

**PART 3**  
**ARRIVANCE:**  
**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND MIDDLE CLASS, 1900-1940**

**PROLOGUE**  
**1940**

The visitor arriving in Antigua in 1940 would have found a place that looked very much as it did to the visitor of the late 1890s: fields of bright green sugarcane still covered the landscape, edging the city on all sides; the streets were still dusty, although they were now paved and had streetlights; and the large two-storey merchant establishments still lined Scotch Row. But beneath this superficial similarity, large changes had taken place. There were no longer active sugar mills scattered across the countryside, only the one at the Antigua Sugar Factory, and few estates were still owned by individual planter-proprietors, most of whom had sold out to the Antigua Syndicate Estates. The merchant establishments lining Market Street were now owned not by white men but by members of a new nonwhite middle class, which had, since the turn of the century, taken over the retail merchant sector—although not the import-export houses—and inched its way up the rungs of the civil service occupational ladder. And as the result of a movement among the West Indian middle classes, a measure of representative government had been reinstated and an election had been held for seats on the Legislative Council in 1936—the first election since Crown Colony government was installed in 1897. Two nonwhites were elected, one from the nonwhite middle class and the other a leader of the growing movement of peasants and laborers that had begun soon after World War I and that had formed the first trade union in early 1939. Finally, Britain had declared war on Germany in September 1939 and was, in 1940, in the process of negotiating to allow the United States to build a naval air station and army base not far from St. John's.

Nevertheless, one factor remained constant: in the years between 1904, when the Antigua Sugar Factory began grinding, and 1941, when the United States raised its flag over the naval base, sugar continued to dominate the economy, despite the efforts to introduce new crops that will be described in Chapter 8: it provided 97 percent of total export income in 1929 and 95.5 percent in 1938 (*Annual Report* 1931: 25; Agricultural Advisory Department *Report*: 219), and employed, directly or indirectly, about 90 percent of the population.

The previous section described the development of a nonwhite middle class in the late nineteenth century primarily in terms of how it was generated out of two distinct groups

within the population. This section turns to the process of class formation itself and explores how *this* class, made up of *these* people, became a middle class, and the kind of middle class that it became: a class with a particular economic role, holding certain occupations and with control over certain resources; a class that took on a particular political role; a class with certain aims and aspirations. Both historical origins and socioeconomic configuration are part of what makes a class behave in a particular way, and it is crucial to understand both if we are to understand Antigua as it proceeded into the twentieth century.

The economic crisis of the 1890s created an economic and demographic crisis that petrified the local white elite and the Colonial Office but provided an unprecedented opportunity for the nonwhite population, and with gathering momentum educational and occupational barriers began to fall to a class that had been waiting in the figurative wings for just such a chance. Yet even in these new circumstances, the white population relinquished its hold only reluctantly, gradually, and piecemeal, determined that it would control and shape the class that it believed it was “allowing,” so that opportunities became available in an uneven manner. This process will be analyzed in Chapter 6, which focuses the crucial struggle for educational opportunities, and Chapter 7, which focuses on the occupational rise and social organization of the nonwhite middle class. In discussing occupations, I use a modified version of Harrison White’s (1970) concept of an opportunity chain (see Introduction) to chart the changes in four key sectors—merchant, civil service, sugar factory, and banking.

Classes form in a particular context and in relation to other classes. For the nonwhite middle class, the development of a peasantry, the introduction of Garveyite “racial” ideology, and the development of trade unions in the late 1930s all changed the context dramatically. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was almost no peasant cultivation in Antigua, despite the fact that every commission since the 1880s had recommended that it be encouraged. But the planters were unwilling to give up land, and it was not until after World War I that, primarily as a result of government support, a peasantry began, very slowly, to develop. Once this happened, however, it introduced a new element into Antiguan economic and political life. And with it came still another element, this coming from outside: by 1918, the word “union” was in the air, accompanied by a heightened rhetoric that had its roots in Garveyism and Pan Africanism. Both developments were closely tied to growing unrest among the laboring population throughout the Caribbean, in part the result of local economic conditions and in part carried home by those returning from serving in the British armed forces. Riots in Antigua in 1918 presaged far greater unrest in the 1930s, which in turn culminated in the establishment of trade unions on most islands, dramatically changing the face of West Indian life. These changes are discussed in Chapter 8.

The 1930s was a decade of decision for the new middle class. Having gained in occupational status, they now turned to the political arena. Throughout the West Indies, beginning in the early years of the century but increasing in numbers and insistence after World War I, the middle classes in the colonies began to demand political reforms that would give them a greater voice in their own governance. But while in many of the colonies the middle class led the movement for reform, and then went on to become leaders of the trade unions that followed, in Antigua there was disjuncture rather than continuity: not only

was the middle class not part of the wider movement for reform, but it did not go on to lead the unions—or, therefore, the political parties that followed them. Chapter 9 explores the political role of the new middle class.

The context further changed with the coming of the Americans to build a base in Antigua in 1941. It both signaled a move from British to U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean and at the same time introduced some very American social practices, including a high level of racial animosity and divisiveness. It also brought the new middle class competition in the social arena. Chapter 10 describes the forces unleashed by the building of the bases, and introduces the Portuguese, who although they had been in Antigua since the mid-nineteenth century, only now began to compete directly with the nonwhite middle class.

The Portuguese, despite their numbers and role in the economy, have been ignored in virtually every book on Antiguan society: Paget Henry's otherwise comprehensive study, for instance, fails to even mention the fact of Portuguese immigration. Intent on writing a history of the "black" working class, whose roots he sees as lying in slavery (and, before that, Africa), Henry accepts the world view of the class that he identifies with and ignores what they ignore. This is equally the view of the nonwhite middle class, and my informants knew very little about the Portuguese as a group.<sup>1</sup> As Gordon Lewis wrote: "The trouble, in one way, is that so far West Indian discourse has failed to identify with any clarity what functional role it wants its minorities to play" (Lewis 1968: 45). This comment, written many years ago, remains germane today.

After analyzing the ways in which Antigua society, and the nonwhite middle class in particular, were transformed by the American presence in Chapter 10, the Conclusion briefly

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<sup>1</sup> This attitude is part of a more general attitude toward all ethnic minorities in Antigua, and applies with even more force to the Lebanese, the first of whom arrived in 1908 or 1909. The Lebanese will not be discussed here because they had little impact on the aspects of Antigua history that I am describing. For the record, however, although this group is loosely called "Syrian" in Antigua, they actually came from the very large area of the Levant that comprised ancient Syria and were under Ottoman rule from the mid-nineteenth century until 1917, the period of their migration to the West Indies. The area became modern Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan; modern Syria did not become a state until 1925 and Lebanon until 1926. The first families to come to Antigua (families with the surnames Michael, Shoul, John, and Khoury) came from the area of Mt. Lebanon called Bazoun, in what was to become Lebanon—a similar pattern to the Lebanese in Jamaica (Nicholls 1985: 138). It is for this reason that I refer to them as Lebanese.

During World War I the Lebanese were considered enemy subjects (because they were citizens of the Ottoman Empire), and were therefore regarded with considerable suspicion by the British, but were defended by the governor as hardworking and not dangerous. Nevertheless, Anthony Michael's application for naturalization was turned down in 1914 because of the war (CO 152/356/250, 22 August 1917). In Antigua, the Lebanese joined the Catholic church, and they were highly intermarried: the wives came from related families in other colonies (primarily Guadeloupe, Martinique, Surinam, or Dominica) or from the Levant. They were at first itinerant traders or peddlers, in the city and countryside, and then moved into dry goods (mostly cloth), relying almost entirely on family labor. They opened stores in the center of town in the mid-1930s, although the first to actually buy was probably Anthony Michael, who bought from Forrest in 1929. They remained few in number: in 1918, when all the adult men were asked if they wanted to return "home" (all said no), there were only seven in Antigua, almost all of whom were in their twenties and thirties (CO 152/360/Conf., 18 December 1918). By this time there were, however, a large number of children, who joined their parents in their businesses in the 1920s and 1930s.

The only "unequivocally" Syrian families, such as the Hadeeds, came much later, and then from Trinidad or Jamaica not the Levant (Nicholls 1985: 256, n.7).

sums of the characteristics of this “peculiar class” and looks at the implications of their history and development for the contemporary era.

## CHAPTER 6

### A TESTIMONY OF TRIUMPH: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY<sup>2</sup>

The intense desire for education on the part of the nonwhite population, the reluctance on the part of the authorities, both locally and in England, to provide it, as well as their attempt to control its content, are themes that run through West Indian history—from the arrival of the first slaves well into the twentieth century. From the very beginning, the entire nonwhite population, both slave and free, believed that education was the key to any kind of social mobility. For their part, the post-emancipation elite, white and nonwhite, was united in the view that education, or too much education, would lead to a withdrawal from the “proper” pursuit of those being educated—agricultural labor. Some of the former free colored elite endorsed this attitude. Thus in 1836 Henry Loving stated a not uncommon point of view when he wrote:

The only universal complaint, or rational cause of alarm, is the withdrawal of the younger persons from any proportion of Plantation labour, or trivial occupation, for the purpose of education, or being placed out to learn different trades of Mechanics or Artisans, and the general impression is, that the System of Education has been overdone, and that the rising generation will grow up without the ability or inclination to engage, at any future period, in the different branches of Field Labour, or Cultivation of the Soil. (Quoted in Hall 1971: 153.)

This attitude remained dominant into the twentieth century. Governor Sweet-Escott’s words in 1911 could have been written in 1834: too much education, he wrote the Colonial Office, might “inspire the children with a distaste for agricultural pursuits” (CO 152/328/Sweet-Escott, 30 October 1911). And in 1914, Joseph Theodore Thibou, editor of the *Antigua Standard*, echoed this same dogma: education, he wrote, should be confined to the teaching of the “cultivation of the fruits of the earth,” as well as preparation for such occupations as typesetting, painting, needle and thread use, for “we do not need a whole community of parsons, doctors, lawyers, civil officers.” The most important role of education, he wrote, was to teach young men and women “how to be civil and obedient to their employers and show interest in their affairs” (*Sun*, 13 February 1914).

The ruling classes believed that education would create desires that could not be met and that it was therefore a threat to their control. Education was to serve primarily as a mechanism to sort and select, to control access to various occupations, rather than to

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<sup>2</sup> *A Testimony of Triumph* is the title of James W. Sutton’s autobiographical account of growing up in St. Kitts-Nevis in the 1920s and 1930s. Sutton’s experience echoes that of many Antiguans during the same period, including his emphasis on the role of education—he himself was an educator who came up through the pupil-teacher route, eventually serving as headmaster. The book was published in 1987 by Edan’s Publishers, in Scarborough, Canada, which also published Sammy Smith’s autobiography.

educate as such (Lewis 1968: 230). Thus the educational arena became a terrain of struggle, first between free and unfree, then between whites and nonwhites. And in Antigua, with its declining economy, debates over education, which generally centered on issues of funding, frequently turned into battles not over thousands of pounds, but literally over shillings and pence. Given their substantial disabilities—little time and fewer resources—and the lack of support from any but a tiny number of determined men and women, the number of nonwhites who acquired an education shows a heroic determination, as well as a heartfelt belief in the value of education itself.

### **Post-Emancipation Education for the Masses**

Until early in the twentieth century, education in Antigua was almost entirely the responsibility of the churches. Before emancipation, formal mass education took place primarily in the Sunday schools, which grew rapidly in number in the 1800s. By 1823 the Moravians had Sunday schools at all their stations and on nineteen estates. The largest, at Spring Gardens, was established in 1810 and soon had 640 students (Maynard 1968: 38-40). The Methodists established another sixty-one between 1812 and 1831.

With emancipation, the first in a series of steps toward a formal education system, as well as toward government control and, eventually, secularization, was taken: as part of the emancipation act, the British government made education grants to the various church mission societies in order that they provide primary education for the mass of the population (Henry 1985: 63; Rothe 1846: 59). By 1839 there were forty such schools, with a total of 1,885 students—900 boys and 985 girls (R.W. Martin 1839). By 1846, John Davy reported that there were 3,000 children in school, about half being taught by the Anglicans and the other half by the Methodists and Moravians (Davy 1854: 393n). By 1858, William Sewell reported that the number of schools had increased to 52, and the average number of students attending on any one day to 4,467, approximately half the school-age population (Sewell 1861: 148). Although these may not seem impressive figures, they made the population of Antigua one of the better educated in the West Indies: the estimated figure for Jamaica at this time was only 20 percent (Holt 1988).<sup>3</sup>

Education acts that took effect in 1875 and 1876 required that parents ensure that their children attend school and extended government control by establishing a system of regulation and inspection, including the post of Inspector of Schools, and by setting certain standards that each school had to meet in order to receive its annual government grant; in addition, a fee of not less than one penny per week was instituted (Lazarus-Black 1990: 145), although by no means always collected. Two acts in 1890 went a step further: the first made education compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 12 (and restricted the employment of children under the age of 9), and gave the governor the power to create

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that average daily attendance figures, while they are better than enrollment figures for getting a sense of how many children were being educated, masked a wide range of actual attendance. Nevertheless, throughout this entire period, attendance rates were virtually the *only* official measure of the success or failure of the educational system.

educational districts and to erect and maintain schoolhouses; the second gave the governor and Legislative Council the right to regulate teachers' salaries, to establish a pupil-teacher system, and to set standards for exams (Aspinall 1923).

Yet despite these acts, in the next fifty years—from 1890 to 1940—enrollment only increased slightly, while the number of schoolhouses actually declined: the figure was down to 39 in 1890, 35 in 1898, 30 in 1900, 21 in 1920 (Henry 1985: 63; CO 152/229/114, 15 February 1898; Blue Books).<sup>4</sup> Further, there was a sharp drop in attendance: the number of children attending as a percent of children of school age declined from 55 percent in 1860 to a low of 44 percent in 1905. Not only were the schools themselves often further away, but the economic depression meant that children had less time, and their families less money, for school. From this point on, however, school attendance became a major issue at the Colonial Office, and a concerted effort led to a modest reversal of the trend: the figure crept up slowly, reaching a high of 66 percent in 1925. By 1940 it had dropped again, to 62 percent.

To begin with, then, in the century after emancipation two-thirds or less of the school-age population was receiving some sort of formal education. But not very much: the number of children in each higher standard (class) decreased dramatically as children dropped out to work. In 1909—presumably a typical year—the governor reported that the percent of students in each standard was as follows:

Junior	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
40.9	18.1	2.1	10.2	7.5	5.5	3.2	2.5

In other words, 88.8 percent of the students were in the lower grades (and therefore under 12 years of age), while only 11.2 percent reached the upper three standards (CO 152/319/474, 21 October 1910).

If the amount of education for the mass of the population was limited, its content was even more so. Further, despite the enormous economic, social, and political changes of the nineteenth century, primary education changed very little. The aim of education was to propagate Christian values and morality, and it was believed that this could best be accomplished by teaching the reading of the scriptures. According to Rothe, who visited a number of schools in 1846, only pupils who paid additional fees were taught to read and write, and these lessons had to be given before school officially began in the morning; similarly, Davy noted that writing and arithmetic were only taught to those over the age of 13, and that they had to pay a fee for this "extra" learning.

One result of this attitude was that pitifully little money was spent on education—by the churches because they increasingly did not have it, and by the government because it saw no need to spend it. The Colonial Office, while it tended to be more sanguine about the benefits of education than was the local elite, on the other hand felt that, given Antigua's impoverished situation, there were better uses for scarce funds. Every additional pound of

<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Peter Fraser for collecting this information from assorted Blue Books and passing it on to me.

aid was discussed extensively and allocated reluctantly. This situation worsened with the depression of the mid-1890s, which affected both the churches and the government. The Moravians, always the least wealthy of the denominations, were particularly hard hit, but all the churches were receiving less money from their "home" denominations, while their ability to collect school fees was reduced.

The first serious crisis came in 1897, when the government reduced its grant and proposed a further reduction for 1898. The school managers protested directly to the Colonial Office. They pointed out, among other things, that the government was contributing a mere 13s/4d per child, or under 5 percent of government revenues: the state of the economy meant that by this time less was being spent on education in Antigua than any other Leeward Island. They argued that a reduced grant would mean their having to close ten schools, while if they were forced to withdraw from the task of providing education, the entire job would fall into the government's lap. The Inspector of Schools entered the discussion on the side of the denominations, pointing out that the teacher of the principal Wesleyan school earned less than a private in the police force, and that out of this small salary he had to pay not only his house rent and living expense, but also the children's schoolbooks and the school's furniture (CO 152/229/114, 15 February 1898). In their internal discussion, the Colonial Office people deplored the poor funding for education in Antigua, but then noted that, pity though it was, there was simply not enough money available. The governor's decision to reduce the grant was allowed to stand. Luckily for the students, the school managers retreated and the schools remained open.

But a new governor, Sir E.B. Sweet-Escott, who arrived in 1906, wanted to go a step further and revamp the entire educational system, which he personally felt was both too expensive and too open. An energetic reorganizer, Sweet-Escott immediately began a campaign to reduce the amount of education that was either compulsory or free. After a long battle with the Colonial Office—which generally dismissed his plans as "misdirected energy" (CO 152/304/362, 30 July 1908)—as well as over considerable local protest, Sweet-Escott finally came up with a compromise: education would only be compulsory up to the fourth standard, but would remain free up to the sixth (CO 152/328/Sweet-Escott, 30 October 1911). This meant, however, that the seventh standard—the highest level of primary education, which provided the school-leaving certificate—would be available only to fee-paying students.

In 1912, Sweet-Escott was replaced by Hesketh Bell (1912-1916), who again proposed to cut the grant to the schools. The school managers responded by again threatening to abandon their posts unless they received not only their grants but an *additional* £500 a year. In a memo to the Colonial Office, the Inspector of Schools repeated that if the government were forced to take over, it would in the long run be far more expensive than even the additional grant. The governor then offered an additional £250, which was reluctantly accepted (CO 152/334/17, 3 January 1913).

But in November, the clergy, increasingly hard pressed, once again threatened to close the schools if the full £500 was not forthcoming. This time, however, the governor refused to bow to the churches' pressure. Armed with a new report from a different Inspector of Schools, which noted that the denominations were by this point providing less than 15

percent of the total cost of the schools and that the situation would only get worse—the Moravians, for instance, were no longer receiving any assistance from abroad—the governor announced that the government would take over education. Caught off guard, the school managers protested vehemently: they were afraid that if they lost control over education, both their longevity as churches and their continued influence in the community would be threatened. The Moravians, for example, felt strongly that their church's future hung on the "continuous shepherding of its youth, day by day, in schools supervised by Moravian teachers" (Maynard 1968: 56). And although the governor did not state explicitly in his correspondence with the Colonial Office that this was indeed his aim, he did note that there were growing doubts "in many quarters" about the advisability of continuing a system of state-aided denominational schools. The new system was instituted in 1914, apparently with very little disruption. The teaching staff remained virtually the same, as did the conditions in the schools: "state" control over education by no means indicated a change in priorities. The move was meant to save money, not to spend it, and the amount allocated to education continued to be less than 6 percent of the total budget.

It was not until the end of World War I that there was a discernible change in the attitude toward education, either at the Colonial Office or in Antigua. Around that time the newspapers began to publish complaints about widespread truancy and decreased school attendance, while the merchant community began to express alarm that it could not even find errand boys who could understand their tasks. Crime was a growing concern: as one newspaper editorialist put it, "We are steadily, slowly, but surely, drifting backwards into almost primitive ignorance, superstition, and crime" (*Sun*, 21 May 1918). The rising crime rate was persistently linked to the lack of adequate education, as in this: "It is impossible for us to rear in our midst a hoard of illiterates without at the same time rearing a class of criminals of which we will be ashamed a generation later" (*Sun*, 12 October 1918). Although the problems of truancy and crime were undoubtedly the result of economic hardship created by the war, the education system was seized upon as the culprit. The planters suddenly began to argue that education was not just a luxury but a *necessity*: "Education is the only foundation upon which the life of a healthy, prosperous, and progressive community can be reared..." (*Sun*, 17 October 1918).

In addition, after the war the governor—now Sir Edward Merewether—found himself facing a more activist Colonial Office, one whose officers refused to bow to conservative fears that education would unleash some terrible force that the government would be unable to control. The focus at the Colonial Office shifted from insisting that there *be* education to insisting that what education there was be *available*—translated in practice into a focus on improving attendance and a refusal to be taken in by any excuses for maintaining the status quo. The governor, a testy man who was not particularly well liked on the island, blamed low attendance on everything and everyone but his administration: it was due to the fact that illegitimate children were abandoned by their fathers and neglected by their mothers; that the procedures for ensuring that children went to school were too cumbersome (read: expensive); that the fines for not attending were too small; and that parents kept their children away from school to earn money. In addition, he wrote the Colonial Office, the current system was what the planters wanted, so any attempt to change

the system would undoubtedly come up against their violent opposition (CO 152/377/280, 2 June 1921).

When Merewether was taken to task for his attitude, he changed tack and argued that there was no point in increasing school attendance because there was no more room in the schools. By this point, however, he was fighting a losing battle: as one Colonial Office memo noted acerbically, public education in Antigua could not be allowed to go by default simply because the governor was behind the times. The governor was ordered to focus his (and his education authorities') efforts on keeping children in school. The result was an increase in enrollment and average attendance, as well as in the amount spent per student. Nevertheless, this was all relative: attendance was still only 66 percent and expenditure per student remained paltry, at just over £1. By 1943 dissatisfaction with the government's educational efforts had come full circle, and there were calls for a more "religious foundation" for education (*Magnet*, 19 January 1943).

### **Post-Emancipation Education for the Nonwhite Middle Classes: The Mico School**

There was one school in the primary system that was always first in examination results, received the largest grants (which were based in part on results), had the best educated teachers, and was widely considered the star primary school. This was the "Mico School"—formally, the Mico Model School of the Mico Training School at Buxton Grove. In 1878, Horsford ranked it as the best primary school in the island (*Almanac for 1878*: 13); in 1898 it was referred to as the school that had educated "the majority of the middle class people in the City" (*Antigua Times*, 24 December 1898). In the 1870-1900 period, it was the school to which most of the families in the artisanal part of Set 1 and in the urban part of Set 2 sent their children, and it was thus central to the development of the nonwhite middle class.

Immediately after emancipation the London-based Lady Mico Charity had embarked on a project of teacher training in the West Indies. Despite resistance from the Anglicans, who felt that all education should be under their control, by 1840 over 196 Mico schools had been established in the region (10 in Antigua), including a nondenominational Mico Training School in Antigua. In 1841, a permanent center—along with a practice school—was established at Buxton Grove (Farquhar 1994: 173; see also Flax 1984b). In 1846 it had between 12 and 15 students in a two-year course that included all the subjects "required of someone who will be made responsible for a school for children of the poorer classes" (Rothe 1846: 60; Candler reported 12 teachers in training in 1850). Students came not only from Antigua, but from the Danish islands and the Leewards and Windwards. The principle of at least a small amount of government support was established in 1878, when the government agreed to pay a quarterly grant of £2/10 for a maximum of twenty students from any of the Leeward Islands (Flax 1984b: 4).<sup>5</sup> This must have been crucial to the school's existence, because in 1880, 15 of the 19 students examined—all of those from the

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<sup>5</sup> Maynard gives the date as 1858, but this seems unlikely (Maynard 1968: 53).

Leewards—were on government scholarships. In 1887, the course of study included “Scripture, History, and Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid, English Grammar, School Method, Elementary Science, and Vocal Music; with practice on the Harmonium; together with the Art of Teaching, and Drill” (Flax 1984b: 6). It was the practice school, which charged a small fee, that was the primary school attended by the poorer middle class; it had about 300 students in 1898.

But the hard times of the 1890s also affected the Mico Charity, and in 1898, after several years of financial struggle, it put its property up for sale (*Antigua Times*, 24 December 1898).<sup>6</sup> The Moravians then pleaded to be allowed to continue the practice school but on a non-denominational basis and with the aid of a government grant. The Methodists agreed but the Anglicans objected, arguing that there was ample accommodation in existing schools, including their own (CO 152/253/96, 29 January 1900). The Colonial Office was ready to close the school down until the Inspector of Schools won the day with the same argument that he used later with regard to other church-run primary schools: he simply pointed out that if the grant was not given, the government would suddenly be responsible for educating 300 more children (CO 152/255/246, 7 April 1900). The grant was then approved and the school—renamed Buxton Grove—was opened with many of the former masters from Mico and 92 students; by 1906 it had a huge enrollment of 523, despite the fact that it still charged a small fee.<sup>7</sup> When the government took over the schools in 1914, Buxton Grove became the St. John’s Boys School.<sup>8</sup>

The point made in the *Sun* and cited above is amply borne out by the genealogies, which show how many members of the families in the sample who lived in or near St. John’s

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<sup>6</sup> This was a severe blow to aspiring male teachers, because the government refused to increase its expenditure in this area. After some negotiation, the trustees of the Lady Mico Charity agreed to train up to twelve Leeward Island pupils at their college in Jamaica for £10 a year each. The government considered even this an extravagant waste of public money, and cut the number to six. There were eight Leeward Islands students in 1900, twelve in 1901, and six in 1902 (although one dispatch noted that Antigua never sent more than six [see CO 152/341/257, 26 June 1914]). This agreement held until the war, when the Charity asked for an additional amount to cover the drastically increased costs of transportation. The government refused (CO 152/345/95, 16 March 1915), but the discussion became moot when the war made travel to Jamaica impossible. The government then briefly tried to train male teachers at home (CO 152/358/55, 21 February 1918), but had trouble doing this adequately; in 1920 it agreed to send the Leeward Island students to train in Barbados.

Mico-trained teachers went on to teach in schools across the island, but there were not always enough places for them. For instance, in the discussion of scholarship funding in 1901, the Inspector of Schools reported that of the 7 men who had completed the course as of the end of 1900, only 4 were in charge of schools; 4 more were expected to return by the end of 1901, but only 1 of them would find employment (CO 152/266/696, 31 December 1901). This seems to indicate an excess of teachers, which is confirmed by the report’s comment that many trained teachers went to other islands rather than accept the lower level (and lower paid) jobs available in Antigua. The situation had not changed by 1915, when the Inspector of Schools noted that all 5 of the men who had returned from Jamaica in the past year were still without employment, and that no situations were expected to open up for either these men or for the 3 about to graduate (CO 152/345/95, 16 March 1915). Education was not expanding fast enough to absorb the new teachers.

<sup>7</sup> At the time the Mico Training School closed, its property was sold to the Moravian church, to be used as a theological seminary, and its name was changed to Buxton Grove. The theological seminary continued until 1914, but by 1912 it had only 3 students and 4 teachers (Maynard 1968: 138-39). It closed in 1914 and the property was eventually sold to the Antigua Girls’ High School.

<sup>8</sup> One booklet says Bishop Mather School became the St. John’s Boys School, but this does not seem correct.

attended the Mico school (or, after it closed, Buxton Grove), and a proper school roll would undoubtedly show that many more did so. They were barred from the Antigua Grammar School, which had opened in 1884 (see below), for financial or social reasons, but not—as many people believe—because they were illegitimate, for (as noted in Chapter 5), the urban generation that was born in the 1870s and 1880s was in fact generally legitimate; it was their rural counterparts who were not.

But a Mico education was only acceptable for the generation that began school in the 1880-1900 period: once the Antigua Grammar School began to accept nonwhite students in any number, it was almost impossible to be a member of the rising middle class—in other words, to enter any of its occupations—on the basis of a primary education, no matter how good. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the purpose of education was to select, not serve. Thus although those who reached 7<sup>th</sup> standard at St. John's Boys School were undoubtedly well educated, the school was not considered socially equal to the Antigua Grammar School and thus did not provide access to certain occupations. As we shall see below, the situation was somewhat different for girls.

### **Post-Emancipation Education for the Nonwhite Middle Classes: The Grammar Schools**

The upper level of the nonwhite population, which wanted not only education but education to a higher level than offered in the primary system, got little help from the government or the white elite and had to struggle hard to educate itself. Excluded from the white institutions by skin color and constrained by finances, the upper level nonwhites nevertheless believed themselves entitled to a different education from that of the masses—different both in a pedagogic and in a social sense. Throughout the nineteenth century, they therefore made a number of attempts to establish their own institutions and to win government support for them. The unsettled nature of nonwhite middle-class education in the post-emancipation period reflects the fluidity of the underlying processes of class formation: schools arose as new constituencies came into being and closed when their constituencies vanished or became too impoverished to support them.

Information on middle- and upper-class education in the immediate post-emancipation decades is sketchy, and comes mainly from assorted travelers reports and almanacs, but it is clear that one key aspect of such education in this period was its fiercely denominational nature. As church historian David Farquhar has written, "The extensions of the ecclesiastical feuds of Britain struck at the most vital spot in the advancement of the non-white population" (Farquhar 1994: 151). Although some children, white and nonwhite, were sent abroad to be educated, some were educated in their homes, and some, particularly white children, were apparently not educated at all—there are occasional sarcastic comments in the Colonial Office minutes that refer to planter-legislators who could scarcely read or write—most of the rest were taught in small private schools run by men and women of the same social class and denomination as their students or in one or two larger institutions run more directly by the churches. From the small private school held in a private house to Coke College to the Antigua Grammar School, education in the nineteenth century was by and for

the members of one denomination only.

At the pinnacle in the hierarchy of colonial educational establishments was the “grammar” school—defined as a school that offered a “classical” education along the lines of a British “public” (i.e., elite private) school. In 1826, there were two such schools in Antigua, one in St. John’s and one in English Harbour, both small and confined to poor white children (of both sexes) (Farquhar 1994: 155n; see also Coleridge 1832: 241). They were replaced in 1836 by the Antigua Classical School, which was strongly Anglican and almost entirely white, although it is probable that some wealthy free colored Anglicans, such as the Cranstouns and Athills, sent their children there. Legitimacy was an absolute prerequisite for admission. By 1846 it had 25 boys, some of whom were definitely nonwhite, and 2 masters (Davy 1854: 393n).<sup>9</sup> But in that same year, when the three nonwhite members of the House of Assembly (at least one of whom was Anglican) proposed that the school be opened to the “children of Dissenters”—meaning Methodists and, by implication, nonwhites—on the grounds that they too paid rates (taxes), they were firmly outvoted by the majority (Davy 1854, quoted in Flax 1984b: 1). By 1850, however, they were able to block the renewal of the endowment (Farquhar 1994: 157). The school was forced to close its doors by reason of “Anglican forbidding exclusiveness and sectarian narrow-mindedness” (Horsford 1856: 86-87)—or, more specifically, the Anglicans’ attempts to control access to institutions supported by the local rate-payers had in this instance failed. Another small grammar school, with only five students, opened in 1861 but closed in 1865.

The struggle of the nonwhite middle class to educate its children in what it considered an appropriate manner ran into the same obstacles faced by the white population: declining numbers and increasing impoverishment. There were a few private boys’ schools, particularly for nonwhite Anglicans, and Lucy Lynch continued to run a school for the better-off Methodists until the 1840s. In the mid-1830s, the Methodists tried to establish a St. John’s Academy as a counterpart to the Antigua Classical School, but the poverty of their own constituency and of the Missionary Society abroad led to the abandonment of the project (Farquhar 1994: 158). Nevertheless, it was the Methodists who educated George Black, a former free colored petition signer who became a Justice of the Peace and then member of the Assembly in the 1840s and 1850s; John Smythe, who became Colonial Secretary in Sierra Leone; and well as the Thibous, Nibbs, Cranstouns, and Moores, taking “coloured young men and women, educating and training them to fill high positions in the world” (*Sun*, 11 February 1914).

The Methodists made one further attempt to establish a grammar school when they founded the Antigua Proprietary Grammar School in 1868. It too failed within a few years, although in the meantime it educated such upper level nonwhites as Joseph Theodore Thibou.<sup>10</sup> But it was not until the Middle Class Education Act of 1882, whose aim was to encourage the education, locally, of the children of the middle class, and the Crossman

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<sup>9</sup> Although there was at first both a boys’ and girls’ school, the girls part had closed by 1842 (Farquhar 1994: 156-57). In 1846, Davy reported only boys. According to Oliver, in 1850 there was one “Normal School” with 11 male students (Oliver 1894-99: clvi).

<sup>10</sup> He then went on to Mico, and then into the civil service, before becoming editor of the *Antigua Standard* (*Sun*, 11 February 1914).

Commission of 1884, which wrote that it was a disgrace that Antigua did not have a secondary school worth its name and urged that such a school be established in order to provide training for the expanding civil service (which had until then depended far too heavily on patronage) that there was a serious move to provide a secondary level education in Antigua. When, as a result of the act, the firmly Anglican Antigua Grammar School was established in 1884, the Methodist Regional Conference renewed its effort to establish a similar institution for its own constituency, and in 1886 founded Coke Memorial College, which provided primary, secondary, and ministerial education for men and women from the Methodist nonwhite middle class. By 1890, the *Antigua Standard* was carrying ads for its “boys department, girls department, and kindergarten.” Yet Coke had financial difficulties from the beginning, and it closed in 1893 (although the formal sale of the property did not take place until 1899). In the years that it existed, however, it educated people from “respectable” Methodist families, as well as a few Anglicans from the remaining upper level Set 1 families—including Avis Athill, who, along with fellow Coke graduate Nellie Robinson, went on to become a prominent educator, mentoring, aiding, and advising the next generation of students. Avis Athill taught at St. John’s Boys School and at Spring Gardens, while Nellie Robinson went on to found the T.O.R. Memorial School when Coke closed.

### **Education for the Elite: The Antigua Grammar School and Antigua Girls’ High School**

There had been no grammar school for almost twenty years when the Rev. Samuel Edmund Branch, son of the Bishop Coadjutor of Antigua, opened the Antigua Grammar School in 1884. The school was run as a proprietary boarding school under the aegis of the Anglican Church, but received government aid from the beginning, in part as a result of

The first class had 24 boys ranging in age from 9 to 19; the school then expanded rapidly, drawing students both from Antigua and from nearby islands (including St. Maarten, St. Kitts, Montserrat, Nevis, and the Virgin Islands). By 1897 it had an enrollment of 44, and by 1905, 68. This number was maintained for the next forty years, despite the growing population—and the growing middle class.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of curriculum and style, the Antigua Grammar School was faithfully modeled on the English public school. The curriculum contained all the usual subjects, including Latin, as well as drawing, music, bookkeeping, and shorthand. Sports were emphasized, including cricket, football, boating, and target-shooting. There was a school uniform, school colors, a school magazine (replete with an Old Boys’ column), school “houses” that competed in intramural sports, school prayers (from which the Catholics among the Portuguese were exempted in 1886), and so on. Equally important but less tangible was the school’s sense of itself: as the Rev. Branch emphasized in speech after speech, Antigua Grammar School boys

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<sup>11</sup> The Anglican cast continued as well, with Branch, now an Archdeacon, remaining headmaster until 1936, when he was replaced by the Rev. John Frere Pilgrim, a Barbadian who was related to the Branch family by marriage. The staff in 1890 was small: S.D. Branch, B.A. Durham; Rev. W.J. Moody, B.A. Cambridge; and Mr. A.F. Bowen, B.A. Durham. According to Farquhar, Durham had an arrangement with Codrington College in Barbados, and the Durham degrees may actually have been received there (Farquhar, pers. comm.).

had a “mission” and a role in the world. No matter where they found themselves, they were to remember that they were representatives of the school, and that they exemplified in their very persons the best aspects of Antiguan society. Branch’s speech at an Old Boys’ exercise in 1930 captures the essence of this attitude exquisitely. It was a speech that might have been given in any grammar school anywhere in the Caribbean, and that Branch himself had undoubtedly given many times before:

You boys have great opportunities. You hold wonderful power in your hands. See that you use it wisely, ever keeping before you the objects of justice and truth. Above all, strive to maintain the reputation of your school. Ever cherish her honour and her welfare as things most dear to you. And remember that whether you are at work or at play, whether you are still at school or you have gone out in the world, it is character which is worth most—worth infinitely more than either money or brains. Because you belong to the Antigua Grammar School, you are stamped with her hallmark.... When difficulties and temptations come, say to yourself, “I am an A.G.S. boy, and therefore I will or will not do so and so. Always put your school first.” (*Antigua Grammar School Review*, Trinity Term 1930.)

And many did go “out in the world.” The headmaster reported in 1917, thirty years after the school had opened, that of the 479 boys who had attended the school, 54 had died (6 in World War I—by 1918, this figure had risen to 14), 58 were in the armed forces, 56 were working or in school in the West Indies outside the Leewards, 40 were in the United States, 35 in Canada, 25 in England, 20 in other of the Leewards, 12 in Africa, 3 in Mexico, and 1 each in India, China, Tonga, Fiji, and Mauritius. Only about 90 of the 479 were still in Antigua, a further confirmation, if such were needed, of the tremendous rate of outmigration among the white population.<sup>12</sup> They were soldiers, clergymen, doctors, lawyers, planters, merchants, engineers, chemists, telegraphists, and many government and business clerks (Headmaster’s Report for 1919, cited in Flax 1984a: 4).

