands of the workers. Rural labourers were in principle at the mercy of planters and estate managers as regards depressions in wages. The labourers' only recourse was withdrawal of labour. Strikes and strained labour relations followed some planters' failure to pay wages, which did not always help to redress the situation because of political interferences. And it is interesting to note that since 1838, local colonial authorities were not capable of handling labour disputes between planters and workers. Recourse to His/Her Majesty's troops has been a constant feature of industrial dispute in St. Lucia.

In the late 1850's, planters in St. Lucia as elsewhere in the British Caribbean turned to indentured labourers in order to influence a depression of the wage rates. However, measures to secure indentured labourers were unorganised and on a very minor scale. This meant an introduction of contract labour in an emergent labour market.

St. Lucia received 1,525 East Indian immigrants over a period of nine to ten years,^{70/} in the years preceding 1880. These indentured labourers were contracted for three to five years during which time they were under the control of the estate owners. After accepting the contract of indentureship, the East Indian labourers did not have much bargaining power. At the end of the contract period, they were allowed to return home, were given land or were forced to join the labour market. Nearly all the estates acquired East Indian labour, but it appears as though the majority were employed in the Vieux Fort district in the south. By the end of the nineteenth century, Augier, in the interior of the Vieux Fort parish, became a predominantly East Indian settlement. An indication of other areas of East Indian settlement is the establishment of East Indian missions in the late nineteenth century. A few of these areas are: Mon Repos, Canelles, Mayoude and Roseau. Except for Roseau,

^{69/} Ibid., p. 309

^{70/} E. Williams, From Columbus to Castro, op.cit. p. 339

the other areas mentioned are in the south and south-east of St. Lucia, in close proximity to estate areas. Marshall reported however, that the indentured immigrants received lower wages than they were promised, i.e. below 10d daily.

Another source of immigrant labour was liberated Africans, 1,119 of whom were introduced into the country in 1849-1850, in the estate areas of Micoud, Gros Islet, Vieux Fort and also in some areas in the Castries and Dennery quarters. The total number of immigrants - East Indian and African - amounted approximately to an increase of 10% of the total population. The low wages plus the latest artificial increase of the labour supply did not have the anticipated results hoped for by the dominant classes. Both elements made the St. Lucia labour force more determined to pursue social and economic self-expression even though their access to resources was severely constrained.

Limited Access to Resources

Once enslavement is challenged, plantation agriculture cannot foster development of a fully fledged market economy, unless steady flows and prices of export commodities could be secured. It had been seen that such was not the case in St. Lucia. The ups and downs of the sugar market demanded that wages be maintained at very low levels. This situation in turn called necessarily for the blossoming of a complementary sector of the plantation economy, whose marginal output, geared exclusively towards self-subsistence, equated with a total of merchandise equivalent to distributed wages, that would have been paid.

As distinct from agriculture of self-subsistence, an inward oriented one emerged in St. Lucia as a consequence of the striving of the Africans and their descendants to establish a self-sufficient economy, structurally independent of the plantation. The line of demarcation between both types of agriculture - one an evolution of the provision grounds, the other a prelude to peasant economy - remained blurred due to the fact that their distinct conflicts with the dominant system were dealt with within the same legal framework. Expansion of "provision grounds" should be viewed as an expansion in the number and volume of distributed wages with limiting effects on the growth and increase in export oriented agriculture. Multiplication of squatter settlements and freehold

reduced similarly the chances for increasing the volume and rate of profit of the plantation. Pressure from the colonial authorities could not restrain at the same time both the demands for higher wages, expressed through the enlargement and multiplication of "provision grounds", and the establishment of independent peasant ventures.

The basic groups in relation and conflict would be, on the one hand, the descendants of the enslaved, and on the other, the planters and the colonial authorities, whose peculiar and ambiguous alliance has already been referred to. Each of these classes having their distinct and incompatible project of development, the concrete facts of St. Lucia's history appeared as a series of successive compromises. But these compromises attempting to by-pass the obstacles to the deployment and implementation of St. Lucians' vision of society, should not obscure the part played by a key character in the country's history.

Emancipation in 1838 unleashed the tendency of the population to be independent of the plantation, that is to say, to secure some share in the available resources. In spite of tremendous odds, there was a gradual movement away from the estates. Labourers resisted participation in wage relations under prevailing conditions. The planters, over-anxious to safeguard their entire labour supply, attempted by various means to keep all the ex-slaves on the estates in relationships which closely approximated their earlier servile condition. Insecurity or lack of tenure, as well as relatively low wages for plantation labour, sometimes high rent and long contracts, reinforced the determination of the ex-enslaved to seek new and better opportunities away from the estates.^{71/} They attempted to buy land, even at prohibitive prices.

^{71/} W. K. Marshall, "notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838", Social and Economic Studies, University of the West Indies, ISER Vol. 17, No. 3, September 1968, p. 254.

"The circumstances following emancipation, therefore, lacked the solid economic foundation which would be necessary for the emergence of any very definite social pattern. The population was divided into those who tended to escape from the influence of the estates and from contact with Europeans into often remote and inaccessible holdings of small parcels of land, and those - a diminishing number - who remained on the estates under conditions little, if at all, superior to those prevailing under slavery. The settlers probably formed then, as they do now, the solidest and most enterprising section of the negro population". ^{72/}

By the decade of the 1840's the changing trends in land tenure were already apparent. For example, estimated numbers of freeholders between 1845 and 1861 indicate the trend.

1845	1345
1846	1390
1849	1920
1853	2343
1857	2045
1861	2185 ^{73/}

The limits to more rapid freehold land acquisition were numerous and consequently, renting and leasing of land from planters became a major feature of the peasantry's development. Thus, early peasant movement was restricted to lands on the periphery of the estates. Marshall, for example, refers to the rapid transformation of Denmery and Micoud, main plantation areas. Planters opposed freehold settlement and encouraged leaseholding and renting.

By the late 1840's to 1860's this sort of peasant system was able to expand^{74/} as the plantation system became subject to the vicissitudes of the international market. After 1846-48, many estates were abandoned.

^{72/} The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit. Chap III, para 41, p.30 (our emphasis)

^{73/} W.K. Marshall, The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands 1838-65, op.cit. p. 353.

^{74/} As early as 1845, mention is made of a new village in the heights of Soufriere which is considered the first inland settlement"... Lieutenant Governor Power of St. Lucia observed in 1854 that cultivation might be seen creeping up the mountain in every direction". Ibid. pp. 313 and 317.

The survival of the plantation system was possible inter alia as a result of the planters recognising and accomodating the strong desire of the free labour force for independence. This resulted in the introduction or strengthening of the metayage system which fostered an even greater increase in small holdings. Metayage was reportedly very successful and improved sugar production during the period. There were also increased exports of cocoa and provisions as early as 1857. ^{75/}

Another means of land acquisition was also evident at a later stage. For those who could not afford to purchase land and who were faced with severe prohibitions on land acquisition, squatting became an important avenue for establishing an independent existence. Labourers were forced to settle in the mountainous interior of St. Lucia.

Settlement on the extensive areas of lands monopolised by the Government was obviously prohibited and discriminatory land taxes were introduced to "deter labourers from obtaining possession either by purchase or lease of detached or remote plots of ground and becoming what in these islands are usually denominated squatters..." ^{76/} In 1849, a tax of 4s was imposed on cultivated land and was designed to operate as in Tobago, against all small holders while favouring labourers on the estates and cultivating land as "provision grounds".^{77/} The imposition of this land tax was the cause of a major uprising in the island in the same year.

The expansion of this quasi-peasant system occurred during the 1840's sugar depression and continued during the second half of the nineteenth century, after a brief respite in the contraction of the sugar industry. Moreover, there was another sugar depression in the 1880's, as a result more land was available for peasant acquisition. Lewis^{78/}, Marshall^{79/} and others refer to this period as that of the

^{75/} W. G. Sewell, op. cit., pp.92-93.

^{76/} W.K. Marshall, Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands -1838-18
op.cit., p.352

^{77/} Ibid., p.354

^{78/} W.A. Lewis, op.cit.

^{79/} W.K. Marshall "Notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838", op.cit. p. 253

"expansion of the peasantry" in the Windward Islands generally. "Peasants" were then able to participate in the export oriented economy via their production of new staple crops particularly in the period after the 1870's.

By the end of that decade, Government policy towards peasants was ostensibly modified. There was even a token of Crown Lands for sale in 1890 but the conditions of sale and settlement were not attractive to labourers, since by this time squatting on Crown Lands was greatly increased.^{80/}

Within the dual framework depicted earlier - the need to contribute to the imperial economy, while securing some degree of self-sufficiency - St. Lucia's society adopted the metayage system as a workable arrangement between the interests in conflict. This system of land tenure and labour organization consolidated itself particularly from 1840 onwards and for approximately three decades, it competed with the system of wage labour. Hereafter, sharecropping in various forms established itself as a definite feature of rural St. Lucia.

Sharecropping or metayage represents as an economic institution, a compromise between agriculture of self-subsistence linked to the plantation system and self-propelled inward oriented ventures. Metayage is a marriage of resident estate labour and peasant economy. It was reported that one of the reasons for its "failure", from a planter's outlook, was the importance which the metayer attached to his own provision crops hence the neglect of export crops.

Under the system both planter and metayer were interdependent.

^{80/} R.A. Foreman, Land Settlement Scheme in St. Lucia, based on a survey of the Agricultural land and Social Conditions of the island. St. Lucia, Government Printing Office, 1955. p.15.

The planter supplied the land for cultivation of sugar, by the métayer. By a share system, the métayer paid the cost of manufacturing the sugar out of his half share ^{81/} of all the sugar produced which he received in compensation for his labour. The planter received besides, the other half portion of the sugar and all the incidental products of sugar manufacture.^{82/}

The labourers, on the one hand, were able to establish a semi-independent existence within the plantation system which, in principle, allowed their income to exceed the expected output of normal provision grounds. On the other hand, metayage created tenant employees in preference to wage labour, and a milieu propitious to forms of exploitation which side-stepped imported labour legislation.

Metayage contracts, as legal instruments, were generally deficient and more advantageous to the planter than the métayer. Very few contracts were written and they were more often than not assumed. The métayers were left unprotected from the whims of the landlord even though there was an Ordinance in 1850 to protect them. Nonetheless, in practice and particularly during the second half of the century, referred to as the period of "expansion of the peasantry", difficulties faced by the planters seemed to indicate that the métayers were not devoid of bargaining power.

The extensive use of the metayage system in St. Lucia is understandable in view of the predominance of small planters. In this context, it was particularly amenable to periods of crisis since it produced a higher yield per acre with cheaper production costs and reduced risks and recurrent expenses.

^{81/} The métayer received the value of the sugar, not the sugar itself.

^{82/} W.K. Marshall, The Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands 1838-1865, op. cit., pp.227-228

"Circumstances forced the system on planters who lacked capital for wages and immigration... This was clearly seen on the small estates. On these, because only small outlays of capital are necessary, metayage was highly successful, provided that the ... planters had some stock and a good mill. But on the larger estates this advantage was not so obvious. There was little doubt that if the estates possessed some capital, a conversion to metayage cultivation in its present form would result in a decline of sugar production. The fragmentation of the labour force implicit in metayage could inhibit the operation of these large units..."83/

83/ Ibid., pp.247-248

PEASANT ECONOMY AS A COUNTER PLANTATION SYSTEM

In St. Lucia, the basic element for the definition of a peasantry, the relation Man/land, appeared under peculiar political circumstances. The former enslaved either had to content themselves with excessively small areas of land, in many cases, in defiance of "ownership rights" of the Crown or absentee landlords, or had to settle for fragile metayage contracts. Large numbers had no legal access to land at all. In this country, as in the Caribbean in general, efforts towards the establishment of a peasantry are relatively recent. They were not accompanied by the development of the complementary crafts and industries (e.g. for the production of agricultural implements), and this made the need for some form of exchange of agricultural against non-agricultural goods, more urgent. Demands for cash had always been pressing. Cash crops being produced mainly on large estates, and their trade controlled by consignees, the total amount of monetary resources distributed to would-be peasants was limited. They were forced, in order to secure their form of living, to undertake non-peasant activities, by selling part of their labour force. These export-oriented activities, being subject to variations, uncontrollable from the St. Lucian-end, were not designed to stimulate self-propelled inward-oriented agriculture.

On the contrary, since the administrative machinery, the consignees and the planters were making their living out of the distribution of goods on the international market, it shaped a relationship between countryside and cities, inconsistent with the solution of the problems faced by would-be peasants. The contribution of each métayer or independent farmer to export trade, being meagre, the negotiation of the share of social wealth accruing to them could only be carried out on non-economical grounds. It could only aim at modifying the economic actors of social intercourse due to the lack of institutionalised channels for bargaining. It resulted in an endemic occurrence of "riots".

In this context, St. Lucian society appeared with a dual structure: a colonial one, imposed by the political authorities, through public administration, import-export trade, and plantation activities, and a local

one, emerging around inward-oriented agriculture, family and community life. At no point in time, had the bearers of the local structure been able to deploy fully the model which can be designed on the basis of their practices, nor had they been able to isolate themselves from the dominant plantation system, and to create a distinct peasant economy.

One could then apply to St. Lucia, Marshall's definition of West Indian peasantry:

"(...) The West Indian peasantry exhibits certain special characteristics. It is recent in origin; its growth - in numbers and in acreage controlled - was consistent during the first fifty or sixty years of its existence; it exists alongside and in conflict with the plantation; and it did not depend exclusively on cultivation of the soil for its income and subsistence". 83/

In the process of sorting out the numerous obstacles to its development, invented by the colonial authorities and the French-creoles, the peasantry of St. Lucia created at least two remarkable social instruments which in fact constitute its backbone. These local creations, linked to counter-plantation activities, have been obviously viewed as the very source of backwardness. The important point nonetheless is to find out their rationales.

During the nineteenth century - and up to now ^{84/} - when St. Lucians were solving their problems with their own resources, the sets of negotiations would be carried out in Patois. In this case, the basic concepts used during the course of the discussions were laid down by the natives. This fact ruled out any external influence which was not digested and adapted to the local circumstances. The colonial authorities could limit the range of relations carried out in Patois, but they had no mechanisms to interfere in these relations and let alone to arbitrate conflicts developing therefrom, unless invited by the St. Lucians and to the extent permitted by them.

83/ W.K. Marshall, "Notes on Peasant Development", op.cit., p.253

84/ At Public Hearings of the St. Lucian Land Reform Commission 1980, the very first sentence directed to the Chairman, Dr. Beckford, was the following: 'Excuse me, Sir, but I cannot speak English so much, I prefer to speak Patois instead.' The second sentence explains that: 'I do not want to start in English and I cannot complete.' (St. Lucia Land Reform Commission, Transcript of Second Session, 25 Feb. 1980).

It will be noted that in the conflicts opposing the French-creoles and the English administration, the problem of Patois as an obstacle to law enforcement and consequently to economic progress as designed by the dominant classes was never raised.^{85/} Since there cannot be any social relations enacted beyond a set of articulated concepts and symbols, this bi-lingualism in formation (English -vs- Patois) gives the first indication of cultural dualism in the St.Lucian society.

While some kind of peasantry is a necessity for the survival of the decadent plantation system in St.Lucia, and while the survival of the St. Lucian distorted peasantry implies participation in plantation activities, the set of norms, values and knowledge orienting each mode of production do not intermingle. They evolve in parallel or even divergent directions and cannot produce a unified cosmovision nor a unified project of development. Full deployment of the plantation model would destroy the peasantry and full deployment of the peasantry would eliminate the plantation system. The wisdom and knowledge of each system of life is embodied in linguistic structures which evolve in isolation one with respect to the other, notwithstanding the fact that most St.Lucians may be fluent in both idioms. Relationship between those languages and the economic organizations they sponsor is of a political nature.

In a similar manner, since there is no peasantry without land and since the access to land resources was not actually stimulated by the dominant groups, the small amount of it that the peasant was able to control,

^{85/} The basic values and philosophical standpoints created during more than a century of conflicts with the plantation society are totally unknown. Contempt for these achievements and their authors had reached such levels, that any newcomer feels compelled to express an opinion. One reads in a Report to the Government of St.Lucia:

"Another problem is that the first language of most of the rural population is Patois French, and unwritten language of limited vocabulary which complicated efforts to reduce the island's 30% illiteracy and inhibits the capacity of school children to learn English".

(Report to the Government of St.Lucia on the development of the Vocational Training. ILO, February 1966).

had been subtracted from any colonial interference. This interference could have been ended by re-possession by the planters or the Crown. So the decisions on alienation of land property were taken away from individuals and deposited in the hands of the community.

