

BRITISH DECOLONIZATION IN THE CARIBBEAN:
THE WEST INDIES FEDERATION

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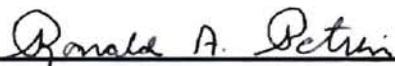
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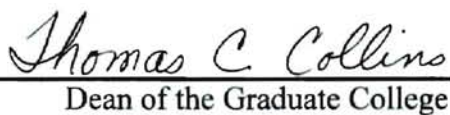
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PREFACE

In 1947 Great Britain together its Caribbean colonies to discuss the idea of a closer association among them. The British wanted the colonies to unite in a federation to which Britain would give independence and entry into the Commonwealth. After World War II it was an accepted view among the larger countries that small nations could not compete economically and survive politically in the modern world. Britain's belief in this theory led them to their offer of 1947.

However, in their efforts to rid themselves of their economically poor colonies in the Caribbean, the British failed to take into consideration the insularity they had fostered for years in the area. Although Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Leeward Islands of Antigua, Montserrat, and St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, and the Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent shared much in common, including their agriculture-based economy and their British heritage, they had lived independently of each other for centuries. Although they agreed to explore the possibility of federation, and even embarked on the venture for four short years, their reluctance to give up their new-found political freedom brought about the collapse of their federation.

The West Indies Federation is important to the field of British colonial history because it offers a different perspective on British decolonization. These islands were not attempting to divorce themselves from Britain, as so many of their other colonies were. The people of the British Caribbean admired the British and their institutions. The

British West Indies islanders simply wanted the freedom to control their own destinies without the help of colonial masters. They wanted political and economic freedom, but within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all those associated with this study. In particular, I am indebted to my major adviser, Dr. Elizabeth Williams, for her guidance and patience. I appreciate the advice of my other committee members, Dr. Joseph Byrnes and Dr. Ronald Petrin, as well. Finally, I am especially grateful for the support and encouragement of my husband, Steve.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Ten minus one equals zero.” With these words Eric Williams of Trinidad proclaimed the end of the West Indies Federation. A political union that the ten islands of the British Caribbean, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, the Leeward Islands of Antigua, Montserrat, and St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, and the Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent, had put together over eleven years, lasted for only four. After numerous conferences, committees, and meetings where the islands debated economic, social, and political problems, it was a local decision by one island, Jamaica, that caused the demise of this political unit.

However, it was a poor decision on the part of Great Britain that made the Federation of its Caribbean colonies an almost impossible task from the beginning. The British had spent years keeping the islands separate from each other, treating them independently politically and economically, while at the same time waving the prospect of independence as a coalition before them. When the West Indies islanders chose to come together, they believed, because the British had always presented it that way in the past, that it was the only way to attain the political freedom from colonial rule that they all desired. However, what each of the island colonies wanted most was individual independence, not a coalition government. Throughout the years of debate

over the structure of the Federation, a common theme was the fear of the islands, particularly the smaller ones, that they were just trading one colonial ruler for another, albeit in a different form. They never proceeded far enough to find out whether or not that would have been the case. Although the British Caribbean colonies were geographically and culturally diverse, which even the islanders pointed to as a potential problem for the Federation, they actually had much in common. They shared similar economic and social problems. They were all largely agricultural economies, with the exception of Trinidad which had an oil industry, with high rates of unemployment and few prospects for development.

They shared their British colonial heritage as well. The islands had been united in their ties to Britain for more than one hundred years. They shared similar political institutions, although their level of political development varied widely as late as 1950. Barbados, the oldest of the British colonies, was the most "British" of the islands, but both Jamaica and Trinidad had some experience with representative government. The smaller islands were the least politically developed, but they too had some say in their own governance by 1950.

The years between 1935 and 1945 were particularly important in the history of West Indies political development. Beginning in 1935 the islands erupted in a series of labor strikes and riots that protested the islands' poor economic and social status. Britain responded by sending a commission to study conditions on the islands and make recommendations for improvements. The Moyne Commission report advocated a series of measures to improve the lives of the islanders. In addition, it recommended that the British explore the possibility of federation among the islands in preparation for

independence. World War II interrupted the negotiations between the British and the islanders. When the war ended Britain was economically depressed and faced with a growing sense of nationalism in all its colonies. The Caribbean islands were no exception. They did, however, differ substantially from independence movements in other British colonies. The West Indian islanders considered themselves British. They had no desire to break away from their mother country; they simply wanted the political freedom to rule their own islands within the British Commonwealth. In that sense they afforded Britain an opportunity to provide a model of friendly decolonization for their other colonies. On the other hand, the islands' desire to remain closely tied to Britain may have led the British to ignore the problems that did beset the decolonization process in the Caribbean.

The British did acknowledge that changes were needed in the West Indies. They agreed that the islands were ready to pursue independence and took steps to achieve that end. The British never considered independence for the islands on an individual basis, because they believed the islands were too small to function independently in the modern post-war world. Instead, the British offered the idea of closer association between the islands. The concept of federation was not one the British reserved for the Caribbean. At the same time the Colonial Office was proposing federation in parts of Africa and Asia. It was an idea they had proposed unsuccessfully several times before in the Caribbean. This time the islands agreed to discuss the issue. At a conference held in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1947, the islands formally asked the British to consider a federation of its Caribbean colonies. The British would argue later that the islands had initiated the process of federation in 1947 of their own accord. It was clear to most, including some

members of the British Parliament, that the people of the West Indies would never have promulgated the concept of federation unless they believed that it was the only way to attain their independence. They were convinced of this because the British had told them so for years.

With British support, the islands spent the next eleven years working out the details of the West Indies Federation. In a series of conferences the islands debated every issue imaginable. They argued over how to finance the federation, and how much power the central government should have, specifically whether the central government should have its own source of revenue or be dependent upon the islands for support. They discussed over and over again the relative strength of island representation in the Federal House of Representatives. They argued about how much freedom individual islanders should have to move from one island to another within the Federation. They debated the site of the federal capital. The islands' representatives revised and amended, usually more than once, every decision they initially made.

By 1958 the British West Indies had a Federation, but the negotiations that had preceded its inauguration continued throughout its short life. The islands still could not solve any problem easily. Finally, Jamaica, the most politically and economically advanced of the islands, virtually demanded a Federation on its own terms, and threatened to withdraw if it did not get what it wanted. Although the other islands acceded to the weak Federation Jamaica demanded, it was already too late to save the new country. In 1961 the voters of Jamaica elected to withdraw from the Federation. Trinidad followed their example and the Federation ended in 1962.

At the same time the islands were haggling over the political and economic problems of federation, they were cooperating in a number of ventures. The islands had no trouble coming together to handle regional problems or to foster regional development. Although they had no history of area-wide cooperation before World War II, that did not deter them from successfully collaborating to solve problems that affected the whole region. What was different from the proposed federation was that no one asked them to give up political or economic freedom in order to join a commission. The islands remained independent entities that recognized the advantages of cooperation.

The British failed to achieve federation in the West Indies because they ignored the true desires of the islanders, who wanted political freedom for their individual islands. They were not adverse to cooperating with each other; they even recognized how much they had in common as West Indies and British colonial subjects,. Yet they were reluctant to give up what economic control they had or hoped to have in the future, and they were even more adverse to relinquishing the political freedom that they had never experienced before, and to which they aspired. The West Indies could have been a model of cooperative British decolonization. Actually, in many ways it was because the British gave the islanders an enormous amount of freedom to work out their own problems and develop their own federation. However, the failed Federation could not become a lasting symbol of decolonization.

The British could have allowed each island to develop at its own pace, while at the same time encouraging cooperation on common issues. Eventually, the islands might have come to see federation as a viable option. At that latter time, they would have experienced the freedom of controlling their own destinies and have been aware of what

they would have to give up and what they could expect in return. They might also have chosen to remain independent, but regionally cooperating nations. However, by preaching the idea of federation for so many years, the British led the islands to believe that it was the only way they could ever hope to achieve independence. Although the British insisted that the West Indies had chosen this option for themselves, it was the only possible choice the islands believed would be successful. In fact, the British offered the islands no choice, and the islands failed to seek another option on their own.

The history of the West Indies Federation has received little attention over the years. Books and articles written before 1962, the year the Federation failed, emphasized the positive benefits the West Indies islands could expect from the plan. Morley Ayearst acknowledged the weak ties between the islands, but concluded that federal union was the only viable method by which the islands could hope to gain economic and political independence.¹ Albert Gomes, a Trinidadian who was participating in the federal process, cited the economic and political problems the Federation would have to confront, but recorded his confidence that federation was the future of the West Indies and that it would succeed.² Sir Hugh Foot, the British Governor of Jamaica, expressed the same confidence as Gomes. Foot believed that federation was the only viable option for the British West Indies if they hoped to compete successfully in the international

¹ Morley Ayearst, *The British West Indies: The Search for Self-Government* (New York: New York University Press, 1960).

² Albert Gomes, "Federation in the British West Indies," in A. Curtis Wilgus, ed., *The Caribbean: Its Political Problems* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1956): 275-289.

marketplace. He was convinced that federation was the right choice for the small islands of the British Caribbean.³

Jesse Proctor believed that the Federation could work out its economic and political problems as well. Proctor stressed the importance of the federal experiment for the rest of the world. He claimed that the Federation would be beneficial to the rest of the Caribbean because it offered an example of a democratic government with a free and loyal opposition and respect for individual rights. In addition, he was convinced that the Federation would counter any threat from the non-democratic governments of Latin America. On a wider scale, Proctor called the Federation an example of a graceful retreat from colonization.⁴

Works published after 1962 focused on the failure of the Federation. In *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations*, John Mordecai and Arthur Lewis blamed the downfall of the Federation on its leaders, particularly Grantley Adams, the prime minister of the Federation, Norman Manley, the prime minister of Jamaica, and Eric Williams, the prime minister of Trinidad. Mordecai claimed that each man failed to realize, at least until it was too late, that compromise was necessary for the success of the Federation. Instead, each tried to impose his own views on the whole. Mordecai emphasized that each should have known better. All three were educated at Oxford and had extensive experience in

³Sir Hugh Foot, "Great Britain and the Building of a New Self-Governing Nation in the Caribbean," in A. Curtis Wilgus, ed., *The Caribbean: Contemporary International Relations* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1963): 53-58. Although this article appeared in 1963, Foot discussed events in the British Caribbean prior to 1958.

⁴Jesse Harris Proctor, Jr., "The International Significance of the Federation of British Caribbean Territories," in A. Curtis Wilgus, ed., *The Caribbean: Contemporary International Relations* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1963): 59-68.

public service. Yet when it came to the Federation, these men put insular pride before the good of the Federation.⁵ Elisabeth Wallace was also critical of the islands' leadership. She contended that the personal antagonisms among Adams, Manley, and Williams were so acute that they could not even agree to compromise for the sake of the Federation. In her view Adams was a weak federal prime minister, and Manley and Williams could not see beyond their local identities to support the Federation for the good of all the islands. She blamed all three men, as well as the leaders of the smaller islands, for failing to sell the idea of federation to the local voters.⁶

Although Charles Archibald dwelled on the decisions of Manley and Williams too, he offered a different interpretation of their efforts. Archibald credited the failure of these leaders of Jamaica and Trinidad to reach agreement on their economic problems for the demise of the Federation.⁷ In her study of the Leeward and Windward Islands, Carleen O'Loughlin focused on the relationship between the large and small islands. She cited economic problems, specifically the debate over how to finance the Federation and how much aid the smaller islands could expect from the Federal government, for the collapse of the Federation. In addition she pointed out that the small islands were

⁵John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968).

⁶Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean from the Decline of Colonialism to the End of the Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies: Improbable Federation?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 27 (November 1961): 444-459; Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies Federation: Decline and Fall," *International Journal* 17 (Summer 1962): 269-288.

⁷Charles H. Archibald, "The Failure of the West Indies Federation," *The World Today* 18 (June 1962): 233-242.

committed to the concept more than the larger islands, but the Federation could not work without the commitment of the larger islands.⁸

Harold Mitchell offered a broader perspective on the Federation. He claimed that the failure of the Federation was rooted in its past, where previous British attempts to unite the islands politically had failed. He cited the British history of keeping the islands separate, thereby encouraging their isolation. As a result, each island's loyalty was first to itself. There was no history of a wider West Indian view of the future in the islands of the British West Indies.⁹

Despite the importance some of these authors attached to the West Indies Federation in the history of British decolonization, most historians of the British empire and decolonization have given the Federation little attention. In fact, some failed to mention the West Indies at all.¹⁰ Others mentioned the West Indies in passing references, but did not discuss the Federation.¹¹ It is likely that historians of British decolonization

⁸Carleen O'Loughlin, *Economic and Political Change in the Leeward and Windward Islands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁹Harold P. Mitchell, *Europe in the Caribbean* (London: W. & R. Chambers, Ltd., 1963); Harold P. Mitchell, *Caribbean Patterns: A Political and Economic Study of the Contemporary Caribbean* (London: W. & R. Chambers, Ltd., 1967).

¹⁰See, for example, D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Tony Smith, ed., *The End of the European Empire: Decolonization after World War II* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1975). P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1970* (New York: Longman, 1993) devoted entire chapters to India, Africa, and South America, but dismissed the West Indies Federation in one sentence.

¹¹See, for example, Martin Kitchen, *The British Empire and Commonwealth: A Short History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850-1970* (New York: Longman, 1975).

have chosen to ignore the West Indies because the islands represented a small and relatively unimportant part of British decolonization history after World War II. Most historians have chosen to concentrate instead on British efforts in India and Africa, both of which were more problematic in the history of British decolonization.

John Darwin did address the West Indies Federation. He claimed that the British were indifferent to the region because it offered little hope for the future. In contrast to the Asian colonies which offered the prospect of wealth, power and glamour, and the African colonies which presented the opportunity to develop new states, societies, and economies, the West Indies' days of glory had passed. Darwin called the islands a monument to colonial failure because they were poverty-stricken, politically backward, and economically and politically fragmented. He blamed the death of the Federation on local island nationalism which contributed to the islands' failure to develop a West Indian nationalism.¹²

Although all these authors reached conclusions that could explain the failure of the Federation, most did not address the underlying cause of the problems. Mitchell blamed the British for their colonial policies, but stopped short of blaming them for planting the root of the federation idea in the minds of the islanders. The British knew the West Indies. The Colonial office had always treated the islands individually. The West Indian islanders had always rejected the idea of federating. However, in 1945, when the British made the commitment to disband their empire, they believed that the only way for the West Indies to achieve independence was by federating. Even with their

¹²John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

knowledge of the West Indies, they never sought another option. The West Indian leaders, despite their growing nationalist views, believed that the only way to achieve independence was the British way. These were people who admired the colonial leaders. They considered themselves British. So they decided to federate. The British ignored the signs of nationalism in the West Indies and persisted in their old idea of federation. The result was a failed federation.

Previous studies of the West Indies Federation have included chronicles of the daily events, and economic, social, or political studies of some aspect of the federal negotiations. This work will use British government documents along with previous monographs to present a synthesis of the process that will show the steps the islands took toward federation as well as the economic and political problems that plagued the negotiations. In this way it will provide a more comprehensive survey of the pre-federal and federal periods in British West Indies history.

CHAPTER II

BRITAIN AND THE WEST INDIES

Britain had a long history in the West Indies. It established representative governments from the beginning. The first settlers, in the seventeenth century, made their own laws and set up their own governments modeled after those of the mother country. In the nineteenth century the British took control and established crown colony governments in the islands. In the twentieth century the British began to give the colonies more control over their own affairs with the introduction of elected legislatures. The most substantial changes occurred between 1935 and 1947. Economic distress in the islands led to strikes and riots in the late 1930s. Britain responded with proposals for economic assistance and political concessions, which went forward despite the intervention of World War II. However, the war altered the course of British policy. When it ended Britain faced problems at home and around the world that changed its attitude toward its colonies. The war affected the way the colonies perceived their own futures as well. The West Indies provided support for the British war effort in both men and money. This helped to convince the islands of their own ability to function independently in the post-war world.

