

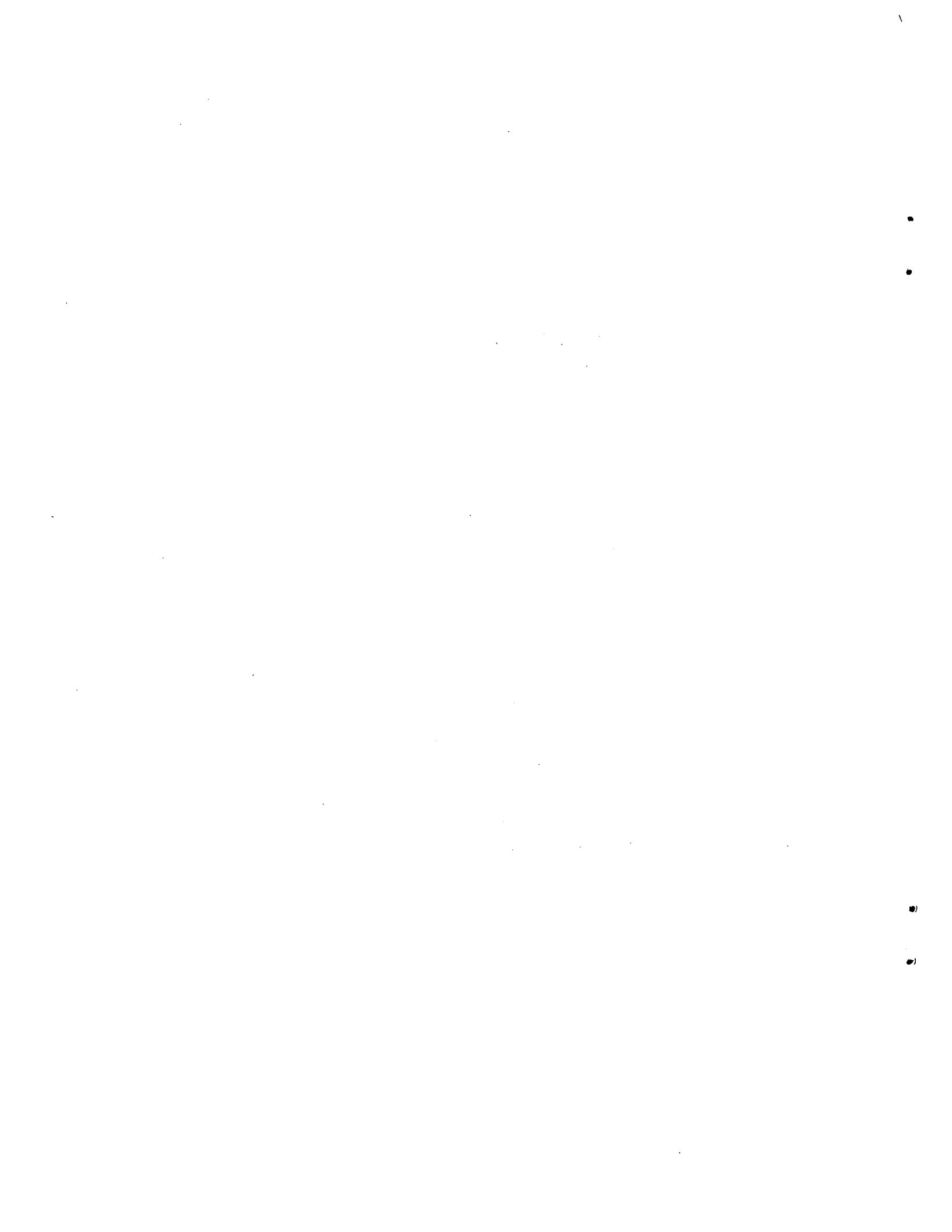
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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA  
Office for the Caribbean



SELECTED INFORMATION ON THE BAHAMAS



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The Commonwealth of the Bahamas comprise an archipelago of about three thousand islands, fourteen of which contain the bulk of the population. The Bahamas cover an area of 5,353 square miles.