"The Community Property System" emerged as an institution under which the legacy of land is the common prerogative of the entire family, 'even generations of the same family' having descended from the original owner/occupier. Rights to plots of lands so controlled - and commonly known and described as 'family land' - and produce derived therefrom are shared. Those who inherit such lands are not allowed to sell or to dispose of them at will, unless perhaps by agreement of the entire family.

Following the nineteenth century tradition, of graciously granting all responsibility for backwardness when not to the "slaves", to the "brigands", the "emancipated", the métayers, the rioters, the illiterate and so on, publications discussing the peasantry in St. Lucia repeatedly argue that the main barrier to development and progress occurs as a result of the institution of Community Property.^{86/} In other Caribbean islands, where land is divided in very small plots and owned by individuals, individualism of the peasant is made responsible for lack of progress. In St. Lucia, multiple ownership is supposed to restrain individual initiative and to prevent the peasant from utilizing credit facilities,^{87/} while one could think of it as the only avenue for individual initiative to evolve away from metropolitan influences. The

^{86/} Reference is made to a few such publications:

(a) R.A. Foreman, Land Settlement Scheme in St. Lucia, op.cit., p.12.

(b) H.J. Finkel, "Patterns of land tenure in the Leeward and Windward Islands and their relevance to the problems of agricultural development in the West Indies", in Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean, edited by Horowitz, p.299.

(c) D.C. Emerson Mathurin, "An unfavourable system of land tenure: The Case of St. Lucia" in Proceedings of the Second West Indian Agricultural Conference. University of the West Indies, 1967, p.36.

(d) R.S. Romalis, "The Rural Entrepreneur and Economic Development: The case of St. Lucia" in Caribbean Anthropology; Ed. F. Henry. Occasional Paper Series No.5. Montreal, McGill University, 1969. p.95.

^{87/} The easy availability of cheap credit is important to the peasantry for the production of economic goods. W.A. Lewis, op.cit., p.30.

irrationality of the St. Lucian peasant is alluded to by most observers, the benign ones of whom one would speak of ignorance and low levels of instruction. It is remarkably difficult to find a study which will see the difficulty in "the inability of existing Agricultural and Credit Institutions to devise a workable relationship with the institution .."^{88/}

Multiple ownership of land is widespread in terms of the number of persons involved, and it seems that rather large areas of land can be categorised as 'family land'. The St. Lucia Five Year Development Plan 1966 - 1970 estimates that a total acreage of approximately 20,000 acres may be involved. This may even be an understatement, since the system by nature defies official records.

Basic contempt for the institution and its authors prevented its detailed and relevant study. It is not clear when the system was first started. Reports posit fantastically that it is a relic of some Napoleonic law,^{89/}

"an old system of land tenure which is a legacy of the former French Occupation. St. Lucia's Civil Code, based on the Napoleonic Code, includes sections which deal with Laws of Succession and which provide for the succession of ascendants and descendants as well as collateral relations",^{90/}

First of all, it has been seen that the Laws of St. Lucia, according to Liverpool, during most of the nineteenth century were by deliberate choice, those existing in the French colonial empire before 1789.^{91/} Secondly, even though there were no written texts of laws and in many cases common planters would act as judges, it would be difficult to link the French creoles to ideological development fostered under Napoleon or during the Revolution. Thirdly, the estates, i.e. properties of French

^{88/} Small Farming Study (CDB) op.cit., p.9

^{89/} For Example: (a) R.S. Romalis, op.cit. p.95
(b) D.C. Emerson Mathurin op.cit.
(c) Small Farming Study (CDC) p.6

^{90/} D.C. Emerson Mathurin, ibid., p.4

^{91/} N.J.O. Liverpool, op.cit., p.8

creoles, were never 'hampered' by Community Property System; why then would the black population adhere to these 'imported' views? Fourthly, assuming that community property had any relation with some Napoleonic Code, it should be in force in France with more vigour than in St. Lucia, which only copied a model. Finally, for succession laws to derive from a Napoleonic Code and to be so spontaneously adopted by the black population of St. Lucia, would suppose a Napoleonic type of family and it seems doubtful that the enslaved and former enslaved of St. Lucia would also be in a position to copy such family organization. One can only suppose that these writers conceive inadvertently of all cultural patterns in rural St. Lucia, as of French origin, with the aggravating circumstances that in St. Lucia, French cultural heritage had been stagnant or degraded. What happened to the language of France, degraded into Patois, must have happened to the Coutume de Paris, transformed into a Community Property System.

Case studies of land tenure arrangements in other societies of the Caribbean reveal that similar institutions exist in Jamaica and Haiti. Historically, the former was influenced by African, Spanish and English cultures and therefore the system could not have derived from any old French custom or legal code. The latter had a French and a very strong African cultural heritage but even here the system is not derived from the French and let alone from Napoleonic laws, taking into account relations between these countries during the nineteenth century. These studies ^{92/} give detailed information and explanation of the system as it exists in those specific social and cultural contexts.

In Jamaica, the system is seen as being closely interlinked with the maintenance of close kinship ties. Clarke posits that there exists a customary theory of land tenure by which the peasants have solved their problem of land ownership and inheritance. She argues that the system in Jamaica reflects West African principles of land tenure.

^{92/} (1) Edith Clarke, "Land Tenure and the Family in four communities in Jamaica", in Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 1, No. 4, August 1953, pp. 81-118.

(2) Serge Larose, "The Haitian lakou, land, family and ritual", in Family and Kinship in Middle America and the Caribbean; Ed. Arnaud Marks and René Romer (Co-publication of the Institute of Higher Studies in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles and the Department of Caribbean Studies of the Royal Institute of Linguistic and Anthropology at Leiden, Netherlands) 1975.

The concept of family land is linked with "the principles of inheritance and use, not by one individual member but by a group within a prescribed lineage". ^{93/} Based on customary belief and practice, family land passes to 'all the family' or 'all the children' and may be used jointly by a group of kindred who together subscribe towards the payment of taxes. Clarke notes that in practice 'all the children' may also include siblings or lateral kin on the relevant side. ^{94/}

Historically, the system in Jamaica is seen as having originated in the immediate post-emancipation period. Apparently grants of land were made to ex-estate labourers and these gifts were interpreted by the recipients as being for the family in perpetuity.

The rationale of the system implies also a solution of the peasantry confronted with the high cost and intricacies of English Common Law and procedure which was out of context in rural Jamaica. Since the majority of the family land acreages were small, the cost of obtaining a registered title including a land survey and lawyer's fees were prohibitive in comparison to the cost of land. On the other hand, the concept of family land sidestepped the English Common Law on inheritance. That law did not recognize illegitimate children as heirs. This implied forfeiture of land by the Crown when a 'legitimate' heir could not be produced. Undoubtedly what the colonial government considered illegitimate was not consistent with the peasants' view of their offspring in their specific family arrangements.

One can therefore conclude that in order to sidestep the complications of laws and legal procedures the Jamaican peasants created an institution of 'family land', or reinstated an African tradition, with its specific inheritance patterns. These explanations are applicable to the situation in St. Lucia.

Mention must be made of other forms of land ownership in Jamaica. Clarke makes a distinction between 'bought land' which is purchased land and other land which is inherited but is not 'family land'; that is, it is

^{93/} E. Clarke, ibid., p.82

^{94/} Ibid., p.83

not inherited by an entire family group but by one or two persons. Clarke also argues that in Jamaica the system of family land results in insufficient use of these lands because of the problem of claims to the produce and the problem of producing Registered titles in order to obtain loans or credit, much needed by the peasantry.

In the case of Haiti, a similar system of land tenure is closely linked with religion and domestic group composition in rural areas. The 'family' there, as in St. Lucia and Jamaica, refers to the cognatic descent group centered around the inheritance of a piece of land from the original owner. Land and family organization are inseparable. The existence of 'family land' entails the control of the peasant family's main resource - land - by the entire family, according to the principle of equal inheritance and rights by all children. There are restrictions on sale of land outside of the family.

The social organization is not static or singular in form. There are a variety of forms and developmental cycles connected with these communal properties. They may vary from self-sufficient units employing family labour to residential units or yards (lakous) of linked families and tenants, with members earning their livelihood outside of the area. The study referred to, however, emphasizes the lakou - a group of interrelated conjugal families each one occupying its own dwelling unit and sharing a common yard, ^{95/}

What is different in Haiti is the ability of anyone to start a lakou as long as he has lands even though the original lakous were apparently started in the nineteenth century, most particularly on properties granted to soldiers who had participated in the War of Independence, according to Larose.

Religion is of major importance to the family group concentrated in a lakou. The lakou has been referred to as 'a model of social organization; explicated in an elaborate religious system which provides the main element of continuity with the past', ^{96/} The lakou is also identified as a cult unit centred around a cult house.

^{95/} Serge Larose, Ibid., P.482.

^{96/} Ibid., p.485.

Larose made the similar distinction as Clarke does, between inherited land (tè éritié) and purchased land (tè achat),^{97/} The similarities in Jamaican and Haitian societies are emphasized with respect to the rights of the holders to dispose of the land. The rationale of the system also appears to be similar but not exclusively so. Larose posits that residence in a lakou has evolved to those who do not have the means to live in a different way and the lakou provides them with a type of security both religious and familial.

Undoubtedly in Haiti also, the multiple ownership of land had depleted the natural resource of the peasants as in Jamaica and St. Lucia. What has occurred is the increasing importance of salaried employment, part-time or otherwise, for owners of family land. In those circumstances, the land remains as mainly residential or as security.

The reason why the Community Property System exists in St. Lucia or Haiti and not in France, and operated in Jamaica and not in England is rather elementary. Among the Caribbean peasantry the right of all descendants to a given inheritance is acknowledged. Concepts like 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' children do not belong to the definitions related to family organizations. Operational terms in that respect would be 'recognized' -vs- 'not recognized'. Hence once recognition of kinship ties is given, the descendant is entitled to the legacy. The fact that all descendants would share a given legacy, in this case, a piece of land, would not in the end produce a Community Property System. But if none of them can alienate their right to the land, after a few generations all siblings end up being co-owners, that is, the Community as a whole becomes the depository of the property rights. The specific feature of family land is therefore the virtual inalienability of the right to a legacy. One may or may not make use of this right, but he/she cannot transfer it to those who may not claim such a right. From that angle it would appear that no line of thought, slightly related with a bourgeois/capitalist conception of the world could encompass such an institution. What is denied in the Community Property System is precisely one of the pillars of Western thought, the jus uti et abuti, the right to use and to abuse one's property.

^{97/} Ibid., p.489.

This conception of the relationship between man and natural resources whether it derives from an African cosmovision or not, had to be consistent with the circumstances in which St. Lucian peasantry was evolving in order to be adopted as a basic institution. Family land and the laws of inheritance, transmission and exploitation deriving therefrom must be conceived as a direct answer to the colonial policy of monopolization of natural resources. It is in fact a community monopoly which bypasses state control and metropolitan sanctions, because it is located within a totally different conception of society.

Assuming that the land acquired in such difficult conditions by the formerly enslaved population would become a common commodity on the market, there is no doubt that those who attempted total monopoly with the support of H.M.'s Government, would find themselves in an excellent position to repossess the plots they had to sell in periods of economic difficulties, and then to rebuild their estate, through common mechanisms of demand and supply. In the end, therefore, the French creoles and the Crown would have achieved peacefully what they could not secure by force.

It is in this connection that it had been stated earlier that the Black people of St. Lucia seemed to have found a mechanism to checkmate the economic hold of the planters, making it more difficult for them to reproduce as a social group or even demographically. Community Property System as an indicator of a peasant project of development which should be called a counter-plantation system. The precise contour of peasantry or counter-plantation as a model is obscure in St. Lucia, or in any case, its process of implementation, having to overcome such fantastic obstacles, the net result is ambiguous. But there cannot be any doubt that the project existed at least in the minds of the enslaved and descendants as a concrete utopia.

Indications are that during the setting up and dissemination of the metayage system, the African descendants would spend more time producing their own crops rather than the staples of interest to the planters. ^{98/}
If one were to compare the nineteenth century agricultural economy with the

^{98/} W.K. Marshall, Social and Economic Development of the Windward Islands, op.cit., pp.251-252.

previous one, it would appear that while the planters and to a lesser extent the colonial authorities were desperately trying to copy the eighteenth century forms of economic organizations in an obviously unfavourable international context, the descendants of the former enslaved were introducing new crops and consequently new methods and techniques of cultivation, and of social organization.

"Peasant activity modified the character of the original pure plantation economy and society. The peasants were the innovators in the economic life of the community. Besides producing a great quantity and variety of subsistence food and livestock they introduced new crops and/or reintroduced old ones. This diversified the basically monocultural pattern. Bananas, coffee, citrus, coconuts, cocoa and logwood in Jamaica; cocoa, arrowroot, spices, bananas and logwood in The Windward Islands; these were the main export crops subsequently adopted by the planters and became important elements in the export trade by the 1870's. All of these crops did not succeed. In addition, the success of the peasants in combatting attacks of disease on crops like cocoa and bananas was always severely limited by their shortage of resources of capital and knowledge".^{99/}

The creation of a market economy in St. Lucia, even though feeble because of the numerous obstacles raised by both planters and colonial authorities, was due to progress of technology and management devised by the labourers. The metayage system is located logically between, on the one hand, an unviable plantation system, which could barely operate with low wages imposed as a result of non-economic pressures, and on the other hand, the full development of multi-crop economy which should have followed the successive revolutions of the enslaved and the so-called 'riots' organized during the whole nineteenth century. His/Her Majesty's Government had deliberately prevented the deployment of private initiative and free enterprise reducing to a minimum the chances of the only viable alternative to plantation economy by preventing the access of the population to capital resources.

^{99/} W.K. Marshall, "Notes on Peasant Development", op.cit., p.260.

It would be clear that concentration of wealth in St. Lucia was not a result of entrepreneurship, but rather a pre-condition for 'acceptable entrepreneurship'. While the metropolitan country was developing within the framework of liberal capitalism, the colonial authorities were striving to establish a 'free' labour market, but not a free market economy. In other words, once the means of production would 'legally' be monopolized, the bulk of the population would be free to deploy their economic activities. The fact that the colonial power and the dominant classes had to use legal means and even violence to prevent the development of free enterprises and the unfolding of the Africans' private initiative, implies that these Africans were not at all devoid of all resources.

To the efforts of monopolizing the land resources and maintaining the African descendants sufficiently disaggregated and unarticulated, they answered by creating totally new and innovative institutions,

"The alternatives foreshadowed by the presence and activity of the peasants had great social significance as well. The peasants initiated the conversion of the plantation territories into modern societies. In a variety of ways they attempted to build local self-generating communities. They founded villages and markets, they built churches and schools; they clamoured for extension of educational facilities, for improvements in communication and markets; they started the local co-operative movement". 100/

They organized their communal life, preserved their language distinct from both French and English, introduced forms of economic organizations which resulted in quasi-full employment, forcing the planters to have recourse to immigration of indentured labour, and finally they completely substracted from the influence of the dominant classes and of the state the proportion of land on which they achieved control.

100/ Ibid., p.260 (our emphasis)

PART II

PREDOMINANCE OF POLITICAL DETERMINANTS

The set of practices carried out during the twentieth century by the population of St. Lucia are framed by several developments at international levels which are not, in their substantive content, of immediate interest to this study. A few pages will be dedicated in this introductory part, to analyse how the international context - which affects a colony through the intermediary of its metropole - impinges on domestic social affairs. Subsequent chapters will focus on main economic practices in St. Lucia. The social structure of the country and its successive modifications will be derived from the observation of social relations entertained in the process of producing and sharing the bulk of the local wealth. This methodological approach will expose how domestic institutions are coming gradually to grasp with the modern world.

In the previous chapters, it has been seen that the fabric of St. Lucian society has not been patterned by a close economic relation with the outer world. The country's main assets from the point of view of the colonial empires resided in its geographical location. Political interferences of the colonial powers had then a scant impact on the substantive content of locally geared economic and social organizations. They basically impaired their internal dynamism, isolated them and forced them to stay away from political intercourse. In this context, domestic resources could be harnessed with a certain degree of freedom to meet local needs; but since such self-reliant arrangements were not of much interest for the world economy, St. Lucia deployed its complexity largely unnoticed or misjudged. At this level, social differentiation could not transcend the stage of family and lineage formations.

