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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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The Role of Ethnicity and Labour Unions in
the political development process in
TRINIDAD and TOBAGO

by

Mymoon Zubida Mohammed, B. A.

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in International Affairs

The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs
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November 9, 1976

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the nation-building process in the multi-racial developing polity of Trinidad and Tobago. To this end the relationships between the two major ethnic groups -- the Indians and the Negroes -- are examined within the context of trade unions and nationalist politics. A conceptual framework based on theories of nation-building, cultural pluralism, cultural engineering and trade unionism, is used to analyse these problems in the society.

The study focussed on two main themes, namely, the inter-relations between trade unions and political parties and the persistence and importance of ethnic identification in the nation-building process. At the same time, the roles played by some individual trade union and political leaders and their ethnic affiliations were examined.

The analysis indicates that the unity of the two ethnic groups was hampered by the political leaders deliberately for their own political survival and was also because of these leaders' perception of the role of industrial stability and economic development in the nation-building process. It was believed that economic development would reduce racial tensions and indirectly induce national unity. The eventual joining together of oil and sugar workers (symbolising the unity of Indian and Negro workers) against their multi-national employers and the Government proved the leaders' strategy to be ineffective when the workers acquired a sense of shared class identification which transcended their ethnic heritage.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Political Parties and Associations:

BEHRP	British Empire Home Rule Party
DAC	Democratic Action Congress
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
DLP	Democratic Liberal Party
ECA	Employers Consultative Association
NJAC	National Joint Action Committee
NWA	Negro Workers Cultural Association
POPPG	Party of Political Progress Groups
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PNM	People's National Movement
TCL	Trinidad Citizen League
TLP	Trinidad Labour Party
TWA	Trinidad Workingmen's Association
UF	The United Front
ULF	The United Labour Front
WFP	Workers and Farmers Party

Trade Unions:

ATSEFWTU	All Trinidad Sugar Estates & Factory Workers Trade Union
CONGRESS	Trinidad & Tobago Labour Congress
ICFTU	Islandwide Canefarmers Trade Union
NTUC	National Trade Union Council
OWTU	Oilfield Workers Trade Union
PSA	Public Service Association
SWWTU	Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union
TIWU	Transport and Industrial Workers Union

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In their book Where Peoples Meet, Everett and Helen Hughes claimed that "many of the people who are now studying racial and ethnic relations are doing so from an ethnocentric point of view".¹ In setting out to study the ethnic relations of the peoples of Trinidad in the process of nation-building, the 'inspiration' was derived not from any ethnocentrism as a Trinidadian, but from the sad evidence of the failure of several of the newly independent states to form nations in spite of the fervour of their nationalism during their struggle for independence. It seems as if ethnic "nationalism" has re-asserted itself with greater vigour in some countries after independence. The question arises then -- could culturally differentiated groups be meshed into a nation? If primordial group sentiments persist despite change, is it possible or realistic to expect that multi-cultural societies can achieve that feeling of oneness that constitutes the essence of a nation state, or should they in fact be content with a pluralized society with an incomplete national identity.

There is no clear answer, as the problems in different countries seem to warrant different foci. What is clear, however,

¹C. E. Hughes and H. MacGill-Hughes, Where Peoples Meet, (Free Press, Illinois, 1952), p. 8.

is that the problem of nation-building² and national integration³ is the crux of political development.

The problem of nation-building:

The post-World War II period was an era of reconstruction. In Europe, the old countries were engaged in rebuilding their devastated countries. In the emerging Third World, the new nations were embarking upon the development of a civilized life pattern that required not so much the reconstruction as the restructuring of their societies. The impetuosity of nationalism and the glow of Independence had heralded in an era of nation-building. Countries everywhere, and especially the new emerging ones, strove towards the common objective of building institutions and organizations to bridge the gap between their former and new circumstances, between tradition and modernity; and creating new patterns of relationships for shaping and directing the development of a new national identity.

At first, the new countries looked to the older nations for a model on which to convert their "newly invented fragile states into secure integrated nations".⁴ Most of them adopted a -

²"Nation-building" is regarded more broadly as the process of creating a workable and viable nation-state which does not require the complete destruction of ethnic differences but a common empathy, or patriotism. National development is used synonymously.

³For our purposes "national integration" is taken in its narrowest aspect to mean that process by which ethnic differences are gradually erased from the different groups to form a single nation -- i.e. social integration.

⁴Ali Mazrui, Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1972).

a wide and all-encompassing brand of nationalism as the prime mobilizer and basic ideology of national integration and development. In almost every case, national integration was approached through some form of compromise or accommodation between the larger or more influential groups. For example, in Kenya the struggle for independence, and its maintenance afterwards, could not have been successful without the alliance of the Kikuyus and the Luos. In Malaya where ethnic exclusiveness menaced national unity, the rivalry was resolved by a compromise wherein the Malays retained political dominance and conceded the economic sphere to the Chinese. Even in an older and established nation society such as Canada, some historians and political scientists claim that its unity is based on intelligent mutual accommodation between the elites of the two "founding nations" or ethnic entities.

The continued threats to the stability of these alliances or coalitions or accommodations have kept alive the search for new approaches to national integration and development. In time, the emphasis on economic development was reduced by the recognition of the equally important role of the socio-cultural factors. In this context, Ali Mazrui has forwarded the concept of "cultural-engineering". It assumes that society can be re-organized in some "predetermined directions". Therefore, social integration can be systematically induced by the deliberate manipulation of cultural factors in the direction of new and

constructive efforts.⁵

The small success rate in achieving this objective has led to a division of opinion on the approach to nation-building. Opposite Mazrui and those who believe that nations can be built stand those who believe that nations, like a natural phenomenon or organic process, evolve after many stages; and still others who believe that nations develop under conditions combining these two methods.⁶ The controversy over defining the nature of nation-building was prolonged in the first decade and a half after decolonization by the absence of theoretical or applied knowledge to provide a basis for strategies of nation building.⁷ It was further complicated by the legacy of colonialism and the "new world culture". Despite the state of literature and new perceptions on nation-building since then, the controversy continues.

This seems to underscore the experimental nature of building or creating a nation. That is, although they are all aiming at the same objective, the individual experience of each country seems to require a focus on problems which are unique to that society. For example, the quest for a national identity is common to both India and Nigeria. Although they share the common problems of British colonialism, one composite race divided by

⁵ Ibid., p.

⁶ See Karl Deutsch "Nation-building", in K. Deutsch and W. Foltz, Nation-Building, (Artherton Press, New York, 1966), p. 3.

⁷ L. W. Pye, Politics, Personality and Nation-Building, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1962), p. 6

language and religion, it would be foolhardy to suggest that the solution to the one could be applied to the other. The advantage of the controversy has thus been to underline the fact that the problem of creating, or engineering, a national identity is intimately associated with the particular context of individual experiences. The case of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly, is an excellent example. Although it shares many of the development problems in common with other developing or transitional societies, the history of its political development displays an experience unique to itself.

Like most developing or transitional countries, it was formerly a (British) colony that inherited a multiracial or multi-ethnic society, or what J. S. Furnivall called a "Plural Society", and built its development plans on the foundation of economic development -- i.e., industrialization. But in spite of economic change, ethnic differences persisted, making the task of nation-building as difficult as ever. When a form of social integration began to emerge, it did so, quite unintentionally at first, from among the ranks of the workers, through the Workingmen's Association. That is, the trade union movement succeeded in achieving moments of inter-ethnic solidarity where the nationalists movement had divided them by politicizing the unions. Trade unionism is, therefore, a more important factor in understanding the political development and nation-building process in Trinidad, more so than in any other Third World country, with perhaps the exception of Zambia.

In Zambia, the trade unions brought together workers of different tribes in the copper industry well before independence. Any "integration" that resulted from this association can be explained as due, in part, to the traditional workers solidarity against their white employers and the higher paid white employees, and in another part, to their isolation in the mining towns. But whatever its success in "detribalizing" workers in Zambia, its relationship to nation-building does not appear to be as far-reaching as in Trinidad.

This study proposes to examine the contribution of the trade union movement to nation building and hence national integration in Trinidad. It is our contention that, given the historical divisions of Trinidadian society by ethnicity and its continuing retardation of the development of Trinidad, the trade unions will be able to transcend racial lines and promote a class-based society, so long as they remain independent of ethnically polarized political parties. We base this on the recent achievement of a class-based unified union movement in Trinidad.

The case for this position will be explained in the chapters that follow. In Chapters II and III a theoretical framework will be developed from a discussion of the works of a number of authors concerned with nation-building, ethnic relations and plural societies and trade unionism. This is to provide a theoretical and historical content within which the Trinidadian experience can be comprehended and assessed in relation to political and sociological theory. Chapter IV provides a descriptive account of

the geographic, demographic and social setting against which the process of the rise of trade unionism, political parties and changing patterns of ethnic relations will be examined. Chapters V and VI provide a description of the rise of trade unionism from two vantage points, firstly, studying the link between ethnicity and the trade unions (Chapter V) and secondly, the trade unions and the political parties (Chapter VI). In Chapter VII will be described a series of major recent incidents, including strikes, leading to what seems to be a non-ethnic class-based approach to nation-building. Chapter VIII is an attempt to draw the diverse material on trade unions, labour movements, ethnic groups, plural societies, party politics and political alliances together and draw some tentative conclusions relating to nation-building, ethnicity and trade unions.

CHAPTER II

NATION-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT

More than a century ago, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote concerning modern societies: "Far from supposing that members of modern society will ultimately live in common, I am afraid they will end by forming only small coteries".¹ The post World War II period of decolonization and national consciousness has evidenced the fulfilment of Tocqueville's prediction as continents and empires became instead "coteries" of sovereign nation states. The commitment to creating nations has resulted in a strong emphasis on national integration as a prerequisite to development among these countries.

In this chapter, it is proposed to examine some of the literature on nation-building in a multi-nation society to help us to develop a theoretical framework for the study of the Trinidadian case. In so doing, we shall discuss the evolving approaches to nation-building and the effect of ethnic divisions on this process. Finally, it is posited that if social tensions between "dominant" and "minority" groups are to be reduced, then the labour movement is one of the best suited institutions for bridging the gap between economic development and social change, and building a level of class-consciousness necessary to transcend the ethnic barriers in creating a society or a nation.

¹ A. de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. R. Heffner, (New American Library, New York, 1956), p. 248.

After the French Revolution, European countries in their attempt at evolving a new social order of nation-states -- i.e. the unification of different sub-systems within a territorial area as one nation formulated a new theory of nationality. This theory emphasized territorial descent rather than tradition -- i.e. the principle of the "Fatherland". Thus the "French people" were regarded as a physical product: an ethnological, not an historical unit. "In this way", says Lord Acton, "the idea of sovereignty of the people uncontrolled by the past gave birth to the idea of nationality, independent of the political influence of history".²

The multi-ethnic states emerging from colonialism in the Twentieth Century found a model of nation-building in this European theory. The indiscriminate divisions of continents, particularly Africa and its people during the colonial power struggle, had produced 'nations' in which their only common loyalty was to the territory. Freedom from colonialism inspired the quest for nationhood and national identity somewhat as a corollary. Pieris describes a similar situation in Europe thus:

Freed with the need to evolve a viable form of social life which would transcend the parochial units of rival baronial kingdoms, and finding no direction from the past, the peoples of Europe evolved the artifact of the nation state. It was an artifact because it had no previous community of race or tongue amongst the people who came to be known as Italians, Frenchmen, Germans or Spaniards, least of all the amalgam known as British.³

²H. Guindon, "Two Cultures: an essay on nationalism, class and ethnic tensions", in R. H. Leach, ed., Contemporary Canada, (Duke University Press, Durham, 1967), p. 75.

³R. Pieris, Studies in the Sociology of Development, (Rotterdam University Press, 1969), p. 170. In this somewhat facile comparison lies the crux of the failure of the earlier approaches to development in the Third World. It underplays the "artifact" of the European nation-states and has led some writers into drawing some optimistic inspiration for the development of Third World countries despite the complex historic differences between the two areas.

This similarity notwithstanding, the majority of the countries of the Third World failed to achieve the political stability, economic well-being and social cohesion expected after Independence. This suggests that patriotism is not a sufficient criterion for engendering national unity, nor can the European model be facilely applied to these new states. The Europeans had a history of co-existence, not too dissimilar cultures and regular contacts -- if even by wars -- and these provided some of the basic conditions for recognition and accommodation of each other in their mutual bid for peaceful co-existence. In the new states, these factors were in the main absent, particularly in those "plural societies" where the colonial policy was designed to keep the different peoples separate.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the 20th Century, despite a plethora of studies on nationalism, social scientists found themselves "ill-equipped to pass judgment on the prospects of development in strange and unknown societies".⁴ Attempts at trying to explain the new wave of nationalism only resulted in "ambiguities" and "imprecisions" of the term "political development", and a variety of themes subsumed under the rubric of development -- the most popular being economic development and nation-building. In demonstrating these ambiguities, Lucian Pye has listed ten different concepts of political development. Summarized, they pertain to (1) economic development, (11) political/or social mobilization and change. Included among these is nation-building.

⁴L. Pye, "Concept of Political Development" in J. L. Finkle and R. W. Gable, ed., Political Development and Social Change, (J. Wiley and Sons Inc., New York, 1966), p. 83.

In this view there is the assumption that the politics of historic empires, of tribes and ethnic community or colony must give way to the politics necessary to produce an effective nation-state, which can operate successfully in a system of other nation states. Therefore, intrinsic to this process "is the translation of diffuse and unorganized sentiments of nationalism into a spirit of citizenship and equality".⁵ But how are these sentiments to be transformed from the group level to the larger nation?

According to Karl Deutsch, the approach to the problem of making a nation depends on the individual's perception of the problems of nationalism and the rise and fall of nations.⁶ The three approaches are national growth, national development and nation building. National growth, he says, is suggestive of the organismic development of a living thing towards a maturity the form of which is known, whereas the "architectural or mechanical" connotation of nation-building is dependent on the builders for its form and is partially independent of its environment. The concept of national development, however, "implies a limited but combinatorial freedom" that includes the internal and external interdependencies of national growth which modifies the structural process of nation-building.⁷ That is, national development combines

⁵ K. Deutsch, "The Problems of Nation-building" in Deutsch and Foltz, Nation-building, (Atherton Press, New York, 1966), p. 3.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Idem., p. 3.

the other two views (national growth and nation-building). The main difference between this view and that of political development is that the latter materializes with a "spirit of citizenship and equality" while the other has an indefinite quality that makes it susceptible to the various influences in its environment and hence to change.

This indeterminateness of "national development" and the subsequent differing interpretations of nation-building introduced the controversy: are nations built, or do they grow? The advocates of the "growth" theory do so from a historical perspective rooted in the Middle Ages -- opines Carl J. Friedrich. He argues that the historical argument is inapplicable to the new states since these former colonies attained the status of nation without the long historical process of the Europeans. Nation-building in the new states is "a matter of building group cohesion and group loyalty for the purpose of international representation and domestic planning..."⁸ Following this argument, he suggests that the concept of a nation must be broadened to accommodate "present realities" where "suddenly peoples composing vast cultural entities, such as India...Nigeria... are being referred to as nations"⁹ and proposes that nation be defined as

a cohesive group possessing "independence" within the confines of the international order as provided by the United Nations, which provides a constituency for a government effectively ruling such a group and receiving from that group the acclamation which legitimises the government as part of the world order.¹⁰

⁸C. J. Friedrich, "Nation-Building?", Ibid., p. 32.

⁹Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁰Idem.

In taking over this mechanical approach, Ali Mazrui draws his analogy to construction from the fact that the process of turning the new states into secure, integrated nations requires the building of institutions for the management of tensions between groups; bridges between tradition and modernity calculations for the creation of new shapes and patterns of relationships; and foundations to be laid for a new national heritage.¹¹

Unlike Friedrich, however, Mazrui believes that at the heart of the process of nation-building is the realization of the paramount issue of identity - "how people view themselves and how far self-conception can be modified in the direction of enlarged empathy".¹² He concludes, therefore, that in a society where cultural factors impinge on social reform and national development, nation-building becomes "cultural engineering"; that is, the deliberate manipulation of cultural factors for purposes of deflecting human habit in the direction of new and perhaps constructive endeavours.¹³

In contrast, W. J. Connor contends that building a nation from many nations by transferring the loyalty from the sub-nations to the state is actually nation-destroying.¹⁴ In so saying, he exposes the dialectic process involved in nation building, for in the process of destroying the sub-national ideology, customs and sense of homogeneity and creating a new ideology, institutions and common identity, a new nation is being built.

¹¹ A. Mazrui, Cultural Engineering & Nation-building in East Africa, (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1972), p. xv.

¹² Idem.

¹³ Idem.

¹⁴ W. J. Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying", in World Politics, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1972), p. 319-355. Connor defines a nation as a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs in a sense of homogeneity. This might also be used as a definition of an ethnic group.

The problem with Freidrich and Connor is that the former simplifies the main problem as that of achieving enough acclamation and legitimacy for effective government from the many constituent groups in a country, while Connor's rigid definition makes it almost impossible to create nation-states under existing conditions without cultural destruction. Mazrui's cultural engineering acknowledges the cultural resistance to change but grasps the essence of the problem of identity. Were the problem to be simply one of administration and international recognition, then all member states of the United Nations would be "nations". Yet we know from the incessant conflicts between minority and majority groups for recognition that the quality of a nation, the essence or spirit of oneness, is singularly wanting in most of these very countries. Witness at present the case of Lebanon.

The advantage of the cultural engineering approach is that it does not negate the historical relevance but merely relegates it and places priority on inventing institutions and organizations for dealing with the transference of a society from one stage to another. Had the bestowal of independence and desire for nationhood spontaneously created "nations", there would be no heterogeneous or plural societies, nor inter-group conflicts such as have threatened the viability of the state in Nigeria or Pakistan, or Ireland among the "older" nations.

The problem, therefore, lies not in the ultimate emergence of a new nation state but in the interim period, in providing a modicum of unity that would militate against the fissiparous tendencies of ethnic nationalism at present and in the near future.

The lesson to be extracted from the Europeans' experiences, however, is that although it took centuries to make Englishmen or Frenchmen, it is possible with the appropriate institutions and organizations to develop a level of communication between different peoples that allows interaction on a national scale. At this stage, the crux of nation-building lies in the tripartite inter-relationships between personalities, culture and polity.¹⁵

The problems of nation-building, however, are not confined to domestic factors. The diffusion of a "world culture" or modernization based on modern technology -- economic development, organizational practices and governmental performances, has set the direction of development for the emerging states wishing to participate in the international community of nation-states.

As Pye points out, more often than not, "this means that the process of nation-building in the new countries is neither autonomous in its dynamics nor free to select at random its goals. The impact of the modern world on traditional societies has been a pressure in set directions".¹⁶ In other words, the transfer of sovereignty from the colonial regimes has been based on the implicit assumption that the new states reorganize themselves into nation-states that conform to the generally accepted concept adapted by the Europeans and aptly described by Anthony Smith:

The nation-state is the norm of modern political organization; and it is as ubiquitous as it is recent. The nation-state is the almost undisputed foundation of world order, the main object of individual loyalties, the chief defender of a man's

¹⁵ L. Pye, Politics, Personality and Nation-Building, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1962), p. 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

identity. It is far more significant for the individual and for world security than any previous type of political and social organization. It permeates our outlook so much that we hardly question its legitimacy today.¹⁷

This external factor has created a problem of priorities in the process of nation-building between the domestic challenge of national integration, which is a slow process, and the international need to have a national identity somewhat quickly. Reconciling these two to the benefit of the society as a whole is also central to the problem of nation-building. For these reasons many countries have chosen economic development as the generator of national growth, and subsequently, of social integration. In a reconsidered approach, however, some countries, like Tanzania, have embarked on a programme of self-reliance that integrates the groups in the efforts of economic growth -- i.e., it employs the cultural engineering strategy using ideology as a weapon.

Whatever the strategy adopted, an almost fundamental requirement to development is a mutual political and social understanding among the different groups. In this respect, ethnic cleavages have been shown to have a deciding influence on its outcome.

Ethnicity and National-Building

So far we have discussed mainly the political scientists' responses to nation-building. Looking at the definition of a nation as the essence of a people sharing a feeling of oneness,

¹⁷ A. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, (Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1971), P. 2.

there is also the suggestion of a psychological aspect to nation-building. Clifford Geertz's argument that primordial attachments "exist by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the tie itself"¹⁸ clearly illustrates the intangibility of ethnic sentiments. It also provides us with some insights as to why nations have not automatically arisen following independence and the difficulty in overcoming this. This point Herman Weilenman fully grasped as he cautioned: only a population that has become by itself a people because it felt it belongs in it can turn itself into a nation.¹⁹ Thus, the conversion of an "unformed" society into a nation is a slow and uneven process as it is dependent on the conscious choice of its members. Both Mazrui and Pieris support a somewhat similar view.

According to Peiris, there are three stages in the evolution of a nation-state: (a) fusion of the hitherto distinct people in a political and moral unity; (b) consolidation of the in-group and awareness of "other" as strangers or as enemies; and (c) full consideration when nationality takes precedence over segmental affiliations. In Mazrui's pattern, deliberate nation-building involves five major processes.²⁰ First is the achievement of some degree of cultural and normative fusion; second is the

¹⁸ C. Geertz, ed., Old Societies and New States, (The Free Press, New York, 1963), pp. 105-157, p. 109.

¹⁹ H. Weilenman "The Interlocking of Nation and Personality Structure" in Deutsch, p. 36.

²⁰ In a previous work, Mazrui mentioned four stages in the slow, natural evolution of an overgroup from different subgroups: first was bare co-existence; second, contact; third, compromise situation; and fourth, coalescence. See A. Mazrui, Violence and Thought, (Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., London, 1969), p. 105.

promotion of economic inter-penetration among different strata and sectors of society; third is the process of social integration; fourth, the building of institutions for effective conflict resolution; and fifth, the psychological accumulation of a shared national experience.²¹

The difference between Mazrui's process and Pieris' stages is obviously one of detail rather than aim. They both recognize that national development or integration is a long and slow process having as its ultimate goal a shared cultural heritage. That occurs "when the sub-groups succeed in forging a common universe of perspectives and a capacity for mutual communication".²² According to Mazrui, this is the purpose of his fifth process: to pull the other four together and focus them toward the shared national experiences. We may conclude, therefore, that cultural engineering is a long but finite process.

These opinions re-emphasize the dialectic inherent in nation-building, namely that of destroying an earlier common sub-group consciousness so as to create a new common consciousness. At the same time, it also shows that while the making of a nation can be set in "predetermined directions", it requires time, an accumulation of shared experiences or common history, to weld the separate parts together. It is suggested, therefore, that Mazrui's optimistic conclusion, (inferred by the achievement in the long run of a shared national experience), was derived from his engineering perception

²¹ Mazrui, Cultural Engineering... p. 277.

²² Ibid., p. 292.

and his own East African background. A study of Malaysia, for example, might well dilute this optimism.

In Malaysia, the wide distance between the Malay and Chinese cultures make cultural engineering -- i.e., cultural integration -- almost impossible. Hence, the Malays have tried to resolve the ethnic conflict by compromise: retaining the ruling position while allowing the Chinese to dominate the economic position. In Kenya, the attempt at cultural engineering was made possible by the accommodation of the two leading groups, the Kikuyu and the Luo. Only the future can pronounce judgment on their success.

Furthermore, there has been a resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the industrialized societies, where it was predicted that ethnic pluralism would inevitably disappear with modernization, economic integration and nation-building.²³ On the other hand, countries such as India, Britain and Spain, to mention a few, have shown that it is possible to share accumulated national experiences and still retain ethnic exclusiveness. Thus, in a multi-racial country, the prospects for national integration are more unpredictable than cultural engineering would lead us to believe.

Mazrui's earlier formulation on national integration bore more relevance to a multi-ethnic society, especially to those without a "previous community of race or tongue". Formerly, he

²³M. J. Esman, unpublished paper, "Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict in Industrialized Societies", 1975. The recognition that ethnic differences were of considerable importance in developed countries elicited a conference on the subject at Cornell University, 1975.

defined the process of national integration as a partialization of group identities and also a quest for a new kind of total identity. Success comes when partially eroded group personalities coalesced to form a new national entity.²⁴ In ethnically plural societies, therefore, the goal of nation building appears to be the partialization or diffusion of the various nationalities into a synthesized identity.

Another opinion on the ethnic problem to nation-building is given by H. Hoetink. He argues that the potential for national integration should be viewed within the socio-racial stratification of a society and its correlation with the criteria according to which power is allocated and distributed. This is because

in a society where socio-racial stratification predominates, the frequency and existence of vertical social rise and fall are to a high degree determined by membership in a given socio-racial category: special mechanisms of social selection generally tend to favour those whose somatic traits are most akin to those of the dominant socio-racial group, other things being equal.²⁵

This is, if race is the criterion by which power is allocated, in a majoritarian system the majority group will be kept in the dominant position in perpetuity. This militates against compromise, perpetuates animosity the accumulation of which could eventually explode into racial riots. Under these circumstances, ethnic identity provides a psychological security to both groups,

²⁴ Mazrui, Violence..., p. 104.

²⁵ H. Hoetink, "National Identity and Somatic Norm Image", in W. Bell and W. Freeman, Ethnicity and Nation-building, (Sage Publications, Beverley Hills, 1974), p. 35.

but more particularly to the minority group. Hoetink's solution of "a formal federative or quasi-federative collaboration... provided a minimum interpenetration can be maintained",²⁶ is therefore highly untenable. The examples of Cyprus, Palestine, Malaya and Singapore justify some scepticism about it. Moreover, in most of the developing countries, despite the conflict and apparent cleavages, there is already some degree of interpenetration. As the Hughes have suggested, "if two groups have relations enough to be a nuisance to each other,... they are in some sense or measure members of the same body",²⁷ and it is too late to separate them.

Hoetink's stratification model is, however, useful in its differentiation between inter-ethnic and racial conflict situations resulting from a race-stratified society. Where the discontinuous type of vertical stratification (exemplified by Trinidad and Guyana) obtains, in such societies, he notes, "every type of horizontal solidarity that may emerge, such as that based on class position, will tend to mitigate the existing racial and cultural cleavages".²⁸ And by extension, if this process continues through other layers, the society eventually becomes horizontally stratified

²⁶ H. Hoetink, "National Identity, Culture and Race in the Caribbean", in E. Campbell (ed.) Ethnicity & National Identity, (Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 1972), p. 27.

²⁷ H. & E. Hughes, op. cit., p. 160.

²⁸ H. Hoetink, "National Identity and Somatic Norm...", p. 38. It should be pointed out that this situation obtains only where the races overlap to some degree in the various strata, otherwise the resulting horizontal stratification will effectively institute a division of the society by race and class, with boundaries of race and class coinciding as, say, in South Africa.

on a class basis and more conducive to national integration.

We may note, then, that the problem of national development has been complicated by the various perceptions of nation-building of the different national leaders. Still facing most of the countries is the search for a solution appropriate to their own experiences. History has shown that the application of the European model in the new states has failed partly or wholly. The outcome of the continuing search has produced a profusion of models of nation-building tried under differing labels such as compromise, or "cultural engineering", as in Kenya and Malaysia.

A glance at the development model of many new countries will show that they have adopted some form of these two approaches. This includes Trinidad. But in none of these countries, not even in socialist Tanzania, was the trade union movement seen as a possible engine of national integration. No one saw the movement as a bridge between a traditional society moving towards becoming an industrialized society in which most of the highly mechanized industries are foreign owned. If, as Huntington indicated, it was the lag between rapid social change and mobilization and the slow development of political institutions that was responsible for the violence and instability among developing countries in the fifties and sixties, and if, as he warned, "men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of condition is increased"²⁹, then the trade union movement lends itself appropriately

²⁹ S. P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, (Yale University, New Haven, 1968), p. 4.

to this end. They provide ready institutions in which segments of the population associate together to protect their economic interest relative to the other segments of the society, whether by claiming improvements in wages and working conditions or acting as a pressure group in expressing objection to government's laws, foreign policy, social services, education and other changes in the society that affects their lives. As D. W. Rawson observes,

What is distinctive about the political attitudes of most trade unions is not only that they have these wide objectives and aspirations but that they think of them as being somehow all of piece and part of a general blue-print for a better society.³⁰

It is within this framework that we examine the trade union movement in Trinidad for it provided an institution or locus of association and contributed towards creating a class-based inter-ethnic solidarity between some Indian and Negro members of the society, without threatening their social bonds. In consideration of this objective, Chapter III discusses the relation between ethnicity and trade unionism as factors of nation-building.

³⁰ D. W. Rawson, "Unions and Politics", in P. W. D. Matthews and G. W. Ford (eds.), Australian Trade Union, (Sun Books, Melbourne, 1968), p. 175.