### 1. GEOGRAPHY

Location: The islands stretch out between latitudes 20°-27° North and longitude 72°-79° West.

Size: Approximately 5,353 square miles or 13,864 km<sup>2</sup>.

Topography: Composed of calcareous sand originally derived from marine shells. Relief is generally low and flat, the highest point about 206 feet above sea level.

Climate: Sub-tropical - warm waters from the gulf stream keep water temperature high, while sea breezes moderate the summer temperature. Mean temperature is 76°F., humidity about 79% and average rainfall 56 inches per annum.

### 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Christopher Columbus sighted the island now known as San Salvador or Watlings Island on 12 October 1492. The Spaniards did not colonise the island but took the inhabitants to work on the mines in Cuba and Hispaniola. The islands served for a long time as a base for pirates but they were regarded as British Domain in the 16th century. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 Great Britain finally secured the islands in exchange for East Florida. The islands remained a British colony until 1973. In 1965, Her Majesty, the Queen in Council, made the Governor of the Bahamas the Governor of Turks and Caicos Islands too.

### 3. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL

Internal Self-Government was attained by the Bahamas on 7 January 1967 and it became independent on 8 July 1973. As a British colony, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas had enjoyed a form of representative Government since the middle of the 17th century when its affairs were managed by a Governor, a Council and an elected senate.

#### The Parliament

The Parliament comprises two houses - the Senate and the House of Assembly. The Senate consists of 16 members appointed by the Governor - 9 on the advice of the Prime Minister, 4 on the advice of the Leader of Opposition and 3 after consultation with the Prime Minister or such other leaders as the Governor deems fit. The House of Assembly comprises 38 members elected for a five-year term on universal adult suffrage (21 years and above).

Among the political parties in the Bahamas are:

1. PLP (Progressive Liberal Party)
2. UBP (United Bahamas Party)
3. LP (Labour Party)
4. FNM (Free National Movement)

#### The Executive

The Governor is appointed by Her Majesty, the Queen, and he acts in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister who is expected to carry with him the general authority of the Cabinet in all matters not specially reserved. The Cabinet is collectively responsible to the Parliament.

#### The Cabinet - Portfolios

1. Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs and Internal Security -  
(Hon. Lynden O. Pindling)

2. Home Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister
3. Education and Culture
4. Tourism and Aviation
5. Finance
6. Health
7. Development
8. Labour and Welfare
9. Agriculture
10. Transport
11. Works
12. Local Government

The Attorney General is appointed by and is subject to the direction and control of the Governor General.

#### Local Government

The delegation of administrative authority is made through District Commissioners who directly represent the Governor of the territory on various family islands. They also exercise limited legal jurisdiction.

#### 4. NATURAL RESOURCES

Mineral resources: Extensive deposits of argonite have been located but extraction has not yet begun.

Marine resource: Relatively rich in marine life - many varieties of fish abound in surrounding waters. Solar radiation provides salt - a major export of Bahamas.

Land: Total land area is 2.8 million acres. 840,000 acres are arable of which approximately 40,000 acres are under agricultural cultivation - mostly vegetable, bananas and fruits.

Forestry: 700,000 acres consist of pine forest and 100,000 acres of sub-tropical broad leaf trees.

5. DEMOGRAPHY

Population: Census 1970 - 168,812

Population density at census - 32 per square mile or 12 per km<sup>2</sup>

Crude birth rate - 23.8 (1973)

Crude death rate - 5.7 (1973)

Labour force - 89,356<sup>1/</sup> (Census)

Employment - 69,791<sup>2/</sup> employed at Census 1970

6. FISCAL AND MONETARY

Currency: Bahamian dollar (B\$)

The Bahamas Monetary Authority is responsible for the issue and control of local currency.