Conversely, post emancipation plantation economy was viewed in terms of its inability to abide by strictly economic rationale. It appeared to be surviving only as a result of constant recourse to imperial police or military forces. The dominance and perpetuation of the plantation system was ensured by political factors rooted within

the overall set-up of the British Empire, remaining therefore beyond the reach of the native population and of its unsponsored peasant society. Such overwhelming determination of local intercourse transformed the very nature of social divergences and of conflict-prone situations. Prevalence of political determinants over any locally propelled initiative, seen from the point of view of domestic affairs, was being operationalised through the functioning of imported institutions, or in simpler terms, through the use of arguments of authority in any socially significant discussions. Most particularly, differences in economic interests of planters and non-planters acquired a fundamental political character in spite of their visible economic overtones. Class formations were observed at the level of this structural twist of the St. Lucian society.

The process of obstructuring local initiatives resulted in the articulation of a dual society which is presented at this stage of the analysis on the basis of immediate empirical reference. One could perceive on the one hand, a super-imposed political structure actualized through an unviable plantation system, and therefore with important economic implications; and on the other hand, a pseudo-peasant society built in reference to the plantation system, but with its independent and self-reproducing rationality. From this angle, the predominance of political factors over the economic ones tend to be conceptualised as a monopoly on all avenues opening to the world by a tiny sector of the population which happened to be lodged in a plantation system. Such a monopoly would seem to bestow upon the dominant class an apparently favourable position enabling it to convey new developments in the world scenario to the natives.

Data on the nineteenth century nonetheless, expose the ineptitude of the planters to develop any entrepreneurial ability, which would approximate that of their seventeenth and eighteenth century ascendants. Added to this, the evolution of the plantation system during the twentieth century and the gradual control achieved by the population on the process of development, demands the clarification of the methodological approach beyond the level of immediate perception. It will be seen, in the second part of the study, that St. Lucia's dual society ought to be visualised as a single binary system of processes, arranged in a manner which would reproduce each of its components in their distinctiveness, unless the space in which this dualism is originated were modified.

It will appear that dualism in St. Lucia originated as a result of the interplay of international politics, and that it was derived from colonialism itself. It was not an end product of local intercourse, quite the contrary. If one bears in mind the appalling differences in political strength between the colony of St. Lucia and the British Empire; even though the super-imposed political structure did not remain unaffected by changes, it never lost its alienation with respect to local intercourse. The dependency of the plantocracy and related dominant groups, i.e. the fact that they would internalise norms emanated from the United Kingdom and accept them as their own, bears no relevance for this discussion.

As far as the social fabric of the country was concerned, the central issue was the origin of any modification taking place. Changes which were not achieved through local negotiations might have been quite progressive in a worldwide perspective, and still strengthen traditionalism in St. Lucia because of their imposed nature. For example, the first emancipation of the enslaved was a substantive change, but the second one was merely a contextual one, in the sense that it modified the conditions in which a basic relation was carried out, but not the relation itself. The second emancipation had been forced upon the planter class, which had to devise ways and means to side-step the imported norms. The dominated class, trusting the declaration of intention to the metropole, soon found out that the United Kingdom was more concerned to support the dominant class, than to implement equality between the subjects of the Crown. To face externally nurtured changes, both elements of St. Lucia's dual society modified their practices, but with the aim of preserving an original arrangement arrived at internally.

Texts will be quoted showing that what was being promoted by a super-imposed political structure was not the privileges of the locally dominant class, and less alone the demands of the deprived one. A super-imposed political structure looked after the perpetuation of the overall power of the Empire. The privileges of the planters or the interests of the non-planters were taken care of by themselves in their reciprocal relationships.

The net impact of autonomous external political determinants had the peculiar effect of strangulation of social practices in colonial St. Lucia, whereby the constituent binary components of this society were articulated in a joint effort to prevent the absorption of one of them by the other. The control of the overtures on the outer world by the planters and the self-reliant initiatives of the peasants were not immediately geared toward the obtention of modern spiritual and material amenities, and toward the establishment of correlated institutions. Social intercourse seemed to aim at the safeguard of what has been achieved by each social sub-system.

Under the umbrella of the Colonial Empire, the components of dual St. Lucia were themselves conspiring against a nation-building process which would merge both terms of the relation. It will be seen that the accession of the country to independence appeared related to the demise of the locally dominant class, due to the cancellation of the political will to boost its eroded economic activities. The nodal elements of Caribbean colonial social structure have been quite aptly described by the West India Royal Commission of 1938-1939, chaired by Lord Moyne:

"The social structure of most of the West Indian colonies is dominated by the fact that agriculture which is their mainstay was founded and long continued on an estate basis, involving the existence of a comparatively small number of proprietors and managers, usually European, and a very large number of negro labourers".^{101/}

Whenever there existed a demand for sugar or other tropical staples produced in plantation economies, that could only or mainly be supplied by the West Indian colonies, the Caribbean planters would have certain leeway in their negotiations with the United Kingdom. They could bargain for certain privileges and display self-centred initiatives originating from themselves - even though with the sanction of the metropole - an impact on the domestic social organization. This potential autonomy of movement which, in fact, defines a dominant class, may be more easily perceived in the case of the

^{101/} The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit., Chapter I, para. 13, p.6

territories seized by other European countries. If the respective metropole would find it impossible to satisfy local needs as expressed by the planters, alternative arrangements would be actively sought for, even endangering the hold of the said metropole on the colony. Therefore, in spite of their political and economic dependency, the planters could at a time formulate demands on their mother country.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the share of the Caribbean planters in the supply of the metropolitan markets became, year after year, less important.^{102/} Locally, this period witnessed the formation of peasant or pseudo-peasant societies. Practices modifying the local arrangements were no longer set into motion by the planters, nor were such practices assisting in giving them access to a self-reliant privileged position. Manipulation of the material needs of the United Kingdom could not offer any leverage for promoting certain degrees of autonomy. The bargaining power of the plantocracy faded out gradually.

Social relations within the West Indian colonies experienced then a basic modification, even though not immediately perceivable.

^{102/} As a consequence of the up-coming of liberal capitalism, of subsequent technological developments facilitating the production of a substitute to sugar cane, together with the opening of other areas of the world to plantation economy.- "There is a radical difference between the economic difficulties that face the West Indies today, and those that they had to encounter in the nineteenth century. Then the world demand for almost every tropical product was increasing so rapidly as to outstrip, subject to the ordinary ups and downs of trade the available supply, and to require for its satisfaction the opening up, one after the other, of new productive areas. (...) But, in the case of many, if not most, tropical commodities, the development of new productive areas has been carried so far that the productive capacity seems now to be greatly in excess of the requirements not only of the present world demand but of any expansion of that demand that is probable in an early future". Ibid., pp.27-28

The planters had hardly anything to offer in exchange for the Empire's patronage. Having no specific role in the structure of worldwide economic practices that they would strive to perpetuate and expand, their material interests ceased to be located at the centre of colonial intercourse. Their wreckage at the end of the first quarter of the present century was depicted by Lord Olivier, Chairman of the West India Sugar Commission (1930) in the following terms:

"Nowhere in the world can sugar be made at (the) price (quoted in the London Market), (...) factories are increasing their indebtedness but their planters employing labour are also working at a loss, whilst cane farmers who do their own labour are getting nothing for cultivation and barely the value of harvesting and delivery. (...) The immediate position is (...) immediately unremunerative and progressively ruinous. The threatened situation (...) can only be described as involving complete economic and social destruction and degradation of the colonies dependent on sugar"103/

The reason why the United Kingdom felt obliged to salvage the West Indian plantocracy derived from what the same Lord Olivier termed as "sound Imperial political economy". He put it rather bluntly:

"I have no desire to avoid or dissemble the basal issue, which is - do we prefer to have cheaper sugar or to preserve our oldest colonies, which regard themselves as part of our community?"104/

The precedence of "Imperial Political Economy" over simple market economy^{105/}

103/ The Sugar Crisis as a Menace to the West Indies, being a speech delivered before the Royal Empire Society by the Rt. Hon. Lord Olivier, London, The Royal Empire Society, April 1930, pp.3, 6 and 7

104/ Ibid., p.8

105/ "Our Imperial State definitely and constitutionally, and especially in the West Indies, by a profound and indestructible historical sentiment, includes our own Crown colonies. Our Imperial economy includes the Colonial sugar industry which actually supplies one-third of our own consumption. The Imperial Government apparently is not prepared to regard these Colonies as having any claim except the luck of open market. (...) We should naturally assume that it would not be possible for any British Government to take the view that they should leave them simply to the chances of the market and not take some special measures to keep these industries and Colonies going". Ibid., pp.14-15

fostered the interlacement of the basic class structure of the West Indian colonies as depicted by Lord Moyne's Commission with the parameters of international politics. The asymmetric relations of the initial pair of Caribbean social classes having lost their economic raison d'être, the class of proprietors and managers started to crumble into dust.

A generalized system of preferences was institutionalized and provoked a remarkable increase in the total output of sugar. In St. Lucia, for instance, between 1928 and 1938, the production of sugar raised 60%. But over-supply followed soon enough and prices started to fall. In 1937, an International Sugar Agreement was issued, establishing specific quotas for each producing country and thus limiting severely the manipulation of current economic parameters. These new relations, which certainly do not belong to a market economy, impinged severely on the social structure of the colonies. Some viability of sugar plantations was ensured, but paradoxically, the International Sugar Agreement buried once and for all the sugar plantocracy by preventing its specific economic interest from playing any leading role in the development of the referred countries. New investments in the industry would produce returns and multiply themselves if the political determinants of the quota system were amenable to it.^{106/} Instead of economic competition of one kind or the other, groups of interests involved in the sugar venture, viz. factory and estate owners, canefarmers and agricultural workers, were driven in a political game to secure the trickling down of the preference-cum-quota bounty system. Sugar producers were then incited to invest in other economic sectors.

^{106/} A case in point is the settlement scheme in St. Lucia: "Before export quotas had been prescribed for the colonies under the International Sugar Agreement, the Government of Barbados was negotiating the acquisition of an estate in St. Lucia for the purposes of land settlement. Unless a special addition can be made to the quota of sugar export from St. Lucia, this scheme must be abandoned, or diverted to another basis". The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit, p.320

During the first half of this century, the Imperial country had then to put forward - if it were to conserve a foothold in the Caribbean - a global subvention for the West Indian colonies. As far as St. Lucia was concerned, the total amount of this subvention was largely the horizon of its economic life. But, as the rivalries between the metropolitan countries lost in acrimony after each of the world wars, ending in some kind of entente cordiale, the political interest in exclusive zones of influence and consequently in maintaining afloat doomed economic ventures, eroded substantially. With it, what was left of manoeuvring space for the plantocracies, bound "by profound and indestructible historical sentiment" to their respective mother country, vanished away.

The pace for gradual accession to independence was then set. After much social commotion and re-arrangements of the basic dimensions of the initial social structure, political negotiations - for direct or disguised subvention to the Caribbean depleted economies - became entrusted to a specialised group within the society: the representatives of the people. A totally new social structure and new rules for the social game emerged, centred this time around local political phenomena.

The gradual evolution of control of national destiny occurred over a period of three decades and was gained on the basis of agitation and concessions. From 1924-1951, meagre concessions were made towards any type of representative government. There existed a very limited franchise based on high incomes and property ownership. Within this twenty-seven year period, the constitution provided for three elected representatives of thirteen (1924), then five of twelve (1936). Not until 1951 did a new constitution provide for Universal Adult Suffrage. For the first time provision was made for elected representatives and the participation of the total adult population in the electoral process. The constitution of 1951 placed a majority of elected members on the Legislative Council and allowed for the participation of these members on the decision-making council - The Executive Council.

With the introduction of the Committee System in 1955, the people's representatives on the Executive Council undertook supervisory control of specific departments of the Civil Service. Of an Executive Council of eight members, only three were elected members, still under the control of an

Administrator, appointed by the Colonial Office. In 1956, the full ministerial system was introduced. Three elected members were appointed "Ministers" by the Governor in Council. This was the first real step towards self-government.

Up until 1960, St. Lucia existed within the Windward Islands Colonial Administration and only then did the Executive Council have control of the island's affairs under the Chairmanship of the Administrator. The 1960 Constitution specifically facilitated the formation of the Federal Government of the British West Indies. The appointment of a Chief Minister was then made on the basis of majority support in the Legislature. This, in fact, gave official recognition to political parties and the popular support manifested by St. Lucians in their choice of their political representatives. By this time, the Legislative Council consisted of twelve members, the majority of whom were elected (ten) and two nominated.

Absolute internal self-control was eventually acceded in 1967 with the status of Associated Statehood. The Premier, or Chief Minister, headed the decision-making Council, now the Cabinet. Control of overall national destiny came in 1979 with the accession to independence.

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BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Referring to the last years of the 1920's, Lord Oliver's Sugar Commission reported that mono-production was not as acute in St. Lucia as in other West Indian islands. Sugar and sugar products accounted for 45% of exports; lime, lime products, cocoa, copra, fruits and vegetables being responsible for the remaining. Added to that diversity, the country enjoyed a comfortable position as far as the production of food was concerned.^{107/}

The West India Royal Commission noted that sugar was "the main crop of St. Lucia". It nonetheless suggested a decline in the industry after its fact-finding visit in 1938 and reiterated the versatility of the local productive system.^{108/}

In 1951, the Malone Commission remarked that sugar was "an industry which (played) such a vital part in the economy of the Colony", and that workers in the industry constituted by far the largest group of employees in the island.^{109/} But in 1953, the St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association Limited was being created. Gradually the cultivation of this product expanded throughout the island and by 1964 no sugar was being produced.

^{107/} Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission, London, H.M.'s Stationery Office, 1930, pp. 85-89.

^{108/} "The past prosperity of the island was based mainly on coconuts and limes, but large areas now infertile in the north of the island are pointed out as having once supported prosperous sugar estates. (...) Some sugar is grown at Roseau and Cul de Sac, but the scale is small". The Moyne Commission Report, *op.cit.*, pp. 409-410.

^{109/} Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Stoppage of Work at the Sugar Factories in St. Lucia in March 1952, and into the Adequacy of existing wage-fixing machinery in that Colony. *op.cit.*, pp. 71 and 7. This Report is hereafter referred to as The Malone Commission Report.

Direct contributions to export by peasants were reportedly only 5% or so in 1958.^{110/} With the introduction of bananas, a shift in emphasis from inward oriented crops, as their main activity, to the production of the export crop was achieved. From 300 acres of peasant banana production in 1958 (according to Foreman)^{111/}, banana growing became predominantly a peasant industry by the 1960's. From the point of view of the rural population, the opportunity for a more steady income that banana could provide was apparently the greatest impetus to the adoption of the crop to the neglect of others. The development of marketing and other institutional arrangements which favoured production also facilitated the shift. More precise data will be produced at a later stage, but let it be said that farms of under 10 acres are responsible for at least 56% of most of the banana crop produced^{112/} though extensive mixed cultivation is still relevant.

Besides the diversity of agricultural produce - the flexibility with which productive factors are reallocated to ensure the switch from one staple to another - it seems that the economy of the country is characterised by the articulation of production for export and for local consumption. One is under the impression that the scale of both sectors would in itself and inter alia demand this arrangement.^{113/} Hence the conclusion of the West Indian Sugar Commission with respect to St. Lucia:

"There is no reason why, with intelligent handling (...) the island should not be made self-sufficient",^{114/}

What appears economically feasible faces the same sociological and political hurdles which made it impossible for a self-sufficient society to evolve during the previous century. The involvement of large numbers

^{110/} R. A. Foreman, op.cit., p. 7

^{111/} Ibid., p. 6

^{112/} Small Farming Study, op.cit., p. 46

^{113/} "The organization of local food supply ... even if effected will leave the labouring population largely devoid of means to buy clothing and other imported necessities of life". Lord Oliver, The West Indian Sugar Crisis, 'A Basal Issue for the Empire', London, The Royal Empire Society 1930, p. 6

^{114/} The West Indian Sugar Commission Report, op.cit., para. 302, p. 89

of producers in small scale agriculture whereby the basic food production is ensured, reproduces at the same time several forms of isolation and deprivation, very functional to the maintenance of a flexible export oriented sector. This last point will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

Historiographic data on the expansion of access to land resources are scanty. They usually refer to that sector of the peasantry which entertains links with export production. Since fluctuations and reconversions are the pattern of export agriculture, these figures do not give in any case, a complete picture of the situation. In his study on Social Structure of the British Caribbean published in 1946, G. Cumper gave the first global appraisal; he states estates in St. Lucia held 40% of the farm acreage and were less important than the combined shares of middle and large peasant holdings.^{115/} He substantiated his assessment with the following table:

Farm Acreage and Proportion of Farmers^{116/}

Units of		% Land operated in units	% Farmers operating units
1-10	acres	12.9	56.5
10-50	acres	33.7	38.6
50-200	acres	14.0	3.4
over 200	acres	39.4	1.4

The figures for the period 1946 and 1958 show a tendency towards land acquisition and/or fragmentation of existing holdings as well as an increase in the number of peasants.