CHAPTER III

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF ETHNICITY AND TRADE UNIONISM

Within recent years there has been a growing recognition and acceptance by academics and others of the influence of the social environment on the growth and development of organizations and institutions. Hence, in order to understand the behaviour and character of an organization, one must know the surrounding circumstances of its historical origins. The discussion of ethnicity, pluralism and trade unionism in this chapter is based upon this relationship between environment and organizations. It also provides a frame of reference for the understanding of the development of trade unions in Trinidad, described in later chapters.

The purpose of this chapter is to rediscuss the two factors of nation-building mentioned in Chapter II, namely ethnicity and trade unionism. Our discussion on ethnicity focuses mainly on the controversial theories of pluralism as advanced by J. S. Furnivall, M. G. Smith and others. The subject of pluralism, it is suggested, remains a controversy partly because its authors have failed to realize that in studying a given society, its particular ecology differentiates it from the others included under the same umbrella of a "general theory". This makes generalizations on such a sensitive subject difficult. The debate has, nevertheless, been included here since it rages between Caribbeanists, and Trinidad, as a Caribbean country, is often described as a plural society. The discussion on trade unionism examines such questions as to why trade unions are formed and why different types of union movements

have developed in different parts of the world.¹

A.

ETHNICITY

An English writer travelling through the West Indies once noted

the existence of a flourishing coloured "society" (which) was at once the most fully creolised in their general life style and the most Anglophile in their political and social attitudes.²

This graphic description of the dual complex of West Indian societies conveys at the same time overtones of the dichotomy of appearance and reality and with it, the elusiveness of definition.

In studying ethnic groups, Helen and Everett Hughes warned against the practice of distinguishing one group from another merely on the basis of a combination of observable traits. "An ethnic group is not one because of degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups; it is an ethnic group... because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the ins and outs talk, feel and act as if it were a separate group".³ That is, there is present the we-they consciousness between the different groups that make up the population of the country.

The basis of ethnicity, therefore, can be anything which a group of people identifies as being common to them. Race is an obvious factor of ethnic identification. At the same time, a race

¹No attempt is made here to summarize the massive literature on trade unions or ethnicity per se; only those items which were deemed immediately relevant to the Trinidadian situation have been treated.

²G. Lewis, Growth of the Modern West Indies, (McGibbon & Kie, London, 1968), p. 72.

³H. Hughes and C. E. Hughes, Where Peoples Meet, (Stanford University Press, California, 1952), p. 156.

can be divided into several sub-groups by socio-cultural traits such as language, religion, tribe or clan or caste. The complexities of the problem of labelling a society "plural" thus become immediately apparent, for if the above criteria are applied to existing societies, they will all present some form of ethnic pluralism. This type of plural society - a multiplicity of ethnically differentiated groups - differs from the concept of the "plural society" as was first advanced by J. S. Furnivall.

Plural Society :

Based on his observations of the societies of Southeast Asia, Furnivall defined a "plural society" as "one in which different racial or ethnic groups lived side by side without mingling in one political unit".⁴ The important distinguishing features displayed by such societies, he observed, were the absence of a national consensus - a set of cultural and political values shared by the different communities; the coincidence of economic activities with racial divisions that tended to turn economic conflicts into racial riots necessitating drastic measures of control, invariably by a foreign colonial power; and the reliance on the market place as the only common meeting ground for the various races.⁵ Consequently, the relationship of the indigenous sub-groups to the dominant colonial power assumed the qualities of "Charter Member Minorities".⁶

⁴ J. S. Furnivall, Netherlands India, (Cambridge University Press, London, 1939), p. 446.

⁵ Idem.

⁶ Hughes, p. 23. This term was used in reference to people in Europe who by changes in state boundaries became politically subordinated and incorporated within a new state making them strangers though at home.

Furnivall's theory has been criticized primarily for its static quality. According to Furnivall, any change in a plural system instigates violence. Therefore, it is argued, in a multi-racial society, the potential instability posed by racial cleavages provides the colonial government with its raison d'être and its role as a neutral arbitrator. Axiomatically, to perform its "duties", it is obliged to keep the races or ethnic groups separated and subjected. Its presence in the society becomes permanent. A plural society, therefore, also presupposes a static, submissive society without the will to change and the acceptance of the superordination of the ruling group. In short, plural societies remain plural under colonial rule.

M. G. Smith (an adherent of Furnivall) and Leo Despres, two of the foremost Caribbean proponents of pluralism, have made some attempts at making universal Furnivall's theory. Smith's point of departure is culture, not race.⁷ In his first attempt, he defined a multi-ethnic society as one consisting of a "plurality of cultures" where "two or more different cultural traditions characterize the population";⁸ and where the onus is borne by the cultural institutions for the "core of a culture is its institutional system".⁹ It forms the matrix of a society's social structure because it defines and sanctions the persistent form of social life.¹⁰ Therefore, Smith concluded, modern societies are culturally

⁷ Smith's "essential" preconditions to his culturally heterogeneous society were the same as Furnivall's - a multi-ethnic society governed by a minority group.

⁸ M. G. Smith, The Plural Society in the West Indies, (University of California, Berkeley, 1965), p. 14.

⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

heterogeneous and not pluralistic. He reserved the term "pluralism" for conditions where a formal diversity exists in the basic system of compulsory institutions.

Smith's theory, however, does not differ significantly from Furnivall's. The main difference proposed between the "plural society" and his "culturally heterogeneous" society is that the different units participate in "basic" or "compulsory" institutions - understood here to mean national institutions common to all groups - and still maintain their own alternative or exclusive institutions. But this is no more integrative than the "plural society" in which the colonial institutions were basic and compulsory. In addition, such societies are not necessarily modern. Centuries ago, the various tribes of the Inca Empire were compelled to serve the institutions of the Supa, but they practised their own cultural and religious customs in their communities.¹¹ Moreover, there is an implied assumption that the society is already formed, consisting merely of a number of different cultural institutions, presenting a picture of unity in diversity.

Secondly, it is not applicable to the modern independent developing countries, especially those in the Caribbean. On gaining independence, the majority ethnic groups inherited the ruling position in those countries, except for Guyana. In essence, the difference between culturally heterogeneous" and "plural societies" is that the former seems to imply a willing compliance to the

¹¹ The Incas, having conquered several different tribes, subjugated them to the institutions of the Inca. They worked for and worshipped the Sun God - the basic or compulsory institutions - but practised their own religion and spoke their own language in their local communities. See C. Gibson, The Inca Concept of Sovereignty and the Spanish Administration in Peru, (Greenwood Press, New York), 1969.

compulsory institutions of the dominant power, while in the latter it is imposed.

In an effort to correct these imperfections in Smith's formulations, Leo Despres based his theory on the integrative function of both local and broker institutions. The local institutions demonstrate the extent to which particular groups display systems of cultural differentiation by their activities within local communities. This he calls minimal institutional activities conducive to transformation of the first order. The broker institutions show the extent to which local activities are linked to the wider spheres of social activities. This is the maximal institutional organization or transformation of the second order. When the broker institutions serve only to integrate the similar local cultural sections, for example, Negro with Negro or Indian with Indian, the society is "culturally pluralistic". When they integrate the different minimal institutions of the different ethnic groups, as for example all educational institutions, Negro and Indian, then the society is "culturally heterogeneous".¹² It is only when the broker institutions, which are similar in function to Smith's "basic" or "compulsory" institutions, unite all their corresponding local institutions of different ethnic groups at the national level that socio-cultural integration is energized and cultural heterogeneity obtains. Anything short of this point represents some degree of cultural pluralism. Despres overlooked the fact that despite the establishment of national or broker institutions, ethnic differences persist precisely because they

¹² Leo A. Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guyana, (Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, 1967), pp. 22-27.

are practised at the local level where ethnic groups have a tendency of in-gathering manifested in the emergence of ethnic areas or districts such as the Italian quarter, or the Jewish district and so on, and this perpetuates the ethnic identity even at the national level. Transformation of either the first or second order, therefore, implies or provides only the way for integration and does not determine the actual degree of integration between the groups. The integration of different institutions under a common one does not necessarily effect the automatic integration of its members. Rather, the establishment of broker institutions in a society should be construed as a form of cultural engineering - i.e., the structuring of the society in a "predetermined direction" of cultural integration in the future.

But Despres suggested the reticulated model in which a socio-economic stratification as well as a cultural sectionalization of the whole society exist side by side, as shown in the diagram. Since both types of division cut across each other, neither the socio-economic strata nor the cultural sections are able to produce enough loyalty for a value consensus as the cross-sections themselves are too small, and this gives a chance for some overall value consensus to emerge in the political system, however fragile this may be. Thus, in the reticulated model, "serious conflict - conflict that threatens the political order should not be expected".¹³

This evaluation of Caribbean societies seems a little too optimistic because in a high stress situation human beings tend to identify quickly with an older or familiar type of social organization such as their ethnic group, rather than a new socio-economic

¹³ Ibid., p. 20.

entity such as class or strata. The very fact of the presence of ethnic groups in a society indicates, by definition, the existence of an influential we-they conflict situation. In such a political system, where the ethnic majority, or minority, group dominates the other, an ethnic group becomes susceptible to exploitation as an instrument for maintaining the status quo or changing it. If Smith is correct in suggesting that cultural institutions "define and sanction the persistent form of social life", then in a multi-cultural society, ethnicity can affect the development of new organizations and institutions necessary to the nation-building process.

THE RETICULATED MODEL

H Stratification
Structure

A
B
C
D
E

Cultural Sections

SOURCE: Despres, p. 19.

After considerable criticism, Smith reformulated his theory. In this instance, the emphasis falls on structure having three basic levels of pluralism - social, cultural and structural.¹⁴ These differ according to their degree of "incorporation", a term

¹⁴M. G. Smith and Leo Kuper, eds., Pluralism in Africa, (University of California, Berkeley, 1969) pp. 430-449.

introduced to demonstrate the integration of the "corporate" groups into a single society. The mode of incorporation corresponds with the political structure in form and scope. Therefore, the relation between the political structure and the cultural institutions determines the type of pluralism in that system - consociation, social or structural pluralism, in descending order of integration.

COMPARISON OF THE PLURAL MODELS

CULTURAL

PLURALISM

Smith

DOMINANT CULTURAL		MINORITY	
a	b	c	d
A	B	C	D

HETEROGENEITY

DOMINANT MINORITY GROUP		COMPULSORY INSTITUTIONS	
A	B	C	D
a	b	c	d

A
B
C
D
RACIAL GROUPS

PLURAL SOCIETY:

Furnivall

COLONIAL GOVT.			
A	B	C	D

a
b
c
d
Alternative Cultural Institutions

In spite of the changes, one cannot but agree with Leo Kuper that, in revising the theory in this manner, not only did Smith introduce new complications, but increased the confusion which resulted from the revival of the plural society theory following his first formulation.¹⁵ His major failing lies in his

¹⁵ Leo Kuper, "On Theories of Race Relations", in W. Bell and W. Freeman, eds. Ethnicity and Nation-building, (Sage Publications, Beverley Hills, 1974), p. 21.

attempting to derive a general theory of society from a theory formulated on observations of a particular area and circumstances in a given era and then discarding the fundamental elements of that theory, race and colonialism.¹⁶ That is, Smith saw no reason to limiting his concept to situations where the basic cleavages fell along racial or ethnic lines.

In his (Smith) formulation, the plural society was constituted by incompatible cultural differences, and by pervasive social cleavages, between sections who were held together by the political domination of a cultural minority, and regulation rather than consensus.¹⁷

In diluting the theory to fit the diverse cases, he failed to take cognizance of the equally diverse type of pluralism present in the emerging independent countries of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The result of the revised theory was, in effect, a typology of multi-ethnic or multi-cultural mixed societies. Secondly, in discarding the culture criterion in the revised version, he also discarded a means of explaining or accounting for peaceful change or integration in the society. Earlier, he had argued that because culture is learned, it is transmissible and not bound to any one group. It follows then that people living side by side involuntarily learn of each other's culture or transmit their culture into the society. Over time, understanding and/or toleration develop and may lead to appreciation and, in some cases, transmission into practice in modified forms. Therefore, by his own logic, culture could also have an integrative effect. Malaya presents an example of this

¹⁶ Smith did try to retain the idea of the colonial minority power by insisting on a precondition of a minority dominant group as essential to a heterogeneous society.

¹⁷ Kuper, Race Relations, p. 22.

cultural persistence and intermingling. Muslim by law, the majority of the Malay population retained their old Hindu celebrations after conversion to Islam and this 'Indian' element in their culture was later reinforced by the Tamil immigrants from India during the last century.

These finer aspects of intra-societal changes are overlooked by the macro-level approach of the plural theory. Cross was therefore correct in contending that the "theories of cultural pluralism represents a gross over-simplification of social reality".¹⁸

In opposition to the cultural theorists, some West Indian sociologists of the structural-functional school have put forward a social stratification theory as an alternative. Their argument can be summed up in Lloyd Braithwaite's contention that social stratification, as a form by which "classes" are differentiated in terms of status within a hierarchically arranged social order, is more meaningful in explaining racial conflict.¹⁹ Stratification theories offer no explanation for possible integration in such a society. Instead, they postulate a persistence of cleavages. Even if we were to assume an integration of the "class strata", then racial cleavages are replaced by class cleavages. This can be preferred to an ethnically divided society only if the boundaries of race and class do not coincide.

Emanating from this discussion, therefore, is the conclusion that we are still without an adequate model for understanding multi-

¹⁸ Malcolm Cross, "Cultural Pluralism and Sociological Theory a critique and re-evaluation", S. E. S., Vol. 17 (1969), p. 381.

¹⁹ Lloyd Braithwaite "Social and Cultural Pluralism in the Caribbean", in Vera Rubin, Annals of the New York Academy of Science, Vol. 83 (1960), p. 816.

ethnic societies despite the amount of theoretical attention bestowed on the problem. An examination of the multi-ethnic societies of the Third World will show that different circumstances lead to different types of "pluralism". It would indeed be an oversimplification to assume a general theory that applies equally to all these countries. For example, in Africa, pluralism is based on tribalism, language and religion in some cases, but they are racially homogeneous. In Asia, there is a mixture of immigrant and native races, each with its own culture, language and religion. Pluralism there involves indigenesness, race and culture. The Caribbean presents yet a different set of problems as its population is completely exogeneous. Developed from immigrants of different races and cultures, they have all, in varying degrees, been acculturized into their respective colonizing culture. The nature of pluralism thus differs from area to area and from country to country.

B.

TRADE UNIONISM

From his work on trade unions, Selig Perlman formulated a general theory of trade unionism. He presented the thesis that trade unions are formed only when workers become conscious of the scarcity of opportunity, in his words, "consciousness of job security".²⁰ This becomes universally applicable, according to Perlman, because everywhere workers are concerned with job security. This is the reason why the wage earner becomes willing to envisage a future in which his union indefinitely controls his relation to

²⁰Selig Perlman, A Theory of the Labour Movement, (A. M. Kelly, New York, 1970), p. 6.

his job. Therefore, he concluded, a worker's economic attitude is determined by his consciousness of scarcity. Thus, psychologically, he tends to prefer the controls of a secure though modest livelihood.

By comparison, the employer or businessman's economic attitude is determined by an "abundance consciousness". This opinion he premised upon Werner Sombart's conclusions of the businessman's psychology which is from the start "inspired by a boundless desire to amass wealth".²¹ Unlike the workers, businessmen gamble and are willing to assume risks in proportion. In either case, their attitude is "the product of a simple survey of accessible economic opportunity and of psychic self-appraisal".²²

A. E. Musson argues along a parallel line with Perlman but attributes the prime mover in union development to the economic "boom and slump" and not to the usually emphasized ideological fluctuations - Radicalism, Chartism, Socialism and others.²³ This, he alleges, is because the wage earner perceives his interest in terms of improving his wages and not in terms of changing society. To illustrate his point, he noted the case of the National Association for the Protection of Labour which, at the height of union development and an economic boom in the 1820's, failed to get labour's support for introducing radical schemes of political and social reforms. The workers are mainly concerned with trying to improve their wages, he concluded, and not with revolutionizing society.²⁴ Therefore, in times of an economic boom, trade unions are

²¹ Ibid., p. 238.

²² Ibid., p. 239.

²³ A. E. Musson, Trade Union and Social Theory, (Frank Cass, London, 1974), p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

less likely to be militant than during an economic slump. Perlman and Musson may be said to represent the early American and British view of trade unionism. A later view of trade unions is represented by Bruce C. Roberts. In his opinion, trade unionism was a response to the exploitation of workers by the employers. Its objective was not only in securing job opportunities, but was also a means of improving industrial relations under conditions of change in the organization of production and exchange. He ascribed the phenomenal growth of trade unions to

the desire of working people to protect themselves from the vicissitudes of employment by collective action and render aid in times of adversity... to establish a system of rules that would reduce the arbitrary power of the employer to an orderly and predictable pattern of behaviour; a desire to improve wages and working conditions by the exercise of the bargaining power achieved by organization directly through negotiations with the employer and indirectly through political pressure.²⁵

We see here another stage in the evolution of trade union democracy - the worker joining a union not only for job security but also for improved working conditions by direct negotiations and collective action against the employer. The worker described by Perlman reacts as an individual to his perceived threat of limiting opportunities or scarcity which compels him to tie himself by membership to a union to assure for himself a share of the opportunities. Thus Perlman noted, "the manualist groups have been led to practising solidarity, to an insistence upon an 'ownership' by the group as a whole of the totality of economic opportunity extant, to a 'rationing' by the group of such opportunity among the individuals constituting it... in brief

²⁵ Bruce Roberts, Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth, (Duke University Press, Durham, 1964), p. xiv.

to a "communism of opportunity".²⁶ In either case, the need to protect themselves is common.

Following from these authors, it would appear that the establishment of trade unions is psychologically motivated by a perception of scarcity and the need to insure and improve their job opportunities and conditions, both as individuals and as a group.²⁷ But, Perlman enjoins, a union can only do this if it is mature; if "it has mastered the dilemma of serving simultaneously the individual member and the group as a whole".²⁸ Or, as S. Ghosh puts it, if it can control "the resistance power of capitalism".²⁹ This underscores the extent to which membership and economic conditions determine the success of a union. Under these circumstances, we have to agree that the psychological motivation of security is a fundamental element that drives men to accept a working future controlled by union rules. Since the perception of the workers is derived from the economic environment, the psychological factor is an effect of that environment.

Perlman has been criticized for emphasizing the psychological and underplaying the environmental factors.³⁰ This, it seems to this writer, represents a misunderstanding of Perlman's formulations, and of the questions why unions are formed and why different types of unions have developed. In the first place, it must be remembered that trade unionism is a product of modern society's rapid industrialization; that it was the labour conditions,

²⁶ Perlman, pp. 6-7.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 272.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ S. Ghosh, Trade Unionism in the Underdeveloped Countries, (Bookland Productions Ltd., Calcutta, 1960), p. 26.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

such as those described above by Bruce Roberts, which resulted in the formation of trade unions in England and Western Europe. Although the conditions surrounding the establishment of trade union movements in the Third World differ somewhat from those of Western Europe and America, it is safe to say that the trade union movement in these countries became a notable industrial force only after a programme of industrialization was instituted. These differences will be taken up later. It appears, therefore, that industrialization creates a condition, common to workers, which propels them towards joining trade unions, while the differences in their environment influence the type of movement that eventually appears.

Perlman's comparison of the American unions with those of Europe explicitly demonstrates this effect of the social environment on the development of the different types of unionism which evolved in those countries while showing the universality of why workers join trade unions. He pointed out that in Europe, where the unions were formed or encouraged by political parties, they adopted the ideological orientations of the party and were closely identified with them, and hence their type of unionism acquired a political and broader purpose than the individualistic American unions. The difference was partly due to the socialist persuasion of the parties which was in itself a response to the poorer conditions in Europe (analogous to the scarcity syndrome) compared with the U. S. A., where there was deemed to be "an unboundedness of opportunity" facilitated by the

easy access to the natural resources of a rich and unoccupied continent; it lay further in the simplicity of the industrial and business structure of a young community. In consequence the great mass

of American manual producers - ...developed a competitive psychology which greatly exceed in intensity the competitive psychology of the very same classes in Europe.³¹

America was the exception that proved the rule. Perlman was careful in pointing out that in spite of this abundance, it was only when the workers fully realized that the abundance consciousness had been replaced by a scarcity consciousness that trade unions first became a stabilized movement in America.³² Even under the new consciousness of scarcity, the American economic and political situation was more prosperous and abundant than in other countries.³³ With the devastation of Europe during the two World Wars, this advantage became a supremacy. Since the historical differences have continued, the unions of the two areas have continued to develop along different paths. The European unions by their close association with the political parties are more politically oriented towards socialism, while the individualistic nature of American unionism has inclined them towards capitalism, and hence the label, "business-unionism".³⁴

Business Unionism:

From Perlman's theory we see that the nucleus of "business-unionism" was formed with the firm establishment of trade unions in the U. S. A. and derived its character from the individualistic and abundance consciousness of the workers. G. D. H. Cole has added that the continued development of American unions along this line

³¹ Ibid., p. 249-250.

³² Ibid., p. 8 & 252.

³³ G. D. H. Cole, The World of Labour, J. Lovell, ed., (Harvester Press, Sussex, 1943), p. 129.

³⁴ I was unable to find any reference to the origins of this term. It seems to have evolved from the capitalist nature of American unions and their organization in the quest for "more and more" as Gompers described them. See Philip Taft, Organized Labour in American History (Harper & Row, New York, 1964), pp. xv-xvii.

was due to the industrial structure as "Nowhere is capital so concentrated, industrial method so advanced and industry itself so 'trustified'..."³⁵ As a result, where the European union had a "small master" to oppose, in the U. S. there was the impersonal force of the trusts. Given their business propensity, the unions adopted the corporation attitude and developed a union movement comparable with an Empire of Workers against an Empire of Industry.³⁶ Samuel Gompers, the renowned American unionist, has recommended to radical unionists "to accept capitalism and seek to improve their own wages and working conditions, as any business enterprise selfishly seeks economic gain".³⁷

Albert Rees, has accordingly defined "business-unionism" as unionism which "is primarily, though not exclusively engaged in advancing the interests of its members through seeking improvements in their own wages, hours and working conditions, and is only secondarily concerned with broader programmes of social reform".³⁸ To the extent that American unions have succeeded in adopting this philosophy, Mark Perlman attests, "they have ceased to represent a social movement, they have become a labour monopoly like any other industrial monopoly".³⁹ A look at the history of the trade union movement in the United States will show this development to be a result of its early beginning. Unlike other countries where industrial labour formed the basis of trade unions, in the United States trade unions were first formed by skilled workers to protect

³⁵ Cole, The World of Labour, p. 130.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Mark Perlman, "Labor Union Theory" in P. D. Bradley, ed., The Public Stake in Union Power, (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1965), p. 6.

³⁸ Albert Rees, The Economic of Trade Unions (University of Chicago, Chicago, 1962), p. 2.

³⁹ M. Perlman, p. 6.

their trade by limiting membership and "not for the purpose of organizing the working class... It did not seek to make an end of unemployment, of child labour and all the other frightful conditions of labour."⁴⁰

Besides the industrial structure and individualism, some other factors which have been attributed to the uniqueness of American unionism are immigration, a large native Negro section and its political system. It is argued that the immigration of a large number of identifiable ethnic groups, particularly those whose initial purpose was to accumulate money and return to their homeland, created a situation in which poor conditions were tolerated and clannishness and an indifference to politics developed. Consequently, the unions were kept independent of politics and political parties and less radical.⁴¹ It also accounts for the failure of the attempts to form a labour party in the U. S. A.

In summation, "business unionism" of the U. S. A. (or the economic unions of some of the developed countries) may be identified by those unions which pursue a policy of non-alignment and having as its primary objective the satisfaction of its economic self-interests, with only a minor or secondary interest in politics except for its use as a "pressure" mechanism.

Political Unionism:

In contrast, unions which seek a political solution to their economic ends may be called "political unions". But the application of political means to an economic end is not exclusive to these unions. Therefore, the terms "political" and "business" unionism are used to indicate the two ends of a continuum of union

⁴⁰ Cole, World of Labour, p. 137.

⁴¹ Idem.

types. Between these two there is a variety of union types differing according to the degree of inclination towards these two ends. Most of the unions of Europe and the Third World, however, tend to fall within the broad range of political unionism but for different reasons.

In Western Europe, trade unions arose in response to the appalling working conditions of the workers in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution. But the workers were too demoralized and destitute of political influence to organize themselves against the capitalists and the privileged class of the feudal structure which permeated into the capitalistic stage of European development.

The support and instigation for workers' organization came from intellectuals such as Saint Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, Karl Marx and others, who promulgated in varying intensities the ideology of Socialism that advocated a total change in the society.⁴²

Thus trade union movements in Britain and Europe have, in general, seen themselves as part of a political movement of left-wing persuasion and have had a political bent right from the beginning.

This is, of course, an entirely sweeping and brief account of unionism in Western Europe, but the point to be grasped is that historically workers organizations have seen political organization through a left-wing party as one of the best means of achieving long-term as well as immediate objectives. This is illustrated in its extreme form in the Communist countries and to a lesser degree in some countries of the Third World where the emerging phenomenon of the state as the biggest industrial employer

⁴² See Adolf Sturmthal, Comparative Labor Movements, (Wadsworth, Belmont, 1972), pp. 2-9.

perpetuates the association of political action with unionism for a number of reasons.

In the developing countries, the political parties and the trade unions were brought together in a mutual alliance against colonialism and capitalism. Of course, a certain amount of left-wing, socialist philosophy was used by the political leaders who saw the solution to labour problems in common with the political problems, as resting on the attainment of independence, since they viewed these problems in terms of colonialism and capitalism. Hence, in the colonial times, unions found common cause with the nationalist movement and participated in the struggle for independence. Party-union interdependence has become an outstanding feature of unionism in these parts.⁴³ Bruce Millen has incorporated these various examples of unionism under the general title of "political unionism".⁴⁴ Their intense and consistent involvement in the

⁴³ Quite often, unions were created by nationalist leaders during the freedom struggle against foreign capitalists, thus promoting workers' organization as well as the nationalist freedom struggle. This was so in India in the early days of unionism when leaders of the Congress Party either fostered unions or took over leadership of the unions. Sometimes the freedom fighters formed alliances with the already established unions to fight against foreign corporations as in Zambia. In general, leaders of the freedom struggle found it easy to make common cause with the trade union leaders because they were fighting the same common foreign elements whether in the shape of colonial masters or economic exploiters.

⁴⁴ Millen's specific characteristics of political unions are:

- (i) Time index. leaders are engaged in political operations everyday;
- (ii) Broad goals: may include major social changes or willing to concede goals in the hope of gaining political power;
- (iii) Frequent use of direct mass action;
- (iv) Demands ideological conformity on the leadership, but may be permissive if linked only loosely to party or government demanding only ideological support;
- (v) Marked tendency to "movementism" because union deemed inadequate to attain the political, social and economic reforms sought;
- (vi) Often resembles political party in early stages - may become one.

Millen, p. 9.

politics of the country to the obscurity of the economic base is in direct contrast to those of the American and European types that consistently promote the economic base. This difference, according to Millen, is a result of the fact that in developing countries unions "are part of the political rubric of a society",⁴⁵ and political importance and power often accrue to labour leaders because of their ready access to and influence over great numbers of people. In these countries, therefore, unionism is concerned with more than job security and wages.

On the other hand, the heavy emphasis on political action created during the independence struggle has persisted after independence and with the same fervour of social mobilization. Hence, their demands tend to run counter to those of the Government which then requires stability as well as a broader political base and "because in most cases the political and economic conditions of the new nations operated in the same direction".⁴⁶ At the same time, the revolution being accomplished, the unions tend to lose their influence with the political party. Consequently, most union movements in the Third World have been either incorporated into the ruling party, willingly or unwillingly, in order to regulate their demands or, in Millen's words, "to march in step with the national goals established by the party".⁴⁷ Any other political activity by unions is perceived as a threat to the ruling party.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Sturmthal, p. 139.

⁴⁷ Millen, p. 50.

We may tentatively conclude then that political unionism in the Third World differs from that in Europe. We have already discussed briefly the historical reasons for the differences. In Western Europe, the workers misery, socialist and political thinking, the broadening of the base of democracy and the rise of mass political parties happened almost simultaneously in the context of established nationhood. Hence political party-union alliance when it has won power, as in Britain or Scandinavia or Germany, tended to change the face of the national economy and industry in a particular direction without being driven madly to catch up with other highly developed countries and the left-wing unions and political parties have been able to contain their differences through the normal process of bargaining.