Spain was the first European power to inhabit the West Indies in the sixteenth century. It was not until the early seventeenth century, when Spanish influence had

begun to decline, that other European countries took an interest in the region. Britain, France and the Netherlands each began to settle on West Indies islands.¹

Barbados was first settled by the British, who landed on the uninhabited island in 1627. It was the only island that could claim an unbroken link with Britain from that time, which made it the most British of the colonies and accounted for its nickname, "Little Britain."² Jamaica was originally occupied, although never settled, by the Spanish, before it came under British control in 1655. It was formally ceded by Spain in 1670.³ The Leeward Islands of Antigua, Montserrat, and St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla changed hands repeatedly in the course of conflict between the European powers. The English settled St. Kitts in 1623, making it the first British settlement in the Caribbean. The French captured it and the British retook it on several occasions until France finally ceded it to Britain in 1783 under the Treaty of Versailles. British settlers from St. Kitts moved to Nevis, Antigua, and Montserrat, the smallest of the islands committed to federation, in 1632. The French and British also fought for control of these islands until Britain received Nevis and Montserrat in 1783, also by the Treaty of Versailles. Antigua finally became British in 1666.⁴

¹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The West Indies: A Nation in the Making* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 3.

²Great Britain, British Information Services, *Barbados* (London: Central Office of Information, 1966), 1-4; *The West Indies*, 3.

³Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Jamaica for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 78-82; *The West Indies*, 3.

⁴Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report on the Leeward Islands for the Years 1949 & 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), 53-55; *The West Indies*, 3.

Trinidad remained a Spanish colony for nearly three hundred years, although the French, Dutch and English attacked it repeatedly as well. Finally, in 1797 the British captured and controlled it and the Spanish ceded it to England under the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. Tobago remained Spanish for another twelve years until it became a British colony in 1814. Tobago became part of Trinidad, as a joint colony, in 1889.⁵ The Windward Islands of Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent changed hands regularly as well. The French settled Dominica in 1632, and Grenada and St. Lucia in 1650. Although shipwrecked blacks first settled on St. Vincent, the French overran the island in the seventeenth century. The French and British fought for control of all four islands throughout the eighteenth century, but the British ultimately prevailed. They captured Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent in 1783, and St. Lucia in 1814.⁶

The British established a form of representative government in all the islands. The first constitutions followed the British example. A governor represented the sovereign. There was a nominated legislative council patterned on the House of Lords and an elected assembly like the House of Commons. The king, on the recommendation of the governor, nominated members to serve on the legislative council. One of the council's principal functions was to act as a check on the governor. The Barbados House of Assembly first met in 1639. St. Kitts had an elected assembly and a council by 1650. Jamaica's first assembly met in 1663. When Antigua became British in 1663, and

⁵Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Trinidad & Tobago, B.W.I., for the Year 1947* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 88, 93, 111-114; *The West Indies*, 3-4.

⁶Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Dominica, B.W.I., for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 32-34; *The West Indies*, 3.

Montserrat, Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent in 1783, they also received constitutions from the British.⁷

St. Lucia and Trinidad were the only islands that did not inherit a British constitution. St. Lucia continued under the French system already in place until the middle of the nineteenth century. In Trinidad, the British maintained the Spanish laws until they converted all the colonies to direct crown colony government in the nineteenth century.⁸

By the seventeenth century sugar was the basis of all economic activity on the islands. The cultivation of sugar and its preparation for export required extensive land and a large labor force. Large plantations began to replace the original smallholdings and African slaves replaced European laborers. A pattern of society developed in which a small European oligarchy and a large number of African slaves relied heavily on sugar for their welfare. After a century of this existence, the British, by an Act of Parliament in 1834, abolished slavery in all its territories. In the West Indies, the emancipated slaves left the sugar plantations in the thousands, acquired their own plots of land, and began to work for themselves. To replace the lost workers, West Indian sugar planters adopted the practice of bringing in immigrant laborers, chiefly from India, under an indenture system.⁹

⁷*The West Indies*, 3-5.

⁸*Annual Report on Trinidad & Tobago, 1947*, 87-90; *The West Indies*, 5.

⁹*The West Indies*, 4.

In the nineteenth century the British decided to take a firmer hand in the political operation of their colonies in the Caribbean. There had been constant friction between the assemblies, which controlled the supply of money, and the governors, who were responsible for administering the colonies. From about 1830 onwards the situation deteriorated. Social problems created by the vast numbers of emancipated slaves and economic problems arising from increasingly severe competition in the sugar trade produced growing unrest throughout the islands. Between 1854 and 1898, in a two-step process that was similar throughout the islands, the British first merged the elected assemblies and the nominated councils into single partly elected, partly nominated, legislative councils. Then they replaced these with wholly official and nominated legislatures and executives, in other words crown colony governments, which the British claimed gave the unrepresented classes the direct protection of the crown. Although the governors had wide-ranging power to impose their will in the public interest, the British maintained that the force of public opinion would effectively prevent arbitrary decisions on their part. In that way, British officials contended, those who were unrepresented under the old systems of government could now voice their opinions openly and expect to be heard. This was in lieu, of course, of granting them direct representation.¹⁰

One important point to note was that in the process of converting to crown colony government the Leeward Islands used the authority granted in their original constitutions to institute the change by local acts, so in these colonies the crown had no power to

¹⁰The British defended the change by pointing out that the colonial legislatures in each island chose to convert to crown colony government and voted their own elected assemblies out of existence. See *the West Indies*, 6; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *West India Royal Commission Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 57.

legislate by Order-in-Council. Rather, Parliament had to enact legislation on matters outside the authority of the local legislatures. The other West Indian legislatures, with the exception of Barbados which did not convert to crown colony government, renounced their constitutions to the crown and thereby lost the authority to effect changes in their system of government by their own enactments. The British gave them new constitutions in which the crown retained the right to legislate for them by Order-in-Council.¹¹

Federation was an idea that surfaced more than once in the political history of the West Indies. In 1922, E.F.L. Wood, the under-secretary of state for the colonies, explored the idea of federation in the eastern Caribbean and concluded that the islands could only achieve federation if they wanted it themselves. He reported that public opinion had not advanced to that stage yet. In 1933, the new secretary of state for the colonies, Philip Cunliffe-Lister, appointed a commission to explore the idea of federation once more. It suggested a federation of Trinidad, the Leeward Islands, and the Windward Islands, which the islands rejected because, in addition, the report concluded that it would cost the islands more to operate under a federal than their current systems of government cost.¹²

By the late 1930s, however, when the world-wide depression brought severe economic distress to the already depressed agricultural economies of the islands, they were actively protesting their colonial condition. The long duration of the 1930s depression caused decreased income and irregular employment and eventually led to a

¹¹*The West Indies*, 6.

¹²*West India Royal Commission Report*, 324-326.

series of strikes and riots, uncommon events in the 1930s Caribbean, beginning with a sugar strike in Trinidad from May to July 1934, and in St. Kitts in January 1935. In February there was an oil field strike and hunger march in Trinidad. In May dock workers in Jamaica went on strike. In October St. Vincent residents demonstrated against increased taxes, and in November coal workers struck in St. Lucia.¹³ After relative quiet in 1936, there were a series of strikes in Trinidad in June 1937, followed by outbreaks in Barbados and St. Lucia in July, and in Jamaica in August. In January and May 1938, strikes and riots occurred once more in Jamaica.¹⁴

The British feared the growing unrest and political agitation. Working-class interests became more important in the colonies and new leaders surfaced to replace the traditional middle-class leadership in many of the colonies. The Barbados Labour Party, the Jamaica Labour Party, and the People's National Party of Jamaica supported a new

¹³Great Britain, Colonial Office, *British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1952* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), 3; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Trinidad and Tobago: The Making of a Nation* (London: British Government Reference Division, 1962), 7-8; *West India Royal Commission Report, 196-197*; John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 26; Annette Baker Fox, *Freedom and Welfare in the Caribbean: A Colonial Dilemma* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), 29-30.

¹⁴Great Britain, British Information Services, *Jamaica: The Making of a Nation* (London: Cox & Sharland, Ltd., 1962), 5; Great Britain, Parliament, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 5th series, vol. 331 (1938), 1038-1039; vol. 335 (1938), 871-874; vol. 336 (1938), 1196-1200, 1420-1421; *British Dependencies in the Caribbean*, 3; *West India Royal Commission Report, 196*; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 27.

kind of political movement that challenged British imperial policy.¹⁵ Each colony had a different idea, however, about what was necessary to ameliorate its own problems.¹⁶

The British realized they had to respond to the unrest and try to blunt the growing power of the labor movement. In 1938 they announced that the West India Royal Commission, commonly referred to as the Moyne Commission, would undertake a wide-ranging inquiry into the situation in the West Indies. The government authorized the Moyne Commission to investigate social and economic conditions throughout the British Caribbean, which it did from October 1938 to April 1939, and to make recommendations for further action.¹⁷

In a preliminary report issued in February 1940, the Moyne Commission concluded that the region urgently needed social services that it could not afford. It recommended unifying certain branches of public service, particularly the medical.¹⁸

¹⁵The Leeward and Windward Islands' middle-class leaders were able to control island politics until after the war, but by 1947 trade unionism had made inroads there as well. See Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 27.

¹⁶*British Dependencies in the Caribbean, 1939-1952*, 3; John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 218; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 27.

¹⁷*West India Royal Commission Report*, xi-xii; *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), vol. 338 (1938), 3299-3300.

¹⁸The British delayed the issuance of the full text of the Moyne Commission report until June 1945 because of the outbreak of World War II in August 1940. They feared that any public acknowledgment of the unrest in the colonies might undermine colonial solidarity during the war. They feared, also, that their enemies might perceive a negative report as propaganda to be used against England. *British Dependencies in the Caribbean, 1939-1952*, 3-4; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 28; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 218; Fox, *Freedom and Welfare in the Caribbean*, 31, 124.

As regards politics, the Moyne Commission heard a number of complaints from the West Indies islanders, one of which involved crown colony government. They protested that public opinion, which was intended to present the minority view to the governor, had little impact on him. In fact, the governor listened to all views, but acted upon those that agreed with his own opinion. As a result, critics of government policy became part of a permanent opposition whose opinions remained just opinions, and not practical alternative measures to government policy. The commission responded by recommending the extension of the franchise in all the colonies, because it was the next logical step towards self-government, and because it would give the people more influence in local governmental affairs. In order to accomplish a wider franchise the commission advocated lowering voting qualifications, which varied from island to island. In every case, though, they were high in relation to average local income. For example, in Trinidad in 1938 only 6.6 percent of the population qualified to vote. In Barbados the percentage of qualified voters was only 3.3 percent of the population.¹⁹

It was also the Moyne Commission that again called for the political federation of the West Indies colonies. The commission heard testimony from a number of local witnesses on all the islands who favored some type of closer union of the colonies but were for the most part unable to define what exactly they expected from a federation. After hearing the testimony, the commission reached the conclusion that West Indian public opinion was not ready to accept federation. It reported further that local pride and recent unsuccessful attempts to secure cooperation for the common good of all the West

¹⁹*West India Royal Commission Report*, 57-58, 378-379.

Indian colonies made the idea of any large-scale political federation unfeasible. As an example the commission reported that witnesses, whom it described as well-informed people, expressed the opinion that nothing beneficial to their colony could result from institutions established elsewhere in the West Indies. Despite this, the Moyne Commission recommended federation as the ideal to strive for in the West Indies.²⁰

Even during the war years the islands benefited from the recommendations made in the Moyne Commission report. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was a direct outcome of the report.²¹ This act promoted orderly social and economic planning for the islands on a comprehensive scale. Local governments formulated plans and Britain provided technical and financial assistance. For example, West Indian sugar colonies planned for the development of research in sugar technology. In addition, Jamaica started a food yeast factory, and planned for the rehabilitation of its banana industry. These programs were beyond the scope of Jamaica's own limited expertise and financial resources, so the island could not have initiated these programs without this assistance.²²

²⁰*West India Royal Commission Report*, 327; *British Dependencies in the Caribbean, 1939-1952*, 4; "Federation in the British Caribbean: An Exercise in Colonial Administration," *Round Table* 39 (June 1948), 234; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 28-29.

²¹It replaced the Colonial Development Act of 1929, which provided monetary advances to colonial governments to develop agriculture and industry. There was no money under this act for social programs. See *West India Royal Commission Report*, 355.

²²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), 11, 85.

The islands also enjoyed political advantages during the war. Progress generally took the form of an extension of the franchise, as recommended by the Moyne Commission. The British supported an expanded franchise in Barbados in 1943 which it accomplished by lowering income and property restrictions. In 1944, Jamaica gained full adult suffrage by eliminating the previous income restrictions, a new constitution, and an elected lower house, which gave the colony a substantial measure of self-government. The British granted universal suffrage to Trinidad in 1945.²³

Economic and political advances served to increase the desire for freedom in the islands, because they made the colonists believe that they had the ability to rule themselves. So did the West Indian war effort. Increased exports of sugar and cotton, the presence of American troops on military bases in the West Indies, and jobs for West Indians on the United States' bases and on the United States' mainland combined to raise the standard of living on the islands.²⁴ All of the West Indian colonies made the monetary surpluses they built up available to Britain as interest-free wartime loans.²⁵ At the same time the West Indies contributed 5,500 ground troops to support the British, and

²³*The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947*, 15-16, 46-47; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 32.

²⁴*The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947*, 6-8, 10, 75. It was also true, however, that in Trinidad and Antigua so many residents took jobs on the American bases that a shortage of agricultural labor developed. This did not affect the overall positive economic picture on these island, however. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1943-44* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 10.

²⁵Barbados contributed L202,322, Jamaica 223,375, the Leeward Islands 37,262, Trinidad, which had a large American base, 929,095, and the Windward Islands 58,338, for a total of L1,450,403 of the L24,014,948 given by all the British colonies together. See *The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947*, 115.

West Indian men served in the Merchant Navy as well.²⁶

By the end of the war attitudes toward colonial rule in the West Indies mirrored those throughout the British Empire. The islands had made positive economic strides, gained some political concessions, contributed to the British war effort, and now expected a measure of independence in return. The West Indies colonies were different from other British colonies seeking independence, though. Here there was a deep-rooted commitment to the traditional British civil and political liberties with which the islands were so familiar. As far as the West Indians were concerned, they were British and they wanted to maintain their ties to Britain.²⁷

Britain also changed during the war. It emerged with both its economy and its colonial empire in disarray. The cost of the war left Britain deep in debt. Destruction was widespread. Hard currency was in short supply. The government had sold foreign assets to help finance the war effort. The civilian economy was in a state of upheaval, and the British people were demanding an enlarged social welfare program.²⁸

The British had to consider the post-war supremacy of the United States as well. It was from the United States that the British hoped to get financial support to rebuild their country. In addition, they were cognizant of the United States' desire to end

²⁶*The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947*, 9-10.

²⁷The British were aware that the islands retained strong ties to them. See *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, vol. 337 (1938), 85, 132; Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies: Improbable Federation?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 27 (November 1961), 448.

²⁸Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 67-67; Don Taylor, *The Years of Challenge: The Commonwealth and the British Empire, 1945-1958* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 15, 55-56.

colonial oppression and grant political freedom to all colonial peoples. This was particularly important in the West Indian colonies which were located in the United States' sphere of interest.²⁹

The end of the war brought political change to Britain as well. The Conservatives lost the election of 1945; the Labour Party received an overall majority at the polls for the first time in history. Yet though the Labour Party's pre-war pronouncements about colonial policy had differed substantially from those of the Conservative Party, in fact the new government changed few features of colonial administration. The Labour Party, in keeping with its traditional tenets and post-war anti-imperialist attitudes, supported a progressive colonial policy that encouraged self-government in the colonies. However, by the 1930s colonial discontent had forced the Conservative Party to the same position. It had begun already to improve economic conditions and support political development in the colonies. The Labour Party was able to continue from these beginnings, in keeping with its own traditional views.³⁰

Although official government publications pointed to already successfully developed parliamentary institutions in places like Jamaica as examples of a long British

²⁹P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (New York: Longman, 1993), 277-278.

³⁰*The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947*, 15-16, 20-21; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Britain and Her Dependencies* (New York: Longmans Green and Company, 1943), 39; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Origins and Purpose: A Handbook of the British Commonwealth and Empire* (London; His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), 10, 12; David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 10, 127-128; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 63-65; Taylor, *The Years of Challenge*, 13-14; "Federation in the British Caribbean," 234.

tradition of local self-government, the Labour government criticized what it called the halfway constitution of Jamaica. This was in accord with views widely held in Jamaica. Accordingly, the government of the island vowed to make more improvements and the Labour Party did as well.³¹ As soon as the war ended, the British took steps to forge a new relationship with its colonies in the West Indies.