Antigua Grammar School students received a hugely disproportionate share of Antigua’s meager expenditure on education, one of the reasons that both Coke College and the Catholic High School (also established in 1886) had closed by the late 1890s. Although the school was private, it was regarded by the governor, the planters and estate attorneys, the merchants, and the civil servants as “their” school. This allowed them—generally with Colonial Office approval—to shift public funds to augment the school’s budget. Thus when the Diocese took the school over from Archdeacon Branch (in an agreement by which they purchased a property for the school in 1910 and the school itself on Branch’s retirement in 1927), the Colonial Office agreed to continue the government grant on the grounds that the school was no more denominational than before. This grant, in existence since the school’s first years, was large by the standards of the time: £200 in 1906, *in addition* to the scholarships. This was more than twice the grant allocated to even the best primary school, Buxton Grove (which in 1906 got a grand total of £140 for the 520 students on its roll [CO

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<sup>12</sup> Most of the nonwhites who entered the school after 1900 remained in Antigua and were therefore part of the 90. The figures do not add up, presumably because Branch did not know where everyone was.

152/295/112, 11 March 1907]). In addition, the grant increased disproportionately over the years: it was £440 in 1915, £535 in 1920, and £774 in 1930 (Leeward Island Reports).

The shifting of funds from government to elite private education took place in other ways as well. Thus in 1902, money allocated for teaching the principles of agriculture in the elementary schools was used instead to pay the salary of a science master at the Antigua Grammar School—in effect, a further grant of £150, increased to £250 by 1910 (CO 152/270/119, 22 March 1902; CO 152/317/220, 19 May 1910). Further, when, in 1903, the school wanted to construct a new building, the Legislative Council (and the Colonial Office) saw no problem with “loaning” the Colonial Engineer for the job. In 1908, the governor and Executive Council proposed that Antigua Grammar School masters be given government pension rights if they were graduates of British universities; even the Colonial Office thought this was going too far, however, and refused to agree to the request (CO 152/303/231, 29 May 1908). Yet when Branch retired in 1927 and the Legislative Council attempted to give him a pension—in recognition, as the report to the Colonial Office put it, of the fact that most of the civil servants in the Leeward Islands were Antigua Grammar School Old Boys—the Colonial Office gently reminded them that the headmaster had not in fact worked for the government; it then proposed that, to get around this inconvenience, the Legislative Council consider a direct grant instead of a pension (CO 152/403/39567, 1927).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Any discussion of the allocation of resources for education should not ignore the issue of the Leeward Islands Scholarship. There was no post-grammar school education in Antigua (except for Moravian clergy at Buxton Grove, and they came out of the post-primary system), and so any student who wished to go on to become a doctor, lawyer, and, very secondarily, a clergyman or dentist—virtually the only professions for which further education was needed—had to go abroad. This was an exceedingly expensive business, particularly if a student had no relatives overseas, and was thus confined to the very few whose families could afford it or who had access to a private benefactor. When, just before World War I, a Leeward Island scholarship was established, winning it immediately became the pinnacle of educational achievement in the Leeward Islands.

The story of the battle to establish a Leeward Islands scholarship is instructive of the respective attitudes toward education on the part of the Colonial Office and the governor. It began in 1906, when Sweet-Escott made one of his many proposals for reorganization, this time that the scholarship system for the Leeward Islands be “rationalized,” with a uniform system of exams and scholarships, culminating in a newly introduced “Kings scholarship” of £200 a year for four years, to enable the holder to complete his (as it was expected to be) education in the United Kingdom and qualify for a profession. The Colonial Office denied the request for financial reasons (CO 152/289/123, 20 April 1906), but Sweet-Escott refused to give up, and it was discussed several times over the next few years. Finally, in 1912, the Colonial Office agreed to a much reduced scholarship: £50 to be offered every three years—not enough for the U.K., but enough for Codrington College in Barbados or a university in Canada (CO 152/331/282, 3 July 1912). The reasons for Colonial Office reluctance were in part (and as usual) financial—one minute noted that Antigua needed its money for water and agriculture, not education—but there was also a fear that once the scholarship was established, it might be given to “unsuitable” candidates simply because it was there. In addition, the Colonial Office also argued, cynically, that even if only one scholarship was offered, many more would work for it.

The governor and Executive Council protested the small amount and asked for at least £150. The Colonial Office finally agreed: its people argued (among themselves) that although £150 every three years was not enough for the best Oxford or Cambridge colleges, or even for the cheaper ones, it was enough for the Scottish universities, and it would allow the Leeward Islands to train badly needed doctors (CO 152/336/363, 25 October 1913). (This is one reason why so many of the early locally born doctors had degrees from Edinburgh.)

There were five candidates (three from Antigua) for the first exam, which was held in April 1914. The top marks were obtained by E.A.G. Branch, son of the headmaster, but they were not as high as stipulated and an exception had to be made in order that he be awarded the money. It was, and he went on to become a doctor.

The Antigua Grammar School only admitted 11 nonwhites from Antigua (out of a total of 217 admissions) in its first fifteen years. The reasons were in part financial. The school's fees were light years away from even those of the fee-paying post-primary educational establishments. A grammar school education cost £10 a year in the early 1900s and £12 a year by 1920—a fairly stiff sum even for a middle level civil servant, who earned around £200 a year, or an estate manager, who earned even less, and a virtually impossible amount even for the upper reaches of the nonwhite population. To help overcome this difficulty, there were a number of scholarships, so that the education—and hence reproduction—of the increasingly hard-pressed white population, sons of plantation managers and civil servants, would be assured. It was these scholarships that eventually became the entry point for the sons of the upwardly mobile nonwhite middle class.

Not surprisingly, the Antigua Grammar School's scholarship fund far surpassed—in pounds and numbers—that of any other educational institution in Antigua. From 1884 to 1897, 16 boys had full tuition scholarships and 21 had part-scholarships (*Antigua Times*, 6 November 1897). Each scholarship was for the full time that a student attended the school, so that if there were 16 scholarships at any one time, only a few of these were available to each year's entering class. Since about 200 students went through the school in those years, this meant that about 20 percent were on some kind of scholarship. By 1906 there were 5 government scholarships for regular students and 8 for "agricultural" students, sons of plantation managers who expressed a wish to continue in their father's line of work, as well as 7 others—6 for sons of clergy (a great many Branches and Hutsons—Branch's wife's father was Archbishop of the West Indies—attended the school over the years) and 1 funded by the Masons—a total of 20 scholarships for 68 students. In 1923, the figures were about the same: 5 government, 4 agricultural, 1 Masonic, and 6 private.

Although the school only admitted a few nonwhites, the names of those who were admitted are important:

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In 1920 the scholarship was made annual—Antigua's finances were better and, as noted above, the attitude toward education in the Colonial Office had begun to change. (However, it seems to have gone back to being awarded every three years at some point, because several people remembered it that way by the 1940s.) By the 1920s, however, all the larger islands had annual scholarships, and the Windward Islands had two (CO 152/372/428, 4 September 1920). (A bit of perspective is in order here, however. By 1911 Trinidad, with a population ten times that of the Leewards, had only four free places in the secondary schools and three university scholarships for the U.K. [Oxall 1982: 61]. This makes the Leewards seem relatively favored.) The amount was increased to £200 in 1920, and could be used for a period of five years if necessary. The scholarship was not open to women until 1924 (Idris Bird, pers. comm.) and was first won by a woman (Evelyn Tibbits) in 1929—which so upset the Antigua Grammar School, whose candidate lost, that the school attempted to get the government to give the boy a special grant (*Antigua Grammar School Review*, Trinity Term 1930).

Reading through the correspondence during this period, one is struck by the enormous struggle that went into financing one scholarship. But looked at another way, that one scholarship was equal to the entire grant of the Antigua Girls' High School and the T.O.R. School combined—a truly disproportionate sum to be expended on one person. Nevertheless, for the aspiring middle class, it provided virtually the only path to a professional education—and, most important, to the two most valued professions, medicine and law. As far as I can determine, it was first won by a nonwhite in 1925. This was Conrad Stevens, son of Inspector of Schools E.A. Stevens, who went to Dublin to train as a doctor and later married one of Jim Pigott's daughters. Another nonwhite, Ralph Vanier, lost out to Evelyn Tibbits in 1929. (The elder Stevens had come to Antigua from St. Croix, received one of the Mico scholarships and went on to teach in a number of government schools, including Buxton Grove. He eventually became head teacher at St. John's Boys School and finally Inspector of Schools.)

1884	Joshua Henry Peters Clarence Rannie
1885	—
1886	Thomas Oliver Robinson
1887	—
1888	Arthur Nibbs Rannie William Boyer Rannie
1889	Samuel Benjamin Jones
1890	—
1891	—
1892	—
1893	—
1894	Robert Bindon Holberton Nanton
1895	—
1896	Alfred Earle Thibou
1897	Samuel Lauchland Athill Robert Ernest Potter
1898	—
1899	James Ernest Langley <sup>14</sup>

Status alone does not explain this list, for only some are from the remnants of the upper level free colored; nor can it be explained by color, for some were very dark and some very light. It is only in terms of the entire combination of criteria that Branch used in deciding to admit a student that we can understand his selection.

Four of the surnames—Rannie, Athill, Potter, and Thibou—are familiar from Chapter 5 as belonging to the younger children of the remaining upper level nonwhite population, and are therefore no surprise. The Rannie brothers were from a prominent merchant family that was not part of the sample but was discussed as following the pattern of the former free colored: the father, David Nibbs Rannie, was a merchant whose three sons all entered the Antigua Grammar School in its first few years; their sister married their fellow student, Robert Ernest Potter (the surname Potter was not in the sample, but the father was a merchant). Alfred Earle Thibou was the son of journalist Joseph Theodore Thibou; his sister married William Boyer Rannie. Both families were prominent Methodists, and the boys' admission marked the opening of the school to this denomination. Finally, Samuel Lauchland Athill was the nephew of the elder Samuel Lauchland Athill, whose wife's brother entered the school from Montserrat in this same period.

Two of the names—Joshua Henry Peters and Samuel Benjamin Jones—are quite different. These were boys who were accepted by Branch because of their fathers' personal connections to the church.<sup>15</sup> The remaining three—Thomas Oliver Robinson, Robert Bindon

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<sup>14</sup> There were 6 other nonwhites: 5 Walls and 1 Semper, all from Montserrat. The Semper (Dudley) was related by marriage to Samuel Lauchland Athill.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Benjamin Jones is remembered as the first "black" to attend the school; he was certainly not the first

Holberton Nanton, and James Langley—come from families that would have been part of the artisanal level of Set 1 and/or the upper part of Set 2. It is not clear why these three men went to the Grammar School while most of their contemporaries were still attending Mico or Coke—perhaps they had a little more money available, a personal connection to the headmaster, a “forward” mother or father—but they are most usefully seen not as a separate group but as the first trickle of what became, after 1900, a flood of aspiring nonwhites. Robinson came from a prominent Methodist family that had left the Methodist church because of its strict rules of social conduct;<sup>16</sup>; he died soon after he left school, but when his sister Nellie founded her own school after Coke closed, she named it after him—the T.O.R. Memorial School. Nanton went on to work at Brysons and married Isabella England, from a similarly prominent nonwhite family. Langley’s father was married to

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nonwhite, and probably not even the first dark-skinned man, but he is remembered because of his subsequent career. He took his surname by adoption from his maternal great-uncle, Samuel Jones, who was born a slave on Bettye’s Hope (one of the Codrington plantations) in about 1805 and was the sexton at the Cathedral when he died in 1889. His birth father, James Murray, was subforeman in the waterworks department (see his application for a Colonial Service appointment, CO 152/221/478, 18 August 1897). The information on the elder Jones’ background comes from the caption of a photo that was in the possession of Dr. Arnold Branch. It was thus not Jones’s father who was born as slave and became sexton at the Cathedral, as many Antiguans believe, but his great-uncle—one more example of the tendency to compress the generations. Jones thus became a protégé of the archbishop and headmaster.

A grammar school education gave Jones credentials, but although he eventually became a doctor, he was far ahead of the times and suffered repeatedly from Colonial Office and local discrimination. His career exemplifies the multiple setbacks faced by a qualified man with the wrong color skin in that early period. From the Antigua Grammar School he went to Codrington College in Barbados to study for the ministry—another photo shows him as part of a Codrington class photo in 1894—but gave it up and came back to teach at the Antigua Grammar School. That is what he was doing when he spoke at one of the meetings to extend the franchise discussed in Chapter 5. He applied to the Colonial Office for service in West Africa and was turned down; the governor’s recommendation was lukewarm. He then went to England, where he received a B.A. from Durham, and from there to the United States, where he received an M.D. from Illinois. (He also married an American.) He was allowed to become a Medical Officer in the Leewards, but only on an “emergency” basis—it was wartime—the reason given being his American degree. (U.S. medical degrees were not officially accepted in the British islands.) He was sent to Anguilla and was finally granted a permanent position, but only after a desperate plea from the administrator: it turned out that not only was Jones Medical Officer, but he was also acting as magistrate, subpostmaster, subtreasurer, and assistant supervisor of public works; further, he was earning £300 a year less than any other Medical Officer in the Leewards and £800 a year less than most of the others. Not only would it have been impossible to get a white Medical Officer under those conditions, but the officer and his family would only have had one other white family to socialize with, and the administrator doubted he could induce anyone else to take the post. After much discussion, Jones’s position was confirmed, but only on the condition that his appointment was to be good only for Anguilla. (On all this, see CO 152/376/166, 4 April 1921; CO 152/378/Conf., 18 July 1921; and CO 152 for 1921 and 1922 passim.)

There is less information about Joshua Henry Peters, but he seems to have been the son of James Edward Peters, who had been clerk to the Registrar, clerk to the Magistrate for District A, and who was Clerk of Police in 1897. James Edward’s father, also named Joshua Henry, was Keeper of the Gaol from at least the 1870s until 1891, when it was decided that this was inappropriate and the job given to a white man—with a new title, Superintendent of Prisons, and a higher salary. I found no record of what happened to the younger Joshua Henry after he left the Antigua Grammar School; nor is it clear why he was accepted, except that he had a connection to Jones and that both families were considered “respectable.” James Edward Peters is given as a reference by Samuel Benjamin Jones in his application to the Colonial Service in 1897.

<sup>16</sup> One story is that they attended the theater, at a time when this was forbidden by the church, and were expelled (Farquhar, pers. comm.).

Thomas Henry Kelsick's sister, and his own sister married Donald Christian.

A glance at the list of admissions for the following ten-year period, 1900-1909, demonstrates graphically how the trickle of nonwhites quickly became a flow: out of 169 admissions in this period, at least 40 were nonwhite.<sup>17</sup> Many of the names will be familiar from the discussion in Chapter 5; all of the rest, including those from other islands, were (or became) connected to this group by ties of blood or marriage.

1900	James Harold Robinson
1901	William Mortimer Malone (Nevis)
1902	James Louis Engelbert Lake Randolph Westerby Buckley Victor Sylvester Brookes Donald Preston Christian Sydney Theophilus Christian Oscar Richardson Kelsick
1903	John Edgar Otto Malone
1904	Hugh Liston Henry Ronald Earle Kelsick Cyril Oscar Athill Sheppard Lawrence Octavius Athill
1905	Cyril Hampstead Malone (Nevis) John Humphry MacDonald Watts James Watkins Harper Thomas Henry Kelsick Roland Edward Henry Langford Duer Cranstoun Arthur Herbert Cranstoun Francis Allen McFeeters
1906	George William Bennett MacDonald Oswald Foster MacDonald
1907	Samuel Victor Athill Donald Edward Malone (Nevis)
1908	Alfred Eric Peters Alfred Ernest Athill
1909	Richard Smith Mason Edgar O. Reginald Lake Cyril Claude Brookes
1910	Alan Edmund Malone (Nevis) Wilmot Randolph Ellis O'Neale (Tortola)

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<sup>17</sup> This does not mean the rest were white, however, since many were Portuguese. The Portuguese began entering the school in 1885. The status and even the "color" of the Portuguese are the subject of Chapter 10; here it needs only be said that they were not the same social class as the nonwhites, although it should also be pointed out that they most were Catholic, and that the school therefore opened up to Catholics before it opened to Methodists.

## Alfred Powell McDonald

A school photo for the year 1910 shows that about a third were nonwhite (Flax 1984a). In addition, the school began to hire nonwhite teachers at about this time: S.B. Jones was an assistant master from 1896-1897 (CO 152/221/478, 18 August 1897) and Samuel Francis Randolph Buckley, son of the Rev. John Andrew Buckley, one of the first nonwhite Antigua-born Methodist ministers and manager of one of the better primary schools on the island (*Almanac for 1878*: 14), taught there from 1903 to 1907 (CO 152/298/416, 1 October 1907). For both, it was a temporary occupation while waiting for something “better” to open up.

Once the grammar school began to admit nonwhites in large numbers, a grammar school education became *the* key prerequisite for all the “middle class” occupations and a virtual passport into the civil service. Thus while at first the white population sent their sons to the Antigua Grammar School, conferring superiority on the institution, once selected nonwhites were allowed in, it was the institution that conferred superiority on the student. From the nonwhite point of view, if the “right” education could be secured, access to these opportunities was, if not assured (as it had been for whites), at least possible; this was the case for the young men and women who were not the descendants of the old free colored elite. Further, while nonwhite access to education was by no means *regardless* of social class, the fact that such access was often through scholarships meant that a grammar school education occasionally became available to young men and women who, if strictly social and economic criteria were followed, might not have had access to the new opportunities.

But while the Antigua Grammar School began to open up to nonwhite men, its counterpart for women, the Antigua Girls’ High School, was far less welcoming to their sisters. Although this no doubt had something to do with family finances, and particularly with the differential allocation of scarce family resources between boys and girls, it was also a matter of social exclusiveness: the Antigua Girls’ High School reportedly did not admit its first nonwhite student until well after 1900.<sup>18</sup> One of the first was Bessie Harper, the daughter of the Legislative Council member discussed in Chapter 5;<sup>19</sup> two others were Amy Christopher, a minister’s daughter, and Aggie Brooks, whose father was a Sergeant Major in the police. These were followed by Therese Taylor and Ella Henry—all beginning somewhere between 1906 and 1910.

The teaching staff also remained white far longer than at the Antigua Grammar School. In the beginning most of the teachers at the Antigua Girls’ High School came from England, but, as with the Antigua Grammar School, increasingly they too were old girls—in this case,

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, I could find no trace of the Antigua Girls High School roll book and have had to rely on memories and on school *Bulletins*.

<sup>19</sup> Bessie Harper was one of the few people that my informal ranking panel (see Introduction) had difficulty placing. Her father, although he had been a landowner in Montserrat and owned a nonworking estate in Antigua, was better known for his drugstore. His sister married a Cranstoun. His daughter Bessie was very very fair and was classified as white by those who did not know her father, who died in 1915. Bessie was a very religious Catholic who worked hard in the drugstore, socialized with whites, and never married. Her brother, who went to the Antigua Grammar School, migrated to New Zealand; his not marrying in Antigua also made it difficult to place Bessie.

however, white old girls. Thus in 1910, Melicent and May Branch were assisted by Miss Dorothy Branch, Mrs. B. Branch, Miss E. McDonald, and Miss Ruby Grant; they were joined by Mamie Branch, also an old girl, in 1911. As late as 1926, the teaching staff was reported to be “entirely European” (CO 152/399/17, 4 January 1926), although this was somewhat misleading, since there had been at least two nonwhite teachers—Avis Athill and Ella Henry—before then. Neither had stayed long, however: both went on to teach at government schools (St. John’s Boys School or St. John’s Girls’ School), and Avis Athill taught at Spring Gardens as well.

The Antigua Girls’ High School was founded in 1886 by Elizabeth Williams, an English schoolmistress who came to the island in search of a good climate for her husband (Antigua Girls’ High School Centenary Celebrations Committee 1986: 9). She remained headmistress until 1902, and was followed briefly by another Englishwoman, who left to marry Archibald Spooner, the irascible manager of the Bendals factory, in 1904. The school was then taken over by two sisters, Melicent and May Branch, daughters of a St. Kitts doctor and cousins of the Antigua Grammar School headmaster, who served as joint headmistresses for the next forty years, until they retired in 1944.<sup>20</sup>

The Antigua Girls’ High School began with fewer students than the Antigua Grammar School and expanded less rapidly: there were still only about 30 pupils in 1905. But while the Antigua Grammar School reached its peak of about 70 in that year, the Antigua Girls’ High School continued to expand gradually until about 1925, when it had approximately 76 students, the number that continued on the rolls through the 1930s (*Leeward Island Reports*, various years). Part of the reason for the slow growth was that the school was far less favored financially than its male counterpart: it did not approach the Antigua Grammar School in the level of grants it received or the scholarships it had to offer. Indeed, the school’s finances were always precarious. Fees were half those of the Antigua Grammar School—£5 a year in the early part of the century, increased to £7/10 by 1923—and the government grant was far lower as well—£100 in 1905, increased to £125 in 1917 and £200 by 1920. To add to this relative deprivation, although there were just as many (and sometimes more) students, there were only five partial scholarships, and these were not instituted until sometime around 1910. The teachers’ salaries were pitifully low, and the headmistress reported in 1917 that her own salary was simply what remained after all the school’s expenses had been paid, and that it had been under £100 for the past two years (CO 152/355/219, 25 July 1917). Nevertheless, teaching at the Antigua Girls’ High School was a privileged occupation for women. And despite the tight budget, its students studied for the same exams—the Cambridge School Certificates—and apparently did very well in them (*Leeward Island Reports*, various years).

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<sup>20</sup> The three successive headmistresses after the Branches retired were Evelyn Tibbits, a white old girl, and then two Englishwomen, Winifred Wainwright and Lorna Blake.

### **Education for the Nonwhite Middle Class: Spring Gardens and the T.O.R. Memorial School**

The women who did not go to the Antigua Girls' High School went to the Spring Gardens' Female Training School, entering it through the pupil teacher route. Teaching was one of the two main occupations open to educated young women in Antigua during this period (the other, clerking in a store, will be discussed in the next chapter), and the women who wanted to be teachers were somewhat luckier than the men, at least to the extent that they had a teachers' training college on the island throughout the entire period.<sup>21</sup> Spring Gardens began at the Bishop's parsonage in Lebanon in 1840 but by 1854 had moved to Spring Gardens. Its aim was to provide female teachers for all the Moravian schools in the Leewards. By 1858 it had 16 students, but finances were a perpetual problem; by 1867 the number had dropped to 9 and by 1870 to 4 (Maynard 1968: 135). To bolster finances, a practice day school was opened in 1870 for fee-paying pupils, and a secondary school for girls over 12, which charged 10s/month, was opened in 1914 (*Sun*, 17 April 1914). Many of the young women educated in the primary and secondary school went on to become pupil teachers and then returned to the Training College itself.

In its earliest days, the young women who went to Spring Gardens came mostly from the countryside and from the strongest Moravian communities: Laviscount's Farm (now part of Seaview Farm), Williams Farm (which does not exist any longer), Newfield, Grace Hill, and Greenbay. But in 1892, again as a result of financial constraints, Spring Gardens agreed to accept 8 girls on government scholarships, and it began to lose its denominational character. By 1919, it was receiving £180 a year for 6 students, 3 of whom were chosen through the third-year pupil-teacher examination (CO 152/367/551, 9 December 1919). In one form or another, government support remained crucial from then until the school closed its doors in 1958. The Moravians were in any case not as exclusive as the Anglicans or Methodists. Both the Mico Training Institution and Spring Gardens accepted men and women from other denominations. By 1905 only 5 of the 14 students at Spring Gardens were Moravian—and only 3 were Antiguan (Maynard 1968: 135-37). Through most of this period the school had between 12 and 14 pupils at any one time.

In the 1890s, Spring Gardens took in women whose brothers (and sometimes sisters) went to Coke or Mico—for instance, Jim Pigott's sisters Edith and Mary. It also attracted a number of women from other islands, who then remained in Antigua and married local men. For instance, Julia Young, who came from Barbados in 1877 and married the butcher Roland Edward Henry, and Helen Piper, who came from Montserrat and married James Allen Gore. In doing so, they often gave these men (who were from Set 2 families) a major boost up in social status: the men were considered to have "married up" simply by virtue of having married women who had gone to Spring Gardens. After Coke and Mico closed, and as the

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<sup>21</sup> Although the Mico Training School and Spring Gardens were specifically teacher training schools, the grammar schools and Coke trained teachers as well: it was assumed that a graduate of any of these was automatically qualified to teach, and, as we have seen, many of the teachers at the grammar schools were former pupils. However, neither of the grammar schools had formal post-primary teacher-training programs.

men in these families began to be accepted at the Antigua Grammar School, their sisters continued to go to Spring Gardens, although not in equal numbers since Spring Gardens was so much smaller. This, however, only increased the value of a Spring Gardens education for the nonwhite middle class.

Unlike Spring Gardens, which focused on teacher training, the T.O.R. Memorial School was for children of all ages and quickly replaced Buxton Grove as the “middle class school.” Here the attempt to control access to higher levels of education fell prey to the determination of the nonwhite population, as well as to its newly gained financial ability to support its own institutions. Founded by Nellie Robinson when Coke closed, T.O.R. was, as one elderly Antiguan put it, for those who “had prominence.” It opened in 1898 with a handful of boarders and took in children of all denominations, but it was primarily for girls—their brothers having finally been allowed into the Antigua Grammar School.<sup>22</sup> “Miss Rob” was a fierce believer in the educational potential of the nonwhite population in all areas, including the professions: when journalist Joseph Theodore Thibou argued that nonwhites should be educated only enough to be obedient workers, Miss Rob had vehemently accused him of denying his responsibilities to his own people: she, she wrote in a letter to the newspaper, was a “West Indian hybrid” like him but preferred to remember that she was a “negro,” the “direct descendant of an African princess,” who was educating the people while he lived off his government pension (*Sun*, 13 February 1914).<sup>23</sup>

But although she believed strongly in the value of education, Miss Rob believed equally in the value of respectability. This led to an emphasis on legitimacy nearly equal to that of the grammar schools, but the circumstances of the school’s constituency made it more difficult to implement, and illegitimate children were very occasionally accepted if Miss Rob was convinced that they came from a “good home”—and provided the child was “boarded out,” in other words, not living with his or her mother.<sup>24</sup>

The school began with only a few pupils but grew rapidly, and in 1909 had 30 on its roll; by 1917 there were 94. It charged roughly the same fees as the Spring Gardens secondary school—10s per term for those over 13, less for others (and there were many exceptions). It received a small government grant beginning in 1909: £25 pounds, increased to £40 in 1917, £50 in 1920, £75 in 1932, and £90 in 1934 (CO 152/354/66, 28 February 1917)—not only small amounts but a slow rate of increase considering the rapid growth in the number of pupils. But to balance the lack of government funding, the school had enormous support from its own constituency, and a number of prominent nonwhite Antiguan endowed scholarships, as well as helped support the purchase of a building on High Street in 1918. This was true of those who had gone to the Antigua Grammar School, such as Samuel Lauchland Athill, who at one time was chair of the school’s board, and of

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<sup>22</sup> After World War I, T.O.R. also took in Lebanese, while the Antigua Grammar School began to take in Portuguese in its very early days, a distinction based on social status rather than religion, since both groups were Catholic.

<sup>23</sup> In referring to her African ancestry, Miss Rob was implying that Thibou was denying his. Note, however, that she apparently believed she was of royal birth.

<sup>24</sup> This may have been true at the two grammar schools as well: there are certainly stories of illegitimate girls being allowed to attend if they lived in town and were being raised as the children of others, rather than of their own parents. However, the stories take the form of rumor and no one could provide me with even one example, quite unlike with T.O.R., where there were many.

those who had not, such as “Stuidiation” Brown, who never had a grammar school education (and who was also a supporter of the Antigua Girls’ High School).

The school quickly filled a gap in the educational system: a school for the growing middle class that did not have access to the grammar schools but nevertheless—and this is reminiscent of the class that preceded it in the nineteenth century—insisted that its children have a better (in a social sense) education than the government system provided. The place the school filled was recognized even by the governor, who noted in 1917 that the school “serves a very useful purpose by bridging the gap between the primary schools and the schools attended by the wealthier classes” (CO 152/354/66, 28 February 1917). In 1918, the *Sun* praised the school for doing “very good work for the middle class community” (*Sun*, 14 December 1918). The T.O.R. teachers were as middle class as the students—and after its first years, many were old students. In 1910 and 1913 the teachers—all but one of whom were “Miss”—included Coralee Thibou, Ann McDonald, G. England, and A. Taylor.

### **The Role of Legitimacy**

The previous chapter described how, in the decades after emancipation, legitimacy came to provide a new means of exclusion or basis for inequality—how the distinction between being legitimate and being illegitimate became central to the way in which the white population tried to control the growth of the nonwhite middle class. The crucial arena for effecting this connection was education: by opening education to nonwhites but tying access to legitimacy, and then by controlling occupational opportunities by tying them to education, the white population had a powerful means of limiting the growth of a competing class.

The grammar schools as institutions, and their headmasters and mistresses as individuals, thus became gatekeepers to the middle class. As we saw above, not any young man could go to the Antigua Grammar School, even if he had the funds. More important than money, and at least as important as intellectual ability, was the respectability that could only be attained by being legitimate.<sup>25</sup> No illegitimate child was knowingly admitted to the school until 1938—and very few even in the twenty-five years after that. Further, once the grammar schools had opened, a grammar school education became necessary for access to the best occupations. Thus if the school was limited to the small number of legitimate children, the pace of upward mobility could be somewhat controlled.

But at the same time that marriage/legitimacy became central to white definitions of respectability, they were also adopted by the aspiring nonwhite population—only for this group it was not so that they could distinguish themselves from those below them socially but to enable them to gain access to those institutions to which legitimacy, rather than skin color, had become the key. Legitimacy-as-respectability was therefore as important to Miss Rob at T.O.R. as it was to the Branches at the grammar schools: the difference was that Miss Rob’s standard of respectability remained flexible enough to accommodate behavior

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<sup>25</sup> As noted above, for the school's first twenty years an additional component of being respectable was being Anglican.

patterns that were still changing, particularly in the rural areas. Nevertheless, the end result was that branches of any family that continued to have illegitimate children were left behind, remaining in the class below.

Women, as noted in Chapter 5, tended to be the enforcers of the content of respectability, and so it should not be surprising that they were more threatened than the men by the entrance of nonwhite women into their domains. This is part of the reason why the Antigua Girls' High School refused admission to nonwhite women long after the Antigua Grammar School did so (and certainly would not have gone out of its way to give scholarships to dark girls from the lower middle class). Even as late as the 1920s, nonwhite Antigua Girls' High School students remember more social distinctions than do Antigua Grammar School boys, including the fact that although they were often friends with white girls in the school itself, those friendships were seldom carried on after school hours: one elderly white woman recalled how some of the white girls refused to swim at the Fort beach if any nonwhite girls were there and even went so far as to insist on being called "Miss" by their fellow (but nonwhite) students when outside the school's boundaries. In interviews, white women who had been at the school at the time showed an almost total ignorance about the lives, and families, of their nonwhite classmates. Socialization across the racial divide was far more constrained for girls than boys, in part because the boys had a number of outside arenas available to them, from the cricket field to the corner shade tree; the girls, being more protected, had no other place to socialize but at home. And home, as we shall see in Chapter 10, was the most socially restricted arena of all. The nonwhite women also resented the fact that, despite having Cambridge Certificates, they did not get jobs in government service, while white women with lower qualifications did.

The gendered access to elite education had an important effect on the structure of the emergent nonwhite middle class, and, from the white point of view, a curiously perverse effect at that. The whites, few though they were, hoped that they could control the rate of growth of the nonwhite middle class by only gradually opening up the elite grammar schools to them. Yet by not opening them at the same pace to boys and girls, they created a situation in which stratification could not proceed in a straightforward manner. The women, by being more exclusionary, in effect prevented a rigid and clear-cut class line from developing between elite nonwhites and those below. The women acted as levelers: while the boys went to the Antigua Grammar School, many of their sisters—along with a number of other women—went not to the Antigua Girls' High School but to either Coke College (as Avis Athill, Samuel Lauchland Athill's sister, did), or, after it had closed, to Spring Gardens.<sup>26</sup> Thus while the Antigua Grammar School may have separated out the boys by social status, it was Spring Gardens and T.O.R. women—through marriage and blood—that in the early years of the century tied together a much larger and less bounded group than would

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<sup>26</sup> Thus Hilda, Ivy, and Florence May Christian all went to Spring Gardens, while their brothers Donald and Sydney went to the Antigua Grammar School; the same was true for Ida and May Henry and their brothers Hugh and Roland; for Kate Pigott and her brothers Richard and Charlie; for Eunice O'Neal and her brother Joseph (who married Maisie Shervington); for Edith and Olive Louisa Brooks and their brother Victor; and for Mabel Harney and her brothers Egbert, Clarence, and Harold.

The Spring Gardens roll book is at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It was painstakingly handcopied for me by Milton Benjamin and the Rev. Neilson Waithe of Barbados.

otherwise have been the case.

The white elite also failed to take into account the nonwhite middle class's desire for education and willingness to sacrifice in order to get it. By dint of perseverance and hard work, primarily on the part of a small number of dedicated nonwhite women, the new middle class was educated to close to same standard as the grammar schools, whether the grammar schools liked it or not. Nellie Robinson at T.O.R. and Mary Pigott at St. John's Girls' School also taught at Spring Gardens, where Avis Athill was the main teacher—and tutored dozens of students on the side. There is no better indicator of the complex roles of women in setting and maintaining, but also opposing, class divisions than the fact that it was the white women who tried hardest to exclude nonwhites and the nonwhite women who tried hardest to make educational opportunities available.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Of course there were male teachers who worked hard and encouraged their students, but at this particular point in time and for this particular class, women seem to have been key.

## CHAPTER 7

### WALKING IN A DEAD MAN'S SHOES: OCCUPATIONAL HIERARCHIES AND THE FORMATION OF A MIDDLE CLASS

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Antiguan economy was in such shambles, and the white population so reduced in numbers, that the combined pressures of economics and demographics began to force open occupations that had previously been the exclusive domain of whites. An examination of the order in which the different sectors opened, the process within each sector, and the shifts in status that resulted reveals a great deal about the kind of nonwhite middle class that was developing, as well as about white conceptions of the economy.

The process was slow in all sectors, but in some it was relatively straightforward while in others it was fraught with difficulties. The Colonial Service, the banks, and the Antigua Sugar Factory were the most contested arenas, not surprising because they were at the center of the economy and were therefore most crucial to white hegemony. The most desirable route to middle class status was through the professions—doctor, lawyer, and to a lesser extent dentist—but because all three were expensive and the training period lengthy and necessarily in the Great Britain, few took this step and most of those who did remained there. The security of the Colonial Service, which was also the largest employer, made it the occupation of choice for many of those working their way into the middle class, and government attempts to slow the pace of change were both devious and complex. The retail merchant establishments, which were by this point economically marginal, provided the earliest openings, so we will start with them.

#### Scotch Row and the Retail Sector

The retail sector suffered with the decline in the sugar economy, and by the end of the century the retail merchants were too impoverished to be able to attract young white men to work for the low wages that clerks were paid, or to be able to pay their passage out to Antigua, while the remaining resident whites had better occupational choices. The job of merchant's clerk was thus the first to become a nonwhite occupation. The pace of the decline in the number of white clerks can be measured in the jurors' rolls: in 1872, just under half of the 54 clerks were white; by 1900, only 8 of 41 were white.<sup>28</sup> Further, all those who were listed on the roll in 1872 were gone by 1900, as were most of those who first appeared in 1875 and 1880.

In 1844, Mrs. Lanaghan noted sarcastically that those who called themselves *clerks* in the West Indies would have been called *shopmen* in England (Lanaghan 1844, I: 211). But

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<sup>28</sup> In the 1890s there were, however, a few white lawyers' clerks whose names did not appear on the jurors' rolls.

while for whites, clerking was one of the lower status occupations, for nonwhites, with fewer opportunities, it was an occupation of choice. Thus the occupation was redefined, and clerking became a far more privileged occupation for nonwhites than it had been for whites; indeed, those nonwhites who achieved the post of chief clerk by the end of the century were at the pinnacle of the nonwhite establishment, with the status of Special Jurors and membership in the Masonic lodge.

Until the 1890s, clerking was not an occupation in which there was much mobility, and most clerks, white and nonwhite, remained in the same jobs year after year without increasing in status. A very few opened their own stores, but the small size of these was indicated by the fact that the owners were then described as “Shopkeepers” rather than “Merchants” in the jurors’ rolls; in any case, this was after many years of clerking.<sup>29</sup>

The nonwhite clerks on the 1872, 1875, and 1880 rolls were the children of Set 1 families, either from among the few remaining members of the upper level (such as William Hatley Thibou, Rodolphus Thibou, Samuel Lauchland Athill, Hilton C. and Walter Selby Nibbs, Daniel Wand Scarville), or the children of the wealthier artisans (Donald and James Robertson Kelsick, sons of shoemaker Thomas Kelsick). But by 1895 the rolls begin to show a change in the background of the nonwhite clerks, with the new arrivals suddenly coming almost entirely from Set 2 or associated families. By 1911, this trickle had become a torrent.<sup>30</sup>

Once again, a count of the clerks on the jurors’ rolls shows the extent of the change: of the 42 clerks on the 1911 roll, 27 were nonwhite. No whites at all appear on the 1918 list: clerking had by then become an entirely nonwhite occupation.

The discussion has centered on the men, because there is nothing comparable to the jurors’ lists for women. But as clerking increasingly opened to nonwhites, it also—although more gradually—opened to women.<sup>31</sup> This was, however, as much a sign of the declining

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<sup>29</sup> Brysons in particular became a launching pad for a cohort of small shopkeepers, men who became heads of departments and then left to start their own stores (sometimes sending their wives ahead). Dews played the same role, but to a lesser extent, and was more likely to train blacksmiths, engineers, and ironmongers rather than shopkeepers.