On the other hand, when successful nationalist movements in the Third World acquire national leadership, they are compelled by the "world culture" to develop their economy very fast, and sometimes at any cost. Hence, they resort to subordinating unions in the hope of increasing productivity and regulating demands. This conflict situation can lead to several different results. For example, in those African countries under a one-party system, unions are made a part of the political party and subordinated to it (e.g., Ghana and Tanzania). The results of this enforced marriage are yet to be seen. In other cases, the unions may remain independent and go on to develop working class consciousness and view their own national government as being no different from any other exploiting class. This has happened in a few developing countries but has not advanced very far, except perhaps in the case of Trinidad and Tobago.

We may join G. D. H. Cole in saying that

in each country, trade unionism is shaped not only by the form and stage of economic development but also by the political conditions and by the general structure of the society in which it has to act.⁴⁸

Where does Trinidad and Tobago stand in relation to these theories of (1) ethnicity/pluralism and (2) forms of trade unionism? In the case study that follows, it will be seen that if in the first case above we were to apply Despres' model to the Trinidadian situation, it would appear to be a "culturally plural" society, in spite of the number of national structures that exist for integrating the different local institutions. But this would be an oversimplification and misleading conclusion. For example, the political structure administers to all different local institutions, none of which is completely autonomous. In addition, the political parties, though ethnically identified, are multiracial in composition; there are no local ethnic parties nor is there a national ethnic party.⁴⁹ Similarly, there are no ethnically organized trade unions, but the coincidence of labour and occupation with race has bestowed a racial character on some unions - the sugar and oil unions for example. Thus, empirical data seem to differ from official policy. Since official policy determines the basis of the formation of these institutions, we have to conclude that Trinidad is a culturally heterogeneous society with pluralistic features.

With regard to the second case, the type of trade union

⁴⁸ G. D. H. Cole, Introduction to Trade Unionism, (Allen & Unwin, London, 1955), p. 34.

⁴⁹ Except for a one-party system, it is difficult to see how a national association would integrate the different local political parties whether they are based on race or ideology.

movement, the recent division of the unions on ideology, and the movement's fluctuations from business to political, places it in mid-line as a quasi-business-political union.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Because of its independence of political parties, the Trinidad unions are a less "political" type than Israel's Histadrut which is associated with the Government. See Millen's classification, Millen, p. 9.

CULTURAL PLURALISM/HETEROGENEITY

Second Order Transformation

Local Instit.	Structure for Partic.					Str. for all groups	Broker Instit.	Str. Int'g. similar loc.	Str. Int'g. diff. loc.
	Ind.	Afr.	Arab	Chinese	White				
Language	x		x	x	x	x	Markets		x
Family & Kinship	x		x	x	x		Corporations		x
Relig. Acti's.	x	x			x	x	**Labour Union	x	x
Local Econ.	x	x	x	x	x		Gov't. Agencies		x
Soc. & Educ. Activ's.	x		x	?	x	x	**Polit'l. Party	x	x
Recr'l.* Activ's.					x	x	Sch. Assoc.	x	x
Assoc'l. Actv's.	x		x	x	x		Rel. Assoc.	x	
Com'l. Actv's.	x		x	x	x	x	Soc. & Civ. Assoc.		x
							Ethnic Assoc.	x	

* Some differentiation in recreational activities

* Some differentiation in recreational activities is based more on class than culture, notably e.g.

Political parties are really national-multiracial parties, but since the majority of support for the 2 major parties comes from 2 racial majorities, they are identified, hence the overlapping institutions.

CHAPTER IV

THE SETTING

In the previous chapter some areas for analytical consideration were put forward for the case study of ethnic and labour relations in the development of Trinidad and Tobago. In this short chapter, some basic preliminary data is provided to acquaint the reader to some extent with the environment within which the problems are raised. It is also important for situating the origin of the multi-racial composition of Trinidad and providing a brief socio-historical background to the present state of inter-group relations under conditions of development.

Geo-physical features :

A two-island state, Trinidad and Tobago, sits at the southern end of the West Indies archipelago, approximately seven miles off the north-eastern coast of Venezuela. They were discovered by Christopher Columbus on his Third Voyage, in 1498.¹ Trinidad is the more southerly and the larger of the two islands having an area of 1,864 square miles. Tobago lies nineteen miles northeast of Trinidad and has an area of approximately 192 square miles. With respect to its international connections, it lies almost diagonally across the Caribbean Sea from Jamaica, Cuba and Miami over 1,000 miles to the northwest; 4,005 miles from London; and 1,958 miles from New York.

¹The name Trinidad is believed to have come from "La Trinite" for the three peaks in the southern range. But some writers ascribe it to the Holy Trinity as Columbus' thanksgiving for the first land sighted after his crew threatened to mutiny. To this "holiness" is also ascribed the "charmed life" which Trinidadians enjoy. From henceforth, the name Trinidad shall apply for Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad is comparatively rich in tropical vegetation and forestry. Three mountain ranges traverse the island from west to east leaving narrow corridors of plains between them. The highest peak is El Cerro Aripo at 3,085 feet. Fanned by the northeast Trade Winds, the maximum temperature averages 87°F and the minimum 72°F at night. There are only two seasons, a dry season from January to May and the wet season from June to December. Tobago shares almost the same climatic conditions. It justly lays claim to two natural wonders, Bucco Reef - a coral reef that houses some rare and colourful fishes and the "nylon pool", a coral sand bank in the middle of the bay; and the Bird of Paradise Island off the north-eastern coast. It is the only place in the Western Hemisphere where the Bird of Paradise can be seen in its natural habitat. Hence the tourist industry is centered mostly on Tobago.

The discovery and mining of petroleum in Trinidad since 1910 has spared the country from a dependence on agriculture, and at the same time, has neglected it. Within the Commonwealth, it is second only to Canada in crude oil production and has the largest refinery, operated by Texaco Limited. The Pitch Lake, discovered by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1598, provides another natural mineral resource. These were complemented in recent years by the discovery of natural gas.

The Economy:

By developing countries' standards, Trinidad's economy is relatively favourable.² Its 1975 expenditures were estimated at

² CEDTT "Policies for Faster Economic Growth in Trinidad & Tobago", Research and Policy Committee, (P. O. S. 1968), p. 3.

more than (TT)\$1,294 million. Its per capita income of (US)\$940 (1971) is surpassed only by Argentina and Brazil. But like all LDC's it suffers from "the dependency" syndrome - the dependence of export on one or two main products, oil and sugar. As a result, its economic growth rises and falls with the demand for these products. In addition, a worsening term of trade since 1964, a rapid population growth, increasing expenditures and declining productivity have all contributed to the high unemployment rate of over 14% and the growth problem in general.

Population :

In 1968, the Committee for Economic Development of Trinidad and Tobago (CEDTT) listed the "young, vigorous and reasonably well educated population" as one of the country's main resources. In 1970, 68.31% of the labour force were under 30 years.³ The population growth rate which had been above the world average of 3% is now estimated at 1.5%.⁴ Thus, the population at the 1970 Census was 931,071, a decrease from mid-1966 when it reached one million.

Uneven as the economy, and because of it, over 70% of the total population resides in the western half of the country. The majority lives in the county of St. George which contains the chief port and capital, Port of Spain, the largest number of factories and places of commerce accentuating the primacy of Port of Spain. The second largest town, San Fernando, lies in the southwest and is the main area of oil refining and mining and the petrochemical and cement industries. In spite of this, the southern areas have remained

³ Ibid., p. 7

⁴ "Social Indicators", (Central Statistical Office, P. O. S. 1975), p. 9.

the hinterland of Port of Spain and the north. Consequently, there has developed a northern urban rim to the agricultural rural south. This urban-rural dichotomy is an important constituent of the Trinidadian attitudinal landscape.

The table below gives a breakdown of the racial composition of the population and a comparison with the previous two Census Records.⁵

TABLE I
ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO - 1946-1970

Race	Pop. 1946	%	Pop. 1960	%	Pop. 1970	%
African	261,485	47.0	358,588	43.0	398,765	42.8
Indian	195,747	35.1	301,947	36.0	373,538	40.1
Mixed	78,775	14.0	134,748	16.0	131,904	14.2
Europeans	15,283	3.0	15,718	2.0	11,383	1.2
Chinese	5,641	1.0	8,361	1.0	7,962	.9
Syrians/ Lebanese	--	--	1,590 ^a	.0	993	.1
Others	1,039	(.2)	6,714	2.0	6,526	.7
TOTAL	557,970	100.2	827,957	100.0	931,071	100.0

^a Included in "others".

SOURCES: 1946, 1970, Social Indicators (C.S.O., 1975)
1960 Eastern Caribbean Report (C.S.O., 1963)

⁵ The 1970 Census data was extracted from a continuous sample survey and not the actual Census Report, and this has given rise to inconsistencies and distortion. For instance, three sources gave three different population totals: 933,110; 1,026,750 and 931,071. Another point worth mentioning concerns the increase in the Indian section. This seems to uphold the general theory that the birth rate among Indians is higher than that of the Negroes. Their 10% lower rate against the 1960 projection of 50% by 1975 seems to suggest that the birth rate among Indians has also declined or, as is being suspected, a greater number of Indians of child-bearing age are emigrating. It is significant, therefore, that the Government has now found it necessary not to supply the actual data on race.

The Making of a Multi-racial society;

The multi-racial "mosaic" that is Trinidad's population was created during the search for labour in the production of sugar. The new arrivals after 1945 have only added to the fissiparousness of the society. The population of Trinidad can be said to have begun in the 1780's when under the Cedula of 1783 immigrants of the Catholic faith and subjects of nations in alliance with Spain were permitted to settle there. It is estimated that some 383 families and their slaves immigrated then, but the French Revolution following close on its heels swelled the influx from the neighbouring French colonies. To this cause is attributed the preponderance of the French element in a colony that never belonged to France. By "1790, there were over two thousand white persons, 45,000 free negroes and 10,000 slaves on the island".⁶

It is significant to note for this paper that the early settlers and slaves in Trinidad were from the West Indies, i.e., they had been resident in the area for a number of generations. Though the slave trade still existed, those who came from Africa were "in relatively limited numbers".⁷ Consequently, slaves entering Trinidad from the West Indies were "acclimatized" and acculturized, being the second, third or fourth generation of West Indian born Africans. Their outlook had been modified. Parry and Sherlock have noted that "by 1834... the Negro slave had gone through a process of transition (that) enabled him to adapt himself to adverse conditions and to acquire, given the opportunity, such European habits and skills

⁶K. Boodoo, Politics and Economics of Independence, (M. A. Thesis, 1967, Carleton University, Ottawa), p. 6.

⁷Williams, History..., p. 85.

as seemed to him desirable".⁸ In addition, not all slaves were plantation slaves.

Furthermore, the slaves coming to Trinidad met a different set of circumstances. Trinidad was grossly underdeveloped and the opportunities available (to the planters) were abundant: virgin soil, sparse population -- all the means for expansion of the plantations, a situation akin to that found by the early settlers in the United States. The rigid "slave establishment" had not yet solidified as in the older territories such as Jamaica and Barbados. Sociologically, too, the presence of a sizable African population meant they were not subjected to the same degree of alienation as their predecessors, but might have been helped by this community in making the transition, while they in turn helped to regenerate or even revive the dying African culture. Hence, Herskovits could report that he found retention of African customs and beliefs, diet, economy, but especially the musical complex "in its purest type", in the village of Toco.⁹ Slave history in Trinidad, therefore, differs significantly from those of the other British West Indian islands and could account for the differences in attitude between Trinidadian Negroes and those of the other islands. They have been sometimes called the "Americans of the West Indies" by other West Indians.

If the short period of slavery in Trinidad helped the slaves, it created a problem for the French and Spanish colonists who had formed an influential upper class of landed gentry. Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 with emancipation planned for 1834. Orders in Council, 1812 and 1823, providing for a registry and.

⁸ Boodoo, p. 3..

⁹ Williams, p. 85.

amelioration of conditions regarding slaves, further aggravated a worsening labour situation that threatened to ruin the sugar industry. To the Creole upper class, it seemed that Britain, who had gained control of the island by conquest in 1796, and cession in 1802, was provoking the bankruptcy of her European rivals.

Some idea of the labour shortage facing the planters is gleaned from the following statements. Williams notes that the slave Registry showed a total of 25,717 slaves in Trinidad in 1814.¹⁰ Vera Rubins states "by abolition there were 32,246 slaves in Trinidad and Tobago".¹¹ Speaking of the economy at a later date, Williams mentions there was "a mere 17,439 slaves in Trinidad".¹² (That the shortage was not caused only by Emancipation but also a sparse population is seen from this account:

It was against this background (17,439 slaves) of an acute shortage of labour that Trinidad's economic development proceeded in the period between its annexation by Britain and the emancipation of the slaves in 1833.)¹³

Therefore, the argument made by O. Padmore that the introduction of indentured workers in 1845 was "excessive and superfluous"¹⁴ cannot be sustained. In fact, the withholding of labour after Emancipation only exacerbated an already "acute" situation.

¹⁰Williams, p. 86

¹¹V. Rubins, "Culture, Politics and Race Relations", SES, Vol. 11, (1962), p. 438.

¹²Williams, p. 86.

¹³Ibid., p. 88. See also F. Francis, "A Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning", case study of Trinidad & Tobago, (U.N.R.I.S.D. 1973/2 GE73-1493), p. 15.

¹⁴O. Padmore, The Role of Trade Unions in a Developing Economy: The Trinidad Experience, (M. A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1962) p.10. This misconception of the labour situation in Trinidad is a result of a tendency among West Indian writers in linking Trinidad's history with the other "older" West Indian Islands, to apply the same conclusions. The same applies to the slave conditions.

That a labour shortage existed prior to and following Emancipation is unquestionable. If the planters were to develop the sugar industry and the other crops under the new "laissez-faire" terms, a source of labour that could maintain a steady work force had to be found. But equally important, the cost of this supply had to be cheap. Between 1834 and 1840 some workers were recruited on a contract basis from Portugal, France, Germany and Britain. A small group of Chinese (339) had also been introduced earlier, in 1806 - only thirty remained. The combination of slave-like working conditions and the weather led many to return home or enter other fields of work, and others to desist in venturing out. Therefore, by 1845, the labour situation had not improved. With the failure of these sources, Britain turned to India.

It is interesting to note that when India was first suggested by the Governor, Sir Ralph Woodford, the Indians were meant to be used as small farmers cultivating their own land - probably swayed by the economic theory that free enterprise is more productive than contract labour. He also recommended that some consideration be given to the sociological requirements of the immigrants, because "without their priests, their chiefs, their families, artisans... etc., the success of such a plan could not be expected".¹⁵ But the social considerations were outweighed by the economic - the need to supply cheap labour to the planters as a concession for abolishing the slave trade and the sugar preferences. The Indians were given a Protector or, as we would say today, an ombudsman.

¹⁵ Williams, p. 78.

These conditions were in marked contrast to those received by the African worker. For example, after Emancipation the purchasing of land was made difficult in order to prevent the drift away from the plantation. Their socio-cultural considerations were neglected, either because of their association with slavery or their high degree of acculturation. Whatever may be the reason, the decision to import labour from India¹⁶ rather than from the neighbouring islands, or to meet the demands of higher wages, created the impression of the perpetuation of slavery, at the freed slaves expense. Thus, the Indians who had been contracted to work at the cheaper rate of 25 cents per day maximum became the scapegoats. The frustration of the Negroes was converted into a source of contempt for the Indians. It was under these circumstances that the first group of Indian workers (225) arrived in Trinidad on the 30th May, 1845, on the immigrant ship "Fatel Razak". They consisted of 197 men, 28 women and 1 infant.

Their contract was of five years duration, with a guaranteed free return passage; (the ineconomies of this soon terminated it in 1860); they were bound to live on the plantations to which they were allotted - a condition that led to the nick-name of "bound-collies". Misdemeanours and transgressions of the contract were punishable by fines and imprisonment. Comparing the Indentureship system with slavery, Eric Williams has written:

The grand discipline of slavery and the principal incentive to labour was the whip. The grand discipline of the system of Indenture and the principal incentive to labour was the jail..
Indentured labour was...slavery plus a constable.¹⁷

¹⁶ J. C. Jha, "The Indian Heritage in Trinidad", in John G. LaGuerre (From Calcutta to Caroni, (Longman Caribbean London, 1974), p. 14.

¹⁷ Williams, p. 106.

Even under such conditions, 143,000 Indians had been brought to Trinidad by the time Indentureship was abolished in 1917. Only 13% had returned. But why did they come?

From the available evidence, there appears several reasons for the Indians' decision to "immigrate". Some reported they were "tricked" or kidnapped, promised high wages, or for adventure; it was also a time of great emigration from these areas (U. P. Bihar).¹⁸ Others came to escape either legal convictions or family persecutions and responsibilities. Their decision to remain was possibly prompted by their comparative "independence" once they were free to live off the estates on their own lands.¹⁹ After 1890 it was also possible to buy Crown lands. As a result, they set up "Indian villages" on the peripheries of the estates and revived their native life styles. On or off the estates, they remained agricultural and rural. This pattern of residence has not changed in the intervening years. In 1891 they accounted for 78.33% of the rural population, in 1974 it was 71%.²⁰ In consequence, they suffered one of the greatest deprivations - educational neglect. It was not until the Canadian Missions opened up primary schools in the rural districts, purposely for the Indians, that they received any educational attention. However, the system of indenture can be said to have brought one gain to the Indians. For, ironically, the system of labour which was designed along a caste system based on colour succeeded in breaking

¹⁸ Jha, Indian Heritage, p. 2.

¹⁹ When their free return passage was cancelled, they were offered small parcels of land in return for a second term.

²⁰ Winston Dookeran, "East Indians & the Economy", in La Guerre, p. 75.

down the barriers between a people who had lived all their lives in an accepted caste society. Faced by an opposition of "others", the Indians - Hindu and Muslims, were forced to relegate cultural differences and unite on racial lines, as Indians.

It was during this period of mass immigration - or imported labour, that Chinese were again introduced to Trinidad under the "bounty system".²¹ Most of them came from Malaya and not China. In the early phase of their immigration, a shortage of Chinese women resulted in inter-marriages with African and other women of "colour". However, once a Chinese community was formed, Chinese families procured brides for their sons from China, and a Chinese segment appeared. Unlike the Indians, they did not remain in agriculture but moved into the urban centres and commerce.

Arabs of Syria and Lebanon and some Jews have also settled in the country since World War II. The Arabs came mostly as traders and to escape the Middle-East turmoil; the Jews came in their exodus from Europe to escape persecution and the War. Their visibility in the society is marked by their influence in the commerce and manufacturing sectors of the economy which has gained them political power and social status beyond their proportion in the society. This has earned them the resentment of the more 'indigenous' members who have failed to acquire equal status despite their centuries of residence and was manifested by such in the 1970 riots. (Table 2 shows the extent of property ownership).

²¹The "bounty system" offered payments to captains of ships for every labourer brought to the colony, regardless of race or nationality. Boodoo also states that many were found to be the type distinctly not required (for agriculture). Boodoo, op. cit., p. 8.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF % OF BUSINESS OWNERSHIP
EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT WITH ETHNIC %

Ethnic Group	% Business Ownership	Recruitment to Executive Posts	Population %
White	53%	)	1.2
Off-White ^a	24	) 70%	1.7
Mixed	10	10	14.2
Indian	9	0	40.1
African	4	20	42.8

SOURCE: Tapia, No. 20, (1971), p. 2.^aInclude Arabs, Jews, Chinese

Taken as a whole, the impression to be drawn from this chapter is that Trinidad and Tobago, in comparison with other developing nations, constitute a relatively prosperous country, owing mainly to its possession of petroleum, though small. On the other hand, this good fortune is not shared by all. High unemployment rates, the division of labour by race, and residence are conducive to creating a potential class conflict.

In its multi-racial composition, race remains the criterion of ethnic affiliations and identity since neither of the groups has claim to native habitation as the "Bumiputera", (sons of the soil) in Malaya or Fiji. Nor do they have the long history of coexistence to blunt the lines of cleavages as the different tribes have had in Africa. Trinidad has, like the rest of the Caribbean and Mauritius, a population composed entirely of immigrants of established cultures, and therefore displays a different type of "pluralism" from the more endogenous societies. Its problems of nation-building are exacer-

bated by the presence of two almost equally large immigrant groups - the "two majorities", the Indians and the Negroes who vie with each other for the ruling position.²² In the absence of a claim to a natural right, this competition has centered on race and majority rule in the post-Independence period. All these elements have thus contributed to the formation of the attitudes and perceptions of the various groups in this society.

The following chapters will show that the colonial policy of keeping the two majority groups - the Indians and the Negroes - socially and physically apart reinforced the social distance occasioned by their cultural diversity. In the post-Independence period, attempts at bridging this distance at the working-class level were purposely foiled for the specific reason of economic development. Nation-building being premised on economic well-being suffered. Thus, to the extent that the economic sphere remained the avenue of association, to that extent, the country exhibits its pluralistic features.

This brief socio-historical background has been introduced so that the reader may be made aware of the complex social problems faced by a multi-ethnic society as it moves from colony to sovereign nation during a period of industrialization.

²² The Indians have retained more of their cultural attitudes than the Negroes because of their shorter residence in the area and their obligation to live on the plantations, which kept them together as a community. The Negroes, who for historical reasons have no clear ties with their original home in Africa, despise the Indians for their cultural persistence. Some have even used it against the Indians' claim to an equal opportunity to govern the country, by arguing that their longer residence and slavery in the country made them the natural heirs to the country. For a better explanation, see Chapter 8.

CHAPTER V

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE UNIONISM

In two previous chapters (II and III) a conceptual framework based on the writings and formulations of Pye, Deutsch and Mazrui on political development (especially nation-building), Furnivall, M. G. Smith, and Despres on ethnically plural societies, and Perlman and Millen on trade unions, was put forward. In Chapter IV the setting wherein the conceptual framework is to be utilized has been described. In this chapter, some historical aspects of the development of the relationship between the ethnic groups and the trade union movement and political parties will be examined. To demonstrate the growth process it is divided into three stages: the early or embryonic (1919-1936), the developmental stage (1937-1946), and the pre-Independence period (1946-1961).

The first attempt at an organized labour movement in Trinidad and Tobago began with the socio-political organization of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (TWA) established by Alfred Richards in 1897, one major reason/ ^{for this form} was the absence in the law of the right to form trade unions. Although it was the first to pay heed to the needs of the unrepresented working masses in the colony, there is no evidence to suggest its ever having agitated for the right to form trade unions. It operated chiefly as a political organization, concerned with constitutional reforms. That is, as a political body, it viewed any attempts at reform as lying strictly within the legal realms of legislation, operating within the system of British Constitutional dictates. Or, as G. Lewis puts it, even when the British were beaten, it was with their own stick. It

confirms, however, the criticism that although it was interested in the labouring masses, it was more concerned with ameliorating the situation of political representation, restoring municipal rights to the city and ending Indian immigration,¹ in which it succeeded. But lacking the mass support of a trade union or political party, the Association eventually became defunct by 1903; i.e., after the 1902 Water Riots in Port of Spain (POS).

By the end of the first World War, however, events in Trinidad portended well for the labor organization. By 1917 Indian indentureship was terminated, and along with it the post of Protector of Immigrants² and the policy of keeping the Indians restricted to the estates. Indians were then free to move and associate with fellow workers in the island. Furthermore, their establishment of "Indian villages" led to the development of closer community ties and solidarity among this group. The Negroes had by this time all but left agriculture for the industrial and service sectors. Consequently, this division of labour by race and residence, which would play an important role later, emerged. The significance of the Indian's freedom lies in the fact that the workers were now beyond the easy grasp of the Government's and employers' policy of playing one group off against the other.³

¹R. Mentor, Trade Unionism in Trinidad, (Workers Publishing Co., San Fernando, 1944), p. 1.

²The East Indian National Association (EINA) and the East Indian National Congress (EINC) formed in late 19th century - agitated in respect of day-to-day problems of East Indian community but cannot be said to have replaced the Protector. See B. Samaroo in *La Guerre*, p.85.

³Evidence to this effect was cited in a letter to the Colonial Office 1919, from the white business community in which they noted that the freedom of the Indian workers from the control of their plantation owners, managers, etc., had removed a "substantial safeguard against trouble with the Negroes and vice versa". With the abolition of such a counterpoise, the "creole coolie" will either remain an interested spectator or join the mob". C.O. 295/522 Confidential, Best and Milner, August 7, 1919, cited in S. Basdeo, "The 1934 Indian Labour Disturbances in Trinidad", unpublished paper presented at Conference, Indians in the Caribbean, at University of West Indies, (St. Augustine), 1975, p. 12.

The end of World War I also witnessed the return to Trinidad of its nationals who had served in the British West Indian Regiment. Stirred and encouraged by the experiences of workers abroad, this group of Negro and Indian Trinidadians who had served in the war together, and who may previously have viewed each other with suspicion, now saw their interest as dependent on their common effort. The TWA was revived in 1919 with its motto: agitate, educate, confederate.

But it was Captain A. A. Cipriani, a Trinidadian of Corsican descent, who was most responsible for its successful revival.⁴ Cipriani, perhaps because he was neither Indian nor Negro, had won the confidence of both groups, and for the first time workers -- labourers -- could be said to have had representation despite the lack of trade unions.

But in spite of its sympathy with the "barefoot" workers the new TWA remained, as its forerunner, essentially a political organization affiliated to the British Labour Party. Its platform consisted of universal suffrage, self-government, and racial equality in job opportunities, but it did not include the formation of trade unions of interest to Cipriani. Knowles, writing on West Indian trade unions, noted that the TWA had shown itself to have had "no stomach for full-blooded trade unionism". When pressed to organize support for the workers during the 1919 strikes, it reiterated that "the Association is a political organization for the furtherance of social reform...it is not a labour union for gain".⁵ Dr. Zin Henry

⁴ Z. Henry, Labour Relations & Industrial Conflict in Commonwealth Countries, (Columbus Publishing Co., POS, 1942), p. 27.

The southern branch was led by Timothy Roodal and for a short time by A. C. Rienzi who left to study in Ireland. He returned to join TLA in 1934 but split with Cipriani soon after.

⁵ Roberts, pp. 13-14.

also mentions that no effort was made by TWA of securing bargaining status from employers; nor was the right to form trade unions included in their agitation until after the Ordinance was enacted.⁶

That the requisite for trade union organization existed prior to 1937 was amply manifested by the workers' organization and solidarity during the Waterfront Strike in 1919. Within three days, it achieved such nation-wide support from workers in different industries, including agriculture and the police, that it was thought necessary to call in the British Caribbean Fleet. The Strike's effectiveness can also be measured by the fact that the conciliation board was instituted on the third day and a compromise reached on a 25% wage increase.⁷ That is, the 1919 strike clearly demonstrated that the workers in Trinidad, whether of different racial ethnic background or not, were ready to unite as a class when their interests were severely threatened. More importantly, it showed that it was possible in Trinidad for Negroes and Indians of the working class to unite on a class basis, even though such a short time had elapsed since the Indians were freed and the oft-claimed antagonism of Negroes towards Indians was still generally accepted.

In spite of this, or because of it, Cipriani consistently refused to form a trade union, although many branches of the TWA operated as trade unions. Consequently, when the Trade Union Ordinance (1932) was enacted requiring all organizations representing

⁶ Henry, p. 37.

⁷ Capt. A. A. Cipriani was a cocoa planter and race horse owner. His action was a culmination of a number of instances when he seemed to be on the side of government rather than the worker; e. g., Minimum Wage; the Law; the open strike 1936; the ideological split with Rienzi -- see B. Rennie, History of the Working-class in the 20th Century: Trinidad & Tobago, Part II, pp. 25-27

labour to be registered as trade unions, Cipriani, acting on the advice of the British Trade Union Congress, refused to register the Association as a union. He claimed that the law as it stood amounted to "precious little" use, since it denied workers the right to peaceful picketing and immunization against action in tort, and did not include any settlement for agriculture workers.

Cipriani was probably justified in rejecting such a labour law, but it had been suggested that a truer reason lay in a conflict of interest for Cipriani. By 1932, he was an elected member of the legislative Council and as a member of the upper class he had shown himself to be at variance with the demands of the working class and closer to his own class.⁸ The evidence tends to support the latter view. Nevertheless, the result of this combination of a political association with an upper class leadership and inadequate labour legislation had a twofold effect. First, it caused a split in the movement which brought to the forefront leaders from among the workers such as T. U. B. Butler, Jim Barrett, Elma Francois and Jim Headley, and two middle-class leaders, A. C. Rienzi and Quintin O'Connor, most of whom were to play important roles in the future. Second, it retarded the evolution of the labour movement into its natural organization -- the trade union. It also, incidentally, indicated that in such alliances when a choice is to be made it would favour the political association.

This does not belittle the success of Cipriani's leadership. Between 1919 and 1932, the TWA flourished, boasting of 98

⁸Rennie, pp. 31-54.

sections and a membership of 125,000 workers, peasants, and small business people⁹ out of a total population of 450,000.¹⁰ During this time it succeeded in obtaining substantial gains for workers, including an 8-hour work day, factory legislation, Workmen's Compensation law, land settlement and several minor improvements in work conditions.