^{115/} G. Cumper, Social Structure of the British Caribbean (excluding Jamaica), Part III, University College of the West Indies, p. 14

^{116/} Ibid., p. 14

Peasant Holdings in Selected West Indian Territories:

<u>St. Lucia 1946 and 1958^{117/}</u>			
1946	1958	1946	1958
1-5 acres		5-50 acres	
857	4887	1976	2361

Peasant holdings remained scattered in very small acreages (under five acres) showing a 400% increase in this category.

In 1976, less than twenty years later, peasants with 0-5 acres accounted for 82% of all holdings and occupied only 14.2% of total farming land. Farmers in the 200 acre category represented 0.6% of the farming population, yet held 52.7% of the total acreage in holdings.^{118/} Ownership of extensive estate acreages employing wage labour is controlled by a multi-national company and a few individuals. Large numbers of the labour force involved in small scale agricultural production on their miniscule acreages, are also wage earners.

Percentage Distribution of Holdings by Size Group

	0-5 acres	5-25 acres	25-200 acres	200+ acres	Total	(No)
1. Owned in owner-like possession	77.9	18.3	3.1	0.6	99.9	7563
2. Rented from others	97.6	2.2	0.1	-	99.9	2001
3. Holding of mixed tenure	75.2	17.6	7.2	-	100.0	472
4. Other	88.5	10.0	1.5	-	100.0	400

Source: SMALL FARMING STUDY IN THE LESSER DEVELOPED MEMBER TERRITORIES OF THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, p. 48.
(Adapted from Agricultural Census of St. Lucia, 1974)

^{117/} W.K. Marshall, "Notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies since 1838", op.cit., p. 258

^{118/} Small Farming Study, (CDB), op.cit., p. 47

The variety of tenural arrangements - freeholding, leaseholding, renting, squatting and sharecropping, as reported for 1958^{119/}, presages an intricate knot of social relations between modern companies, traditional estate owners, salaried workers, metayers and independent farmers. One is tempted to conclude that the nineteenth century linkages of plantation and counter-plantation economies remain the underlying structural arrangement of St. Lucian agriculture - at least up to 1958. It will be seen nonetheless that the demise of the planters as a social class has set into motion other forms of social articulation.

119/ R. A. Foreman. op.cit., p.6

ECONOMIC PRACTICES OF THE EMPLOYERS IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY

Relatively detailed description of economic practices in St. Lucia has been found in the Commissions of Enquiry Reports of 1952 (Malone Commission), 1957 (Jackson Commission), 1980 (Interim Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Banana Industry and in the Interim Report of the Beckford Land Reform Commission together with the transcripts of its Public Hearings). The first two reports deal with the production of sugar and sugar cane, the third with banana and the last one with the general infrastructural question of land tenure.^{120/} These data cover the economic activities which are responsible for the bulk of St. Lucia's wealth at a given time and their scrutiny will assist in clarifying the mechanisms through which the population makes a living.

As Lord Olivier puts it: "some Colonies depend for money earnings wholly upon one industry".^{121/} The case of St. Lucia is not as extreme, but sugar represented in 1951, 47% of the total value of its exports^{122/} and had the largest single impact on the utilization of its labour force.^{123/}

^{120/} Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Banana Industry not consulted due to its unavailability.

^{121/} The West Indian Sugar Crisis, Lord Olivier, op.cit., p.13

^{122/} The Malone Commission Report, para. 7, p.3

^{123/} "(...) the sugar industry is of considerable importance to St. Lucia as a whole. Not only does it provide employment directly for a large number of workers, but a proportion, by no means small, of those not actually engaged in the cultivating and reaping of sugar canes, and in the manufacture of sugar, derive employment indirectly from the prosperity of this industry". Ibid., para. 9, p.4

Within the established preference system referred to earlier, the St. Lucia Sugar Association negotiated the monetary value of its sugar production. This negotiation was carried out within the British West Indies Sugar Association which in turn conversed with the United Kingdom Government. It can be safely said that decisions reached by the planters affected substantially the well-being of the whole population.

It will be noted that the supply of sugar expected either from the British West Indies Sugar Association or from the St. Lucia Sugar Association was fixed by the quota system and therefore production could not be expanded on the initiative of the sugar companies. The price was arrived at year after year, before initiating the cycle of production, and one could infer ex-ante the total revenue for the year's production.

In a Memorandum by the Chairman of the St. Lucia Sugar Association, January 1952, the mechanics of the industry was presented in a systematic form. Reflections were initiated with the total revenue:

"The amount received by a producer for each ton of sugar sold is used by him under four main heads:

- (1) To pay for supplies purchased
- (2) To pay wages
- (3) To pay overhead expenses and depreciation
- (4) Profits

On the assumption that every sugar producer in the British West Indies receives the same net price for his sugar, the items spent on (1) and (3) would be fairly constant throughout the colonies. Consequently, it is fairly apparent that when item (2) (i.e. wages per ton of sugar) is below average, item (4) (i.e. profits) are above the average and vice versa".^{124/}

When the total selling price of the end product was known, the St. Lucia Sugar Association discussed a wage agreement with representatives of the workers, the basis for which negotiations being "the price variation and not selling price in relation to production costs".^{124/}

^{124/} Ibid . p. 43

In these circumstances, the disparity between profits and salaries remains constant, or their eventual increase in favour of the former is not visible. In any case, the rate of profit of a hypothetical initial year of production - which is not unrelated with conditions set up during times of slavery plantation - become untouchable.

"In some parts of the West Indies notably the smaller and poorer islands, rates for agricultural labourers have advanced little beyond the shilling-a-day introduced after emancipation. Examples are the 1s 2d a day in St. Kitts (...), the statutory minimum of 1s 3d (1s for women) in Grenada and St. Lucia, 1s 1d and 10d in St. Vincent". 125/

It is relevant to compare the production costs to the selling price (i.e. the expected revenue) if there was a possibility of profit maximization by modifying the total output and determining the level in which the marginal costs matched the marginal revenue. When both volume of production and selling price were known and when this price varied every year, the only reasonable dimension to negotiate yearly wages was in fact the price variation as practiced in the country.

The Malone Commission felt very strongly about this basis for negotiation, which rendered perfunctory the company's disclosure of profits.^{126/} While the proposal of the Commission does not seem to do justice to the system in which the Sugar Industry was operating in the

^{125/} The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit., Chapter III, para 7, p.32.

A trade unionist stated that these wages were the same in the 1940's. (Interview February 1980)

^{126/} "It has been the policy of the sugar companies not to disclose their profits". The Malone Commission Report, para 13, p. 5. "In any event the undisclosed of the individual profits of each company puts those negotiating with the representatives of labour in the advantageous position of having a monopoly of the information on which the negotiations should be based". Ibid. para 14, p.5. "We cannot see how they (sugar employers) can adopt a position that the wages paid are fair according to the price of sugar and production costs and refuse to support it except with vague figures, and expect to be believed". Ibid. para 58, p.17.

1950's, the argumentation is nonetheless valid as to the consequence of the system on the workers' attitudes and on the perceptions of the whole society:

"It is realised that (the necessity for revealing profits made) will be repugnant to the sugar companies and perhaps to other employers, but it must be pointed out that this secrecy about profits has been a weighty factor in breeding profound and deep-seated distrust of the employers among the sugar industry workers (and other citizens of St. Lucia too)".^{127/}

The point is that when risks and uncertainty are eliminated from an economic undertaking and returns can be determined with accuracy before initiating a cycle of production, such undertaking is not managed by an entrepreneur, nor can the returns obtained be considered as profit. This undertaker receives contractual payments for he knows in advance, like other factors of production, what he is to receive for his services. The term profit is used in such context by analogy and quite improperly.

It becomes then understandable that the whole population might have found it excessive that the United Kingdom paid such huge honoraria/profits to the Sugar Companies. The point made may also assist in clarifying why the workers could not be entitled to a share in the profits,^{128/} and why one of the companies could fail to pay dividends during twenty-three years of operation.^{129/}

The three sugar companies operating in St. Lucia were, vis à vis the island economy, self-sufficient units. They depended on external supply of sugar cane for less than 20% of the total input to their mills.

^{127/} Ibid., para. 97, p.26

^{128/} The Malone Commission Report, para. 14, p.5

^{129/} Ibid., para. 12, p.5

This average varied between more than a third at the Dennery Factory Company and 12% at the Roseau Company. The additional supply of raw materials would come from the production of métayers and contributors and sold to the factory under unfavourable terms:

"In addition to the canes grown by the three sugar companies, canes are supplied to the factories by contributors and métayers. Contributors are small farmers who own lands which they plant in sugar canes, and sell the canes to the Companies at a price per ton fixed by the Companies; the canes are weighed at the Factory on the Company's scale. Métayers are usually workers on the sugar estates who are permitted (...) to plant small areas of the Companies' lands in sugar canes, and in lieu of rent deliver to the Companies one-fifth of the canes supplied by the métayer to the factory. The canes are weighed at the factory, and the métayer is paid at the same rate per ton as a contributor, for four-fifths of the cane weighed".^{130/}

Theoretically, contributors and métayers were entrepreneurs in their own right. They evidenced, in the opinion of the Commissioners, "an appalling lack of concern and ignorance for cane cultivation" and "it can hardly be profitable to them to grow canes" at their level of productivity. According to the Malone Commission:

"The Sugar companies readily advise the peasants on agricultural matters when they are asked, and provide sugar cane plants free of cost. Few peasants seem to take advantage of these facilities. Indeed they evinced a general lack of interest in agriculture".^{131/}

But it so happens that as entrepreneurs, they had to cope with an appalling degree of uncertainty. The métayer had no security of his tenure and could be evicted at any point in time. The company actually had no obligation to take his canes. As for contributors, the Companies were obviously free to purchase their canes, even though they,

^{130/} Ibid., para. 43, pp.12-13

^{131/} Ibid., para. 46, pp.13-14

as the métayers, were not really in a position to deny themselves to sell to the companies. Hence,

"Another matter which has given rise to considerable distrust has been the method of fixing the price paid to contributors and métayers for sugar canes. It is based on a formula evolved by the employers and imposed on the suppliers of canes - it must be appreciated that so far as the buying of cane is concerned the St. Lucia Sugar Companies have a monopoly".^{132/}

In conclusion, it is important to stress that around the 1950's social intercourse affecting the global wealth of St. Lucian society and its distribution among the largest sector of the labour force was devoid of economic rationale. This fact characterized the society as a colonial one, that is to say as a society where economic bargaining did not actually take place. Economic practices were initiated with a set of political negotiations with the Imperial Government, carried out by the employers' association. Besides the monopolistic position they had been granted - and which they did not achieve in a free competition market - they operated knowing ex-ante the price of their product and the volume to be supplied. Moreover, they were practically self-sufficient with respect to their supply of raw materials and imposed a price for canes provided by non-estate producers. Besides a possible failure in the negotiations with the metropole, their only difficulty consisted in ensuring that "wage demands be based on economic facts", i.e. within their form of disaggregating the ex-ante price of sugar to cover costs of production and "profits".^{133/}

^{132/} Ibid., para 49, p.14

^{133/} "In St. Lucia, Politics and Trade Unionism are synonymous. One of the main problems of the St. Lucia Workers Co-operative Union at present is not only to get new members but to get them to pay their dues. A drive with that object in view has lately been instituted in the Sugar Estates, and it is again understandable that the officers feel that they can best persuade new members to join by telling them that they are grossly underpaid, and if they all join the Union much higher wages can be obtained for them. Though, as I have said, this is quite understandable, it is nevertheless true that if wage demands cease to be based on economic facts, the continuance of a Sugar Industry in St. Lucia must necessarily be jeopardised".

Memorandum by the Chairman of the St. Lucia Sugar Association, January 1952, in the Malone Commission Report, Ibid., p.42

ECONOMIC PRACTICES IN THE BANANA INDUSTRY

The facts observed in 1952 led the Malone Commission to endorse the views of the St. Lucia Sugar Association and to state in several passages of the report that the sugar industry is "vital to St. Lucia's economic life". As it sometimes happens with extrapolations which are not based on historical considerations, it turns out that the permanency of the sugar industry was not that important to the country. Some ten years later, sugar represented barely 1.3% of the total domestic exports, while bananas represented 78.5% of these exports. It will not be stated that banana is presently vital to the economy of the island, since its share has declined steadily from 1972 onwards, in spite of the constant increase in value and volume. The following tables substantiate the points made. They do not show, nevertheless, the participation of the enclave industries, the share of which in the total value of exports is increasing.

EXPORTS OF SUGAR AND BANANAS 1960-1963

VALUE (000 EC\$) AND % OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS

YEAR	SUGAR	% OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS	BANANAS	% OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS
1960	689.6	13.2	3369.0	64.4
1961	707.4	9.3	5187.1	68.2
1962	366.3	4.9	5833.8	78.0
1963	101.5	1.3	6141.0	78.5

Source: ST. LUCIA OVERSEAS TRADE REPORT, GOVERNMENT OF ST. LUCIA. TABLES FOR 1964 DO NOT INCLUDE SUGAR EXPORTS. 1963 MARKS THE LAST YEAR OF SUGAR EXPORTS IN ST. LUCIA

ST. LUCIA BANANA EXPORTS 1963-1979

YEAR	TONS	VALUE (\$'000EC)	% OF DOMESTIC ^{3/} EXPORTS
1963 ^{1/}	52,232	6,141	78.5
1964	60,268	8,186	84.8
1965	79,911	9,278	86.4
1966	77,182	9,142	80.7
1967	73,309	9,002	81.5
1968	71,158	9,764	81.8
1969	67,206	13,867	86.0
1970	36,760	5,424	--
1971	48,164	6,947	75.5
1972 ^{2/}	46,061	8,313	66.7
1973	35,936	10,150	66.8
1974	50,796	21,219	--
1975	30,583	17,539	--
1976	41,086	21,072	--
1977	41,405	25,526	--
1978	47,820	32,705	51.0
1979	---	27,840	48.0

Sources: ^{1/} DATA 1963-1971 QUANTITY - VALUE - ST. LUCIA ANNUAL STATISTICAL DIGEST 1971
^{2/} DATA 1972-1979 PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL TRADE 1978, GOVERNMENT OF ST. LUCIA. MEASURES QUOTED IN METRIC TONNES
^{3/} ST. LUCIA OVERSEAS TRADE, GOVERNMENT OF ST. LUCIA (1972, 1973, 1978, 1979 - DATA 2ND QUARTER)

Banana Growers' Associations were started in the Windward Islands since the 1930's, but were allowed to lapse during World War II and were revived in the post-war period with the boom in banana production. The Banana Growers' Association of St. Lucia, like those of the other

Windward Islands was granted a trade monopoly of local banana; it "established and operated buying stations; (and) negotiated purchasing agreements with Geest, a shipper with his own refrigerated ships as well as the sole buyer; and administered various schemes for wind insurance, spraying and fertiliser".^{134/}

Relationships between the banana growers, the local merchants and the transnational one differ from those entertained by the sugar producers. While the price of sugar was discussed by the British West Indian Sugar Association with the United Kingdom Government, now the West Indian Banana Association (WINBAN), through Geest, abides by the price quoted on the London market.^{135/} The situation bears indeed severe disadvantages, but at least it relies upon economic factors at the international level, and as far as the value of the produce is concerned. Moreover, local political parameters play a determinant role in relation to the remuneration of the factors of production.

The predominance of banana introduced another relevant particularity to St. Lucia's economic practices. In times of sugar plantations, since estate sugar canes produced up to 80% of all canes grown, the main issue of these practices revolved primarily around the fixation of wages and secondarily around the price of the agricultural product. In the case of banana production, the reverse is true, fixation of rural wages became secondary to bargaining the price of the product. The CDB Small Farming Study notes:

"The price received by the grower is arrived at only after Geest has deducted from the green market price per ton, 40% for freight charges, variable costs, fixed costs and a shrinkage and wastage charge, and after the Banana Association has made a further deduction of 35% for operating expenses and current debt. The Association also deducts charges for leaf-spot, spraying, diothene, fertiliser and weedicide purchased on credit".^{136/}

^{134/} Carleen O'Loughlin, Economic and Political Change in the Leeward and Windward Islands, London: University Press 1968, pp.109-110

^{135/} A businessman who has been involved in the importing and exporting of fruit, stated that the price quoted on the United Kingdom market determined prices paid by Geest for bananas. (Interview, November 1980)

^{136/} Small Farming Study, Caribbean Development Bank, op.cit., pp.42-43

Geest Industries of the United Kingdom, through the Banana Growers' Association, seems to have established a unique arrangement in the development of both peasant and plantation economies in St. Lucia. From the point of view of the transnational company, use is made of land, labour and management in return for a percentage of the sale of the produce. There is a great imbalance between farmers' inputs and returns, particularly because in the accounting system of peasant and plantation economies excessively reduced monetary values are allocated to labour and capital replacement. The relationship has therefore been described as a wage relationship, a minimal remuneration for land, labour and management being supplied. What seemed to have emerged is a reconstruction of a nationwide plantation system, without conspicuous salaried workers and consequently with no relevant industrial dispute. It is not surprising that:

"... in spite of the appeal of bananas as a source of quick profits the push did not come from below. Indeed, we are of the impression that many are reluctant participants in a system where the small scale nature of production camouflages what is essentially a wage relationship with Geest and the Banana Association".^{137/}

Bananas are still cultivated on traditional estates which hire more or less large numbers of agricultural workers. But it is being suggested that the bulk of the country's wealth is produced by a large number of small and medium farmers, and that this wealth is made available to the population through negotiations mainly between producers and merchants, and secondarily between workers and employers. Since the main issue is to assemble and articulate small and large entrepreneurs in order to sell en bloc their production, economic practices relevant for the class structure of the country can be traced by looking at the structure and organization of the St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association.