One of the problems of federation was apparent already from the crown colony system of government. The political units that resulted were a perfect example of the British tendency to treat the islands individually. Barbados did not convert to a crown colony, but instead retained its old representative government. In addition, the Leeward Islands differed constitutionally from the Windwards. The Leewards were a federation of units with local autonomy in all matters except those expressly delegated to the federal legislature. The Windwards were separate colonies united only by the fact of having a common governor. Trinidad and Jamaica each had individual crown colony governments.³²

Although the British had proposed federation in the Caribbean before the Moyne Commission report did, their plans only involved the eastern Caribbean islands. Jamaica was excluded because of its distance from the other islands. The Moyne commission was the first group to call for a Caribbean federation that included Jamaica.

³¹Although Britain liked to point to Jamaica as a shining star in its colonial empire, it usually failed to mention that the island had long demanded even more political freedom than Britain was willing to give. See *Origins and Purpose*, 10, 12; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 218-219; Fox, *Freedom and Welfare in the Caribbean*, 173.

³²*West India Royal Commission Report*, 325.

Another problem materialized during the Moyne Commission hearings when island representatives expressed their opinion that what was good for, and workable on, one island would not necessarily work for their own. They were reluctant, as well, to commit to the idea of a federation. In light of these views, the Moyne Commission recommendations were interesting. Although the report acknowledged that cooperation was not forthcoming and that the islanders were lukewarm to the idea of federation, it still endorsed federation for the islands. It was already becoming clear that the British could conceive of no other way to advance political freedom to this small group of island. However, by 1945, both the British and the West Indians had agreed that change was necessary. The British invited West Indian leaders to meet in Jamaica to discuss the idea of closer association among the colonies.

CHAPTER III

GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURE IN THE WEST INDIES

The West Indies colonies that met to discuss federation in 1947 were a diverse group. They spanned thousands of miles from Jamaica, across the Caribbean Sea, to Trinidad. These distances were a potential problem for the fledging country. In addition, the islands had a wide variety of cultural traditions they had acquired from other European countries before they became British colonies. As we have seen, Spain and France had inhabited most of the islands at one time and their influence was still apparent in many places. The new federation would have to take these into consideration in forming a government.

The distances between the small colonies were enormous. (See Map¹, p. 28, and Table 3-1.) Jamaica was 990 miles northwest of Trinidad, the most southerly of the islands, and 1,050 miles from Barbados, the most easterly. St. Vincent and St. Lucia, of the Windwards group were located about 100 miles west of Barbados. The Leeward Islands were situated north of Barbados. These distances had caused the island colonies to be politically and administratively distinct throughout their histories. As the political history of the islands showed, the British treated their Caribbean individually and

¹Michael M. Horowitz, ed., *Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean: An Anthropological Reader* (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1971), iv.



separately. They had different governors under the crown colony system, and their systems of government varied. Because separate governors handled the affairs of individual islands, they could, and did, often implement different policies on their own islands. Contributing to this isolation was the lack of air and sea transport, and insufficiently developed telecommunications.²

TABLE 3-1
AREA AND POPULATION³

	Total Area (sq. miles)	Total Population (estimated thousands)
Barbados	166	192,800
Jamaica	4,677	1,249,900
Leeward Islands		
Antigua	171	41,800
Montserrat	32	14,300
St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla	153	46,200
Trinidad and Tobago	1,980	558,000
Windward Islands		
Dominica	305	47,600
Grenada	133	72,400
St. Lucia	238	70,100
St. Vincent	150	61,600

Obviously, the British could do nothing about their traditional isolationist treatment of the islands; however the British and the colonists themselves could take measures to improve communications. As early as 1940 the Development and Welfare Organization in the West Indies realized that inter-island communications were a major

²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1943-44* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 3; *British Dependencies in the Caribbean, 1939-1952*, 1-2.

³These population figures were taken from the last census prior to the first meeting to discuss federation, 1943 in Jamaica and 1946 in all the other islands. See *The West Indies*, 49.

problem and examined ways to improve conditions. Regular steamship service existed already between the eastern Caribbean colonies, but did not extend to Jamaica.⁴ The British did not consider plans to extend sea transport important, because they believed that air service would become the principal mode of transportation in the future. In 1943 the Development and Welfare Organization approved grants to construct airport landing facilities in the Windward and Leeward Islands. Those in Antigua, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent opened in 1943. Also in 1943, British West Indian Airways Limited began providing air service between these islands and Trinidad and Barbados. In 1944 the company extended its range of service to Jamaica. Although the airline got off to a shaky start, with frequent cancellations and delays, there was no question of disbanding the service.⁵

By the time the delegates were preparing to meet to discuss federation in 1947 there had been even more improvements in air traffic, although the shipping situation was still inadequate. British West Indian Airways expanded and improved its service. British Caribbean Airways also emerged as a carrier, as did Caribbean International Air Lines. Dominica and St. Vincent still lacked regular air service, but the airlines were considering plans to remedy that problem. In addition, the British appointed a Director General of Civil Aviation to coordinate air activities. The participating governments of the British Caribbean colonies, in one of their first cooperative ventures in the 1940s, paid the

⁴*Development and Welfare, 1943-44*, 88; *British Dependencies in the Caribbean, 1939-1952*, 3.

⁵*Development and Welfare, 1943-44*, 88-89; *West India Royal Commission Report*, 339.

director's salary.⁶ Although air and sea communications were not perfect, it was clear that travel among the islands was reasonably assured by 1947.⁷

Telecommunications among the islands had also been a problem for years. Little in the way of improvement occurred in this area in the 1940s. The same was true regarding attempts to establish a radio broadcasting system throughout the Caribbean.⁸ It was clear, however, that the problem of communications, so often referred to as a major stumbling block to federation, was unlikely to be a problem by 1947. Although conditions were not perfect, there was slowly increasing radio service available to the islands, and there was certainly no reason to think that communications would deteriorate as the years progressed.

Another major area of concern was the cultural diversity of the islands. (See Table 3-2.) Clearly, the islands had developed separately and individually, from a variety of beginnings, but in most the Spanish and French influence had long since lapsed. The Windward Islands were the only exception. They were the only part of the British Caribbean where the French language was still in use in some form. Although English was the official language in all the colonies, in Dominica and Grenada the inhabitants

⁶Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1947-49* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 104-105.

⁷By 1950 Development and Welfare Reports did not mention interisland communications as a specific area in need of development. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951).

⁸*Development and Welfare, 1943-44*, 89-90; *Development and Welfare, 1947-49*, 105-108. There was little change in 1950. See *Development and Welfare, 1950*, 91-92.

spoke a French patois, and in St. Lucia the common language was a French-based Creole dialect.⁹ Even these colonies that maintained some visible remnant of French culture had been British colonies for hundreds of years. They had lived under British laws and customs since the nineteenth century. These were British colonies in every sense of the word, and any plans for federation would be based on British principles.¹⁰

TABLE 3-2

BRITISH COLONIAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES¹¹

	British Colony Since	European Influences	Language	Religion
Barbados	1625	British	English	Anglican
Jamaica	1655	British Spanish	English	Anglican Rastafarian
Leeward Islands Antigua	1632	British French	English	Anglican
Montserrat	1632	British French	English	Anglican
St. Kitts-Nevis- Anguilla	1623	British French	English	Anglican
Trinidad and Tobago	1797	British Spanish French Dutch	English	Roman Catholic Anglican Muslim Hindu
Windward Islands Dominica	1783	British French	English French Patois	Roman Catholic Anglican
Grenada	1783	British French	English French Patois	Roman Catholic Anglican
St. Lucia	1814	British French	English French Creole	Roman Catholic Anglican
St. Vincent	1783	British French	English	Roman Catholic Anglican

⁹ *Annual Report on Dominica, 1948*, 34; Suzanne Anthony, *West Indies* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), 87, 97.

¹⁰ Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Conference on Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies, Part I, Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 11.

¹¹ Anthony, *West Indies*, 10-17, 75, 82-88, 93, 96-101.

TABLE 3-3
DISTRIBUTION BY RACIAL ORIGIN
(IN THOUSANDS)¹²

	AFRICAN	EAST INDIAN	EUROPEAN	MIXED	OTHERS
BARBADOS	148.9	0.1	9.8	33.8	0.1
JAMAICA	971.4	21.4	16.0	232.2	8.8
LEEWARD ISLANDS					
ANTIGUA	35.4		0.7	5.4	0.2
MONTserrat	13.3		0.1	0.9	
ST. KITTS-NEVIS-ANGUILLA	40.0	0.1	0.9	5.1	0.1
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	261.5	195.7	15.3	78.8	6.7
WINDWARD ISLANDS					
DOMINICA	11.9		0.1	35.5	0.1
GRENADA	53.3	3.5	0.6	14.8	0.2
ST. LUCIA	40.6	2.6	0.3	26.3	0.2
ST. VINCENT	45.0	1.8	1.9	12.6	0.3

The British West Indies were also racially mixed (see Table 3-3). In all the islands, except Dominica, blacks were the predominant racial group. Those of mixed race comprised the largest population group in Dominica and the second largest in all the other islands, except Trinidad where they were the third largest behind the East Indians. Trinidad had the largest East Indian population, a total of thirty-five percent of its population.¹³

¹²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The West Indies: The Making of a Nation* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 49.

¹³Mixed race peoples in the West Indies were mainly mixes of African and British. See Great Britain, British Information Services, *Barbados* (London: Central Office of Information, 1966), 1-4; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Jamaica: The Making of a Nation* (London: Cox & Sharland, Ltd., 1962), 1-3; Great Britain, *British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-52* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), 81; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Trinidad and Tobago: The Making of a Nation* (London: British Government Reference Division, 1962), 2-4; Suzanne Anthony, *West Indies* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), 27-32.

Although there was a racial consciousness on the islands, race was only one factor in a mix of cultural, economic, and political currents. In the British West Indies race was tied closely to class. The small European element on the islands, residents and colonial administrators, constituted the upper class. The mixed race peoples were primarily middle class. They were able to reach this position because their lighter skin made it more likely that the British would select them to fill the minor colonial posts open to the native population. Blacks formed the lower class in Caribbean society. Most of them made their livings in agriculture or seasonal work.¹⁴

These distinctions, however, were not necessarily permanent. There were opportunities for members of every class to improve their position. Because blacks were the lowest paid workers in the British Caribbean, they were the hardest hit by the economic downturn of the 1930s. The labor union leaders who rose to prominence during the late 1930s came from this black population. Members of the mixed race middle class joined these men in advocating the end of colonial rule. Many of these same men would become the political leaders of the 1940s and beyond. They would all play a major role in planning the federation.¹⁵ Another group of blacks that would influence the

¹⁴Barbados had a history of discriminating against blacks more than the other colonies, although there was no official system of segregation. See Bridget Brereton, "Society and Culture in the Caribbean: The British and French West Indies, 1870-1980," in Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, eds., *The Modern Caribbean* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 92-93; Scott B. MacDonald, *Trinidad and Tobago: Democracy and Development in the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 31-32.

¹⁵For example, Alexander Bustamante of Jamaica, Eric Gairy of Grenada, Vere Bird of Antigua, and Robert Bradshaw of St. Kitts all began as labor leaders. See Frank McDonald, "The Commonwealth Caribbean," in Tad Szulc, ed., *The United States and the Caribbean* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 132. Perry C. Hintzen,

federation were the Oxford-educated leaders of their islands. They were motivated by a desire to free their homelands from colonial rule, as well.¹⁶

The most oppressed group in West Indian society was the East Indians. Since the time they arrived as indentured laborers to replace the freed blacks on the sugar plantations, black West Indians had looked down upon them for performing tasks they considered beneath their status. Because the East Indians chose to live in enclaves separate from the rest of the population, cultural differences became stereotypes which persist today. In Trinidad, where they resided in numbers large enough to have a political impact, they seldom worked in cooperation with the black leaders. Most of the racial problems of the pre-federation and federation period were between the East Indians and blacks of Trinidad.¹⁷

The economies of the islands were similar; they were all largely agricultural. (See tables 3-4) Sugar was the principal export of all three of the largest islands. Trinidad and Tobago's oil industry was the only non-agricultural industry of consequence.¹⁸

"Trinidad and Tobago: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Construction of Racial Identity," in Carlene J. Edie, ed., *Democracy in the Caribbean: Myths and Realities* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 62.

¹⁶ Grantley Adams of Barbados, Norman Manley of Jamaica, and Eric Williams of Trinidad were all Oxford-educated West Indians, who were labor leaders as well. See Wendell Bell, *Jamaican Leaders: Political Attitudes in a New Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 17.

¹⁷ Jesse H. Proctor, Jr., "East Indians and the Federation of the British West Indies," *India Quarterly* 17 (October-December 1961), 370-395; *Area Handbook for Trinidad and Tobago* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 89-90; Hintzen, "Trinidad and Tobago," 63.

¹⁸ Great Britain, Colonial Office, *British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1952* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), Appendices V,

TABLE 3-4
 MAIN DOMESTIC EXPORTS BY QUANTITY AND VALUE
 BARBADOS, JAMAICA, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO¹⁹

	QUANTITY		VALUE (L,000)	
	1939	1950	1939	1950
Barbados				
Sugar (tons)	128,594	131,743	1,278	3,868
Molasses (000 gals.)	10,661	8,835	575	1,076
Rum (000 gals.)	98	896	9	291
Jamaica				
Sugar (tons)	104,000	222,000	990	5,934
Rum (000 gals.)	839	2,363	247	1,559
Cigars (000s)	30(a)	15,037	17	564
Cocoa (tons)	2,315	1,084	48	204
Bananas (000 stems)	18,772	5,773	2,439	2,116
Citrus Fruits & Juices	---	---	178	1,028
Trinidad & Tobago				
Sugar (tons)	114,000	124,000	1,060	3,729
Cocoa (tons)	7,479	7,231	253	1,742
Rum (000 gals.)	183	1,166	21	430
Bitters (000 gals.)	9	48	20	129
Asphalt (000 tons)	59	47	168	257
Petroleum				
Crude (million gals.)	8	82	40	1,787
Refined (million gals.)	605	924	5,535	24,526

(a) 000 lb. (b) not available

On the Leeward Islands of Antigua and St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, sugar was the principal crop as well. Sea Island cotton was also an important export in the Leewards. In fact, it was the main crop of Montserrat. (See Table 3-5.)

The Windward Islands grew a wider variety of agricultural products than the other islands. Sugar was grown only on St. Lucia, where it was the principal crop. Dominica produced significant amounts of bananas and citrus fruits. Grenada relied heavily on

IX, XII, XIII; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report on the Leeward Islands for the Years 1949 & 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), 21.

¹⁹*British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1953*, Appendices V, IX, XIII.

spices for its income. On St. Vincent arrowroot, a medicinal herb, copra and Sea Island cotton were all important sources of income. (See Table 3-6.)

TABLE 3-5

MAIN DOMESTIC EXPORTS BY QUANTITY AND VALUE
LEeward ISLANDS²⁰

	QUANTITY		VALUE (L 000)	
	1939	1950	1939	1950
Antigua				
Sugar (tons)	21,000	28,000	195	959
Cotton (000 lb.)	247	840	15	135
St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla				
Sugar (tons)	36,000	39,000	373	1,120
Salt (tons)	---	5,840	---	17
Molasses (000 gals.)	669	1,008	8	24
Cotton (000 lb.)	589	270	37	45
Montserrat				
Cotton (000 lb.)	(b)	362	(b)	313
Citrus Fruits	(b)	---	(b)	18
Vegetables	(b)	---	(b)	1

(a) 000 lb. (b) not available

The fact that the West Indian islands were all agricultural economies was important in the British decision to seek federation there. The British believed that the island could never produced enough crops for export to support the economies of the individual islands. If, however, the islands could come together, as a whole they might acquire enough power to compete with the more economically advanced countries of the world.