However, with the TWA converted to a political party, the labour momentum shifted to the south where Butler and Rienzi were located. But it was the riot of the sugar workers or "Indian Riots", occurring in a period of economic slump, that caused the shift.

If 1919 was the watershed mark in labour consciousness, the 1934 strike in the sugar belt was the consolidation and the catalyst of the trade union movement. Between 1919 and 1934, the government and the planters, who had been forced to take some interest in the workers following the 1919 Strike, soon relapsed into their former ways. Whatever legislation was enacted to ameliorate the situation by providing for better industrial relations continued to be ignored. The result was that labour relations continued to worsen.¹¹

In 1934, the sugar workers began feeling the effects of the World Depression in the sugar industry. Large-scale retrenchment and consequent unemployment was aggravated by an unusual drought in Trinidad which made it impossible for the sugar workers to indulge in their alternative occupation of rice cultivation to supplement their

⁹Henry, p. 22.

¹⁰A. W. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies, Fabian Society Research Series, No. 44, (V. Gollancz Ltd., London, 1939), p. 193.

¹¹For a detailed account of the 1934 strike, see S. Basdeo, op. cit.

income. The employers' indifference and the deliberate withholding of payments from the workers added to the workers' plight. Subsequently, in July, the sugar workers struck and were joined by the large contingent of other unemployed agriculture workers. There followed hunger marches into Port of Spain, demonstrations and riots, until the workers' demands were met. No sooner had this major strike been settled when a series of labour disturbances erupted in Trinidad and throughout the Caribbean. This culminated in Trinidad in June 1937 with Trinidad's first general strike.

In the wave of rioting that followed the calling of the strike, fourteen people were killed, fifty-nine wounded and hundreds arrested, including labour leaders and eventually some months later, Butler. There was also a substantial amount of property damage and looting. The tensions and frustrations which had been brewing since 1934 had finally boiled over. But what exactly triggered off this labour unrest? It is difficult to pinpoint any one issue. It seems rather the result of a combination of several factors, escalating from a generally increasing labour consciousness assisted by mass unemployment and worsening agricultural market conditions, that were finally provoked by the attempted arrest of Butler. Thus some of the underlying causes that led to this revolt may be identified as the economic situation, state-industrial relations and Butler's role in the labour movement.

T. U. B. Butler

By June 1937, Butler had emerged as the undisputed labour leader of the oilfield workers. Noted for his Messianic oratory and ability to rouse a crowd, he had the added asset of being "one of them"-

TABLE I
LABOUR ACTIVITIES IN TRINIDAD, 1934-1937

Date	Event
May-July 1934	-Disturbances, strikes in sugar estates
February 1935	-Apex Oilfield workers strike, hunger march to Port of Spain
1936	-General disturbances: Negro Welfare Association in Port of Spain -Protest and hunger marches -T. U. B. Butler's meeting with the governor -Stephen Trust Fund Issue -The Mayor's Fund Issue -Agitation and demonstration for dole -Prince's Building Meeting of government and labour
July 1936	-Meeting of Negro Welfare Association, Butler, A. C. Rienzi to form national labour organization -Lecture by government on labour situation and proposal of replacing cow's milk with coconut milk
August 1936	-Butler forms British Empire Workers and Citizens Home Rule Party
September 1936	-Railway workers strike -Prisoners riot at Port of Spain gaol
October 1936	-Butler demands 50% pay increase for oil workers and removal of Blue and Red Book System ^a -NWA tries to make inroads with oilworkers to counteract Rienzi's influence -Butler's and-to-the-people Movement
June 19, 1937	-Attempt to arrest Butler--beginning of strike riots in Fyzabab -Strikes in POS, Rio-Claro, Sangre Grande -Oil Preferential Tariff issue

SOURCE: B. Rennie, History of the Working Class in the 20th Century, pp. 70-80; and Z. Henry, Labour Relations and Industrial Conflict, p. 25.

^a See footnote 25

a worker. He could therefore identify with and relate to their plight. Cipriani by this time no longer held the respect of the workers, and with their increasing class consciousness they saw him as one of the oppressor class.¹² When Butler was expelled from the Labour Party, this increased his stature and further diminished Cipriani's influence over the oil workers. To consolidate his influence among these workers, Butler established his own party, the British Empire Workers' and Citizens' Home Rule Party (BEW & CHRP) popularly known as the "Butler Party", in August 1936. The Party's policy was carried literally in its name. Unfortunately, it lacked an articulated ideology and the organization skills necessary to consolidate this grouping. It is commonly agreed that Butler himself lacked these qualities.

He seemed to desire no more than better working conditions for workers and home rule - self-government. Therefore, the success of the strike was due not to any particular manoeuvring or organization by Butler, but rather to the confidence he instilled in the workers by his agitation and their belief in his sincerity in fighting their cause, which created a unity of the labour movement at that time.

Two other parties or organizations that were instrumental in promoting this successful strike were the Negro Welfare and Cultural Association (NWA) in POS, and the Trinidad Citizen League in San Fernando led by Rienzi. The NWA (1934) was formerly the National Unemployment Movement (NUM) in 1933.¹³ It was strongly Marxist in orientation with purely working class as leadership. It

¹² See S. Ryan, Race & Nationalism in Trinidad & Tobago, (ISER, Toronto, 1974), p. 57: Henry Craig's quotation.

¹³ Rennie, p. 64. The NWA was responsible for organizing the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union (SWWTU) and other activities--see Rennie, op.cit., p.

was quite active in organizing demonstrations and workers in the Laventille hills. By 1937, it also had a strong following among the waterfront workers who had defected from the Labour Party. As an organization in the north, it sought to join with Butler in a national labour organization in 1936. Although they did not get Butler's agreement on that issue, they nevertheless recognized Butler's leadership and agreed to support the oil workers' strike, planned for June 21, 1937.

The second factor that aided the "Butlerite" movement was A. C. Rienzi. Shortly after he joined Cipriani and the TLP, they were in conflict and Rienzi was subsequently dismissed from the party. He then formed his own Trinidad Citizen League (TCL). Since he was also quite popular and enjoyed the confidence of the workers, both Indian and Negro, the combination of Rienzi and Butler shifted the labour impetus to the south.¹⁴ Indian and Negro workers were now both represented and joined together. Thus, when the attempt was made to arrest Butler while he was addressing a crowd of workers on the eve of a strike, the situation and mood of the times were ripe for the events that followed. Butler was instrumental in creating that mood, but the wholesale support of the workers in other fields could not have come without this general coordination and unity of purpose. Had it not been for this, it would not have been a general strike, but simply an oil workers' strike.

The Economic Issue

The economic issue was probably the strongest motivating factor behind the strike. As Professor Arthur Lewis has noted, "The

¹⁴ The development of the oil and sugar industries in "the south" was also instrumental in causing the shift.

strike was no sudden storm",¹⁵ Since October 1936, Butler had made a demand for 50% wage increase and better working conditions, including free medical attention and double pay for overtime work.¹⁶ That is, negotiations (if they can be called that) had been pending for some time. The oil companies, however, were not in any haste to conclude them. The absence of a union and an already large surplus-labour market, being augmented by further unemployment caused by the Great Depression, made it an employer's market. With the cost of living rapidly rising by 17% in 1937 according to government sources,¹⁷ and by 111% in 1938 according to another source,¹⁸ the companies were confident that the workers would eagerly accept their 2% increase, without fringe benefits, for it was their impression that the workers were happy, contented people who had been misled by extremists.¹⁹

The question arises: Under the general economic conditions prevailing in the industry, could the companies have afforded a higher rate of increase? The consensus is a resounding "yes". Lewis has noted that of the 22 companies operating in Trinidad at the time (1936), the 5 larger ones produced 88% of the total output. Profits from 4 of these for the years 1936-37 amounted to £1,540,000 over a total capitalization (including all reserves and premiums) of £6,770,000. That is, their profits were more than three times the total wage bill for the entire (22 companies) industry of £473,000. Further, dividends declared that year reached up to 30% in the case

¹⁵ Lewis, p. 21.

¹⁶ Ryan, p. 48.

¹⁷ Lewis, p. 21

¹⁸ Ryan, footnote, p. 47; estimated by C.S.O. with base year at 1935.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 48.

of one company, and of another, 45%.²⁰ Workers' wages were between 70 and 80 cents per hour, in a week of sometimes up to 90 hours.²¹

An even worse situation existed in the sugar industry, where the average weekly rate was \$3.00. Their rates in 1845 were 25 cents a day; but the sugar industry was less able to afford high wage increases.

Labour-Management Relations and Conditions:

The second most important factor underlying the cause of the strike was undoubtedly the absence of any means of communicating the workers' general dissatisfaction or demands to the employers. The deficiency in communication and lack of organized machinery for collective representation, Forster noted, "could only find expression by individual complaints and these were not likely to be too sympathetically received...."²² In addition, the Forster Report pointed to the following facts as contributing to the generally poor labour relations:²³

1. The Industrial Court created since 1920 had never functioned.
2. The ILO Convention (1928) regarding minimum wages, although ratified by the U.K. 1929, and passed in Trinidad in 1935, was not instituted.
3. The Workmen's Compensation law, also in violation of ILO Convention Treaty, did not cover agricultural workers.
4. Though directed by the Colonial Secretary to establish a labour department, none existed in Trinidad.

²⁰ Lewis, p. 20.

²¹ Ryan, p. 48.

²² Rennie, p. 70.

²³ W. H. Knowles, Trade Union Development and Industrial Relations in BWI, (University of California Press, Los Angeles, California, p. 8. citing of the Forster Report.

In short, whatever labour regulations or laws there were existed only on paper. That is, all except for the Trade Union Ordinance, which did not permit picketing and immunization. The local government, then, and not the British government, were therefore responsible for this administrative lapse. This clearly indicated some form of collusion between the ruling class and employers that gave the latter a freedom to exercise substantial power in the colony, expressed by their indifference to the workers' conditions. The English journalist Calder Marshall called this "the benevolent tyranny"; tyranny that was evident in the legislation in the interest of the exploiting capitalists, that was "close to the demands of big business but distant from the workers (and)...deaf to the cries of distress because it has not tried to listen".²⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that the "Red Book" and "Blue Book" system²⁵ which Butler equated to the treatment of "tribalized Bantus" could be introduced in the oil fields and used to victimise workers without any resistance from either the government or the unorganized workers. It was against this tyranny of economic politics that the workers rebelled. And it was this revolt in 1937 that gave the final push to the emergence of trade unions in Trinidad. Although the strike was a failure, in that the workers did not obtain their demands before resorting to riots and violence; it nevertheless was a supreme

²⁴ Calder Marshall, Glory Dead, cited in Ryan, p. 54.

²⁵ It is believed that the system was introduced by the South African managers at Trinidad Leaseholds Ltd., but operated in the industry as a whole. It consisted of two categories—the "Red Book" and the "Blue Book". The Red Book was used for recording a worker's defiance of company regulations and were considered as "grave"; the Blue Book was used for less "grave" acts: absenteeism, malingering, etc. On the accumulation of a certain number of acts, a worker could be fired, and unable to find work in any other oil field. It was a form of discipline and identification of the "good" and "bad" workers. See Rennie, p. 70, and Lewis, p. 21.

success in convincing them of their need and ability to unionise. They recognized that it was only by organized collective action they could hope to be heard and have their grievances redressed. Therefore, they decided to accept the advice that Cipriani had refused: unionise and then fight for reforms. It is reported that such was their determination that "even before the crisis was over, meetings were being held by workers all over the country to lay plans for the organization of unions"²⁶ in spite of Butler's absence in prison.²⁷

Another realization that came out of this crisis was the degree of class consciousness among the workers. This found its utmost expression in their refusal to be daunted by Butler's absence and their request to Rienzi to become their leader.²⁸ The Commission under the Chairmanship of Lord Moyne rightly remarked that the disturbances were "a phenomenon of a different character",

...representing no longer a mere blind protest against a worsening of conditions, but a positive demand for the creation of new conditions that will render possible a better and less restricted life.²⁹

Developmental Years:

This "new-dawning" mood was manifested in the formation of trade unions in quick succession throughout the country. Some of the earliest ones founded are shown in Table 2. In 1938, the Committee

²⁶ Ryan, p. 58.

²⁷ Butler went into hiding from the day of the outbreak and did not reveal himself until he appeared before the Commission of Enquiry. He was later arrested and sentenced to 2 years imprisonment.

²⁸ Henry, p. 25.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

TABLE 2

ESTABLISHMENT OF TRADE UNIONS IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, 1932-1938

YEAR	UNION	ORGANISED BY	RECOGNISED
1932	(a) Railway Union Stevedores Union	Both branches of TWA, acting as trade unions.	n/a
1934	Federated Workers Trade Union	NWA	n/a
1936	(b) Amalgamated Building & Woodworkers Union Printers Industrial Union		n/a
1937	Oilfield Workers Trade Union All Trinidad Sugar Estate & Factory Workers Trade Union Seamen & Waterfront Workers Trade Union Public Works Workers Union Transport & General Workers Union Federated Workers Union Trinidad & Tobago Shop Assistants & Clerks Trade Union	Rienzi Rienzi NWA NWA OWTU O'Connor OWTU	1938 1945 1938 1938 1938 1938 1938
1938	Printers Union Public Works & Public Services Workers Union	OWTU OWTU	1938-39 1938-39

SOURCES: compiled from (a) E. Williams: History, p. 232.

(b) A. V. Lewis: Labour in the West Indies, p. 24.

for Industrial Organization was formed by the major unions. By 1939, it consisted of ten unions with a membership of 11,000 under the new name of The Trade Union Council (TUC).³⁰ Most of the activities during the early years (1937-1945) were largely devoted to consolidating and building unions and the workers movement in general.

In this effort they were aided by some new directives from the British Government. In 1943, the limitations on picketing were relaxed. Laws stipulated under the ILO Conventions were revived, and the labour department opened and was supplied with advisers from the U. K. Among them the most influential was Sir Walter Citrine (who was also a member of the Moyne Commission). He, it is said, was largely responsible for the interest and assistance given by the British TUC to the Trinidadian and Guyanese movements³¹ and, one may add, also for the type of unions that emerged, that is, a quasi British political type of union instead of the American business type of union.

Some important indicators and patterns evolving from these formative years of the trade union movement that continued to influence its later development were the leadership pattern, the opening of the U. S. naval base in Trinidad and Universal Suffrage.

Leadership

From the very beginning of the labour movement, leaders had emerged from among the workers themselves. Yet it was Cipriani, a middle to upper class white, who was the leader prior to 1937; and later, seemingly by a twist of fate, Kianzi, an Indian middle class

³⁰ Ibid., p. 51

³¹ Ibid.

lawyer, became the leader of the most powerful union in Trinidad.

In other words, to be a leader in the movement at this point in time, special status qualifications were called for: either proper colour (white) or proper profession (law). This, W. R. Jacobs rightly argues, tends to put the focus on the leader and encourages oligarchy.³² Notwithstanding this fact, it also seems that the leaders who were successful were those with the appropriate "qualifications"; hence, Cipriani at the beginning of the movement, when neither Indian nor Negro were equipped to lead; followed by Rienzi, whose leadership was based on his qualifications as a good negotiator and his "acceptance" among the workers of both races when trade unions were organized. It is suggested that Rienzi was appointed because he was the most qualified person.

In contrast to this view, Ryan, in emphasizing the racial theory, has argued that Rienzi's appointment was due to the absence of a Negro leader.³³ But if race was the sole criterion, the leaders of NWA were Negroes. They had successfully organized the Seamen & Waterfront Workers Trade Union (SWWTU) and had been associated with Butler prior to 1937, but they were noted as being more radical than Butler or Rienzi. For despite the fact that the 1937 disturbances were tantamount to a workers' revolution, it seems that, once the revolutionary action was spent, workers were more interested in building and consolidating a strong and effective union that would give them a strong bargaining position for economic gain and better industrial relations rather than in ameliorating the political situation. Ryan was therefore more correct when he (in an earlier

³² W. R. Jacobs, "Factors Affecting the Organization and Development of Trade Unions in Trinidad and Tobago", (U. W. T. 196), p. 12, pamphlet.

³³ Ryan, p. 59.

article) credited Rienzi's rise to the fact that "no Negro professional came forward".³⁴

One may conclude then that, from the very beginning or first attempt at a national movement, there was this tendency of the masses to look to a charismatic or a professional individual for leadership, and of the workers to economic rather than political gains. That is, the emergence of trade unions in Trinidad was more of the "business type" in which workers were still willing to separate the roles of government and union, prepared to leave "important political changes" to government, while filling the void the old system left with regard to the "bread and butter" problems of the working man.³⁵ None other than Butler himself publicly declared that "the era of working class revolutionary politics must give way to an era of trade unionism and collective bargaining within production".³⁶ Also, up to this time there was rapport among Indian and Negro workers. However, the arrival of the Americans in Trinidad in 1941, and the economic problems of the country, soon changed these patterns.

The U. S. Influence

The building of the U. S. naval defence base at Chaguaramas in 1941 is said to have had a "deleterious" effect on the economy and a social reawakening of the population. The reasons for this were blamed on the higher wages paid by the Americans and

³⁴ S. Ryan, "The Struggle for Afro-Indian Solidarity in Trinidad and Tobago", Index, (No. 4, 1966), p. 1-24, p. 28

³⁵ See R. Mentor, op. cit., p. 10.

³⁶ Rennie, p. 139.

the "demonstration effect".³⁷ During the construction of the base 1941-43, between 15 to 20% of Trinidad's labour force (30,000 men) were employed by the Americans at an average wage of \$1.15 per day, compared with 95 cents in government services or 80 cents in sugar. Consequently, skilled and unskilled workers were attracted to the base, creating a labour shortage in the other industries with a resultant reduction in production.

Even more significant than high wages was the experience shared by this large section of the labour force, that of working with a white man. Until then they had only known of working for the white employer. In addition, the high consumption and "easy life" style of the Americans made an indelible impression on the Trinidadian worker, awakening him to the choices available. Then as the war went on and trade with Britain was diverted to the U.S., the importation of American goods brought also its values, ideas and social mores, and reinforced the "demonstration effect". Edwin Carrington, noting this switch in the economy, pointed out that between 1936 and 1939 imports averaged 37% from the U. K. and 34% from North America (mostly Canada). By 1944, the figures had reversed to 11% (U.K.) and 59% (North America), mostly from the U.S.³⁸

³⁷ The term "demonstration effect" was used by R. Nurkse, after J. S. Duesenberry, to explain the effect that contact by poorer people with richer ones, or poor countries with rich ones had in influencing their consumption patterns and its consequences on capital formation. Briefly, the "demonstration effect" tends to create new wants and stir up dissatisfaction and shift the propensity to consume upwards. Sociologists also use the term to refer to the imitation effect on life styles, that this type of contact has. See Ragnar Nurkse, Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1953), pp. 58-59.

³⁸ E. Carrington, "Post-War Political Economy of Trinidad & Tobago", New World Qtrly., Vol. IV, No. 1 (Dead Season 1967), p. 47.

The combination of these factors with the worsening economic conditions and foot-dragging pace of legislative improvements were largely responsible for turning the labour movement from economic to political unionism. There was a consensus among the workers that without political power or support their position would stagnate at pre-1937 levels. As early as 1944, R. Mentor, secretary-general of the Trade Union Council, had declared: "There must be side by side with industrial agitation, political action as well".³⁹ This policy received added impetus at the end of the war with the publication of the Moyne Commission Report, for although it did not recommend the granting of self government, it did recommend the introduction of universal adult suffrage.⁴⁰ The post-war period (1946-1956), it will be shown below, marked the development of political unionism in Trinidad and Tobago.

Post-War Period:

The history of the development of trade unions between 1946 and 1956 is, in fact, the history of the early political development of Trinidad and Tobago. During this period unions were more directly involved in forming political parties and contesting elections; in the process, ethnic cleavages began to take definite shape. Union leadership rivalry also became political leadership rivalry, bringing schisms to the labour movement rather than cohesion. However, at this time the major responsible factors were still class and ideology. The race issue, while it was beginning to raise its head more noticeably, did not become overt until the 1956 general elections.

³⁹R. Mentor, p. 10.

⁴⁰Ryan, p. 44.

The 1946 elections were the first general elections to be fought under the new system of universal adult suffrage. Critics, however, deemed it meaningless, for the old Crown Colony system remained intact, with the Governor still enjoying the supreme power. In an effort to counteract the system, the socialist West Indian Nationalist Party (WINP) suggested a coalition comprised of all unions and parties under the banner of the United Front (UF), to contest the elections and thereby control all nine of the elected seats in the Legislative Council. Thus their manifesto claimed: "Only in unity could we obtain the whole loaf"⁴¹ i.e. self-government. It was rationalized that a united labour party combining not only politicians but also classes and races would qualify it to demand responsible government; which had been denied to the colony because of its cultural heterogeneity.⁴²

The mass vote of the unions could have been an asset, but with trade union leaders also vying for political positions, group interests soon undermined the coalition. The small farmers wanted more emphasis placed on a better social system that would give them a better deal; OWTU squabbled over the allocation of seats; and Butler maintained that seats should be proportional to the numerical strength of the respective groups. Failure to reach a compromise resulted in the withdrawal of OWTU, FWTU, and SWTU, which then formed the Trade Union Council and Socialist Party (TUCSP). The Butler party also withdrew. Consequently, the votes and the Legislature were even more fragmented. Even so, the United Front and Butler's Party succeeded in gaining three seats each. The TUCSP got

⁴¹Jacobs, p. 21.

⁴²In 1802, the Governor advised against independent legislature because the majority of people, even whites, were a mixture of nations unfamiliar with British custom. See Williams, p. 72.

two seats. There was one Independent.

It is the measure of Butler's popularity that his party won so many seats, though he was defeated. Butler had only recently (1945) been released from imprisonment following his strike actions in the oil belt in 1937 and 1941. Determined to regain his position as leader of oilfield workers and OWTU, which he felt had been usurped by Rienzi and Rojas during his disbarment, upon release Butler formed his own party, the British Empire Home Rule Party (REHRP) and the British Empire Workers and Ratepayers Union (BEWRU) and refused to join the United Front.

There is no doubt that Butler would have been elected had he contested a seat in the south, where he was popular, instead of choosing to oppose Albert Gomes, who was popular in the north. It seems, as Gomes has suggested, "either he over-estimated his influence or took the risk with his eyes open, after having decided that for him the first step to power was to get me out of the way".⁴³ Moreover, the Socialist manifesto of the middle-class dominant UF, claiming equality for all and nationalization of the large industries; i.e., a greater measure of independence, was more inspiring to the more urban northerners than Butler's calls for "Home Rule" under the British Crown, better wages and working conditions for the workers and Indian-Negro solidarity.

Whether the beacon of power misguided those judgments or they were caused by simple ignorance of this dichotomy in Trinidad is speculative. It is believed it was more the latter, since many Trinidadians tend to underestimate the differences in attitude between the people of the two areas and their perceptions of each

⁴³ A. Gomes, Through a Maze of Colour, (Key Caribbean Publishers Ltd., Port of Spain, 1974), p. 116.

other. Secondly, the question of achieving power or using the trade union as a spring-board to political office was not confined to Butler alone.⁴⁴ For years, the Indian sugar workers kept Bhadase Maharaj, a union leader, in political office. In this case, the support was derived from the racial affiliation between Maharaj and the workers.

Although Bhadase did not become President of ATSE & FWTU until the mid-50's, he had by that time already won over the mass of rural Indians--especially the Hindus. He was the chief architect in the revival of the Maha Sabha, the establishment of Hindu primary schools with Hindi being taught. In short, he had revived the Indian community; and since all Indians (in the rural district of Central Trinidad) benefitted from it, they supported and trusted him to lead them. The revival of Hinduism also revived the attitude of "Indianness" and prepared the ground for the reception of an Indian leader for the sugar workers.

Until then (mid-50's) race or ethnic affiliations did not play an important part in union politics, but this is not to say that it was totally absent. Indians and Negroes still constituted the bulk of the working class population and Indians accepted the Negro leadership of Butler and Moses. For example, prior to the 1946 elections, racial tensions arose over the language requirements for eligibility to vote; i.e., only those persons who understood spoken English were to be allowed to vote. English was proposed by the

⁴⁴ McDonald Moses left OWTU to become leader of All Trinidad Union. But when the workers refrained from supporting his candidature for election, he resigned. The point to grasp here, however, is that Moses, a Negro, besides being leader of an Indian majority union, believed that he would be supported by an Indian electorate.

Franchise Committee as a prerequisite to the right to vote. When this was accepted by such labourites as Gomes, Mentor and O'Connor, Rienzi quite logically concluded:

To insist that a voter should understand the English language when spoken would lead to the inevitable conclusion that this qualification has been introduced to deprive a large population of the Indian community of the right to vote...this is quite naturally resented as an unfair discrimination⁴⁵ against an important section of the population.

Apart from this, racial antagonism between Indian and Negro was muted. Where it did exist was between the white employer class and black working class. This was as much a factor in Gomes' victory over Butler as was Butler's unpopularity among employers. The 1946 election was then run on a multi-racial basis - both TWP and Butler's party sponsored candidates of different ethnic backgrounds. In fact, in both the 1946 and 1950 elections, the Butler party returned a majority of Indian candidates among its winners (2 out of 3 in 1946 and 4 out of 6 in 1950). For this to be possible, Negroes had to vote for Indians - with over 100 candidates vying for 9 seats. While this may be explained as the result of Butler's support among Indians and Negroes, it is also suggested that candidates capitalized on this fact; that is, candidates chose a party whose leader could almost guarantee to procure votes, as Butler. For that reason then, men such as T. Roodal, an Indian politician, joined that party. That is, at this stage in its development (10 years), the trade union movement still showed some solidarity between Indian and Negro workers; but a divergence on class, and a North-South axis, was beginning to appear.

⁴⁵Ryan, p. 69.

The most striking example of the exercising of this criterion of acceptability was the "castration" of Butler and his members in the Legislative Council following the 1950 elections. In spite of his two terms of imprisonment for inciting the workers to riot, Butler continued to call for strike action in the sugar and oil belts, if only sometimes to demonstrate his influence and leadership. This earned him the reputation of a demagogue and an irresponsible autocrat,⁴⁶ despised by most of the government officials and manufacturers. Recognition was denied his unions. Therefore, although his party won the largest number of seats (6 of the 18 seats, later made 7 by the inclusion of 1 independent) in the 1950 elections, not one member from his group was called to the Executive Council. Gomes in his book has defended his Executive appointment by suggesting it was the government's way of nullifying his attacks on the government. If Butler was such a threat as they (government) claimed, it would have been at least consistent to follow the same procedure with him, but they did not. It is believed that the government, determined to deny Butler a governing position or of creating any changes in the colonial system, adopted a strategy, 'self-destruction', which they were convinced would ensue from the frustration and disappointment among the Butlerites, as indeed it did. Williams quite aptly described this government of individuals as the caricature of "the notorious individualism of the Trinidad character and Trinidad society in its worst possible light".⁴⁷

In general, the effect of the early years of union involvement in politics was that the cause they were formed to protect was

⁴⁶ Dalley, p. 88.

⁴⁷ Williams, p. 238.

relegated to second place and often neglected. Since the political struggle was one of personal or individual prestige and accomplishment, it failed in developing either a mass political movement or a national labour movement. Consequently, the proportionate increase of unions declined. Within the first decade of its establishment - 1937-1947, registered trade unions increased from 5 to 23 with an estimated membership of 20,000. By 1950, it had reached 40 unions; and by 1956 there were 64 unions with an estimated membership of 41,118 in a labour force of more than 250,000. That is, in the first decade the increase was almost fivefold, while in the second it was less than threefold. More significantly, in spite of a rapidly growing labour force, membership only slightly doubled. The slow rate of membership increase was a consequence of the size of unions which were in turn a result of the nature of trade union organization in Trinidad and Tobago.

From its inception, trade unions were established at the work place - the plant or firm or industry which was located or concentrated in one area; e.g., oil, sugar, and dock workers. These unions therefore developed on an industry-wide basis. However, as the manufacturing sector was developed, several small "house unions" appeared, even within the same industry. For example, if there were four shirt factories, there would be four unions - one in each factory. Each factory's union was considered a separate bargaining unit and pertained only to the members of that unit. Since all workers in the factory benefited from the agreements, there was no compulsion, except a moral one, to belong to the union. Under these conditions, wages and working conditions could and did vary in the same industry. Although there is now a trend towards blanket-type and "industry unions", example the TIWU, this system of house union bargaining is

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NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS 1963 A

still operative. Therefore, the wider use of collective bargaining as providing for uniform conditions to all workers of the same industry remains underdeveloped and open to manipulation by both unionist and employer. In the oil industry where unions have historically operated on an industry basis, the Petroleum Manufacturing Association has suggested and got the "house" union type to be used.