^{137/} Ibid., p.32

The Association was created in 1953 by five planters, a merchant and an accountant, as a private company limited by shares. This company was "organised primarily for mutual help and (was) not to be conducted for profit but to act as agents for registered growers". It intended to perform for them "services in collecting, marketing, manufacturing, shipping, exporting, selling or dealing in any way in bananas and its by-products".^{138/}

The Company, i.e. St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association Limited, had two types of members: its shareholders who alone could be its Directors, and registered growers, i.e. any owner or occupier of land with at least thirty banana trees. Originally with a number of at least fifteen members, a District Branch of the Association could be organised, which would elect a certain number of delegates according to its relative importance in the totality of the Association membership. The Branches would also nominate persons who may be eligible as Directors. At the Annual Ordinary Meeting, the delegates would elect Directors and renew the Board of Directors according to a given system of rotation. It is not clear how small growers were discriminated against, even though it does not seem that their interests have been catered for under the private enterprise formula chosen by the original Association.

The Company was dissolved in 1967. In August that year, the House of Assembly of St. Lucia issued the St. Lucia Corporation Act 1967, establishing the Association as a Statutory Corporation to which powers were conferred for the marketing of bananas.^{139/} The Act is a piece of Legislation whereby the State sets up the procedures for delivering in the market its major export crop. The duties of the Association, its membership, their stratification and organization in different functional units, as well as their access to the decision-making levels were stipulated.

According to the Act, the basic economic activity entrusted to the Association was to market and control all bananas produced; in second place, to promote the

^{138/} Memorandum and Articles of the Association of the St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association Limited, mimeo. para. 66, Profits, p.18

^{139/} Preamble of St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association Act 1967

well-being of the banana industry and in third place to undertake research and related activities.^{140/} To organise the activities of the Association as sole exporter of bananas, the country was divided into forty districts, each organised by a District Branch of the Association. The banana growers were stratified according to the total of bananas they handled and only those who produced and sold the previous calendar year not less than one thousand stems qualify for election as delegates to the Annual Assembly and hence as Director. This qualification did not appear in the organization of the original private Company, nor the disqualification arising from the inability to speak and read English. The need to add this clause in a country where a common language does exist reveals precisely the erosion of the economic cleavages and a re-arrangement of the class system.

Contrary to the Board of Directors which, in the case of the previous Company, comprised only private entrepreneurs, the public corporation established by the 1967 Act was placed under the direction of nine Directors of whom three were appointed by the Minister responsible for Agriculture. The six elected directors represented, in a manner to be described later on, the small, medium and large growers.

The Board of Directors, responsible for the management and control of the Association, had the faculty of appointing Committees and contracting officers for the exercise of the functions and obligations vested in it. It organised, in fact, a small bureaucracy which in the ultimate analysis acted as buying agent and absorbed most of the 35% on the market price of bananas deducted by the Association for what was aptly conceptualised as operating expenses, and not as profits.

Through the nominated Directors and other mechanisms, government has had a say in the global policy formulated by the merchants/large growers. The Ministry of Finance of St. Lucia enjoyed a supervisory

^{140/} Article 5, Duty of the Association

function on the finance of the Association, the accounts of which had to be periodically tabled at the House of Assembly, through its intermediary. For the purposes of the Act, a cess on the poundage of bananas was also levied.

The mechanisms established by the 1967 Act drove the planters into competition in the political arena, as did the preference system established for colonial sugar. Undoubtedly St. Lucia's merchants/planters had in the short term secured a monopolistic concession, but in the long run, what they could not achieve through the simple game of economic practices will be questioned on the same political ground where it originated. Their privileged position of intermediaries became sensitive to the changes in political variables which decide on the type and direction of government. Dissatisfaction and disenchantment of the growers and related population, channelled through the interplay of political forces, provoked the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry into the Banana Industry 1980, whose Interim Report came out to be very critical of the dealings of the Association. Moreover, recommendations contained in the report, if ever implemented, will strike a definite blow to the remnant of the plantocracy.

By 1967, the Association was composed of 17,000 members. The same source counted a membership of less than 6,400 growers in 1977/1978.^{141/} This remarkable decrease is not explained. The growers are divided into four categories.

QUALIFICATION OF GROWERS

Categories	Up to 1971 (Packaging by stems annual production)	1971 Onwards (Packaging by hands average weekly production)
1. Growers	less than 1,000 stems	less than 500 lbs.
2. Small growers	more than 1,000-less than 5,000	500 - 1,399 lbs.
3. Medium growers	more than 5,000-less than 25,000	1,400 - 11,999 lbs.
4. Large growers	more than 25,000	more than 12,000 lbs.

^{141/} Inquiry into the Banana Industry, Interim Report June 1980, Chap. III, pp. 11-12

The Commission of Enquiry noted that:

"The categorisation of growers had a two-fold purpose, (i) to limit the number of growers eligible to represent their branches as delegates and consequently as candidates for election as Directors and (ii) to allocate to categories of growers a specific number of Directorships. The category 'Grower' which represents the largest number of farmers suffered heavily with the introduction of this legislation. These 'Growers' were essentially cut off from the two major decision-making bodies".142/

During the Annual Conferences which comprised no "Growers", several resolutions were put forward aiming at modifying this situation and at deepening the democratic character of the Corporation. In 1976, a resolution was adopted lowering the qualifying limit to 375 pounds of average weekly production. The then Minister of Agriculture rejected the resolution in a letter of June 1977 quoted by the Commission of Inquiry:

"The minimum quantity of 500 pounds would represent approximately ten (10) tons per annum. The reason for stipulating the minimum was no doubt to ensure that persons eligible for election as Delegates should have a reasonable stake and involvement in the Industry".143/

The argument was flatly turned down by the 1980 Commission of Inquiry which was satisfied that several factors were underestimated, namely:

- "a) the collective contribution of these producers to the total production of the industry;
- b) the vast numbers of these growers and the social, economic and political problems which could be created if and when these growers' needs are not satisfactorily met;
- c) the dependence of many of these on bananas as a cash crop with regular revenue throughout the year". 144/

142/ Ibid., p.12

143/ Ibid., p.12

144/ Ibid., p.38

"Growers" and "Small Growers" - 99.4% of the membership - were responsible in recent years for approximately 65% of the production.

Production by Category of Grower 1977/1978^{145/}

Grower Category	Number of Growers		Percent of Total		Weight sold '000,000 lbs.		Percentage of Total Weight	
	1977	1978	1977	1978	1977	1978	1977	1978
Growers	5,525	5,663	90.69	89.56	29.5	N.A.	34	36
Small Growers	536	623	8.79	9.85	26.1	N.A.	30	32
Medium Growers	26	31	0.42	0.49	7.7	N.A.	9	9
Large Growers	5	6	0.10	0.10	23.4	N.A.	27	23
	<u>6,092</u>	<u>6,323</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>86.7</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The data of banana production by category of grower suggest that the institutionalization contained in the 1967 Act appears to be oriented towards granting protection to those who produce more, but not necessarily towards maximizing production as such. In effect, the principles enacted by the House of Assembly granted two representatives to the large growers, 0.10% of the totality of the membership. They were five persons in 1977, and six in 1978. Two representatives were allocated to the medium growers (0.50% of the membership i.e. 31 persons), and two to the small growers with slightly less than 10.0% of the total membership. Hence 90% of the Association was kept away from the decision-making bodies, this percentage numbering more than 5,500 persons. The Board of Directors dominated by "large" and "medium" growers - transformed by their accession to the directorship position into merchants - would have needed an exceptional degree of altruism to dedicate itself to the promotion of measures favouring the development of the excluded 90% of the membership.

^{145/} Ibid., P.14

One is satisfied that the Directorate of the Association, as established by the 1967 Act has not attempted to address itself to the expansion of the productive activities. This issue, being central for the General Assembly and the Growers in general, filtered during the nearly thirty years of existence of the Association, in resolutions presented under item "Any Other Business" of the Annual Conference Agenda. They referred to 1) fertilizer cost, assistance, supply and distribution; 2) communication between management and growers; 3) feeder roads, establishment, repairs and maintenance; 4) management cost and efficiency; 5) qualification for Delegate status; and 6) aerial spraying cost and value. The executive organ of the Association - The Board of Directors and Management - dealt with these resolutions in the most flippant way, as recorded by the Commission of Inquiry. In view of the adoption of these resolutions, one can still argue that the interests of the "Growers" were conveyed through the actions of the totality of the Delegates. Obstruction at the phase of implementation appeared a deliberate step taken by the Directors, expressing the interests of the merchant class, and not of the growers.

One of the most interesting features of the St. Lucia Banana Growers' Association was that the Directors did not pursue the internal affairs of the Corporation according to some kind of economic rationale. On the contrary, gross irregularities discovered by the Commission of Inquiry led to the conclusions that "The Association appears to run more as a club than as a business concern in many aspects".^{146/} Five specific irregularities were underlined:

- 1) A Director and former Chairman owed money to Management;
- 2) A rather large number of staff loans were made;
- 3) Unauthorized appointments and payments of salaries were carried out;
- 4) Reserve funds were misused;

^{146/} Ibid., p.41

- 5) Sale and purchase between General Manager and association took place.

Recommendations to redress this state of affairs and above all to assist in depositing the decision-making processes in the large majority of growers are still under consideration.^{147/} It can, nonetheless, be concluded that many changes have already been initiated and that the present structure of social negotiations varies substantially from what characterized it in the 1950's.

In fact, the substitution of sugar by banana as the main export crop of the country introduced profound modifications in its whole social organization. While cultivation of cane and its transformation into sugar involved relatively limited agricultural areas, located within the reach of the sugar mills, cultivation of banana spread all over the country and embraces most of the rural population in one single set of social and economic practices.

Expansion of banana cultivation seems to have taken place without any conflict arising with the production of sugar canes;^{148/} gradually most cultivable lands and important portions of marginal ones were encompassed in the banana venture. But, in the banana industry, the original asymmetric relations between planters, métayers and contributors has changed completely, in view of the fact that planters and estate owners were producing altogether less bananas than the aggregated output of the other growers, and were not enjoying a distinct bargaining position.

One must also observe that, on the one hand, with the disappearance of sugar mills and cane cultivation, modern science and technology applied within the society as a whole became severely diminished and one of the links of St. Lucia with worldwide trends was eliminated. On the other hand, local knowledge necessary to grow banana was given an opportunity to guide new practices in production and marketing and to be enriched in close contact with different agronomic progresses.

^{147/} It would seem, for instance, that the Board presently comprises 13 Directors, 7 government appointees and 6 elected ones. (Trinidad Guardian, February 6, 1981, p.5)

^{148/} In 1959, Geest bought the Sugar Manufacturers Ltd., which in turn was a merger of Cul de Sac Co. Ltd. and Roseau Co. Ltd. Sugar Manufacturers Limited was created in 1953.

No social and economic barriers could obstruct for a relevant period of time the diffusion and application of science and technology related to banana cultivation. At the same time, it must be said en passant that the basis for modifying the functional specialisation of languages in St. Lucia - English for public life and Patois for private life - and the cleavages deriving therefrom, was set up. Actually, the diffusion of information in a form readily understandable by the population is already being requested.^{149/}

Another consequence of the present predominance of banana over the previous cash crop consists in the destruction of traditional linkages between small scale farming and estate farming. The plantocracy lost its privileged economic position whereby it used to control the only avenue opened to the small producers - contributors and métayers - on the world market. Estate owners became a simple social stratum in a universe of farmers. Only planters who entered commercial ventures could maintain a distinct position vis à vis other producers, in fact as merchants and not actually as planters. In effect, both large and small growers of bananas had access to or conflictive interests with the same commercial concern: The Banana Growers' Association. It has been seen that propositions favouring the smallest of the growers filtered through the medium and large ones. In times of sugar cane predominance, it was not conceivable - and no evidence had been gathered in that sense - that proprietors of sugar cane estates could share the interests of métayers and contributors.

It must finally be added that in spite of the relevance of these trends the direction in which they will guide St. Lucia's evolution in the years to come, is not clear. Other sets of re-arrangements are being processed in the urban areas with the development of tourism and enclave manufactures. The convergence of these trends will be responsible for the ability of the country to respond to a third system of processes, namely international trade and politics.

^{149/} Land Reform Commission, Public Hearings (mimeo) April 1980, Part I, p.24

CHARACTERISTICS AND PRACTICES OF THE EMPLOYEES

Chapter III, Social Structure and Conditions of the famous Report of the West India Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Moyne, is initiated with the following statement:

"In this Chapter, our main concern will be the conditions of life of the non-European populations - the negroes, whose ancestors were brought to the West Indies in a condition of slavery and the East Indians, who came in circumstances which cannot be regarded as equivalent to the immigration of free settlers". 150/

A study on social structural changes addresses itself primarily to the original major component of a population and searches for the principles of its differentiation and ramification. The existence of sub-groupings is not denied, it is simply postulated that the frame for their appearance and subsequent evolution is given by the basic relations entertained by the majority sector. It may be said that minority groups are offsprings of a trunk or grafted shoots on a mother branch. They have actually no self-contained existence. Seen in this light, the present chapter is central to the understanding of present day St. Lucia.

Once more, the definition of the dominated class formulated at the end of the 1930's by the Moyne Commission offers a good point of departure to appreciate the components of class formation and development:

"The negroes had one function only - the provision of cheap labour on estates owned and managed by Europeans for the production of their valuable export crops."151/

It will be noted that what was valuable belonged to the Europeans, that labour was cheap and dedicated to the production of export crops, and that estates were owned and managed by Europeans. It has been seen that since the nineteenth century the negroes have managed to have access to the land and to introduce themselves to the production of export crops. They never succeeded in controlling the international trade of the island which remained monopolised by the Europeans and their descendants.

150/ The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit., Chapter III, para 1, p.29

151/ Ibid., Chap.III,para 2,p.29

It has also been seen that economic practices in St. Lucia during the twentieth century is evidence of how a series of changes in the international market made it impossible to deal with the export of sugar in strictly economic terms, i.e. without political patronage. Then, one observed that planters, métayers and independent peasants were gradually cornered into a rather similar position, as far as their entry on the local market of the main crop (bananas) was concerned. In any case, a split between the "Europeans" and legatees separating the planters from the merchants was detected, initiating thus some communality of interests with peasants and métayers. Social negotiations are ongoing, but yet the business of exporting remains beyond the reach of St. Lucians.

This series of social changes whereby conflicts between plantation and peasant (or pseudo-peasant) economies tend to fade out - due to reserve being made for the survival of ideological prejudices and conflicts - and to yield to clashes of interests between producers and merchants, cannot be appreciated without an appraisal of the evolution by landless persons working in the agricultural sector, and from which have emerged, and are still emerging, apparently, the peasants and the métayers. This chapter will address itself to this matter.

The negotiations in which the working class entered in the course of its evolution are geared towards the modification of working conditions on estates producing "valuable export crops". These practices were strongly affected by the everlasting threat of intervention from external repressive forces,^{152/} altering the course of social negotiations and deterring the advances of nation-building processes. In spite of their constant opposition to the local conditions of plantation development, they remained at the same time an integral part of it. Concretely, freeholders, squatters and métayers have, to a larger or lesser extent, detached themselves from the plantations, but by all means, freeholding, squatting and métayage are, under the conditions observed, inescapably related to plantation economy. So much so for the working class, the horizon of which is given by estate agriculture, in spite of attitudes, preferences and actual efforts in other directions.

This constant reference to estate organization conceals the complexity and ambiguity of different social changes already described.