<sup>30</sup> Thus the new names in 1885 were Montague and S. Ernest Athill, Alexander England, William Bright Langley, John Thompson, and Benjamin Lowen; in 1890, they were Charles McDonald, Coleridge Thompson, William Buckley, and Ashley Shervington. Lowen is the only name not mentioned in Chapter 5: he was the outside child of the outside child of a white planter with a small plantation, and thus does not quite fit either the Set 1 or the Set 2 pattern; he went on to become chief clerk at Brysons.

In 1895, however, we begin to see a whole new set of names, mixed with a few from the old families: George Edwards, Frank McFeeters (whose sister married Lushington Jeffrey), John Watt, and John Rannie; in 1900, John, James, and Robert Pigott, Joseph Taylor (whose daughters married Rowland Henry and Lushington Jeffrey); and William Llewellyn Watt; in 1911, Richard Athill, Joseph Anderson Harney, Wentworth Heath, Hugh Kelsick, Robert Holberton Bindon Nanton, James and Walter O'Reilly, Richard Pigott, Jr., Thomas Isles Thompson, Clive and Kenneth Shervington, and Basil Wilberforce Willock; and in 1918, Lawrence Octavius Athill, John Lushington Jeffrey, Cyril Dudley Kelsick, William Henry Peters, Hubert Allen St. Luce, and Leonard Thompson. Those on this list who were not members of the lower level Set 1 or of Set 2 had intermarried with them.

<sup>31</sup> Women could not serve as jurors, and there are no similar official lists of women clerks. However, many are remembered, and the following list, although incomplete, contains enough names to make the point. The time period is the early 1900s until the 1920s:

Edna Kelsick            Elma Harper            Irene Bird

status of the job as of a widening of the occupation. Further, it did not happen easily: people still told stories of the first women from nonwhite families—the first “decent” women—who went to work as clerks. But with more men migrating and money scarce, it became essential that young women be able to take care of themselves, and as those men who remained began to have other choices, more and more women took their jobs. For these women, however, the top post was generally cashier, not chief clerk, a lower paying but nevertheless highly responsible post. Further, these women, many of whom were either widowed or had never married, were treated differently from the men: they were considered part of the employer’s extended family, were given gifts, left small bequests, taken care of after they retired. In other words, they were treated as much like servants as employees.

There were two hierarchies among clerks: the hierarchy inside the merchant establishments, already discussed, and that among the establishments themselves. In terms of status, the most desirable place to work was George W. Bennett-Bryson, the largest and most prosperous commission/retail merchant and shipping agent, followed closely by Joseph Dew & Sons; the older retail stores, like Murdochs, Warnefords, and McDonalds, lagged far behind. By the 1920s, Brysons employed between forty and fifty clerks and was the largest employer of clerical staff outside the government.<sup>32</sup> It therefore provided more opportunities for young men (and a few young women) than any other merchant establishment. It also paid better than the government, but offered less opportunities for advancement and less status—the top management remains white to this day. An upper level clerk at Brysons in 1917 earned about £96 a year and a lower level clerk earned about £60, compared to a starting salary of between £30 and £40 in government service and between 5s and 8s a week (or between £13 and £18 a year) at one of the other stores.

Those who won the job of clerk—and it was a competition of sorts—had to come from “respectable” families and usually had to have an introduction from a mentor or patron. But—and this is an important but—the young man or woman did not have to be legitimate, and many of the early nonwhite clerks were not. Further, at this point being legitimate does not seem to have provided any particular advantage, primarily because illegitimacy did not prevent these men and women from acquiring the necessary level of education. As noted in Chapter 6, those from town tended to be legitimate; those from the rural areas did not.

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Mae Gore	Gertie Gore	Ernestine Gore
Nita Edwards	Kate Martin	Audrey Wise
Lottie Walters	Beryl O'Donahue	Madge Lindsay
Ivy Tittle	Ada Kelsick	Ida Thibou
Winifred Taylor	Hilda McFeeters	Alice May Taylor
Edith Moore	Kate Pigott	May Henry
Mae Norman	Hilda Norman	Millie Warneford
Joyce Robinson	Annie Ronan	Stephanie Walter
Frieda Harper	Elma Harper	Ruby Wilson

Many of these surnames will be familiar from Chapter 5; others are those of women who married into families in the sample and similar families. A few were women who can best be described as impoverished but respectable, women who never married and were only on the fringes of the new middle class.

<sup>32</sup> The discussion of Brysons and Dews could not have been written without the help of Keithley Heath, George Maynard, and Lucien Reid, who spent a delightful morning with me reminiscing about the early days at Brysons; and Norris White and Maybert and Dalmar Dew, who helped reconstruct the hierarchy at Dews.

They therefore did not have to have attended the Antigua Grammar School: most clerks had only a 7<sup>th</sup> standard education, although a number had gone to Mico.<sup>33</sup> In fact, of all the dozens of young nonwhite men who became clerks in the period between 1890 and 1910, only *two*—William Boyer Rannie and Robert Bindon Holberton Nanton—went to the Antigua Grammar School (which, it will be remembered, had opened in 1884), and it is not a coincidence that they worked at the two most prestigious establishments, Dews and Brysons respectively.

Becoming a chief clerk was the first step to becoming a store owner, and this too began to happen after the turn of the century. In 1897, there were only four nonwhite merchants, all from former free colored families, who were considered important enough to be listed in Lightbourn's business directory for that year. They were:

Delos J. Martin, general merchant  
Moore, Moore and Co., dry goods, general importers  
D.N. Rannie & Co., commission merchant

A list drawn up for 1930, however—only thirty years later—would be barely recognizable to someone who had lived in Antigua in 1897. In the first place, three of the four stores listed above had closed: Thomas Kelsick died in 1900 and David Nibbs Rannie in 1917, and in both cases the executors seem to have sold off the businesses; while in about 1900 Moore, Moore & Co. declared bankruptcy (for the second time) and William Hart Moore died in 1908. In the second place, virtually all of the white-owned stores of 1897 had new owners, and every one of these was not only nonwhite, but the man who had clerked in that store in the early years of the century. In this thirty years, then, a major process of transition to nonwhite ownership was completed.

But the process of buying did not begin for some time. According to the jurors' roll, and confirmed by ads in newspapers and almanacs, there were no new nonwhite owners between 1890 and 1900 and only three by 1911.<sup>34</sup>

Thus it was not until after the war that we see the beginnings of what was to become a rapidly escalating process of turnover, and the war itself was a major reason for the change. Emigration in general, and the emigration caused by the war in particular, took away the merchants' one remaining source of white labor—their sons. For instance, William Hart—owner of both Murdochs and his own men's clothing store—had a son named Archibald Murdoch Hart who was listed as a clerk in 1911. He served in a Scottish regiment in the war and was killed in France in 1916. This led directly to Hart's decision to close both stores.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For example, Owen Shervington, who was a "confidential" clerk at Brysons when he committed suicide in 1890, had gone to Mico (*Antigua Star*, 13 August 1890).

<sup>34</sup> Of these, two had owners from the same former free colored families, but were short-lived: one was opened by William Bright Langley, who was married to Thomas Kelsick's sister and had been a clerk since the mid-1880s, and one by Robert Ernest Potter, David Nibbs Rannie's son-in-law (he called himself an auctioneer in a 1914 ad in the *Sun*). The third had been opened by Douglas Foster Ross, who had come to Antigua from St. Kitts to found a branch of D. Hope Ross, the family store (called Scotch House in Antigua). Of the three, only Scotch House remained open for the next twenty years. This was thus less a new trend than the dying gasps of an old one.

<sup>35</sup> Hart's long-time manager, Herbert Alfred Tucker, had left the island in 1904. Tucker is an interesting case. According to information given me by the wife of one of his grandchildren (who now lives in Canada), Tucker had

Similarly, Donald McDonald's son Ian died in 1920 in Iraq, and his father reportedly never felt the same about the business after that; he died in 1923 and the business was then sold out of the family.<sup>36</sup>

And if it was not the war itself that took them away, it was the expectations that it engendered: one of the McDonald brothers, a doctor, joined the West Indies regiment and took the entire family to England. Two of the sons came back: the first, who returned in 1920, got a job at the Antigua Sugar Factory, but the second, who returned in 1923 (at the age of 17), could find "nothing to do." Age may have been a factor, but his description of his choices was revealing: the Colonial Bank and the Antigua Sugar Factory had no openings; the government had only a few and was in any case too poorly paid, and the same was true for Brysons; in the end he went to Trinidad. He did not mention the possibility of working in any other place, including his own family's store—that was simply not something a young white man from a prominent family would consider at that point in time, despite the fact that the store was clearly in need of leadership.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, then, merchants who wished to leave the business had the choice of either closing down or selling. Most sold, and mostly to their chief clerks, who by now were all nonwhite:

Store	Manager	New owner	Date
Murdoch/ Hart	Walter O'Reilly	Jim Pigott for brother-in-law O'Reilly	1920 <sup>38</sup>
Bridgers	Thomas I. Thompson	Thomas Isles Thompson for brother Richard	by 1918
Torry	Richard Pigott	Jim Pigott	1918 <sup>39</sup>
Dobson	Jim Pigott	Jim Pigott	by 1918
Madgwick	Joseph A. Harney	Joseph A. Harney	by 1918
R.R. Kirkwood		D. Hope Ross	1920

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come to Antigua in about 1882 and in 1890 had married Mathilda Edwards, the daughter of a dry goods merchant named Benjamin Edwards, in the Spring Gardens church. Tucker emigrated to Toronto in 1904, where he died in 1958 at the age of 89; his wife followed in 1910. Before that she and Tucker had moved around a great deal—presumably while working for Hart—and their children were born in Antigua, Montserrat, and Nevis. (Personal correspondence with Shirley Tucker, Toronto, 1 December 1986, 15 January 1987.)

<sup>36</sup> John Edgar Otto Malone also died in the war, but it is not clear who was running Malones at the time; Walter W. Malone was still listed as a clerk in 1920. In addition, James Harvey Bryson died in the war, which may have been one of the reasons why Noel Scott-Johnson was brought out as manager. (Deaths listed in Flax 1984a.)

<sup>37</sup> This information comes from an interview with Archie McDonald, from the white McDonald family, who also provided me with the white McDonald genealogy. He claimed that it was not until I told him that he learned that the nonwhite McDonalds—also a prominent Antiguan family—were related to his family. The nonwhite McDonalds had also kept a family tree, and we were thus able to put the two together.

<sup>38</sup> I could find no written sources for these dates, which are therefore approximate, but they ought to be correct within one or two years since they were confirmed orally by several sources.

<sup>39</sup> Torry's widow emigrated to Canada after her husband's death, leaving Dick Pigott in charge. I am not sure exactly when Jim Pigott bought the store: one informant thought it was as late as 1942, while others thought it was soon after Torry's death in 1917.

None of the men who bought these stores were young, having paid their dues by working for many years as clerks (Thompson was born in 1870, Jim Pigott in 1872, O'Reilly in 1883) or, in Harney's case, as a schoolmaster. Most were members of Set 2, or similar, families, although Harney was part of the lower level of Set 1.

James Albert Pigott, known as Jim, was not only typical of the mobility path of the entire group, but was also in many ways the quintessential example of its aspirations and achievements. His father, Richard Albert Loudon Pigott, was the son of Richard Pigott (1801-1861), a white clerk at the cathedral (see Genealogies 7 and 8). Richard's brother Thomas Pigott, Sr., was a planter and father of Thomas S.G. Pigott, the white clerk described above—thus Thomas S.G. Pigott and Richard Albert Loudon Pigott were cousins, as were Thomas S.G. and Richard's brother Robert Thomas, both of whom appear as clerks on the 1872 jurors' list. Richard Albert, however, was a country person, manager of Fitches' Creek estate, and thus like many in Set 2 had a family with a nonwhite woman. There were nine children, and Richard Albert moved them into town so they could get a better education—a story not unlike that of another clerk with origins in the countryside, George Hill Edwards, chief clerk at Warnefords. Jim, who was born in 1872, may have gone to Mico; his sisters Mary and Katherine went to Spring Gardens. In any case, by 1889 Jim is listed as being a clerk to Samuel McDonald, notary public (an outside child in the white part of the McDonald family). He then went to work for W.R. Dobson, a Scotsman who owned estates and a wharf-front export firm that specialized in shipping tamarinds and skins (goat and sheep), and then for his son Robert William Dobson. When Robert William died in 1918, Jim acquired the business from his widow. The wharf was from that point on known as Pigott's wharf—at least until its recent tourist-driven reincarnation as "Redcliffe Quay."

Two of Jim's brothers were also merchants' clerks and one, Richard, became chief clerk at David Torry's store—as was his sister Katherine, who married Walter O'Reilly, a clerk at Murdochs. Another sister, Mary, was the teacher who became headmistress of St. John's Girls' School in 1917 (see Chapter 6). A third brother, Charles, worked at the Antigua Sugar Factory as a cane weigher. Jim married Florence Dougall, who died when their four children were young. His two sons went to the Antigua Grammar School; one died in 1942 and the other emigrated to England. One daughter, Mary Florence (May), married Conrad Stevens, the son of the headmaster of Buxton Grove (and then Inspector of Schools) E.A. Stevens (see Chapter 6). His other daughter, Kate, went to Spring Gardens and then worked for Warneford.

Where Jim differed from some of the others in this group—for example, Joseph Anderson Harney or Lushington Jeffrey, who will be discussed below—was in his lack of interest in entering the public arena. Reportedly a private person, he did not play cricket, become involved in politics, or join the Masons, although the family were strongly Anglican. He was known as a voracious reader and is remembered as an outstanding example of the rewards of hard work and enterprise—in this sense he is typical of his group. When he died in 1967 he was over 90. He would have been a wealthy man at his death if he had not spent his money on his family. In about 1918 he bought Torry's store for his brother Richard and in 1920 he bought Murdochs for his sister Katherine's husband Walter O'Reilly; both were by then chief clerks and would have lost their jobs if the stores had closed. Much later, he bought Warneford for his unmarried daughter Kate.

Not only were Dobson, Torry, and Murdoch—thanks to Jim Pigott—in the hands of their nonwhite chief clerks by 1920, but so were Bridgers and Madgwicks, while R.R. Kirkwood

**Genealogy 7**  
**Descendants of Unknown Pigott**

**Genealogy 8**  
**Descendants of Richard Albert Pigott**

had been bought out by D. Hope Ross from St. Kitts. But the three oldest and largest stores—McDonald, Forrest, and Warneford—still had white owners *and* white managers. It is no coincidence that it was these three owners who were central to the remaining white elite, and were among those most determined to maintain their exclusiveness. Their clerks were Alexander Lamond, a Scotsman who had arrived in the late 1880s and managed Forrest (with the help of Ernest-Thain Lang, a West Indian white who arrived sometime in the early 1900s but had moved on to work on an estate by 1918);<sup>40</sup> and William Gerald du Cloux Davey, who arrived sometime in the 1890s and ran Warneford's after Thomas Smith Gregory Pigott died in 1920. The McDonald brothers seem to have run their store without the aid of a white clerk.

In the next decade, however, these too turned over or closed:

Store	Manager	New owner	Date
McDonald	McDonald	Brysons	1929
Forrest	Lamond	—	closed mid-1920s
Warneford	George Edwards	Jim Pigott for daughter Kate	1938

Both McDonald brothers died in 1923, leaving the family businesses to be run for the trustees of the estate by solicitor Thomas Burrowes. It took some years to get the entire family's agreement, but they finally sold to Brysons in 1928 or 1929.<sup>41</sup> Forrest, who had no children and whose chief clerk was by then elderly, did not sell but instead simply closed the store, selling his stock to A.C. Camacho and his property to a Lebanese family sometime in the mid-1920s.

The last remaining large white merchant was the venerable R.A.L. Warneford, who had come to Antigua in the mid-1880s and who finally, in 1938—the year of his death—sold to Jim Pigott, who bought for his daughter Kate. Warneford had one son, but he was in government service and was not interested in the store; his chief clerk, George Edwards, may have had the interest but did not have the money. In any case, after Warneford's death, Pigott immediately renamed the store Pigott & Co.<sup>42</sup>

By the time Warneford sold, there were no major white merchants left, but the change to Set 2 owners was not completed until the final two sales listed below:

<sup>40</sup> I am severely hampered in specifying dates more precisely here by not having any jurors' rolls for the years from 1920 to 1934. Most of this information therefore comes from oral sources, almanacs, and newspapers. In addition, by 1934 the rolls are far less useful because they contain far fewer people: the 1934 roll, for instance, lists only four merchants, two of whom were really shopkeepers. By this point, many of the merchants were apparently no longer willing and/or required to serve on juries.

<sup>41</sup> The store was run as McDonalds until about 1937, when it was fully incorporated into Brysons.

<sup>42</sup> There were two smaller white merchants who survived into the 1920s, W.G. Richardson and J.B. Smith. Smith died in 1917 and his wife immediately entered into a partnership with Alexander Proctor, their long-time white chief clerk. The partnership dissolved quickly, however, and in 1918 Proctor bought out Mary Smith's share. He promptly renamed the store A.C. Proctor & Co., but he closed it in late 1921, reporting that business was too slow and exchange rates too high for him to make a profit (CO 152/388/120, 16 March 1923). As for Richardson, he died in 1944 and reportedly had the store until then, but on a reduced scale.

Store	Manager	New owner	Date
Delos Martin/ Louisa Thibou	Lushington Jeffrey	Lushington Jeffrey	1937
D. Hope Ross	Arthur Mercer	Arthur Mercer	1939

Both of these stores were nonwhite establishments that had been in existence since the turn of the century or before and both had owners who were part of the upper levels of the former free colored population. These stores' turnover thus marked the completion of the demise of the old nonwhite middle class, and the rise of its successor, in this sector of the economy.

Louisa Thibou died in 1907, leaving her husband, Le Roy Delos Jeaffreson Martin, as the sole executor of her will. She left a series of small bequests to her nieces and nephews, cousins and friends, but the store itself went to her husband. He remarried and continued the business with his new wife, but when he died in 1914 she decided to return to England, leaving the store in the hands of her manager, Arthur Hughes, a nonwhite Antiguan. When Hughes died, John Lushington Jeffrey became manager—this was in about 1931—and he finally bought the store in 1937 (*Star*, 6 August 1937).<sup>43</sup>

If Jim Pigott represents the country strand of the new nonwhite middle class, Lushington Jeffrey represents its urban counterpart: born in 1889, he was the legitimate son of a white writing clerk and a nonwhite woman (see Genealogy 9). He went to Mico and then to work, first for Bridger and then for at least one other merchant; he first turns up on the jurors' list as a clerk in 1920. He was married three times, first to Hilda McFeeters, whose background was very similar to his: her father, William Henry McFeeters, was a white merchant who also married a nonwhite woman (and whose sister was married to David Torry). Hilda was also a clerk in a store and she married Lushington in 1916. They had three children: their daughter, Helen, married Jim Brown, a merchant who will be discussed below. Hilda died in 1921, and in 1923 Jeffrey married Winifred Taylor (a clerk herself, whose sister was a clerk at Malones), and they had a son, Alfred, subsequently Suffragan Bishop of St. John's, and a daughter, Arah, who married George Derrick. Jeffrey's third marriage was to an American, and he left for the United States in about 1955; he died there in 1980.

Unlike Jim Pigott—and perhaps because this was somewhat later in the development of this class—Lushington Jeffrey was a very public person: he was a popular cricketer, serving as both captain and president of St. John's Cricket Club, as well as president of both the Antigua and the Leeward Islands cricket associations and a member of the West Indies Cricket Board of Control; he also played for Antigua in inter-island cricket matches. He was an active politician: he was a nominated member of the Legislative Council in 1936 and was

<sup>43</sup> The other new owner, Arthur Mercer, was somewhat younger than the others: he was a Kittitian who had come over in 1920 to be chief clerk for D. Hope Ross. In 1925, he married Alice Cranstoun. He bought the store in 1939 and renamed it Mercer & Co.; his wife and daughter continued to run it after he died. He will figure in Chapter 9.

elected in 1937, 1940, and 1943—his role in the 1937 campaign will be discussed at length in Chapter 9. He served on the Executive Council and on the Leeward Islands Legislative

### **Genealogy 9**

#### **Descendants of John Jeffrey**

Council, was president of the Chamber of Commerce, and was chairman of the Tourist Board. He was also a high-ranking Mason.<sup>44</sup>

There is one other important store that should be mentioned before leaving this section, and that is J.A.N. Brown & Co. It differs from the others in its origins, but in most ways it followed a similar pattern. James Adolphus Nibbs Brown first turns up on the jurors' role in 1911, where he is described as a shopkeeper; by 1920, his son, J.A.N. Brown, Jr., is listed as a merchant. J.A.N. Brown, Sr.—whose nickname was "Studiation Brown" because he was a great believer in the value of education (and who was referred to in Chapter 6)—also began his life as J.A.N. Brown, Jr., the son of still another J.A.N. Brown, this one reportedly the child of an Irish policeman and a nonwhite woman from Seaview Farm.<sup>45</sup> Studiation had a store in the village, and in the early 1900s brought the business into town, selling wholesale and retail, but also, most importantly, through a number of commission shops that he opened in the countryside. At some point Studiation became J.A.N. Sr., and his son, born in 1913, became J.A.N. Jr.—known as Jim. Studiation Brown died in about 1960 and the store's long-time manager, Harry Murphy, died in 1962; after that the business—by this point confined to wholesaling—was run by his son Jim until his death in 1988.

The differences in scale and mode of organization between the large export-import houses and the Market Street retail merchants grew with the coming of the Antigua Sugar Factory and the subsequent consolidation of the sugar industry. In particular, George W. Bennett-Bryson continued to expand rapidly, gaining a monopoly on shipping sugar and also moving into insurance, hardware and lumber sales, opening a supermarket (in about 1930), and acquiring a fleet of lighters and inter-island schooners.

The Market Street stores, on the other hand, remained under the ownership of individuals or families and confined themselves primarily to retailing. Short of capital and lacking contacts with the outside world, they were hardly a powerful force in the economy. Nevertheless, owning a store was a major achievement for nonwhites in the 1920s and 1930s, and all of these men were central figures in the new middle class. Further, the biographies highlight certain features of this class that were discussed in Chapter 5: they were mostly from Set 2, both its urban and rural branches, and although they were not necessarily legitimate, they were from "respectable" families. Because of their age—they were born on either side of 1880—they had generally attended Buxton Grove or Mico, not the grammar schools. They had certainly paid their dues before they became owners: most started work at age 15, if not earlier, and even the entrepreneurial Jim Pigott was about 45 when he bought his first store. And they married women from very similar backgrounds,

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<sup>44</sup> Much of this information comes from the printed program of the memorial service held in Jeffrey's honor in New York City on 19 October 1980.

<sup>45</sup> This is, in any case, what the family believes. However, there is also the possibility that these Browns were related to the free colored Browns. There was a James Nibbs Brown, writing clerk, who married Mary Ann Nibbs in 1826; James Nibbs signed the 1823 free colored petition and Mary Ann was presumably a member of the free colored Nibbs family. Unfortunately, there are so many Browns that it is probably impossible to trace this particular family back in time. What is clear, however, is that at some point they ended up in the countryside, and that the family is convinced that there is a white policeman in their past—another example of the belief in a white ancestor.

many of whom were also clerks in stores. They did not, however, marry each other as the planters did, to consolidate their holdings. Indeed, they were in general capital-shy, so that what they did was far more modest: their savings were used to provide a living for their children (although by not means a lavish one), to educate them at the grammar schools, and to provide for their unmarried daughters.

By the 1920s and 1930s, then, the retail merchant sector had come full circle: in pre- and immediate post-emancipation years a sector that was the center of free colored economic life, it became increasingly white as the former free colored were gradually excluded and then, as the economy contracted, once again became a nonwhite occupational sector. But other sectors of the economy remained dominated by the white population far longer. Not until they began to open up to nonwhites was it possible for a more fully formed middle class—one that played a role in other sectors of the economy—to develop.

### **The Colonial Service Opportunity Chain<sup>46</sup>**

The extensive role that government plays in the West Indies today—as administrative authority and as employer—has its roots in the colonial methods of administration, and more specifically in the colonial civil service. Colonial governments not only carried out all the usual components of administering government (treasury, judiciary, post office, police, education, etc.) but took care of areas that elsewhere might well be done by local authorities, private enterprise, or voluntary agencies. Thus the roads and utilities (water, electricity) were a government charge, as were the medical services, running and staffing the local markets, the hospitals, the old age home, the lunatic and leper asylums, the agricultural department and the botanical station, the harbor, the cemetery, the local telephone exchange, and so on. In Antigua, even the keeper of the clocks was a government employee, albeit a very part-time one.

The civil service system in Antigua in the nineteenth century can be seen as two non-overlapping pyramids. One is narrow and sharply tapering, with the governor at the top and, at the bottom, a small number of poorly paid clerical workers whose opportunities for advancement, in theory if not in practice, were fairly great; the other pyramid is a smaller fat one composed of service workers, hospital workers, road workers, and so on, whose opportunities for advancement were more real but also far more restricted. It is the first of these pyramids, that for the administrative civil service, that is the focus of what follows. Here, far more than in the merchant sector, the white response to changing circumstances was conditioned by a complex combination of precedent and prejudice, pushed at the edges by the need to respond to new circumstances. All this led to a panoply of realignments, as jobs were devalued and revalued, combined and split and recombined, introduced and abolished, all in an attempt to control the pace at which the system opened up.

From 1890 until 1940, the entire established civil service in Antigua (including those working for the Leeward Islands federal government and stationed in Antigua) did not

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<sup>46</sup> See the Introduction for a discussion of Harrison White's concept of opportunity chain and how it was adapted to study the Colonial Service.

change measurably in size, and its higher ranks remained remarkably constant. What did change dramatically, however, was the proportion of British to Antiguan whites in the highest ranks, and of all whites to nonwhites in the lower and middle ranks. In a process that was similar to the merchant sector, but far slower, a growing number of Antiguan whites moved up the ranks, as positions long reserved for British expatriates were—reluctantly—opened up to locally born white men; and then, in a similar but even slower and more reluctant process, a growing number of Antiguan nonwhites moved into these same ranks (but never, in this period, reaching quite so high) as the local whites died or retired. As one applicant for promotion noted in 1913, vacancies in higher positions occurred only once or twice in a decade (CO 152/335/257, 19 July 1913). No wonder that those caught up in this process referred to it as “walking in a deadman’s shoes.”<sup>47</sup>

There were only two nonwhites in the administrative branches of the Colonial Service in 1895. One was James E. Peters, clerk to the magistrate of District A, son of a former Keeper of the Prison (before the job became firmly white) and father of the Joshua Henry who was in the first Antigua Grammar School class. He had begun as a clerk in the Registrar’s office in 1876 and held a number of other clerical posts, but in each position had been pushed aside by young white men. When he died in 1915, his wife had to beg for funds to keep her family (CO 152/194/32, February 1895; CO 152/218/248, 24 April 1897; CO 152/222/Conf., 13 September 1897; CO 152/282/33, 19 January 1904; CO 152/283/129, 22 March 1904; CO 152/347/339, 13 September 1915).

The other nonwhite was Clarence Rupert Rannie, another member of the first Antigua Grammar School class whose brother, a clerk at Dews, was mentioned in the previous section. Rannie was appointed clerk to the auditor general in 1895, went on to become 2<sup>nd</sup> clerk, 2<sup>nd</sup> indoor officer, and finally 1<sup>st</sup> indoor officer in Treasury. He died in 1919 and was replaced by a white Antiguan, a second-generation civil servant.

The Colonial Service had thus not, up until this point, been an occupational hierarchy accessible to any nonwhites beyond the few remaining sons of the declining nonwhite elite. But by 1900 demographic change had begun to affect the Colonial Service, as it had other sectors, and young white men were increasingly less interested in, and less available for, government service posts. First, the salaries were considered too low to live on, and the opportunities for advancement too slim, since the top ranks were clearly reserved for British imports. Civil servants were expressly forbidden from earning additional money by becoming involved in trade or other investments (i.e., plantations) (CO 152/281/Conf., 16 November 1903), and on top of that they felt unfairly (and overly) taxed.<sup>48</sup> Second, by the early 1900s, and particularly with the opening of the Antigua Sugar Factory, a number of civil servants took up the better paying opportunities that suddenly became available. The banks provided some competition as well. And third and most important, there were opportunities beckoning overseas—in England, the United States, and Canada—that seemed far more appealing. By 1912, a Colonial Office minute noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult

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<sup>47</sup> I first heard this phrase from McChesney George, in an interview in Barbuda (11 May 1981).

<sup>48</sup> When an income tax scheme was proposed in 1900, the public officers protested vehemently, arguing that they seldom got promoted, that their salaries were therefore scarcely sufficient, and that such a tax would in effect amount to a discriminatory *reduction* in their salaries (CO 152/255/229, 28 March 1900).

to keep capable clerks in the West Indies, and Governor Bell wrote that Canada was “providing a great attraction to the young men of these islands and every lad who possesses energy and enterprise, goes North as soon as he can. It is now very difficult to find a white man of suitable age, education, and social position to whom a responsible appointment in the Civil Service could properly be offered” (CO 152/330/142, 29 March 1912; CO 152/332/Conf., 11 October 1912) (Note, as we go along, how all references to skin color are in confidential memos.) One result was that trained people were made to take on several jobs, often to the dismay of the Colonial Office—as when the treasurer became the acting auditor general and thus his own auditor—but it was privately (i.e., in the minutes) agreed that such situations were unavoidable.

By the early 1900s, succeeding governors were extremely unhappy about this turn of events, and peppered the Colonial Office with requests for young white men. Now, however, their pleas were met with less and less sympathy as they found themselves running up against a Colonial Office pragmatism that overrode skin color: the Colonial Office was worried about the expense of sending people out, and about being able to get rid of incompetent people once they had arrived (CO 152/303/246, 2 June 1908). In general, the Colonial Office was prepared to move faster on social issues than the governors,<sup>49</sup> which led to a growing tension between the two: the Colonial Office saw the governors as regressive and uncooperative, while the governors saw the Colonial Office as tyrannical and insensitive to local conditions.

The governors had other problems as well. For one, there were growing complaints locally—both from members of the Legislative Council and in the press—that qualified local candidates were not getting a fair chance. Thus in 1897—a time of considerable unrest, as we saw in Chapters 2 and 3—there was a long series of articles in the newspapers over the proposed replacement of the keeper of the lunatic asylum on Rat Island,<sup>50</sup> a “black man” named Lewis Benjamin who had come from Dominica and had held the post since 1878; his wife was matron and his son, Albert, was superintendent at the Ridge leper asylum. The entire elected side voted against the proposed candidate, a white European, but their protest was ignored: the Colonial Office response was that there was no need to take them seriously since the interests of the taxpayer were more “truly and directly” represented by the nonelective side (CO 152/225/729, 8 December 1897)—the Colonial Office was already behaving as if Crown Colony government was in place, although the actual vote was still three months away. From the governor’s point of view, even in this post—the conditions at Rat Island were admittedly deplorable, the subject of much official correspondence and little action—a nonwhite was problematic: not only was the governor convinced that nonwhites could not discipline other nonwhites, but no white matron or nurse would consent to serve under a nonwhite man. For nonwhites to rise too high in administrative posts also created

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<sup>49</sup> Not on its own turf, however. Although during World War II, when the entry examination was suspended, there were four nonwhite men and one nonwhite woman hired for administrative work, with the resumption of the examination it became unlikely that “coloured staff will be available except on temporary engagement” (Parkinson 1947: 105-106).

<sup>50</sup> Rat Island—named for its shape not its wildlife—lies in St. John’s Harbour and was not at that time connected to the mainland. The Lunatic Asylum remained on Rat Island until 1906, when it was moved to Skerrets; at that time there were 124 inmates (CO 152/291/392, 2 October 1906).

an awkward social situation, since no nonwhites were invited to social events at Government House, no matter what their position, until the early 1920s, when Sir Eustace Fiennes became governor.

This is not to say that there was any real concern, on either the part of the governor or the Colonial Office, that opportunities for advancement be created for the sake of the development of the colony (or, for that matter, of individual Antiguans). The lack of qualified personnel was a problem to be overcome, within the confines of the financial situation; but this was not the result of any belief in "development" in the modern sense. Further, while the Colonial Office was prepared to ignore skin color, it was only prepared to do so up to a certain level; above that, skin color remained a central concern. What the demographic, economic, and social pressures did, however, was to force the phenotypic barrier, or divide, to rise gradually over time.

A few young nonwhite men were therefore admitted into the Colonial Service in the early 1900s. Yet, as with the merchants' clerks, they were more the remnants of the old elite than the forerunners of the new. One was Samuel Lauchland Athill, Jr., nephew of the Samuel Lauchland Athill discussed extensively earlier, who was appointed 5<sup>th</sup> indoor office in the Treasury in 1901 and moved on to become clerk to the attorney general in 1906, held a number of other low level posts, and finally became Magistrate for Districts A and B in 1924, a post he held until his retirement in 1940. Another was Clement Malone, who was appointed acting junior audit clerk in the same year and also held a number of low level Treasury and Audit posts until he went to England to get a law degree; by 1943 he has risen to chief justice of the Leeward Islands—an exceptional achievement and part of what one local newspaper attributed to an overdue Colonial Office policy to open up the highest posts to all, "irrespective of color, class, or creed" (*Magnet*, 5 June 1943). Athill and Malone were followed by John S. Watt, appointed clerk to the Board of Health in 1902, a post he held until his retirement in about 1933. In 1905, two more nonwhites were admitted: R.H. Malone and Alfred Earle Thibou—respectively brother of Clement Malone and son of journalist Joseph Theodore Thibou—who were appointed assistant government analyst and junior clerk in Audit.

In 1903, in order to forestall further protests from either the Colonial Office or the local press, the governor proposed a system of what he called "limited competition" for colonial service posts. The "limits" were not academic, however, but phenotypic: the governor wrote the Colonial Office that he had

carefully considered the difficulty that an "open" competitive examination would probably result in the almost invariable defeat of youths of pure European descent by "coloured" candidates, and I propose, without publishing any rule upon the subject, to meet this difficulty by so arranging the nomination that only young gentlemen of pure European descent shall be selected to compete for, say two out of every three vacancies (CO 152/277/Conf., 24 March 1903).

The governor's plan was approved by the Colonial Office, which only noted (and only in a minute) that it seemed "rather hard" to give the white men two out of three places.

The first examination followed, and in 1904 three candidates were selected—all white

and with only tenuous connections to Antigua.<sup>51</sup> Several subsequent candidates passed the exam but were deemed “unacceptable” by the governor after an interview; although their names are not included in the correspondence, it is a safe assumption that they were all nonwhite (CO 152/291/Conf., 19 August 1906).

Sir E.B. Sweet-Escott arrived in Antigua in 1906, having just served as governor of British Honduras, and immediately began to recruit more actively among the nonwhite population for the lower level administrative posts. As we saw in the previous chapter, Sweet-Escott was a relentless reorganizer and he immediately proposed creating a system of “copyists” at the small salary of £12 a year (rising to a top of £24), in order that the “Grammar Schools of Antigua, Dominica, and St. Kitts-Nevis [become] the training and recruiting ground for clerks in the Civil Service of those three Presidencies.” He suggested that there be four such positions in Antigua, and argued that this would have the added positive effect of keeping more boys in school: they would stay in the hopes of getting one of these positions (CO 152/290/311, 10 August 1906; CO 152/291/Conf., 19 August 1906). He placed these appointments under his personal control, stipulating that the candidates be nominated by him but that they first have two endorsements from well-known persons of good character. He then reorganized the lowest level of clerkships into two grades, with the copyists the lower of the two (CO 152/292/475, 10 November 1906). Two were appointed in 1906, two more in 1907, 1908, and 1909, for a total of eight (CO 152/319/547, 25 November 1910). He also created the additional post of lady typist, also at £24. None of these posts were permanent, however, and in 1910, four of the copyists wrote the Colonial Office, pleading that their salaries be raised from £24 per year to £36 after two years of service if they had not received permanent appointments by then; they won an increase of £4 per year (CO 152/319/547, 25 November 1910). Both posts—copyist and lady typist—proved to be only a temporary expedient, however: they were almost all held by only one person, for only a brief time, and all had been abolished by 1915.

Despite the miserable pay, these new positions provided the first real opportunities for nonwhites from the new middle class—for Oscar Richardson Kelsick, Victor Sylvester Brookes, Donald Preston Christian, Ferdinand de Freitas, Ronald Earle Kelsick, Francis Alan McFeeters, and Sydney Theophilus Christian (CO 152/312/389, 22 September 1909; CO 152/319/547, 25 November 1910). A similar sort of position, supernumerary clerk in the Post Office at £24 a year, was created in 1915 and given to Frank Clarke. These were the same young men who had been in the first wave of nonwhites to enter the Antigua Grammar School at the turn of the century. In fact, of the forty-four nonwhite Antiguans who passed through the Antigua Grammar School between 1900 and 1914, at least eighteen went into government service, and a grammar school education quickly came to be seen as a passport to a job in the civil service. Their names appear in boldface in the following list, the same list as in Chapter 6, but confined to Antiguans and with the years 1911-1914 added:

1900        James Harold Robinson

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<sup>51</sup> These were Henry Richard Cruise, one of the lucky few who eventually won a posting to Africa in 1906, H. Selwyn Branch, and R.E. Pigott. Although Branch and Pigott had relatives in Antigua, it is not clear that they had been borne there; Cruise was not. None of the three had attended the Antigua Grammar School.