The individualism of unions and politicians displayed up to mid-1950 was partly instrumental in setting the pattern of union independence of political parties. Only Butler's party can be said to have been the political "arm" of the union. On the other hand the growth of the unions, in numerical and economic strength, was at the expense of political parties. It may be deduced from this that the development of stronger unions than political parties was a result of its inherent inclination towards more of a "business" type union. The introduction of co-operation between the American labour movement and the Caribbean Labour Movement through the International Council of Federated Trade Unions (ICFTU) may have also influenced this tendency. However, by 1956 the union's membership and its leaders were sufficiently developed and well established when the political nationalist movement was launched. They could stand as equal and independent partners or supporters of the PNM without being subjugated by it. In this instance the PNM needed the trade unions. There is no doubt that the trade unions provided the backbone of support for the two major political parties--PNM and PDP--in the 1956 elections. For the PNM it was the springboard to political power. Unfortunately, this alignment of unions with political parties led to the polarization of union-party alliance on racial lines.

1956-62

The establishment of the PNM in January 1956 under the leadership of Dr. E. Williams introduced "party politics" in Trinidad and Tobago. Forced to their feet by the tumultuous response to Williams during his national education campaign, the political rivals of Williams made haste to consolidate their organizations and membership. Even would-be individual candidates joined up with parties as a measure of expediency such that only 30 Independents contested the election, compared to about 90 in 1946. Of the eight parties that contested the election, only three had direct links with a union. These were the Butler party, the PDF - Sugar, and CNLP--through Rojas with OWTU.

It was clear from the outset that PNM was setting the pace, leaving the others to defend their stand on the issues. But very often both sides descended to personal attacks of degeneration. In this both Rojas and Gomes suffered. Rojas, though a veteran unionist, was accused by Williams of misappropriation of union funds. The PNM supporters among the oil workers supported Williams, with the result that Rojas failed to be elected. The support for Williams amongst the African members of the population was so total and unquestioning that he was openly being hailed as the Messiah. For them no candidates other than those of the PNM were worthy of a hearing or allowed to be heard. Gomes, whom the Port of Spain unions had supported in 1946 and 1950, was made public enemy number one. Accused of betraying the workers by his close association and identification with the colonial government, the workers demonstrated their dissatisfaction by a series of strike actions. In 1956 alone,

TABLE 3

STRIKES BEFORE AND AFTER THE PNM GOVERNMENT,
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 1945-1965

"COLONIAL" GOV'T., ¹ 1945-55			PNM GOV'T., 1956-65 (Mar.)		
Year	No. of Strikes	No. of Workers Involved	Year	No. of Strikes	No. of Workers Involved
1945	4	194	1956*	7	11,028
1946*	7	7,164	1957	6	n/a
1947	4	3,148	1958*	7	1,434
1948	2	4,070	1959	69	12,598
1949	1	151	1960	31	21,048
1950*	16	3,107	1961*	35	12,322
1951	13	881	1962	75	16,762
1952	5	n/a	1963	48	17,799
1953	7	1,207	1964	44	8,097
1954	5	2,686	1965	4	7,160
1955	3	435			

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Digest (C.S.O. 1964, 1966)
(figures represent those at the beginning of the year).

* Election Years (1958 - Federal Election)

¹ Term "Colonial" used to differentiate period prior to PNM's advent.

11,028 man hours were lost compared to 3,209 man hours between 1951-55,⁴⁸ when Gomes acted as Minister of Labour and arbitrator. (Table 3 and Figure 1).

The most far-reaching attack, however, was that made on the PDP and its leader, B. S. Maharaj. As stated earlier, Maharaj had revived the Maha Sabha religion and Hindu community and became a sort of "Godfather" to rural Indians. Their faith and confidence in him was manifested by their support for him in the sugar union and at elections. During this period of trade union development, Maharaj and his party could really claim direct affiliation with a union -- the sugar union (the Butler party was already becoming a spent force). It must be remembered that the Indians constituted more than 36% of the population, with over 70% of them concentrated

⁴⁸ Ryan, p. 95.

in the rural areas -- within Maharaj's influence. It was feared that an en masse Indian vote for the PDP could result in the return to the Legislature of an "Indian" government. The thought was cause enough for revulsion among the PNM. A very clever and vicious attack was launched on the PDP and its Maha Sabha affiliations. Williams charged that the Maha Sabha in Trinidad was linked to the "intolerant and fanatic Hindu Maha Sabha in India which both Gandhi and Nehru had vigorously denounced".⁴⁹ Ryan suggests that Williams' strategy was

to drive a wedge between orthodox Hindus...and the Hindus, Moslems, and Christianized Indians...by portraying the PDP as an obscurantist communal organization with Brahmin dominance.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 140.

⁵⁰ Idem.

Despite the counterattacks and reassurances of the PDP to the contrary, the PDP was confined to fight the rural areas - and therefore contested only 14 of 24 seats. The results of the election showed that although the PNM had won 13 of 24 seats, they had failed to gain any seats in the sugar and oil districts - areas controlled by Maharaj and Butler. It is also significant that under such overwhelming support for the PNM the urban-rural dichotomy still persisted.

The paradox of the whole campaign and election results was that the multi-racialism approach exhibited by the parties' candidates, and the hope of engendering a nationalist-conscious leader and national integration, ended with the two major groups more divided than ever before and with their two parties being stereotypically identified as the Indian and Negro Party.

One of the contributing factors to the predominance of the racial issue in the 1956 election and after was the imminent establishment of the West Indian Federation. With only Trinidad and Guyana having a sizeable Indian population, the Indians were afraid of having their minority status diminished to subordinate status. The problem was still unsolved when the 1956 elections were called. With Guyana eventually withdrawing from the proposed federation, the Indians in Trinidad were even more concerned. The Federal elections of 1958 showed ethnicity to be a stronger factor, with DLP (former PDP) winning over the PNM. This sense of threat among the Indians, under a Negro-dominant government, was so reinforced that they thought it necessary to find an Indian equal to Williams for their leadership. Their solution was perceived not in reaching a compromise but in paralleling the PNM situation. Dr. R.

Capildeo, also a renowned scholar, was given the leadership of the DLP.

The DLP under Capildeo's leadership proved to be no more effective than under Maharaj. True, the fact that he was a "doctor" of some repute did give the supporters a sense of added prestige, but politically it failed to break the stigma of an "Indian" party. In fact, some of Capildeo's speeches, especially the one in which he suggested that if the Indians or people were being denied access to power by legitimate, democratic means, they should seize it forcibly,⁵¹ put fear into Negro and white segments of the population, thereby increasing PNM support. Consequently, the 1961 elections showed an even greater polarization between the two parties. Whereas in 1956 the votes were about 66% racially inclined, by 1961 they were almost 100%.⁵² Thus when Trinidad and Tobago became an independent state in August 1962, inter-ethnic relations were at the lowest point in its entire history. The prospects of building a nation seemed almost futile, or if at all, only by the complete subordination of over one third of its population, stressing the most objectionable feature of the "plural society".

The role of the trade union movement between 1956 and 1965 could be called its period of political eclipse. With the advent of Williams and black nationalism, Black trade unionists no longer saw the need for political struggle or education. The PNM, by its public lectures and meetings in Woodford Square - nicknamed from then the

⁵¹ Capildeo was addressing an election rally in POS. Reference to "undemocratic means used in the elections" was the voting machines which were believed to have been "rigged" in favour of the PNM.

⁵² See K. Bahadoorsingh for details. Trinidad Electoral Politics: the persistence of the race factor, (Oxford University Press and IRR, London, 1968).

University of Woodford Square - was fulfilling that role amiably. In fact, George Weekes, then a supporter of Williams, explained trade unions did not have the same politicizing effect in Trinidad as they did in other countries. The political education movement started by PNM in 1955-56 had a greater effect in one year than unions had since 1937. "With the appearance of Williams and majority party rule, trade unionists no longer needed to fight for workers' political alliance. Williams was the Messiah".⁵³ The implication being understood was that he would take care of "his people".

The effect was that trade unions turned once again to concentrating on strictly "union matters" - collective bargaining. Aided by the U. S. Labour Federation, especially through the ICFTU, trade unionism in Trinidad began to acquire Americanisms in its policy and structure, especially the maintenance of its independence from political parties. It is at this point that Trinidad departs from the norm among developing countries, especially Africa. In several African countries, trade unions were formed like those of Europe, pari passu with the establishment of political parties. In western European countries, particularly Britain, the unions were encouraged to increase parties' electoral support. In Africa, too, they were needed and used to support the nationalist struggle for independence. However, once independence was won the unions were incorporated with the ruling party and were thereby strictly controlled and regulated in the interest of the national economic growth, deemed to be the key to development and workers' welfare.

In Trinidad, the opposite happened. The unions were established prior to and independent of the nationalist party and

⁵³ Told to me in an interview with speaker, July 1975.

were deliberately kept away from the Party after independence. Williams had clearly stated that he did not wish to have the party bogged down with union "block vote" as had the British Labour Party; further, he also seemed to contribute to the American theory that unions should not indulge in politics. Thus unionism began to move more decidedly in Trinidad in the direction of American unionism. A reason for this development, Demas reminds us, was

In considering the development of the Caribbean economics, we have to bear in mind two fundamental institutional constraints; the existence of political democracy on classic Westminster lines and the existence of a strong independent and forceful trade union movement sharing the philosophy of North America, and to a lesser degree, British trade unionism...in few other underdeveloped countries is the trade union so imbued with ideas and attitudes more appropriate to the advanced countries.⁵⁴

In allowing the unions to remain unaffiliated to the Party, Williams indirectly encouraged them to continue the demands "appropriate to the advanced countries" in a developing country whose development plans for economic growth were based on the policy of "industrialization by invitation"; i.e., dependent on foreign investment capital. He had also failed to take cognizance of the dialectic inherent in the nationalism he triggered off in the late 50's. By trying to create a national consciousness among Trinidadians, he made them conscious of "the others", especially the exploiters, with the result that, between 1956-66 when demands were

⁵⁴W. Demas, The Economies of Development in Small Countries With Special Reference to the Caribbean (McGill University Press, Montreal, 1965), p. 98. Professor Bruce McFarlane has suggested that this direction may also be a consequence of the shift in origins, and ownership of the major employing agencies, that is, from British Management to United States Management--hence some of the major protagonists in every dispute began to have a different view of the role of trade unions in the industrial relations process.

not granted, strike actions followed in greater frequency than before. Between 1956-65 there was a total of 331 strikes and a loss of revenue to workers of (TT)\$4.5 millions and to government of over \$9.0 million. It was against this background that the Industrial Stabilization Act (1965) was enforced, outlawing strikes and completely, in a sense, disarming the trade union movement.

It is apparent from this socio-historical description that the emerging ethnic-union-party relationships were influenced in their various stages by the internal and external forces impinging upon them. That is, as the external colonial power dominated the system, the two major ethnic groups found common cause in protecting their interests against the planter class by jointly supporting the political parties. However, with the rise of nationalist politics and the question of dominance by one of the ethnic groups over the others, the unions aligned themselves with the parties on racial lines.

We will examine the development of those relationships in the post-independence period in the next chapter, in particular its influence in directing the course of the trade union movement towards political or business types.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE PARTIES

The previous chapter described the development of the links between ethnicity, the trade union movement and the rise of political parties in the Colonial period. The purpose of this chapter will be to focus attention more directly on the links between the political parties, its leaders and the trade unions on the eve of Independence and their change after Independence. To this end it will examine the evolution of the unions' relationship with the nationalist movement as led by Dr. Eric Williams, and sugar unions relationship with the leader of the DLP, Basdeo Maharaj,* and their contribution in promoting the quasi-political-business union movement that emerged in Trinidad in the post-Independence setting.

In Chapter III, attention was drawn to the ideal examples of "business" and "political" unionism as represented by the United States and the U.S.S.R. respectively. Although the trade union movement in Trinidad can, in general, be classified with those of the political persuasion, the split of the movement into two factions, each representing to a greater degree than the other one of the two extremes, has bestowed on it an ambivalent character. This situation, it is hypothesised, was created by a change in the Government's association with some trade unionists after Independence; and this change was itself motivated by the Government's fear of an increasing political opposition from the trade union movement which

* Maharaj was the leader of the DLP until 1961, but his influence in the party continued long after. Together with his role as leader of the All-Trinidad Union he remained, to all intents and purposes, leader of the Indian people.

tried to link the workers of oil and sugar in defiance of the Government's policy.

Trinidad and Tobago became an independent sovereign state in August, 1962. In that year, however, industrial unrest reached its highest peak with seventy-five (75) strikes, the largest annual number in the country's history. The wave of industrial unrest which had accompanied the nationalist party's ascent to power in 1956 was accredited to the rise of nationalism and the ensuing reaction to foreign dominance of the economy. Consequently, there were seven major strikes in 1956 compared with only three in 1955. Although there were thirteen strikes recorded between 1957-1958, industrial relations in this period were considered relatively quiet. It is noteworthy that economic growth made "unprecedented" and "substantial strides" in this period.

In 1959, however, a trend of worsening industrial relations with high costs to the economy began, letting up only briefly in the election year of 1961, and finally prohibited by the enforcement of the Industrial Stabilization Act, 1965 (ISA). The short duration of the unions-Government co-operation was in some way a result of the Government's ambivalence towards trade unions, and as one observer remarked, the tendency of the workers to interpret Williams' election stridency of "Massa Day Done" as their licence to be no respecter of anyone and wield the big stick¹, their freedom not to work.

In a speech delivered at Woodford Square in 1955, Williams in an obvious reference to the then Minister of Labour,

¹ Trinidad Guardian, 13/4/75, hereinafter called Guardian.

Albert Gomes, denounced the Government's indifference in having a practicing trade unionist nominated to the Upper House as "indefensible". He noted that such conditions lead "straight to totalitarianism", fission workers and recognise only those they consider amenable. Thereupon he advocated that the unionists' place should be in the Lower House, as an elected member.² By inference then, he was not against unionists participating in politics but objected to their having any responsible portfolio in the Government.³

Paradoxically, there was some measure of consistency in the relationship between the trade unionists and the nationalist Party leader. Although Williams believed that the Party should be the defender, "the political arm" of the labour movement, he also believed it "must not actively intervene in the formation or management of trade unions".⁴ Hence, he continuously refused to affiliate the unions formally with his party as had been done in Jamaica and Barbados or in most of the countries of Europe and Africa. The role of the governing party, he maintained, should be to promote and enforce "proper and civilized industrial relations based on collective bargaining".⁵ Addressing an audience in Guyana in March, 1963, Williams thus reiterated his disagreement with "all those idiots...who say that Government must interfere in the industrial relations or ban strikes".⁶

² E. Williams, "Constitution Reform in Trinidad & Tobago", lecture in Woodford Square, 1955, cited in C. D. Parris in paper prepared for University of West Indies (1972), p. 34.

³ Donald Granado has been the only (former) unionist to hold a "cabinet" post in the PNM Government since 1956. But the cabinet-system then did not operate in the usual parliamentary sense. See Appendix I

⁴ Parris, p. 2.

⁵ E. Williams, "The Future of the West Indies and Guyana", address given at Queen's College, Georgetown, 13/3/63. (Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 14.

⁶ Idem.

In brief, up to March 1963, Williams policy towards trade unions appeared to be one of non-interference and non-alignment based on the belief that modern industrial relations may best operate by collective bargaining where unions are free from political ties and responsibilities. He was determined not to have his party's machinery bogged down by the unions "block vote", as had happened with the T.U.C. in Britain and the British Labour Party.

It seems in this regard Williams was influenced by the American system in which unions and Government maintain separate and exclusive identities. At the same time, however, he was equally determined to maintain the British parliamentary system. This strategy of combining the two systems was to affect the nature and development of the trade union movement, but more importantly, it was an early signal from Williams that in his efforts to develop Trinidad the trade unions were to be kept apart from the political machinations of the Party and the State. Control of the unions, as occurred after Independence, was therefore not inconsistent with such policy.

Another reason why Williams may not have wanted to dominate the unions at this time (before Independence) was based on the speculation that the newly formed West Indian Federation was tottering and Williams seemed to be moving towards an Independent Trinidad. The mass support of the unions was still needed for the Independence struggle. Moreover, ethnic support would also be essential. Since ethnic plurality was the criterion used in imposing the Crown Colony system in Trinidad, convincing Britain that Trinidadians were united on Independence would require the Indians collaboration. Williams was, therefore, obliged to maintain a non-partisan nationalist stance in order not to appear as a racialist

to the non-Negro groups.

On the other hand, it may be argued that this policy was dictated not so much by Williams' stated preference of collective bargaining or unions freedom but more expressly by the reluctance of the trade unionists to align themselves formally with a political party. Their earlier experiences in Trinidad (and knowledge of unions in other developing countries) of a Party's ascendancy over the union in any party-union alliance had tinted any such liaisons with skepticism. In addition, by 1955 the labour movement was already a well established and viable organization on its own. Therefore, while they were prepared as individuals or members of the Negro ethnic group to support the nationalist movement, as unionists they were not. Some unionists still hoped to achieve political prominence through the union. Like Williams, the unionists also believed they could best perform their duty to the worker only if they were free to criticise and oppose "all acts and measures which are not so calculated (to benefit the greatest number)".⁷ Thus the policy of non-alignment was mutual to both the unions and the Party. This was responsible for the informal alliance that emerged between them based on Black nationalism - joined on the basis of race but separated by fear of dominance of each other - rather than quixotic nationalism.

By comparison, the relationship between the DLP - the Opposition party - and the sugar workers and farmers unions were so intertwined that although Bhadase Maharaj was its intermittent leader, the tie between them was an undisguised "political force in

⁷ R. Mentor, in speech to new Governor in 1947, T. G. 13/4/75.

a way that many leaders...would envy".⁸ It was generally held that the strength of this relationship, with its racial connotations, was another factor that incited the eventual coalition between the PNM and the other unions. Therefore, to the extent that race or ethnicity remained the basis of the association between them, their interests remained common on racial issues and divergent on economic issues, whereas these issues were inseparable in the case of the DLP-Sugar unions association. This provides some insight into the possible reason for the PNM's failure to control or influence the unions' behaviour in the post-Independence period.

Despite the fears, following the PNM's accession to the ruling position in 1956, the labour movement released itself from formal political activities and concentrated on traditional union responsibilities, developing into a powerful force by Independence as indicated by the number of strikes (Table I). The escalating industrial unrest moved the business community (both the foreign and local investors who had been supporting the PNM since the 1961 elections) into pressing for union controls. The dilemma arose of how to control the unions without losing their support.

A close examination of Williams' labour policy reveals that by the early 1960's, as the country was moving decidedly to greater self-government and industrialization, the distance between the PNM and the union movement was becoming wider and more apparent. The party leader's calls for collective bargaining and restraint for the sake of national development went unheeded by an ebullient

⁸ Ibid., B. Maharaj was leader of the Federation of Sugar Unions from 1954-1955 only. In 1961 he took over All Trinidad Union but was ousted in 1965. No evidence could be found of his becoming leader of the Sugar Workers Union.

and independent trade union movement. Eventually, a strike in the sugar industry (1962-1963) involving inter-union rivalry, and the cry of communism from Rojas, provided the opportunity for regulating the unions.

TABLE I

WORK STOPPAGES & LOSSES IN
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, 1956-1965*

Year	Total Indus.	No. of persons	No. of man days lost	Wages Lost \$m	Gov't. Rev. Lost \$m
1956	7	11,028	213,930	-	-
1957	6	530	3,122	-	-
1958	12	1,820	13,960	-	-
1959	69	12,595	23,383	-	-
1960	31	21,048	275,223	1.3	1.6
1961	35	12,322	125,105	.3	.2
1962	75	15,962	164,657	.7	.5
1963	48	17,799	204,971	1.6	1.7
1964	44	8,097	95,906	.5	.2
1965	4 ¹	7,160	88,057	-	-

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Digest (CSO) 1966

* January to March 1965

1 Tapia, 18/5/72 lists 11 strikes

Although the strikes in themselves were no more harmful than the usual union rivalry, a Commission was called to "enquire into all aspects of labour relations in the Sugar Industry and matters incidental thereto".⁹ In their report the Commission found that the activities of Mr. A. Smith, a member of the All Trinidad union, were subversive. It was charged that since 1961 he had

⁹ For full details of the strikes see H. Honeyman Report, 1963, (G.P.O., Port of Spain). The main issue was that of poaching between All Trinidad and SILU in January, 1962; and Amalgamated and All Trinidad between 1962-63.

"conscientiously and meticulously followed the instructions laid down by those [Soviet Congress] who govern the followers of that creed",¹⁰ fomenting grievances or creating them where none existed.

However, since Smith was also the Organiser for Amalgamated, an avowed anti-communist union,¹¹ the charges were not upheld: nor could Amalgamated be charged with subversion. Nevertheless, this finding provided ammunition to the Government for a legitimate attack on the unions. Later that very year (1963) Williams, in a public address at Harris Promenade, showed a drastic change from that made earlier in Guyana as he declared: "As far as I am concerned, sooner or later we have got to stop this freedom we give all these people...and put one or two of these subversive elements straight in jail where they belong".¹² It is not too presumptuous to suggest that the seeds of the Industrial Stabilization Act (ISA) were sown here. At the very least, we have here the germ of what collective bargaining was to be under Williams..

Williams' reversal of attitude was not prompted by this case alone, but as he explained later, by his perception of the imminent collapse of the trade union movement. That is, the militancy of the young unionists, who were challenging the older body of unionists, was identified as being synonymous with communism and subversion. Consequently, Weekes and Young, because of their adherence to a Marxian brand of unionism, were accused of communist activities and

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹ In 1953, Amalgamated withdrew from the T.U.C. because of the Council's affiliation with the supposedly communist World Federation of Trade Unions. It then joined the anti-communist Trinidad & Tobago Federation of Trade Unions. It was suspended from Congress in 1962 for its role in the sugar industry.

¹² B. Primus, pamphlet "Annual Conference of Delegates, 1963", (O.W.T.U. San Fernando, 1963).

Machavellian tactics aimed at bringing down the Government with the object of achieving power themselves.¹³

On comparing Sutton's behaviour in the sugar industry, one finds that he did no less than the leader of the other unions. In fact, the Honeyman Report describes him as "undoubtedly ambitious and wanting power". They noted further that

he finds no difficulty in portraying himself as a militant dedicated trade unionist fighting against reactionary employers and corruptive unionists, and at the same time, the image of a mature responsible trade union leader anxious to co-operate with other unions and employers in promoting good industrial relations...¹⁴

As some writers¹⁵ have pointed out, in modern industrial relations, aggressiveness is an important quality of a trade union leader. A leader who fails to gain concessions or to be aggressive in negotiations, soon loses respect and legitimacy. Workers suspect that any concession gained simply by discussion is either a "sell out" or is given by the employer. They "become easily persuaded that the leaders are weak and inefficient".¹⁶ Accordingly, both F. Daley (1954) and H. Honeyman (1963) in their writings on industrial problems in Trinidad have found it necessary to comment on the Sugar Manufacturers' "self-righteousness and condescending" attitude which tends to belittle the union's leader and encourages union rivalry and/or growing hostility towards the employers. Under such conditions, therefore, union leaders are forced to be increasingly aggressive, or as they are now called, militant.

¹³ H. Hudson-Phillips, Q.C., Guardian, 23/2/65

¹⁴ Honeyman Report, p. 15.

¹⁵ See R. Bates, op. cit., the Honeyman Report (1963) and F. Daley, op. cit.

¹⁶ Honeyman Report, 1.15

Williams was, nevertheless, correct in his perception of a threat, but to the wrong organization. For while a change in the union movement's leadership forecasted the removal of the "conservative" and "acceptable" members of the movement by the increasingly strong and challenging young militant unionists, it also posed a threat to the Party and its relationship with the TUC. Because of its middle-class orientation, the nationalist party was dependent on the unions for its contact with the Black working class. To maintain the status quo, these militant leaders had to be discredited. It followed, then, that the sheep and the goats must be separated. Thus, based almost solely on the findings of the Honeyman Report (published 29th March, 1963) and abiding by his unstated policy of keeping the trade unions at arm's length, Williams, less than one month after his speech in Guyana and only eight months after Independence, commissioned an "Enquiry into Subversive Activity" on the 5th April, 1963, under the chairmanship of a Nigerian, Judge M'Banefo.

If "labour anarchy" led by "subversive elements", as Williams claimed, was the justification for initiating union controls, the evidence suggests otherwise. In 1963, while Rojas was still President of the TUG, there were forty-nine strikes at a loss of 204,981 man-days. By comparison, in 1964 when Weekes was both President of Congress and OWTU, the number of strikes dropped only slightly, but the number of persons involved fell by almost 50% and the number of man-days lost by about 46% (Table 1). These data suggest that the strikes in 1963 involved the larger, more powerful unions over a longer period while most of the strikes in 1964 were in the general industrial sector, (mostly between the rival unions,

Amalgamated and TIWU).

The evidence seems to indicate that Weekes' role as a leader of the labour movement did not lead to "labour anarchy" but rather the opposite. This fact then tended to increase his stature as a union leader and in proportion, to magnify the sense of threat to the Party. In addition, the Trinidadian economist Roy Thomas, has suggested that the large figures quoted by Williams in introducing the ISA were misleading. In fact, the numbers of days lost, when viewed as a proportion of the labour force and work force (employed), represents a very minor percentage of only .013% and .014% respectively.¹⁷ That is, labour unrest per se as a threat to the economy and economic growth was an almost insignificant aspect of an undoubtedly ebullient labour force, implying that the root cause lay elsewhere.

In common with other developing countries, economic development in Trinidad was regarded as the very foundation of all development. Complementary to this philosophy is the dual dependence on foreign capital and a stable industrial climate locally. It is often argued that without good industrial relations, investors will locate elsewhere and the country would be denied an opportunity of modernization. In Trinidad, as Thomas has shown, the threat to the economy was insignificant. Moreover, despite the turbulent industrial situation, there is no evidence that investments were reduced or withdrawn. (This did not occur until 1971 with the "Badger Affair").¹⁸

¹⁷ Tapia, 11/5/72, p. 3.

¹⁸ In 1971, a work disturbance involving the personnel manager of Wimpey Company and the shop steward resulted in a strike. Workers of Badger struck in sympathy. "Thereupon, Badger withdrew all its staff and their families from the territory and gave the Government an ultimatum: control labour or we never return". Tapia, 18/5/72, p. 7.

Empirical evidence tends to support the view that foreign investors have grown more pragmatic in recognizing the universal upsurge of working-class consciousness and nationalism and therefore the inevitability of industrial disturbances. Provided there is an efficient machinery for settling these disputes, investors will tolerate a fair amount of industrial unrest.¹⁹

It seems more pertinent, therefore, to suggest that, in the immediate post-independence period, Williams was embarking upon a policy designed for turning the unions into "out-put" factors. Drawing largely from the African experience, Ioan Davies has deduced that in countries embarked upon an industrialization programme, for development, the objective of the political parties in the post-Independence period is to turn the unions from "in-put" factors of pre-Independence to "out-put" factors after Independence.²⁰

This brings into focus the conflict which arises between the party and the labour movement in the post-Independence era. The unions, having participated in and contributed to the achievement of Independence, realise their greatest political role as the defender of the national welfare and are awakened to their potential as an input factor in the nation's development. After Independence, however, they are suddenly amputated from the political movement and relegated to meeting production targets. Their feeling of betrayal is reinforced when their demands for faster and greater benefits are unheeded or deemed inimical to the national development. That is, in the post-Independence period, the objectives of the unions and the

¹⁹ A case in point is that of the general strike in Nigeria in 1964. Many investors, seeing the orderly way (it) was conducted, concluded that the country was a good investment risk rather than the contrary. Davies, p. 227.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 219.

nationalist party appear to be counter-poised. Each perceives the other as a threat to its existence. Of course the party, being the government, enjoys the advantage which it utilises by introducing legislative regulations. According to M. C. Okpaluba and Davies, such action is generally motivated by the fear that unions could mobilise the workers in a confrontation with the powers and pose a serious threat to the political power.²¹

All these seem to confirm the contention that the expressed change in the Government's attitude towards the unions was motivated by the fear of political opposition from some trade unionists; that the split of the movement and the ISA were its direct outcome.

One fear, if not the primary fear, that incited the Government's action (enforcing the ISA), was the possible merging of the sugar and oil workers' unions. Karl Hudson-Phillips, the then Attorney General, has reportedly admitted that the ISA was introduced "not merely to prevent work stoppages and their causes, but for distinctly political reasons".²² Zin Henry clearly identifies the reason for the ISA with the "imminent" re-establishment of the old link between sugar and petroleum workers. He writes, "it was this situation which precipitated legislation in the form of an Industrial Stabilization Act".²³ Yet another source expressed the conviction that the Bill had been in existence for years, awaiting such an opportunity.²⁴

²¹ M. C. Okpaluba, "Legal Restraints on Caribbean Trade Unions", in Caribbean Issues, op. cit., p. 24; I. Davies, op. cit., p. 219.