^{152/} For instance, British warships circled St. Lucia during the strike of sugar workers in 1957. Additional police forces were also brought in from Barbados and Grenada. (Interview with ex-trade unionist, February 1980)

There is no need to distinguish two lines of evolution of the original class of negro workers, the separation of which has never materialized fully. For "the negroes (who) had one function only - the provision of cheap labour", the retreat or "escape" to the counter-plantation system by some of them does not introduce a breaking point with those who remained imprisoned in the dominant form or organization. This is self-evident for the métayage system, which in a way prolongs the span of life of provision grounds.

"Only the prevalence of 'food gardens' even among estate labourers mit gates the severity of conditions in rural areas".153/

The same can be said for any agricultural exploitation of an uneconomical size, be it of freehold or squatting tenure. The strive of the labourers towards independent agriculture is certainly not denied. It is being proposed that in the original conditions in which such efforts were carried out, there was no possibility for the emergence of a class of small farmers, independent from the landless workers.

Whenever gardening constituted a fall-back position - an economically marginal undertaking in case of redundancy of the labour force - such labour force had actually no monetary value, nor did its produce (they had a negative value). Food gardening was not an entrepreneurial activity in the sense of an economic endeavour aiming at increasing the original investment. Hence the economic necessity for the food gardener to either deal with a staple crop or to employ himself temporarily for wages.

The previous argument does not hold for provision grounds cultivated in times of prosperity of the plantation economy. The monetary value of food so produced or supplied by independent farmers derived from the social wealth originated within the plantation system and was fixed in one way or another with reference to the cost-benefit of food imports.

Now, if the output of the plantation system had to be rescued by the metropolitan country, it was therefore acknowledged that the whole

153/ The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit., Chapter III, para 11, p.33

system and related sub-systems were operating on and beyond the margin of economic rationality. It is not surprising in such a case that other arrangements of the productive factors imposed themselves sooner or later. The cultivation of bananas instead of sugar canes, allowed a step forward in social organization, by promoting the operation of food gardens together with the production of the staple crop, stimulating then a higher degree of participation of the labour force in the main industry.

Reference to a gradual and uneasy access to land resources implied the existence and reproduction of a permanent group of landless workers available for salaried work. This is the second line of evolution of the original class of negro workers, even though not much evolution can be devised in their condition. 154/

Wage rates reflected no increase over almost a century, i.e. approximately 1840 to 1930.

"At that time (1930), the ruling daily rates for agricultural and manual labourers were as follows: 1s to 1s 6d for men, 10d to 1s for women". 155/

The low level of wages is apparent when one compares prices of basic foodstuffs in the same year 1930 - "fresh meat at 8d per lb., fish at 5d., rice and flour at 2-1/2 ..." 156/ In addition to this situation, during the Great Depression, wages

154/ "To say that the West Indian labourer is placed at a disadvantage in bargaining with his employer, who in all probability owns the range in which he lives, and could not evict him at short notice, is to understate the case. Devoid of any effective protection by means of trade unionism, the labourer is helpless and, if he wished to live, must accept the rate of pay offered to him. In the light of this it is not surprising to find that earnings have remained extremely low, even in periods when planters were making good profits". Ibid., Chapter 10, para 11, p.193

155/ C. Jesse, Outlines of St. Lucia's History, op. cit., p.44

156/ C. Jesse, Ibid., p.44

were severely affected. Indicators of this are the strikes of 1935 and August 1937 when agricultural labourers on sugar plantations struck for higher wages. The force of the colonial government was quickly drawn upon on both occasions although the labourers made no show of violence.

In St. Lucia, in 1938, the wages of an unskilled sugar worker was thirty cents a day.^{157/} The 1946 Colonial Annual Reports of St. Lucia documented the official minimum wage for agricultural labourers as 2s (48c) and 1s 7d (38c) per day for the male and female labourers respectively. In 1949/50 wages on sugar estates were:

male - 98 cents per day
female - 68 cents per day^{158/}

The low wages plus bad working conditions triggered off strikes in 1951 and 1957.^{159/}

Wage rates for the agricultural worker in 1963 and 1964, though augmented by 100%, represented only a minimal increase over a thirteen or fourteen year period.

Men employed fulltime in agriculture - \$1.75 per day (1963)
- \$2.00 per day (1964)
Women employed fulltime in agriculture - \$1.25 per day (1963)
- \$1.40 per day (1964)^{160/}

One must emphasize that wages in the agricultural sector are the lowest in the St. Lucian economy.^{161/} Agricultural labourers experienced

^{157/} E. Williams, From Columbus to Castro, op.cit., p. 444

^{158/} Colonial Office Annual Report, St. Lucia 1949-1950, H.M.'s Stationery Office, London 1952.

^{159/} Strikes reported in Colonial Annual Reports 1951-1952 and 1957-1958, H.M.'s Stationery Office, London, 1955 and 1960 respectively.

^{160/} Colonial Office Annual Report, St. Lucia 1963-1964, H.M.'s Stationery Office, London 1967.

^{161/} Some comparison could be made with wages in other sectors of the economy. In the service sector, shop assistants received \$25.00 per month in 1964. (Colonial Office Annual Report, ibid.) Daily paid workers in the construction industry received higher wages than agricultural workers; masons and carpenters were the highest paid, receiving up to \$5.06 daily. Other skilled labour received up to \$3.62 daily. (Eric Carlson, Housing in St. Lucia, New York, United Nations 1967, mimeo.)

seasonal and occasional employment, and among them, female labourers have the lowest wages and quite probably suffer most from seasonal variation of employment.

But it is evident that the estates are still an important avenue for wage labour. In 1963 the sugar industry accounted for employment of 900 persons during the crop season. Up to 1967, it was recorded that the large estates occupied 53% of the farm acreage which makes them relatively dominant and they do employ manual labourers. Estimates from the St. Lucia Agricultural Statistics (1974) numbered paid agricultural workers at 5,402 (3,525 males and 1,877 females).

The possibility for the workers to have a sustained influence on their general working conditions depends basically on the type of relations which they entertain with their employers, in the process of producing the output of the enterprises, and secondarily on the degree of exploitation to which they are subjected. The Lord Moyne Commission has drawn attention to an often forgotten fact, which explains why the logical separation between salaried work, métayage and self-employment does not correspond to a distribution of Caribbean individuals into different and distinguishable social groups. This fact incidentally, also assists in understanding the perpetuation of the lack of concern evidenced originally by the enslaved for the compound to which they were attached, and for the daily activities they had to perform.

"The exact form of employment in agriculture varies from Colony to Colony, but everywhere task work is characteristic. Task work is the West Indian term for what is described in Great Britain as 'piece work' or 'payment by results'. By far the greater proportion of agricultural workers in the West Indies are paid for the amount work they actually perform and not according to the length of time they take to do it. Payment by the day and not by the task is the rare exception for field work in the West Indian agriculture and the rates, though varying greatly from one Colony to another, are extremely low.

(...) Thus, generally, when sums paid to labourers are quoted, these are usually earnings and not wages. This is an important consideration and it cannot too often be repeated that most West Indian labourers employed on agricultural work are paid for what they actually do. This system of task work has certain consequences. The rate of pay for particular tasks are not fixed by any

general agreement or collective bargaining, but are usually decided on the spot". 162/

More important than its impact on the homogenisation of pay, the prevalence of "task work" indicates a peculiar form of integration - one is tempted to say of marginalisation - in the enterprise. On the one hand, such relations with the labour force grant to the employers an extreme flexibility which allows rather quick adaptations to changes in schedules of production and in the arrangement of productive factors. On the other hand, in this form of absorption of labour force, the employees can never initiate a lifelong endeavour, what is commonly called a career, an occupation or a trade. Their practices remain a succession of unrelated and unarticulated jobs. Hence, earnings in agriculture can assist in making a living, but this form of insertion in the sector is not a way of living. The output of the rural worker is aggregated to an articulated set of material goods, but he himself is not trapped in a complex set of industrial relations. He does not form part of the enterprise. There is no possibility for him to increase his qualification, nor is there for the employer a self-propelled motive for promoting new dexterities or absorbing new technologies, because of pressures coming from within the enterprise.

"Task work" is functional to cyclical and seasonal variations in the demand for labour force. Seasonal intermittency is particularly relevant to the present discussion. The Moyne Commission underlines that:

"The actual wages paid may or may not be reasonably satisfactory for persons in full employment - we consider that in many cases they are not - but at the present time the question does not arise for a tragically large proportion of the labouring population: full employment and regular wages are not available for them." 163/

162/ The Moyne Commission Report, *op. cit.*, Chapter 10, paras 7-8, pp.192-193: May it be remembered that the quid pro quo between earnings and wages, parallels the one between profits and contractual payments.

163/ *Ibid.*, Chapter III, para 9, pp.32-33

In St. Lucia, around 1950, "most field work including the cutting, heading and loading of canes, is paid for on a piece work basis". ^{164/} There seem to have existed, cases in which the workers assembled a fair amount of money for a day, a week or a month's work. According to the Malone Commission this would have been quite common:

"Any idea that the willing and able-bodied canecutter or header of canes employed at Roseau or Cul de Sac is existing on a bread-line wage (...) is quite incorrect. No doubt the aged and infirm will have difficulty in living, and so will the children without poorer (sic) parental care, or a family with an exceptionally large number of young children, but these conditions are primarily social problems which exist everywhere". ^{165/}

The fundamental and most hidden characteristic of piece work is to be found in analysing this statement. This form of hiring labour force, as its name should render readily apparent, does not impinge on the time dimension. When a job is completed, the employer has no obligation to offer another one to the employee nor has this latter an obligation to supply his labour for the next job, in case he were offered it. The unpredictability of the demand for labour is usually conceived as an apparent unpredictability of the supply.

"Men and women, living and working together or apart, with or without vegetable gardens, or growing canes, small farmers (contributors) and employees as métayers, are so intermixed and there is so much freedom to work or not to work at particular times, with estate labour demands rising or falling, dovetailing or not with private production labour requirements..." ^{166/}

The idea that there is always something that an "able-bodied person" can do obscures the structural relations between employers and employees in St. Lucia's agriculture. Both systems of practices are closely interdeterminate, the "liberty" of the employer to demand or not to demand labour corresponding to the "liberty" of the employee to supply or not to supply. As far as the employer is concerned, it is taken for granted that he is free to contract Mr. X or Mr. Z. This is true in any labour market, but in classical market economies the employee is contracted

^{164/} The Malone Commission Report, op.cit. para 41, p. 12

^{165/} Ibid., para 40, p.11

^{166/} Ibid., para 42, p.12

for a given time, even though he may be paid for the tasks performed. For instance, a worker in the garment industry, paid according to the number of buttons he fixed, is hired for the day, the week or the month. In agricultural piece work one is hired and paid for the job. The practices of agricultural workers are not different from those of a plumber who visits a manufacturer to fix a leaking tap. The plumber cannot claim to be part of this enterprise, even if he had to come every day for a whole month.

This form of encounter of supply and demand for labour has two consequences on community life as far as levels of living and cultural development are concerned. First of all, intermittent earnings for piece work are not geared to cover the life span of the worker, and much less the whole issue of raising a family or of taking care of its "un-able-bodied" components. Piece work in agriculture has to be viewed as a sub-contract passed to an independent or self-employed producer who will forever remain independent and self-employed. His well-being and his survival is of no concern to his eventual employer. Actually, if the employer does not pay "wages" to his employee, he cannot be concerned with his level of living, since such level of living does not affect the productivity of the enterprise. A famished worker has a very low output during a day's work; if this worker is paid by the task and not by the day, his hunger belongs to humanitarian considerations, important as they may be, but it is not an economic fact to be dealt with by an entrepreneur. Hunger is a "social problem which exists everywhere"!

Secondly, the prevalence of piece work makes it impossible for employers and employees to evolve a joint outlook of their society and shared institutions for ruling the life of the island community. Each one of them may live in his separate cultural world for as long as this arrangement persists. Ordinarily, this dualism is perceived as a gap in a cultural continuum, which would preside to the fixation of low "wages" by both employers and administrative authorities.

"It has been found in other countries, like St. Lucia, where employers are separated from workers by wide cultural gaps, that there is a tendency to regard workers as little more than machines that have to eat. We are convinced that the Directorates of the sugar companies in St. Lucia (...) have been inclined to pay little, if any, regard to encouraging improved standards of living among the workers..."^{167/}

When the impossibility of making a living by working on the estates for "wages" is not solved by a complementary contract of metayage, or cannot be coupled with self-employment on freehold or squatted land, the worker is forced to have recourse to a set of marginal activities giving rise to what has been termed occupational multiplicity.^{168/} The original and fundamental lack of integration to the agricultural enterprise is strengthened by a process of circular causation which tends to make even more difficult economic bargaining and industrial relations geared towards a betterment of the working conditions.

"Task work" is open to both marginal or economically visible enterprises to any individual with some spare time. This allows the articulating of a complex, ambiguous and undifferentiated pool of agricultural manpower in which a factory worker, even a qualified one, may at the same time be a small farmer, a métayer and an employer, and at different points in time, a field worker.^{169/}

^{167/} Ibid., para 15, p.6

^{168/} L. Comitas, "Occupational Multiplicity in Rural Jamaica (1964)", Work and Family Life - West Indian Perspectives, L. Comitas and D. Lowenthal, Ed. Anchor Press/Doubleday 1973, pp.163-164

^{169/} "It is perhaps necessary to state that many factory workers have common interests with the field workers. Out of the crop season they are often called field workers and in common with the field workers are sometimes métayers and contributors. As contributors they stand to benefit by high prices and low wages. As sugar industry employees as well as contributors they have dual interests which may conflict - high wages vs low cane production costs!"
The Malone Commission Report, op.cit. para 78, p. 22

"About that time (1945) a few young men including myself decided to take an active part in the organization and as a result about four or five boys joined and began preaching trade unionism on the Market Steps." 170/

Piece work, by making it impossible for the workers to have a "reasonable stake and involvement in the industry", cuts them from the outer world and forces them to rely exclusively upon such knowledge and understanding of the economic system they can elaborate. In such circumstances, dependence vis à vis middle class "preachers" becomes unavoidable.

"Social reform in the West Indies has had to come from above, as the mass of the population have (sic) had insufficient experience of the conditions elsewhere to be in a position to formulate demands". 171/

In a few works, piece work as a form of labour contract, isolates the workers one from each other, alienates them in relation with the enterprise in which they make a living and maintains them apart from what occurs in the larger world. No ground is left for industrial relations between employers and employees. The community becomes the basic place for social cohesion and the conflicts emerging between the "people" and the employers have to be solved outside of the economic domain. 172/

The bridge between employers and employees in the sugar cane industry is personified by the overseer. The evidence gathered in St. Lucia does not elaborate his functions, but it is known that in certain countries, his role is of such importance that companies do not contract labour force. They hire overseers whom they pay for a major job; the overseas disaggregate this job in different tasks to be distributed among the eventual workers contracted by him.

170/ Ibid., para 18, p.7

This was an important aspect of trade union education and recruitment in St. Lucia as reiterated by a pioneer of the trade union movement (Interview in February 1980)

171/ The Moyne Commission Report, Chapter III, para 6, p.31

172/ The Malone Commission Report, op.cit., para 42, p.12

is in the logic of task work contraction and eventually the Malone Commission discovered a very similar phenomenon, apparently also at the level of the factory.

"It seems to the Commission that the attitude of the employers to their staff is best illustrated by their records of employees' earnings. There are no person (sic) records of earnings or time worked - the records are cost items debited under particular work heads. This is not to say that the employees were treated harshly or unkindly; indeed all our evidence is to the contrary - we received many tributes from employees as to the kindness of individuals on the managerial staff. But the employees were not treated as people with a real and vital stake in the sugar industry: they were "cost items", even if incalculable "cost items". In the opinion of the Commission such an attitude is most undesirable and even dangerous in the world to-day (1950's)." 173/

It will be readily apparent how consistent is this approach with the rules of the game in the sugar industry. The systematization made by the Chairman of the Sugar Association deserves to be reiterated: A quota of sugar and its price is fixed in the United Kingdom. The amount received per ton by the producers is disaggregated into four items, one being the wages. But, wrote the Chairman:

"(...) it is unreasonable and meaningless to compare wages paid for any particular operation. The only comparison which can stand the test of economic and practical sense is the amount of wages paid out to labour per ton of sugar produced". 174/

To consider the contribution of labour as a "cost item" is not at variance with a paternalistic setting. There is no room in the sugar industry of St. Lucia for personal relations, even though personnel ones may appear to be idyllic.