1902     **James Louis Engelbert Lake**  
 Randolph Westerby Buckley  
**Victor Sylvester Brookes**  
**Donald Preston Christian**  
**Sydney Theophilus Christian**  
**Oscar Richardson Kelsick**

1903     John Edgar Otto Malone

1904     Hugh Liston Henry  
**Ronald Earle Kelsick**  
 Cyril Oscar Athill Sheppard  
 Lawrence Octavius Athill

1905     John Humphry MacDonald Watts  
 James Watkins Harper  
**Thomas Henry Kelsick**  
**Roland Edward Henry**  
 Langford Duer Cranstoun  
 Arthur Herbert Cranstoun  
**Francis Alan McFeeters**

1906     George William Bennett MacDonald  
 Oswald Foster MacDonald

1907     Samuel Victor Athill

1908     **Alfred Eric Peters**  
 Alfred Ernest Athill

1909     **Richard Smith Mason**  
**Edgar O. Reginald Lake**  
 Cyril Claude Brookes

1910     Alfred Powell McDonald

1911     Edward Herman Theodore James  
 Walter Gordon Harper  
 Charles Theodosius Michael  
 Henry Darrell Carlton Moore  
 George Leslie Edwards  
 Harold Edward McDonald  
**Egbert Ewart Harney**

**1912**    **Edwin Archibald Thompson**  
 Arthur Clifford Thompson  
 Frank A. Frederick Lake  
**Frank David Clarke**  
 Charles Miles Stanley Moore

1914     William A.R. Michael  
**John Archibald McDonald**  
**Clarence Addison Harney**  
**Ickford Witmore Thomas**

In striking contrast to the previous generation, only two of these men went on to work as clerks in stores. One became a teacher at the Antigua Grammar School, one a vet, one a druggist, one a planter, one a doctor, and one a minister; two went to work for the British-owned Cable & Wireless—which managed the telephone and telegraph systems throughout the British West Indies. Many migrated. And in further contrast with their predecessors, they were all by definition (being Antigua Grammar School graduates) legitimate.

But while these young men got jobs, they did not get quite the jobs their white predecessors had had: usually in the guise of saving money, the salaries of these entry-level positions were reduced dramatically when they were turned over to nonwhites. Thus, for example, when the post of 4<sup>th</sup> indoor officer, Treasury, the lowest rank in the department, was given to H.B. Thompson and the post of 5<sup>th</sup> indoor officer created and given to Samuel Lauchland Athill, Jr., the salary was reduced from a poor £75 a year to a pitiful £50. Similarly, when C.R. Rannie finally became 1<sup>st</sup> indoor officer, Treasury, in 1915—the first nonwhite to hold the post—the salary was promptly reduced.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, posts that had been first jobs for white men became second or even third jobs for nonwhites: nonwhites had to start lower, and earn less for longer, than the whites who had preceded them. Some new recruits were even made to work at *no pay* for several months, as a form of “probation” that was gross exploitation. The Colonial Office admitted to some qualms about this arrangement, but as it was “only for three months,” they let it pass (CO 152/290/311, 10 August 1906). It nevertheless continued, if informally, for many years. Further, as young white men moved up the opportunity chain, they could expect to change jobs rapidly—one person could work, in succession, in the government lab, Audit, Treasury, the Post Office, in Antigua or any of the other Leeward Islands, all as part of the process of gaining experience. Nonwhites were far less likely to be offered these opportunities.<sup>53</sup>

The Colonial Office correspondence is full of these men’s pleas for increases in salary: as Athill noted in 1919, his salary had remained small compared to those (read: those whites) who had joined the government service in the same year that he did (CO

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<sup>52</sup> This process continued when the lower middle class began to take on these jobs in the 1940s and 1950s. Thus when Oakland Swift took over as Inspector of Prisons from Alfred Peters in 1953, the job was further downgraded and separated from that of Town Clerk, with which it had been joined under Peters.

<sup>53</sup> This did not mean that Antiguan whites could move up very far in the Colonial Service, however, since they too had to walk in dead men’s shoes. Many tried repeatedly to advance by moving outside the country and the Leeward Islands correspondence is full of pleas for appointments elsewhere, particularly to Africa (and within Africa, to Nigeria on the West coast and Nyasaland, Kenya, Uganda, and later Northern Rhodesia on the East coast), where the Colonial Service expanded enormously between 1900 and World War I (Jeffries 1938: 15). Their applications were greeted with great suspicion and the applicants “choked off” before they got too hopeful (CO 152/332/343, 14 August 1912). The Colonial Office viewed West Indians—white West Indians—as second-class candidates, and the answers to their requests were nearly formulaic: “West Indians do not seem to do well in Africa”—a belief that can have had little basis in fact—or “he seems quite a good man but I doubt if there is much chance for him outside the West Indies” (CO 152/332/Conf., 14 November 1912). Applicants were denigrated for their colonial education, believed to be inherently inferior, their lackluster performance, their inefficiency, and in general for being of “inferior status” (CO 152/332/360, 28 August 1928). It simply was not believed that a West Indian national, even a white one, could “act in accordance with the traditions of an English gentleman” (Heussler 1963: 60). The best these men could hope for was a posting to another colony, which happened only infrequently, or to another of the Leewards.

152/392/140, 4 April 1924).<sup>54</sup> Sons of retired white senior civil servants moved ahead much further and much faster.<sup>55</sup> Alfred Earle Thibou ran into this problem when two posts he felt he deserved because of seniority were given to second-generation white civil servants. He petitioned the Colonial Office directly: "It is not only on my own behalf that I have approached your lordship, but also on behalf of my brother-officers who lacking the necessary influence ... are obliged to bear in silence injustices such as I have experienced." The governor quickly pointed out to the Colonial Office that Thibou was a "young man of colour." Thoroughly disgruntled, Thibou resigned and left for the United States, but not before stirring up a considerable fuss among the "general public." He pointed to the larger concern: because of such treatment, "not only the more ambitious men in the service are resigning, but also the people as a whole are leaving these Islands in large numbers; those remaining, clamoring for a change in the form of government" (CO 152/372/494, 16 October 1920; CO 152/377/292, 10 June 1921). He was regarded by the governor and Colonial Office as a troublemaker.

There is no doubt that what prevented these young men from moving further and faster was not their social or educational attributes but their phenotypic skin color. This was a major—indeed, almost overriding—concern in any Colonial Office assessment of an application for promotion, and although it was in general a carefully concealed criterion, every so often it surfaced in the official correspondence and in the minutes. Thus in 1916, when Clement Malone—who by this time had over twelve years in government service *and* was about to be called to the bar at Middle Temple—applied for a magistrate's appointment, a minute noted that "He seems rather dark," and a following minute (written by the man who actually interviewed Malone) reported that "He is more than 'rather' dark, and could not do as a magistrate anywhere except in the West Indies, and even there better qualified men can be obtained" (CO 152/353/Malone, 13 June 1916); Malone's application was turned down. In 1919, the Colonial Office people, fearing the governor might bow to pressure in the colony, asked him in each case to specify whether a candidate was of "pure European descent" or not (CO 152/362/9, 4 January 1919). And of course a candidate had to be "quite

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<sup>54</sup> All applications for transfer went through the Colonial Office and are the source of considerable detail about the person's background, education, career, etc., at least until 1926, when the files begin to be weeded out. The proportion of the correspondence between the various governors and the Colonial Office that is taken up with issues of salary, pension, additional pay, promotion, and so on is truly astounding. The Colonial Office had to approve every increase in salary and every promotion; in addition, it was repeatedly petitioned by the people involved if they did not get what they wanted in Antigua, which they seldom did. Reading through this material, watching as people get shifting from department to department, from island to island, gives a clear sense of the huge amount of time the governor and colonial secretary must have spent on personnel matters. This was apparently still the case in 1949, when Hammond did the research for his report (Hammond 1952: 67).

<sup>55</sup> There were a number of these: the civil service was even more of a family profession than being a merchant or planter. Sons frequently followed their fathers into the civil service, and three- and even four-generation civil service families were not uncommon. Examples include brothers Elwood D'Arcy and A.C. Kent Tibbits, sons of Arthur Salmon Tibbits, a civil servant for twenty-two years; Melville and Gilbert Graham Auchinleck, sons of the auditor general William Douglas Auchinleck; Arthur Donald William and Robert Burnell Skinner, sons of an inspector of schools who retired in 1918; Edward Baynes, son of the administrator of Montserrat; A.E. and F.A. Drinkwater, sons of an earlier inspector of schools; A.N. Garling, son of a treasury official; Walter Thompson, son of the acting inspector of police who died of a fever in 1895; and Hugh Liston Humphrys, son of long-time registrar Octavius Humphrys.

white” if he was to have any chance of a posting outside the West Indies (CO 152/394/435, 14 October 1924; CO 152/388/713, 3 January 1923).<sup>56</sup>

The policy of expanding low-level jobs but keeping the upper levels static may have helped the governor and Colonial Office control the rate at which nonwhites rose up the ranks, but it also led to an inefficient civil service run by elderly men.<sup>57</sup> Even as the first cohort of nonwhite clerks rose to higher level positions, they continued to face various manipulations that were used to control the process of change. The most prevalent was the “acting” appointment: many young men did the work of their superiors without being permanently appointed to the post and without a commensurate increase in salary. The acting person generally got half his own pay and half the pay of the person he was filling in for, although even this was not always the case. Nevertheless, chances to act were jumped at, not only because the work was more interesting and the prestige greater, but because it gave the job holder additional ammunition for his resume. It also led to much bitterness, however: people who were considered good enough to act in a post were not considered good enough to be appointed to it permanently, and an individual’s career record could be full of acting posts without a permanent appointment. Further, it was a primary cause of defection from the service (*Star*, 6 November 1937). In another maneuver, a candidate who was clearly qualified for promotion but who had hit the color barrier might be moved to a higher paying post that was on the same side of the barrier—for example, Roland Henry was not considered “suitable” for the post of Treasurer, and so was made Registrar, a less sensitive post that had been held by a nonwhite for many years.<sup>58</sup> Despite the clear difficulties of continuing to recruit Europeans, even as late as 1927 the governor insisted that the magisterial work could not be in the hands of “coloured officers,” and that the new magistrate be a barrister of European descent whose presence would strengthen the

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<sup>56</sup> This was not necessarily true of other colonies, however, and there was at least one nonwhite serving in a high post in Antigua in this period. This was Frederick Mackenzie Maxwell, who served as Chief Justice of the Leeward Islands from 1912 until after the war. Maxwell was a British Honduran with impeccable British credentials and many years of service.

<sup>57</sup> In his report on the Leeward Islands civil service, Hammond reported little change in this regard, with the numbers at the top being the same in 1949 as in 1914; only the lower levels had expanded, despite increasing administrative burdens (Hammond 1952: 58).

<sup>58</sup> Perhaps because the departments they headed were smaller, less hierarchical, and less sensitive, the posts of Registrar and Postmaster were the first to open to nonwhites. The post of Registrar was given to a Montserratian white (and son of a civil servant), R.H.K. Dyett, when Octavius Humphrys retired after forty-seven years of service in 1905, but when Dyett was promoted to Magistrate District A in 1917 the post went to James Pogson Turner, a nonwhite Kittitian and long-time civil servant; the only other candidate was Dudley Semper, a nonwhite Montserratian (and the brother of Samuel Lauchland Athill’s second wife), who did not want the job. Pogson Turner was therefore the first nonwhite head of a department and it was considered appropriate that the job should then go to Roland Henry. However, in line with previous practice, when Henry took the post, the salary was reduced: although the change meant a significant increase for him, it was still less than his predecessor had earned.

As for the Postmaster, it was the job that John Athill had had (then called Deputy Postmaster General) before emancipation. In 1895, the post was held by A.E. Eldridge, the son of Charles Monroe Eldridge, a leading member of the government in the 1860-1880 period. When Eldridge was promoted to Treasurer in 1907, the job went to A.C. Kent Tibbits, the son of a white civil servant, and then, when he in turn was promoted in 1926, to Ferdinand de Freitas, a Portuguese—not only one of the very few Portuguese to enter government service, but the only one to reach so high in this period. The post office also had the first women (see below) and eventually became the first government department to have a woman at its head.

“European element” in the civil service. By “European element” he meant “preferably an Englishman or Scotsman or a British Colonial of pure European or Scottish descent; for instance, a British Colonial of Portuguese descent would not be acceptable, nor a Canadian” (CO 152/404/39650/1927). In this case, he did not get his wish, and Samuel Lauchland Athill, Jr., was appointed. Similarly, a white man was promoted to the post of Treasurer over O.R. Kelsick in part because he was of “pure European descent,” although it was publicly argued that he was better qualified (CO 152/400/Conf., 17 July 1926).<sup>59</sup> In 1931, there were protests in the newspapers that Europeans were being appointed at higher salaries, and with greater increments, than nonwhites, while nonwhites were being discriminated against in promotions. The governor attributed this upsurge in unrest to the fact that the papers were edited by nonwhites “who appear to devote their whole energies to stirring up racial feeling,” as well as to the spread of “communist literature” (CO 152/428/5, 1931). Nevertheless, in 1933, Roland Henry was again passed over for the post of Treasurer, ostensibly because he could not command the necessary “respect,” being far too closely connected in Antigua—clearly a specious argument since the white candidates were often equally connected. The Colonial Office disingenuously argued that this was *not* racial discrimination since Henry had already been promoted over a totally incompetent, but senior, man of “pure European descent” (CO 152/443/11, 1933). Colonial Office minutes increasingly noted that local whites were incompetent, but this did not lead to nonwhite appointments. Thus when Clarence Harney asked for leave to study law in England—he had been a junior clerk for *fifteen years*—and his request was denied, the *Star* asked why, if he was so indispensable, his requests for promotion, despite numerous acting appointments, had also been denied (*Star*, 6 July 1937).

By 1940, the color barrier had moved up to the point where only the heads of the most important departments remained white—the governor, chief justice, puisne judges, attorney general, commissioner of police, treasurer, auditor general, superintendent of public works, and government analyst. All the principals (as the chief clerks were renamed in 1925), with the key exception of the chief clerk in the governor’s office, were nonwhites, as was the Magistrate for Districts A and B. Most had gained their posts only recently:

Chief Registrar	Roland Henry	1937
Superintendent Prisons	Alfred E. Peters	1936
Postmaster	Wilfred Peters	1931
Magistrate Dist. A/B	S.L. Athill, Jr.	1930
Principal Administration	Charlesworth Ross	1934
Principal Audit	Daniel Walwyn	1937 <sup>60</sup>
Principal Treasury	Edwin A. Thompson	1939
Senior Clerk Public Works	Harold Harney	1933

<sup>59</sup> There is one other point that needs to be made about the work relations that underlay this system: time and again it was emphasized to me that it was the nonwhites who had to teach their white supervisors—who revolved in and out of the country with monotonous regularity—their jobs. Thus while the hierarchical structure was maintained, as was the social divide between whites and all nonwhites, it was often the nonwhites who were doing the work. This was particularly true in the civil service, but it was true in other sectors as well.

<sup>60</sup> Ross and Walwyn were both from St. Kitts, although Ross went to the Antigua Grammar School and seems to have considered himself an Antiguan: he wrote a memoir called *From an Antiguan’s Notebook* (Ross 1962).

Of the others in that early intake from the Antigua Grammar School, Donald P. Christian remained a civil servant until his death in about 1927, while Ronald Earle Kelsick was posted to Montserrat. Ickford Thomas died in 1939, but remained a civil servant until then. Not surprisingly, however, many of the brightest found ways to move out of the service—if possible into law: Henry Burford Thompson, Clement Malone, Clarence, Egbert Ewart, and Harold Harney, Sydney T. Christian, and Frank David Clark all went on to get law degrees. A few came back into government service, but most did not.

For women, the story was rather different. In about 1905, the governor realized that women could be hired to do certain of the clerical tasks that men had been doing, particularly if they were called typists (the post of copyist, created at the same time, was for men). But while these low-level posts provided entry points for nonwhite men, they did not do the same for their sisters: instead white women were hired—with the one exception of Isabella England, who served very briefly as a lady typist in the Colonial Secretary's office but left when she got married. In any case, after the first set of lady typists, the post was abolished. No nonwhite woman was again hired for the Colonial Service until 1917, when Gwendolyn Edwards was taken on as lady typist at the Botanical Station. Thus in 1905 and 1906, several white women were hired in the Post Office and in the Colonial Secretary's office (the library clerks and the telephone operators were already women, and one of the newly hired women in the Post Office quickly moved on to the library, as did her successor).<sup>61</sup>

From then on, however, there were increasing numbers of women in the lowest level clerical positions, although not in Treasury.<sup>62</sup> The key differences between these women and their male counterparts were twofold: first, the women's salaries were lower, and second, the women did not get promoted—in other words, they did not become part of the opportunity chain. Thus when Millicent Proudfoot, the 1st clerk in the Post Office, applied for the redesigned post of 1st clerk in 1921 (at considerably higher pay), she was flatly rejected by the governor, who argued that the post should now go to a man. The Colonial Office

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<sup>61</sup> The women appointed to the post office as 1st and 2nd lady clerks were Maggie Spencer MacDonald and Millicent Proudfoot, appointed in 1905. MacDonald went almost immediately to work in the library—in what became, along with the telephone operators, a female occupation—and Millicent Proudfoot moved up to 1st clerk, while Frederica Percival became 2nd clerk.

<sup>62</sup> Part of the problem with Treasury was that, since it included customs, much of the work was outdoors and so not considered suitable for women. Thus in 1911, when there was discussion of adding another lady clerk in the post office, the governor argued for a (male) copyist so that he could be available for outside duties; the Colonial Office agreed (CO 152/320/575, 13 December 1911). This was also one of the key arguments for not having women medical officers, and led to extensive correspondence over the appointment of Dr. Effield Roden as a district medical officer. Dr. Roden, who was married to the manager of Montpelier, was one of the first women medical students in England. In this case, however, in addition to the supposed problem of "rough traveling," there was the problem of a white woman treating nonwhite patients, which some at the Colonial Office viewed as "repulsive" and dangerous to the "prestige of the European race." They were quite happy to have her serve in acting appointments, however, which she had done since 1897, but she did not get a full appointment until 1922. The entire correspondence, along with the minutes, provides a nice case study of the attitudes toward women in this period. (On this see CO 152/319/536, 21 November 1910; CO 353/Greene, 19 January 1916; CO 152/380/517, November 1921; CO 152/382/62,152/ 17 February 1922.)

noted that the governor's grounds were "highly inadequate," but refused to intervene (CO 152/377/276, 28 May 1921; CO 152/378/374, 30 July 1921). In fact, only Gwendolyn Edwards gradually worked her way up, from her initial appointment at the Botanical Station (at £30) through two clerkships in Treasury; by 1940, she was a junior clerk in Audit.

The line between wanting to hire women because they were cheap and not wanting to hire them because they were women and therefore supposedly had only limited capabilities was narrow and successive governors trod it warily. Even as late as 1928, when there was once again a clear shortage of males, the governor wrote the Colonial Office that he had reluctantly increased the proportion of females, although there were "obvious limitations"—apparently understood because they were not specified—to the otherwise valuable services the "ladies" provided (CO 152/407/55603, 1928).

Despite the difficulties of attracting qualified people, Antigua's perilous financial situation meant that government salaries remained very low. There was no-across-the-board raise until World War I: a 25 percent increase was granted in 1919, pushed by a government officials' petition, and another in 1920. Yet this was small compared to the increase in the cost of foodstuffs, which had reportedly risen between 125 and 150 percent during the war (CO 152/373/548, 12 November 1920). In addition, government salaries remained lower than salaries in other sectors, and the complaints continued. This created a problem for the last cohort of local whites, many of whom came from families that had held posts in government service for two and even three generations and whose widows were forced to apply for special help when they died.<sup>63</sup> A "Committee to Consider Conditions of Employment of Junior Civil Servants in Antigua," which reported in 1926, bemoaned the low salaries and was also extremely critical of the lack of opportunities for promotion due to the retention of overage officers (CO 152/400/306, 17 June 1926).

The Colonial Office solution was a smaller, better paid service. The committee recommended a graded system, which would allow people to be paid better, stop the practice of higher level civil servants being paid for doing inferior duties, give more responsibility to underlings, hire more women for typewriting and clerical work—all to make upward movement possible. The Colonial Office agreed, and the governor instituted a series of grades, each one of which was expected to take about ten years. This plan proved optimistic, however, and in 1928 he was forced to reduce the entry-level qualifications and to introduce a new grade so that candidates with superior educational qualifications and previous experience could move quickly into a higher grade (CO 152/407/55603/1928).

By the 1930s, the Colonial Service was no longer the attraction to the top Antigua Grammar School graduates that it had been in the first decades of the century. The sons (and daughters) of the new middle class were going elsewhere—many quite literally, heading for England, the United States, or Canada, the men to become lawyers, doctors, and dentists and their sisters to become teachers. Government service was once again providing an opening—but for the next middle class.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Examples include Dyett in Montserrat (1916), Eldridge (d. 1904, appeals 1913), Branch, C.A. Shand (1910), Garling (1919), Jarvis (1917), Odium (1911). All were from second- and third-generation Colonial Service families and all were still earning relatively meager salaries after many years service.

<sup>64</sup> This was the beginning of a change in the ranking of the civil service in the occupational hierarchy. By the end of

### **The Antigua Sugar Factory and the Banks<sup>65</sup>**

While color prejudice played a role in the Colonial Service selection process, the government was eventually forced to give way in the face of need. But in the sectors most central to the economy—sugar production (factory and field) and the banks—color played a central role for even longer.<sup>66</sup>

The demographic pressures that forced change in the merchant sector were at work in the sugar industry and in the banks as well. In the plantation sector, it should be no surprise that the field opened up before the factory. Despite a concerted effort to encourage white Antiguans to work in agriculture—through recruitment, Antigua Grammar School scholarships, etc.—by the early part of the century it was clear that the wages and conditions of estate work were no longer acceptable to young white men. Unlike the merchant sector, however, there was no history of nonwhite involvement on the plantations in either the pre- or post-emancipation periods: as we saw in Chapter 4, nonwhites had been excluded from plantation ownership or management by the deficiency laws and in addition the plantation sector was profitable, so that the white planters had been able to maintain their virtually exclusive hold on the land throughout the nineteenth century. This had three effects: first, there were very few nonwhites in the plantation sector throughout the nineteenth century; second, changes in the field did not begin until much later, in the early 1900s; and third, those who moved into the positions of overseer and then manager were in general from the lower, rural, levels of Set 2, the sons of white managers and nonwhite women who did not move to town.

Of the 58 jurors who were listed as “planters” (a broad category that included managers but generally not owners) in 1895, fewer than 10 were nonwhites, and most of these were peripheral members of Set 1 families, including a Moore, a Shervington, and a Thibou.<sup>67</sup> In 1900, the total was down to 47, including 25 new names; 12 of the earlier list had gone on to the next level and become managers of several estates (and therefore Special Jurors), while another 20 had disappeared from the rolls. Yet there were still only about 10 nonwhites (although they were not necessarily the same people). By 1904, the total number was still 47, with 15 new names and the same 10 nonwhites.

Thus in these ten years there was a great deal of turnover. Young white men were still

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the war, according to Hammond's report, the civil service had become so unattractive that it ranked below the merchant and other sectors, only able to recruit less well educated men and women (Hammond 1952: 113).

<sup>65</sup> This section could not have been written without the help of Ashley Kirwan, Fred Abbott, and Jimmy Watson on the Antigua Sugar Factory personnel and Annie Bell on the banks.

<sup>66</sup> It took still longer in the communications sector—so long that it does not fall within the scope of this chapter. In Antigua, as throughout the Caribbean, communications was controlled by Cable & Wireless. Owned by the largest overseas company and being the most technically complex operation, Cable & Wireless in Antigua did not hire its first nonwhite staff until the late 1940s, although it began to hire white West Indians well before then. It hired nonwhite Antiguans elsewhere, however: of that first group of nonwhites to graduate from the Antigua Grammar School, Oswald Foster McDonald went to work for C&W in Guyana and George Leslie Edwards did the same in the Virgin Islands.

<sup>67</sup> It was more difficult to determine who was white among the plantation managers and overseers, many of whom came from other islands—hence the vagueness of the phrasing.

being recruited with some success, although increasingly from the other West Indian islands (particularly Barbados) rather than from Britain. But in the next ten years the picture changed dramatically. Despite the governor's desperate plea for young white men, they were no longer interested in Antigua, and by 1911 there were at least 20 nonwhite overseers and managers. They included Arthur Grainger, Kirton, and Thomas Hinckson Edwards; Frederick and James Gore; William Thomas and Frederick Abbott; Kirton Swift; and a number of Lakes. By 1919, the list included another Gore, a Hewlett, several Winters, Charles Pigott, and Percy Kelsick. All the names will be familiar from the discussion of the rural part of Set 2 in Chapter 5, for the older of these men were the sons of white managers and nonwhite women, while the younger were mostly sons of these same managers and had gone to the Antigua Grammar School. Charles Pigott and Percy Kelsick went on to work at the factory, but the others were by and large still listed as managers twenty years later (in 1934), along with more members of the same families.

The upper level managers—those who managed the larger estates or who managed groups of estates, and particularly those who managed the factory's estates—remained white into the 1940s, in no small part because Moody-Stuart was adamant that nonwhites could not manage a nonwhite labor force. In addition, this was not an occupation that allowed a move upward—to owner, for instance—as the merchant sector did, and it was also a sector that employed fewer and fewer people overall. It did not, therefore, provide an occupational opening for many members of the new middle class.

British hegemony was maintained even longer at the banks and the Antigua Sugar Factory. Although a "penny bank"—the St. John's Savings Bank—was open by the 1840s, the Colonial Bank (chartered in 1836) remained the major bank until the Royal Bank of Canada opened in 1915. The managers were always Englishmen, but most of the staff were white Antigua: indeed, working in a bank was a prize occupation for the remaining urban whites, and it paid considerably more than working in a store. Thus in 1917, when a clerk at Brysons was earning between £60 and £96 a year, a "local clerk" at the Royal Bank was earning £200—the same as an estate manager (who also got a house, groom, horse, and a bonus). The banks also did not hesitate to employ women: when Annie Bell, daughter of the chief of police, went to work at the Royal Bank in 1924 (as a steno-typist), she replaced the daughter of the keeper of the prison; the other staff included her two brothers. One of these was replaced by Gordon Griffith, son of the treasurer (and former inspector of police in St. Vincent), while Annie was replaced by the daughter of the next keeper of the prison (and *she* in turn left to marry a white policeman). Other staff included Gladys Sutherland and Vida Abbott, both daughters of planters.<sup>68</sup>

Neither Barclays—the successor to the Colonial Bank—nor the Royal Bank hired any nonwhite staff until the late 1940s, and then only after considerable pressure. According to an often retold story, the Antigua Girls' High School had been trying for some time to get its

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<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that if a restricted number of paid occupations was available to nonwhite women, fewer still were available to white women because it was considered inappropriate for them to clerk in the stores. When the stores were still owned by white men, white women did not work outside the house; and by the time they did, the stores were increasingly owned by nonwhite men. This left the banks, the sugar factory, and teaching at the Antigua Girls High School as virtually the only occupations open to white women.

students hired by Barclays, but with no success until the *Workers' Voice* mounted a daily campaign and the bank gave way.<sup>69</sup> The first nonwhite employee was thus a woman, and apparently the object of great curiosity: people reportedly flocked to the bank to take a look at her.

It was a virtual rule throughout the West Indies until at least the 1970s that the banks would only hire phenotypically fair people, and this was as true in Antigua as elsewhere. Although they would no doubt have preferred that class play a role—and certainly education did—the emphasis on skin color led to hiring choices that ignored class in favor of color. This was reinforced by the fact that the managers were English and generally unfamiliar with the Antiguan class structure. It meant, first, that Portuguese were hired before nonwhite Antiguans, simply because they *looked* fairer—the first was a woman and was hired by Barclays in about 1932; and second, that, for example, the first nonwhite at the Royal Bank was the illegitimate daughter of a white planter and a nonwhite woman: not an appropriate choice by nonwhite Antiguan middle-class standards of the time, which, as we have seen, placed a great emphasis on marriage and legitimacy, but she was fair and thus seemed appropriate to the British. Similarly, women from English Harbor were hired before women from town—because English Harbor people are, for historical reasons, likely to be fairer than other Antiguans. We will return to this inappropriate—to Antiguans—understanding of the local social hierarchy on the part of non-Antiguans in Chapter 10.

If the process was slow in the banks, it was glacial at the Antigua Sugar Factory. The only nonwhites were in the semi-artisanal areas: the foreman in the machine shop, the head storekeeper, the tinsmiths, the head foreman inside the factory itself. Generally from a rural background, they were not themselves members of the new middle class.<sup>70</sup> Everyone at the level of engineer, chemist, and above, including the office clerical staff, remained white until Fred Abbott was made shift engineer in 1955. In fact, there were very few white Antiguans either, since it was considered that factory management was a specialized occupation and men were recruited from abroad; many were Scots.

### **Arrivance**

Antiguans talk about their “arrivance,” and by the 1930s this new middle class had certainly arrived, at least in terms of education and occupation. Arrivance had clearly not come easily: none of this class’s achievements was welcomed by the white population, and opportunities were given only grudgingly and when no other options were available. But

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<sup>69</sup> Even after that, the banks reportedly would call businesses that had large accounts with them and ask for their approval before hiring an applicant.

<sup>70</sup> The technically most sophisticated of all, however, the panboilers, had been nonwhite since slave days. In Antigua in this period, the panboilers were usually Guyanese and fiercely protective of their trade. Antiguans did not become panboilers until late, and even then they had to go to Bendals—the less important factory—to learn the trade. There is even a story that one Guyanese panboiler at the Antigua Sugar Factory was not allowed to teach his son the art, and the son had to go to Bendals to learn it. Children of panboilers did become part of the middle class: Keithley Heath’s first wife, Maggie Phillip was a Spring Gardens graduate and daughter of a panboiler at Bendals.

educational and occupational arrivance there was nonetheless, and by the 1930s this class attended the formerly all-white schools, won the formerly all-white scholarships, and worked in a wide range of formerly all-white occupations, from grammar school teacher to store clerk to upper level civil servant, from merchant to doctor to lawyer.

The next step was to enter the political arena, but before turning to a discussion of the political role of the new nonwhite middle class, we need to look at the two new forces that came into play during the period during and after World War I—the peasantry and the labor force— which drastically changed the context in which the middle class was developing.

## CHAPTER 8

### **THE PEOPLE ARE GETTING VEX: THE BEGINNINGS OF LABOR UNREST AND THE GROWTH OF A PEASANTRY**

The period during which the new middle class was forging a place for itself in the educational and occupational arenas was also the period in which two momentous events took place on the wider world stage: World War I and the Depression. Both unleashed forces in Antigua that shaped the political arena as it developed in the 1930s. In the first place, the hardships caused by the war led to an episode of labor unrest that profoundly shook the white population and presaged the beginning of a labor movement. In the second place, a new grouping, the peasantry, developed, with interests that had to be taken into consideration by the ruling and middle classes. And finally, both the war and the labor unrest were accompanied by the growth of a racial consciousness among the lower classes and a willingness to emphasize race as part of their means of achieving their goals.

#### **The War Experience**

On August 14, 1914, the Antigua Defence Force (ADF) was put on active duty, and both the Defence Reserve Corps and the Leeward Islands Police armed division in Antigua became part of the ADF. The population joined the war effort with a speed and wholeheartedness that should have warmed the hearts of even the most cynical of Colonial Office officials. When the call for volunteers went out from Britain, Antiguan from all classes asked to join up. Race, or phenotypic skin color, immediately became an issue. T.H. Best, who was Colonial Secretary and also acting governor throughout most of this period, sent a hasty cable asking if "coloured men" would be accepted.<sup>71</sup> Apparently funding was a problem, because he assured the Colonial Office that their passages would be paid by local subscription. The men in the Colonial Office went into something of a tizzy. They realized that they already had "coloured" troops—as they considered those from India—but argued to themselves that these were different because they had received their training at home: it was not having nonwhites in the forces that was the problem, but having to train them in *England*. As one minute put it, "Is it likely that public opinion here would welcome a raw West Indian negro troop being sent over here to be trained alongside of the regiments in Lord Kitchener's new army?" (CO 152/347/Tel., 1 July 1915). Yet there was clearly a problem with completely forbidding nonwhite West Indians: for one thing, troops were needed, and a contingent of planters—a minority of whom might possibly be nonwhite—who could shoot would be useful; for another, in some colonies it would be difficult to tell the pure white and near white apart, and they did not want to lose the opportunity for white

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<sup>71</sup> The governor, Sir Edward Merewether, had been governor of Sierra Leone and was appointed governor of the Leewards in 1916 but he was captured by the Germans en route to Antigua and did not arrive until 1919.

recruits.

However, Colonial Office policy was explicitly to “prevent any discussion of the colour question in the West Indies” (Fraser 1982: 26), and it was therefore decided that although troops could be raised, they could not expect to be sent to Europe. Best was told that nonwhites should certainly be encouraged to volunteer, but that the expense of bringing troops to England was too great for the British government and that they should therefore concentrate on local defense (of what and from whom was unclear), where they would be most usefully employed.

Unfortunately for the Colonial Office, its attempt to keep West Indians safely at home was overruled by the War Office, which had to put its respect for the social niceties aside in the face of the exigencies of war. The War Office’s solution was to organize a British West Indies Regiment and have it trained in Trinidad. In September 1915 the Antiguans were told that they could send a half-company of 110 noncommissioned officers and men, provided they raised the money for their transport locally. The first group went in October, the trip financed not by subscription but by an increase in export duties on sugar and molasses. The Colonial Office would have liked to object to this method of financing—they had envisioned private, not government, monies being used—but felt it could not since the planters themselves had agreed (CO 152/348/Conf., 25 October 1915). Not that it was the planters who went: between October 1915 and December 1917 there were four calls for men to serve in the regiment, all of which were answered largely by men of the “labouring classes” (CO 152/362/72, 6 February 1919). Indeed, the entire British West Indies Regiment had a rank and file that was almost entirely nonwhite—most whites were able to afford the passage to England, where they joined British regiments, while others stayed in Antigua as members of the ADF. These arrangements caused something of a problem for young nonwhite men of the middle classes, however, whose options were therefore limited. Their response seems to have been not to volunteer, so that, as one report put it, “The better class of coloured young men, as a whole, did not make a creditable figure in this respect”—i.e., in respect of numbers. Nevertheless, a 1916 report noted that 14 Europeans and 27 “others” had left the civil service to join up, with 33 Europeans and 63 “others of military age” remaining on the island (CO 152/352/Tel., 27 December 1916).<sup>72</sup> In total, 6 officers and 104 men joined the British West Indies Regiment from Antigua. They were for the most part treated as labor troops, and it was not until July 1917 that any of the British West Indies Regiment battalions were sent to the front line, and while they fought in Africa, they were confined to ammunition-carrying and labor services in France and Italy (Fraser 1982; Fryer 1984: 296).<sup>73</sup>

Much has been written about the disillusionment of the West Indian troops who served overseas. Enlisting with high ideals, they felt betrayed by the way they were treated. As a Trinidadian who was serving in Egypt wrote the Colonial Office, “We are treated neither as Christians nor British Citizens, but as West Indian ‘Niggers’, without anybody to be

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<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, East Indians—at that time one-third of the population of Trinidad—were not allowed to join, purportedly because of their different language and customs (see Fraser 1982).

<sup>73</sup> This did not mean they did not suffer casualties, however. According to Peter Fryer, 185 members of the regiment were killed or died of wounds, while another 1,071 died of sickness and 697 were wounded (Fryer 1984: 296).

interested in or look after us.... Today all that I was taught and believed has been shattered" (quoted Fraser 1982: 26). In August 1918, letters were sent to every West Indian colony that had men serving with the British West Indies Regiment in Egypt relating their grievances. The entire contingent from St. Kitts and Nevis signed their letter. They wrote, "We had all along imagined ourselves to be Imperial Troops ... [but] ... we have been fearfully deceived." They had found that as "colored" West Indians they had been denied the possibility of rising in the ranks—commissions were never granted to nonwhite West Indians—and had even been denied a pay increase granted to all other Imperial troops. According to Peter Fraser, the local elite was partly responsible for this disillusionment, since they knew they were selecting laborers but maintained the pretense that the volunteers would become frontline soldiers.

It is not surprising, then, that those West Indians who were demobilized and returned home (many did not) were different men from those who left: not only had they been offended by the ill-treatment they had received and disillusioned, and pained, by the deception, but they had learned to mobilize to protest this treatment. Ken Post quotes an American observer of the Jamaican scene: while abroad, West Indian troops "learned of unions, strikes, communism, and a lot of other undesirable matters" (Post 1978: 95). In some colonies—notably Trinidad and Jamaica—returning troops, bitter about their treatment in England and their reception back home, got into street fights with British sailors and local West Indian groups (Fryer 1984: 312-13).

And when they came home—the British did not encourage demobilized soldiers to remain in Britain (CO 152/360/271, 14 September 1918)—they also met a different Antigua, one whose laboring classes had for the first time since emancipation acted to protest the injustice of their own poverty in the face of planter profits.

### **The 1918 Riots**

There was at first a great deal of anxiety in Antigua about the effects the war would have on the island, and a number of measures were immediately taken to calm the population. The Colonial Bank was allowed to refuse or delay any large demands for cash, both to stop a panic and to conserve money to pay the laborers. The government held "conversations" with those merchants it felt might take advantage of the situation by raising prices (CO 152/342/Conf., 14 August 1914).<sup>74</sup> In addition, Antiguan rich and poor, in the city and in the countryside, threw themselves vigorously behind the war effort. Across the island, people responded to calls for aid with a variety of fund-raising efforts. The schools held dances, bridge tournaments, and bicycle races. There were Red Cross committees in many communities, and the women made bandages and knitted scarves and hats. Despite the number of young men who joined up, the island's economy at first seem little affected.