²² Tapia, 18/5/72.

²³ Henry, p. 101.

²⁴ J. Hackshaw, First Vice President of NTUC, believed a labour Code had been in existence for some time but was shelved following ILO Report. Guardian, 18/3/65.

To quell any doubts, Williams, in his autobiography, boasts that his greatest service to Trinidad as its Chief Servant was his responsibility in introducing the ISA that prevented a linkage between the trade unions in oil and sugar.²⁵

Undoubtedly, the prospect of a merger or alliance between the oil and sugar unions was cause for alarm. As trade unions they represent not only two of the largest unions, but the two most vital industries in the economy. Oil and sugar together account for over 85% of export earnings. Any marriage between them, under any leadership, increases the probability of both unions being involved in a strike and hence their potential to hold the entire economy as a pawn. The second factor, and perhaps the more important, was the implied racial alliance. Sugar workers in this sense meant Indian, and oil-workers, Negro.²⁶ An alliance of the two would therefore rob Williams of his force majeure in keeping the two unions, and races, apart.

Williams, therefore, felt compelled to prevent the alliance but was faced with a personal crisis. Knowing that any labour legislation would affect all trade unions, he would have preferred to desist from such action. Although he thought the situation serious enough to send some National Defence Guards into the area as early as February 24th (the Strike started February 21st.), the State of Emergency was not called until the 9th of March, 1965, and then, only when it was definite that Weekes would support the workers who had now rejected Maharaj. Thus bereft of Maharaj's influence to

²⁵ Eric Williams, Inward Hunger, (Andre Deutsch Ltd., London, 1969), p. 311.

²⁶ In recent years the number of Indian workers in the petroleum industry have increased. But, overall, it still remains predominantly Negro and coloured.

"quiet" the workers, Williams, convinced that sugar and oil must be kept separated at all cost, initiated the ISA. As an astute politician he still found a means of emerging as the hero. It is not without some significance "that the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Subversive Activities was tabled in Parliament on the very same day that the ISA Bill came up for second reading in the Lower House".²⁷ It is also not surprising that the DLP supported the Bill.

Lloyd Best has suggested an explanation for both Williams' and Maharaj's behaviour. According to him, Maharaj's actions were dictated by an agreement he made with the Sugar Manufacturers: that in exchange for a year free of strikes, they would grant bonus inducements. In addition, the Government did not interfere because it could rely on Maharaj to keep the sugar workers quiet. That is, the government was concerned with achieving tranquil industrial relations "even to the high price of an unspoken alliance with Maharaj".²⁸ If this is true, it testifies to the Government's priority towards foreign investment.

The collaboration in this instance was, however, misguided. If, as it is generally held, industrial tranquility is the product of a unified and recognized labour movement, then everything in the government's attitude preceeding the ISA contributed to producing the opposite effect. First, the continuous attacks on the militant trade union leaders and the cultivation of a "client leadership" from the conservative faction encouraged a division of the labour movement. Secondly, Maharaj's co-operation (though himself a

²⁷ Henry, p. 251.

²⁸ Lloyd Best, "From Chaguaramas to Slavery", New World Qtly., Vol. 2, No. 1 (1965), p. 64.

unionist) with the Government was a political and personal expediency. The Indian people whom he represented were fearful of communism, socialism or militancy, which were all the same to them. They were against any "socialist" policies or persons.²⁹ At the same time, the sugar workers were in open opposition to Maharaj as their leader. Joining the Government in the "national fight against communism" was more to his benefit than to either Williams' or the nation's stability. Third, as Zin Henry rightly concluded,

the ISA was conceived and introduced not merely as a policy instrument of industrial relations, but also as a measure for containing alleged subversive activities and political agitation by trade union leaders through trade union organizations...³⁰

so that the entire approach to creating an attractive atmosphere for investment was premised not only on political expediency but on the paradox of industrial tranquility based on industrial fragmentation. The I.S.A.'s failure was assured and with it any hope for industrial peace.³¹

Emerging labour unity and the older leaders:

In March 1966, the National Federation of Trade Unions and the NTUC were reunited to form the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress. W. W. Sutton was its first President. However, the continuing difference in union ideology finally led to the expulsion of OWTU from Congress, though ostensibly for non-payment of dues. In 1971 OWTU joined the opposition labour association, the Council for Progressive Trade Unions (CPTU), and the movement was once again

²⁹ To these people, any form of "socialism" meant the loss of private property (land) and the right to own anything, things which they were beginning to acquire and which formed the means of their livelihood, especially land, animals, automobiles.

³⁰ Henry, p. 252.

³¹ For a concise analysis of this failure, see R. Thomas, "Wither Industrial Relations", Caribbean Issues, op. cit., pp. 42-47.

divided. This time it was irrevocable.

The division of the union movements over socialism and capitalism, or progressive and reactionary ideas or policies, are not unique to Trinidad³² nor was another split in the movement. What is important to note here is that this dissection was the result of a persistent campaign by the governing party to remove from the union leadership those elements it considered a threat to the country's stability. Thus in 1965 when the movement was divided into the NTUC and the National Federation of Trade Unions (NFTU), "the NFTU enjoyed more official recognition than Weekes' congress".³³ The "acceptable" unions were given favoured treatment while harsh punishments were levied on the militant unions.³⁴

In spite of this patronage, the unity that the Government and its "well wishers" had hoped would follow proved to be as elusive as before. In the opinion of the E.C.A., the cause was clearly "that the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress did not enjoy the confidence of some of the larger unions and, therefore, lacked the strength which its well wishers hoped it would develop".³⁵ It further stated that in spite of this, "the Government has publicly insisted on dealing with the Trade Union Movement on National issues only through the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress".³⁶ That is, the Government was itself guilty of fostering a situation more conducive to the fragmentation and instability of the Movement in order

³² Some examples of other union movements fragmentation: India has 4 federations based on ideology; Indonesia 5; Singapore and Nigeria 2 each. Millen, p. 19.

³³ T. G. 13/4/75

³⁴ R. Thomas, "Whither Industrial Relations", op. cit., p. 43.

³⁵ Council's Report for the Year 1967, (E.C.A. Port of Spain, 1967), p. 4.

³⁶ Council's Report, 1969, (E. C. A. 1969), p. 3.

to ward off a political threat that became more menacing with the deterioration in the relationship between Maharaj and the Sugar workers.

Maharaj & Sugar Workers

If the Negro unionists were angered by Williams' infringement of their "rights", the Indian workers felt betrayed by Maharaj. Powerless to give any other expression to their bitterness, they formed the Freedom Fighters Organization and the Sugar Workers Trade Union (SWTU) following the strike in 1965. George Simmel has imputed that people who have more in common with each other, the more easily will their "totality" be involved in their relationship. Consequently, when there is a conflict between them, the more bitter and total is their hatred to each other.³⁷ Why then did the sugar workers not express their bitterness in a more violent form towards Maharaj? Was it a result of the oft-ascribed passive ethos of the Indians?

In order to understand this, one must view the situation as it appeared to the sugar workers at that time. First, the sugar workers were only a small part of the total Indian population and Maharaj's influence still held sway among the larger Indian community. He was also known to be capable of violent retaliation far greater than they could ever realize. Second, although the cane-farmers were also Indians, as a propertied body their interests were different from the workers. The conversion of the farmers' association, TICFA, into a body incorporate by Act I, 1965, had virtually removed them from the trade union milieu. Third, politically, the DLP was floundering under internal conflicts and its leader, R.

³⁷ G. Simmel cited in A. Coser, Functions of Social Conflict, (Free Press, U. S. A., 1964), p. 67.

Capildeo, to whom they might have appealed, was attempting to lead the Opposition from London. At the same time rumours of Maharaj's collusion with the PNM were becoming more widespread and credible. His actions during the 1965 strike had convinced them that he had acted in his, and not their, interest. Since the majority of workers were members of SWTU and not the Maharaj-led All Trinidad Union, they found themselves without the support of Congress. Bereft of any channel of appeal, the sugar workers perception was pervaded by a sense of futility and hopelessness. Contrary to popular belief, it was this overpowering feeling of dejection and not passivity that caused them to retreat as disillusioned spectators. In effect, 1965 witnessed a concurrent break between Williams and the militant unions, and Maharaj and the sugar workers.

The by-product of this period of separations and shifting loyalties was the Farmers and Workers Party. Among its members were G. Weekes, B. Panday, C. L. R. James and T. Sudama, all of whom contested the 1966 General Elections. Although the Party did not return a single successful candidate, it nevertheless tried to inject a new element of class into the elections contest. The 1966 elections were the first, since 1956, in which race was not a paramount issue. But despite this, the results were again decided by race.

Considering the state of industrial activity in the country since 1963, why did the Farmers and Workers Party, and especially the union leaders, fail? Was it apathy? The opinion is advanced here that, while the drop in the electorate's particip-

ation³⁸ indicates the presence of apathy, the more fundamental reasons lay in the fact that the separation between political -- i.e., ethnic -- interest and economic interests still existed; that the elections in Trinidad were still a contest for the ruling position by an ethnic group, and race was still the deciding factor.

In substantiating this explanation, Weekes pointed to the workers' dual interest-loyalty character. As workers, he explained, their interest in and loyalty to him was as a negotiator, a union leader, and thus they would not support a PNM candidate for the union's presidency. Politically, however, their interest was ethnically oriented, and for this reason they owed their support and loyalty to Williams and the PNM.³⁹ Therefore, in 1966 they had to vote PNM. For the same reasons the Indians felt they had to vote DLP. Although there was a common disenchantment among the sugar workers and some negro workers, with their respective leaders, the idea of a nexus between them had not yet dawned. Each group still saw the other as its rival, thereby confirming the thesis that in Trinidad general elections are a contest for the ruling position by an ethnic group. For both groups, it was the only opportunity they seized every five years "to shake off their state of dependence... long enough to select their master and then relapse into it again."⁴⁰

³⁸ By 1966, the registered electorate had dropped from 88.1% in 1961 to 65% in 1966. The PNM's share fell by 5% while the DLP's by 7.6%. The DLP's decline was an expression of the general apathy, but more particularly their conviction that with the voting machines, installed since 1961, it was useless to vote when the machines were guaranteed to return a PNM Government. An alternative explanation lays the PNM victory streak to the gerrymandering of the constituencies. For a detailed account see S. Ryan, op. cit.; note especially maps on p. 371 and 394.

³⁹ Told in an interview with the speaker, July, 1975.

⁴⁰ Tocqueville, p. 304.

From 1967, a new dimension was added to the racial dilemma, that of 'Black Power', and this, to some extent, was also responsible for the sugar workers' subdued reaction to Maharaj. The introduction of the Black Power movement,⁴¹ supported by the militant unions, students and the unemployed masses, mostly in Port of Spain, and demanding Black control of the country, reinforced the Indians' fear of Black domination and estranged the middle and upper-class Blacks whose interests lay in maintaining the status quo.

In spite of its revolutionary approach and definition, a revolution against capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism,⁴² Black Power in Trinidad was a reassertion of Black nationalism started by Williams in 1956, but which they felt he had failed to continue after 1962. They had not yet realised, as Williams had, that in Trinidad Black Power, as an assertion of national rights, must not exclude other Trinidad nationals. While recognizing that at a certain level Black must mean non-white, they had also to realise that at another level "the people" of Trinidad included White and what some call "off-white". The trauma suffered in the process of rediscovering one's Self or identity, like Roquentin in Satre's Nausea, could lead to over-reaction. This is a probable explanation for their initial myopic militancy. Once they realised that they were alienating the other groups, they reformulated their approach. But in their reformulation, they included only some of the other

⁴¹ The Black Power movement was started by some university students as the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) in 1967. With the support of some unions and unemployed they became a powerful force by 1969 and led the demonstrations in 1970.

⁴² B. Riviere, "Black Power, NJAC and the 1970 Confrontation", in a paper presented at Seminar on Black Man in the Caribbean, (University of Pittsburg) (University of West Indies, 1972), p. 67.

Trinidadians - the Indians, on the basis that Indians had shared a similar experience of slavery during indentureship.

In the meanwhile, the revival of Africanism had inspired a counter revivalism among the Indians. Nationalism in the late 1960's, therefore, acquired overtones of racial exclusivity at the same time that some Negro members were attempting a nexus with the Indians. Thus, when the Black Power movement marched into Caroni in April, 1970, to show their solidarity with their "Indian brothers" who were again on strike, the Indian people were perplexed. Although they did not welcome them with open arms, there was some sympathy in their reception and they offered the marchers cold refreshments and fruits. One suspects that it was not just Indian hospitality or tokenism but a genuine sympathy with perhaps some secret appreciation.⁴³

Since the march coincided with the eve of T.W.U.-planned anniversary celebration of its 1969 Bus strike, suspicion and tension among the political leaders were high.⁴⁴ The speculation current then held that the Black Power group's real motive was to induce the sugar workers to join the demonstration in Port of Spain the next day. This would bring together not only the oil and sugar unions, but workers of various industries and the public sector - transport and water. Were this to be accomplished, and the Black Power movement succeed in winning over the sugar workers, it would end the type

⁴³ K. Boodhoo, supports this speculation as he wrote: this writer could recall numerous instances of obvious support demonstrated by these rural people for the marchers, in "A Little Black Book", Caribbean Review, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 42.

⁴⁴ It is reported that Maharaj went to extreme lengths to advertise his hostility to the movement and the march which "drew not even the mildest rebuke" from the law. J. Millette, The Politics of Succession, (Moko, Curepe, 1970), p. 3. It was rumoured that he had even armed some of his supporters in the field.

of unrepresentative trade unionism of the sugar unions and the "racial politics in which Maharaj as well as Williams had a heavy personal stake".⁴⁵

Lending some truth to this statement is the fact that, though it was not known that the sugar workers would join the demonstration, the Prime Minister removed any speculation by having a State of Emergency declared at 4:30 a.m. on the morning of April 21st, 1970. It should be noted that it was only when the militant unions seemed to be coming together, including oil and sugar again, as in 1965, plus the new support from the youths and other areas of PNM stronghold, that the Emergency was called. Yet, Williams in a nationwide broadcast declared: "It was only when the total breakdown of the trade union movement was imminent that I decided to act".⁴⁶

Emergence of Class Consciousness?

In fact, what was happening among a segment of the people - the sugar workers since 1965, and some members of the Negro working class since 1969 - was the fruition of a psychological self-appraisal in which the faintest glimmer of an awareness of a common oppression was glimpsed. The two races had suffered the common experience of servitude under slavery and indentureship, but it was not seen as a common experience until 1970 when they felt that their own leaders had betrayed them. The beginnings of a national feeling of class identification among workers may have begun to take form from this period. But given the political interest in preventing such an event, it was thwarted in its development and suppressed by the

⁴⁵ Millette, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁶ E. Williams, quoted in S. Ryan, op. cit., p. 459.

opposition. The "client" unions continued to receive the favours of the ruling party at the expense of the militant unions; and Maharaj formed a new Party, the Democratic Liberal Party, which carried the same acronym as the Democratic Labour Party, DLP. In both cases, the purpose was the perpetuation of the divisions.

In sum, by the middle of 1971, we see what appears to be the beginning of a replacement of the race barrier by a class barrier at the worker level, and a polarization between unions and parties on political lines - the pro-government unions of Congress affiliated with the PNM, and the anti-government unions of GPTU independent of any party but identifying with the forces opposing the PNM regime. The attitude of the "client" unions is interesting in the light of proposals made by A. M. Zack to the African unions. Writing on political unionism in Africa he argued that, since one-party systems tend to emasculate unions in the name of national development, unions should concentrate on the economic and social spheres, for any attempts at reasserting union autonomy will incur further governmental restrictions. The advantages of this "compromise" approach to union development, according to Zack, are that it is pragmatic, and serves mutually the interest of labour and Government, for

while giving evidence of good faith in the program of national development, labor may also be able to serve its own interests in the traditional areas that deal with wages and conditions of employment. (Furthermore) once the labor movement has won the government's endorsement, ... it has a fair chance of winning support for its programs either from fraternal organizations and private sources... on the outside.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ A. M. Zack, article in W. A. Beling, ed., The Role of Labour In African Nation-building, (Praeger, New York, 1968), p. 95-102

This seems to summarise exactly the policy of the unions of Congress. Although they have maintained their independence of the Party, their political affiliation and support⁴⁸ of the Party characterise them as "political" unions. (Chapter II). On the other hand, the non-affiliated unions of CPTU, at this point, resembled more closely the strong "business" type unions in which political pressure is used to obtain their objectives. Therefore, the Government's legislation, patronage and separatism from the unions which were intended to produce industrial stability succeeded in driving the unions to adopt opposing positions and bestowing on the movement as a whole a quasi-political-business quality with a greater propensity towards the political aspect.

The promotion of industrial tranquility failed because, to use the ECA's President's words,

Strikes are not what is wrong with industrial relations in Trinidad and Tobago. Strikes are not the disease - they are only the symptoms.... Strikes and industrial action of various sorts are the end product manufactured by bad industrial relations practices.⁴⁹

Since the ISA was intended for other purposes as well as outlawing strikes, its diffusion weakened its impact on industrial relations. Finally, the conflict which occurred between the sugar workers and Maharaj in 1965 and his death in 1971, witnessed the concurrence of ~~disension~~ between two national leaders and members of their respective groups; and in the case of the sugar workers, removed them

⁴⁸ For example, the trade unions publicly supported the PNM in 1961 and 1966. In 1970, during the Emergency, members of SWWTU volunteered to patrol the docks and ride with the coast guards, for which they were armed by the Port authority - i.e., Government. Although all the unions interviewed were against the ISA, none called for its repeal until 1969. From interviews, July, 1975.

⁴⁹ The President's Report, March 14th, 1975, (E.C.A. Port of Spain, 1975), p. 10.

from their marginal position into the political mainstream and provided a receptive ground for the seeds of a union between the sugar unions and the militant unions. The growing general dissatisfaction among the people, inflation and the Government's apparent indifference, provided the catalyst for the labour unionification in 1975.

In 1975, the concurrence of industrial disputes in the oil and sugar industries; the objectives and attitudes of these unions gave momentum to the amicable relationship between them. This eventually manifested itself in the spontaneous workers alliance of the United Labour Front. In the following chapter, we will examine these strikes, the emergence of the United Labour Front and attempt some explanations.

CHAPTER VII

THE 1975 STRIKES: OIL & SUGAR

On the 18th February 1975, an event of national significance took place in southern Trinidad. The emergence of the United Labour Front (ULF) on that day brought together the thousands of workers that constitute the membership of the four most militant unions of north and south Trinidad; i.e., those unions found in the oil, sugar and transport industries. In this chapter, we propose to analyse the ULF phenomenon which united the workers of the sugar and oil industries and challenged the hard "racial-myth" that separated them in the past.

It is postulated that the independence of these unions from any political party and their exclusion from the Government's allied Congress were largely responsible for their success in initiating a class movement in Trinidad. This would not have been possible without the difference in perceptions between the unions and the political leaders; the leadership vacuum created by Maharaj's death and the sugar workers' escape from their state of marginality; and (as we saw in Chapter VI) the awakening of a new national consciousness that had begun to cut at the roots of ethnic separateness. It was these attendant circumstances which made possible the alliance between the two unions which had been separated by ethnicity, type of industry and political leadership.

Consequently, in the post-1970 period ethnicity became less a problem to worker solidarity than political opposition. Hence, we find the purpose of the workers' rally at Skinner's

Park was:

To demonstrate unity for their just and earthly cause and again to call upon those responsible

- (1) To repeal Act No. 1 of 1965 - The Canefarmers Cess Act
- (2) To repeal Act No. 23 of 1972 - The Industrial Relations Act
- (3) To protest the delay by Texaco, Caroni and Neal & Massy in concluding negotiations with OWTU, All Trinidad and TIWU respectively.
- (4) To demand the withdrawal of Texaco's Writ and Injunction preventing the recognition of the monthly paid workers of Texaco
- (5) To demand withdrawal of the levy on sugar; and
- (6) To let those who labour hold the reins.¹

The rally was significant not only from the massive response of the workers, but because it was inspired by the workers themselves and not just the leadership, as in 1965 and 1970. It was also important from the labour movement point of view, in that workers from "the north" in Transport and industrial, electricity, Water and Sewerage services gave open support for the workers in the south, underlining the fact of a workers' solidarity movement, and linking up five of the listed essential industries. Hence, the fact that oil and sugar were again "linking up" was overshadowed, in one aspect and exacerbated in another, by the fact that a mass movement based on class and not ethnicity was emerging.

For a better understanding of these issues, it is important to examine the social condition and perceptions of the people and government prior to these strikes.

¹ Vanguard, 7/3/75

Social perceptions

To the people of Trinidad, calypsos (part of the island's oral tradition) have always been a source of reminiscence about the annual highlights that concerned or excited them in the previous year. As the calypsonians have become more involved with the nation's dilemma in nation-building, some of their songs have veritably painted portraits of Trinidad. In addition, there is the annual 'slang'.² Their importance lies in the fact that, however superficial and varied the circumstances in which they might be used, they depict the prevailing mood or state of affairs in the country as it is perceived by the people and, therefore, provide a genuine guideline to the moods of the people at a given time.

For example, in the late sixties, the slang then was: "hold strain"; (to be patient or tolerant). In 1970, the revolutionary spirit of Black Power had inspired "Power to the people". By 1972-1973, however, the subdued revolution was encapsulated in "scrunting", (to be seeing hard times, or having difficulty in getting ahead). In 1974-1975, the slang being voiced was: "it ain't easy". In other words, what these "sayings" tell us is that the expectancy of the late sixties had become a disillusionment by the early seventies.

The Mighty Atila in his calypso "The New Portrait of Trinidad" echoed the same sentiments of deterioration in these

² Almost annually there appears a word or phrase that becomes nationally used and is known as the slang. The use of these ideomatic expressions for social analysis is only just beginning to draw the attention of Caribbean sociologists. Lloyd Braithwaite and a few others have touched upon it but none has attempted to analyse the social conditions through this medium.

lines:

From 1965 to now we are no more great,
Our country has vastly deteriorate,...
With revolution and race talk my country is filled
To-day we live under a Sedition Bill,...
In Tobago the fishermen dying with grief,
No more taking tourist to Bucco Reef;...
Is some big shot controlling that....
Don't find me mad, for painting the present portrait
of Trinidad.

The calypsos of the Mighty Sparrow, "Ah Diggin Horrors"; the Mighty Duke's "Lock them up" or Lord Valentino's "Dis place nice" all corroborate and accentuate the same problems -- moral and economic decline, race, revolution, the existence of oppressive laws and, finally, foreign control.

These "intuitive" perceptions are statistically substantiated. The studies of E. Ahiaram (1965) and R. M. Henry (1973) confirm unequivocally that between 1957 and 1973 the poorest 30% of households in Trinidad grew poorer in terms of their share of the national product.⁴ The Central Statistical Office data on household incomes authenticated this evidence by showing a Gini co-efficient of .51 for households' income in Trinidad and Tobago for the period 1971-72 compared to .39 in 1957-58.⁵ In other words, the inequality of income distribution widened; this was especially true among the working-class and lower middle class households.

³ Due to the poor printing quality there is some doubt about the accuracy of the calypsonian's name.

⁴ In his study, Ahiaram showed in 1957/8 the poorest 20% of households received 3.4% of pretax income; the poorest 30%, 7.2%. In 1973, Henry showed that the same categories' incomes had dropped to 2.2% and 5.1% respectively. Cited by R. D. Thomas, "Whither Industrial Relations" in Caribbean Issues, Vol. 1 No. 2, (Aug. 1974) pp. 42-51.

⁵ Social Indicators, (C. S. O. Port of Spain, 1975), p. 65.

These data are important not only because they tell us where the trouble lies but, more significantly, that it is where the people believed the cause of the trouble to lie and, in particular, that they were aware of their deteriorating position. When this fact is combined with the fact that the decline occurred in that segment of the population which constitutes the bulk of the workers, a nesting ground for turbulent industrial relations was laid. In such a situation, the "scarcity mentality" described by Perlman is activated. Since this attitude tends to induce workers to take stronger collective action, unions tend to become correspondingly more aggressive.

Also, under such circumstances, in a multi-racial society, racial stereotyping tends to gain prominence. Stereotyping influences the behaviour of the groups towards each other, and reflects the way they view themselves and the others. As Cohen and Roper, following George H. Mead and C. H. Cooley, argue, "objects of the social world are constituents of the subject's mind and self.... each person holds some internal image of the other ... (which) is much affected by the visible facts of differing status, in this case, different races".⁶ Therefore, in a territory where the ruling class is a different race or colour, this group becomes the scapegoat and target of attack.

It is therefore not surprising that since 1970, with the rise of Black consciousness and the concern with MNC's,

⁶ E. G. Cohen and S. Roper, "Modification of Interracial Interaction Disability" in American Social Review, Vol. 37 No. 6, 1972, pp. 643-6. Research based on project on "equal status interaction" among some Black and White junior high school boys.

there has been a growing preoccupation with 'Whites' and foreign ownership in Trinidad, particularly since they control the economic sector. In the process, the traditional antagonism towards the Indians was, in general, being avoided, although the Indians were also undergoing a period of ethnic revivalism. As a result, in the early seventies, the racial issue became a Black versus White, or worker versus employer, conflict. Thus the calypsonian, Lord Valentino, sings about the exploitation of Trinidadians by the large corporations and local White businessmen with a clear implication of Government assent. He says:

They (Trinidadians) born in a land, the better part
controlled by aliens,
They fill the pockets of Portuguese, Chinese and
Syrians...
The people who formed the Constitution laws were the
oppressors and foreign investors... (Amoco and Shell
and Texaco)

He ends by predicting that a revolution or "Fighting (is) on the way".⁷

Government's Perceptions

By comparison, the Government's view of the prevailing social condition in the country was one of a deterioration of law and order. Consequently, the Government resorted to legislation to contain the worsening industrial and social condition. In the period between 1970 and 1975, therefore, a spate of laws were enacted or drafted for the expressed purpose of maintaining public safety and national security. Thus, following the riots

⁷ From Lord Valentino (E. Phillip) "Dis Place Nice", this is believed to be a post carnival calypso and may have been inspired by the industrial situation in the country around the same time, February-March.

of 1970, a Public Order Bill was presented. But in a very rare occasion of national consensus, the Bill was rejected. Among those rejecting the Bill was the PNM party itself.

The editor of Tapia has since suggested that the Bill was reintroduced "in pieces" in the form of the Firearms Act (1970); The Sedition (Amendment) Act 1971; The Summary Offences (Amendment) Act, 1971 -- which prohibits protests by public meetings or marches without police permission; and the Industrial Relations Act, 1972, which replaced the ISA.⁸ In 1975, an amendment to the Criminal Law Act was proposed. Aimed directly against acts of violence and destruction by unionists during strikes, it was given the popular title of "The Anti-sabotage Bill". It has been further asserted that Williams indirectly condoned indiscriminate police shooting when he said in the House "that it was virtually the duty of the police to shoot down criminals".⁹

Justification for these public safety acts is, of course, expressed in terms of the Government's commitment to the national welfare and economic development. But as Okpaluba and Davies have both indicated, such action is usually engendered by the fear of the unions mobilising the workers in a confrontation with the political power.¹⁰ In Trinidad, the root of this fear lay in the fact that the trade unions represent one of the few organizations that cut across ethnic lines, especially those belonging to CPTU, and that such a possibility had been advancing towards realization since 1965. The question therefore arose as

⁸ Tapia, 28/10/73.

⁹ A. J. Alexander, "The Worker and the Law" in Dialogue, 1973, (OWTU San Fernando), p. 44.

¹⁰ M. C. Okpaluba "Legal Restraints", p. 24; and I. Davies, African Trade Unions, p. 219

as to whether it was the safety of the public or the political leadership that was being protected. It is no secret that since 1970 the unions of the CPTU together with the Black Power movement and other dissident groups had been calling for the removal of Williams and the PNM party from the political leadership position.

By adopting legislative measures to control the unions, Williams exposed not only the extent of his colonial conditioning but his own intellectual limitations. He thus fell victim to his own indictment of the West Indians' anti-intellectual mentality "in aping the customs and attitudes of the expatriate officials".¹¹ According to Davies, a feature of the Colonial administration was their practice of according themselves wide powers for supervising labour disputes under compulsory arbitration, such that "the strike as an industrial weapon is made nearly impossible by the existence of arbitration procedures which must be exhausted before a strike or lock-out can be called".¹² The ISA and the Industrial Relations Act, 1972 (IRA) had the same effect.