173/ Ibid., para 60, p.17

174/ Ibid., p.43

If there is no personal relationship, ipso facto, an industrial compound is devoid of any mechanism to negotiate, nor can any such mechanism evolve in this context. In the society at large, no institution can ever arbitrate economic discussions dealing with the divergence of interests between the parties involved. The Malone Commission noted "the absence in the sugar industry of adequate negotiating machinery in which the workers themselves can play a part". 175/

The aggregation of a multitude of "task works", even under a very wise management, creates hence a context where confrontation is unavoidable. Strike actions become hardly the only tolerable instrument of negotiation (one would think of sabotage).

"We consider that the evidence put before us shows that the employers failed in the field of labour management and that failure was partly responsible (not wholly) for bringing about a position where a strike was possible, perhaps inevitable". 176/

Now, if by the very nature of their participation in the industry, the workers do not constitute an articulated whole in their relations with their employers and if there is strictu sensu no such place as a work place, strike actions spring in the community itself, where the pool of labour force meets and reproduces itself. They become "community strikes". They are fostered not by 'genuine labour leaders', but by politicians and agitators. 177/

175/ Ibid., para 88, p. 25

176/ Ibid., para 58, p. 16

177/ "Mr. Devaux (Chairman of the St. Lucia Sugar Association Ltd.) passed a Memorandum which he said he had prepared expressing anxiety for the future of the Industry in that demands would (...) be made of it which would place it in an inferior position to similar industries in other parts of the Caribbean. That anxiety, he alleged, had been brought about by politicians and Trade Union leaders seeking to become popular or to maintain their popularity with the masses". Excerpt from the Memorandum of St. Lucia Workers' Co-operative Union, quoted in the Malone Commission Report, Ibid.

These last ones are most disruptive of established order, as the Association of Employers made it explicit in a Memorandum to the Commissioners, where one can read:

"It might be possible to explain such things (methods of paying) to the cutters if they were left to themselves, but it must be borne in mind that any apparent dissatisfaction is eagerly fanned by Agitators and persons with political ambitions which can only be achieved through the support of ignorant and uneducated people." 178/

It is important for the employers that the workers should be left to themselves, for as "task-workers" they cannot strike. Strikes, i.e. classical industrial disputes, are impossible not on the account of their ignorance, as heralded in all the Report, but because of the structure of social relations which they entertain on the plantations.

Where wages are actually not paid and where labour relations do not evolve as an articulated set of internal relations of an undertaking, there cannot be a trade union "in the universally recognised sense of the word". 179/ At the beginning the St. Lucia Workers' Co-operative Union tried arduously to stay clear from "politics" and to function within this "universally recognised sense of the word". 180/ But a well-deported union during the 1952 strike became the target of agitators: "quite a lot of irresponsible propaganda of absolutely no foundation, had been engineered to discredit Officers of the Union". They included among other charges that some of them had been paid by the President of the Employers' Association, that "the labour members of Legislative and Executive Councils were responsible for the presence of the Grenada Police in St. Lucia" and "that all Union Officers were in league with the white man and therefore against the workers". In the same Memorandum which reproduced these charges, the Union reaffirmed its commitment to abide by "normal" industrial action, and it referred to the organisers of the 1952 strike in the following terms:

178/ Ibid. p. 55

179/ The Jackson Commission Report, op.cit., para 13, p.5

180/ The Malone Commission Report, op.cit. para 18, p. 7

"The Union by negotiation, representation and discussion has endeavoured to combat these ugly forces and look forward to assistance from the Labour Welfare Fund. Here and there some changes have been made but these conditions remain in the main, and now offer a fertile ground for any unscrupulous and self-motivated person to exploit, as conditions become unbearable and immediate salvation is sought". 181/

Actually, none of the Unions existing at the time of the Inquiry could provide to the Commissioners any evidence that they organised not even a significant minority of workers in the industry (less than 10%). While employers and Trade Union Leaders seemed to agree that the 1952 stoppage was due to the action of political activists, the Commission had to raise certain questions which clearly led to the answer that what appeared to be industrial relations was a straightforward political bargaining in St. Lucia. 182/

The organization of a strike implies the total mobilization of the community: field and factory workers, contributors and métayers. In 1951 everything started with a Commission Merchant, Mr. Brown, of the village of Canaries, during his election campaign for a seat in the Legislative Council. Since the election would be held under Adult Suffrage,

"he was shrewd enough to realise that promises of better conditions for workers might very well attract votes. His electioneering points were, in his own words, 'to interest the people with an improvement in their lot in the area by trying to get better wages, and better conditions of living - improvement in social conditions and their manner of living'". 183/

181/ Ibid., p.61

182/ The employers endorsed the conclusion as far as the Unions are concerned: "We have considered whether the reason for recognition⁺ on these slender representational grounds might have been primarily a method of keeping their employees amenable to work discipline of a barter for protection in the political field - for Mr. Devaux (Chairman of the Sugar Association) takes the view that in St. Lucia, politics and trade unions are synonymous". Ibid., para 52, p.15

+ (of the St. Lucia Co-operative Union)

183/ Ibid., para 26, p.8

He organised the Roseau Peasants' and Workers' Labour Union and obviously won the election. The reaction of the employers to this "agitation" is very illustrative. They acknowledged that "politics" is the Achilles' heel of the industry. ^{184/}

"When Mr. Brown commenced his political-cum-trade union stumping in the Roseau valley in 1951 the Sugar Association members were worried, but they felt there was little they could do about it except to prepare to abandon the industry."¹⁸

Very few of the initiators of the trade union movement, at least as far as the sugar industry is concerned, were actually workers.^{186/} The necessity of shifting industrial relations towards political arenas seems to call for this type of leader with exposure to the overall societal fabric and capable of manipulating the dominant institutions. In 1952, a Wages Council to be appointed by the Governor was recommended by the Malone Commission ^{187/} with the following clarifications:

"Collective bargaining is by no means repudiated, but it is our view that adequate and fully representative machinery does not exist at present to carry this out".^{188/}

By 1957 two Union Officers - the President and the Treasurer - were government Ministers, and the General Secretary had announced his candidacy for the next General Elections.^{189/} In spite of the strong opposition of the Jackson Commission to this practice^{190/} it has

^{184/} "The sugar industry may soon become a pawn in the political game now being played." Ibid., p.44

^{185/} Ibid., para 55, p.16

^{186/} Recent interview (Feb. 1980) with an ex-trade union leader, substantiated this. He stated that the initiators were from 'upper and lower middle class brackets.'

^{187/} Recommendation 1: "That a Wages Council be established for the sugar industry of the Colony under the provisions of the Wages Council Ordinance 1952 (No.1 of 1952) of St. Lucia, for the purpose of regulating the amount of the remuneration and, as far as possible, the conditions of employment of workers in the industry." The Malone Commission Report, Ibid., para 101 p.27

^{188/} Ibid., para 105, p.27

^{189/} Jackson Commission Report, op.cit., paras 38-39, p.16

^{190/} "It has been urged on behalf of the union that there is a paucity of competent persons willing to undertake the work of the trade unions in St. Lucia unless it is dovetailed with politics, and for that reason alone the holders of posts in the Ministry of the Government and other active politicians should be permitted to fill important offices in the Union. To this view we cannot subscribe for (...) it is wholly incongruous with the efficient pursuit of the problems of the industry." Ibid., para 41, pp.16-17.

remained and characterizes the subsequent evolution of the country.

Political practices having their own set of rules, the possibility of cleavages between the Union's leaders and their 'constituency' seems greater than what can be observed in classical situations. In 1952 the St. Lucia Workers' Co-operative Union hesitated to negotiate categorically in the political arena, but soon the leaders had to abide by this structural arrangement. As the years go by, individual practices drove early leaders either into the camp of the employers or into the Civil Service, while some preserved their allegiance to the workers. The possibility of a strife between the trade union and the workers is underlined in the Jackson Commission Report:

"There is in St. Lucia a great need for a vigorous and well organized trade union, and until the workers are able to secure persons even arising from among them who can devote their time and energy to their common welfare, their hope to receive the best out of any set of circumstances will ever remain a hope". 191/

The separation between workers and employers grounded in the economic fabric of St..Lucian society gives the space for the emergence of a specific middle-class stratum - which could be called the technicians of politics - with their own motivation, strive and economic interests, notwithstanding their services to the working class. The 1952 and 1957 strikes of the sugar workers evidenced both this collusion and separation of interests.

The workers do not always follow their necessary but self-appointed leaders. In 1952, they repudiated "almost unanimously" the agreements reached between the Union and the employers. In 1957, the representatives of the Union challenged the agreement reached at the Wages Council; the Council recommended and the Governor went on to approve and issue the Wages Regulations (Sugar Industry Workers) Order, 1957. According to the Jackson Report, a small number of cane cutters stopped work on the morning of 25 March 1957: "later that day Uno officials arrived at Roseau and decided to support the strike". By noon all field operations had ceased in one valley. The next day the strike spread and field and factory operations stopped all over. "The local Police had to be strengthened by others from one other of the Windward Islands".192/

191/ Ibid., para 40, p. 16 (Our emphasis)

192/ The Jackson Commission Report, Ibid., para 27, p. 12

The 1957 situation evidences much more closeness between the Union leaders and the workers. Data referring to the 1952 strike are more detailed and they show the starting point for the progress achieved.

"Both the employers and the St. Lucia's Workers' Co-operative Union stressed the ignorance of the workers and the Commission carefully examined the evidence on this point. We are convinced that in fact the ignorance of the workers was one of the factors which led to the strike". 193/

In spite of arguing that the strike was due to the workers' ignorance and political agitation, Commissioners, employers and Trade Union leaders had to acknowledge that it was a spontaneous movement initiated by a few workers, 194/ that most workers had not the faintest idea of what a Trade Union was, 195/ that everything had the appearance of having been well planned in advance, that the demands to all three companies were identical.

The case is, therefore, made by the very "educated" actors in the 1952 and 1957 conflicts for the acknowledgement of a specific stand-point of the St. Lucia working class. Even though one does not and cannot expect to find this growing awareness embodied in a "manifesto", or a treaty of political economy, it would appear that the sugar cane workers were the first to have perceived and imposed through their "spontaneous" practices, and maybe as a result of their "ignorance", the need to introduce political voluntarism to redress a supposedly free market local economy.

The Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Banana Industry 1980, substantiates also the possibility of the Trade Unionists in their capacity of political leaders, to depart from the demands of the workers and to enact a set of practices consistent with their own interests as a middle class stratum. It has been reported that the workings of the Association were not to the economic advantage of the peasant farmer, to say the least. Whatever wrong-doings were happening in the St. Lucia

193/ The Malone Commission Report, op. cit., para 39, p.11

194/ Ibid., para 73, p.21; paras 81-82, p. 22

195/ Ibid., para 83, p.23

196/ Memorandum No 2 of the St. Lucia Sugar Association, Ibid., pp.46-47

Banana Growers' Association, Cabinet and the House of Representatives were in a position to be aware of it, in view of the overall supervisory function they fulfilled through the intermediaries of the Ministers of Finance and of Agriculture.

Analysing the "ambiguous relationship" between the Board of Directors of the Association and politics, the Commission of Inquiry quoted a memorandum where the structural character of the arrangement is recognised:

"One has no reason to believe that any member of Government or the opposition or persons in the top hierarchy of any of the political parties would deliberately do things to endanger the banana industry. In one's mind what has happened are instances where because of the potential influence of banana growers and their close associates on political outcomes in St. Lucia, politicians and potential ones have tried to make the best of an existing situation (to their advantage) while the other side has attempted to frustrate their efforts taking advantage of the situation - sometimes leaving the banana growers and the Association in the middle of the struggle but not intentionally".^{197/}

As has been noticed earlier, by then the class structure of the country had changed. According to Carleen O'Loughlin, "the political power of trade unions declined at the same time as the expansion of bananas".^{198/} The main sources of social conflict ceased to be located between employers and employees, and switched to conflicts between growers and merchants.

In conclusion, if one were to relate the analyses in this chapter to the previous history of labour utilisation in St. Lucia (and the Caribbean), it would appear that "task work" must be considered as an intermediate form of workers' participation in economic endeavours, located half way between enslaved

^{197/} Inquiry into the Banana Industry, Interim Report, op.cit., p.42

^{198/} In 1963, "the predominantly trade union-backed Labour Government was overthrown and elections led to the return of a party in which more business and professional men figured. The banana industry, with its emphasis on the self-employed peasant farmers has contributed much to the weakening of the political power of the trade unions in all the Windwards, not least in St. Lucia". Carleen O'Loughlin, Economic and Political Change in the Leeward and Windward Islands, op.cit., p.45

and salaried labour. From the point of view of the enterprise, an enslaved worker was conceived as a talking implement (instrumentum vocale), his very person being an integral part of the economic activity. The "task worker" was viewed from the same perspective as an eating implement (machine that has to eat)^{199/}, but his nutrition needs were marginal to the economics of the enterprise, based on an accounting of cost items. The price of the labour force in a setting where salaried relationships are predominant is bargained separately from both the investment of capital (the instruments) and the costs of the global operation. With respect to this last item, the price of labour impinges upon the cost of production, and not inversely. Workers, as a group, are partners with whom negotiations are carried out and implemented under the daily supervision of representatives of both employers and employees.

In one extreme, therefore, the whole life span of the enslaved worker belonged to his employer and he was supposed to perform whatever tasks were required of him, his well-being depending entirely on the needs of such employer. In the other extreme, the employer acquired a specific portion of the time the worker was prepared to sell, in order to have him perform given activities. The buying and selling of labour time is only feasible if the ability of the worker to perform such activities is ensured, and among other things, if he is relatively well nourished and healthy. Mutual interests of workers and employers in the delivery and in the ability to deliver labour services are processed through a complex set of societal relations which encompass the whole life span of workers and related individuals, from their education and health to their leisure activities.

Now in a situation where task work is the predominant form of labour contract, the employer is concerned only with remunerating the required piece or pieces of work. The worker, as a person, is alien to the makings

^{199/} The Malone Report, *op.cit.*, para. 15, p.6

of the enterprise and he can be subject to all forms of discrimination and over-exploitation without endangering the normal deployment of economic activities, so organised. The employee then has to find outside of the enterprise what may be necessary to complement his subsistence during the useful period of his life as a worker; before and after that period, only community and family institutions - as opposed to societal ones - are accountable for the well-being of the population.

The seemingly private life of an enslaved worker was consequently immersed in his employer's decision-making system. In the case of a "task worker", his private life is so extended that it embraces the organisation of all economic activities he carried out as a self-employed worker. For the salaried worker, the matter is largely dealt with at the level of society at large, and only a restricted set of activities are carried out in the fame of his privacy. So, each form of labour utilisation implies a given type of social organisation, and in spite of apparent similarities, the makings of each society organised around these basic relations are totally different. For instance, institutions ensuring law and order during enslavement times, task-work times, salaried work times are qualitatively distinct. The institution of family in the situation of the enslaved hardly deserves its name; whereas that of the task or salaried worker has different features, varying from extended to nuclear types of family. Similarly, the police forces or the courts of law in any one of these contexts operate according to peculiar parameters, and trade unions for task or salaried workers can only share the same appellation, but not their modus operandi nor their functions.

The specific characteristic of contemporary societies, based on salaried relationships is that the arrangement of capital, management and labour is grounded on the access, of all human resources involved, to the same political, ideological and economic mechanisms of social intercourse. The formal and legal equality between social actors, heralded since emancipation, is superseded by the conditions for concrete social parity of human conditions.

It would appear, if one dares to make a prognosis, that further changes are to be expected in not too distant future. St. Lucia remains a small island. One of its alternatives of development consists in correcting the land

tenure system and strengthening the class of farmers. The everlasting conflict between landless workers and employers is bound to regain its prominence since there will not be land for everybody. But this conflict will be qualitatively different. The colonial and imposed cleavages between landowners and management on the one side, and task workers on the other, should have lost their ethnic, cultural and ideological overtones, employers and employees being able to discuss around a table as peers can do. For instance, a small farmer will be arguing about wages with the son of another small farmer who happens to be unemployed. Hence the need for the trade unions to carry social negotiations, related to economic conditions of living and of producing, to the political arena would be greatly diminished, and mediated by other specialised institutions. It is expected that the trade unions will have a more limited range of issues to deal with, and that only then will they be able to leave "political agitation" to the political parties. Social cohesion will be a fact and the process of nation-building will advance, for those who are presently called ignorant, as opposed to well educated people, will merge in a single whole sharing the same national culture. In other words, once concrete social equality between employers and employees become entrenched in the ways and customs of the population, the basal relation between workers and employers may recover its role in social dynamics.