But as the war progressed, people began to experience increasing hardship. Reports of

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<sup>74</sup> It also, on request, assured the Colonial Office of the loyalty of all its subjects—specifically meaning the Lebanese, who as citizens of the Ottoman Empire might have been classed as loyal to the enemy; the only exception was a German commercial traveler who was made a prisoner of war and shipped off to Trinidad (CO 152/342/Conf., 14 August 1914 and CO 152/345/Sec., 27 January 1915).

scarcities and rising prices began to appear in the papers quite early in the war, but the government did not begin to get seriously worried until 1917. Ships carrying badly needed goods were being blown up or diverted or delayed, and the reliance on outside foodstuffs had begun to take a toll as imported items became more expensive and such basics as flour, matches, kerosene, and cornmeal became scarce. Inflation reached 100 percent between 1914 and 1916 for some items (CO 152/352/364, 18 November 1916), while the wages for estate workers only increased an average of 50 percent (CO 152/352/548, 12 November 1920). In February 1917, the newspapers reported that there might be actual starvation if something were not done (*Sun*, 21 February 1917). At one point in early 1918, there was no rice, sugar, bread, cornmeal, or kerosene; bakers and other shops were forced to close; and the street lights were out. T.H. Best, the acting governor, reported to the Colonial Office that he could see a "physical deterioration" among the laboring population due to poverty and malnutrition (CO 152/358/10, 9 January 1918). Sammy Smith described the situation considerably more graphically: "During and after the war people nearly eat one another" (Smith and Smith 1986: 124). The planters, convinced that the fault lay with the labor force, mounted another of its campaigns to make "vagrants" work, accompanied by threats of increasingly harsh punishment for acts—such as theft of agricultural produce, or praedial larceny—that the planters (and in this case the government concurred) saw as lawless. In June 1917, for instance, when there were reports that praedial larceny was on the increase, the planters lost no time in suggesting that flogging be instituted as punishment (*Sun*, 14 June 1917); by February 1918 a law to this effect had been passed.

While some of the shortages were unavoidable, the food crisis was not, and everyone agreed that the obvious solution was to grow more food crops. There was no agreement, however, about who should do so: no cane farmer, large or small, was willing to give up sugar land at a time of high prices in order to plant provisions. But the large planters were far better able to resist government pressure, and it was therefore the small holders who became the focus of the effort. Here too compulsion was discussed (e.g., *Sun*, 26 May 1917), although not instituted. Instead, there were repeated appeals to "patriotic" small cultivators to plant provisions (e.g., *Sun*, 15 June 1918). The large planters remained sacrosanct, and only "Stroller," the *Sun* columnist who seems to have considered that his role was to represent the "common man," had the temerity to point out that the planters were inexcusably being let off the hook. Sammy Smith remembers that some planters gave land they did not need to those who wanted to work it, but that they insisted on keeping two-thirds of the produce for themselves (Smith and Smith 1986: 124).

Part of the problem was that the labor force had long preferred to migrate rather than work under the constraints of the Contract Act (see Chapter 1), which continued to be enforced despite widespread acknowledgment that at least parts of it were, as one article in the *Sun* put it, so obviously outdated that "any right-thinking person, planter or otherwise," should agree that it needed amending (*Sun*, 30 June 1914). In 1898, the Norman Commission had been told that Antiguans left in part to escape the restrictions of the act (CO 152/239/703, 20 December 1898), and the pace of this exodus picked up as opportunities opened elsewhere. From that point onward, Antiguans from the laboring classes went in large numbers wherever there was work—to St. Thomas, St. Croix, Santo

Domingo, Puerto Rico, Panama, and the United States (*Sun*, 11 July 1917).

Complaints about the Contract Act became loud enough that in 1914 a commission was established to inquire into its workings. Not surprisingly, it found that while the planters brought complaints against the laborers in great numbers—about four hundred a year in the three years preceding the inquiry—the laborers had brought very few against the planters—an average of five. Yet the planters were adamant that the act must remain in effect, and no changes were made as a result of the commission's inquiry.

By early 1917, workers in other islands were beginning to call for higher wages, and there were strikes in St. Croix. The term "union" was for the first time in the air. In February 1917 a series of night-time cane fires led to a spate of alarmed articles in the *Sun*, which reflected general planter sentiment when it warned that the island would find itself on the "eve of conflict" if something was not done to improve the condition of the masses (*Sun*, various issues in February 1917)—cane fires being a time-honored method used by estate workers to display dissatisfaction. In neighboring St. Kitts, the St. Kitts Universal Benefit Association tried to reorganize itself as a trade union, but was forestalled by Best, who believed he had quieted a "highly excitable situation" by negotiating a wage increase and at the same time forbidding trade union activity because of wartime conditions (CO 152/354/Conf., 10 June 1917). The St. Kitts association continued to attract members—by August 1917 it had 1,500 (out of a nonwhite population of 26,000)—but its activities reverted to those traditionally associated with a friendly society—sick allowances and funeral expenses—a situation Best considered "excellent" (CO 152/356/Conf., 24 August 1917).

Despite this display of verbal confidence, Best was aware that, along with demands for the abolition of the Contract Act and for increased wages, a new factor had been introduced into the islands: these demands were being phrased in racial terms, as black against white. Fear of the "negro race" was nothing new to the West Indies, having been central to the maintenance of order during the slave era, and in Antigua race-based calls to resist the white ruling class, if not to revolt against it, had continued throughout the nineteenth century. But they had been genteel and restrained, and had come from the dissatisfied middle classes rather than the broad mass of the population—as we saw, for example, in the debate over Crown Colony status. Now the lower classes began to protest their unequal treatment, and to do so by invoking race.

The movement in St. Kitts had been under the tutelage of Arlington Newton, a Barbadian who was described in one typically skeptical dispatch to the Colonial Office as "a man of doubtful antecedents, who has lived much in the United States and, according to his own account, in Egypt" (CO 152/359/Conf., 15 May 1918). Newton was viewed as such a threat that he was forbidden entry into the Leewards, but he continued to send letters and messages of advice and encouragement. Before he had moved on to St. Kitts, however, he had apparently spent some time in Antigua, where he founded a society of some sort—quite possibly the Ulotrician Universalist Lodge, which was founded in 1915.<sup>75</sup> The official founders of the lodge, however, were Robert Brown and his brother James A. Brown, both

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<sup>75</sup> In 1916, the Inspector of Police had written the Colonial Secretary to warn him about the dangers of the society Newton had started in Antigua and the letter was forwarded on to the Colonial Office (CO 152/352/Conf., 28 September 1916).

of whom had also lived in the United States and had probably been strongly influenced by Garvey.<sup>76</sup> They were from the start determined that it would act not only as a friendly society but as a political organizing force as well (Henry 1985: 82; CO 152/358/113, 28 March 1918), and the membership card was certainly provocative: it called the organization the "Ulotrichian Universal Union" with general headquarters in Abyssinia, Egypt, and central bureaus in Paris, London, and Rome (Enc. in CO 152/352/Conf., 28 September 1916). Best attributed the "awakening of the resentment of the negro against the white" directly to the speeches of some of its members (Henry 1985: 82), while the Inspector of Police, in still another letter devoted to the pernicious effects of the Lodge, wrote that one of its major aims was to "manufacture a feeling of race hatred." His conclusion: that its leaders were therefore pro-German and, as a result, seditious (CO 152/359/Conf., 15 May 1918).

In February 1917 there was an apparently acrimonious split in the Lodge, and fifteen branches—all in the countryside—withdrawed to form the Antigua Progressive Union (CO 152/358/113, 28 March 1918; *Sun*, 28 February 1917). It is not clear whether this was the result of a difference in politics or a matter of personalities—not only were the Ulotrichians under the patronage of the Dean and the Antigua Progressive Union of the Bishop, with considerable animosity between them (CO 152/358/Tel., 12 March 1918), but the founders of the Antigua Progressive Union (APU) were both more rural and more moderate. Its president was C.O. Sheppard, a clerk at the Antigua Sugar Factory and a small cultivator, while its vice-president (and later president) was a pipefitter at the factory and also a small cultivator (Carmody 1978: 161). The Browns and their supporters, on the other hand, were urban shopkeepers and small businessmen. In addition, the Browns seem to have taken over virtually all the top posts in the Lodge, leaving little room for non-family members.

The APU, with its more temperate leadership, won the support of the government and planters in a way the Ulotrichians did not. Perhaps because their meetings lacked the stridency and racial overtones of the Ulotrichians or perhaps because they emphasized traditional friendly society activities, they received help from both the churches and the planters (*Sun*, 13 June 1917, 25 June 1917). Nevertheless, from the beginning labor problems were discussed at APU meetings, and both a political and a racial consciousness developed. Copies of Garvey's *Negro World* circulated (on all of this, see Carmody 1978:

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<sup>76</sup> Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) gained adherents among West Indians in the United States who then returned home, and in particular attracted those who had suffered discrimination during the war. Tony Martin reports that there was a UNIA branch in Antigua, although none of my informants remembered one (T. Martin 1983: 78). In any case, Garvey's tenets were certainly well known, particularly among the Ulotrichians. For instance, in June 1917, well before the riots, the Ulotrichians sponsored a public lecture at the Methodist church on the life and work of that "great pioneer of the race," Booker T. Washington. The speaker, according to the *Sun*, emphasized that "we are not to look for *greatness* in being *white*, nor to *live* to *wipe* the feet of the white man, nor to think there is any *disgrace* in *not being white*" (*Sun*, 30 June 1917; it is not clear if the emphasis is that of the speaker or the writer). As the movement grew, the planter press attacked Garvey and his followers again and again, taking great pleasure in his financial troubles in the early 1920s and calling members of the UNIA "deluded" (e.g., *Sun*, 13 May 1922, 18 May 1922). In 1921, C.O. Sheppard wrote a letter to the *Sun* defending the UNIA against malicious and gross misrepresentations, and emphasizing the organization's self-help and economic development aspects. He argued that the UNIA was not *against* whites but was instead *for* Africans (*Sun*, 10 October 1921). It seems likely that the Ulotrichians, and possibly unaffiliated people with Garveyite sympathies, played a major role in what follows, but the material available allows no conclusions one way or the other. (Garvey visited Antigua in 1937—see Chapter 9.) It should be noted here that these Browns were proprietors of a store called Bargain House and as far as I can tell were a different family from that of the merchant J.A.N. Brown (Stadiation Brown) who was discussed in previous chapters.

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Then, at a series of public meetings in late 1917, the APU began to call for the abolition of the Contract Act and for higher wages for cane cutters. The meetings became larger and larger, and on October 28, 1917, at a meeting chaired by the Bishop, a resolution was passed calling for a revised wage scale that would be in effect across the island, as well as modification of the Contract Act. This call was greeted with considerable sympathy, even by the non-laboring population, and a number of articles in the *Sun* agreed that wages had to be adjusted if conflict was to be avoided.

Immediately thereafter, a group of nine men formed what they called—inaccurately, as we shall see—a “Committee Representing the Labourers,” with the self-proclaimed mandate of coming up with an agreement for the 1918 crop that would forestall a confrontation. The committee included the Bishop and one other Anglican clergyman; APU president C.O. Sheppard; the Rev. Dr. George Andrew McGuire, another APU leader; A.E. Hill, a nonwhite teacher; A.H. Nurse, the Barbadian editor of the *Sun*; R.S.D. Goodwin and Sydney Smith, white planters; and—last but certainly not least—L.I. Henzell, manager of the factory. Clearly this “People’s Committee,” as it was called in the newspapers, not only did not represent the people, but was heavily stacked with members of the ruling groups.

It seems clear from its subsequent actions that the committee had been organized as part of an attempt by the planters and factory to channel the cane cutter’s unrest in an acceptable direction. The committee immediately decided to put the matter of the Contract Act on hold: the planters (and the factory) had unanimously decided that the act was not to be tampered with, and the committee wanted to avoid a confrontation on that score (*Outlet*, 13 March 1987, quoting a letter from George Moody-Stuart to the Colonial Office). It proposed instead to concentrate on the wage issue.

As people waited for the committee’s report, the atmosphere on the island grew increasingly restless, and there was another rash of cane fires in December 1917 and January 1918. Finally, the committee presented its proposal: cane cutting on all the estates should instead be paid a uniform rate and such payment should no longer be by the line but should be by the ton. This was a carefully crafted attempt to reassert control over the workforce: although the rate itself appeared higher, mandating the same payment on all estates made it more difficult for the workers to play one estate off against the other, while insisting on payment by the ton meant that the cane would be weighed—either at the factory by a factory employee or in the field by the overseer. This was how it was done on the Henckell DuBuisson estates, and in the bitter arguments that often ensued, the planters always had the upper hand. In addition, the 1918 crop was expected to be very light, due to drought, and the laborers knew that if they were paid by the ton they would earn even less than usual—while the planters would be assured their usual high profits. (It took much more work to cut a ton of cane in a bad year than in a good year.) “No payment by the ton” quickly became the rallying cry across the countryside (CO 152/358/28, March 1918).

The “People’s Committee” proposal was nevertheless submitted to the Planters’ Association, a group that had been hastily constituted only shortly before. This was a truly brazen attempt to create what looked like a “negotiation,” between the self-selected “People’s Committee,” which, as we have seen, did not represent the people, and a group

representing the planters. How little “negotiation” was likely can be seen from the fact that Henzell, the most powerful man on the People’s Committee (and on the island) was also the honorary secretary of the Planters’ Association.

For the planters and factory, this “negotiation” provided a golden opportunity to put the labor force in its place. Not surprisingly, then, the committee’s key proposal—that cane be cut by the ton rather than the line—was immediately accepted by the Planters’ Association, which then introduced two additional demands. First, wages should be paid on a sliding scale, so that the more cane cut, the less earned: the planters were constantly frustrated by the fact that the cane cutters preferred to work hard for two or three days a week and then “retire” to do their own business and hoped by this measure to make them work a full week. Second, the price differential between ratoon and plant cane was to be abolished, even though one was far harder to cut than the other. Then, in an attempt to make this bitter pill easier to swallow, the planters offered a slight increase in the rate.

Such a proposal was bound to create a furor. The planters knew there was widespread sentiment in favor of cutting by the line—it was repeatedly endorsed in the *Sun*, for instance (*Sun*, 6 February, 8 February, 9 February, 16 February 1918)—but they saw this as a crucial issue in the “negotiations,” and therefore instituted the agreement unilaterally. This high-handed action set in motion the chain of events that culminated in the “riot” of March 9. As Sammy Smith put it, the people were “getting vex.”<sup>77</sup>

The day after the planters announced the new terms—their terms—the cutters on some estates refused to cut any cane under the new rules, while others refused to work the customary number of hours. A number of planters immediately invoked the Contract Act, hoping to punish the laborers until they fell into line. The factory attempted to force the small farmers to come to terms by refusing to accept their cane.

Then, on February 26, a hearing for the first of the Contract Act cases was held in Parham magistrate’s court—Parham was at that time the second most important town on the island—and the magistrate ruled in favor of payment by the ton. A huge crowd had gathered, and an unpopular planter and his son were stoned (but not injured) as they left the court. The next day, what Colonel Bell, the Inspector of Police, described as “bands of young men” stopped people from cutting cane on at least four estates (Morris Looby, Donovans, Millars, and Cassada Garden). The police issued summons against a number of “offenders.” The situation can hardly have been helped by an intemperate letter from a planter printed in the *Sun* proposing that, under martial law, the laborers should be made to serve King and country by being forced to work (*Sun*, 27 February 1918).

The planters were becoming increasingly alarmed, and on February 27 they sent a delegation to Best to protest the situation and to ask him to enforce the Contract Act. Best decided instead to create an “impartial” commission to look into the entire situation. He appointed the Chief Justice F.M. Maxwell, Thomas Fisher (the governor of the prison), and

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<sup>77</sup> The events of the following days have been pieced together from reports written by Acting Governor Best and the Inspector of Police, Lt.-Col. Bell (enclosed in CO 152/358/113, 28 March 1918); two reports by Henzell to Henckell DuBuisson, which were passed along to the Colonial Office (CO 152/358/Tel., 12 March 1918, encs.); Chief Justice Maxwell’s subsequent report (CO 152/360/295, 25 September 1918); and many articles in the *Sun*. It differs slightly from the description given by S.A. Henry (S.A. Henry 1984), primarily because the contemporaneous official reports included more detail than Henry remembered after fifty years.

the Dean of the Cathedral. This appears to have been a fairly liberal threesome—the Dean, it will be remembered, was the mentor of the Ulotrichians, Maxwell was a distinguished nonwhite jurist from British Honduras, and Fisher, while white, had never been considered by the plantocracy to be quite of their class. None was a planter. The commission's composition and mandate were not announced, however, until March 4.

On March 1, a Friday, the attorney for the Maginley estates was stoned while on the way to town, as was the overseer of another estate. Both fired their revolvers even though neither was hurt. The first was so unaccustomed to guns that he nearly shot himself, which perhaps gives some indication of the planters' state of mind. A police car was sent to patrol the main road to the estates, and more people were arrested.

On the following Tuesday, the cases against those who "intimidated" the cane cutters were heard, again in Parham. A crowd of more than four hundred gathered, carrying an assortment of homemade weapons and making a commotion. Colonel Bell, according to his own account, attempted to convince them that they should disperse and await the results of the government commission, but some in the crowd had copies of a leaflet that they believed outlined the "true" agreement. They were convinced that the planters had abrogated this agreement and substituted one of their own. The leaflet specified higher rates, uniform across the island; stated that the cane was to be cut by the line, or, if by the ton, was to be weighed on the estate on which it was cut; specified different rates for plant and ratoon cane and a sliding scale that *increased* for cane cut above the minimum on dense fields. It also included a provision for equal pay for women. Although its source is not specified in the official reports, the proposal embodied everything (and more) that the estate laborers wanted. Furthermore, it was extremely detailed, and appeared to have been a carefully worked out agreement, or draft of an agreement.

To Bell, however, it was a forgery, and he and the magistrate attempted to convince the crowd that it was a false document, a propaganda piece manufactured by troublemakers (although who they were and what their purpose might be was not specified). At this point the same unpopular planter again emerged from the courthouse and the crowd again began to throw stones at him. This was enough for Colonel Bell, who felt that the situation was fast getting out of hand. He quickly called for a detachment of the Defense Force that was stationed in St. John's, and when it arrived (it came by car, while the police were mounted on horses) it escorted the planter home; two armed police constables were left to guard his house. This particular planter's presence was in fact a direct provocation: even Bell felt that his presence was extremely unwise, since he had no business in the court and had come only to show the people that he was not afraid of them.

There were fires that night at Ottos estate, and in the early morning hours at Gambles, just outside St. John's. The next morning, when the cane cutters at Ottos refused to cut the damaged canes, the owner sent in cutters from another of his estates, under police protection. According to Bell, an attempt was made to "interfere" with these cutters, and still more summonses were issued. Nevertheless, the situation was calm enough for Bell to write a long report (which Best forwarded on to the Colonial Office) that concluded with his firm belief that order had been restored.

By the next day, however, it was clear that this evaluation was premature. There was

another cane fire that evening, which burned perilously close to Government House. Bell called out the entire Defense Force. Two more fires then sprang up on the same estate. When the manager and some of the laborers tried to put them out, a “disorderly mob” tried to stop them. The manager immediately identified four men as leaders of the crowd—how he knew who they were is unclear—and Bell was determined to act forcefully by arresting and jailing them.

It is important to note that the stage on which all this activity was taking place had moved from the countryside to the town—the fires were on estates edging the city—and that with this move came a whole new set of actors. The crowds were now young and urban: the four men Bell was determined to arrest—Joseph Collins, George Weston, John Furlonge, and “Sonny” Price—not only lived in the city, but lived in the Point, the center of the urban working class and an area long considered a law unto itself.<sup>78</sup>

March 9 was a Saturday, and market day. Bell and the magistrate went to the Point to arrest the four men but quickly realized that feelings were running high and retreated. He then ordered all the rum shops closed, an action bound to provoke a hostile reaction on market day, and went up to Government House to attend a hastily convened meeting of the Executive Council. He convinced the Council that he should take whatever action necessary to make arrests. The planters immediately fled town for their estates, while Bell returned to the Point where he arrested Weston, Price, and Collins; Furlonge escaped, only to be killed—coincidentally or not—later in the afternoon.

By this point a huge crowd had gathered, filling St. John’s Street from well down in the Point up to Popeshead Street, along Popeshead and up Newgate Street to the Police Station. Whether the crowd was truly threatening is not clear—although close to three tons of stones were collected in the clean up the next day—but Bell considered that a riot was in progress and ordered the magistrate to read the Riot Act. He then ordered the militia, which had approached Popeshead Street from Newgate Street, to make one bayonet charge, and then another, in an attempt to disperse the crowd. When this failed, he ordered the mounted infantry to fire. They got off eighteen rounds, and the crowd finally scattered; many of those shot were reportedly hit in the back. Fifteen people were injured, and either two or three subsequently died.<sup>79</sup> At least thirty-eight people were arrested; almost half were women, who were also prominent among the stone throwers. Few of the rioters were cane cutters, which again points to the extent to which this had become an urban action.

A curfew remained in effect for about a week, and liquor sales were prohibited. Throughout that evening and the next day—Sunday—there were incidents of vandalism and threats to burn down the town; one shop was looted. Best had called for reinforcements, and a Canadian artillery officer and twenty-six men arrived from St. Lucia to relieve the Defense Force, along with a British patrol boat (with an Admiral aboard), two French men of

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<sup>78</sup> This was not the same George Weston who joined the UNIA in New York, later became its vice-president, and returned to Antigua when he retired—and for whom George Weston House was named (contrary to what Paget Henry states [1985: 82-83]). This George Weston lived in the Point; the Garveyite George Weston came from Greenbay.

<sup>79</sup> Accounts vary on the number who died. Best’s report of March 12 gives the figure as three, while his final report says two. S.A. Henry’s graphic description (S.A. Henry 1984: 42) says three, and he was a dispenser at the hospital at the time. See also *Sun*, 12 March 1918, and Bell’s report, which states that there were sixteen “casualties”; S.A. Henry says there were fifteen.

war, two mosquito fleet boats, and the subinspector of police and five of his men from Montserrat. By the time this armada arrived, however, the town was quiet.

On Monday, March 11, Weston and Collins were tried at court martial; Weston was given seven years hard labor, but escaped—the rumor was that he had the help of an “intimate bottle friend” who worked at the court (S.A. Henry 1984: 43). An inquest was held into the deaths, and it agreed that the government had acted correctly. On April 4, the twenty-three men and women charged with rioting were tried, and all but seven found guilty. Sentences ranged from two to three years hard labor—punishment so harsh that one Colonial Office minuter was moved to write that the “whole thing savours of vindictiveness”; another responded with a true administrator’s logic that if the sentences were harsh, they must have been deserved (CO 152/359/Conf., 15 May 1918). (Twelve more remained to be tried, but the result is not included in the correspondence.)

The three-man commission had reported on Saturday, March 9, but its findings did not become known until the Monday. Although it agreed that payment by the ton was preferable, “in the circumstances” it recommended payment by the line. The rates it proposed were almost exactly those in the Parham leaflet (which were, not surprisingly, higher than the line equivalents offered by the Planters’ Association) (*Sun*, 13 March 1918), and it reinstated the differential between plant and ratoon cane. There was no sliding scale.

The factory reopened on March 12. There was one last-ditch effort by an estate manager to get his laborers to accept a lower rate, but the magistrate ruled against him, thus effectively codifying the agreement (CO 152/358/114, 28 March 1918). Henzell, however, continued to bombard both his company and the Colonial Office with intemperate letters about the new rates. He felt that he was the only clear-sighted planter on the island, and argued that the government’s weak and foolish capitulation would lead to nothing but trouble. The laborers were going to earn “entirely out of proportion to the amount of work done” and, as he put it, “All the licks we got with stones has gone for nothing.” He was particularly upset that the final agreement, as published in the *Gazette*, included the phrase “if the laborer is willing,” which he believed effectively took away all authority from the planter (CO 152/358/Tel., 12 March 1918, enc.).<sup>80</sup>

The planter/government line on the entire affair was quickly established: the riot, it was decided, had in fact had very little to do with labor conditions but had been instigated by “lawless and idle persons” in the city (*Sun*, 10 April 1918)—the main evidence being that those who were arrested were city people. In addition, the “riot” would not have happened were it not for “outside agitators” motivated by racial animosities. It is difficult to determine, given the sources, the extent to which racialism actually played a role, but there seems to have been a fairly general consensus that by the end the situation had acquired a decided racial aspect. As Sir Frederick Maxwell put it, “What began as a labour question developed into a race question” (CO 152/360/295, 25 September 1918); and Sammy Smith reported that what had been a dispute between Point people and the police became, once the militia was called out, a battle between “nega and white” (Smith and Smith 1986: 131). The one

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<sup>80</sup> As a whole, however, the planters were very proud of how they had stood up to this threat to their way of life. They heaped praise on the Inspector of Police, the magistrate, and the defense and police forces, both in their dispatches to the Colonial Office and in public ceremonies in Antigua. Bell was awarded a piece of silver plate—paid for by subscription—for his services and good judgment (*Sun*, 20 March 1918).

voice of reason was that of Maxwell, who had been charged with investigating the riots and who wrote a very thorough and sympathetic report that concluded, among other things, that the real agitator did not come from among the laborers, but was the person who had suggested that the planters get together in the first place.

Over the next few months, the planters gradually convinced themselves that perhaps they had given in too easily and they began another assault on the "idleness" of the working masses. There were renewed calls for enforced work—"Every eater should be a worker," said the *Sun* on April 27. The newspaper also reported favorably—and more than once—on a Trinidad law that in effect allowed "habitual idlers" to be jailed (*Sun*, 10 May 1918), and frequent editorials bemoaned the fact that some people would rather beg and steal than work. The economy was not improving, and the fault was the laborers: they had to be "taught habits of thrift and industry" (*Sun*, 6 May 1918 and 7 September 1918); they were "suicidal" in their inability to use opportunities to earn more (*Sun*, 12 September 1918); each one had to be "taught to feel his responsibility as a man" (*Sun*, 14 August 1918). This hysteria continued for several years, and culminated in an amendment to the vagrancy act to allow the imprisonment of habitual idlers, with the persons so charged having the responsibility of proving they had a trade or calling (*Sun*, 2 April 1922).

Although it might appear from this that the laboring population achieved little as a result of the tumultuous events of 1918, and although this belief is apparently part of the popular conception—Sammy Smith reports that for the next few years things were very quiet, the planters feeling assured that the laborers had learned their lesson (he also believes that they failed to win any wage increase)—this was in fact far from the case. For despite the fact that some things did not change—the Contract Act remained in effect until 1937, for instance—the balance of power between labor and management had imperceptibly begun to shift toward labor. The more astute planters recognized this: it is part of the reason that Henzell, more of a businessman than the others, protested the agreement so vehemently. He knew that it was a victory for the laborers, not only because they would earn more, but, much more important, because organized collective action had achieved better wages and conditions than had been possible through the traditional method of negotiating agreements between workers and management on an estate-by-estate basis, where management always had the upper hand. The road to trade unionism had been embarked upon.

But only embarked. The 1918 "riots" were a spontaneous revolt against an attempt by the planters and the factory to assert their control over a labor force that had suffered badly from the effects of the war, and they did not, as Sammy Smith noted, lead immediately to any further organization. The bulk of the labor force remained in estate labor, and wages remained appallingly low, averaging between 1s/6d and 2s/4d a day for a male field hand from the 1920s to 1940 (*Annual Reports*). Disputes over the implementation of the Contract Act continued, as did out-migration, and in 1920 the governor reported to the Colonial Office that it was becoming difficult to find not only skilled artisans but unskilled labor for roadwork; he proposed recruiting from other islands (CO 152/309/97, 9 March 1920).

One key obstacle to further organizing was lack of leadership. The laboring population blamed the Antigua Progressive Union, and particularly its leaders, for the failure of the

“People’s Committee” to win them a favorable agreement. This led to a vigorous attempt by Sheppard to set the record straight (*Sun*, 1 March and 7 March 1918). He argued that the APU could not be blamed for the failure of the committee, since it was an entirely separate body and since the two APU members served as individuals, not as representatives of the organization. Further, he protested that the People’s Committee had not *intended* to represent the workers. This defense was disingenuous at best and can have done little to mollify his constituents, who knew that he and his fellow APU members had neither resigned from the committee nor filed any protest about the agreement, and who could be forgiven for believing that the APU members on the committee—who were, after all, its president and secretary—were there to represent them. Indeed, this was hardly a spirited defense of the laborer, and Sheppard’s intent seems primarily to have been to defend his name. In addition, this was apparently not atypical of the APU’s leadership: when Dr. McGuire (also a committee member) was appointed to a post in St. Kitts and met vociferous opposition for having been one of the “causes” of the riots, he defended himself by denying vehemently that he was either a “social [or] a labour firebrand” (*Sun*, 23 April 1918).<sup>81</sup>

### **The Rise of a Peasantry as a Political Force**

Both the president and vice-president of the Antigua Progressive Union were independent cultivators or peasants—more accurately, part-peasants, since they were also skilled wage laborers. It was thus to this stratum of the population that the laborers first looked for leadership, and it clearly failed them: the final agreement, after all, was the work of a committee of outsiders. Courted by the planters and factory, they sold out their followers in order to join on the side of the elite. But this did not signal the end of the peasantry as a political force, only its temporary defeat. The peasantry’s role in the politics of the 1930s will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter; here I want to describe its origins and growth.

Although establishing a central sugar factory in Antigua had been a key recommendation of the Norman Commission, and the one that became the focus of government and Colonial Office efforts to save the economy, the commission had also strongly reiterated past recommendations to encourage other export crops and other producers—in other words, to develop peasant production. There had long been a sizable number of independent cultivators in Antigua: Hall quotes an 1852 report that of 15,000 agricultural laborers, only 6,000 worked on the estates (Hall 1971: 128)—but these produced vegetables and root crops for domestic consumption, not sugar (or anything else) for export, which was what the term “peasant” meant to the British.

The issues of peasant production and diversification had been raised officially in Antigua as early as 1884 (if not before), when the Crossman Commission, responding to an earlier crisis, had visited the West Indies and recommended that peasant production be encouraged in order to increase government revenues: a strong peasantry would have

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<sup>81</sup> It is hard to believe that this was the same Rev. George Andrew McGuire who became UNIA chaplain-general in 1920 and was the first bishop of the African Orthodox Church, but it certainly seems to have been. For more on McGuire, see T. Martin 1983: 52, 78; and articles by Ernle Gordon and Philip Potter in Lewis and Bryan 1988.

money to spend, imports would increase, and government revenues, highly dependent on import duties, would rise with them. This argument was the result of a sea change in attitude within the British government. Whereas in the years after emancipation there had been great concern, both in the West Indies and England, that sugar production was declining because the estates were unable to attract a sufficient labor force (see Lobdell 1984 on the Select Committees of 1842 and 1848), now the concern was less economic than political: only a strong "independent" peasantry would provide political stability. As in England, where the yeoman farmer was believed to be the backbone of the country, so it should be in the colonies.

Foreshadowed by the Crossman Commission, the Norman Commission thus abandoned the position that progress depended solely on the plantation production of sugar and emphasized that an independent peasantry as a key element in economic recovery. Further, this peasantry was not only to be part of the sugar export economy but was to lead in the development of other export crops: "No reform affords so good a prospect for the permanent welfare and future of the West Indies as the settlement of the labouring population on the land as small peasant proprietors" (quoted in Lobdell 1984: 10). The commission argued that an established peasantry would benefit the planters by providing the necessary seasonal wage labor force more willingly, and would also become innovative agriculturally, thus developing into a source of economic growth and stability; this would in turn stem the out-migration of the "more intelligent labouring population" (quoted in Aspinall 1923). Underlying these proposals was the Colonial Office's belief that peasant proprietors would exhibit ambition and initiative, while the ordinary wage laborer would not (CO 152/295/112, 11 March 1907).

The Norman Commission made a number of concrete suggestions: it recommended that estate land be given up to this purpose, and forcefully condemned the plantation monopoly of unused cultivatable land, on some islands going so far as to recommend its expropriation: "A monopoly of the most accessible and fertile lands by a few persons who are unable any longer to make a beneficial use of them cannot, in the general interests of the island, be tolerated, and is a source of public danger" (quoted in Lobdell 1984: 10). It also recommended that money be allocated for the development of the necessary local infrastructure, such as roads from the countryside to the ports and sugar factories, and for the improvement of techniques of cultivation—which led directly to the establishment of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture and of agricultural extension services in most islands.

The reaction to these proposals in Antigua was lukewarm. In response to a circular sent out by the Colonial Office to determine the opinions of the various legislative councils, the Antiguan planters reported that they feared a loss of their labor force and would only countenance a peasant proprietorship based on growing cane on the half-share system. Some of the officials, on the other hand, favored the development of a peasantry that would grow provisions and export crops other than sugar (i.e., pineapples), particularly on the south side of the island, arguing that this would not compete with the estates' need for labor. The attorney-general, recently arrived and perhaps less caught up in local points of view, took on all these objections one by one, and concluded that, "It would certainly not be

right to preserve the existing poverty and wretchedness of the people in order to ensure cheap and weak labourers for the sugar industry" (CO 152/243/94, Enc., 11 February 1899). Governor Fleming's covering letter endorsed the idea, but with a certain restraint, and proposed the use of Crown lands rather than any compulsory expropriation. In the end, the issue was dropped, although as a condition of its grant the Antigua Sugar Factory had to agree to take in a certain amount of peasant cane. As we saw in Chapter 3, this was a promise easily made because it was so easily ignored: not only was there very little peasant cane production at that time, but it was not in the factory's environs.

Despite local recalcitrance, the Colonial Office continued to press its cause. This was not only because of the evident troubles faced by the sugar industry, but was equally the result of the movement into the Colonial Office of a group of younger men with colonial experience: Norman had served in India and the secretary to the commission, Sydney Olivier, had served in the West Indies (Lobdell 1984).<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the report of a commission sent out in 1930, this time headed by Olivier and known as the Semple-Olivier report, was a reprise of the Norman Commission report: wages in Antigua were lower than in other islands, while the labor force was still excluded from the cultivation of either cane or foodstuffs, leading to increasing out-migration and an unbalanced sex ratio of 198:100 (*Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission* 1930: 5). Peasant ownership should be encouraged, even if this meant the government taking over private estate land; but sugar should nevertheless be reinforced because it provided employment for a majority of the workforce, because it was the only way to keep the European population, and because there was no obvious alternative (ibid.: 13, 40). By the 1920s, if not earlier, this attitude had become liberal orthodoxy locally as well: as one newspaper editorial put it in 1922, a "thriving and contented peasantry" is the "backbone of any country" (*Sun*, 16 May 1922).

Without the support of the planters or the factory, however, and therefore without access to land, a peasantry developed very slowly. Despite a plethora of schemes on the part of a series of governors—for developing pineapple, onion, and tomato production, for instance—there was little support, financial or otherwise, and each quickly collapsed. It was not until 1916, when the war led to a desperate scarcity of foodstuffs and an enormous rise in prices, that the Colonial Office finally approved a proposal to sell government land at Sawcolts and Clare Hall in order to increase the output of local food crops (CO 152/352/364, 18 November 1916). The lots themselves were tiny—one to three acres. Within twelve years there were five settlements comprising 3,989 acres, although only 226 were considered arable and few were in areas suitable to cane. Thus while the stated aim may have been to develop a class of "self-respecting" families attached to their "native soil," the immediate result was to satisfy the need for housing and gardens, not agricultural production. By 1938, 3,300 people owned or rented holdings of less than 10 acres but only 10 percent were owners, while another 20 percent were in the process of acquiring ownership through lease-purchase arrangements and a large 70 percent were renting from the estates (Colonial Office 1942).

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<sup>82</sup> After serving on the Norman Commission, Olivier went on to become governor of Jamaica and a fervent advocate of peasant production, as well as a well-known Fabian socialist. In two papers exploring Olivier's role in policy issues, Richard Lobdell shows that Olivier was particularly convinced of the importance of the development of a strong peasantry. See Lobdell 1984, and esp. 1986.

There followed a sad tale of abortive schemes to develop different peasant-grown crops—a sad tale as revealed in the Colonial Office records that must have been an even sadder tale for those individuals who tried crop after crop, only to see them all fail. The first to receive attention was pineapples. In 1894, their production was reported to be “entirely in the hands of the negroes” (CO 152/190/124, 16 May 1894), and the governor evinced an interest in developing production. In 1896 an Antigua Fruit Growers’ Association was formed to “develop minor industries” and “improve the conditions of the labouring man.” The founding members were a newspaper editor, a barrister’s clerk, and a magistrate’s clerk, which gives some indication of the stratum of the population involved. The problem was that pineapples grew best in the south but were perishable, and there was no good way for the growers to get their crop across the island to the port. The effort quickly died. Similarly, onions were grown, beginning in 1895, at the instigation of the governor, and an Onion Growers’ Association, with thirty-three members, was founded in 1914 (*Sun*, 29 June 1914). But production was erratic because of the difficulty of getting seed in time and of getting the crop to market early enough to precede the seasonal glut. Erratic prices and competition from foreign onions, along with low prices on the world market, led to a decrease in production—from a high of 7,000 crates in 1925 to 20 crates in 1934.