²⁰*British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1952, Appendix XII; Report on the Leeward Islands, 1949 and 1950, 21.*

TABLE 3-6
 MAIN DOMESTIC EXPORTS BY QUANTITY AND VALUE
 WINDWARD ISLANDS²¹

	QUANTITY		VALUE (L 000)	
	1939	1950	1939	1950
Dominica				
Bananas (000 stems)	47	250	4	116
Lime Juice (000 gals)	118	737	6	104
Citrus Fruits	---	---	16	46
Essential Oils (000 gals)	46(a)	47	12	40
Vanilla (000 lb.)	11	34	5	39
Cocoa (tons)	97	117	2	23
Copra (tons)	223	678	2	31
Grenada				
Nutmegs (tons)	1,916	3,097	74	670
Mace (tons)	334	326	49	151
Cocoa (tons)	3,592	2,011	107	507
St. Lucia				
Sugar (tons)	7,182	8,629	64	239
Cocoa (tons)	160	258	4	53
Copra (tons)	579	1,054	5	52
St. Vincent				
Arrowroot (tons)	5,251	2,831	132	196
Copra (tons)	804	1,340	8	62
Cotton (000 lb.)	606	469	49	85

(a) 000 lb. (b) not available

Although the West Indian colonies were divided in many ways, economic and structural problems were not a major obstacle to federation; it would be political problems that undermined the union. In 1945, though, the British believed that uniting could increase the economic power of the islands enough so that they could compete on the world market. This was enough to convince the leaders of the island colonies to explore the idea of some type of closer association.

²¹*British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1952*, Appendix XII.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAKING OF A FEDERATION

After World War II Britain advanced independence movements in many of its colonies. In the West Indies, they proposed the idea of federation for the islands, as they had done for years. At the same time, the West Indian islands had benefited from increased political freedom during the war, and, in conjunction with advancements in communications, this led to increased contact among the islands. These contacts, in turn, led to more discussions among the islanders about their options for independence. At the Montego Bay Conference in 1947, they opted for federation.

In 1945, Oliver Stanley, the secretary of state for the colonies, in keeping with British promises, sent a dispatch to each of the West Indian colonies inviting them to meet and discuss a possible advance towards federation.¹ It was not until 1947 that the new secretary of state for the colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, took the next step by inviting the West Indian governments to meet at Montego Bay, Jamaica, to discuss whether the time was right to establish a federation. Arthur Creech Jones had extensive

¹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies*, Part 1: *Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 4; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The Colonial Empire, 1939-1947* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), 45; John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968), 31; Morley Ayearst, *The British West Indies: The Search for Self-Government* (New York: University Press, 1960), 231.

experience in colonial affairs. From 1936 to 1945 he had served as vice-chairman of the colonial office's Higher Education Commission in West Africa. He was under-secretary of state for the colonies from 1945 to 1946, when he became colonial secretary.²

Barbados, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Windward Islands sent representatives to the nine-day conference in September 1947. Each delegation was made up of three members nominated by their respective legislatures, except the Windward Islands delegation, which included one delegate from each of its four island. The chief legal and financial advisers of each colony accompanied the delegates. Although the British advised the islands to choose delegates who represented the range of views of their constituency that did not happen. Trinidad included an East Indian in its delegation, but he favored federation, unlike most East Indians on Trinidad.³

Creech Jones represented the British interests. He opened the conference by declaring that Britain no longer viewed its colonies as provinces for material exploitation. Instead it pictured them as free nations within the British Commonwealth. He went on to say that it was the task of the British government to create the conditions necessary for the political, social, and economic development of the colonies, so they could become

²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies*, Part 2: *Proceedings* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 6; David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 14, 387; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 34.

³The letter of 1945 invited the Bahamas, also, but it responded that it had no interest in a West Indian federation, so was not invited to Montego Bay. British Guiana and British Honduras did attend the conference, but neither ever agreed to participate in the federation. See *Conference on Closer Association*, Part 1, 4; Jesse H. Proctor, Jr., "East Indians and the Federation of the British West Indies," *India Quarterly* 17 (October-December 1961), 374.

independent. In the case of the West Indies, Creech Jones acknowledged that the British believed that collaboration was necessary to raise the living standards of the islands and to assure their prosperity as an independent nation. He pointed out the need to integrate separate territorial concerns and interests with the development of the West Indies as a whole. He stressed that individual islands could not meet their economic goals, or satisfy the needs of their people for education, housing, and medical care, without some kind of cooperative political venture, preferably federation.⁴

At the same time, Creech Jones was quick to stress that the British government was not urging closer union on the West Indies in order to shirk its own responsibilities to provide for the economic and social requirements of the islands. The goal, he said, was to provide the tools the islands needed to tackle their own problems. He promised to continue British monetary aid, as well as the research and technical assistance the Development and Welfare Act provided. In fact, he pledged to increase the benefits where necessary.⁵

The colonial secretary acknowledged that leaders of the individual colonies feared losing territorial autonomy to federation. He pointed out that the British government respected the need for domestic responsibility in the individual territories, and believed it should remain. He told the delegates that he did not believe that federation would interfere with the identity and individuality of the separate islands. He stressed that no

⁴Creech Jones provided examples of other cooperative ventures in Africa and the Pacific as well. See *Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 6-8.

⁵*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 8.

island should dominate the federation, a fear the small islands shared. However, he was quick to point out the British government's view that in the post-war world no small territory could hope to survive and thrive on its own. On the other hand, a voluntary federation could provide a way for the small islands to continue to exist in freedom, within the community of islands that shared common goals. Creech Jones concluded that it was Britain's desire to keep the colonies within the Commonwealth as an independent nation. To that end he urged the island representatives to found a federation that could produce a sound economic foundation and strong democratic political organizations.⁶

Most of the West Indian colonies supported federation from the beginning, but their delegates raised a number of concerns. H.A. Cuke, a member of the legislative council of Barbados, attested to a growing West Indies national spirit which he believed paved the way for cooperation, but he warned against forcing any island into a federation against its will. He called for more legislative and administrative responsibility for the islands in order to prepare them for federation. Grantley Adams, a member of the Barbadian House of Assembly, urged that the islands take immediate steps to initiate the process of federation, even though he acknowledged that Barbados, which possessed the most advanced constitution, would have to give up more jurisdiction than the other islands. He called for a federal system in which the islands maintained individual autonomy over all issues not directly charged to the federal government. W. A. Crawford, another member of Barbados' House of assembly, criticized Cuke for being

⁶*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 9-10.

too cautious and endorsed the idea of federation.⁷

Jamaica's delegation was divided as well, although its house of representatives had voted to accept in principle the goal of federation. W.A. Bustamante, a member of the house, began by asking why the British had not offered the islands independence separately without federation. He claimed that independence was what the islands wanted, not a closer union. He called the proposed federation another form of bondage. He claimed that Jamaica was far more sound than most of the other islands and feared it would have to carry the weaker ones. Bustamante endorsed the idea of federation at some time in the future, but believed that the islands should be politically and economically more developed, more equal to each other, before that happened. D. J. Judah, a member of Jamaica's legislative council and F. A. Pixley, from the house, endorsed federation, but also urged that the islands move slowly to accomplish it, while the smaller islands matured politically. Norman Manley, who represented the British section of the Caribbean Commission at the conference, was a Jamaican. He spoke in favor of federation. He believed that federation was necessary if the West Indies were to prosper. He claimed that a federal government could develop regional plans to help all the islands. He called on the islands to accept the British offer of freedom through federation.⁸

Albert Gomes, a member of the legislative council of Trinidad, called for wider political representation for the islands. He claimed that the governments currently in

⁷*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 13-16, 37-45, 69-71.

⁸*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 16-32, 54-62.

control were not representative of the islands' populations. He believed that political development was necessary for a successful federation. T. Roodal, another member of the legislative council of Trinidad and an East Indian, spoke with the majority of the island in favor of federation, but acknowledged that most East Indians disagreed with the idea of a British-dominated federation. He agreed, though, that the West Indies could not develop economically without federation and the application of federal resources, because no one island possessed what a federation could bring to the process of development.⁹

The Leeward Islands delegation included one representative of each island, who was a member of his own legislative council and the general legislative council of the Leeward Islands. V.C. Bird of Antigua called federation the only avenue to independence for his country. He applauded the fact that federation with self-government would remove Antigua's status as a subject nation and make it part of a responsible country. A.W. Griffin of Montserrat supported the principle of federation, but contended that the larger West Indies islands had a responsibility, even greater than that of faraway Britain, to provide aid to the smaller islands.¹⁰

The Windward Island delegation included one member from each island's legislative council. A.M. Lewis of St. Lucia declared the island one hundred percent in favor of federation, although he urged that any federal government take into consideration St. Lucia's French-based legal system when formulating legal policies for the federation. He wanted to be sure that St. Lucia retained the right to vote for any prospective changes.

⁹*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 64-69, 93-94.

¹⁰*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 45-59, 56-57.

F.A. Bonadie from St. Vincent endorsed federation as well, because he believed that it was the only way to assure a true political destiny for the small islands. He stressed that St. Vincent intended to bear its full financial share for the federal operation and would not be a burden on the rest of the federation. J.B. Renwick of Grenada claimed his island was strongly in favor of West Indian federation, stating that it would be both politically and economically beneficial to every colony. C.A.H. Dupigny of Dominica endorsed federation as well. In fact, he claimed that Dominica left the Leeward Islands group, which operated as a federation, in an attempt to dissolve it and in so doing make room for a West Indies federation. He said that as the representative of an island that had been part of a federation, he recommended it.¹¹

The delegates' statements emphasized two important issues. Their criticisms of British policy were the first widespread anti-imperialist attitudes the islands had expressed. Although islanders had been critical of British policies during the riots of 1930s and in their calls for independence after the war, previous critiques had focused on attaining goals of increased economic, social, and political power. Now Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad openly criticized the British for failing to give them the political power they needed to become independent. The smaller islands were still less critical of the British. They focused more on the idea of federation, because they believed it was the only way they would ever attain freedom from Great Britain.

The second issue was the concept of federation itself. It was already apparent that the larger and smaller islands had different concerns. The larger island delegations

¹¹*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 33-37, 49-51, 88.

were divided on the idea of federation, but none portrayed it as the only way to attain freedom from Great Britain. The smaller islands were united in their support of federation. They acknowledged that their chance of attaining freedom without it were slim. British Guiana voted against the idea of federation and never joined. British Honduras voted to continue to consider the idea, but they never joined either.¹²

Despite some of their disagreements, though, the ten islands of the Caribbean were able to reach a unanimous decision on all of the resolutions. They agreed to establish a political federation of the British Caribbean territories on the Australian model, "in which each constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the federal government."¹³ They voted to give the unit governments increased responsibility for political development as an aim in itself. They committed themselves to increased communications among the islands, and to the development of agriculture. In addition, the representatives put in place measures to further foster international trade.¹⁴

To handle the pressing problem of developing a working federation, the

¹²*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 105-106, 109-112.

¹³For the West Indians the Australian model meant that the individual islands would maintain most of the power within the federation. Elisabeth Wallace pointed out, however, that the islands would not actually follow the Australian model because they would not give their federal government the power to tax which allowed authority to gravitate to the center in Australia. See Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies: Improbable Federation?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 27 (November 1961), 444.

¹⁴British Guiana voted against the idea of federation, and never joined. British Honduras voted to continue to consider the idea, but they never joined either. *Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 105-106, 109-112.

participants established a Standing Closer Association Committee to draft a federal constitution. They appointed a commission to examine the question of establishing a customs union and to make recommendations to the islands as well. This commission urged the island governments to establish another committee to study and report upon matters of common economic significance, and to advise upon plans for economic development.¹⁵

The conference endorsed a recommendation to establish a uniform currency for the federation, a common financial year, and a unified public service sector. It asked the British government to examine “the possibility of effecting changes in the methods of Treasury control of grant-aided Colonies,” including the idea of substituting a block grant for three years to the affected territories, thus freeing them from yearly budgetary control by the Crown. In a move not unexpected for a group that was determined to maintain its ties to Britain, the delegates ended by declaring their allegiance to the king.¹⁶

When the conference adjourned, the local legislatures met to discuss its recommendations. In Barbados the House of Assembly enthusiastically supported the idea of federation by unanimously adopting the resolutions. The Legislative Council took a more cautious approach, though. It decided to await the report of the Standing Closer Association Committee (see below) before offering an opinion on political federation. In Jamaica, both the Legislative Council and the House of Representatives agreed to accept the resolutions, as did the Legislative Council and the Legislature of Trinidad and

¹⁵*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 106-108.

¹⁶*Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 108-109, 112.

Tobago.¹⁷

In the Leeward Islands, the Legislative Council of Antigua accepted the resolutions, and introduced legislation to amend the Constitution to permit universal adult suffrage without financial and property qualifications, and a larger elected representation. The Legislative Council of St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla voted to accept the resolutions.¹⁸

In the Windward Islands the legislatures of St. Lucia and St. Vincent accepted the resolutions as written. In Grenada the Legislative Council decided to await the report of the Standing Closer Association Committee before making a final decision on the feasibility of federation. Dominica agreed to the resolutions, as long as the federation would accept the island as a separate constituent unit.¹⁹ In these various responses to the conference recommendations, the islands showed their diversity once again. Although they generally agreed to support the federation of the West Indies, the small islands believed it was necessary to attach stipulations or reserve final judgment.

At Montego Bay the delegates created the Standing Closer Association Committee as a permanent body to study the problems connected with creating the federation and make recommendations to the island legislatures. The committee was

¹⁷Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Jamaica for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 111; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Trinidad and Tobago, B.W.I., for the Year 1947* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 2; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Trinidad and Tobago for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 3; "B.W.I. Legislatures Discuss Proposals for Federation," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 2 (March 1948), 21-22.

¹⁸"B.W.I.," 22.

¹⁹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Dominica, B.W.I., for the Year 1948* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), 3; "B.W.I.," 22.

composed of one member from each of the legislatures of the Leeward and Windward Islands, and two representatives of the other island legislatures, along with a British chairman and secretary appointed by the secretary of state for the colonies. The Standing Closer Association Committee began its meetings in November 1948, and presented its report in October 1949. The committee, commonly called the Rance committee after its chairman, Sir Hubert Rance, recommended a bicameral legislature consisting of an entirely elected House of Assembly based on universal adult suffrage. The number of seats designated to each island was based on population, but not strictly. The committee decided that the larger population areas should have more representatives, but chose not to use population as a basis of representation because that would allow Jamaica to dominate the House. Under its proposal Jamaica's representatives would still make up the largest contingent with sixteen members, but the delegation would not be large enough to dominate the federation. Trinidad would have nine representatives, followed by Barbados with four. Antigua, St. Kitts, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Dominica would each get two representatives. Montserrat would have only one.²⁰ The governor-general would be the head of the executive branch of the federal government. He would represent the king, who would appoint him. With a council of state to advise him, the

²⁰The committee included six representatives for British Guiana and two for British Honduras as well, but these were eliminated before the federation began. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 26-33; *Conference on Closer Association*, Part 2, 103-104; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 39.

governor-general would appoint members to the Senate.²¹ The committee recommended that members of the federal House or Senate be proscribed from serving concurrently in a unit legislature or unit executive council, although, as we saw in the Leeward Islands, its representatives served in both unit and federal governments.²² The issues of the number of delegates representing each island and dual federal-local service in the legislature remained controversial and subject to debate for years.

As to relations between the federal government and the constituent territories, the committee was clear: "Geography alone suggest the wisdom of not attempting too close or all-embracing a Federation for this widely scattered region."²³ It stressed that the federal government was not meant to rule over the territorial governments. The territories would keep all their powers except those specifically granted to federal administration. The areas under federal control, referred to as the exclusive list, consisted of such things as defense, external affairs, federal agencies and institution for research and investigations, for professional and technical training and for the promotion of special studies, federal courts, federal law, interpretation of federal legislation, federal elections, raising loans outside the federation, and federal public services. The committee issued what it called the concurrent list as well, which included issues on which both the federal and territorial governments could legislate, such as aviation, aliens, arbitration, banking, census, copyrights, criminal law and penal administration, currency, development of

²¹*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 30, 34-35, 38, 44; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 39-40.

²²*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 82, 88.