Exchange rate: B\$1.00 = US\$1.00

B\$2.40 = £1

Government expenditure - B\$104.9 million in 1972

Government revenue - B\$103.5 million in 1972

7. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

GNP - B\$380 million in 1972. (market price)

Per capita GNP - B\$2240 in 1972.

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<sup>1/</sup> Persons between the ages of 15-64 years.

<sup>2/</sup> Economically active population

Tourism: Tourism is the major economic activity, and the industry has expanded considerably in recent years.

Selected Statistical Indicators on Tourism<sup>3/</sup>

	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>
No. of stop-over visitors	818,994	1,036,210
Average length of stay	5.8 days	6.2 days
Cruise-ship visitors	253,219	407,191
No. of Hotel rooms	8,268	11,227
Total visitors' expenditure	B\$180.4 mill.	B\$285.7 mill.

Principal Products:

- (i) Marine products mainly salt, crustaceans and molluscs and scale fish.
- (ii) Agriculture - vegetables and sugar-cane. The scarcity of cultivable land (scattered) poor soil allied with lack of irrigation facilities limit agricultural possibilities in the Bahamas.
- (iii) Forestry - mainly Bahama Pine but also some broadleaf timber.
- (iv) Industrial products - refined petroleum products, chemicals, cement, rum and sugar.

8. EXTERNAL TRADE

Total imports: B\$484.9 million (1972)  
 Total exports: B\$343.4 million (1972)  
 Trade deficit: B\$141.5 million (1972)

Major suppliers of imports during 1972:

USA	=	28.4%
Nigeria	=	15.9% <sup>4/</sup>
UK	=	12.9%
Venezuela	=	3.7% <sup>4/</sup>
Libya	=	16.2% <sup>4/</sup>
Iran	=	9.3% <sup>4/</sup>

<sup>3/</sup> Source: Statistical Abstract, 1972/73, Department of Statistics, Cabinet Office, Nassau, Bahamas.

<sup>4/</sup> Imports are mostly crude petroleum for refining.

Major destinations of exports during 1972:

USA	=	81.5%
Puerto Rico	=	6.8%
Canada	=	4.4%
UK	=	2.5%

Value of Principal Exports - (B\$'000)

	<u>1969</u>	<u>1972</u>
Petroleum products	13.0	245,703.0
(Residual fuel oils)	( 2.7)	(173,262.3)
Hormones	-	28,247.1
Cement	1,727.7	15,412.2
Rum	3,523.8	11,445.3
Pulp-wood	1,654.0	5,213.0
Salt	1,892.3	3,550.9
Sugar	1,275.6	nil
Crawfish	677.2	2,351.4
<b>TOTAL EXPORTS:</b>	<b>54,325.9</b>	<b>343,412.9</b>

9. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Air: Airports - There are 55 airports and landing strips in the Bahamas island chain. The two largest are Nassau International Airport on New Providence Island and Free Port International airport and Grand Bahamas Island. The Bahamas are served by many international carriers; for inter-island travel the Bahama Airways is the main link.

Aircrafts: No. of aircrafts entering the Bahamas in:

	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>
Private	13,803	14,729
Commercial	<u>18,848</u>	<u>21,027</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<u>31,651</u>	<u>35,756</u>



Sea: Harbours and Ports

- (a) Two modern deep water harbour with adequate facilities to accommodate most of the world's largest cruise-ships. There is Nassau harbour with 2,210 feet of available mooring of which 1,150 feet is in deep water. There is also Freeport harbour and port with facilities for off-shore bunkering terminal, heavy lift crane facilities and roll-on/roll-off ramp.

There are numerous harbours and jetties in the other islands suitable for local freight vessels.

(b) Shipping

Many international shipping lines serve the Bahamas.

Wireless & Postal Communications:

The Bahamas is served by international telephone, telegraph and telex services. The local broadcasting and televising is through ZNS. There is daily international and inter-island airmail services.

B A H A M A S

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