Coconuts were produced in the 1920s, but were susceptible to hurricane damage and no money was allocated for replanting. Beginning in 1911, limes made a small contribution to exports (in the form of concentrate and raw juice), and beginning in 1918 tamarinds did as well; both had died out by the late 1930s. Vegetables, particularly tomatoes, were grown in the 1930s, but problems with weather and shipping forestalled further development. There were experiments with sisal in 1915 and again in 1926 (at Moody-Stuart’s instigation), and with tobacco in 1929, but these too faded away. Pearl fishing, an oyster industry, a sponge industry, an expanded fishing industry—all were proposed but never developed. Goatskins were exported from 1915 to about 1930, and then faded out. The “Barbados Syrup King” came to Antigua in 1918 to make arrangements for syrup to be produced for the Canadian market (*Sun*, 17 April 1918), but nothing came of that either. Tiny amounts of ornamental beadwork were exported between 1923 and 1926, as was some turtle shell in 1928 and 1931 and some preserved fruits between 1918 and 1920.

The same story held true for local industry: rum was produced locally until the coming of the central factory, as well as taxes, made small producers unwilling to invest in modernizing the distilling equipment. Locally produced rum—in any case an estate product—was quickly displaced by imported rum (CO 152/290/239, 1 July 1906) until the Antigua Distillery was opened in 1934 (St.-Johnston 1936a: 256). A locally owned ice factory, which was formed in 1893, was by 1894 supplying the needs of Antigua, St. Kitts, and Montserrat, but was turned down flat by the Colonial Office when it asked for a loan in order to expand (CO 152/191/165, January 1894). The Colonial Office suggested instead that any government subsidy be used for importing ice from Barbados—another strike at local initiative. A similar loan request from a steamship line (represented in this case by A.M. Lee) which hoped to encourage tourism was also denied: such ventures were considered too “speculative” (CO 152/192/Crown Agents, April 1894). In 1913, Governor Bell proposed, with great fanfare, a corn-growing and kiln-drying scheme to produce cornmeal, but it was

met with resistance on the part of the planters and was then forced out of business by cheaper cornmeal imported from the United States (*Annual Report* 1922: 10). Despite the fact that cornmeal was in very short supply during the war, the idea left with Bell. Not until the Antigua Recovery Programme was begun in 1938 did the government begin to take seriously its role of developing an alternative to sugar: the program included loans for a cornmeal factory and a hotel (Henry 1985: 142).

The only crop in which the peasantry gained a foothold was cotton, but here the problems were much like those for sugar: control over the factory—in this case, the cotton ginnery—was firmly in the hands of the planter class, so that the peasantry was never able to garner a fair share of the profits, while lack of access to land and erratic weather conditions made production problematic.

Cotton had been grown successfully in Antigua in the mid-1800s, a time of cotton famine in Europe, but when world production increased and prices fell, cotton land was put into sugar (*Almanac for 1872*: 45). In 1903, however, Governor Strickland revived the idea of growing cotton, waxing enthusiastic to the Colonial Office on the crops' prospects: it would "make insolvent Presidencies self-sufficient at an early date," would put abandoned sugar land into cultivation, and would even induce emigrant Antiguans to return home (CO 152/281/563, 16 November 1903). The Colonial Office was skeptical and correspondence flew back and forth as the governor—who, it will be remembered from the sugar factory negotiations, was argumentative—marshaled a new argument to meet every objection: there was a serious shortage in the American cotton crop, as well as in Lancashire, and prices for Sea Island (long staple) cotton were in any case higher than for other kinds; and the labor force was available, with women and children able to help with the picking. Most important, cotton demanded different growing conditions from sugar and so the two would not compete: cotton could be planted on land abandoned by the planters—a total of between 4,000 and 5,000 acres in the east and south, and some in Five Islands, was already in the hands of the government (CO 152/287/280, 12 July 1905).

In 1903 the British Cotton Growers' Association, founded in 1902 to promote cotton growing overseas, gave a small grant to the Leeward Islands (£50 for Antigua) to encourage cultivation, and the governor proceeded to set up a gin in an unused storehouse with a loaned steam engine.<sup>83</sup> Then, at two meetings of the Antigua Agricultural and Commercial Society, in July and October 1903, both especially held at Government House and presided over by the governor himself, the prospects for cotton cultivation were emphasized. At the first, the Imperial Commissioner of Agriculture, Daniel Morris, discussed the favorable conditions for cotton-growing in Antigua and promised the assistance of his department. At the second, the governor emphasized that cotton was not a speculative crop—one reason the planters gave for not becoming involved—but one with increasing demand, good profits, little risk (since, as with sugar, one bumper year can make up for several bad ones). After offering this carrot, he then flourished his stick: he "laughingly" threatened to increase the tax on uncultivated land to make the "owners recognise the responsibility resting upon their shoulders if they did not do their duty by the land and the labourers" (Minutes, included in

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<sup>83</sup> Watkins (1924: 217) reported that experiments were first conducted in Antigua in 1901, as well as Montserrat and St. Kitts, but Strickland does not mention this in his dispatches to the Colonial Office.

CO 152/280/334, 6 July 1903; *Antigua Standard*, enclosed in CO 152/280/526, 29 October 1903).

Much to his disappointment, the response was minimal. For one thing, sugar prices were (temporarily) up again, and for another, few people appeared willing to embark upon a new and unproven venture. Impatient with the slow acceptance of his scheme by the large planters, Strickland next proposed to offer ten-acre lots of government land in Piccadilly and the Savannah (the southeast) rent free for two years. The Colonial Office agreed to a loan of £1,100 for this purpose, but with stringent terms: interest was to be at 4.5 percent, the loan was to be repaid within a year, and—as if this were not enough—security on each lot was to be provided in the form of a guarantee by *two* “substantial” persons (CO 152/283/9, 11 January 1904). Nevertheless, a number of small proprietors, including several Portuguese, applied and seventeen loans were recorded for 1904–05. All the amounts were small—£20, £30, and £40, or 10, 15, and 20 acres (CO 152/284/256, 15 June 1904).

Production then began to increase rapidly, and by 1907 the governor could write the Colonial Office that “settlers are arriving from England to invest Capital and Land” in cotton (CO 152/294/19, 5 January 1907). He turned the government gin over to a private company, and four additional private gins were then established (CO 152/295/157, 9 April 1907). In that same year, Aspinall reported that “Many acres are devoted to the cultivation of Sea Island cotton, which is produced profitably.... Antigua is one of the centres of the revived cotton industry in the West Indies” (Aspinall 1907: 203, 211).

Success was short-lived, however. Cotton never found more than a marginal place in the Antiguan economy, although it did in St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat, not only in terms of the amount of land it occupied—1,650 acres in St. Kitts, 2,000 acres in Nevis, and 2,000 acres in Montserrat in 1911/12, compared to only 647 in Antigua and Barbuda (Watkins 1924: 218)—but also in terms of its contribution to export earnings. In Antigua the bloom faded fast, and by 1909 the governor (now Sweet-Escott) was calling the effort a failure (CO 152/310/176, 15 April 1909). By 1912 cotton was providing only 5.2 percent of Antigua’s export earnings, compared to 24.3 percent for St. Kitts and 45.6 percent for Montserrat (Watkins 1924: 219):

Year	Pounds
1903	27,853
1904	54,289
1905	99,948
1906	180,000
1907	182,000
1908	45,300
1909	59,960
1911	96,992
1912	80,910 <sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> For sources for this data, and acres planted, see Appendix 5.

Indeed, cotton could hardly have brought stability since its problems were very similar to those of sugar: erratic market prices, susceptibility to poor weather (although, unlike with sugar, it is wet weather that is disastrous for cotton), wildly fluctuating production, pests (the pink boll worm made its appearance in 1921 and created problems in the following years), and unreliable markets—the outbreak of the war, for instance, closed off two major markets, Belgium and northern France, which were occupied by the enemy. Production fluctuated wildly, as did acreage planted—and, as with sugar, increased production did not necessarily lead to higher income because prices fluctuated wildly as well. In fact, in many years, particular in the late 1920s and early 1930s, no buyer could be found and the full crop could not be sold.

Nevertheless, cotton growing continued and in 1916 an Antigua Cotton Growers' Association was formed to improve quality and help the small grower. But the term was relative, for by this time, despite Strickland's efforts to develop new areas and support a new set of agriculturalists, the crop was firmly in the hands of the sugar planters and local merchants, in particular Dews and Brysons. While about half of the crop was produced by peasants, this production was financed through advances from the merchants, and the merchant-dominated growers' association marketed the cotton, retained the seed, and kept 25 percent of the profits for itself (*Sun*, 13 July 1917).

The Colonial Office pushed for increased production after the war, but the governor reported that frequent drought and the scarcity of labor made this difficult. In 1918, the local acting superintendent of agriculture argued that cotton production should be taken completely out of the hands of the peasant cultivators and placed firmly under the control of the sugar producers. This would reduce the competition for labor and make for more efficient and scientific production. By 1922, however, the wild postwar boom in prices had led overproduction, followed by a drastic price decrease, and the larger growers left production. But while cotton then became a peasant crop—in 1938, all but 240 of the 1,600 acres were cultivated by peasants (Agricultural Advisory Department *Report* 1938: 223)—the Cotton Growers' Association remained firmly in the hands of the planters and merchants—indeed, it had virtually the same officers in 1931 as it had had in 1918, with only a few additions.

Despite this lack of support from planters and government alike, a peasantry did gradually develop, but it was a cane-producing peasantry and thus completely dependent on the whims of the factory management. In 1907, there were only 325 acres of cane under peasant cultivation; by the late 1930s, there were about 4,000 acres, or about 40 percent of the total (Agricultural Advisory Department *Report* 1938: 219); on the other hand, peasant cane accounted for only 25 percent of the final product, a clear indication of the difficulties the peasants faced. These difficulties were the result of their dependence on the factory, which, along with its associated estates, used all the weapons at its disposal to control the amount of land available for peasant production, as well as to extract as much profit as possible from it. Thus peasants received a lower rate for their cane than did the estates—because, the factory argued, peasant cane had a lower sugar content. The problem was that the only way to maintain the sugar content of cane is to get it to the factory quickly and the peasants lacked the means to do this: the estate railways had been built to serve the large

estates and in addition the peasants were charged a cess for using them, despite the fact that they had been built with the aid of government loans. In addition, the organization of cutting was administered by the estates, which gave their own cane precedence. Estate production thus did not suffer from peasant competition: in good years the estates could put their own production first, while in bad years peasant cane kept the factory grinding. All this became a major issue in the 1937 elections, described in the next chapter.

The nineteenth-century notion that a colony should have only those services that it could pay for out of its own revenues continued to dominate thinking in the Colonial Office into the twentieth century, and it was not until the mid-1930s that additional money began to be allocated for peasant development. Yet even when specially designated funds were established to help the peasantry, there was a lot of foot-dragging locally and little was at first accomplished. Thus despite a 1934 Colonial Development Fund grant to £52,454 to be spent on housing, sanitation, land settlement, drains, water, and so on (CO 152/446/15, 1934), and a further grant in 1937 specifically designated for the acquisition of land (*Star*, 9 August 1937), only 600 peasants were settled in the next two years (Henry 1985: 85, citing Supplement to the *Leeward Islands Gazette*, 24 November 1938). Not even after the Moyne Commission recommendations and the institution of the Antigua Recovery Programme in 1938, which included money for land settlement, was there much progress. A Land Settlement and Development Board was not established until 1943, and help for farming and marketing problems was not begun until the late 1940s (Henry 1985: 106).<sup>85</sup>

Nevertheless, by the mid-1930s, the peasantry was large enough to begin to press its concerns publicly—and wealthy enough to be able to vote. Indeed, as the first election neared—it was held in May 1937—it became clear that the peasantry had become strong enough, and unified enough, to vote as a bloc, and that the “peasant vote” might provide the margin a candidate needed to win. In addition, the peasants were quite willing to make their voices heard, as they did when there was a rash of cane fires in mid-1937, reportedly lit because the peasants felt they were being unfairly deprived of the opportunity to cut their canes at the optimal time (*Star*, 12 June 1937). Planter/merchant papers such as the *Star* began to write about the peasants in the same terms they had long written about the laborers, condemning them, for instance, for exhibiting an “aggressiveness and a self-assertiveness which are at times quite uncalled for” (*Star*, 12 June 1937). The peasants had clearly become a force to be reckoned with.

Thus by the mid-1930s, the white planter class in Antigua was facing mounting

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<sup>85</sup> Even then there was a lack of arable land, however, and it was not until the 1951 strike, followed by the investigations of the Malone Commission, that there was a true growth in peasant acreage. This lasted from 1951 to 1956, when the planters again had it restricted (P. Henry 1985: 106).

Nevertheless, Antigua was far ahead of St. Kitts in this regard. St. Kitts was almost as dependent on sugar as Antigua but had only 500 acres in peasant cane. The St. Kitts factory, also owned by Henckell DuBuisson, produced slightly more sugar from its cane than the Antigua factory did, primarily due to better growing conditions. On the other hand, this made St. Kitts somewhat less suitable for cotton.

In Antigua, peasants grew about 25 percent of the total crops, but most of this was cotton. According to *Outlet*, in 1943 there were 1,220 small peasants settled on 6,219 acres (*Outlet*, 21 April 1989). By 1945, according to the census, there were 3,196 farmers with more than 1 acre, 2,159 of whom had sugar as their principal crop, while 12,600 out of 16,700 acres overall were in cane (Rottenberg 1960: 2). In 1947, small peasants produced 10,075 tons of cane; by 1956, they were producing 69,354 tons; similarly, in 1958, after cotton revived, peasants produced 999,646 pounds of lint, while large planters produced 231,127 pounds (*Outlet*, 21 April 1989).

dissatisfaction on all fronts: the mass of the labor force (urban and rural), the peasantry, and the new nonwhite middle class were each unhappy with its lot. Both the laboring population and the peasantry were suffering from the effects of the depression and were becoming increasingly vocal in their opposition to the decline in their standard of living. For the new nonwhite middle class, the issues were more political and social than economic: would they, as nonwhites, ever be considered equal to whites, or would they continue to be treated as second-class citizens in their own country. As labor tensions grew throughout the Caribbean in the mid-1930s—the tensions that led to riots in Trinidad and other islands, although not in Antigua, and the formation of trade unions almost everywhere—a key issue in terms of the future was the role the nonwhite middle class would play in this situation.

## CHAPTER 9

### **"THEY COULDN'T MASH ANTS": MIDDLE-CLASS POLITICS BETWEEN THE WARS<sup>86</sup>**

As nonwhite middle classes grew in size and influence throughout the West Indies after the turn of the century, they began to agitate for a greater voice in the governance of their affairs. In the larger colonies, such as Trinidad, such reform movements had begun as early as the 1860s, when planters, merchants, landowners, and professionals all united in opposition to Crown Colony government. In the eastern Caribbean, however, the first Representative Government Association was not formed until 1914, when one was established in Grenada. The movement began in earnest with the return of West Indian servicemen after the war (Dookhan 1975: 117) and public meetings began to be held in many islands to urge more elected representation in the legislative councils.

The British responded to these demands, as was their custom, with a commission, in this case the Wood Commission, headed by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies Major E.F.L. Wood. His report, issued in 1922, "expressed an unwavering commitment to the premises of the trusteeship ideology" (Benn 1987: 45). While Wood conceded the need to move toward more representative government, if only as a tactical necessity to forestall further agitation, he argued that fully responsible self-government—i.e., fully elected legislatures—could not be allowed in the foreseeable future (Benn 1987: 45-46). The underlying fear was an old one: that even a small step in this direction would lead to eventual loss of British control. The issue was plainly put by W. Ormsby-Gore, an M.P. and future Secretary of State, in an article written for a British audience: "Representative government leads ultimately to the control of the purse, and leads to the control of the Government" (Ormsby-Gore 1922: 464).

For smaller islands, Wood recommended that elected members be allowed only in St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Dominica (three in each), none of which had strong white planter classes to protest; all took their seats in 1924 (Augier et al. 1960: 273). The fact that in Dominica the Legislative Council had been dominated by nonwhites since 1837 and that "responsible opinion" was clearly for constitutional reform led Wood to shift gears and argue that too far-reaching reform here would cause problems in other islands (Lewis 1968: 122). In Grenada, which had the weakest white planter class and the strongest nonwhite elite—it included planters and merchants as well as professionals—the Representative Government Association, founded by T.M. Marryshow in 1914, had won acceptance of a semi-representative constitution before Wood arrived. It too was put into effect in 1924, and was followed by an unofficial majority.

In the Leewards, however, Wood favored no such concessions: he argued that there was a large body of "public opinion" in Antigua and St. Kitts that was "definitely hostile" to any change, and that these voices had to be considered (Wood 1922). There is no indication

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<sup>86</sup> The phrase "can't mash ants" refers to a person who is too dainty to even step on something as nonthreatening as a tiny ant. I heard it in Antigua but have since found that it is known throughout the Caribbean.

in the report of how Wood learned of this “public opinion” in Antigua, although in St. Kitts the Representative Government Association, which stated that it represented the entire community *except* the planters, had its arguments turned aside because the Agricultural and Commercial Society disagreed. To quote Ormsby-Gore again, in Antigua and St. Kitts, the demand for change did not have “any very real or substantial backing, and the more responsible sections of unofficial opinion are still satisfied with the old state of affairs and would prefer not to see any change” (Ormsby-Gore 1922: 459). Wood argued publicly that he would only endorse change when all classes and colors were agreed, but the reverse was more to the point: if the planters were against reform, then he would not endorse it, and in St. Kitts and Antigua—unlike the less sugar-dominated Windwards—the planters were still strong enough to be heard.

Part of the reason Wood listened so closely to the planters was that he, like heads of previous commissions, was convinced that “the stability and progress of the West Indies are largely dependent upon the presence of the European element...” (Wood 1922: 49; cited in Benn 1987: 48). Since the sugar industry was the reason for Europeans being in the West Indies in the first place, sugar must be supported. The need for a continued European element was also an essential component of his recommendations for maintaining a strong official element in the government.

If the views of the growing nonwhite middle class in Antigua had not been heard by the Wood Commission, it was in part because they were not being heard in Antigua itself. When the governor had appointed his first fully nominated Legislative Council in 1897, he no doubt thought that he would finally be done with the fractiousness of a partially elected council. But new tensions immediately developed, now between officials and unofficials rather than between nominated and elected. Officials—who were, as the name reflects, high level government officers—were expected to vote with the government. This often led to vocal criticism from the unofficials, who, although also nominated, tended to vote as a separate bloc;<sup>87</sup> not surprisingly, the source of these disputes was generally money, often votes on payments to government officials or over allocations for public works.<sup>88</sup> Further, the unofficials were unanimously opposed to a particular measure, the Colonial Office expected the governor to refrain from putting the disputed measure into effect unless absolutely necessary (Bertram 1930: 174-75), but in small islands like Antigua this could not always be avoided.<sup>89</sup>

Under Crown Colony government, the unofficials were appointed as representatives of different interests rather than geographical areas and as such were not necessarily expected

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<sup>87</sup> As Bertram put it, “The sight of a long row of officials, who otherwise scarcely open their lips, exclaiming ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ in succession, by official order ... moves the resentment of politically minded spectators” (Bertram 1930: 175).

<sup>88</sup> Officials were, as noted, expected to vote with the government, and the punishment for straying could be forced resignation, although it probably did not go that far very often, particularly in small islands where the number of candidates for the post was few. In the one instance I came across where an official did have the temerity to vote against the government, he then claimed he had done so “inadvertently”; he was nevertheless lambasted by the governor and the complaint made its way to the Colonial Office (CO 152/284/353, 30 August 1904).

<sup>89</sup> Immediately before being disbanded in 1897, the Legislative Council passed a resolution forbidding the governor to appoint a government official as a nominated unofficial, which would have forestalled this division into blocs and given him an even greater degree of control (CO 152/216/153, 12 March 1897).

to support the government (Benn 1987: 43). As Bertram put it, "If people think and feel in communities, they should be represented in communities" (Bertram 1930: 71). Thus of the eight unofficials in 1898, three represented planting interests while two represented the merchant sector. As noted in Chapter 3, one of the merchants also represented the Portuguese community and the other merchant also represented the old middle-class nonwhite community. One man, a doctor, was appointed to represent the interests of the "laboring classes." By the 1920s, the balance had shifted slightly toward the merchants, with five merchants (the two largest import/export houses, Brysons and Dews, were by this time always represented) and three planters, but no one representing the laborers any longer. There was still only one representative of the nonwhite middle class, and apparently one was all that was expected: in 1920 the Colonial Office wrote the governor to ask who represented the "coloured community" in the Leewards and expressed satisfaction at the numbers: one in Antigua, three in St. Kitts, and two in Montserrat (CO 152/369/Conf., 27 February 1920).<sup>90</sup> And the real seat of power, the Executive Council, remained both planter dominated and firmly white.

Controlling access to the Legislative Council was not an easy task for the governor, who had great difficulty coming up with enough qualified (and suitable) candidates for the unofficial slots. The council was thus filled with elderly men, and when, in 1914, the governor was directed by the Colonial Office to come up with some "fresh blood," he wrote back in some frustration that this was almost impossible given that all the "best representatives of the various interests" had already been appointed (CO 152/340/Conf., 5 March 1914). One problem was that appointees expected to serve for life, and even when five-year terms were instituted in 1917 (CO 152/354/Conf., 7 April 1917), the older members interpreted this as applying only to new appointees. Thus when, in 1923, J.J. Camacho and R.A.L. Warneford, both of whom had served since the 1890s, were politely asked to retire, they flatly refused, agreeing only after extensive negotiations that allowed them to keep the title "Honorable" (CO 152/392/Conf., 9 February 1923).

The other problem the governor faced was the on-going attempts by George Moody-Stuart, and then by his son Alexander, to shape both the Legislative and Executive councils so that they would be more responsive to the concerns of the sugar factory. George Moody-Stuart's refrain was that the council was "dominated by merchants," despite the fact that this was not the case for the full council and was even less true for the Executive Council (CO 152/370/Conf., 12 April 1920; CO 152/377/273, 28 May 1921). He peppered the Colonial Office with letters to this effect, but although he won their intervention on specific issues, he ran into considerable resistance from the governor, who was leery of giving the factory too much influence (CO 152/373/582, 8 December 1920).<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> There were actually two nonwhites on the council for a very brief period in the early 1900s. Delos Martin was appointed in 1898 and J.D. Harper in 1899, but Martin was off by 1905. Harper was replaced by L.S. Cranstoun (who had married Harper's sister). All of these men were from the old middle class. The first member of the new middle class to be appointed was Joseph Anderson Harney, who replaced Harper in 1920.

<sup>91</sup> An example of this particular problem occurred in 1920, when the planters, frustrated by their inability to get a road repair tax passed, wrote the governor that their interests were insufficiently represented on the Legislative Council. They forwarded a copy of their letter to Moody-Stuart in London and he immediately wrote to the Colonial Office, which then intervened on the planters' side (CO 152/370/Conf., 12 April 1920; CO 370/206, 10 May 1920).

Moody-Stuart focused much of his effort on getting his men appointed. Thus he first proposed that a section of the council retire each year and be ineligible for reappointment, a proposal the governor rejected on the grounds that he would never be able to find enough people to serve (CO 152/370/Conf., 12 April 1920). He then recommended that L.I. Henzell, manager of the sugar factory, be put on the Executive Council (he was at that point a nominated unofficial). When the governor turned him down, he put the same request to the Wood Commission, which turned it back to the governor.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, all this pressure apparently had an effect, because by 1924 Henzell was on the Executive Council—although he no longer held an appointment as an unofficial member of the Legislative Council. By 1930, he had been joined by Alexander Moody-Stuart (who, it will be remembered, had arrived in Antigua in about 1924 to look after his father's interests and had married Henzell's daughter). Alexander continued his father's campaign, even going so far as to propose that the Legislative Council be abolished completely so that local affairs could be handled entirely by the unofficials (CO 152/446/6, 1934)—this at the very time that the introduction of an elective element was once again being seriously discussed.

Far from stopping the movement for political change in the West Indies, the implementation of the Wood Commission's cautious recommendations only provoked it. Where an elective element was introduced, it remained an ineffectual and frustrated minority, while where the councils remained fully nominated, the unofficials grew increasingly restive. The protest movement grew throughout the 1920s, exacerbated by the economic crisis caused by the depression. In early 1932, the Colonial Office sent out a financial advisor to look into the situation. While the unofficials had been advocating lower government salaries as a way of reducing the deficit, the advisor instead proposed a series of tax increases. He also argued that the population should be educated to be "cultivators of the soil," which the local middle classes saw as outrageous imperial elitism.<sup>93</sup> In Dominica and Grenada, the unofficials resigned in protest; in St. Kitts, they voted as a bloc to oppose any tax increase (*Magnet*, 13 February 1932). In Antigua, the unofficials refused to attend Legislative Council meetings. The anti-government *Magnet* editorialized: "What we assert with all the vehemence we are capable of calling forth is that the overhead charges of government are too high and that these should be reduced immediately rather than a greater strain be put on the people" (*Magnet*, 13 February 1932, included in CO 152/435/10, 1932). The paper even hinted at possible civil disobedience if the unofficials were pushed too far. The governor sent a series of agitated telegrams to the Colonial Office, which replied that if the Antiguan unofficials stayed absent, he should simply carry on without them (CO 152/435/13, 22 February 1932). The Council's term then expired, and the

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<sup>92</sup> The dispute between the governor—Merewether—and Henzell took on a personal edge. Henzell was apparently an exceedingly fractious man and in 1921, when the governor gave an official dinner to celebrate the King's birthday and invited Henzell but not his wife, Henzell was extremely miffed. Although, according to Henzell, the wives of other unofficials were invited, the governor said he had not invited Henzell's wife because of the small size of the dining room. Henzell withdrew his acceptance. Moody-Stuart then called the Colonial Office to voice his displeasure (CO 152/377/Conf., 9 June 1921).

<sup>93</sup> The advisor, Sir Sydney Armitage Smith, was sent to the Leewards, Windwards, and British Guiana as part of the Gaskell-McGregor Commission. His trip was reported on in the British Guiana *Daily Chronicle*, which was in turn reprinted in the *Dominica Tribune* of 31 March 1932; this article was included in CO 152/435/10, 1932.

governor only reappointed those who had capitulated.

This high-handedness further fueled the protest movement, and immediately there were calls for a conference of unofficials from all the islands, to be held in London, to discuss the abolition of Crown Colony government and promote "closer Caribbean cooperation." In St. Kitts, the newspaper threatened that the British would lose the support of the West Indian population if the "cherished despotism" of Crown Colony government was not reconsidered (*Union Messenger*, 24 March 1932, included in CO 152/435/10). In Antigua, the *Magnet* called for "Federation, abolition of Crown Colony Government, opposition to the West Indies being used as a dumping ground for mediocre or worn out European officials come to draw the dole, and equality of opportunity for all irrespective of colour or class—those should be some of the aims of the association or league..." (*Magnet*, 24 March 1932, included in CO 152/435/10). The governor, now Reginald St.-Johnston, was completely opposed, arguing that "most of this agitation for 'Federation' is patently aimed at autonomy for the West Indies, with home rule for the negro population who by ballot would outnumber the white inhabitants in an overwhelming manner" (quoted in *Outlet*, 26 September 1986).<sup>94</sup>

To increase the pressure, representatives from all the eastern Caribbean islands (six from Dominica, two each from Barbados, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts, and one each from the others, including Antigua) met in Dominica in October 1932. Dubbed the "West Indian Unofficial Conference" (Augier et al. 1960: 276), the conferees held two public meetings and passed resolutions urging self-government and federation, insisting not only that this was their right as British citizens but that it was the only way to achieve the "emancipation of the West Indian peoples from their political and economic serfdom."<sup>95</sup> The formal conference report was a trenchant critique of the existing state of governance:

Instead of a fundamentally harmonious and fruitful cooperation between government and governed, there exists in most of the West Indian islands two hostile camps: one displaying an arrogant and calculated contempt of popular desires and opinions, and the other a sullen and suspicious resentment of all the acts of Government.... Powerless to mould policy, still more powerless to act independently, paralysed by the subconscious fear of impending repression and therefore bereft of constructive thought, the West Indian politician has hitherto been inclined to dissipate his energies.... His political life has been overshadowed by a government too omnipotent and too omnipresent, and has had little opportunity for independent growth. (Cited in Lewis 1968: 102, 155)

The conference agreed to push for federation and fully elected councils, but was

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<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, *Outlet*—the newspaper of the Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement, or ACLM—never gives detailed sources. This is apparently quoted from a letter to the Colonial Office dated 11 May 1932, as are the quotes that follow, although they may come from not one letter but several. St.-Johnston presents a more reasoned view in St.-Johnston 1936a.

<sup>95</sup> This is from a report written by Frederick W. Baldwin, the U.S. Consul stationed in Barbados. His report is factual and moderate in tone—in striking contrast to the St.-Johnston report cited below. It includes a list of all the attendees with their occupations, and is the source of this information below. Entitled "Report of the West Indian Conference Held in Dominica, British West Indies," it was filed from Bridgetown, Barbados, and is dated 16 November 1932. It can be found in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., File 844C.01.16.

divided on the issue of adult suffrage—put forward by the Trinidadian Captain A.A. Cipriani—and agreed to let each colony set its own qualifications for the franchise (W.A. Lewis 1938: 42). Many critics of the meeting felt that the middle class, inherently unsympathetic to the aspirations of the “barefooted man,” had been too easily bought off with favors, visits to London, and government jobs (Williams 1942: 90).

Despite the political differences among them, those who attended the conference were viewed uniformly, by both governor and Colonial Office, as “rabble rousers” and “malcontents.” St.-Johnston even went so far as to report that there were “underground influences at work, probably from Russia,” although “proof is almost impossible to obtain without a local detective or Secret Service” (CO 152/439/9, 1933; CO 152/442/17, 1933)<sup>96</sup> But in fact these men came from very different backgrounds and represented different constituencies. Some, such as Cecil Rawle and R.H. Lockhart from Dominica and C.L. Elder and J.S. Sainsbury from Barbados, were lawyers; others, such as H.D. Shillingford and J.B. Charles, from Dominica, were planters; a few, including M.S. Osborne from Montserrat and John Flemming from Grenada, were merchants; all of these were also members or former members of their respective Legislative Councils and were from old middle-class families. The men from Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and St. Kitts-Nevis, on the other hand, were of a different sort: they had not served on their Legislative Councils, even as nominated unofficials, and were not in general part of the nonwhite middle class; they were journalists and leaders of the local workingmen’s or peasants’ associations; several had been members of Garvey’s UNIA.<sup>97</sup> Thus the representative from Antigua was not one of the nonwhite middle-class lawyers or merchants, or even one of the former or current nonwhite members of the Legislative Council: it was Harold Wilson, feisty editor of the *Magnet*, a Barbadian who had joined the UNIA in Barbados, where he had edited the *Times*, and who had come to Antigua in 1923 (T. Martin 1986).<sup>98</sup> Not only was Wilson not Antiguan, but he was not socially considered part of its nonwhite middle class, and although he wanted a representative of the middle class to go with him, no one was interested (J.O. Davis interview, 16 September 1980). Wilson had not endeared himself to the governor when, abandoning his Garveyite rhetoric and adopting the socialist cause, he had warned during the crisis the previous April that “Sooner or later the nations of the world will have to accept Russian doctrines in a modified form. Communism might be said to be crude or unrefined just now, but in process of time the principles which are practical and which appeal to the sensible will hold universal sway” (*Magnet*, 14 April 1932, enclosed in CO 152/435/10). Not

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<sup>96</sup> St.-Johnston believed he was particularly well-suited to make these kinds of judgments: he had been colonial secretary of the Leewards and administrator of St. Kitts and served as governor of the Leewards from 1929 until his retirement in 1935. On his own view of his life, see St.-Johnston 1936a and 1936b.

<sup>97</sup> By this point the UNIA was on the wane in the Caribbean, although Garvey was still revered. In 1927, Garvey had been deported from the United States to Jamaica, where he continued to proselytize until he was deported from there as well. For Garvey’s visit to Antigua in 1937, see below.

<sup>98</sup> According to Martin, Wilson came to Antigua to buy tamarinds, discovered there was no newspaper, and “was offered a plant to run one” (Harold Wilson to Ralph Casimir, 17 August 1923, cited in T. Martin 1986).

Wilson was officially a representative of the Antigua Agricultural Association. This was an organization of small farmers and agricultural laborers that was under the guidance of the Rev. Charles Franklin Francis, a Moravian clergyman (P. Lewis 1984: 55).

surprisingly, St.-Johnston wanted to prosecute Wilson for “undermining confidence in public affairs” and included his writings in material sent to the Colonial Office. T. Manchester, from St. Kitts, was a small businessman and president of the St. Kitts Workers’ League.<sup>99</sup>

The pressure from the West Indies forced the Colonial Office to send out a “Federation Commission” to look into the issue of “closer union.” It proposed that the official majority be ended, but the Colonial Office and the governor delayed as long as possible. In St. Kitts they were backed by four of the seven unofficials, and their argument, as reported by Wilson in the *Magnet*, reiterated the Colonial Office point of view: those who “clamoured” for elected representation were not “men of substance in the community” but only “bits of straw” while those against it were “primarily responsible for the unique position of prosperity in which this island finds itself today.” They warned that if the elected principle were adopted, it would not be long before “the worst elements in Haitian politics are introduced into St. Kitts.” And, in words that must have pleased the Colonial Office, “Under any political system the Government should at all times be in a position to govern” (*Magnet*, 28 December 1935). We can assume that the arguments in Antigua were similar.

New constitutions were finally approved in 1936. In some islands, such as Grenada, the elected members now equaled the nominated unofficials and officials together, with the governor retaining the final vote (Singham 1968: chap. 3; Brizan 1984). In Antigua, however, there was less of a concession: the officials and nominated unofficials, with three seats apiece, would still be able outvote the elective element, with five.

Although the 1937 elections are only vaguely remembered in Antigua, they were a defining moment in the development of the nonwhite middle class.<sup>100</sup> Because the franchise remained so severely restricted, only 1,048 people were registered to vote, or 3.2 percent of the population. With adult white and nonwhite middle-class males making up only about half of that, the election became an extended pitch for the remaining voters—peasants and the upper levels of the urban working class.<sup>101</sup> Unlike in Dominica, where the four candidates

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<sup>99</sup> The representatives from St. Vincent were E. Duncan, editor of *The Investigator* and R.M. Anderson, editor of *The Vincentian*; the representative from St. Lucia was G. Gordon, editor of the *Voice of St. Lucia*. I do not know enough about these men to know if they were Garvey followers, but certainly there were UNIA branches in both islands (T. Martin 1983: 79).

It should be noted that J.B. Charles from Dominica was also part owner of the *Dominica Tribune*. The other Dominican, R.H. Lockhart, later moved to Antigua and became the editor of the planter paper, the *Star*, which will be quoted at length below. Contrary to what J. Oliver Davis reported (Davis 1984: 53), neither T.M. Marryshow from Grenada nor J. Matthew Sebastien from St. Kitts attended, although both may have been invited. Sebastien was editor of the *Union Messenger* and had helped establish a UNIA branch in St. Kitts (T. Martin 1986).

<sup>100</sup> As an indication of how vaguely they were remembered, none of my many informants, all of whom were active at the time, remembered correctly how many seats were at stake (most people thought three), none were sure who had won, and, most interesting of all, most thought that those who were in fact elected had been nominated.

<sup>101</sup> The *Star* (17 January 1938) reported the figure of 1,048 for the total number of registered voters and quoted an estimate made by one of the candidates (Sir Hugh Hole) that about 300 of these were peasants.

The population was 32,680 in 1935. In his book, Paget Henry writes that 7 percent of the population could vote in 1937 (Henry 1985: 94), but in his original Ph.D. dissertation, this was the percent of the population of *voting age*, not of the entire population, which fits better with my figures.

Although the number is small, it was nevertheless a considerable increase over the figure of 349 in 1897, when the population was about 4,000 higher, and compares favorably with Barbados, where the figure for this period was 3.3 percent (Mark 1966: 12). The qualifications were an income of £30 per annum, ownership of real

shared a common platform and had no opposition in their districts (*Star*, 24 April 1937), the entire island of Antigua was one district and there were three sets of candidates: those endorsed by the Merchants' Association, who campaigned as the "Merchants' Candidates"; those endorsed by the Planters' Association; and one who called himself the "Peasants' Candidate"—a total of eight candidates for five seats.<sup>102</sup>

The election campaign, and its rhetoric, need to be placed in the context of a renewed upsurge of unrest among the peasantry and wage labor force throughout the Caribbean that began at this time. Depressed sugar prices had led to wage cuts, increased taxation, and unemployment, and the laboring classes were beginning to rise up. Eric Williams described the escalating series of events:

Consider the chronology of these fateful years 1935-1938. A sugar strike in St. Kitts, 1935; a revolt against an increase of customs duties in St. Vincent, 1935; a coal strike in St. Lucia, 1935; labor disputes on the sugar plantations of British Guiana, 1935; an oil strike, which became a general strike, in Trinidad, 1937; a sympathetic strike in Barbados, 1937; revolt on the sugar plantations in British Guiana, 1937; a sugar strike in St. Lucia, 1937; sugar troubles in Jamaica, 1937; dockers' strike in Jamaica, 1938. Every governor called for warships, marines and aeroplanes. (On all this, see Williams 1942: 93.)