²³*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 16.

industries, fisheries, immigration, import duties, marriage and divorce, postal services, shipping and navigation, telecommunications, trade and commerce, and trade unions.²⁴

The committee itself acknowledged that important issues were absent from the lists and thus left to local control, including agriculture, education, housing, and the maintenance of public order. It asserted that these functions were more appropriately left to local control, citing the example set by Great Britain in regard to the division of authority between the central and local governments.²⁵

TABLE 4-1
CUSTOMS RECEIPTS FOR 1947-48²⁶
(Ls)

	Total Revenue	Customs Receipts	Customs Receipts as % of Total Revenue
Barbados	1,869,916	680,082	36%
Jamaica	8,848,775	3,894,202	44%
Leeward Islands			
Antigua	327,237	125,001	38%
St. Kitts-Nevis	360,546	116,000	32%
Montserrat	54,632	22,743	42%
Trinidad & Tobago	7,678,876	2,447,055	34%
Windward Islands			
Dominica	191,116	70,000	37%
Grenada	540,654	172,960	32%
St. Lucia	252,505	103,000	40%
St. Vincent	282,490	98,235	35%
TOTALS	24,800,128	9,423,646	38%

The committee proposed that the islands use customs receipts to finance federal government operations. The committee firmly rejected any notion of voluntary, direct,

²⁴*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 16-17, 79-81; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 40.

²⁵*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 18.

²⁶*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 73.

contributions from the islands, because it believed that would place the federal government in a position subordinate to the local territories and thus make it ineffective. Instead, the federal government would collect all customs duties, but return any money not used back to the territories. Based on 1947-48 figures, the committee determined that the West Indies Federation could expect L9,423,646 from customs receipts.²⁷ (See Table 4-1.)

The committee recommended Trinidad as the site of the federal capital. It offered no explanation for this decision.²⁸ With that final recommendation, it reported that it had designed a document that it believed would constitute the shortest path to political independence within the British Commonwealth for the West Indies islands. Until the federation was able to stand alone, the committee agreed it would have to rely on Britain for economic assistance. However, the committee stipulated that Britain must give the federation the freedom to initiate and administer its financial and economic, as well as its political, affairs. The federation had to be self-reliant as much as possible.²⁹

The islands' response to the work of the committee was generally positive. The legislatures of Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Windward Islands of St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Grenada adopted resolutions favoring political federation based on the report, but the Grenada legislature decried the absence of a proposal for eventual self-government. In Barbados the legislature accepted the report, although it declared that

²⁷*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 19-20.

²⁸*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 48.

²⁹*Standing Closer Association Committee*, 23-25.

under the structure proposed the federation would be nothing but a glorified colony. In addition, Barbados opposed Trinidad as the capital site, fearing that entrenched commercial interests there would exert too much control over the operations of the federation.³⁰ In the Leeward Islands the legislatures of Antigua and St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla accepted the recommendations unanimously. The Montserrat Legislative Council accepted the report as well, but with the provision that its own representation be increased from one to two.³¹

By this time the islands' anti-colonial attitudes were more apparent. Even the small islands were calling for more political independence. Still, even now, the islands maintained their commitment to Britain and its traditions.

With these final votes the idea of federation became a reality. Still, the islands continued to disagree on some important points, which they would have to settle before they could complete the final steps toward formalization of the federation.

³⁰Great Britain, British Information Services, *The British Colonial Territories in 1950* (London: British Government Reference Division, 1951), 63; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The Colonial Territories, 1951-52* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), 32; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 41-42.

³¹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report on the Leeward Islands for the Years 1949 and 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), 7.

CHAPTER V

CONTROL OF THE FEDERATION

With the plan for a federation in place, the West Indies colonies were now in a position to make final preparations for its realization. However, there were still some issues remaining that would require a great deal of cooperation on the part of the islands. Two important concerns that emerged from the Conference on Closer Association in 1947 involved the extent of control any one island could exercise over the others in the federation. The first was representation in the federal House of Representatives. Despite the Standing Closer Association recommendation, the islands would continue to debate the matter. The second, and more divisive issue, was the choice of the site for the federal capital. Although it seemed that this should be a fairly easy decision, in fact the debate focused attention on the issue of trust among the islands. No colony wanted to see another one in a position to dominate the federation.

The Standing Closer Association Committee had already acknowledged the islands' concerns about granting too much power to any one entity in its allocation of seats to the federal House of Representatives. The committee stressed the fact that it did not expect the islands to act or vote as a single block, but rather believed that party lines would develop that would cut across territorial divisions. However, it also vowed to avoid even the possibility that a proposal would appear to foster domination of the

federation by one entity, and for that reason declined to use population as the basis for establishing seating to eliminate the possibility that Jamaica could dominate.¹

From this point on the islands came together in a series of ad hoc conferences to discuss committee reports and specific issues that continued to plague the pre-federal negotiations. The island legislatures chose the delegations that attended the conferences, which typically included the islands' prime minister plus elected members of its legislature.² As the islands gained more control over their own local governments, their potential delegate choices widened, so the participants varied from one conference to another. Many names appeared on every list, though.³ However, three men came to dominate the conference process after the first, less contentious, meeting in London in 1953: Grantley Adams, Norman Manley, and Eric Williams.

Adams participated in the federal process from the beginning. He represented his home island of Barbados at Montego Bay in 1947. He was an Oxford-educated lawyer who served in the Barbados House of Assembly from 1934 to 1958. In 1958 he became the prime minister of the West Indies Federation. He founded the Barbados Labour Party

¹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 33-34.

²The British attended the conferences as well, but they did not participate in the debates unless asked, and never cast a vote. After the 1953 London Conference, Grantley Adams told the Barbados Assembly that nothing had been forced on the delegates by the Colonial Office, which had stressed that it was for West Indians to create their own constitution. See Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the End of Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 109.

³John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 467-469.

in 1938, and became first vice-president of the West Indies Federal Labour Party in 1956. Adams favored federation for Barbados and the West Indies, and worked tirelessly to make the idea a reality.⁴

Norman Manley's history was very similar to Adams'. He was an Oxford-educated lawyer with a long history of political activity in Jamaica. Although he attended the Montego Bay Conference as a member of the British delegation, he spoke as a Jamaican in favor of federation. By 1949 he was the leader of the opposition in Jamaica. From 1955 to 1959 he served as prime minister. In 1959 his title changed to premier, a position he held until 1962. Manley founded the People's National Party of Jamaica in 1938 and the West Indies Federal Labour Party in 1956. He served as president of both.⁵

Eric Williams was the only federation leader without a long history in the West Indies labour unions. He was an Oxford-educated professor of Social and Political Science at Howard University in Washington, D.C. from 1939 to 1945. In 1945 he joined the Caribbean Commission and served as deputy chairman of its Caribbean Research Council from 1948 to 1955. In 1955 he became active in Trinidad politics. He founded the People's National Movement in January of that year. In 1959 he became chief minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and its premier in 1961.⁶

⁴Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 29-30, 33-34, 64, 143-146; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 467.

⁵Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 37-42, 99-100, 113, 127, 137, 144, 154; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 467.

⁶Williams work on the British legacy in the West Indies continues to interest historians. See Seymour Drescher, "Eric Williams, British Capitalism and British Slavery," *History and Theory* 26 (1987), 180-196; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 54, 115, 133-134, 158, 199-202; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 469.

After the island voted to accept the Standing Closer Association Committee's recommendations of 1949, they decided to meet to discuss the issues that needed amendment. In 1953 Oliver Lyttelton, the current secretary of state for the colonies, invited the islanders to meet in London. The West Indians decided to eliminate the Senate and House seats assigned to British Guiana and British Honduras until these countries decided formally to join the federation. They adjusted the number of seats allocated to each island, although again they did not base their decision on population. According to the new numbers, Jamaica would have seventeen representatives, one more than the original proposal. Trinidad would also increase its representation, to ten, and Barbados to five, while the rest of the islands would still have two, except Montserrat which would retain one seat.⁷ These figures increased the large-island representation, but still they did not allow any one island to dominate the federation.

When it came to the selection of the capital site, the Standing Closer Association Committee had chosen Trinidad, but offered no explanation for its selection. In the 1953 London meeting, the island delegates rejected the committee's proposal, because the small islands feared that having the capital in Trinidad would increase the inevitably large influence of what was already the richest island. Instead, they decided to choose one of the smaller islands, focusing their discussion on Antigua, St. Lucia, and Grenada. They believed that the federal government could operate better on a smaller island where they

⁷Great Britain, British Information Services, *The West Indies: A Nation in the Making* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 12; "British West Indian Leaders Accept Federation Proposals," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 6 (April 1953), 202. This was the only one of the series of meetings that Williams did not attend.

thought there might be less interference from the local government. It was clear from the debate, which went on for days, that the smaller islands feared the power one of the larger islands could wield if one of them became the seat of government for the federation. The delegates selected Grenada this time; they did not explain why, beyond the fact that it met their criterion of being a small island.⁸

Still, though, the matter was not settled. Representatives from the islands raised the issue again at another meeting in London in 1956. They had come together once more because there were still matters that they had not agreed on. This time they debated both their own criteria, that is, whether to choose a large island or a small one, and the actual choice. Williams of Trinidad maintained that the capital should be one of the larger islands, either Jamaica or Trinidad, because a small island lacked efficient communications and accommodations to support the capital. Manley of Jamaica continued to lobby for a smaller island, but preferred Antigua to Grenada, because access to Grenada by sea or air was severely limited. When they were unable to reach a decision even on the criteria for selection of a capital site, the delegates decided to appoint a fact-finding commission composed of three non-West Indians to nominate three sites in order of preference. They proposed that at least one architect and one financial expert sit on the commission.⁹

⁸*Standing Closer Association Report*, 48; "British West Indian Leaders Accept Federation Proposals," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 6 (April 1953), 202; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 46, 54; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 115-116.

⁹Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 116; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 54-55.

Francis Mudie, a British West Indian expatriate, chaired the three-member commission, which met the islands' specifications. The Mudie Commission established what it called a twin-site premise for the capital, which established that the federal capital should be based on or near an existing island capital with good roads, communications, health and educational services, cultural and entertainment institutions, and a high level of public services. These criteria immediately eliminated the small islands of the Leeward and Windward groups.¹⁰

The Mudie Commission chose Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad as options for the capital site. It relegated Trinidad to third place because of widespread and generally tolerated corruption in public life there. It described Trinidad as politically backward compared to Jamaica or Barbados, because Trinidad had no clear-cut political parties. In addition, it cited the large percentage of East Indians as a disturbing element because many of that population opposed federation, and further claimed that political fragmentation and racial unrest made the island politically unstable. Not only Trinidadians, but West Indian islanders from across the Caribbean, took offense at this portion of the report. They accused the committee of failing to offer evidence to support its opinion, and of attempting to saddle the newly elected government with past problems.¹¹

¹⁰The fact-finding commission was commonly referred to as the Mudie Commission. Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Chaguaramas Joint Commission* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 1; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 66-67.

¹¹During his campaign for prime minister in 1956 Williams had attacked the corruption of Trinidadian politics, which he called dishonest and immoral, but he claimed to be outraged by this report. See Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a*

Contrary to the islanders' protests, there was some validity to the report.

Although there was no evidence of the widespread corruption it reported on the island, the other claims had some merit. The East Indian population remained divided on the issue of federation, and that resulted in the political fragmentation to which the report alluded. On the other hand, the East Indians were not actively working against the federation. The political opposition was continuing to watch the process carefully to assure that its constituents would not receive unfair treatment in a united West Indies. As to the racial unrest, it had been a problem between the East Indians and the blacks for a long time. The federation process had not enhanced nor eliminated the tension. It had never disrupted the Trinidadian government, so there was no reason to expect that it would cause problems for the federation.¹²

Jamaica was the second choice of the Mudie Committee, which pointed to the distance from the other islands as the primary reason for not making it their first selection. The committee believed that because Jamaica was so far removed from the other islands, it knew little about the eastern islands. In the committee's opinion having the capital would allow Jamaica to control the federation, while ignoring the opinions of the remaining islands.¹³

The Mudie Committee recommended Barbados as the seat of the new federal government. Barbadians had both knowledge of, and close connections to, the other

Prime Minister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 174; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 116; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 67-68.

¹²Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 116.

¹³Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 116; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 67.

islands, plus the highest general level of education in the federating territories. It was also large enough to support a federal capital near an existing metropolitan area, which satisfied the twin-site concept. The fact that it was the most British of the West Indies islands might have influenced the committee's decision as well.¹⁴

The islanders met again in Jamaica in 1957, to review the Mudie Committee report. Although they denounced its conclusions, they agreed to accept its twin-town concept, which meant that the only islands remaining under consideration would be Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad. They agreed further that the chosen island should commit itself to providing one thousand acres, three to seven miles from an existing town, for the federation capital. In addition the delegates demanded that in order to be considered the islands must commit to providing water, electricity, and other public utilities to the federal capital on a priority basis. All three agreed.¹⁵

Each of the three islands had a representative at the meeting who made a bid for the capital. Williams, the newly elected prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago, denounced the allegations against Trinidad in the commission's report. He claimed that race relations in Trinidad were no more divisive than in the other islands. He promised that if the delegates chose Trinidad, the governor would vacate Government House for the federal governor, until a federal site was ready.¹⁶ In addition, a representative of the

¹⁴Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 67-68.

¹⁵*Report of the Chaguaramas Joint Commission*, 1; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 68-69.

¹⁶Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 116; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 69.

East Indian community from Trinidad proclaimed that group's loyalty to the new federation.¹⁷ Adams warned that if the delegates chose one of the more industrialized islands, they would be giving it the power to dominate the smaller territories. In addition, he argued that in the larger islands jealousy might arise between the local and federal governments in competition with each other, which might lead them to ignore the smaller units.¹⁸ Norman Manley of Jamaica countered that no island could hope to dominate the federal government because the number of seats allocated in the House of Representatives precluded that. He urged the delegates to select Jamaica.¹⁹

In just two votes the delegates selected Trinidad as the federation's capital. It was a secret ballot, but the records show that five of the seven small islands and Jamaica voted for Trinidad. In doing so they ignored Adams' warning about the possibility of feuding between the local and federal governments, which would occur within a year.²⁰ They also failed to choose Jamaica, which was the weak link in the federation because of its distance from the others, and also because there had been more opposition to federation on that island than any of the others. In addition, the other islands feared that

¹⁷Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 70.

¹⁸Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 69-70.

¹⁹Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 70.

²⁰On the first ballot Jamaica received the lowest number of votes, four, so was eliminated as a choice. On the second ballot it threw its support to Trinidad. See *Report of the Chaguaramas Joint Commission*, 1; *The West Indies*, 11; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 70.

they would be ignored with the capital so far away.²¹

Although the representation issue and the capital site controversy appeared insignificant in many respects, they were indicative of the lack of trust existing among the islands. This apprehension would contribute to other issues the islands faced along the path to federation.

²¹Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 117; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 70-71; Williams, *Inward Hunger*, 204.

CHAPTER VI

FINANCING THE FEDERATION

Financing the federation was a problem for the West Indian islands throughout the pre-federation process.¹ It highlighted another divisive issue as well: would the islands benefit enough from the central government to offset the cost of financing it, particularly when the money to support the federal government would have to come from the limited resources of the islands themselves? For the small islands in particular, the federation plan would require them to take any money they contributed to the federal structure directly from revenues already used to finance their own local government. The larger islands, on the other hand, were afraid that their contributions would be subsidizing those of the smaller units, and that they would be paying significantly more than their fair share to support the federal government. Once again, the units debated the issue at a series of conferences.

¹In addition to the proposals discussed in this chapter, the issue of Britain's contribution to the federation and the unit governments also raised some questions. However, these did not contribute directly to the problems among the islands concerning the proposed federation. In essence, Britain agreed to continue the grants-in-aid it already provided to St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, and Montserrat. It promised as well to continue to provide development and welfare grants where necessary in the British Caribbean. These contributions would continue for at least ten years. For more information see Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The Plan for a British Caribbean Federation: Report of the Fiscal Commissioner* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), 42-55.

At Montego Bay the delegates rejected the idea of annual contributions from the islands to finance the federation, and instead proposed the use of customs duties.² The Standing Closer Association Committee agreed with these recommendations and expanded upon them. It proposed the establishment of a customs union to include a free trade area, uniform tariffs, and a single customs administration, which it described as the foundation of a federal structure. The committee concluded that customs revenues would comprise approximately thirty percent of the total revenue of the region, which would more than suffice to finance the federal government in its first years of operation. Therefore, they recommended that the federal government return at least seventy-five percent of the money to local governments to help defray their own substantial expenses.³

When the island delegates met in London in 1953 to review the committee's report, they agreed that it was an acceptable fiscal basis for federation but decided to adjust the plan for financing the federal government. They reduced the percentage of customs revenue allocated to the federal government from twenty-five to fifteen percent. They assumed that ten percent of that would cover federal costs and they added the other five percent for unexpected expenses and reserves. They agreed that this proportion

²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Conference on the Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies, Part 1: Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 15.

³Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 19-20, 100. The committee recommended that postal services come under the control of the federal government and that the government use income from it and any other services within its jurisdiction to finance operations. However, these did not raise the same concerns that the proposed customs union did. See *Standing Closer Association Committee Report, 1948-49*, 20-21, 100.

should be calculated after the costs of collection were deducted. At the same time they agreed to an independent inquiry to establish annual federal costs more firmly. They anticipated that the investigation could actually reduce further the costs to the islands of supporting the federal government.⁴

In June of 1955 the colonial secretary appointed a fiscal commission, called the Caine Commission and made up of financial representatives of the islands, to conduct the inquiry into the costs of financing the West Indies federal government, and it issued its report later that year. The Caine commission began by criticizing the basis for the analysis made at the London Conference of 1953. It charged that the previous report had underestimated costs and revenues when preparing its estimates. The fiscal commission amended the previous report by recommending that local governments calculate the percentage of import duties due the federal government before it made deductions for the cost of collection. After the federation took on the responsibility for collection itself, the islands would continue proportionally to share the costs of collection.⁵

The report went on to analyze what could be expected in terms of receipts from customs duties. The commission based its figures on customs duties collected on imports from outside the federation area in 1954, rather than total receipts that included inter-island trade, which the previous committee had used. The fiscal commission estimated that the total revenue would be L10.7 million, fifteen percent of which would amount to

⁴“British West Indian Leaders Accept Federation Proposals,” *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 6 (April 1953), 202.

⁵*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, v, 20; Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the End of Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 111.

L1.6 million. This would fall significantly short of the amount envisaged by the London Conference delegates. It would also fall short of the commission's estimated budget requirements of the federal government, which it calculated at L2.081 million.⁶

The commission's chief criticism of the customs union proposed at the London Conference was the role the unit governments would play in its operation. Instead of being uniform, the individual islands would set the customs duties on individual revenue items, which therefore would vary widely in different units according to the importance of certain items in individual territories. As an example the report used beer consumption. In Jamaica, the islands traditionally favored locally brewed beer, from which no custom duty would accrue. St. Lucians, on the other hand, drank imported beer, for which they would pay a customs duty. The commission contended that similar examples could be multiplied indefinitely, with the result that local governments would have an incentive to substitute other revenues for customs duties wherever possible, because the plan also called for local administration of the customs union. The federal government would have no power to control local decisions, and even if it did, it could only increase its own revenue at the direct expense of local revenues.⁷

The commission instead recommended a completely different way to finance the federation that did not require joint federal and local interaction and cooperation. First, the commission recommended that the federal government receive the profit from currency. Profits would accrue because the currency was based on sterling deposited in a

⁶*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 13-16, 21.

⁷*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 25-26, 29-30.

sterling security fund in London. The sterling security fund was invested in securities, where it could earn a profit. The eastern islands had apportioned this revenue among the territories participating in their unified currency plan already.⁸ The amount derived from any one territory varied with the amount of money in circulation, and so was roughly equivalent to the wealth of the territory. Jamaica operated on a separate currency, but its profits would accrue to the federal government on the same terms. The commission estimated that currency profits would amount to L125,000 a year from the eastern Caribbean islands, plus L70,000 from Jamaica, for a total of L195,000 per year.⁹

The commission recommended that the federal government collect consumption taxes, customs duties on imports and excise duties at the same rate on local products including gasoline, cigarettes, beer, rum, and other liquors.¹⁰ The estimated income from a five cent per gallon tax on gasoline, a sixty-two cent per pound tax on cigarettes, a twenty-five cent per liquid gallon on beer, a sixty-five per proof gallon on rum, and a seventy-five cent per proof gallon on other liquor would be L1.45 million. The plan

⁸In 1951 the eastern Caribbean British colonies adopted a common currency based on recommendations made at the Montego Bay Conference of 1947. See *Conference on Closer Association*, Part 1, 22-27; "Eastern Group of British Caribbean Reach First Stage of Unified Currency," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 5 (October 1951), 74.

⁹*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 31-32. British Guiana participated in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Board, so its profits would have to be deducted from the amount provided to the federal government unless that colony decided to join the federation. See *Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 32.

¹⁰The commission recommended as well that the federal government have the power to extend duties to other forms of petroleum, liquor, and tobacco in order to counter attempts at evasion by substitution. See *Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 33.

allowed the federal government to raise the tax rates a small amount in the first five years to bring in an estimated total of L1.9 million if necessary.¹¹ The total estimated revenue from federal duties, currency profits, and other sources, which the commission noted were at present negligible, would amount to L1.65 million. With a proposed cost of federation of L1.387 million, the federal government could meet its expenses, with a small amount available to satisfy unexpected costs.¹²

The commission showed that it was aware of the concerns of the islands when it addressed the issue of financial agreements between the islands and the unit governments. It suggested that loose financial arrangements would mean that the federal government would be independent upon the islands, which would retain financial control of the federation. In a sense federal officials would not be responsible to the individuals who elected them, but to the unit governments. In other words, the federal structure would be weak. The commission concluded that "it is not on such a basis that a Federal Government worthy to speak for the peoples of the British Caribbean can be created."¹³ It claimed that the federal government should be able to expect a reasonable degree of both freedom and security, and that it should speak for the people of the region and not the local governments. In that vein, it recommended that the islands make financial matters subject to constitutional control, and not to ad hoc agreements.¹⁴

¹¹*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 33-36.

¹²According to the commission the negligible revenue would add up to only about L10,000. *Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 37-38.

¹³*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 41.

¹⁴*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 39-42.

Once again the islands met to consider the question of financing the federation and the Caine Report. At the 1956 meeting in London, initial discussion centered on the idea of the customs union, and what it would mean to internal free trade. Trinidad and Jamaica favored the early implementation of free trade, which would allow them to avoid duties on their exports imposed by the smaller islands. At the same time the smaller islands objected because it would mean a loss of market share in their own islands.¹⁵

A customs union also meant the imposition of uniform tariffs that would increase customs receipts in Trinidad and decrease them in most of the other islands. The small islands objected to what they perceived as a loss of income to their islands and their government. In addition, Jamaica objected to the idea of the federal government setting a uniform tariff, which that island wanted to be free to adjust itself.¹⁶ Jamaica supported the consumption tax as recommended by the Caine report, under which it would pay less, but the other islands rejected it.¹⁷

Finally, Manley suggested the idea of levying a charge on the revenue of each unit, within the minimum and maximum limits set out in the Caine report and apportioned between the units in accordance with one of the percentage scales in the report, for the first five years of the federation. His proposal rejected every previous

¹⁵John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 55.

¹⁶Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 55-56.

¹⁷According to the Caine report's recommendations, Jamaica would pay 47.4 percent of customs duties, but only 42.4 percent of consumption taxes. See *Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 38; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 56-57.

report from Montego Bay in 1947, the Standing Closer Association Conference recommendations of 1948, the London Conference of 1953, and the Caine report of 1955, which all agreed that the federal government had to have its own direct source of finance and that it must not be dependent on the islands for support. Levying an individual charge on the local governments meant that the federal government would have to rely on them to pay the fee, thus making the federal government subject to the discretion of the units. On 23 February 1956, the islands accepted unanimously the mandatory levy without any discussion or debate.¹⁸

TABLE 6-1

SHARE OF FEDERAL REVENUES AMONG TERRITORIES
ON DIFFERENT BASES¹⁹

	On basis of import duties as levied in 1954		On basis of Standing Closer Association Figures		On basis of Caine Commission figures	
	\$000	Percent	\$000	Percent	\$000	Percent
Jamaica	3,744	47.4	3,090	39.1	3,348	42.4
Trinidad	2,578	32.6	3,318	42.0	3,126	39.6
Barbados	800	10.1	843	10.7	675	8.5
Leeward & Windward Islands (total)	782	9.9	653	8.2	755	9.5
Grenada	152	1.9	129	1.6	130	1.6
St. Vincent	99	1.3	91	1.2	101	1.3
St. Lucia	115	1.5	91	1.2	140	1.8
Dominica	107	1.4	87	1.1	120	1.5
Antigua	137	1.7	98	1.2	107	1.4
St. Kitts	151	1.9	139	1.7	133	1.7
Montserrat	21	0.3	18	0.2	24	0.3

The islands discarded every report that stressed the need for a strong federal government, free from financial dependence on the islands, and instead instituted a levy that they perceived would do them less harm back home, because it freed them from the

¹⁸Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 115, 122; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 57-58.

difficulty of having to tell their island constituents that taxes on cigarettes, rum, and beer would go up. Instead, though, they committed themselves to pay revenues that they did not even discuss. In fact, by committing themselves to the Caine report proportions the representatives from Trinidad, St. Lucia, and Dominica committed their islands to paying a larger proportion than would have been required of them under a customs union. The contributions from Grenada, Antigua, and St. Kitts dropped by less than one-half of one percent, while St. Vincent and Montserrat paid the same under both plans. Jamaica, which initiated the proposal, saved the most, five percent.²⁰ (See Table 6-1.)

The British decried the fact that the Caribbean islanders had subordinated the federal government to the individual territories, but the delegates were more concerned with the effects of the proposed consumption tax on their political futures at home. In addition, the small islands were grateful to have avoided the problem of free trade for the time being. For the longer term, the delegates agreed to amend, as quickly as possible, the preamble to the federal constitution. They considered it necessary for the economic strength of the federation to introduce a customs union that included internal free trade, as quickly as possible.²¹ For the moment the islands had solved the problem of financing the federation, but it was an issue they would have to face again in the days ahead.

¹⁹*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 38.

²⁰*Report of the Fiscal Commissioner*, 38.

²¹Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 59-60.

CHAPTER VII

PRE-FEDERAL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

While the British Caribbean territories were debating the pros and cons of federating, they were participating in a variety of cooperative associations as well. Some originated in the course of debate about the proposed federation. Others came about when the Caribbean islanders realized the benefits derived from cooperative ventures. Closer communications among the islands after World War II provided them with the option of regional cooperation they had lacked prior to 1940.

Great Britain instituted the first programs of regional cooperation in the area when parliament passed the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in 1940. The West Indies Royal Commission findings of 1938 emphasized the need for government-sponsored social services. The commission also recognized that only Britain could develop a plan for economic and social development in the island and provide the resources to implement that plan. Individual Caribbean governments lacked the resources or experience to bring about widespread changes.¹

With the first allocation of funds the British established the Development and Welfare Organization in the West Indies in Barbados. In the first years of the

¹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *West India Royal Commission Report* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 427-428.

organization operated largely to supply emergency funds for such projects as the building of airfields. By 1945, however, the organization was acting in an advisory role to the colonial governments, which drew up development plans. Then the British government approved the money, which the colonies used to finance their plans.²

The funds provided under the act not only allowed the islands to develop individual plans, but also to cooperate in regional operations. In 1944 the organization sponsored the West Indian Conference, which provided a forum at which to discuss and debate social and economic topics of general West Indian interest. The organization had sponsored a series of regional meetings as well, most of which the local governments requested, on broadcasting, import control, labor affairs, quarantine, air transport, agriculture, prison administration, and the unification of the currency.³ This was only the first step toward cooperation.

In 1951, following the recommendation of the Montego Bay Conference, the governments of the British West Indian territories established the Regional Economic Committee, which was closely associated with the Development and Welfare

²Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1947-49* (London; His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950), 6-8. W.A. Lewis of St. Lucia, a British-educated economist, was one of the few voices critical of British efforts at economic development in the West Indies. He claimed that the plans for development the British approved did nothing to solve the basic economic problems of the region, because colonial administrators could not recognize the problems, which he claimed were lack of knowledge of production techniques, lack of capital, and too much small scale agriculture. He admitted, however, that by 1949 conditions had begun to improve. See W. Arthur Lewis, "Colonial Development in British Territories, I," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 2 (June 1949), 309; W. Arthur Lewis, "Colonial Development in British Territories, II," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 2 (July 1949), 357.

³*Development and Welfare, 1947-49*, 10.

Organization. It consisted of one member appointed from each of the West Indian governments, plus the economic adviser to Development and Welfare.⁴ It provided a center for promoting, coordinating, and servicing regional action on trade, export industries, communications, and public finance. This committee was active in developing ideas for the marketing of some of the area's principal exports, developing intra-Caribbean trade, exploring possibilities for new markets, and providing commodity surveys and statistical information. It sponsored a Civil Aviation Council, a British Caribbean Citrus Association, as well as other regional bodies.⁵

The Regional Economic Committee was important because it provided the first opportunity for the island leaders to work closely together. It met in different territories by their invitation. Because the islanders cooperated so successfully here, the committee became the clearing house for pre-federal cooperative action and ideas.⁶

In addition to its regional projects, the regional economic committee set up West Indies Trade Commissions and Students and Migrants Services in London and Montreal, and a Students Service in Washington, D.C. In 1951 a delegation of British West Indian

⁴British Guiana and British Honduras participated in this commission as well. See Great Britain, Colonial Office, *The West Indies: A Nation in the Making* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 17.

⁵*The West Indies*, 17-18; John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 43-44.

⁶*The West Indies*, 17-18; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 43-44.

leaders went to Washington to discuss with the State Department the question of migrant workers employed in agricultural positions in the United States.⁷

A good example of regional cooperation involved tourism. As a result of a recommendation by the Third Session of the West Indian Conference held in Guadeloupe in 1948, the islands formed the Caribbean Interim Tourism Committee in 1949 to begin explorations designed to lead to the formation of a permanent body. Representatives from Trinidad, the Leeward Islands, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent, along with some of the non-British territories, made a preliminary survey of their tourist possibilities. They developed plans to attract capital to invest in the creation of facilities for tourism and to provide technical advice on hotel and resort development, transportation and the promotion of tourism, particularly in the United States.⁸

One of the most important examples of regional cooperation in education and research was the University College of the West Indies, founded in Jamaica in 1949. In 1945 the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies issued a report recommending a university for the West Indies. It argued that in light of the insularity of the islands the commission believed that a university would help further cooperative development in the West Indies. At the same time it would serve to keep educated West Indians at home, rather than losing them to Great Britain or the United States, the countries that were currently educating them. The commission argued that by keeping

⁷*The West Indies*, 17-18; "1950, A Year of Progress for the British Caribbean," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin* 5 (November 1951), 118; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 43-44.

⁸Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1950* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951), 9.

the educated at home, the university could provide responsible and well-informed leadership for the future.⁹

The territorial governments supported the college which opened in 1949 with thirty-three students, who could take classes in physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology. Natural sciences classes began later in 1949, and in 1950 the curriculum expanded to include modern history, English, Latin, French, and Spanish. By 1958 it had five hundred students from throughout the British Caribbean, who could take classes in the arts, sciences, and medicine. The college included an Institute of Education, an Institute of Social and Economic Research, and a Department of Extra-Mural Studies.¹⁰

The Extra-Mural department was particularly important to the far-flung islands. It provided resident tutors in Barbados, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad, the Windward Islands, British Guiana, and British Honduras. They offered a variety of both academic and cultural enrichment courses. For example, by the time of Federation in Barbados, students could take classes in French, English, Latin, history, and mathematics, as well as special course offerings in education, economics, music, and science.¹¹

⁹Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the West Indies Committee of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 15-16.

¹⁰*The West Indies*, 18, 39; *Development and Welfare*, 48. In 1958 there were also over three thousand British Caribbean students studying in the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Many of these received scholarships from their own governments, or from development and welfare funds. See *The West Indies*, 39.

¹¹*Development and Welfare, 1947-48*, 48; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Barbados, 1960-1961* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 59.