RELEVANT SOCIAL DEFINITIONS

The analysis of the social structure of the island was initiated with the definition of the fundamental elements of the West Indian societies, proposed by the Moyne Commission. If this definition is correct, and if the changes that have been inferred expressed what has actually occurred, such modifications must be embodied in the accounts made by the population of its way of living. The search for relevant social definitions is worthwhile since the ideas that the St. Lucians entertain of themselves and their peers give the prime elements to devise what society is in the making, assuming that the main determinants of regional and international relations remain favourable to the direction chosen by the people, or amenable to some fruitful manipulation by their representatives.

Social perceptions that the St. Lucians have formulated with respect to themselves in their strive for making a living, must be distinguished from ideas expressed by individuals, however profound and deeply-rooted they may be. Not everything thought by an individual can be expressed in a given context of social pressure. What people may say publicly is already censored by the listeners and reflect the existing interplay of social forces. Self-definitions of interest here are those endowed with a certain degree of operationality, that is to say, capable of affecting on-going social negotiations.

Therefore, what will be presented as relevant changes in social definitions may well be a simple modification in the recording of such points of view. For instance, contrary to the Malone Commission, convened by a colonial government, the Beckford Commission established by a sovereign state found itself in a better position to register what St. Lucians genuinely think of themselves. This correlation between a peculiar arrangement of political forces and social efficient self-definitions, sometimes referred to as ideological structure, gives the frame for the reciprocal determination of social ideas and social practices. Obviously, one cannot embrace the universe of significant social perceptions. Relevant self-definitions are registered in relation to the peculiar

conflicts under observation, which indicate views that have surfaced and are being confronted.

Rural wage earners, as the successors of the enslaved, can safely be qualified as a continuation of the original dominated class of the St. Lucian society. The conclusion of the previous chapter suggests that the insertion in the society of the enslaved and social groups which evolved from their practices, presents some specificities which are not immediately accounted for in current sociological theories. If enslaved and derived social groups were totally integrated in the plantation societies, their performance would have been central to a global model of development conceived as a by-product of progresses in and of these types of societies. History has shown that the ferment of social changes in the Caribbean is precisely to be found among those who attempted with varied degrees of success to extricate themselves from the relationships based on the plantation as a key economic institution. Social awareness of this fact is a progress and it accompanies the viability of translating into concrete social reality the positive image of themselves that the people of St. Lucia have built up.

Generalisation of St. Lucia and St. Lucians during the 1950's is made against the background of the vital importance of sugar for the island economy. Hence,

"It is principally by the mutual trust that must exist between employers and workers that the hope of reaching fruitful results will be realised".200/

Such is the frame of reference of the Malone Commission and of those who gave evidence to the Commissioners. They were observing a situation where small farmers (contributors and métayers) operate in such intimate relations with rural wage earners, that any distinction between these strata becomes purely an analytical matter. Field workers, factory workers, métayers and contributors in their dealings with the sugar companies are seen either as wage earners or as disguised and potential wage earners.

200/ Opening remarks of the Chairman, The Malone Commission Report, op.cit., p.72

Self-employment is hinted, from this perspective, as some kind of antechamber to current employment. Salaried work, which normally evidenced higher and more secure returns, is correlatively considered as a "modern" form of labour utilisation. This perception, based on an erroneous assessment of "task work", is further reinforced by the fact that in most countries history seems to have unfolded itself in such a logical sequence, and at least, since the French Revolution, salaried workers - the proletariat - are viewed as the bearers par excellence of social changes.

The Inquiry into the Banana Industry, thirty years later, acknowledged the central position of the "growers"; the enhanced visibility of the farmers having eclipsed the "wage" earners. This is particularly clear in the evidence gathered at the same date by the Beckford Land Reform Commission which operates with a concept of development which considers plantation-like activities as one among many other alternatives.

New St. Lucian self-definitions do not actually challenge the importance of the wage earners. The point is just not acknowledged, in view of the immediate correspondence of these definitions to the specificity of the island's social development. Far from being a component of marginal and transient occupation, self-employment, particularly in agriculture - and in spite of low productivities which must be accounted for through other parameters - is seen as a definite progress vis à vis what seems to be salaried employment.

Salaried employment as practiced in rural St. Lucia has a transitory nature, even when it lasts for years:

"My problem is that, you see, for the past twelve years I have worked for Dennery Factory and I have heard that this Commission is assisting people in getting land to work. I would be very happy if I could get a piece of land to work".201

In contrast, farming is a trade, a socially acknowledged position, as different to a socially imposed position. This transition from social

201/ Land Reform Commission Report, Public Hearings April 1980, Part I, mimeo, p.247

imposition to social acknowledgement is the clue of the relevance of farming in the local cosmovision and of the sociological importance attributed to this occupation. Farmers, qua farmers, constitute the basic frame of reference, while actual salaried workers - task workers - are viewed in the light of the services they offer to farming.

The two Commissions of Inquiry on the Banana Industry and Land Reform have captioned probably a most significant ideological structural change. Social evolution, as perceived today, becomes the unfolding of an original group of farmers. St. Lucian society is not presented as a world of former slaves, but as a creation of fighting enslaved, i.e. enslaved striving for independent forms of living. The basic trunk of this society is that "solidest and most enterprising section of the negro population", in the words of the Moyne Commission: the settlers, called today's farmers, yesterday runaways, maroons or brigands.

The other social groupings - and most particularly the different occupational strata - appear whenever their local roots are alluded to, as a differentiation of the original set of actual or potential farmers, the frailty of these alternatives to farming underlying the unquestionable vitality of the family property system. The reference to farming should not be obscured by the ambiguity of daily practices and by the efforts to transcend the contextual limitations built into this occupation during St. Lucia's evolution.

Perception of farming as a social point of departure surfaces where people refer to both intra and intergenerational mobility. One witness expressed:

"I am seventy-eight years, I have three trades which include farming, building, carpentry and masonry and I'm putting myself down as a mason".^{202/}

When one secures access to some amount of capital, land is bought as an asset for future eventuality. Several cases of returning migrants, generally middle-aged, attempting to establish themselves as farmers, have been quoted during the Public

^{202/} Land Reform Commission, Public Hearings April 1980, Part II, p.408

Hearings of the Land Reform Commission.

The passage from one generation to another entails a stratified diversification and specialization of farmers' descents. Associated with small scale farming, one finds in the arguments presented to the Beckford Commission, occupations such as: businessman/retailer, clerk, aide-nutritionist, school teacher, sanitary inspector, trucker, mechanic and manual trades. Within a family of former planters (today large growers) one has lawyers, physicians, merchants, teachers and civil servants of higher grades. Most of these descendants of farmers or planters do not relinquish their ties to the land, and most certainly not land ownership.

The gradual upcoming of farmers as a key element in St. Lucian society and their increased visibility do not abrogate the perception of the conflicts of interests opposing planters and workers, which occupied the centre of social definitions during the predominance of sugar cane cultivation. These conflicts, with all their implications, are relegated to a secondary position. But something has changed - the character "planter" has left the scenario.

In 1945, the Moyne Commission Report referred to original "proprietors and managers (of estates) usually Europeans". The Malone Report in 1952 registered "estate owners", "companies", "employers", "Sugar Association". In the list of witnesses interviewed by this Commission, nobody identified himself as a planter, and in the Report the concept is not used. The word "planter" is found in the constitutive documents of the Banana Growers' Association Limited (1953), but the term "large grower" is normally preferred. The same is true for the Interim Report of the Commission in 1980. Terms like "company" and "estates" are favoured.

While the image of the individual planter is fading out, its underlying ethnic and racial characteristic remains quite vivid. In 1952, the Memorandum from the St. Lucia Workers' Co-operative Union to the Malone Commission which has been referred to, informed that the officers of the Union had been accused of being "in league with the white man, and

therefore against the workers".^{203/} This point which was reported by the Malone Commission is reproduced in 1980 as a statement during the Public Hearings of the Land Reform Commission: the white man is accused of wrong doing.^{204/}

Within the urban context, the image of the planter ^{205/} is no longer relevant. The stratum of ex-planters has gradually shifted to the urban environment during the course of this century. The group, with added membership, has introduced itself into other activities and has been the main mover behind the diversification and modernization of the economy, especially in the post-war period. Economic and social changes within the society - the occurrence of United States Air Force bases during the war, and after, as well as the increased participation of St. Lucians in the banana industry and the expansion of employment in the Civil Service - have led to an increased circulation of money and have allowed this stratum to re-allocate itself. Apart from commerce, this group has contributed to the expansion of the urban sector activities such as manufacturing, tourism and other services.

The present, more complex, group of merchant/businessman/landowner - the core membership of which consists of St. Lucians of varied racial characteristics - now fulfill a number of roles, all of which perpetuate the idea that they still occupy a dominant position. As suppliers of goods and services, this small group is significant to the population. Through its control of commerce, it exercises an enormous influence, and in a society which is heavily dependent on trade, it remains an economic élite. The involvement in agricultural production is maintained through the ownership of estates, which have been inherited, and/or acquired within recent decades. Their agricultural connections have been consolidated in the

^{203/} The Malone Commission Report, op.cit., p.60

^{204/} The Land Reform Commission, Public Hearings op.cit., Part I, pp.265, 285 and 296; Part II, p.385

^{205/} Families which owned sugar estates up to 1951, had been most prominent in commerce in St. Lucia over numerous decades. Assessment of social developments related to this group is made mainly on the basis of a number of interviews completed in November 1980.

establishment of urban-based agricultural associations - banana, cocoa and coconut - which they have initiated and in which they still participate on the directorates. So that, within the confines of the national boundaries, this group maintains much control over the activities of the rural sector.

Two organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and the Employers' Federation, exist to represent the interests of this sector. The Chamber of Commerce oversees the commercial activities of the group. The more recent Employers' Federation was formed in 1962 as employers saw the need for expert assistance in the area of industrial relations in the face of increasing activity of the trade union movement within the urban sector. The existence of the Federation shows an evolution of the practices of employers vis à vis their employees. Although direct employer/trade union relations continue to exist, the Employers' Federation has increasingly become the representatives of the employers.

The decade of the sixties brought an influx of foreign entrants to the group, some readily absorbed, others not. The St. Lucia businessmen have affiliated themselves to the foreign investors - North American and European - who have pursued the developments of the hotel and manufacturing industries. This affiliation has been consolidated by the acquisition of shares in the relevant concerns. On a much smaller scale, businessmen from other West Indian islands, especially Trinidad and Barbados also participate in the commercial sector. Syrio-Lebanese have also filtered into the sector and have gradually become a more visible group in terms of their success, but they are considered as outsiders by St. Lucian merchants and other sectors of the population, and seem to lack other important characteristics of the country's élite.

In relation to the employers one finds reference to their racial identity; but with respect to the working class, except in the Moyne Commission Report, one does not speak of race, but of culture. Lord Moyne, having made allowance for the primitive state in which the negroes were living in Africa, acknowledged the existence of their distinct

culture.^{206/} The Malone Commission Report took no note of the racial issue yet it observed a "wide cultural" gap separating two segments of the population, the larger one of which is repeatedly referred to as "ignorant", in contrast to a minority of so-called "educated people".

In 1967, the Banana Growers' Association Act banned entry to the decision-making levels to those - "unless incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause" - who are unable to speak and read English. In 1980, the Interim Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Banana Industry as well as the Public Hearings of the Land Reform Commission do not accord any serious handicap of the sort. Mention is made of illiteracy and of the degree of qualification of the people. It is suggested that they could themselves do the policing of the use of their own natural resources, and the need to broadcast educational programmes in their own language is also acknowledged. Contrary to an image of their appalling ignorance, the Land Reform Commission felt obliged to provide itself with interpreters in order to understand depositions which were made in Patois. Nonetheless, in none of the documents consulted is the existence of a cultural continuum challenged except by small groups of Rastafarians who actually perceived themselves as different even though they did not perceive the whole society as a culturally dual entity.

Another area of important changes in self-definitions is the self image of the workers - urban as well as agricultural - in their relations with their employers. In the 1952 conflicts the Trade Union leader who challenged existing industrial relations, entertained by the sugar cane workers, wrote under "the Terms of Agreement in Dispute":

"That employing personnel of Roseau Company Limited at Roseau Valley treat with (sic) employees in a proper and corteous manner as practiced normally between master and servants".^{207/}

This idea is consistent with the vision of the "well educated people", of the Trade Union leaders and of the 1952 Commission. The following quotation

^{206/} The Moyne Commission Report, op.cit., Chapter III, para. 2, p.29

^{207/} The Malone Commission Report, op.cit., p.65

from a witness at the 1980 Public Hearings held by the Beckford Commission indicated the distance travelled since 1950 when the people were perceived as appallingly ignorant and the workers "as a little more than machines that have to eat".

"You see Sir, the history of the farmers (sic) before was that he did the rough work but he did not eat the nice plate of food, his meal was very low, from his income he cannot afford it, but I think today the farmer is entitled to a well-balanced meal like the lawyer or like the doctor..."208/

At the same 1950 period the Commission of Inquiry noted the helplessness of the workers, their dissatisfaction "being evidenced in several instances by an air of resignation to their lot rather than by an expression of discontent". It went on to mention that

"The attitude of the employers, while not hostile, was disinterested and unsympathetic, and even the attitude of the Workers' Co-operative Union was not constructive".209/

In 1980, the participation of all strata of the population in the proceedings of the Land Reform Commission evidenced anything but resignation and disinterest.

The image of the urban workers has also evolved significantly. The attraction of urban economic activities at various times have continually caused internal migration of the rural population. In the first half of this century, economic activities have been generated by the coaling trade, and construction activity as a result of the military bases and the two fires of Castries, 1927 and 1948. In the latter half of the century, urban employment was heavily weighted in favour of the service sector as well as the construction activity of the hotel industry. Urban workers now participate in more diversified economic activity.

208/ Land Reform Commission, Public Hearings June 1980, mimeo p.91

209/ The Malone Commission Report, op.cit., para. 71, pp.20-21

Urban workers are now engaged by varied employers; local entrepreneurs, foreign investors or their managers, and government. Between 1960 and 1970 employment in the service sector - manual and white collar - had increased tremendously from 26% to 41% of the labour force.^{210/}

The Civil Service, in particular, has been a main avenue for the expansion of the urban wage earning sector and the urban middle class. The constitutional changes between 1951 and 1979 have meant a multiplication of administrative duties controlled by St. Lucians. As a result there has been increasing recruitment of actual wage and salaried workers to perform the increased tasks. In 1974, the estimate of the number of civil servants was 3,000.^{211/} The numbers have expanded since then. The Civil Service remains the main avenue of upward mobility for those who have attained a certain level of educational achievement within the society. Other avenues have been the teaching service and the growing banking and tourism sectors.

The image of the Civil Servant at managerial levels has evolved over the decades, from one of civil servant for the collective Windward Islands to a civil servant serving only the interests of St. Lucians. As the former, they were subject to discrimination in recruitment and promotion prospects and to inter-island transfers according to the whims of the colonial authorities. They were debarred from holding top posts within St. Lucia, as these appointments were outside of their control. This situation has been redressed only slowly with effective constitutional changes, more specifically, within the last two decades, with the control of internal affairs. Professional civil servants now exist in managerial positions within the Civil Service, and constitute a major group in the upper levels of the urban middle class strata in St. Lucia, along with other professionals.

The wage and salaried workers within the urban sector have gradually become unionised,^{212/} especially within the "industrial" concerns. Trade unions have

^{210/} Census data 1960 and 1970

^{211/} 1974-1978 Five Year Development Plan, Government of St. Lucia.

^{212/} A Civil Service Association has also existed for the past three decades.

become more relevant to their social and economic existence as they continually demand concessions on the part of their employers.

Finally, it must be pointed out that there is no evidence of a self-reliant position of any specific social group. Even in respect to the managers of the transnational corporations in the service or productive sectors, they rely heavily on government to facilitate their initial entry as a result of the latter's "open-door" policy to foreign investments. Investors have been accommodated by legal and infrastructural developments abating the risks of entrepreneurial activities and ensuring attractive rates of return. The group of local businessmen have also been reliant on government whose policies, being geared towards economic growth, have created enticing concessions and other opportunities for them.

The possibility of solving main problems affecting the island community is envisioned only through "government" action. It is recognised that "government" exercises a fair amount of control upon the available resources and is in a position to distribute them with relative autonomy.^{213/} There does not seem to exist a mechanism to by-pass this determining influence, and "politics", i.e. the parameters of political structure, remain the lieu where all forms of dominance, including economic privileges, seem to emerge. The mandate given to government is then very broad. A witness at the Beckford Commission of Inquiry puts it rather bluntly:

"So I myself don't have money to fight with that big company so I want Government to help me with that". ^{214/}

^{213/} Cf. Public Hearings Part II, p. 490

^{214/} Ibid., Part I, p. 274

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