By the end of 1936, 46 people had been killed, 429 injured, and thousands arrested (W.A. Lewis 1938: 18). To quote Eric Williams again, "The torch had been applied to the powder barrel."

During this time Antigua was quiet, but both those running for office and those who would vote for them—as well as the mass of the disenfranchised population—were well aware of what was happening elsewhere in the Caribbean: the *Star*, for instance, reprinted reports of major disturbances in Barbados throughout the campaign, and the radio carried reports as well. In addition, the planters had not forgotten 1918. The pitch made to both peasants and urban workers by the Planters' and Merchants' candidates was therefore one of *unity*, with each arguing that it alone would be able to serve the entire community.

The Planters' Association platform, as outlined by one of its supporters, was for an "ANTIGUA, Its Future and Its Varied Interests, Its Capital and Labour, each of which must be necessary to the other" (R.S.D. Goodwin letter in the *Star*, 6 April 1937). Its candidates—Alexander Moody-Stuart, Ernest Dalmar Dew, and Edward Scott-Johnson (of Brysons)—were apparently so confident of winning that they scarcely bothered to campaign. For their part, the three Merchants' candidates—A.E. Mercer, Francis Anjo, and John Lushington Jeffrey—held meetings in all the large villages (Jennings, Bolans, All Saints), in the major urban areas (the Point and Greenbay), as well as in the Cathedral Schoolroom in the center of St. John's.<sup>103</sup> While some of these were in the open air, in All Saints—the center of the peasant cane-producing area—a "monster" audience attended a meeting at the Antigua Progressive Union hall (*Star*, 6 April 1937) and another was held at the Antigua Progressive Seaman's

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property worth £100, rent payment of £12 per annum, or direct taxation payment of 15s; the qualifications in Barbados were somewhat higher.

<sup>102</sup> Each nominee's petition needed the signatures of only two registered voters, plus a £20 deposit.

<sup>103</sup> John Lushington Jeffrey, a leading member of the rising middle class, was discussed at length in Chapter 5. Mercer was a merchant from St. Kitts who had married a Cranstoun. Anjo was a small Portuguese merchant.

Friendly Society in St. John's. Some of the crowds were welcoming and some not (*Star*, 6 April, 13 April, 16 April 1937). The Merchants, like the Planters, pled for the voters to "Nail in its coffin the monster of sectionalism and class hatred." Or, as one of them put it at a meeting in Jennings, "It will not do to have one man for the peasant, one man for the planter, one man for the merchant, one man for the fisherman, and so on" (*Star*, 13 April 1937). But they also took positions on specific issues of concern to the peasants: they went on record as opposing a highly unpopular horse tax and endorsed the right of the peasants to be paid the same rate for their cane as the estates were paid; they favored working toward an eight-hour day and the abolition of the Contract Act; and they endorsed some form of workmen's compensation (which the government would pay for). On the other hand, they defended the cane charge imposed on the peasants who used the factory railway, a very unpopular position to take with this audience. Their positions were endorsed, and given full play, in the *Star*, the newspaper edited by Randall Lockhart, the Dominican lawyer who had attended the 1932 conference but who had subsequently moved to Antigua.<sup>104</sup>

The nonwhite middle class was not united behind the Merchants' candidates, however. Some, generally the older men, remained loyal to their employers. Thus at the one public meeting that Scott-Johnson held, he was accompanied on the platform by two of Bryson's oldest nonwhite employees, Keithley Heath and R.H.B. Nanton (*Star*, 17 April 1937), who endorsed Scott-Johnson's campaign on the grounds that Bryson's had always had a representative on the Legislative Council and that he had always worked for the good of the island (*Star*, 22 April 1937). On the other hand, the leading nonwhite lawyer, Sydney Christian, hedged his bets, chairing the Campaign Committee of the Merchants' Association and some of its rallies, but also chairing Scott-Johnson's meeting (*Star*, 6 April 1937).

The "Peasants' candidate" was Hugh Hole, a flamboyant white Englishman who was a landowner but not a planter and who had a provocative attitude toward the establishment that made him admired by the laboring population but hated by the planters and middle class. Hole ran as a "man of the people," and his campaign attracted large crowds. With a wit appreciated by working Antiguans, he attacked the white upper class with vigor: he once joked that Robert Bryson's medals were "worth about 9d. but you can add 3d. for the ribbon and make it a bob," provoking an outraged response from Bryson that was printed in a West India Committee bulletin.<sup>105</sup> He criticized the governor for incompetence, in typical Hole

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<sup>104</sup> The *Star's* political positions were generally conservative. The paper supported the sugar industry, the factory, and the merchants—white and nonwhite. It was also a vociferous critic of Wilson and the *Magnet*. For instance, the *Star* defended Franco at a time when the *Magnet* was warning of fascism (*Star*, 19 August 1937). On the other hand, it was also strongly in favor of federation. The previous planter paper, the *Sun*, had ceased publication in July 1922 (*Sun*, 15 July 1922).

<sup>105</sup> This was then reprinted in the *Star* (3 April 1937), and was followed by a typical response from Hole: "*Audi alteram partem*. May I express my thanks for your courtesy in recording my view that a civilian decoration, obtained in exchange for a sum of money, is worth exactly the value of the metal of its composition" (*Star*, 7 April 1937). The "sum of money" referred to a pier that Bryson had reportedly helped finance. It is indicative of Hole's reputation that the medal story was told me several times—only the recipient of Hole's scorn was not Bryson but Moody-Stuart!

Hole's sense of irony was equally appealing: when a judge called him, under his breath, an "overfed baboon" (Hole was a very large man), he pretended he was deaf and made the judge repeat the phrase several

language: "If the governor does not do what he is told, I will report him to the Secretary of State and have him spanked" (*Star*, 29 April 1937).

Hole was met with great enthusiasm in the countryside and in the poorer urban areas: at a Merchants' rally in the Point, the crowd interrupted Sydney Christian with "yells, screams, the blast of whistles, and a continual drumming of empty cans," screaming "We nah want you. Ah we wan' Maja' Haole..." until the other candidates fled (*Star*, 16 April 1937). His platform called for the expropriation of the "decaying" planters (with compensation, however) and the distribution of their land among the peasants (*Star*, 26 April 1937). Not surprisingly, this made him feared by the planters and nonwhite middle class, which, while they never publicly attacked each other, attacked Hole repeatedly on the platform and in the newspaper. He was accused of being dishonest, insincere, manipulative, of appealing to the "baser" instincts of the masses, of taking advantage of uneducated people, "exploiting prejudices," and, worst of all, "stirring up class and race hatred." Hole supporters—in particular Luther George and James Jarvis—asked persistent and pointed questions at Merchant and Planter meetings, and the *Star* became so nervous that it attributed the growing "ugly temper and stain and unfriendliness between classes which formerly got along well together" entirely to Hole's bad influence. Two days before the election S.L. Athill warned Hole from the magistrate's bench against fomenting disorder on election day (*Star*, 28 April 1937).

There was one remaining candidate, Reginald St. Clair Stevens, a jeweler who had replaced Harold Wilson as president of the Ulotrighians and who was also a member of the Oddfellows Lodge. These were not qualifications that were acceptable to the nonwhite middle class, and when Stevens went to the Merchants' Association and asked to be one of their candidates, he was told that this would not be possible because they had decided to reduce the number who would contest from four to three. Stevens then turned to Hole for support, and the two campaigned together. His campaign was completely ignored by the *Star*, which only referred to him once, and that critically—as "clinging to Major Hole's coat tails" (*Star*, 29 April 1937).

The election was held on April 30, and the final results gave first place to Hole by a large margin, with Stevens winning the third seat:

Hole	563
Jeffrey	466
Stevens	439
Moody-Stuart	428
Scott-Johnson	391

The other three candidates fell well behind:

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times, each time louder—and then telegraphed his outrage to the Inns of Court, which forced the judge to apologize. At the same time, Hole put a sign on Guana Island, a large scrub island off the northeast coast where he lived: "Beware of the Baboon." (Although Guana Island appears on contemporary maps as Guiana Island, it appears on old maps as "Guana." According to Desmond Nicholson, Guana is a corruption of Guiana, from whence the original settlers came in 1667 [Nicholson 1984: 48].)

Anjo	288
Mercer	281
Dew	181

Since each voter could cast five votes, if everyone who was registered to vote had voted for a full slate, the total would have been just over 5,000 votes. These results, with a total of only 3,056 votes (3,037 plus 11 spoiled ballots, according to the *Star*, 1 May 1937), show not so much an apathetic electorate—the *Star* reported a good turnout—but a divided one. They were also undoubtedly confused: since no party fielded candidates for all five seats, anyone who had wanted to exercise all five of his votes would have had to vote for competing candidates. The Merchants' candidates urged the electorate to vote for five candidates, leading one innocent at a Merchants' rally in All Saints to ask who else he should vote for, in addition to the three Merchants' candidates. The answer was that he would have to make his own choice (*Star*, 8 April 1937). Clearly many voted only for those candidates they liked—and no one liked very many. Compare the Antigua figures to those for St. Kitts, for instance, where the top candidate got 934 votes out of a possible 978, the second got 800, and the third got 635 (*Star*, 24 June 1937). In Antigua, the top candidate got only half the possible votes, and the others even less.

In the end, then, the nonwhite middle class failed miserably in its first foray into the electoral arena. By rejecting Stevens with the outrageously disingenuous argument about wanting to run fewer candidates than previously announced, the nonwhite middle class widened the distance between itself and the class below, a distance that had been evident in its lack of attendance at the Dominica conference. Further, it did not go unnoticed that the argument had been put forward by Sydney Christian (*Star*, 29 April 1937). In the election itself, only Lushington Jeffrey, who was not only a sitting member of the Legislative Council but was also a well-known and popular cricketer, won a sizable number of votes. No leading member of the class, other than Jeffrey, had been willing to run. Those who had could not, as one of my informants put it graphically, "mash ants" on the public platform: they were too gentlemanly, too restrained in their rhetoric, too cautious in their proposals, to match the likes of Hole.

Hole's first-place win, and Steven's third, enraged the white planting establishment. Moody-Stuart, Henzell, and W.M. Howell, manager of the Colonial Bank, wrote the governor a letter that presented an ingenious argument for the right of the white population—which at this point, it will be remembered, numbered less than 3 percent of the total—to complete control:

It is clear therefore that the slogan which has been raised that these islands belong to the Black Race and must be developed primarily in their interests, because they are the native race of the islands, is based on entirely false premises.... In this conviction, we wish to represent to His Majesty that the principle of Trusteeship for the Native (which implies handing over these islands to administrative and political control of the Black Race) which has been applied with success in the West African colonies, is not applicable in the same form to these islands because there is in these islands no indigenous native races; there is

an immigrant Black Race and an immigrant White Race, and of the two the White Race is the older immigration. (Quoted in *Outlet*, 10 October 1986.)

Focusing on Stevens, perceived to be the weaker than Hole, these men began a campaign to unseat him from the council by questioning his financial qualifications—only now they were joined by the nonwhite middle class.<sup>106</sup> Thus in October, when Hole was conveniently out of the country, Jeffrey—who was therefore the ranking elected member and who, along with Moody-Stuart, had also been appointed to the Executive Council (*Star*, 13 August 1937)—introduced a resolution to investigate Steven’s right to be on the ballot. Knowing that he had been placed in an awkward position, Jeffrey later maintained that he had had no choice: although he himself believed Stevens qualifications, he had a duty to do “in view of the criticism and doubts that had been expressed.” At the time, however, there is no record of such doubts on his part. The resolution was strongly seconded by Moody-Stuart and all the other council members spoke in favor (*Star*, 19 October 1937; Legislative Council minutes, October 1937). This was too much even for the *Star*, which commented in an editorial that while it had opposed Steven’s candidacy, such a move had the feel of a vendetta (*Star*, 23 October 1937). The governor then appointed the lawyer Clement Malone to investigate, but before he could rule, Stevens mooted the investigation by resigning (*Star*, 29 December 1937).<sup>107</sup> All this maneuvering took place in an atmosphere of heightened racial tension created by a controversy that arose over whether the “reckless agitator” Marcus Garvey should be allowed to stop in Antigua on a trip through the islands (*Star*, 16 October 1937, 18 October 1937, 21 October 1937). When he was finally allowed to land, he was greeted by a brass band, which accompanied him p High Street to the Cathedral Schoolroom, where he gave a public lecture to a packed hall; he was squired around the island by Harold Wilson (*Star*, 2 November 1937).

Stevens stood again in the by-election in January 1938, this time using property rather than income qualifications to file. The white planters and the nonwhite merchants again joined together, this time to endorse one candidate—perhaps one of the few both groups could feel moderately comfortable with. This was D. Foster Ross, a retired nonwhite merchant who had come from St. Kitts twenty-seven years earlier and had been the appointed representative of the “coloured community” on the Legislative Council from the mid-1920s until the early 1930s. A letter urging Ross to run, printed in the *Star*, was signed by as broad a range of men as had ever signed anything in Antigua: they included Moody-Stuart and Harold Wilson, Petrie Hay (manager of Brysons) and J.A.N. Brown, W.J. McSevney (chief engineer at the sugar factory) and Jim Pigott. Perhaps the most curious of these was Harold Wilson, who had himself been president of the Ulotrachians. But Wilson had a dislike of Stevens that apparently overcame any commonality of interest: he even went so far as be one of Ross’s two nominators and to question Steven’s qualifications in this second round (*Star*, 12 January 1938).<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Henzell and Moody-Stuart also tried to harass Hole by raising again an old question of Hole’s right to three islets off the far tip of Guana Island; Hole defended his position vigorously (*Star*, 23 December 1937).

<sup>107</sup> According to the Legislative Council minutes for December 1937, Stevens resigned as a result of Malone’s investigation; in any case, he resigned before there was a vote in the Council.

<sup>108</sup> Unfortunately, I could find no *Magnets* for this period. If any have since come to light, they will undoubtedly

By this time Hole had returned, and he and Stevens appeared together on platforms around the country. In his speeches, Stevens made a virtue out of the major criticism being made by the middle class—that Hole was his “backbone.” One banner put it directly: “Vote for Stevens, your man to help Major Hole who is in the Council, without him Major Hole will fail” (*Star*, 20 January 1938). Both men met enthusiastic crowds, while Ross and his allies were heckled whenever they ventured into the villages or urban working class areas. Wilson, who often accompanied Ross, was particularly resented and at one tumultuous meeting Stevens himself had to help Wilson escape the crowd (*Star*, 15 January 1938). At the next meeting Ross felt it necessary to emphasize that he was not Wilson’s man (*Star*, 17 January 1938). Although the *Star*, as would be expected, gave extensive coverage to Ross’s candidacy and short shrift to Stevens, it could not ignore the fact that Ross had no following beyond the middle and upper classes.

On election day, January 21, Stevens received 342 votes to 241 for Ross. Although the *Star* interpreted Steven’s majority as a vote of confidence in Hole rather than Stevens, and the low turnout as a vote of censure of the by-election itself, in fact it can also be seen as a stunning defeat for the white/nonwhite-middle-class coalition. The upper and middle classes had apparently failed to take the election seriously, while the peasants and urban workers had. Once again, the middle class showed itself unable to mash ants: what had begun, in April 1937, as a pitch for themselves as a class, in contradistinction to the whites, had ended with an alliance with those same whites against the rest of the population—and with this, defeat. In addition, this was the only election until the 1950s in which the middle-class candidates were able to run as part of anything that resembled a party: in subsequent elections they ran independently, each hoping to get enough votes from patrons, friends, and clients to win a seat. The baton of leadership of the masses now passed to Stevens and his allies from the lodges and friendly societies: in particular, Luther George and Leonard Benjamin, prominent lodge members and among the most vocal supporters of Hole and Stevens.<sup>109</sup>

Steven’s behavior in this period showed him to be a later, urban, counterpart of C.O. Sheppard in 1918. Both were from the artisanal/peasant sector, with strong roots in the lodges and both were therefore potential leaders of the laboring population. Both were willing to negotiate a compromise with the white planters and the nonwhite middle class. The key difference was that while Stevens might have been willing to ally with those above him—specifically by joining them on the platform—he was not given this choice: the middle class now had another set of allies, the planters. In other islands, the nonwhite middle class did make such alliances; in Antigua they did not. By seeking to undermine the one man on the council who, aside from the maverick Hole, could truly claim to represent the working population, the nonwhite middle class lost a chance to lead that population.

From that point onward, the momentum shifted away from the middle class toward the working class. Strikes and disturbances continued throughout 1937 and 1938, culminating in

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provide interesting details on Wilson’s attitude during both the first campaign and the subsequent by-election.

<sup>109</sup> Members of the friendly societies had argued for a voice in government to the Wood commission. According to Wood, a deputation “claiming to represent” the friendly societies had argued they deserved this because they bore the brunt of indirect taxation.

a general strike in Jamaica in early 1938. Trade unions were registered in Trinidad in 1936 and 1937, in British Guiana in 1937 and 1938, and in Jamaica in 1938 (W.A. Lewis 1938). Although there had been a dockworkers strike against Brysons in May 1937, Antigua remained calm after that. Part of the reason may have been Hole's presence on the Council, where he fought for tenants' rights; part may have been that the government had a surplus in 1937, which it was able to spend on bettering conditions; and finally, although probably least important, the Contract Act was finally abolished in August 1938 (Legislative Council minutes, December 1937 through August 1938). In October 1938, the British government once again sent out a royal commission to investigate conditions in the West Indies. Led by Lord Moyne, later to become the Secretary of State for Colonies, the commission visited Antigua to take testimony from December 29, 1938, to January 2, 1939.<sup>110</sup> One of its members was Sir Walter Citrine, a member of the British Labour Party and general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, and the Antigua Workingmen's Association asked him to give a lecture at the Cathedral schoolroom. The association, founded by Harold Wilson on his return from the Dominica conference in 1932, had as members primarily urban lower-middle-class clerks and artisans and had focused, somewhat romantically, on organizing the stevedores on the waterfront in the Point: because they were in charge of unloading imported foodstuffs and loading sugar for export, they were believed to control the life-lines of the society (J. Oliver Davis interview, 16 September 1980). The association met with little success, however, and by 1938 it was little more than a paper organization. Nevertheless, Wilson and J. Oliver Davis, at that point the secretary, took it upon themselves to organize a meeting with Citrine. They invited all the friendly societies and lodges and, on the night of January 1, 1939, Citrine gave a public lecture in which he urged Antiguan to form a trade union that would encompass all the workers on the island.<sup>111</sup> However, when the Workingmen's Association called a further meeting, of the same groups, in the St. John's Lodge hall, and suggested that the association be converted into a trade union, Stevens—not surprisingly, given Wilson's treatment of his candidacy during the election—refused (J. Oliver Davis interviews, 16 September 1980, 16 May 1981). Stevens was, in addition to being president of the Ulotrichians, a member of a group called the Small Traders' Association (formed to fight against what they perceived was government discrimination against them and in favor of the larger merchants, primarily in the area of taxation), along with Norris Allen and F.O. Benjamin, both of whom had lived in the United States and returned to Antigua to establish small businesses; Berkeley Richards, who had worked as an

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<sup>110</sup> The commission heard mostly from the white upper class and the nonwhite middle class, and many of the names of those who testified will be familiar. They heard from the Antigua Agricultural and Commercial Society (Goodwin, Petrie-Hay, Moody-Stuart, Henzell, and Warneford); the Antigua Merchants' Association (Mercer, Pigott, Jeffrey, and Christian); the Antigua Teachers' Association (Carrott, Hill, Kate Pigott, and Ambrose); Government Medical Officers; the Antigua Cotton Growers' Association (Warneford, Goodwin, Scott-Johnson, and Petrie-Hay). They also heard from the Piccadilly and South Eastern Peasants' Association (M.D.L. Benjamin and T. Quinland) and, as individuals, Moody-Stuart again; the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Antigua, the District Officer, the Senior Medical Officer, the Acting Treasurer (Ickford Thomas), Dr. L.R. Wynter, J.E. James, J.A. Harvey, and A.W. Williams of the Potters Village Committee (West India Royal Commission Report 1945: 462).

<sup>111</sup> J. Oliver Davis gives the date as December 31, 1938—Old Year's Night—but in fact it was New Year's Night, January 1 (Davis 1984: 53).

accountant for one of the merchants; C.O. Perry, Stanley Walter, and Joe Stevens (J.O. Davis interviews; Richards 1964: 4). It was this organization that formed the core of the first trade union in Antigua, the Antigua Trades and Labor Union. At a meeting on January 16, 1939, Stevens was elected president.<sup>112</sup> In March, a dispute at the Antigua Sugar Factory led to a strike that quickly involved factory, estate, and waterfront workers. Production was brought to a standstill, and on the third day the police and defense force were called out and the strike broken. The results were meager in financial terms, but the union—which was still not officially registered—was given a boost (Henry 1985: 86). By January 1940, close to 90 percent of the workers at the Antigua Sugar Factory had become members. When they once again called a strike for better wages and conditions, it spread to the waterfront and brought the island to a standstill. This time, however, the strike was ended through the intervention of the government, which used the issue of the war effort to bring all the parties—union, factory, and planters—to the negotiating table. In doing so, the administrator gave the union the chance it needed: although the union was still not officially registered, he nevertheless asked them to represent the workers. After protracted negotiations, the union won a 50 percent raise, plus a promise of a bonus if the crop was good, for the factory workers and a small increase for the cane cutters (Richards 1964: 17). The union was well and truly launched.<sup>113</sup>

In the 1940 Legislative Council elections, Stevens pulled an enlarged electorate behind him and became first elected member. Wilson had refused to join the new union, severing the last tenuous link between the middle-class politics of the Dominica conference and the new and more militant politics of the trade union movement. By 1941 he was criticizing the union for its “dictatorial” ultimatums, and by 1943 he was actively campaigning for its opponents.<sup>114</sup>

The nonwhite middle class’s inability to “mash ants” in the public political arena—to control peasant and working-class demands, to rally these constituencies behind them—as well as the alliances that it made, and refused to make, determined its role in the coming decades. For if, by allying with the white merchants and planters, the nonwhite middle class had hoped to win acceptance in the one arena that remained closed to it—the social arena—

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<sup>112</sup> The other officers were B.A. Richards, general secretary, and F.O. Benjamin, treasurer. The executive committee consisted of V.C. Bird, Griffith Matthew, Thomas Martin, James Jarvis, Stanley Walter, C.A. Perry, Thomas Brookes, and R.H. Lockhart—the editor of the *Star*. They were ratified at the union’s first conference, in February 1940, and the union was officially registered in March (Richards 1964: 4-5).

At this point Randall Lockhart was the only middle-class person associated with the union. He was no longer editor of the *Star*, which remained the paper of the planters and merchants and, in the face of increased trade union activity, became increasingly conservative.

<sup>113</sup> When the union won another increase in early 1941, the *Star* (which was now, as noted above, a planter paper) praised the estate owners for their generosity but argued that such concessions had to stop: the laborer was not ready for any further increase in wages because he had no clear idea of either the value of money or its correct use (*Star*, 15 February 1941).

<sup>114</sup> Wilson was also elected to the Legislative Council in 1940, along with Jeffrey, Sydney Christian, and Moody-Stuart. Not until universal male suffrage in 1946, when the union carried out a massive voter registration campaign, did the unions get more than one seat on the Legislative Council; in the 1946 elections they won them all.

The *Magnet* received financial backing from J.A.N. Brown, and when Brown ran against Luther George in 1943, Wilson backed Brown. George won.

it was to be disabused of that notion very quickly. This final disappointment is the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 10

### WORKING FOR THE YANKEE DOLLAR: SOCIAL LIFE AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE AMERICANS

The U.S. flag was first raised in Antigua on March 21, 1941, to mark the opening of a U.S. Naval Air Station at Crabbs Peninsula.<sup>115</sup> This ceremony, attended by the Antigua Defense Force and a few local dignitaries, symbolically marked the movement—sudden, unheralded, and certainly unplanned—of the United States from the wings to center stage in Antiguan life. It was hailed rhapsodically in the local planters' newspaper as the "union of two democracies in a stern determination to fight to the bitter end the soul-destroying evil of Hitlerism" (*Star*, 26 March 1941). Harold Wilson was a little more restrained in the *Magnet*, calling it simply, and certainly more truthfully, the beginning of a new era of Anglo-American collaboration (*Magnet*, 27 March 1941). The Americans wasted no time in consolidating their presence, and a consul arrived in February 1942, followed a month later by a Navy Branch Intelligence Officer. The first members of the U.S. armed forces, a detachment of fifty Marines, arrived on March 17.

#### The Americans

U.S. interest in the Caribbean had been growing since the turn of the century, when Puerto Rico and Cuba were won from Spain, the Virgin Islands were bought from Denmark (in 1917), and the Dominican Republic and Haiti—as well as the Central American countries of Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Panama—were put firmly under U.S. control, whether through outright or diplomatic invasion. The United States was investing large sums in these countries, and the Caribbean was well on its way to becoming what Eric Williams later called an "American Mediterranean" (Williams 1979: 419). This process took an enormous step forward with the advent of World War II. The United States determined that the best way to protect its East coast and its shipping lanes from enemy attack was to establish bases at strategic points across the Caribbean: this became the "Caribbean Coastal Frontier." Cuba and Puerto Rico were already in hand, but the other sites had to be acquired from the British. Hard-pressed at home, the British were anxious not to have to defend the Caribbean colonies as well and, in what must be considered one of the deals of the century, gave the

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<sup>115</sup> This despite the fact that the overall leasing agreement was not signed until March 27 and the Antigua agreement until May 28.

Most of the information on the Naval Air Station comes from the "War Diary of Naval Air Station, Antigua, Leeward Islands" to Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C., nd; "Administrative History of the Caribbean Sea Frontier," in *U.S. Naval Administration in World War II*; and "Intelligence Report," Intelligence Division, Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, 2 May 1945. The first two are probably dated 1944. All of these can be found at the Operational Archives Branch of the Naval Historical Center, Washington Naval Yard, Washington, D.C.

Note that although contemporary maps have "Crabs," both old maps and the archival records use "Crabbs."

Americans ninety-nine-year leases to eight sites in return for fifty reconditioned but over-age destroyers. The sites were strategically scattered from one end of the Caribbean to the other: British Guiana, Trinidad, St. Lucia, Antigua, Jamaica, and one of the Bahamian out islands. Antigua was chosen because of its strategic position at the north-easternmost corner of the Antilles, where submarines were becoming an increasing threat, and was to be a center for anti-submarine patrols.

For Antigua, facing a declining demand for sugar, rising unemployment, worker unrest, and straightened financial circumstances, the U.S. bases—and the war itself—came at precisely the right moment. Despite the efforts of the newly formed trade union, the workforce was still impoverished: the 50 percent increase won in 1940 had only raised average wages from 1s to 1s/6d a day, hardly enough to live on, and much of the increase was being eaten up by inflation. Unemployment was high. Although the overall leasing agreement was not signed until March 27 and the Antigua agreement until May 28, work on the Naval Air Station at Crabbs began on February 4 and on the larger U.S. Army Air Base at Coolidge on May 13. The land at Crabbs was acquired from independent peasants; for Coolidge, the 970-acre Millar's estate was essentially confiscated from the Camacho family and Winthorpes from the Gomes. The contractors were the Arundel Corporation and Consolidated Engineering Co., Inc. for the navy and S.J. Groves & Sons Company for the army. Arundel alone brought about 15 foremen and hired about 1,000 local people to construct barracks, a pier, a concrete apron, and seaplane ramps, and to dredge the channels and blast the reefs for seaplane runways, a turning basin, and a shipping channel. In addition, an observation tower was erected at the tip of the peninsula. Many more people worked on the army facility at Coolidge, where the entire village of Winthorpes had to be moved and rebuilt, a runway constructed, and other facilities built. All this provided immediate work for thousands of unskilled laborers, and the subsequent operation of the bases provided maintenance, artisanal, and clerical jobs for hundreds more. People had cash to spend and the merchants and import/export houses prospered—the government had to introduce larger denomination bills as more money came into circulation. As one participant put it, "The good life was flowing." Roads and drainage were improved, while the water supply was increased (*Magnet*, 1 November 1940).

Both bases immediately began to operate out of temporary facilities—the first planes landed at Coolidge on June 6 and the first seaplane arrived at Crabbs on June 25—although construction was not completed until the spring of 1942. By this time, submarine activity was intense and Antigua's geographical position crucial. Enemy subs attempting to reach the shipping lanes leading to Trinidad and Curaçao, where there were oil refineries, Guantanamo, and the Panama Canal all had to pass near Antigua; in addition, all movement in and out of Guadeloupe (then under Vichy control) had to be monitored. Anti-submarine patrols out of Antigua extended over a 350-mile radius into the Atlantic, and there were frequent sightings from the spring of 1942 into the summer of 1943. Planes flying out of Antigua dropped depth charges and demolition bombs, although there were no reports of subs destroyed as a result. Survivors from torpedoed merchant ships were frequently brought to both St. Kitts and Antigua. There was a blackout beginning on March 29, 1942, and when the harbor at Castries in St. Lucia was mined by the French Vichy government, ships were diverted from St. John's Harbor to Parham and an anti-torpedo net installed. Only when the submarine threat diminished, after the change of regime in the French

islands in July 1943, did Antigua's importance as a base decline. Aerial patrols moved over to Coolidge in December 1943 and Crabbs became a Naval Auxiliary Air Facility in February 1944, providing refueling facilities, quarters for visiting crews and some communications. It went into caretaker status in January 1945.

The bases immediately became an enormous labor market. As noted above, for the mass of Antiguans, construction work at the bases, followed by clerical and maintenance work, was the first alternative they had had to plantation labor. In addition, there were longer term benefits: new skills were learned, from driving to motor mechanic to heavy equipment operator, that provided Antiguans with marketable skills—marketable not only in Antigua, but in Aruba, Curaçao, England, and the United States. Where before there had been only one or two tractors on the island, now there were bulldozers, huge trucks, steam shovels, and other of heavy equipment. For the first time since the early 1700s, the planters no longer controlled access to work, and therefore to a livelihood, for the mass of the population.

The labor force immediately used this opening to their advantage, playing plantation off against base, and both against the government. A laborer's wages at the Naval Air Station were at first low, between \$.09 and \$.24 an hour (most earned at the lower end of the scale), with long hours and mandatory overtime without additional compensation. Further, in January 1941, the union had signed a no-strike pledge, which severely limited its organizing ability and also led to considerable dissatisfaction among the membership (Richards 1964: 20). In addition, the union was not allowed to organize at the base, and the U.S. government was determined to hire its labor force without regard for union affiliation. Despite these difficulties, the union took the lead in arguing for higher wages. The *Magnet* took up the workers' cause throughout April and May 1941, while both Wilson and Stevens raised the issue in Legislative Council meetings; indeed, Wilson became a frequent critic of the government and the Americans throughout this period, which was apparently a popular enough position for him to move from fifth elected member in 1940 to first in 1943. According to the *Magnet*, the laborers believed that wages were being kept low by the Antiguan government, which was refusing to protect them from exploitation by outsiders, while the Americans were sympathetic to the demand for an increase (*Magnet*, 9 April 1941, 23 May 1941). To prove the point, the *Magnet* printed a letter from the U.S. Department of Labor that pointed out that wages throughout the Caribbean were fixed in consultation with local governments (*Magnet*, 3 May 1941). The British government was also pushing the Americans to raise the rates, while the local administrator was resisting (FO 371/A3382/20/45, A4526/20/45).<sup>116</sup> As a result of all this pressure, wages were raised.

Although the union had tied its own hands by signing the no-strike pledge, and although the government repeatedly used the "don't impede the war effort" argument against worker demands, the very fact of the base's higher wages and large labor market led to a general increase in wages in other sectors of the economy as well.<sup>117</sup> While the rate

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<sup>116</sup> Some of the information that follows comes from Foreign Office (FO) files which, like the Colonial Office correspondence, are at the Public Record Office at Kew.

<sup>117</sup> Novelle Richards, in *The Struggle and the Conquest*, argues that the union failed to progress during the early war years and pins the blame on Stevens—his personality, his inability to stand up to Moody-Stuart and the governor/administrator, and, ultimately, his signing of the no-strike pledge (for the same point of view, see also Tim Hector's article in *Outlet*, 17 February 1989). As a result, Stevens popularity declined and in the 1943

at the base was 5s or more a day and the rate in the field only 3s, that was still double the 1s/6d of 1940. In addition, the higher base wages had a lasting effect: when the bases began to wind down in 1943, the laid-off workers not only refused to work for their old wages but refused to honor the no-strike pledge, forcing a further wage increase. And it was also important that the dues the union collected from its base members gave its treasury a welcome boost.

At first, the laborers tested working at the base by combining it with plantation labor, coming and going when they pleased; but the Americans wanted a stable workforce that they could control, and even went so far as to order a fingerprinting device (presumably because they could not tell people apart by looking) so that workers could not substitute for each other. In any case, the laborers preferred the base to the canefield and were soon working there in large numbers. Not only could they earn more than in the canefields, but the work promised to be steady and year-round, and was considered cleaner. This created a serious problem for the planters, whose sugar crop was in danger of rotting in the ground. A three-way battle ensued, among the Antiguan and U.S. governments and the planters, with each blaming the other for rising wages. The planters called for government intervention, arguing that sugar was an essential commodity in the war effort whose production was being endangered. The Americans in turn argued that the problem was partly the result of "trade restrictions" imposed by the local government, which limited the goods available in the shops and so reduced the incentive to work. The union took advantage of the dispute, aided by the fact that many of the key union leaders were now working at the base.

Moody-Stuart tried to put pressure on the labor force by bringing in cane-cutters from St. Kitts (Antigua Syndicate Estate Minutes, 13 December 1942). The governor alternated between pleas and threats, repeating a variant of the time-honored lazy worker theme: in this case, it was that the workers were refusing to work once they had money in their pockets. Thus on the one hand, he suggested conscription as an answer—a proposal strongly rejected by Stevens—as well as compulsory savings. As for the paucity of goods to buy, he argued that this was result of the war, and people had to learn to live without. He hinted disloyalty, warning that the population was playing into Hitler's hands. He even raised the issue of race, telling the people that it was not just a white man's war because Hitler had once said that all black men were monkeys.

None of this worked, however, and by April 1942 there was enough of a crisis atmosphere for the U.S. consul to write a long report to the Secretary of State in Washington. He argued that the British position was absurd because a raise in the standard of living only brought the bulk of the population out of poverty, not into wealth: "Doing without in Antigua and the other British islands of the Caribbean is practically synonymous with starvation because of the subsistence standard already obtaining," he wrote, recognizing, as the governor and planters would not, that the negative effects of the war—increased prices and shortages—had hit most of the population hard. He warned that there

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Legislative Council elections he was only fifth elected member. V.C. Bird won the presidency of the union in 1943 and Stevens' Legislative Council seat in the by-election held after Stevens' death in 1945 (Richards 1964: 24).

From that point forward, the union's leadership was from among the upper levels of the working class and peasantry. It is part of the importance of the base that it provided a training ground for these men, and most of those elected to the leadership in 1943 had worked there, including V.C. Bird, Kem Roberts, Bradley Carrott, Lionel Hurst, and J. Oliver Davis. So had later leaders, including Denfield Hurst.

might well be serious unrest unless people were provided with goods and the means to feed themselves.<sup>118</sup> As during World War I, the planters and the governor were bickering among themselves over who should plant foodstuffs: the planters insisted that they must produce sugar, and that the peasants—particularly those producing cotton on rented land—should bear the responsibility for producing food. In fact, the planters argued that the government should refuse loans for cotton production to peasants in order to *force* them to grow food (*Magnet*, 15 April 1941, 13 May 1941). The planters did at first increase the amount of acreage in foodstuffs, but in 1943 sugar was declared an essential war commodity and the area under production extended. Nevertheless, by the end of 1943 the governor was able to report that the “grow more food” campaign had been very successful, with the acute shortages of 1942 turning into abundance (*Magnet*, 20 December 1943).

This was the positive side for the majority of the population. But there was a downside as well, and this centered on the social effects of the large number of Americans, officers and enlisted men, who came to work at the bases—there were an estimated 2,000 enlisted men at Coolidge and another 300 or so at Crabbs, not including visitors off ships and airplanes, who at any one time could number close to 100. All were white, a decision having been made not to send black American troops to Antigua (FO 371/A3511/18/45, File 34106).<sup>119</sup> Undoubtedly the most important of these was the introduction of American-style racism: the United States in the early 1940s was a society in which racial discrimination was pervasive, and in the South segregation, in the form of Jim Crow laws that had been passed in the early decades of the twentieth century, was still legal.<sup>120</sup> The Americans thus brought to Antigua a consciousness of race, and a level of racial discrimination and hostility, that was far greater than any that Antiguan had known, at least since slavery ended—it was so strong, and so different, that many people told me that it was the Americans who had *introduced* racism to Antigua. This is not to say that Antiguan did not know racism: as previous chapters have shown, there was still a color barrier in Antigua, although it was gradually lifting. Further, Antiguan were not in any way naive about what racism was: as described in Chapter 8, Antiguan who had traveled to England or the United States—and particularly those who had served in the British armed forces in World War I—had returned

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<sup>118</sup> This report is dated 20 April 1942, and is from Frank A. Schuler, Jr., American Consul, to the Secretary of State, with a covering letter dated 28 April. It can be found in the National Archives in File 844K.504/1 PS/ET.-

<sup>119</sup> Black American troops were sent to Trinidad, but not Antigua, presumably because of the secret nature of the anti-submarine activity in Antigua. There was a great deal of correspondence about this issue: the British were concerned about reports of racial animosity in Trinidad and were under pressure at home not to appear discriminatory. Thus in 1941, the British assured Washington that they had *not* requested that no black Americans be included among the civilian employees sent to build the bases in the Caribbean. In 1942, the question was again raised in the House of Commons and again the Americans were assured that the allegations were unfounded (CO 971/20/72059/1941; FO 371/A1065/10/45, 1942, File 30638). Nevertheless, the British were concerned that nonwhite Americans would be working beside nonwhite West Indians while earning many times more, leading to local unrest, and so insisted that they preferred the use of local labor (see, e.g., FO 371/A1798/10/45, File 30640).