Another area of cooperation was agriculture. Inter-territorial producers' associations, representing the interests of producers in the whole British West Indies, included the British West Indies' Sugar Producers' Association, the Federation of Primary Producers of the British Caribbean and British Guiana, the West Indian Sea Island Cotton Association, the British Caribbean Citrus Association, and the West Indian Limes Association.¹²

Participation in the Caribbean Commission, which promoted consultation and collaboration in addressing regional problems affecting the whole Caribbean area, also fostered a sense of cooperation among the British West Indian islanders. It began as a joint Anglo-American Commission in 1942, when the United States leased British bases in the Caribbean. The two countries realized that it was desirable to promote cooperation and an exchange of information about a wide range of ideas. They extended it to include France and the Netherlands in 1946, and renamed it the Caribbean Commission. The commission itself was made up of four members appointed by the metropolitan governments, but it held a biennial West Indian conference at which two representatives from each of the territories met to examine and discuss subjects specific to the area. For example, in 1944, the commission met in Barbados, with all the British West Indies islands represented, as well as the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. The delegates discussed such varied topics as nutritional problems, public works to improve agriculture, education, housing and public health, health protection and quarantine, and industrial development. In 1944 the commission established the

¹²*The West Indies*, 19.

Caribbean Research Council, with sectional committees to deal with particular aspects of research. The council's standing committees included agriculture, fisheries, wildlife and forestry, economics and statistics, engineering, industrial development, medicine, public health and nutrition, and sociology and education.¹³

As early as 1949, C.W.W. Greenidge, a retired Barbadian lawyer, could proclaim that there was a new West Indian attitude apparent in the region. He contended that the islanders now considered themselves West Indians, regardless of the island they occupied or their cultural heritage. He praised the Development and Welfare Organization and the Caribbean Commission for fostering the new identity.¹⁴ Greenidge was correct, but this cooperative spirit and West Indies outlook did not translate to the federation. Although the islanders had learned the advantages of collaboration, they were still reluctant to give up their local identities to a federal government.

¹³Great Britain, Colonial Office, *British Dependencies in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, 1939-1952* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1952), 73-74; *The West Indies*, 19; Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1943-44* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1945), 92.

¹⁴C.W.W. Greenidge, "The Present Outlook in the British West Indies," *Caribbean Commission Monthly Information Bulletin*, 2 (July 1949), 362.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIRTH OF THE WEST INDIES FEDERATION AND ITS DEMISE

On Friday, January 3, 1958, the West Indies Federation came into existence.

There was much work ahead before the new country attained freedom from Great Britain, but the official inauguration of the Caribbean experiment in federation was already the result of a great deal of debate and cooperation. The member islands were optimistic that they were on the road to complete self-government. Once again a series of conferences would provide the battleground for the divisive issues that remained.

The arrival of Governor-General Lord Hailes marked the formal beginning of the Federation. Hailes was not part of the Colonial Office. He had served as parliamentary private secretary to Oliver Stanley from 1931-1939, and as conservative chief whip and government chief whip from 1951-1955. From 1955-1957 Hailes was minister of works. His appointment highlighted one of the problems the islands had yet to solve as well: freeing themselves from British control. Lord Hailes was virtually unknown in the West Indies. The British Government had appointed him without submitting a list of potential candidates to the island leaders, although it did discuss the qualities necessary to be governor general. West Indians argued that the British government had sacrificed the

well-being of the Federation in order to give a political plum to a party official. The islanders wanted an experienced colonial civil servant in the position.¹

Clearly, the British intended that Hailes be more than a figurehead, particularly during the early years of Federation. The Constitution afforded him sweeping powers. Among other things, he appointed all the senators, justices of the Federal Supreme Court, and members of the Public Service Commission. He could refuse to agree to any bill passed by the House or Senate and reserve it for review by the British government. However, Hailes asserted few of his powers and by 1960 he had relinquished some of them. Hailes arrived with full British pomp and ceremony, which was enough to insult the nationalist leaders of the islands. Yet from the beginning the islanders accepted Hailes as a sincere and enthusiastic official, and vowed to work with him for West Indian independence.²

The first Federal elections took place on March 25. This presented the islanders with another problem. Under the constitution candidates could not be members of their local governments; as a result, several men whom the islanders expected to lead them through the early years of federation, most notably Norman Manley of Jamaica, and Eric Williams of Trinidad, decided not to run for federal office, because they believed they

¹Elisabeth Wallace, *The British Caribbean: From the Decline of Colonialism to the End of Federation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 138; John Mordecai, *The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1968), 72.

²Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 75-77; Douglas G. Anglin, "The Political Development of the West Indies," in David Lowenthal, ed., *The West Indies Federation: Perspectives on a New Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 49-50, 52-53.

could serve the Federation best by supporting it at home.³ Their absence weakened the Federal government before it even began, because they were the most experienced West Indian politicians available and both were highly regarded throughout the islands.

The results of the election produced another surprise. West Indians expected the Federal Labour Party, which was made up of all the parties then holding local power on all the islands except St. Vincent, to gain control of the federal government.⁴ However, the Federal Labour Party won only twenty-two of the forty-five seats available. The Democratic Labour Party, which had been ignored for the most part, gained twenty seats, including a majority in both Jamaica and Trinidad. Three independent candidates, two from Grenada and one from Barbados, garnered the remaining seats, and commanded the balance of power in the House.⁵ So, the political parties that had guided the pre-federal process would not control the new Federal government.

At the same time there were surprises at the local level. The ruling parties of Williams in Trinidad and Manley in Jamaica suffered defeat as well. This was to prove extremely important in the case of Jamaica, because Manley's chief political rival, Alexander Bustamante, opposed Jamaica's participation in the Federation. In addition,

³Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 143-146; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 78-85.

⁴The West Indies Federal Labour Party, inaugurated in 1957, included Manley's People's National Party in Jamaica, Adams' Barbados Labour Party, as well as the small island parties. Williams' People's National Movement of Trinidad was an ally, but not a full member. See Anglin, "The Political Development of The West Indies," 47.

⁵Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 86; Anglin, "The Political Development of The West Indies," 47-48; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Barbados* (London: Central Office of Information, 1966), 7.

the islanders showed a marked lack of interest in the new government. For example, in Barbados only twenty-six percent of registered voters went to the polls.⁶

The first business of the House of Representatives was the choice of a prime minister. Because Manley, the logical choice, had chosen not to run for Federal office, the House selected the number two man in the Federal Labour Party, Grantley Adams of Barbados.⁷ He immediately set out to consolidate the power of the federal government.

The first issue Adams confronted concerned the site of the federal capital. Although Trinidad would host the Federal government, the problem was where on Trinidad to place the federal capital. The Standing Federation Committee had decided that the optimal site was the Chaguaramas military base, which happened to be the property of the United States as a result of the Lend-Lease deal with Britain in 1941. When the British refused to intercede on the part of the Federation, and the United States declined to negotiate with the Federation, Williams, contrary to his belief in a strong central government, argued that it was a decision for Trinidad to make, not the federal government. Adams, however, managed to conclude an agreement with the United States that would defer the decision for ten years, at which time the Americans promised to review the need for the base in light of international issues existing then.⁸

⁶Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 86-87.

⁷Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 89; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 145.

⁸Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Report of the Chaguaramas Joint Commission* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 1-2; S. Walter Washington, "Crisis in the British West Indies," *Foreign Affairs* 38 (July 1960), 654; Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 204-209; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 107-123; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 117-118.

This was a victory for Adams and the Federal government, but it caused a rift between Adams and Williams, who believed that the issue of the American base was the concern of Trinidad, not the Federal government. Williams renewed his protests a year later, in July 1959, when he attacked the United States for condoning smuggling at the base and exposing Trinidadians to the risk of radiation. He pressed for a four-power meeting of the United Kingdom, the United States, the Federal government, and Trinidad to discuss the problems. Adams responded by agreeing to a three-power meeting, to which the Federal government would invite Trinidadian participation. The debate escalated for a year, culminating in a local protest in Trinidad which signified the country's nationalism and its increasing separation from the Federal government.⁹

Finally, the British decided to take an active part in the problem. Secretary of State Iain MacLeod proposed a three-stage series of meetings. Stage I was a conference of representatives of the Federal and local governments with the United States and Great Britain which took place on Tobago in November and December 1960. The United States agreed to release to Trinidad 21,000 acres which included unused portions of Chaguaramas as well as other sites on the islands; they would retain only those essential to their responsibilities for defense. The United States agreed to supply surplus water for local use and to provide economic assistance to Trinidad to improve port facilities at Port of Spain, rehabilitate the largely obsolete Trinidad Government Railway system, improve the road between Chaguaramas and Port of Spain, and develop the Trinidad College of

⁹Washington, "Crisis," 653-654; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 189-195; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 167-168; Williams, *Inward Hunger*, 213-225.

Arts and Sciences as a college of the University of the West Indies. The United States agreed, as well, to a series of reviews which would guarantee that they evacuated the base within seventeen years. All the participants agreed that an autonomous West Indies would have the right to form its own alliances and make its own agreements about military bases on its territory.¹⁰

Stage II meetings took place in December in St. Lucia, Antigua, and Jamaica in which the United States formally released deactivated bases on those islands, as well as the unused portions of Chaguaramas. Stage III was the signing ceremony which took place in Port of Spain in February, 1961.¹¹ Although the meetings settled the matter of ownership and control of the bases, they failed to address the issue of the Federal capital. Adams considered the results a failure for the Federal government and a success for Williams and Trinidad.

Another important issue that the islands had failed to solve involved the freedom of movement of persons within the Federation. Barbados, the Leeward Islands, and the Windward Islands considered unrestricted movement between the islands a keystone of Federation and one of its prime benefits. These islands had severe economic problems, because their agricultural industries could not provide enough jobs to support their large populations. Trinidad believed, on the other hand, that it would be saddled with a rush of immigrants that would aggravate its already serious social and economic problems. Trinidad's oil industry provided jobs for Trinidadians plus some emigrants, but it could

¹⁰Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 179; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 236-237, 299-303; Williams, *Inward Hunger*, 239.

¹¹Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 179-180; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 304.

not support the large number of emigrants the island anticipated when immigration barriers came down. At the same time Trinidad was one of the wealthier British islands, but still it had the same social and economic problems of overpopulation that plagued the other islands.¹² Williams argued that because the British were responsible for the distress in the islands, they should take the excess population from them. Barbados countered that the British could hardly be expected to do what the Federation would not. And, indeed, the British were cutting immigration levels at that time.¹³

The Federal Constitution provided that five years after Federation, in 1963, all united restrictions on migration would expire. Trinidad proposed that the Federal government provide funds to alleviate the social and economic distress that it would encounter from an influx of migrants. In addition, it proposed that free movement of people be tied to free movement of goods.¹⁴

Finally, in December, leaders and ministers of the national and unit governments met to discuss the recent effects of migration. They claimed that migration to Trinidad had increased since 1958; they believed it would continue to do so. The nature of the migration was principally agricultural workers seeking urban jobs, and squatting in urban areas upon arrival, thus adding to the social and economic problems of the island, just as Trinidad had predicted. They concluded that if Britain restricted migration after

¹²“The British West Indies and Migration: Population Pressures on Resources,” *The World Today* 14 (November 1958), 474, 476.

¹³Wallace, “Improbable Federation,” 449.

¹⁴Anglin, “The Political Development of the West Indies,” 56-57; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 211-212.

independence, the problem in Trinidad would increase. They recommended that the Federal government should control freedom of movement, but that until 1967 island legislatures should have the power to restrict entry. This would give the islands time to establish migration agreements among themselves.¹⁵

In May of 1961 another intergovernmental conference reviewed the recommendations. The representatives of the islands worked out a final agreement that would delay Federal control for nine years, unless it received the support of the unit governments. Barbados, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and Dominica voted against the restrictions. One month later, however, Trinidad changed its position. Williams argued that it had stood by while the islands eroded Federal power on issue after issue, but he drew the line at migration, which could only have a negative effect on Trinidad. He threatened that Trinidad and Tobago would leave the Federation if it lost its effort to restrict migration. He decided to put the issue to a vote of the people of Trinidad.¹⁶

Meanwhile, another problem had surfaced. In 1958 Jamaica proposed a plan that would protect oil refining on that island in direct opposition to the idea of internal free trade within the Federation. Within four years the fallout from this proposal would end the Federation.

Jamaica wanted to institute a consumption tax on oil refining that it could refund to Jamaican refiners. Although it was proposed in the form of a consumption tax rather

¹⁵Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 310-314; Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 176.

¹⁶Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 344-346, 369-371.

than an import duty, it was clear to everyone that its purpose was to protect a refinery it wanted to build in Jamaica by excluding Trinidad oil.¹⁷

Both Federal and Trinidadian authorities opposed the tax. Adams objected on the grounds that it would hinder the establishment of a successful customs union. He went on to propose that the Federal government levy an income tax to support itself, and hinted that it might be made retroactive to the beginning of the Federation if the unit governments did not allow its implementation earlier than the five years agreed upon before the beginning of the Federation. Adams retreated from his remarks a bit when faced with widespread criticism throughout the islands, but he continued to lobby for an income tax as soon as possible to provide support for the Federal government.¹⁸

Williams attacked the Jamaican proposal from a local standpoint. He called it an effort at monopoly control of oil in Jamaica and promised to fight the proposal. Both Jamaica and Trinidad hinted that the Federation itself might be undermined by the issue. Manley went so far as to promise that if the Federal government were to threaten local development in Jamaica, Jamaica would have to reconsider its position on Federation.¹⁹

In Jamaica, Manley's political rival, Alexander Bustamante, quickly stepped into the fray. He agreed that Jamaica could not support a Federation that even hinted that it might introduce retroactive taxation. He charged that Manley, the chief proponent of

¹⁷Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 152; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 114-137.

¹⁸Washington, "Crisis," 649-650; Anglin, "The Political Development of The West Indies," 59; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 124-137.

¹⁹Anglin, "The Political Development of the West Indies," 53-54, 59; Washington, "Crisis," 649; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 124-138.

Federation in Jamaica, had misled the islanders from the start.²⁰ Bustamante proposed three changes to the Federal Constitution. He wanted an amendment specifically denying the Federal government the right to tax the islands without their prior approval. He insisted that representation in the Federal House of Representatives be based on population. Finally, he demanded that any customs union be designed so as not to hurt Jamaica's workers or its economy. He concluded by reiterating that Jamaica would withdraw from the Federation if these demands were not met.²¹ From this point on, secession would become an open topic of discussion within the Federation.

Despite their earlier disagreements, Williams came to Adams' defense on this issue. Williams declared that Trinidad was prepared to sacrifice local powers in order to promote a strong Federation with taxing powers. The other islands of the Eastern Caribbean criticized the prime minister for his unpopular proposals on retroactive taxation. St. Lucia supported Jamaica in calling for the amendment of the Constitution in order to deny the Federal government its right to levy income taxes.²²

Adams finally responded by agreeing to convene the Regional Council of Ministers. The islands established his group in 1957 as a non-statutory body composed of the territorial chief ministers under the chairmanship of the prime minister. Its purpose was to confer on issues of common concern that posed different problems for the islands,

²⁰Although Bustamante had been critical of the idea of federation at Montego Bay, he had put aside his opposition in the years that followed. In fact, he had worked with Manley to bring Jamaica into the Federation. See Elisabeth Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445.

²¹Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 138-139; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445.

²²Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 140-141.

with the intent of minimizing tensions before they developed into a problem. Adams had been reluctant to convene the council because it would allow the chief ministers, particularly Williams and Manley, to play a role in shaping federal policy. Adams wanted a strong Federal government on which the islands could not put undue pressure.²³

The council met on January 12-13, 1959. The ministers agreed easily on a number of measures including extension of a rice agreement, enactment of Federal legislation to regulate the operations of insurance companies, institution of a Federal consulting service to assist unit income tax departments, and endorsement of a Federal appeal to unit governments to improve port and harbor facilities. The most divisive issue on the agenda was the last, economic development. Adams invited the council to issue a statement which the Federal government had drafted. It pledged that mutual consultation would be used in the future to achieve uniformity in tax legislation and concluded with the Federal government's promise to honor territorial concessions. Manley countered that a joint statement would be a mistake because the islands were still debating the future role of the Federal government. Williams agreed, as did the representatives from Barbados, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. Adams thanked Manley for his contribution to the debate, then went on to say that he believed Jamaica's attitude would have been different if it had not been facing an election. Manley and the Jamaican delegation immediately left the conference.²⁴ Later that year Jamaica concluded

²³Washington, "Crisis," 651; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 147-148.