Because of this, Williams was short-sighted of the fact that if punitive legislation to emasculate a weaker trade union movement during the colonial administration had failed, legislation against a stronger more independent movement would also fail, unless such laws were so repressive as to eliminate any form of opposition or that he was assured of support from certain factions of the community -- labour and management, as it seemed was the case.

¹¹ G. Lewis, p. 394.

¹² Davies, p. 223.

However, by comparison with the African unions, the unions in Trinidad have so far escaped being formally incorporated with the ruling party and have managed to maintain some degree of independence. Restrictive legislation since 1965 has produced the same result. Once the militant unions had successfully defied the legislation in 1969, the ISA ceased to have much effect. Open defiance of the law was "neither punished nor censured by Government",¹³ complained the Employers Association. The relapse showed that the symptoms and not the disease had been treated. R. D. Thomas has very aptly summed up the government's failure to achieve harmonious industrial relations as follows: "nowhere in the world has it been possible to legislate longrun harmony into work place relations where the larger society is under stress, where basic social political and economic problems are a long way from a satisfactory solution".¹⁴

From the above, it is quite apparent that the perceptions of the people did not coincide with those of the leaders. Their differing ideological persuasions had led them to opposite interpretations. This was later to cause the political leaders to be misguided. It is against this background that the strikes of the early seventies and their issues must be examined. The cases analysed are those of (1) the sugar workers, (2) the cane farmers and (3) the oilfield workers.

¹³ E. C. A. Annual Report, 1970, (E.C.A. Port of Spain, 1970) p. 1.

¹⁴ Thomas, p. 42. My emphasis.

The 'Sugar-Workers' Case:

The Issue:

In a bid to catch up with other workers in the country, the All-Trinidad leader, Basdeo Panday, proposed to Caroni Limited an overall wage increase of 100%; reclassification of workers; better working conditions -- maternity leave, minimum work and minimum pay during the wet season, public holidays with pay, to mention a few; a profit-sharing agreement and a cost of living allowance. By January 31st, Caroni met all the demands except the profit-sharing and better working conditions clauses. It commented that the wage offer was reasonable but the limit the Company could afford, and remain viable.¹⁵

The workers did not reject the offer but considered it only a partial settlement of their demands. They insisted on settling the 'complete package' before signing the Agreement.¹⁶ On the 7th of March, the sugar workers at Brechin Castle walked out in support of fourteen suspended computer workers. They then remained off their jobs, protesting the Company's delay in settling their outstanding agreement. In the following week, the other factories, including the Government-owned Orange Grove National Sugar Company, joined the striking workers. The dispute was finally referred to the Industrial Court on the 11th of April, 1975.

Comment:

In February 1974, Basdeo Panday was re-elected president of the All Trinidad Union after having been expelled in October,

¹⁵ Guardian, 2/3/75.

¹⁶ From an interview with Panday.

1973.¹⁷ By self-admission, he embarked on a campaign among the sugar workers to dispel the racial "myth" behind their oppression. He premised his attack on the hypothesis that, to break the "racial framework" erected over the past years, race must be replaced by class awareness; and he exposed the poor working conditions of Indian workers in the employ of Indians, stressing the need for a class approach to workers' problems and a workers' alliance.

Happily for Panday, this coincided with a period in which these workers were consciously throwing off their shackles of dependence. ~~Since their arrival in Trinidad,~~ the Indian sugar workers had been dependent on one person or another in the Administration or political field for their asseveration -- viz, The Protector of Immigrants, the Indian members of the Legislative Council, and later the DLP leader. With the death of Maharaj in 1971, the last vestiges of that paternalism were buried. For the first time in over a century, they were without a 'Protector'. Their new freedom unleashed what Singham called, the "latent rage" of exploitation.¹⁸ They accommodated easily to, and admired the new brand of, militant trade unionism that was emerging in the country.

In view of this, it is interesting to note Leggett's findings among Black workers in Detroit. Leggett noted that the economic dislocation or uprootedness experienced by Negro workers

¹⁷ Prior to his presidency of All Trinidad, Panday was the legal adviser of OWTU. His expulsion in 1973, it was suspected, arose out of this association and his rivalry with Mr. Rampartapsingh for the union's leadership. Mr. Rampartapsingh is now a Director of Caroni Ltd., which is 55% nationally owned.

¹⁸ A. W. Singham, The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1968), p. 92.

tended to develop and reinforce a working-class consciousness that became more militant when they moved from agraria to industria.¹⁹ After 1971, one might say that the sugar workers had suffered a psychological uprootedness similar in effect to the economic uprootedness. Despite the fact that they were unionised at the same time as the oil workers, for example, the racial basis of politics had perpetuated their status of marginality and kept them in a constant state of agraria. As Sudama so poignantly pointed out:

To talk about the sugar industry is to invoke a feeling of timelessness. The problem of viability... advertised since the inception of the industry is still with us today. Cheap labour is still being sought and obtained. Alarm is still being expressed at increases in the cost of production.²⁰

It was in an effort to break this "timelessness" of poverty among sugar workers that the Union called for the upgrading of 100% of wages to a "decent level" and better working conditions, before increases could be discussed.²¹ The rationale was that the improved social welfare and interest of the community as a whole are directly related to the worker's performance and attitude to his work. Since the majority of sugar workers were completely dependent on the industry for their livelihood, their social condition was directly related to their working conditions -- wages and other "fringe" benefits.

In fact, the persistent poor conditions of these agricultural workers is a testimony of the perpetuation of their subsistence livelihood and neglect in the quest of industrial

¹⁹J. C. Leggett, Class, Race and Labour: Working class consciousness in Detroit, (Oxford University Press, New York, 1968), p. 7.

²⁰Trevor Sudama, "What Future in Sugar?", Tapia, 7/II/71, p. 3.

²¹Express, 31/3/75.

development. A feature typically found in developing countries; and a lesson from which the Government seems it has yet to learn. That subsistence wages and its concomitant effects: poor diets and debilitation from malnutrition, the malaise of long periods of unemployment, lack of alternative opportunities including education, produces a self-perpetuating life cycle inimical to economic, social and therefore, national development.

Recognising the dependence of the workers on the industry, it is to the credit of the Court, in the case of Caroni and All Trinidad (1969), that "weighty consideration" was also given to the community. The Court commented that in view of the significant proportion of the community that relied on their activities in the industry for their livelihood,

The interest of the Community in this dispute therefore lies in the determination of the question whether those who now rely upon those activities for their daily livelihood, will be able not only to continue to do so, but also to improve the condition under which they do so. ²²

It appears, however, that Caroni did not share the Court's concern. The record shows a consistent delay in implementing agreements. For example, it is reported that under Bhadase's leadership an agreement with the Sugar Manufacturing Association in 1962 provided for a pension plan. By December 1964, it had yet to be implemented. In the case mentioned above, some of the demands made then were still being demanded in 1975: sick allowance, public holidays with pay, maternity leave, guaranteed minimum work and minimum wage, cost of living allowance

²² Caroni Ltd., vs All Trinidad Sugar Estate and Factory Workers Trade Union, Sugar Boilers Association; Sugar Industry Staff Association, and the Attorney General, 1969. Annual Report of Industrial Court settlements, (Port of Spain, 1969), p. 83.

and a profit-sharing bonus.²³ So that, even with the Government's participation as controlling shareholder, little to nothing had changed in the management's attitude to the workers and their welfare. In the meantime, however, the worker's attitude had changed.

Their new class awareness had made them intolerant of the Company's laments of small profits and increasing costs and settling for a small wage increase. They were keen to the differences in their wage and working conditions compared with workers in other sectors of the economy. For example, the median monthly income of the lowest paid male worker in the Service sector was \$175.50 in 1975.²⁴ The classified "utility" worker's wage in the sugar industry was approximately \$150.00 per month (based on a daily wage of \$7.50).²⁵ However, wage increases in excess of 55% in some instances, especially among government workers -- the police -- sharpened the acuteness with which they felt the differences. They were determined, therefore, to achieve some parity with the other workers. Perhaps this, more than any desire for industrial or political revolution, was the stronger motivation and inspiration to their brand of militancy. That is, the sugar worker was demanding a fairer share of the national produce or what Perlman called the "communism of opportunities". (Perlman, p. 6).

The sugar worker of 1975 was also a more enlightened worker. The international "demonstration effect" introduced

²³ Vanguard.

²⁴ Social Indicators, p. 64.

²⁵ Caroni Wage Proposal for contract 1975-1977, (Caroni Ltd. 1974), p. 1.

through television and mass media, contact with conditions in countries like Canada, the United States or England either through letters from his children or relatives or visits to these countries made possible by low excursion air fares paid by the children, have all contributed in creating the background radiations of his rising expectancy.

He had endured the bad times when sugar prices were low. With prices now at over £300 per ton, the sugar worker felt entitled to a share of the bonanza. He was aware that his salary in 1974 was based on the negotiated Commonwealth price of 1971-72 when sugar was sold at £46 per ton. But while his wage remained fixed for three years, the price of sugar had risen (in 1972) in the World market to £85.70, reaching £106 by October 1973, and between £250 to £300 in early 1974. The Company's profits from sales in 1974 alone were \$24,464,723.09,²⁶ from a gross revenue of \$132 million.²⁷

There was no doubt that Caroni could afford to meet the Union's demands and was prepared to do so (given their wage offer), but that was their limit. The Company explained their disinclination to further benefits on the grounds that, despite the record success, after budgeting for losses accrued over the past four years (\$12.4 million), repayment of loans and anticipated increases in wages, 'its' current assets exceeded current liabilities by only \$13.9 million, which only just covered the long-term loans of \$10.5 million..."²⁸ The implication which

²⁶Guardian, 1/1/75, p. 14. This sum consists of \$7,033,523.09 profits made for year ending 30/6/74; sales after that gave further profits of \$17,431,200.

²⁷Ibid., 31/1/75.

²⁸Ibid.

follows is that Caroni was left with a net profit of only \$3.4 million and therefore in just as bad a position as ever. Yet further in the same statement, the speaker declares that because of the spiralling sugar prices, "Caroni Limited has been able to fight its way back to a sound financial footing".²⁹ That is, the same data were being used to support two different positions when different audiences were to be the recipients of the messages.

Added to this is its persistent aversion to consideration of the non-material benefits to its workers, even though it may have to be manifested materially. As an example, in 1975 workers were still fighting for a guaranteed minimum number of days work in a year, after it had been repeatedly demonstrated what deleterious effects the long unemployment season brings not only to the workers but also to the economic development of the country.³⁰ Similarly, the refusal to grant public holidays with pay, at a time when such a condition has become more the rule than the exception in other industries, showed the company's attitude to its workers. These considerations together, and the Company's continued reluctance to settle the outstanding demands of work conditions, served to further strengthen the workers' determination, described by their opponents as militancy.

The workers' 'militancy' was, it seems, a combination of their determination to win their "just and earthly cause" and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See H. G. Johnson "Trade, Investment & Labour" in H. Hughes, ed., Prospects for Partnership, (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973), pp. 40-55, where he identifies one of the adverse factors to competition and economic growth as regional income disparity and notes that low wages and high unemployment may reduce the incentives to acquire skills and finance them.

the frustration of their newly realised freedom. As a member of CPTU and later the ULF, it had lost any hope of government's support, and alienated Congress' support by its implied disdain of that organization. Since it was unaffiliated to any political party, it was without any political support. The sugar workers thus found themselves free and independent, in a political system governed by one party (since 1971) and without political patronage, an element so essential in the politics of Trinidad. It was in the appreciation of this fact the Company concluded that the industrial dispute was a superficial covering imposed on the industry in order to disguise its real political aim -- the defeat of the present government.

There is no doubt that there existed a political aspect to the dispute, if "politic" is defined as the activity adapted and pursued to the individual or group's interest and welfare in any given conflict. Since the actors in a conflict adapt means to their own advantage, conflict resolution is, by nature, political. At the same time, it was equally certain that a genuine industrial grievance did exist. I have tried to show here that this crisis could have been prevented and solved earlier, had the Company assumed some moral obligation for the social welfare of its workers, in which case they would have perceived the changes emerging and been able to take a more appropriate approach to the advantage of both. It was this failing that directly contributed to the workers' resolve and the formation of the ULF.

The Cane-Farmers' Case:

Issue:

The most intriguing of the three cases is that of the cane-farmers. Their principal demands were the repeal of "the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Act, 1965" (also referred to as Act I of 1965), and the recognition of the Islandwide Cane Farmers Trade Union (ICFTU) led by Raffique Shah, as the new representative organization of the cane farmers. The perplexity of the situation arose from the fact that the existing organization, the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA) as "a body corporate", was the only body that Caroni Limited could legally recognise and hence, its leader, Norman Girwar.

In 1974 two cane-farmers challenged the constitutionality of the Act in the High Court. Their case was defeated. But on February 14th, 1975, an appeal was won.³¹ In the verdict given by Judge Braithwaite, who ruled against the offending sections of the Act, it was stated that "notwithstanding any appeal, his judgement took effect immediately."³² On the 18th of February, TICFA and the Attorney General, respectively, filed an appeal against the Court's ruling.³³ Despite the Judge's decision, Caroni maintained it had to await the outcome of the appeals before it could consider the claim for recognition.

³¹ More exact information on this action was unavailable. One farmer explained that because Shah was not a farmer, nor recognised as the farmers' leader he could not challenge the Act in Court. A cane farmer, R. Seereeram, the original founder of TICFA, did so on behalf of the farmers. This case was lost and appealed. The newspaper mentions two farmers were involved in the suit.

³² Vanguard, 30/5/75, "The U.L.F., a Review".

³³ CADEC, Vol. I, pp. 2 and 6.

To press their demands, the farmers intensified their "don't cut" (cane) campaign, started at the beginning of the crop season. Over 90% of the farmers supported the campaign. It was well recognised that a prolongation of this action could effectively ruin Caroni's expectation of a record production of 200,000 tons of sugar and hence the large profits it would yield. Although the cane farmer stood to lose also, this was the most he could do. Unlike the sugar workers, they had no recourse to the Industrial Court. Complaints were to be considered by the Manager of TICFA or the Minister of Agriculture through the Manager,³⁴ the very person they were opposing. The farmers' case was further complicated by the fact that between 25-30% of the small farmers are also sugar workers. Therefore, when the sugar workers returned to work, the cane farmers lost their most valuable weapon and support and were forced to end their strike.

Comment:

In view of the central position of the Act in this dispute, let us now examine its relationship to its leader and the members.

The Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Act, 1965, which incorporated the existing farmers association TICFA³⁵ (established under the farmers Ordinance 1957 and continued under the Ordinance 1961) on the 2nd of February, 1965, legally enforced obligatory and automatic membership upon the cane

³⁴ This is my interpretation of the Act based on the statement that any rules, resolutions etc., can have effect only when approved by the Minister, and the absence of any reference to the Industrial Court as a medium for settling disputes under Section (6

³⁵ TICFA was first established in 1957 as a corporation under the Incorporation and Cess Ordinance 1957 and was continued as a body corporate by Section 3 of the Cane Farmers' Incorporation and Cess Ordinance, 1961 to 1965 when it was incorporated by an Act of Parliament.

farmers. Thus Article 4 (1) of the Act reads:

On the date of coming into operation of this Act -

- (a) the Register of names of all members of the former Association shall be deemed to be the Register of members of the Association under this Act; and
- (b) every cane farmer who has entered into a contract with a sugar manufacturer under the Production of Cane Ordinance, shall be deemed to be a member of the Association.³⁶

That is, whether a farmer wished to be a member of TICFA or not, his transactions with a sugar manufacturer before 1965, or those done after that time, automatically registered him as a member of TICFA.

This difference between TICFA as an Association and ICFTU as a trade union lies at the root of the farmers' dilemma. As a trade union ICFTU was governed by the Trade Union Ordinance and the IRA, which grant every worker the right to be, or to refuse to be, a member of any trade union or any number of trade unions of his choice (the IRA, Article 71). Since TICFA is not a union but a statutory body with compulsory membership to it alone, the cane farmers did not enjoy this "right". Therefore, although ICFTU's membership consisted of 90% of the farmers and had the right of recognition as the bargaining unit under the IRA, it was TICFA that enjoyed the legal authority and recognition as the farmers' association, even though it lacked the legitimacy of the majority's support. The denial of this right to free association and choice of its leader, added to the suspicions of collusion between the leaders and the Government, were the chief causes for the demand of the Act's repeal and the removal of

³⁶ Act I of 1965 (Government Printery, Port of Spain, 1965), p.3.

Girwar as the President of TICFA.

In scanning the pages of the Act, one will not find any references to the position, role, appointment or election of the Manager or President³⁷ of TICFA (but there are precise rules pertaining to the functions and authority of the Chairman of the Management Committee). The absence of this information has encouraged the suspicion that the incorporation of TICFA's constitution in the Act, so cleverly done, was to allow the Government to manipulate it in order to keep a Manager sympathetic to its interests in the leadership.

A close examination of Article 12, particularly subsections 2 and 5, reveals how such suspicions could be justified.

Subsection 2 reads: -

The Committee of Management shall consist of -

- (a) two persons nominated by the Minister, and
- (b) twelve members of the Association elected in accordance with the provisions of this Act and of the rules.³⁸

The other sections of the article show that while the elected members are subjected to the authority of the Committee, the nominated members are the responsibility of the Minister. Thus section 5 reads:

Every member of the Committee nominated by the Minister under paragraph (a) of sub-section (2) shall hold office for two years unless, within such period, he resigns or is removed by the Minister.³⁹

³⁷The titles President and Manager seem to be used interchangeably -- reflecting the confusion of the Association and the Trade union ideas. From here on, the title of Manager will stand.

³⁸Act I, Part II, p. 7.

³⁹Ibid., p. 8.

Since there is nothing in the Act which prevents the Minister from renominating or confirming the Manager in this position at the end of his term, it is evident that the Minister can maintain a particular leader in the position of Manager in perpetuity or as long as that Government is in power.⁴⁰ As a Director of the jointly owned Caroni Limited, and Manager of TICFA, Girwar's loyalty was to the Government. Under such circumstances the cane farmers suffered a poor "second-best".

Hence in the dispute of 1974-1975, opposition to Act I was not against the Association per se, but against the man Girwar. Since only the Government could remove him, the farmers employed the strategy of identifying Girwar and TICFA as inseparable, hoping that Act I would be revoked, and Girwar would automatically be dislodged. This brings into question again the denial of fundamental rights to the farmers. It is inconceivable that a member of an association purporting to represent his interest had no "rights" in determining who shall be his leader, particularly in a country that boasts of the virtues of majority rule and democracy.

Due to the lack of written evidence, it is difficult to substantiate the farmers' accusation against Girwar. On the other hand, it is just as difficult to believe that the farmers who, it was estimated, had lost over \$12 million by the end of March and were losing \$300,000 daily, would willingly undertake

⁴⁰ The only other section of the Act which makes reference to the election of members is Article 13(c) which states that the Committee can make standing order for the appointment and removal of a manager and Secretary or their servants. But this I believe refers to Branch Managers, since it is the Managing Committee that is being referred to.

such a sacrifice for a mere political stunt intended to embarrass the Government.⁴¹ That 90% of the farmers chose to undergo this hardship, even while sharing the individualistic interest of the other 10%, so succinctly expressed by one farmer -

Girwar and Shah don't plant cane, and don't help me plant it. It is my labour and money paying for the workers. The loss is mine.⁴²

is indicative of the conviction with which they believed the charges against Girwar to be true. It also belies Sir Harold Robinson's statement that "the issues are not those of fundamental interest to the average sugar worker or cane farmer, but have been superficially imposed upon the sugar industry by political interests."⁴³

Sir Harold was, however, nearer the mark when he described the situation among the farmers as 'a domestic quarrel' in connection with their leadership. It was a domestic quarrel based on the personal illiberality of the actors -- Shah, Girwar and Williams. Shah, as one of the prominent activists of the 1970 military revolt, had emerged from the court-martial a hero to the young militant Trinidadians and especially to the Indians. He was a fighter, and as was mentioned earlier, the Indians loved a "Pahalwan" -- one of the basic reasons for Maharaj's success

⁴¹ Guardian. These figures must be viewed with caution. The implication given was that farmers were losing the opportunity of becoming millionaires. But it is suspected that this amount represents the cost of cane calculated at the price of sugar. The local cane farmers' price of cane does not begin to approach this value. For example, in 1974 the final adjusted payment was TT\$25. per ton of cane. The price of sugar was over TT\$1200. per ton. Further, the local cane farmers' share in the production of cane is about 40%.

⁴² From an interview with a cane farmer, July, 1975.

⁴³ Guardian, 30/3/75. Sir Harold Robinson, "Crisis in the Sugar Industry".

among them. But while these factors endeared Shah to the young and the Indians, they earned for him Williams' personal animosity. Furthermore, Shah's attacks on Williams and his advocacy of the dismissal of the PNM regime hardened Williams' attitude to Shah.

In this light, the Government's reluctance to remove Girwar was understandable, for to do so would put an avowed enemy of the Government in the Government's camp. While it is the duty of any political party in (or out of) Government to protect its interest, the first duty of a Governing Party is to the welfare and interest of the People. The importation of sugar from Cuba at \$1200 per ton, to meet the national shortage caused by the "domestic quarrel" between the Government (as directors of TICFA) and the cane farmers, evinced a Government concerned with protecting its own interest at the expense of the nation's.

The Government, as employer at Caroni and governor of TICFA was in the best possible position to settle this dispute and allow the farmers to benefit from an overdue prosperous climate in sugar instead of allowing it to escalate into a national crisis. The decision of Judge Braithwaite had given the Government that opportunity to settle without losing face by allowing TICFA to be repealed and be replaced by the union, ICFTU. Shah would still be outside of the Government's camp but under its jurisdiction and the rules of the IRA. But more importantly, the farmers' and the nation's interests would be served to their liking and the people spared the inconveniences.

In maintaining an inflexible stand against Shah, Williams failed to heed the Machiavellian principle: it is better to deal with one man than a hundred. He weakened further

the PNM's image among the sugar workers and gave the impression that the threats of one man, Shah, or the three ULF leaders, were a real threat to the Government. It tended, moreover, to confirm the accusations that the Government was not ruling in the interest of the people but in that of the multinationals and thereby converted the opposition of three men into a force of over 40,000 as the sugar workers and farmers joined with the oil workers in a united labour front.

Let us now consider why the oilfield workers, "Trinidad's labour aristocracy", took strike action and joined the ULF.

The Oilworkers' Case:

Issue:

On the 4th of November, 1974, the Oilfield Workers Trade Union (OWTU) began negotiations with Texaco (Trinidad) Limited⁴⁴ on a new contract. The current contract was due to expire in February 1975.⁴⁵ The union's proposal centered on two issues -- a wage increase and its recognition as the bargaining unit for the staff (monthly paid) workers.

By January 1st, 1975, after two months of discussions, the Company had not moved from its offer of 25% nor the Union from its demand of 80%. Following the Rally at Skinner Park, the Union notified Texaco that it had increased its demand from 80% to 147%.

⁴⁴ From hereon called Texaco.

⁴⁵ G. Weekes "The Battle for that 80%" (pamphlet by OWTU, 1975), p. 2. Weekes explained that the early assumption of the negotiations was due to the desire to return to their previous practice of having the agreement concluded and recommence in December. The practice had existed since 1962, but in 1971-72, owing to his imprisonment and the consequent delay to the collective bargain of that year, the contract was not concluded until March, 1972.

Texaco's counter proposal to the Union was at first a wage increase of 19%; but during the negotiations it improved this to 25% and much later to 30%.⁴⁶ It denied the claim for recognition and applied an injunction to uphold the Union's claim at the Certification and Recognition Board. It justified its denial in accordance with Section 23(6) and 33 of the IRA which prohibited a union from representing more than one category of workers in the same essential industry.

The union rejected the Company's offers. By mid-February the impasse completely broke down. The workers intensified a "work-to-rule" campaign that reduced Texaco's production to a dribble of 20,000 barrels a day from the usual 350,000 barrels. On the 12th of March, the 7,000 workers walked off their jobs. Texaco then shut down its operations. By this time there had been fifty-six meetings, including those with the Minister of Labour.⁴⁷ The dispute was referred to the Industrial Court for arbitration and settlement on the 11th of March, 1975.

Comment:

According to the Union, the demand for an 80% wage increase was based on four factors -- inflation, productivity, profits, and a 'compromise' to facilitate an early settlement. The gist of the argument is as follows. In the three years since their last contract (1972), inflation had risen by 53% and in the first two months of 1975 alone, to 28%. Even without improving their wages, workers would need an increase of 82% over the three years of the new contract just to maintain their

⁴⁶ Guardian, 2/3/75.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

present position. Also, the workers' productivity rate for the same period had increased by 202% and Texaco's profits, by 415%.⁴⁸ Based on these data, the union believed that an increase of 144% would have been more appropriate than the 80% demanded and therefore considered this "a catch-up adjustment" aimed at an early settlement and not an increase in the true sense.⁴⁹

During the course of arbitration, Texaco finally revised its offer to 40% comprised of 25%, 8% and 7% for the three years, 1975, 1976 and 1977 respectively.⁵⁰ It argued it had made substantial increases ranging from 54% among craftsmen to 61% among labourers, in addition to a 6% bonus and other fringe benefits covering shift and risk work, and reclassification which in effect increased the wages by an additional 9%.⁵¹ Unlike Caroni, Texaco did not claim a threat to its viability. Instead it claimed, as it had done previously, that it was concerned about the effect an 80% increase would have on the national economy with regard to inflation and income distribution.⁵²

Texaco's arguments, while showing some consistency, also showed a measure of "ostrich politicking" in projecting an image of concern for the country while ignoring the issues of its

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30/3/75. OWTU advertisement.

⁴⁹ Weekes, Battle for 80%, p. 6.

⁵⁰ Express, 5/4/75. Texaco's advertisement.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² In a case of OWTU vs. TEXACO in 1966, Texaco forwarded exactly the same arguments concerning profits and workers productivity. Then OWTU's demand was 15% increase. Texaco offered 9%. Had the Court settled the question of considering profits of a company in determining a wage claim, this problem would have been averted in 1975. See H. Brewster, "Wage-Policy Issues in an Underdeveloped Economy" (ISER, Jamaica, 1968), p. 29. For Zambian parallel, see R. Sklar, Corporate Power..., pp. 106-112.

workers and the unique position of petroleum in the economy. The Prime Minister only recently reconfirmed (what has always been an economic and political fact) that oil is "the basis of economic development and political stability in Trinidad."⁵³ Wages in the oil industry have historically been an index against which wages in other sectors were settled and, therefore, a push-force of inflation. If the Government accepted inflation in the past, probably on the recognition that it was an inevitable cost of development, why was it now determined, together with Texaco, to end this practice in 1974-1975?

First, this paper does not advocate the maintenance of an advantage because of a precedent. What it would like to point out is that, despite claims of concern for the economy in the intervening years (1965-1975), neither the Government nor Texaco took steps to reduce inflation caused by wage increases in these sectors. In fact, the public sector was guilty of awarding wage increases in some cases in excess of 60% in that period.⁵⁴ It is suggested, therefore, that inflation, which both the ECA and Texaco conceded was "an inescapable fact" in wage determination, arose from a combination of local circumstances and imported inflation and was not the real motive behind the new attempt to fight inflation.

It is possible that Texaco's refusal to meet the union's demands was influenced by its own self-interest, and

⁵³ Guardian, 4/4/76

⁵⁴ It was pointed out to me, that the escalation of inflation was started in December 1973 when the Government controlled Tesoro awarded workers an X-mas bonus in addition to a 35% wage increase that year. Other oil companies were forced to follow, although they (Texaco, Shell), had cost-of-living allowances in their contracts. Tesoro workers further received wage increases in 1974 of 45% and in 1975, 55% totalling 135% over the three year period. Since 1970, Policemen, teachers and others have received increases in excess of 65%.

additionally by a converging of interests with those of the Government after the workers' strike.

During its wage dispute in 1965, Texaco had stated quite pointedly that in determining wages the principle used is not its ability to pay per se, but what it decided "was appropriate for the business and generally in the best interest of all".⁵⁵ Trinidad, therefore, had two national objectives, that determined by the national government; and the other, by Texaco. With inflation running at over 20% annually, Texaco apparently decided that a 19% increase was in the best interest of all and even sought the Minister's good offices to persuade the Union to accept this offer.⁵⁶ At that point, even the Government did not seem to agree with Texaco, judging by its silence and encouragement of continued negotiations.⁵⁷

On the other hand, the government's interest in later supporting Texaco's denial of an 80% increase was motivated by its own pecuniary interests and political security. It argued that the "energy crisis" had brought an unexpected bonanza in revenue from petroleum which was sorely needed for the development plans, particularly the development of a petrochemical industry. A large wage increase would cut into the profits and hence the government's share. This argument unfortunately was also put forward by Texaco, and the conjunction of the two positions renewed suspicions of collusion. However, it is believed that in spite of the personal animosity between Williams and Weekes, the government, prior to the strike, was watchfully awaiting the

⁵⁵ Brewster, p. 37.