²⁴Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 146-149.

a plan for an oil refinery, but it would not be put into place until after the demise of the Federation.²⁵

From this point on the oil refinery issue faded into the background while the debate on Federation focused on the strength of the Federal government and the issue of independence. Manley pressed for a weak central government and dominion status as soon as possible. He argued that the islands should decide the most important issues of the Federation, particularly those involving taxes and economic development.²⁶ Williams and his followers continued to demand a strong central government and early full independence from Britain.²⁷ The smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean sided with Williams, because they believed that Manley was trying to exploit them by gaining control of the Federal government. One island went so far as to declare that they would only be trading one colonial master for another if they let Jamaica shape the Federal government on its own terms without considering the other islands.²⁸

When the islands met in September 1959 to discuss the future of the Federation, seventy-three ministers and advisers made the meeting virtually unmanageable. After opening speeches that expressed faith in the Federation, the delegates immediately stalemated over the agenda. Jamaica refused to participate unless the delegates first

²⁵Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 149-150.

²⁶Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 450.

²⁷ Williams had consistently called for a strong federation, even when he was saying that Trinidad should be the one to conduct negotiations with the United States over the Chaguaramas base. See Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445.

²⁸Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 155-160; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445, 450.

settled the issue of representation in the Federal House. Manley dismissed the fear that Jamaica would dominate a body based on representation by population, because, he claimed, party politics would always leave Jamaica's delegation divided. After much haggling, Manley finally agreed to submit the issue of representation to a committee. The islands agreed to make further meetings less cumbersome by limiting representation. In the future each unit and the Federal government would have one vote, which meant that six of the small islands voting together would outvote the larger islands on any subject.²⁹

Most West Indians believed that the Federation could not survive without Jamaica, so they made every effort to meet Jamaica's demands. By 1960 the islands had agreed to a formula for representation based on population. The islands decided to increase the number of seats in the House of Representatives to sixty-four. Each island unit would have one seat plus an additional seat for each population unit of 55,000. Under this formula Jamaica's representatives would increase from seventeen to thirty-one, or 48.4 percent of the House. Trinidad gained five seats, from ten to fifteen, or 23.4 percent. The representation of Barbados, the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands remained the same. The islands used the census of 1960 for their figures, but allowed for regular reviews, with a maximum House size of seventy seats.³⁰

²⁹Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 160; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 173-181; Williams, *Inward Hunger*, 183-184.

³⁰Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 197-198; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 446. The Federal government, Dominica, and Grenada tried to raise the issue of representation once more at an intergovernmental meeting in 1961. They objected to the formula based on population and suggested a percentage ceiling of forty percent for any one island unit.

It was also at this point that the British decided to take a more active role in the federal negotiations. At a London Conference in January 1960, Iain Macleod, the colonial secretary, presented the minimum requirements for an independent Federation, including a defense force, the power to negotiate and conclude treaties, and a central government that controlled the currency and had sufficient financial resources. The British required a customs union as well, and freedom of movement, but Macleod diplomatically conceded that the British might accept progress toward finalizing these plans. He concluded by saying that the British considered the West Indies particularly suited for independence because of its long experience of parliamentary government, its respect for rule of law, and its emphasis on the value of the individual. Finally, he promised that on May 31, 1962, the Federation would become an independent member of the Commonwealth, and that each unit would have internal self-government before that date.³¹

In another effort to placate Jamaica, the islands approved measures that would weaken the Federation. The Federal government would be able to impose an income tax, but only through an amendment to the Federal Constitution supported by a majority in the two federal houses and in the lower houses of each island unit. This meant that each

Their idea received no support from the other islands, which voted it down eight to three. See Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 344.

³¹Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 164; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 449-450, 452.

island had veto power over income taxes, so the 12,000 inhabitants of Montserrat had the same power as the 825,000 of Trinidad or the half-million Jamaicans.³²

Despite the islands' efforts to meet Jamaica's demands, Manley could not stop his political problems at home. Bustamante continued to attack Jamaica's participation in the Federation. Manley managed to delay the referendum vote through all of 1960, until September 1961. The question put to the voters of Jamaica was simple: "Should Jamaica remain in the Federation of the West Indies?"³³

Many Jamaicans favored Federation. The mercantile and trading communities could see new outlets in regional expansion. Middle-class intellectuals liked the idea of developing an active and identifiable West Indian culture and society. The civil service sector viewed Federation as an opportunity for advancement. On the other hand, rural Jamaicans knew or cared little about the West Indies Federation.³⁴ Although the poor on the other island had benefited from development projects initiated by the Federal government, Jamaica had not taken advantage of aid to help its rural inhabitants. Therefore, these people had fewer opportunities to come into direct contact with the advantages of the Federation.³⁵

³²Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 451.

³³Wallace, *The British Caribbean*, 171-172; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 392-401.

³⁴Wallace disagreed. She claimed that in her conversations with sugar workers and taxi drivers, she found them quite familiar with the Federation and willing to accept it. See Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445.

³⁵Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 402-403.

Manley appealed to the voters on behalf of the Federation. He claimed that supporting the Federal government would cost Jamaica half of what it would take to fund independence on its own. He promised bigger markets, more jobs, and more room for development within the Federation. He pleaded on the basis of contemporary political thought. He told Jamaicans that the world trend favored political union for small countries contemplating independence, so if Jamaica joined the Federation it could expect help from the great nations.³⁶

Bustamante argued for isolationism. He promised that if Jamaica joined the Federation, the small islands would rule both with incompetence. He stressed the distance between Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean. He countered Manley's view of wider trade within the Federation by claiming that Trinidad would benefit, not Jamaica. He pointed out that regional institutions advantageous to Jamaica had existed before Federation and did not require a political union for membership.³⁷

On September 19, 1961, Jamaicans went to the polls. They voted against Federation by a count of 54.1 percent to 45.9 percent, with 60.87 percent of registered voters participating.³⁸ As expected, it was the rural population that decided the election. Most of them were sufficiently uninterested in Federation to stay away from the polls.

³⁶Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 404; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 447.

³⁷Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 404.

³⁸A total of 256,261 of Jamaicans voted no, while 217,319 voted in favor of Federation. See, Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Jamaica: The Making of a Nation* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 8; Great Britain, British Information Services, *Barbados* (London: Central Office of Information, 1966), 8; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 410.

They did not care enough to vote for or against the coalition. Shortly after midnight Manley conceded defeat and apologized to the rest of the West Indies.³⁹

The question that now remained was whether Trinidad would continue to support the Federation. Williams had always been a strong federalist, but he had managed to alienate most of the federal leaders over the last few years by his stand on the issue of migration.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the British agreed to release Jamaica from the Federation no later than March 1962. Because there was no provision in the Federal Constitution for secession, and because the West Indies Federation had not yet become independent of Britain, the British Parliament had to agree to let Jamaica leave. Williams declared that if the British consented to Jamaica's secession, he would consider the Federation as it then existed dissolved on the date Jamaica left. In January 1962, after considering the economic and financial implications of reforming a federation with Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago decided to abandon the federal movement.⁴¹ Despite numerous attempts to entice Williams to keep Trinidad and Tobago in the Federation he stood firm against the idea. The West Indies Federation was dead.

³⁹Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 410-414; Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 458.

⁴⁰Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 415-416.

⁴¹Great Britain, British Information Services, *Trinidad and Tobago: The Making of a Nation* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 13; *Barbados*, 8; Mordecai, *The West Indies*, 426-427.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The West Indies Federation failed because Jamaica chose to leave. Although that was true, it was far from the whole story. The Jamaica vote did not address any of the real difficulties the islands had encountered in putting together the Federation. It was a local vote that had more to do with the struggle for power between Norman Manley and Alexander Bustamante. The vote itself confirmed that; it reflected regional differences and customary party lines.¹

Critics have pointed to weak leadership in the West Indies, particularly that of Grantley Adams in the Federal government, as the cause for failure. They contend that if Manley had run for federal office and become prime minister, he could have kept the Federation together.² Although Adams did lack the Caribbean-wide appeal of Manley, and did tend to alienate local island leaders, his leadership, or lack of it, did not determine

¹Charles H. Archibald, "The Failure of the West Indies Federation," *The World Today* 18 (June 1962), 235.

²Some argued that Adams' position in the Federal Labour Party, second in command to Manley, bothered Adams so much that it interfered with his relations with Manley. However, there was no evidence that Adams favored Manley or did not. He had equally bad relations with many other West Indian leaders during the course of the federal negotiations. See Elisabeth Wallace, "Improbable Federation?" *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 27 (November 1961), 447.

the outcome of the Federation. At best, Adams could be accused of failing to develop a West Indies attitude by selling the idea of Federation to the islands. At the same time evidence of conversations with sugar workers and taxi drivers suggested that they did know about the Federation and how it might benefit them.³ In any event, Adams was usually busy trying to shape the diverse views of the islands' leaders into coherent policy. If Manley had chosen to lead the Federation, his presence might have made federation more acceptable to Jamaicans, but Federal laws precluded him from holding office in the Federal government and in Jamaica, too, and he chose to retain his role in Jamaican politics.⁴

The geographical and cultural differences of the islands have attracted attention as a cause of the federal failure as well. There was, indeed, intense insularity in the West Indian islands. At Montego Bay in 1947, many islanders met each other for the first time.⁵ Poor communications and transportation, as well as British policy, had worked to keep the units separate for centuries. However, the islands shared much in common, too. They were all agriculture-based economies. They had similar economic and social problems. They shared a common language and a common political tradition. They all had been British colonies for over a century. In addition, improved communications and

³Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 445.

⁴Archibald, "The Failure of the West Indies Federation," 239-240; Elisabeth Wallace, "The West Indies Federation: Decline and Fall," *International Journal* 17 (Summer 1962), 284.

⁵Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 453.

transportation after World War II had brought them closer together.⁶ Most importantly they had already come together on any number of regional cooperative ventures. The islanders were well aware that they had power in numbers. They willingly cooperated when it was in their best interests to do so, and when they did not have to relinquish autonomy to do so. Their geographic and cultural differences existed, but not to the extent of subverting cooperation.⁷ These differences could have been overcome by the Federation.

The most divisive issues of the pre-federal period involved economic and political control. Although the islanders were willing to come together on ventures that benefited from regional cooperation, they were unwilling to accept control by a central government. In 1961 there was still no common postage or coinage. Each island continued to control immigration and customs. There was no reason for an islander to think in terms of the West Indies Federation, because he was still Jamaican, or Kittian, and guided by that island's laws.⁸

The real problem for the Federation was the idea itself. The British had spent years keeping the islands separate. West Indians were accustomed to living apart. If the British believed cooperation was so important, why had they failed to introduce it prior to 1947? Charles Archibald pointed to Arthur Creech Jones' promises of individual

⁶Wallace points out that although transportation improved, it was still out of the question for most of the Caribbean population. It did, however, allow government leaders to interact. See Wallace, "Decline and Fall," 270.

⁷Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 457.

⁸Wallace, "Improbable Federation," 454.

progress towards self-government made at the Montego Bay Conference in 1947 as proof that the British knew well the habit of separateness that was so ingrained in West Indian life, and wanted to promise the islands that their combined efforts would not deter their individual progress.⁹ The Caribbean islanders wanted to be British. They believed in the civil and political liberties of the British tradition. They wanted those for themselves.¹⁰ Unfortunately for the British, the West Indians wanted them to apply individually to their islands. They could not agree to relinquish them to a Federal government. In 1962, Elisabeth Wallace, a political scientist at the University of Toronto, wrote: “No one familiar with these islands, with their diverse histories, marked individualities, and strong local attachments, would seriously expect them to accept, in all important public affairs, the central direction of unitary government.”¹¹

The British knew the islands well. However, in their rush to rid themselves of the least productive of their colonies they ignored the islands’ diversity. Instead, the British acted in their own best interests by inviting the islands to come together at Montego Bay to discuss some type of closer association. To the islands that meant federation. The British might have invited the islands to a more general discussion of their future after 1945. In that way colonial leaders could have provided a forum for island representatives to discuss any number of options for independence, including federation or individual island sovereignty. The islanders, or the British, could have proposed cooperative

⁹Archibald, “The Failure of the West Indies Federation,” 236-237.

¹⁰Wallace, “Improbable Federation,” 448.

¹¹Wallace, “Improbable Federation,” 454.

associations as a prelude to joint political action. Instead, the British invited the islanders to explore a plan that British leaders thought would ensure them of another independent nation for the Commonwealth. Instead, they raised problems for the West Indian islands that lasted for years.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

COMPOSITION OF CONFERENCE ON CLOSER ASSOCIATION MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA 1947

Chairman

A. Creech Jones, M.P., Secretary of State for the Colonies

Deputy Chairman

G.F. Seel, Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office

Chairman of Committee

A.M. Crawley, M.P., Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for the Colonies

Delegates and their Advisers

Colony	Delegates	Advisers
Barbados	H.A. Cuke, Member of Legislative Council and Executive Committee	P.F. Campbell, Acting Colonial Secretary
	G.H. Adams, Member of House of Assembly and Executive Committee	E.K. Walcott, Attorney General
	W.A. Crawford, Member of House of Assembly and Executive Committee	

British Guiana	Sir Eustace Woolford, Deputy President of Legislative Council	F.W. Holder, Attorney General
	F.J. Seaford, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	E.F. McDavid, Colonial Treasurer
	Dr. J.B. Singh, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	
British Honduras	C.M. Staine, Member of Legislative Council	A.N. Wolffsohn, Colonial Secretary
	K.E. I. Wade, Member of Legislative Council	H.J. Hughes, Attorney General
	W.H. Courtenay, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	
Jamaica	D.J. Judah, Member of Legislative Council	T.H. Mayers, Attorney General
	W.A. Bustamante, Member of House of Representatives and Executive Council	Sir Norman Strathie, Financial Secretary and Treasurer
	F.A. Pixley, Member of House of Representatives and Executive Council	
Leeward Islands	A.W. Griffin, Member of General Legislative and Executive Councils and Montserrat Legislative and Executive Councils	S.E. Gomes, Attorney General
	M.H. Davis, Member of General Legislative and Executive Councils and St. Kitts-Nevis Legislative and Executive Councils	H. Burrowes, Acting Administrator of Antigua

	V.C. Bird, Member of General Legislative Council and Antigua Legislative and Executive Councils	
Trinidad	T. Roodal, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	H.W. Wilson, Attorney General
	D.C. Hannays, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	R.B. Skinner, Acting Financial Secretary
	A. Gomes, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	
Windward Islands		
Grenada	J.B. Renwick, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	A.R. Cools Lartigue, Attorney General of the Windward Islands
St. Vincent	S.F. Bonadie, Member of Legislative Council	Professor C.G. Beasley, Economic Adviser to the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies
St. Lucia	A.M. Lewis, Member of Legislative Council	
Dominica	C.A.H. Dupigny, Member of Legislative and Executive Councils	

British Section of the Caribbean Commission

Sir John MacPherson, British Co-Chairman
 E.E. Sabben-Clare, British Member Resident in Washington
 N.W. Manley
 G. Gordon
 H. P. Hewitt-Myring, Public Relations Adviser to the British Co-Chairman

Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies

Sir John MacPherson, Comptroller
S.A. Hammond, Educational Adviser
Professor C.G. Beasley, Economic Adviser
R. Norris, Secretary

Secretaries

A.M. MacKintosh, Colonial Office, Secretary
H.L. Lindo, Jamaica Secretariat, Assistant Secretary

Source: Great Britain, Colonial Office, *Conference on Closer Association of the British West Indian Colonies. I. Report*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948, 12-13.

APPENDIX B

COMPOSITION OF STANDING CLOSER ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

Chairman

Major General Sir Hubert Rance

Barbados:	H.A. Cuke Member of the Legislative Council
	G.H. Adams Member of the Colonial Parliament
British Guiana:	C.V. Wight Vice-President of the Legislative Council
	T. Lee Member of the Legislative Council
British Honduras:	W.H. Courtenay Member of the Legislative Council
	F.R. Dragten
Jamaica	D.J. Judah Member of the Legislative Council
	Clinton Hart
Antigua:	V.C. Bird Member of the Legislative Council
St. Kitts-Nevis	M.H. Davis Member of the Legislative Council
Montserrat	C.R. Meade

Trinidad	A. Gomes Member of the Legislative Council
	L.C. Hannays Member of the Legislative Council
Dominica	A. Winston Member of the Legislative Council
Grenada	J.B. Renwick Member of the Legislative Council
St. Lucia	Garnet H. Gordon Member of the Legislative Council
St. Vincent	G. McIntosh Member of the Legislative Council

Source: Great Britain. Colonial Office. *Report of the British Caribbean Standing Closer Association Committee, 1948-49*. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1950, 5.

VITA¹

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