⁵⁶ Vanguard, 30/5/75, Mr. Stibbs' letter.

⁵⁷ It was understood that the Minister had suggested at 25% interim settlement to avert a strike, but Texaco refused the compromise and the union also rejected it.

resolution of the conflict, a stand that may have been prompted by its own perceptions and confidence in the industrial arbitration machinery to solve the problem. But once the union went on strike and aligned itself with the sugar workers, the government, adhering to its policy of keeping oil and sugar apart, reversed its attitude. The Rally at Skinner's Park that formally introduced the United Labour Front, comprised of the oil, sugar, and transport and industrial workers marked the final turning point in the dispute.

In the new labour trinity -- Weekes, Shah and Panday -- Weekes enjoyed a central, patriarchal position that juxtaposed him with Williams as the leader of the working class. That is, Weekes' popularity was soaring among a sizeable portion of the population while Williams' was waning. The new labour solidarity and its leaders were gaining sympathy from the agricultural farmers, fishermen, and even the Heads of some Churches. To restore some semblance of legitimacy and control to the Government, Williams was forced to act decisively and firmly. The ULF's popularity had to be eclipsed and its leaders' strength arrested. The application of the injunction against the recognition of OWTU as the representative union of Texaco's staff workers may be construed as an attempt to promote this aim.

With the exception of the argument put forward by the ECA that the "people-management part of a supervisor's job would be made infinitely more difficult"⁵⁸ if supervisors and workers were to belong to the same union, no objective or substantial reason was given. Secondly, Section 39 of the IRA made it

⁵⁸ The ECA President's Report, 14/3/75. His solution to staff representation was to place supervisors "definitely and finally in the category of management and give them the training, responsibilities and authorities of managers.

possible for a different category of worker in the same industry to be included in a recognised union, albeit at the Board's discretion, for the purpose of promoting "good industrial relations". (Section 32,33). It is, therefore, appropriate to recall the judge's comment in a previous litigation by Texaco on the same issue. The judge commented then,

It is astonishing and instructive to observe how the means of settling this straightforward industrial relations question have been stultified and frustrated by legal manoeuvres and legalistic technicalities which have no proper place in labour adjudication.⁵⁹

That this "straightforward and industrial relations question" was still the subject of dispute and legalistic manoeuvres exposed a basic inadequacy in the industrial adjudication system. It also renewed suspicions of Texaco's collaboration with the Government in halting Weekes' influence. Perhaps it was the power of this association of Government with Texaco, together with the singleness of purpose of each of these to protect their vested interests, that misguided their perception. They failed to realise that the union's intent was the same. But faced with such a powerful opposition and lacking influential support, the defensive mechanism of job security was awakened and they were forced into adopting a "militant" stance in order to preserve what they considered their only means of defence. Furthermore, to quote Rees,

⁵⁹ Vanguard, 7/3/75. The fight for representation of Staff workers has a long history, beginning with the PSA. But in the present case it had been going on since 1968. The irony of the situation was that although the IRA, enforced since 1972, prohibited one union from representing two "essential" industries, at the time of Texaco's injunction, OWTU was already representing two essential industries listed in Schedule I of the Act -- electricity and oil.

Once a strike is begun,... its settlement is not wholly a rational matter, but one that involves subtle questions of organizational and personal prestige. Union members can easily come to believe that the continued existence of their union is at stake, and they will then no longer reckon the outcome in cents per hour.⁶⁰

In this case, all the actors were too acutely aware of their organizational and personal prestige at the cost of the national interest.

Taken all together, the industrial situation in February 1975 found the workers of the two vital industries, together with some industrial workers in the north, deadlocked in industrial disputes at the same time. That is, (a) all the "militant" unions were involved in industrial disputes at the same time. (b) All were outside of the membership of Congress. (c) All were without any political affiliations. (d) In the cases of the farmers and oil workers, the industrial conflict was complicated by the psychological factors involved in defending organizational and personal prestige. Since these factors operated on both sides of the conflict, the obdurate stature assumed by one party was equally matched by the other.

In the case of the unions, the rarity of having powerful unions on both ends of the north-south axis, that shared not only a similar circumstance but a similar "socialist" union ideology, coincident with a general social climate of disillusionment and apparent governmental indifference, inspired the spontaneous workers union, the ULF and nourished their determination to fight for their 'just and earthly' cause: "peace, bread and justice" together, in an almost unique, though small-scale example, of what Marx had hoped would happen with workers everywhere. The common

⁶⁰ Rees, p. 34.

practice among developing countries of placing the thrust of national development on the middle-class -- even to the point of artificially creating one by patronage and job recruitment -- has discouraged any serious contribution to nation-building from the "grass-roots" of the society.

This instance of labour unification (however recent and temporary) is, therefore, significant not only for the labour movement but also for its contribution to the nation-building process in Trinidad. It brought together the workers of different unions who had been historically divided by (a) type of industry (plantation versus industrial), and (b) as ethnic groups, by their political leaders exploiting their general political immaturity. The ULF represented an attack on the vertical stratification of the society in creating another horizontal association. And, according to Hoetink, every such horizontal association will tend to mitigate against the vertical barriers leading eventually to a horizontal stratification.

We may add that the conflict has strengthened the unions' resolve towards political unionism. But given the emotional and persistent nature of ethnicity and its role in the past, it is not difficult to imagine a conflict situation in which the ethnic factor may be rekindled. For the moment, however, the unification of these labour unions has partially at least, defeated political manipulations stressing ethnic differences. We will examine the importance of this example in a wider context in the next chapter.

The question that needs to be answered is: Why would a Government, whose commitment to economic development and

political stability are predicated on foreign investment and its concomitant, a stable industrial climate, and who in pursuance of that goal found it necessary to institute legislation "to restrain destructive and senseless strikes", and instill law and order; who was determined that oil and sugar should not mix; who saw the future of the West Indies being determined by the labour movement, hesitate to act in preventing a destruction of the very things it was sworn to defend? Why did the United Labour Front happen?

In view of the recentness of the crisis and lack of adequate information, any explanations now can only be speculative. However, from the case study the main explanation seems to be the differing perceptions between the government, unions and companies of the factors involved and their relative strength.

Analysis

As mentioned earlier Trinidad, because of its petroleum resource and late development, had enjoyed a fair degree of prosperity relative to her Caribbean sisters. But the problems of development, or planning the future development of the country, were not attacked until the mid-fifties following the reconstruction of the British economy after World War II and more seriously after Independence. This coincided with the commencement of the decolonization-modernization process in which industrialization was believed to be the key to the future prosperity of these newly emerging states. In Trinidad, this philosophy had a disciple in the leader of the ruling PNM party.

The underlying philosophy contends that industrialization leads to economic growth and modernization from which

everyone benefits -- more jobs, higher wages, improved technology and altogether, improved living conditions. Implicit in this argument is the belief that increased standards of living promote equality which obliterates differences, material as well as social. Thus ethnic distrust, caused by differences in status on the socio-economic or socio-cultural hierarchy, would be diminished, if not erased. This philosophy was neither socialist nor rankly capitalist but was claimed to be pragmatic. It must be noted, however, that where this philosophy had some success, as in the Caribbean country, Cuba, there was not an ethnic problem. Nor was there one in China or Russia. Neither Castro, nor Mao, nor Lenin had to battle with the problems of a culturally plural or heterogeneous society in addition to those of economic development.

Nevertheless, Williams was convinced of the efficacy of this philosophy for building a nation in Trinidad. Since industrialization was almost entirely dependent on direct foreign investment, it followed that industrial stability had to be given top priority. To do so, it was necessary to develop a certain number of "client" unions, even to the extent of collusion with the Opposition, in the person of Maharaj who was leader of the sugar union. But with the appearance of open opposition to his national objectives by leftist unions, and the ineffectiveness of Maharaj as the sugar union's leader after 1965, there arose a need to institute the ISA to strengthen the "client" support and prevent an oil-sugar linkage for maintaining industrial peace. Guarding against an alignment between the oil and sugar industries became almost an obsession with Williams.

The sequel was that the labour movement had to be divided. This was done by establishing closer links with the labour "doves" and isolating the "hawks". By dividing the movement on ideology and ethnicity (oil and sugar) in effect, weakening it, it was hoped that the industrial climate would prove attractive to foreign investors. Foreign investment, it was assumed, would produce economic development from which all races would benefit, thereby instituting national integration.

This reasoning is not without some basis. Economic development and growth do enhance a country's well-being, but in a developing country it can also stir up dissatisfaction, and the desire for more goods, as the "demonstration effect" inferred. In these countries, the middle class tend to be more advantageously placed in benefitting from development through expansion of the bureaucracy, and they invest and consume more due to their higher status and economic well-being. But in a culturally stratified society, economic development may simply lead to more jealousies. One would have to be blindly optimistic and deaf to the past to expect that in Trinidad ethnic or racial differences, which took root in the country over a century ago, and were strongly revived and sustained in the last twenty years, could be overcome simply by improving the pecuniary position of the groups a little, especially at a time when the awareness of economic differences had promoted a keen competition between the Negroes and the Indians to improve their group's status. The growing concern over the question of race among many Trinidadians and the failure of economic development to evolve a class-based but multi-racial society as in Cuba suggest that the so-called

national approach to nation-building has not had the desired effect. Instead, these rural workers, regardless of race began to see themselves as part of the same exploited class. The unity of the militant unions must also be seen as the outcome of a convergence of all the forces opposed to these unions.

First, industrialization, based as it is on capital intensive industries -- automation -- affects most adversely the unskilled workers. Although unemployment was not an issue in 1975, the army of oil workers has been steadily decreasing since 1964 and retrenchment has become a regular subject of contention.⁶¹ By comparison, it appeared that workers in the service sectors, particularly in the Government services, were demanding and getting lucrative wage increases and enjoying greater job security. Secondly, the consistent refusal of Texaco to compromise with the oil workers union, coupled with the Government's support and its challenge to meet a union confrontation;⁶² the 'Labour Congress' refusal to support the oil and sugar workers' call for a general strike and its public denunciation of the ULF's behaviour, and the absence of political support from a strong political party, all conspired to create an image of a united front of Government, Business, the Government sponsored Labour Congress and the upper and middle classes against the workers of oil and sugar. In order to ensure their share of the

⁶¹ See, "Speeches by George Weekes at the Tripartite Conference on Unemployment and Retrenchment", (OWTU), San Fernando, 1968), pp. 4-7.

⁶² There was a local opinion that the Government had stated it was not afraid of a confrontation 'this time', meaning in 1970 it was surprised by the demonstrators and was unprepared, but in 1975 it was prepared for any eventuality.

national pie and at the same time withstand the pressures of capitalism, the workers of oil and sugar were forced to practice solidarity against their opposition -- or preserve what Perlman referred to as the "communism of opportunity".

Because of its differing perception from the rest of the society and its conviction of the individualistic nature of Trinidadians, the Government was self-deceived into believing that such a unity could not be realized between unions, particularly the unions composed of the two rival races. By placing too much emphasis on the "national psychology" -- as Williams is fond of quoting -- Williams was led to doubting his own observation. As early as 1973, he had drawn his party's attention to the fact that over the last few years a change was afoot in the country which was intolerant of platitudes and such "absurdities as, who [are] you voting for?" He had watched the development of this change emanating from among the working class and knew, as Sydney Webb had enjoined,

Social order will change and be modified -- partly intentionally or unintentionally. It is therefore, not a question of whether the existing social order shall be changed but how this inevitable change shall be made.⁶³

But he misread the signs.

Williams believed that the change occurring among sections of the population was instigated by other politically aspiring individuals who needed to discredit him in order to glorify their own image. The level of opposition was thought to be affective, and subjective without any real foundation. Any threat could, therefore, be quickly dismissed. As the incumbent

⁶³ S. Webb, "The Difficulties of Individualism", in Socialism and Individualism, ed., Fabian Socialist Series, No. 3 (London, 1909), p. 6.

leader, he thought he could personally quell any verbal or written attacks, or settle any industrial uprising by legislation. In addition, he was convinced that the individualism or self-interest of Trinidadians would prevent a long-lasting strike or sympathy for the unions.⁶⁴ With these interpretations of the industrial unrest in 1975, he saw no reason for postponing his visit to China and the Far East. He once professed at a PNM Convention; "I do not panic easily, and do not as a rule mistake a molehill for a mountain".⁶⁵ This was one instance in which he had mistaken the mountain for a molehill. When the ULF Rally took place on the 18th of February, Williams was out of the country. On his return he was faced, not with preventing a unity, but with breaking it.

The physical disruption of the demonstration march to Port of Spain served only to increase the opposition to himself and the Party and support for the ULF. In order to regain the confidence of some of the workers and the unions, and perhaps realising he had overplayed his hand in opposing labour, the Government, after three years of reluctance to amend the IRA,

⁶⁴ There was general support for the strikers though this tended to be spatially divided. In the northern areas it lasted, as expected, as long as sugar and oil were still available. But the fruit and vegetable farmers in Aronguez supported them. Express, 21/3/75. The Presbyterian Church donated \$3,000 in food. Fishermen pledged 400 lbs. of shrimps and two tons of cooking oil and one day's catch exclusively for the campers (following the intended march and camp in Port of Spain). Express, 17/3/75.

⁶⁵ E. Williams, "The 15th Annual Convention of PNM", (PNM Publishing Co., 1973), p. 31.

finally accepted Congress' submission for its amendment.⁶⁶ While this may have helped in resolving one of the outstanding issues in the OWTU-*Texaco* conflict, and quietened somewhat the industrial unrest, it did not stem the tide of opposition. Consequently, in the recent general elections, eight parties contested against the PNM. Only the United Labour Front and Democratic Action Congress succeeded in gaining electoral seats.⁶⁷

It is too early to say how long the popularity of the ULF as a union movement will last. Born out of opposition to the pressures of capitalism, it will probably endure as long as the conditions forcing its unity lasts. But having its own political arm, which will most likely form the official Opposition in the legislature, opens up an entirely new set of questions and problems both for the unions and the country. The social change put into motion in February 1975 has issued the first true labour party in the country that hitherto separated the functions of labour and politics. The onus is now on this new party to prove it can serve both institutions or the nation as a whole. Its choices lie in remaining a labour party dedicated only to its members' interest, and stagnate in the process, or improving its stature by providing a worthwhile opposition and restoring some of the mechanics of parliamentary democracy to the benefit and the development of the country as a whole.

⁶⁶ There were signs of industrial unrest among Congress' unions, in particular, its largest member, the Public Service Union, in connection with a claim by the Customs and Excise Workers. The Government's delay in settling this complaint was beginning to turn these workers sympathy towards the ULF. In its paper the Union issued a warning to the Government that it will not sit idly by and "will have no recourse but to resort to other methods," if "immediate remedial measures" were not taken. "Unrest in the Customs", *P. S. Review*, 26/4/75, p. 1.

⁶⁷ Electoral results were: PNM 24 seats; ULF 10; DAC 2. PNM got 29% of the electorate vote, and the ULF 15%. Only 54% of the electorate voted. *Express*, 16/9/76.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, some aspects of trade unionism, political parties and ethnic relations pertaining to the nation-building process in Trinidad and Tobago, have been discussed. Within that context, we have drawn from the experiences of some other countries and a number of authors for a broader conceptual exposition. We first examined some theories of ethnicity, noting especially certain processes, such as the development of cultural heterogeneity which accepts differences and explores common areas of agreement; and cultural engineering which contains several steps from co-existence to interpenetration that are deliberately engineered by the rulers. These approaches, while partly relevant to the Caribbean, do not seem to have been taken seriously by her leaders. Indeed, attention was drawn to the fact that a deliberate effort was made to keep the races apart in Trinidad, for political reasons, while relying on quick economic growth to dilute tensions.

Theories relating to trade unionism were not found to be very helpful in this particular instance. While the classification of unions into the North American "business-unions" and Western Europe "political-unions", and Perlman's psychological approach, have been useful in understanding union attitudes in the West Indies, they do not explain the actual course of events very much. In the United States the unions have adopted business-unionism as their modus operandi. In Trinidad, it was imposed on them by political leaders for the leaders' own ends. The emergence of the United Labour Front in Trinidad & Tobago into the field of politics,

however, follows the European pattern of the 19th. Century in which workers firmly believed in winning trade union ends by political means. But we do not know as yet if this comparison can be carried any further.

In short, much of the theoretical material and models examined have proved useful in provoking some thought but not in explaining the evolution of a trade union inspired class-movement in Trinidad. In fact, the story in Trinidad seems to be simply one of a typical conflict situation between two groups where a threat from one intensifies the animosity of the other and reinforces in-group cohesion. Thus in Trinidad, the people in power, using their own perceptions of the situation to make policies, saw that their political support from the Negro population could be preserved by keeping the workers divided from the Indians, i.e., separation on the basis of ethnicity, and that this process would also keep the union movement weak, thereby providing inducement for foreign capital for development. Their perceptions proved wrong when it was shown that workers divided by and differing in ethnic background, could unite when pushed to the wall.

Theorists may, therefore, be excused for their limitation of vision with respect to the "strange and unknown societies" that were being rapidly converted to nation-states where circumstances differed with each country; that principles which seem clear in the abstract and applicable in one country are not always so readily applicable in practice in another. Similarly, in adopting western theories, nationalist leaders showed themselves to be equally myopic and unprepared for the task of national development. As a study within the development stream of international relations, the

comparative element has helped to demonstrate this fact which has been partly responsible for the failure of developing countries to develop.

As the study indicated, several Third World countries are inclined to perceive economic development as the foundation of modernization and political stability and to resort to some immediate political or cultural pragmatism for the goal of integration conveniently provided by the all-encompassing theories on "political development", or Mazrui's conflict management and cultural engineering, and Smith's or Despres' models of pluralism. In these countries, therefore, one or other of these models has been used in the approach to national development without first looking at the requirements of that country itself. The result, we believe, was a trial-and-error approach which may have considerably retarded their rate of development.

This set-back can, to a large extent, be blamed on the basic tendency of the new countries soon after independence to imitate not only the political and administrative systems of their former colonial rulers, but also their social and economic systems as well. This again, was essentially so because the political leadership in most of these independent countries was drawn from the metropole-educated middle-class which "mimicked" the metropolitan ruling class. This was probably because they were mostly educated in the "Mother-country" -- United Kingdom or France -- and knew little of any other system or most likely because they were conditioned to accepting the supremacy of the western system in the very course of replacing Western rulers. Furthermore, these metropolitan orientations were considerably reinforced later by the

United States with its obsession, in the early days of the Cold War, to promote western democracy, as against communism. Thus, the idea of nation-building through a reformulation of class-consciousness -- i.e., building from the large base of working-classes upwards -- remained the preserve of the left-wing groups and communists who formed a minority in these countries:

Curiously, in Zambia and Ceylon where some form of class approach was possible, it was only half-successful. In Zambia, the trade unions had initially achieved a degree of inter-tribal unity among the copper-mining workers and joined in the freedom struggle. But as they ultimately formed a "labour aristocracy" in comparison with the rural masses, they became less deeply committed to a wider working-class-peasant unity. In addition, following the incorporation of the mine workers' union and the Trades Union Council, as a whole to the United National Independence Party of Zambia, the mine workers' union could preserve its own economic position only by going along with the leadership of the Party. In this regard, union initiative had to align itself with the political leadership.¹

On the other hand, the integrational activities of the trade unions and left-wing political parties in Ceylon were debilitated by the ethnic factor as between the Indians and native Sinhalese. Briefly, the Indians were the minority of workers on the tea plantations and were organized politically and in trade unions by Indians. The left-wing Trotskyite and communist parties were led by Sinhalese intellectuals and centered around the small urban working-class Sinhalese. Labour and political affiliations

¹ c.f., Richard L. Sklar, Corporate Power in an African State, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975), pp. 96-133; Robert H. Bates, op. cit., pp. 7-26.

coincided with ethnic membership. But whereas the Sinhalese leaders were somewhat theoretical and doctrinaire in their approach, the Indians were not and for some time and leaders of the two groups displayed a considerable amount of sympathy for each other. However, when they were faced with a dilemma at crucial elections or over national issues, the Sinhalese left-wing leaders did not like to be branded anti-nationalists by Sinhalese extremists. So they chose the nationalist side and in practice showed themselves to be Sinhalese first and Socialists later.² It is, therefore, unique that a workers' movement uniting workers of different ethnic groups in the vital industries arose in Trinidad.

The genesis of this movement in Trinidad, as put forward in this study, was traced to the evolution of the Government's policy towards some trade unions and its persistence in pursuing that policy, namely, its relentless opposition to leftist unions, its approach to national development, its maintenance of ethnic cleavages for electoral support, and perhaps the most important, its placement of the responsibility for cultural integration unilaterally on the heads of the Indian sub-group. The importance of this fact must be clearly understood if one is to understand why politically, Trinidad & Tobago has hitherto failed to achieve any degree of real national unity in the fourteen years since its independence.

The independence movement in Trinidad did not entail a freedom struggle in the same sense or to the same extent that it did in India, Pakistan, Indonesia or Algeria. It was contained

²For further details of this ideology-nationalist conflict, see Marshall Singer, The Emerging Elite, (M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts, 1964), pp. 134-135.

within a political movement led by a single Negro intellectual and identified in the minds of most people with the PNM Party, its leader and the Negro people, while the Indians were considered with contempt for their lukewarm attitude to the independence movement. Independent Trinidad came to be regarded as the private property of the Negro members of the population, the benefits of which were to be enjoyed by them and their progeny. If the Indians wished to be included in these benefits, it was their duty to renounce their Indian heritage and integrate with the Negro group.

Such were the perceptions of the Negroes and the Indians. Consequently, the Indians reverted to their "tradition of being on the defensive"³ by clutching on to whatever vestiges of the Indian heritage (however modified), they still possessed. In their understanding, racial integration or unity meant assimilation and absorption -- cultural annihilation. What they wanted was equality of citizenship with cultural autonomy. Moreover, the persistence of the ethnic cleavage, the continued neglect of the predominantly Indian agricultural sector⁴ and marginality of these workers and local instances of discrimination against Indians eventually instilled in them the "latent rage" of discrimination and reinforced their conviction of the Negro desire to suppress them.

Under these circumstances economic growth, even if it did spread to these rural workers, was utterly ineffective in breaking the vertical barriers of race and creating a unified society. Thus,

³ , "The East Indian & Black Power", (University of West Indies, St. Augustine, 1975), pp. 11-16.

⁴ In passing, it is interesting to note Selwyn Ryan's suggestion that "the exclusion of Indians from white collar positions was a good thing (since) it helped to keep talented members of the community in private enterprise". See Selwyn Ryan, "The Struggle for Afro-Indian Solidarity in Trinidad & Tobago", Index, No. 4 (1966) p. 25.

It was only when the sugar workers, released from Maharaj's influence, realised that the upper-class Indians and Negroes were combined against them; that even a Negro unionist was being pilloried by other Negro union leaders, that they visualised their future in terms of a class conflict. If they wished to share in a "communism of opportunity", to use Perlman's phrase, they had to unite with other workers regardless of ethnic background. But until that happened, the ethnic competition for political control had frustrated the natural processes of economic interpenetration and inter-dependence that result from co-existence and contact -- the fourth stage of cultural integration, peaceful reconciliation or the willingness to agree to compromise. The significance of the United Labour Front lies in the fact that, although it has not accomplished this feat, it has turned the integrational process in the direction that should lead to this end.

If the trade union movement has been successful in initiating class-consciousness among ethnically differentiated groups of workers this success is owed partly to the precedent established since the inception of the movement and partly to the failure of the political parties to establish a similar process. In view of the peculiarities surrounding the establishment and development of the trade union movement in Trinidad, the application of its role in nation-building to other countries might prove problematic. The main point it suggests is that any institution or organization which has a history of fomenting unity or cohesion among the different peoples of a country might be more useful in acting as a catalyst of national unity than any ideology. It follows that in spite of the duplication of development problems, the solution must

be sought within each polity.

Topics for further research

During the course of this exposition, some areas or topics peripheral to the main theme were touched upon that would benefit from further research. Some of these would be:

- a) A comparative study of political development in Trinidad and Guyana, as the two are countries very similar in ethnic composition and level of political development.
- b) The role of the trade union movement in Trinidad and Ceylon.
- c) The influence of economic development on the ideological persuasions of labour movements; or the American influence in Caribbean industrial relations following the change of international power influence, from Great Britain to the United States.
- d) The role of accommodation or collaboration between clever politicians and pliable trade unionists in containing racial differences in Trinidad, as against the experience of Guyana.
- e) Why did a Marxist class-based workers unity emerge in a democratic free-enterprise country like Trinidad, but did not in more socialism oriented polity like Guyana under ~~Ugan~~?⁵

⁵ This topic may be rephrased more dramatically thus: On a more general plane, why did it prove possible for unionists in Trinidad to overcome, at least temporarily, their "false consciousness" based on ethnicity and political divisive propaganda while, half a century of research by the Frankfurt School on industrial societies on the same theme came up with no simple remedies? I am indebted to Professor Subramaniam for pointing this out.

**INDIAN & NEGRO CONCENTRATION
BY ADMINISTRATIVE WARD**

a. Excludes Port of Spain,
San Fernando

O Indian

X Negro

$O, X = 2\frac{1}{2}\%$

Port of Spain: N. 58% - I. 10%

San Fernando: N. 48% - I. 28%

APPENDIX I

LABOUR & BUSINESS REPRESENTATION IN THE CABINET, SENATE & HOUSE: (TRINIDAD & TOBAGO 1956-1975)

Year	CABINET		SENATE		HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES		
	Business	Labour ^a Total	Business	Labour Total	Business	Labour	Total
1956	3	0 12	No Senate		6	3	24
1961	5	0 18	7	2 18	7	0	30
1966	5	0 18	6	3 24	9	1	36
1971	2	0 18	2	2 20	4	0	36
1975	2	0 15	2	2 20	4	0	35

SOURCE: R. Thomas, "A Note on 'Labour Representation'". (University of West Indies, 1971).

^a Only practising unitarians are included.

APPENDIX 2THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT, 1972PART 3Certification of Recognition

32. (1) The Board shall expeditiously determine all applications for certification brought before it in accordance with the following provisions of this Part.

(2) Subject to this Act, all trade unions that desire to obtain certification of recognition under this Part shall apply to the Board in writing in accordance with this Part.

(4) Subject to this Act, all determinations of applications for certification of recognition under this Part as well as determinations as to the appropriateness of a bargaining unit under section 33 and as to variations thereof under section 39 shall be final for all purposes.

33. (1) The Board shall on any application under section 32. (2) first determine the bargaining unit it considers appropriate in the circumstances (hereinafter referred to as the "appropriate bargaining unit") and in so doing the Board shall have regard to

(a) the community of interest between the workers in the proposed bargaining unit, including work location and methods and periodicity of payment therefor;

(b) the nature and scope of the duties exercised by the workers in the proposed bargaining unit;

(c) the views of the employer and the trade union concerned as to the appropriateness of the bargaining unit;

(d) the historical development, if any, of collective bargaining in the industry or business to which the proposed bargaining unit belongs;

(e) any other matters the Board considers to be conducive to good industrial relations.

(2) In considering the appropriateness of a bargaining unit, the Board shall not be restricted by the terms of the application under section 32(3)(b) and may, notwithstanding such terms, determine the bargaining unit most appropriate for the workers of the employer in accordance with subsection (1).

39. (1) The bargaining unit and the record of certification of recognition under this Part may be varied in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(2) A petition may be made to the Board not earlier than one year after the certification of recognition --

(a) by the recognised majority union; or

(b) by the employer;

for variation of a bargaining unit; or

(c) by workers employed in the bargaining unit for which the union is certified for the exclusion from that bargaining unit of those workers or any of them, on the ground that it is no longer an appropriate bargaining unit in so far as it includes those workers or any of them; or

(d) by workers not so employed but employed by the same employer, for their inclusion in the bargaining unit for which the union is certified on the ground that it is an appropriate bargaining unit for the inclusion of those workers.

(3) The Board shall not entertain such a petition under subsection (2)(c) unless it is satisfied that not less than one-twentieth of the workers comprised in the bargaining unit have signified in writing their concurrence in the petition.

(4) Where the Board is satisfied, after having regard to the considerations set out in section 33, on a petition under subsection (2) that workers should be excluded from, or included in, a bargaining unit it may vary the bargaining unit accordingly and make an order for the variation of the certification and record thereof made under section 41.

(5) The certification of a trade union as a recognised majority union shall not be affected by reason only of inclusions in or exclusions from the bargaining unit pursuant to the provisions of this section.

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