On Trinidad, see Annette Palmer's article in *Military Affairs* (Palmer 1983), as far as I know the only published discussion of the effect of the U.S. presence on Caribbean societies. However, Marilyn Krigger's discussion of similar reactions to the Americans in St. Thomas when the United States took over in 1917 is illuminating (Krigger 1986).

<sup>120</sup> The attack on the legal structure of segregation began with the epochal 1954 Supreme Court decision known as *Brown v. Board of Education*. Jim Crow laws in the United States were not a legacy of slavery but were newly written in the early years of the twentieth century; see Bennett 1962, chap. 9.

home angry and vocal about the discrimination they had suffered. What they meant was that the American southern (and army)-style racism of 1941 was unlike any racism they had know in Antigua: it was fiercer, more personal, and, most important, divided people crudely according to simple phenotypic distinctions between white and black—with black being automatically inferior.

The Americans offended Antiguan sensibilities from the start. They were on the same side in the war, yet arrived at Brysons dock and marched up through the town in full battle dress—as if, according to Antiguan, it was they who were the enemy. They were rural and/or working-class southern whites who expected nonwhite Antiguan to jump on command. They introduced Jim Crow practices at the base, and separate buses took whites and nonwhites to and from town, a practice the Antiguan government allowed, much to the disgust of the *Magnet* (20 December 1943).<sup>121</sup> They brought with them racially based violence, verbal and physical: filthy language, drunken driving, fist fights, brawls, and shooting incidents all became commonplace. White soldiers quickly resorted to verbal and even physical abuse of nonwhite base workers. The Americans were trigger happy and prone to pulling out knives and guns, and there were a number of serious incidents, including at least two murders.<sup>122</sup> As the war progressed, the British increasingly capitulated to American interpretations of justice, even when they felt they were not in the best interests of the local population. For instance, the Americans refused to have their men tried by local (nonwhite) juries, and the British then discussed how to rewrite the jury law to take this into account—although they noted that such legislation “would require very careful drafting to avoid any suspicion of colour prejudice” and that this was possible in the United States not because of the laws but because the “sheriff only picks white persons when a white person is going to be tried” (FO 371/A7337/10/45, File 30647; A9614/10/45, File 30649). In the end it was agreed that no colonial jury would satisfy the Americans and the matter was dropped. Antiguan complained that the culprits were never punished, and it was the local belief that, despite courts-martial, all the culprits had to do was pay \$.05 as a fine for the price of a bullet and accept transfer out of the country. In 1940, Antigua had the lowest crime rate per capita in the Leewards; by 1942, the rate had doubled (Hammond 1952: 40).<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> The British were determined to leave such matters to the local authorities. One complaint from Trinidad alleged that the Americans were trying to restrict “places of refreshment” to whites only, but this was denied by the Colonial Secretary. A British M.P. was told by the Colonial Office that this issue had to be “left to the Governors concerned in consultation with the local United States authorities.” See CO 971/20/2, File 72059 (1941); FO 371/A1134/10/45, File 30639 (1942).

<sup>122</sup> This information comes from the U.S. files, as well as from oral interviews. Unfortunately, most of the material on racial prejudice in the British Foreign Office and Colonial Office files for these years has been destroyed. Although all the material on criminal offenses has been kept, it primarily concerns endless jurisdictional disputes between the Americans and the British. One report of American violence is in CO 971/20/72063/2/1941.-

<sup>123</sup> The coming of the base also changed relations between men and women. Because of peculiar—to Antiguan—American notions of “democracy,” racial barriers that were strictly enforced during the day suddenly dropped at night, when the American enlisted men were all too happy to socialize with working-class nonwhite Antiguan women. In addition, the Americans had a whole new way of courting, one that had a lasting effect on Antiguan social patterns. The Americans had money to spend on their dates, and they spent it freely, leading to expectations on the part of the women that Antiguan men found hard to meet. Antiguan men complained bitterly that the women were receiving money and gifts and were becoming much too “independent.”

It is interesting that this critique of white soldiers in Antigua is exactly the same as the critique of black

## The Antiguan

The Americans had the power to reconstitute Antiguan social reality in their own image. For the lower classes, although this was unpleasant, it was essentially a more rigid and violent version of an existing situation. For the nonwhite middle class, however, the American interpretation of reality was not simply a step backward but a major shift: suddenly they were "black," their color no longer modified by class. Lacking what was to Antiguan a crucial component of class, historical knowledge—in other words, not knowing the background of this class—the Americans took phenotypic reality to be all, and for them *nonwhite* was not-white. In addition, the nonwhite middle class was less affected in the two areas where it had achieved the greatest degree of equality—work and politics—than in the area where it had achieved the least—social life. American perceptions of black and white led to social choices that simply bypassed the new middle class.

Social arrivance had come very slowly for the nonwhite middle class, and in the late 1930s it remained a large but loosely contained circle of families knit together by ties of kinship, school (Antigua Grammar School, Antigua Girls' High School, T.O.R. Memorial School, and Spring Gardens) and religion (Anglican and Methodist, but seldom Moravian or Catholic), and closed off from white social activities. As we saw earlier, neither wealth nor income were the key issue in determining class membership in Antigua. Equally important, color was not a central issue: just because whites evaluated nonwhites in terms of skin color—as *not white*—does not mean that nonwhites evaluated themselves in the same way.<sup>124</sup> In fact, this is the white point of view, and although much of the analysis of the post-emancipation period has accepted it as portraying reality, it at best portrays only a piece of it. For nonwhite Antiguan, it was class attributes—education, occupation, and behavior—that gained a family entry into this class. Indeed, "manners"—the behavioral component of respectability—were so important that mothers in the countryside would send their children into town to "be improved," while the older generation, male and female, never hesitated to teach a passing child a lesson in deportment, proper dress, or respect. The key word was "standard": it was crucial to "have standards," to "maintain a standard," to "keep up a standard," or, finally, to "be upstanding." Some people—teacher Avis Athill is a prime example—were named godparents by a host of aspiring parents precisely because they were believed to have the "highest standards." They took their responsibilities seriously—not financially, because they had little money, but in realm of education. As one woman put it, "Everything was a lesson." And despite occupational differences that might have led to stratification in other, larger, colonies, in Antigua the members of this middle class considered themselves, as they told me repeatedly, "much of a muchness."

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soldiers in Trinidad. Palmer (1983) details how their presence "upset the very delicate social and demographic balance" in the island, and reports the vociferous objections from the local men: "debauching" the women, "disrupting" families, creating a crime wave. Trinidad being Trinidad, some of the most pointed observations were made in calypsos, including the one by "Lord Invader" that provides the title for this chapter. As a line in another calypso of the time went, "I was living with my decent and contented wife/Until the soldiers came and broke up my life ..."—a sentiment that was echoed in Antigua.

<sup>124</sup> My argument that Antiguan from the nonwhite middle class see themselves (and others) in terms of class rather than color would appear to contradict much of the literature on this issue. It is possible that Antigua is a special case, perhaps because its small size meant that the entire membership of the class was known. For Jamaica, for instance, Lisa Douglass describes a totally opposite situation: she argues that there it is race or color that provides the grounds for power, although this is denied and class is emphasized (Douglass 1992: 16).

While this group was highly intermarried, it differed from the nonwhite middle class of the nineteenth century in its willingness to recruit from outside its immediate circle. Despite the stated belief that the partners in these marriages were also “much of a muchness,” it was socially acceptable for women—but not men—to “marry down,” if the men met certain criteria of respectability and education. Thus women from families that had been legitimate for two generations, and whose fathers were higher on the occupational scale, married men who had only been legitimate for one, and this was socially acceptable; similarly, women from families where the parents had been clerks married men only one generation away from being artisans. In addition, occupation played a major role in determining a man’s status: as one member of this class put it, “the job made the man.” This enabled some men to rise socially a notch above their own parents. For instance, a young man who entered one of the professions—doctor, lawyer, dentist, and, as one prominent member of the nonwhite middle class told his children, “the clergy for those with weaker minds”—was considered a good match for a middle-class woman even if his family was of lower status. For the women, however, family remained key. In addition, women in this group married men from other islands. The result was that there were fewer never married women in the core families of this class than in the first middle class. There were, however, a host of never married women from the families on its less socially secure fringes, women whose parents would rather they never marry than marry socially unsuitable men.

Skin color was a topic of discussion in these marriages, but it was not the most important issue—once again, respectability was. Since the members of one family could (and did) range in shade from light to dark, there came to be what Eric Williams called a “high market value of white skin” (Williams 1942: 64); Rolph Trouillot (1988) has called skin color “epidermic capital” for nonwhites in their dealings with whites. In the most common and everyday examples, parents might favor their lighter skinned children, giving them access to more opportunities, because they believed that they would have a better chance in the white world. There are therefore cases of phenotypically fairer people leapfrogging over their darker class counterparts (and even family members), thus turning phenotype—their own, at least—into an avenue to inclusion. But this possibility was only available to a few, not least because only some members of this class were actually phenotypically light; many were much darker. Further, this worked best with those who were the most socially and physically distant—the British bank managers, for instance, who hired Portuguese or English Harbour women simply because they were fair. White Antiguans, more engaged in the local situation and knowing each family’s history, were more likely to ignore skin color; for them, class attributes were more relevant than they were for the distant British.

The knowledge that skin color could be capital had another side, and that was an embarrassment about darker skinned relatives: the mother who wore mourning black for six weeks when her daughter announced her plans to marry a darker man, or the dark woman who married a lighter skinned man and made “black” visitors go around to the back door, or the nonwhite woman who “passed” in the United States and refused to entertain any of her old nonwhite schoolmates when she returned as an old woman. Yet while these women, intent on enforcing notions of respectability and status, were understood by their class counterparts, they were also held in contempt—as lacking self-respect, as being too easily manipulated by the white value system, as trying to rise above themselves in an illegitimate way. Thus each story ended with an ironic twist that showed how such attitudes were

doomed to fail: the mother was herself darker than her husband, the old woman ended dying alone, and so on. People should "know the rules," and the attempt to use skin color annoyed nonwhite Antiguans precisely because they held to different standards among themselves.<sup>125</sup>

The extent to which nonwhites and whites shared a social life was directly correlated with the extent of women's involvement in a particular activity or organization. What Mrs. Lanaghan had noticed in the early 1840s—that "white ladies are the strongest upholders of prejudice"—remained the case one hundred years later. Thus there was a gender distinction embedded in the different ways in which men and women lived their social lives: nonwhite men and women socialized in different arenas, and these had different standards. In the early anthropological literature on women, men and women were described as inhabiting different domains, generally distinguished as public/private, referring both to the locus of social life and the subjects of discussion. This is a useful distinction for Antigua in this period, in particular because geography and content fit so closely together. But rather than public/private, it is more productive to picture the dichotomy in terms of indoor/outdoor, with the spaces in between—the yard, the veranda—being areas of flexibility, and occasionally of some tension.

In fact, it was by traversing this terrain that young people often came to know their "class." Thus a young man would suddenly find that he was not allowed inside the gate of a close school friend, and realize that he was socially unacceptable to his friend's parents. Or men who were good friends nevertheless did not visit each other inside their houses; those who reported that they were "very close" often got no further than the veranda. Women, as keepers of the indoors, controlled the most intimate types of socialization, ranging from house visits to marriage. Men, in contrast, socialized outdoors, on the streets and playing fields, in rumshops and clubs. In these arenas, they were less constrained by indoor standards of respectability. It was by and large the women who policed the distinctions of social class: who knew, and cared about, the genealogies, who determined who their children could socialize with inside the house and who had to remain an "outdoors" friend, and so on. This contrast between indoor and outdoor social consciousness affected more than the house and street: those social clubs that had both women and men had different, and narrower, standards of membership than those that had men only. This social discrimination was also correlated with the extent to which the organization or activity was open to the public, even if that public was socially delimited: whether it was a "cause" or "skill" organization or a "class" or "social" one. Thus the entirely male, very public, and service-oriented Masonic Lodge—a "cause" club—recruited members of the nonwhite middle class in the 1920s, while the white sports clubs—"skill" clubs—allowed in a very few nonwhites (and those few were phenotypically very fair). The social or "class" clubs, whose activities often included women, preferred to close down rather than open to any nonwhites at all. Similarly, although nonwhite professionals were by this point being invited to

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<sup>125</sup> There were very few twentieth-century examples of marriages between whites and members of the nonwhite middle class before the Americans came, and most of these were with foreigners. Nonwhite parents worried that their children would have "no place" if they married white people and lived in Antigua, and that the marriages would therefore fail. When it did happen, it was most often an older white man who married his housekeeper, nurse, or maid. The woman then became "a little more than a maid, a little less than a wife"—a comment that indicates something about how these marriages were seen.

Government House for semi-public functions (receptions for visiting dignitaries, for instance), they were not being invited to the more intimate and sociable cocktail parties and dances, the occasions when women would be present. And finally, family life, and marriage—the most basic alliance—remain almost entirely separate to this day.

The new middle class did not join the clubs its parents had belonged to, but joined either the formerly all-white clubs, when it was allowed, or created its own clubs anew. Thus where its parents had been members of one of the Oddfellows lodges, it joined the previously white-dominated Masons; where its parents had played for the Wanderers, it created the St. John's Cricket Club; and where its parents had had no social club of their own, it created the Antigua Quoits and Lawn Tennis Club. To hone its skills in the public arena, it founded a branch of ToCH, a service club which tutored young men who had had little chance for education and sponsored public debates.<sup>126</sup>

The St. John's Masonic Lodge was, by the 1920s, in dire financial straits. Founded in 1843, it had had, in the nineteenth century, members from the former free colored elite (see Chapter 5) but it took in only three Antiguan nonwhites in the period from 1895 to 1920—all children of the old nonwhite elite. In 1900, many of the plantation managers, planters, and Antigua Sugar Factory people had left to form the Caribbee Lodge and St. John's was only able to attract one or two new members a year after that—compared to an average of seven throughout the 1890s. Finally, in 1921, when no new members were taken in, Robert Bryson and Robert Warneford launched a membership drive, willing to recruit nonwhites so that the lodge would not die. Thus as more and more of the nonwhite middle class joined the Masons, the Oddfellows became the club of the class below: not only did the Masons not allow membership in both, but those among the nonwhite middle class who did not join the Masons considered themselves of Mason caliber and would no longer join the Oddfellows.

The same was not true of white Antigua Cricket Club, which was also in serious financial trouble, although more protected because the main source of cricketers—civil servants—were still white. In the British colonies cricket was a source of legitimacy and status, and in the West Indies the nonwhite middle class was determined to make cricket its own. It therefore formed the St. John's Cricket Club, which soon became the source of the best players on the island. It was here that many of the men of the new middle class made their mark. Its earliest members included Lushington Jeffrey, for many years club secretary; Basil Willock, for many years considered the best player; and Keithley Heath. Not, in the early stages, Antigua Grammar School boys—although before long that became a necessary prerequisite—but Mico boys who had become clerks in merchant establishments. St. John's lasted until after World War II, when it too faced a crisis of recruitment: its founding members had died or migrated, while their children disdained cricket. In addition, in a reprise of St. John's own history, a new club, Maple, had been founded at the end of the war by a group of younger men who had not been welcomed into St. John's and this became the club of choice for the next generation.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> One held in the Cathedral schoolroom in May 1937 was whether "The Rearmament of a Nation Tends to Preserve Peace," with Edgar Edwards and Archie Watt speaking for the affirmative and Sydney Christian and Roland Henry for the negative; the chair was Archie McDonald (*Star*; 6 May 1937).

<sup>127</sup> In *Beyond a Boundary*, his classic book on cricket in the West Indies, C.L.R. James (1963) describes the reigning cricket clubs in Trinidad as conforming to a strict hierarchy, from the wealthy white elite to the poor black plebeians. This situation held for islands throughout the Caribbean, Antigua among them: from the all-white

The all-white Antigua Cricket Club was able to hang on for a few years, but the all-white social club, called the Antigua Lawn Tennis Club, refused any openness whatsoever, as did the planter-dominated New Club, a social club where planters came to read the newspapers and talk business when they came into town, and the Antigua Golf Club, which had male and female membership. Even when, in the 1930s, the white population was not only decimated but in general quite poor, the Antigua Lawn Tennis Club steadfastly maintained its separate social life.<sup>128</sup>

And this was because, unlike cricket, tennis was a *social* sport. Women played and drinks were served afterward on the club pavilion—anyone who has visited tennis clubs in the West Indies, with their gin-and-lime after a gentle set on immaculately kept grass courts will recognize this. Refused admittance to the Antigua Lawn Tennis Club, the nonwhite middle class founded the Antigua Quoits and Lawn Tennis Club, which became a center of nonwhite middle-class social life in the 1920s and 1930s; then, like St. John's Cricket Club, it too failed to recruit the next generation. In the 1950s it asked to merge with Maple, and was refused.

Despite considerable progress, then, there remained, by the 1930s, a barrier between whites and nonwhites, a point at which such class attributes as education, occupation, and respectability were not sufficient for further advancement or acceptance. This barrier fell at a different place in different arenas—educational, occupational, social—but in each case it was based on phenotypic considerations. Thus the higher up the occupational opportunity chain nonwhite Antiguanians traveled, the more class attributes became disarticulated from skin color, until the point—a point that moved within occupations and differed from

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Antigua Cricket Club to the nonwhite middle-class St. John's to the artisanal Rivals and the lower-middle-class Rising Sun, each club was based in a social class. These clubs, like the classes they belonged to, were more likely to die out as the class structure changed rather than recruit from below in order to stay alive. Thus the Wanderers had faded out by about 1920, while the Rivals gradually lost members to St. John's and had dissolved by the 1940s. Rising Sun, founded in 1922 as the cricketing population expanded, had become the strongest team by the 1950s. The all-white Antigua Cricket Club, founded in 1863 or 1864, was able to hang on by recruiting expatriate civil servants, but eventually it could no longer compete with St. John's and closed. In addition, the Portuguese, excluded from both the white and nonwhite clubs, founded their own—called Ovals, or more formally, the Caribbean Cricket Club—in the mid-1920s, but it did not last long.

The struggle among the nonwhite population to play first class cricket is a story in itself. The white Antigua Cricket Club, whose members were mainly government workers, had time—Saturday afternoons, when others were working, and often a weekday afternoon as well—money for equipment and travel, and coaching. The nonwhite clubs had little of this and depended on membership subscriptions and an occasional financial angel. Nevertheless, the nonwhite clubs contributed members to the island team, and in growing numbers after World War I. There was surprisingly little movement from club to club, so that although there was a status hierarchy, as cricket opened up to larger numbers of people, the clubs of lower social status became the "best" clubs in terms of the number of skilled cricketers they contributed to island teams. Thus in 1913, the island team included seven members from St. John's; by 1922, there were fewer from St. John's but four from Rivals. The captaincy, however, remained white until 1925 (according to Sydney Walling's reflections as reprinted in *Outlet*, 7 February 1992; the rest of this information comes from oral memories and the examination of photographs of various island and club teams).

<sup>128</sup> The Antigua Lawn Tennis Club remained virtually all-white until well into the 1940s, when a few Portuguese joined; it was not until the 1950s that nonwhites were invited in, and by that time the English were dropping out. The club was closed by about 1970.

The New Club, although all male, was also social in that it sponsored dances and cocktail parties for its members and visiting dignitaries. It went through some difficult times and was able to maintain itself primarily by recruiting temporary residents.

occupation to occupation, but a point nonetheless—when only skin color mattered. The same was true with the clubs, so that nonwhites were never admitted to the class clubs because they were not-white. While white and nonwhite men socialized, white and nonwhite women did not.

But these barriers could only be maintained if they were to some extent accepted by both parties. The arrival of the Americans in 1940, with both a very different experience of race relations and different perceptions of skin color—of what was white and what was not-white—led to major shifts in the kaleidoscope of the Antiguan social structure. Social life for the upper and middle classes, which had previously been based on kinship-based circles and private occasions, began to revolve around the more public cocktail parties held for or by the American officer corps—the army, navy, Marine, and Coast Guard officers who were either stationed in Antigua or on temporary visits. And the Americans, with their dichotomous view of society, expected that only whites would be included in these events.

This was not, at first, the Antiguan expectation, white or nonwhite, and members of the nonwhite middle class were initially invited—until the Americans let it be known that they did not want them there and the invitations stopped. To middle-class nonwhite Antiguans, the Americans were at first difficult to classify, seeming at the same time very democratic and very class conscious. In a revealing comment, one woman reported that part of the problem with classifying them was that they had “strange names”—reminding us once again how important knowledge of family history is to Antiguan social classification. The Antiguan middle class was also profoundly offended by American attitudes toward women. As one middle-class nonwhite Antiguan put it, the Americans “made us realize we were really British.” When raw color prejudice suddenly reared its head, they were startled and dismayed: they realized that what they had at first presumed was class prejudice was in fact race prejudice. The Americans, not understanding that this class believed itself their social equals—that for them, color had been modified by class—ignored them. As noted above, phenotypic skin color was central to the American conception of race: all nonwhites were black. Further, since blacks in the United States were by definition lower in the social hierarchy than whites, the same was assumed to be true in the West Indies. And since upper level whites in the United States did not socialize with blacks, the only suitable social contacts for white Americans had to be white Antiguans, regardless of where they fit into the Antiguan social hierarchy. The fact that the British and white Antiguans acquiesced in this exclusion, as it had to the Jim Crow practices, indicates the extent to which the nonwhite middle class had overestimated its own acceptance.

But it was not only in terms of what they saw as black that the Americans reinterpreted Antiguan social reality: what they saw as white differed as well. The American officers socialized with white Antiguans and with some of the British Colonial Service people. But there were few young women among them, and so they turned to another group, the Portuguese. The problem with this from the Antiguan—white *and* nonwhite—point of view was that no Antiguan saw the Portuguese as white. They were classified as “other” by nonwhite Antiguans and as not-white by the British.<sup>129</sup>

This was not the first time the Portuguese had had their color redefined. In fact, they

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<sup>129</sup> As I noted in the Introduction, when I presented nonwhite Antiguans with a list of surnames for ranking, the Portuguese names were always placed off to the side, in a pile that was not ranked internally.

had now come full circle: imported as Europeans to augment the white population, they were subsequently reclassified by the colonial authorities as "coloured"; now they were once again being considered white.

### The Portuguese

It will be remembered from Chapter 1 that about 2,000 Portuguese had been brought to Antigua as indentured plantation labor in the 1850s. Despite the fact that these were "short dark haired men and women with light olive complexions"—to quote one historian (Honychurch 1981: 104)—they had been imported to increase the European and white population, and for the next forty years they were classified as white: in the 1891 census, for instance, almost all the Madeirans were under this heading, with only 3 being "coloured" and 4 being "black."<sup>130</sup> In other parts of the West Indies, the Madeirans continued to be considered white, although not members of the elite: Bridget Brereton, writing on Trinidad, reports that "The Portuguese immigrants from Madeira ... were of course white" (1979: 34, 211; see also 1981: 10, 99)—as they considered themselves (Gomes 1974: xviii). Similarly, Gordon Lewis, writing on Guyana, describes the Portuguese as "racial whites with a relatively low ascriptive status" (Lewis 1968: 261), and Douglas Hall, in a paragraph on both countries, includes them under the heading "white immigrants" (Hall 1982: 89-90). Local usage could be ambiguous, however, as in Guyana, where the census specifically excluded Portuguese from the category of white, classifying them as "Other European" (Lowenthal 1972: 200, citing C.Y. Thomas).

One of the West Indian planters' main complaints about the Madeirans as a labor force—aside from the fact that they died in large numbers—was that they refused to stay on the plantation after their indentures were up, preferring to move into trade and independent farming.<sup>131</sup> In Antigua, the majority remained on or near the plantations, married fellow plantation workers, and gradually blended into the nonwhite population. Nevertheless, a minority moved away, and by the 1870s rum-selling and baking, in the towns and in the countryside, were solidly in Portuguese hands.<sup>132</sup> By the 1890s, the largest bakeries and

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<sup>130</sup> Cape Verdeans, on the other hand, while fewer in number, were mostly classified as black, with a few included under coloured. Censuses in the Caribbean are always suspect when it comes to racial/color categorizations, but here ascription by color becomes useful as a guide to attitudes and perceptions. The census enumerators were forced to allocate people to one of three categories—white, coloured, and black—and this they did faithfully. They were also asked place of birth. The two were not correlated in the 1861 and 1871 censuses, but were in 1891.

That censuses generally raise more questions than they answer, however, can be seen from the treatment of two other immigrant groups, the Chinese and the Indians, in this same census. In both cases, they were mostly classified as coloured, although the Chinese at least can hardly have been darker than the Portuguese and a fair number were also classified as white. (In the Leeward Islands as a whole, there were only two Chinese, and no Indians, who were classified as black.) It seems likely that the tendency of the enumerators to classify the majority of Portuguese as white and the majority of Chinese and Indians as colored was the European origin of the Madeirans. What is not so clear is what made some Chinese and Indians, who were either rural workers or urban petty bourgeoisie, white, and a few Madeirans colored—much less what made any of them black.

<sup>131</sup> In British Guiana, for instance, as early as 1851 the Portuguese owned more than two-thirds of the rural shops and more than half of those in Georgetown (Lowenthal 1972: 199). In Trinidad, they quickly became market gardeners and small shopkeepers (Brereton 1981: 99).

<sup>132</sup> Of the twenty liquor licenses issued in August 1871, eleven went to Portuguese, including the only licenses in All

liquor distributors were owned by Portuguese, and a number of families had acquired small nonproducing estates, either those that had gone into receivership or whose owners were leaving and selling out. The one exception was the Camacho family, which owned extensive estates as well as a large import-export and plantation provision firm.<sup>133</sup>

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Saints, the Point, Newfield, Parham, and Cochranes—in other words, all those outside St. John's except for one in English Harbour. One went to a woman:

Victorine de Fratus (liquor license, Long Street)  
John De Nunes (liquor license, Point)  
Manoel De Silvia (liquor license, Long Street)  
John Souza (liquor license, Cochranes)  
Joseph Ferrara (liquor license, Point)  
Manoel Gums (liquor license, High Street)  
Francis Fernance Jardine (liquor license, Parham)  
Joseph Gonsalves (liquor license, Newfield)  
Francis Gracias (liquor license, All Saints)  
Manoel Rodriguez Mendes (liquor license, Market Street)  
Antonio Perrara (liquor license, Market Street)

And by 1878, four of the five largest bakers in town—Jose Gomes, Manvel Gomes, E. Gonsalves, and Jeremiah Gonsalves—were Portuguese.

The spellings are as reported in the records for each date. Either Portuguese names were still unfamiliar to Antiguans or writing them was unfamiliar to the Portuguese themselves, or both. The spellings were at first very literal, and changed gradually over the next few years.

<sup>133</sup> The common belief in Antigua is that the first Camacho, Antonio Joseph, came out as a poor indenture, and there are a number of romantic stories about how he acquired his wealth. None of these seems plausible, however, because he does not appear to have arrived until the late 1860s—his son was born in Madeira in 1868—and by 1871 he was listed as owning A.J. Comache & Co., shipping agent (*Antigua Times*, 5 August 1871). He appears on the 1872 jurors' roll as Josephy Agosto Comacho, merchant. (The spelling of Camacho's name changed several times in these early years—either as a result of printers' errors or because it took a while to settle on one spelling.) Antonio Joseph bought his first two estates, Bellevue and Briggins, between 1871 and 1878—well before the other Portuguese began buying land—and this was only the beginning of a buying spree that made him, by 1900, the single largest landowner, and sugar producer, on the island (the Maginley family owned more acres, but there were more of them). He acquired Jonas, Ottos, and Langfords between 1878 and 1891; and Woods, Lower Freemans, Olivers, and Turnbells by 1894. By the time he died (in 1894), he had over 1,600 acres under cultivation. He was also a generous supporter of the Catholic church, buying the land for the cathedral's expansion (*Outlet*, 23 January 1987).

A.J. Camacho had three sons, John J., Emmanuel Oliver, and Martin Joseph, who inherited from their father at his death. As was only possible in wealthy families, each son took over different area of his father's holdings. Thus John J. was the most involved in the estate part of the business, which he continued to expand. In 1898 he is listed as representing 14 estates; he had bought another 7 by 1902, adding 1,227 acres of cultivated land to his holdings. John J. was the representative of the Portuguese interests on the Legislative Council, beginning in 1890, and after Crown Colony government was instituted he was immediately appointed a nominated unofficial, as well as a member of the Executive Council, positions that he held until his death in 1929. He (and his brother Emmanuel O.) joined the St. John's Lodge in 1879, despite the fact that they were Catholics, but resigned in 1882. When John J. died in 1929, he left an enormous estate, valued at £52,624. He had no children, and his wife (he was married to Mary Gomes) presumably died before him because he left the bulk of it to the Catholic church, the lunatic asylum, and other institutions, with a miserly £275 to be divided among five men who were either friends or people who had done him services in some way..

Emanuel O. Camacho took over A.J. Camacho & Co., the export and merchant part of his father's holdings, although it was not until 1918 that he became the sole owner (*Sun*, 23 March 1918). He does not appear

Despite their wealth—which in some cases exceeded that of the nonwhite population—the Portuguese were not accorded a commensurate social status or place in public life. This was a group that maintained its separateness, or had it maintained for them. Their Catholicism, in a country where the white population was Anglican and the nonwhite middle class generally Methodist, played a role—it meant, for instance, that they were not welcomed into the Masons—as did the fact that they followed their own occupational ladders, so that the sons joined their fathers in the family businesses. The only area that did open to a few, particularly the women, was the banks, for reasons discussed in Chapter 9: a combination of skin color and education.<sup>134</sup>

Being on the jurors' list was at that time one measure of social status, yet as late as 1900 there were only 17 Portuguese among the 172 registered jurors; in 1934 there were still only 25 (on a list of 144). Like the nonwhite middle class, the Portuguese were considered a "community" by the governor and Colonial Office, and John J. Camacho was chosen to represent them on the Legislative Council after Crown Colony government was declared in 1898. No other Portuguese served until well into the 1940s. And in striking contrast with the nonwhite middle class, for the Portuguese an Antiguan Grammar School education did not open doors to other occupations, and particularly not to the most desirable, the civil service.<sup>135</sup> The Portuguese were admitted to the Antigua Grammar School in large numbers beginning in 1885, long before the new nonwhite middle class. Despite their Catholicism—they had to leave the school during morning prayers—they were accepted because they were legitimate; they did not, however, get scholarships but paid their own

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to have had any great interest in the estates, and owned only Briggins (presumably given him by his father), Herberts, and Dunnings. He had a string of sons, all of whom went to the Antigua Grammar School and several of whom then went on to get further qualifications: one became a licensed surveyor, another an engineer, a third a lawyer and a fourth took over the family business.

Finally, Martin J. went into the professions and by 1891 had qualified as a lawyer. He served on the Legislative Council from 1894 to 1898. He does not seem to have had much of a day-to-day interest in either the business or the estates, although he is listed as part proprietor of eight of his father's estates in 1898.

<sup>134</sup> A few Portuguese became artisans: Innocent Pereira was listed as a jeweler in 1885; Jose Anjo, photographer, was responsible for preserving the memory of an older Antigua, and also had one of the first motorcars and a taxi service on High Street; John Rodrigues Anjo was a "Hair Dresser and Tobacconist" (Tempany 1911: ads); A.A. Camacho (son of E.O.) was a licensed surveyor. No Portuguese went into teaching, but some went into law, including George Ignatius Mendes, Maurice Vivian Camacho, and, somewhat later, Fabian Camacho.

After World War I, the Portuguese began to venture into such new areas as the cinema—John and Francis Anjo opened the Deluxe in the 1930s, and then sold it to Joe Fernandez and Frances Joaquim, who also bought out the Globe for its Kittitian owners in the 1940s. The rum distillery was established by the Techeiras in the mid-1930s.

<sup>135</sup> The Portuguese had something of the same problem with education—in this case, Catholic education—that the nonwhite middle class had, finding it difficult to support their own schools because of financial constraints. The first Catholic priest arrived in 1859 but the first church building was not consecrated until 1871; there was no Catholic church in the countryside until 1932.

Catholic education was even less developed than the churches, and the fact that there were no Catholic primary schools in the countryside must have furthered the amalgamation of the rural Portuguese with the rural nonwhite population. There was a Catholic school in St. John's that opened and closed several times between 1860 and 1900, but nothing from then until the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary opened the Convent School in 1933. From this point on, few Portuguese attended either of the grammar schools. (On the history of the church, see Commemorative Booklet on the Opening and Blessing of the Holy Family Cathedral [St. John's, 1987] and Outlet, 23 January 1987.)

way.

It was when the Portuguese began, toward the turn of the century, to try to break out of their ethnic occupations and apply for the civil service that they began to be reclassified as "coloured." Thus in the first decades of the twentieth century, highly qualified Portuguese grammar school graduates were repeatedly refused promotion in the Colonial Service commensurate with their qualifications. Imported because they were European, they were now told that they were not "truly British" or of "unmixed European descent" (for example, CO 152/371/Conf., 16 July 1920).<sup>136</sup> Imported because they were white, they were now referred to as "coloured." Not surprisingly, perhaps, there was some confusion as to what color they actually were: one Colonial Office official wrote of a particular applicant that "his color is slight," to which another responded, "I should have said decidedly dark." Both, however, considered even the slightest hint of color reason enough to deny the man the job he was seeking. As with the nonwhite middle class, at the point when these Portuguese felt qualified for certain posts on the basis of their class attributes, the British used color as the basis for excluding them. They were also excluded from the white social institutions—the Antigua Cricket Club, the Antigua Lawn Tennis Club, and the New Club—and the few marriages between either Antiguan or British whites (generally men) and Portuguese (generally women) met with fierce disapproval from the men's families. Some of the most prominent Portuguese did marry white men and women, but these were generally American or Canadian, occasionally European and even more occasionally white West Indians from other islands.<sup>137</sup>

The Portuguese were not only excluded by the white population: they were equally excluded by the nonwhite middle class, which saw them as socially inferior. Ironically, for nonwhite middle-class Antiguan the wealthiest Portuguese were the most "other"—partly because the higher the social status in the Portuguese community, the greater the endogamy, and partly because of religion. Thus even the wealthiest Portuguese were not only refused membership in white institutions, but were also refused membership in *nonwhite* institutions, such as the Antigua Quoits and Lawn Tennis Club and the St. John's Cricket Club. Marriages between Portuguese and middle-class nonwhites were few and far between, and social interaction was limited: as noted above, few of my nonwhite middle-class informants could tell me much about the Portuguese and their families.

The confusion of class and color faced by the Antiguan middle class after the arrival of the first Americans was compounded when, in 1943, the United States decided to send Puerto Rican troops to replace "continental" U.S. troops in the British West Indian islands. The local governors were polled and all—Jamaica, Leewards, British Guiana, Trinidad—

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<sup>136</sup> James Geschwender, Rita Carroll-Segun, and Howard Brill (1988) show a similar process at work in Hawaii. Here too, in an effort to increase the number of Europeans, Portuguese immigration (also from Madeira) was encouraged; here too, once the immigrants arrived they were no longer considered European. Although listed in the census as "Caucasian," they were separated out into a subcategory "Portuguese." They moved off the plantation into ethnic niches, and, despite equal educational qualifications, were kept out of key white-controlled sectors of the economy and social life.

<sup>137</sup> One additional aspect of the marriage situation is that many Portuguese who went abroad were considered white, certainly in the United States and Canada, and usually in England as well. This depended on phenotypic skin color, however, because Trinidadian Albert Gomes (1974) experienced the reverse when he went to England. In *Through a Maze of Colour*, he wrote that although in Trinidad he was considered white, in England, because of his "swarthy," he was considered coloured.-

objected, concerned about the “serious political difficulties” that could result if “other West Indians” were brought to defend their islands when local troops were not considered trustworthy enough to do so. It was not just that Puerto Ricans were “other” West Indians, however, but that Puerto Rican troops, who were of a “Spanish-negro strain,” would as United States nationals “expect to be treated as white men, a thing that would in practice almost certainly involve serious trouble amounting possibly to disorder.” Governor Jardine wrote from Antigua that he was worried about contact between Puerto Ricans, who were well on the way to self-government, and “leftist coloured Antiguans.” In Trinidad, where there had been serious clashes between the American black troops and the local population, the governor was pushing hard to get the black Americans removed, and although he was concerned that he might end up with *both* black Americans and Puerto Ricans, he agreed that Puerto Ricans would be preferable. He warned, however, that although the Puerto Ricans might “feel themselves to be white, they are not likely to be so regarded here,” and this would undoubtedly lead to problems. The Chief of Staff, Porto [sic] Rico Dept. of U.S. Army, cannot have helped matters much when he wrote the U.S. army commander in Antigua (who passed the letter along to the governor, who in turn passed it to the Foreign Office) that “We draft Porto Rican troops into white and coloured units... Porto Rican officers are white and of social class equal to continental officers.” The United States told Britain that it needed to find a place for 15,000 Puerto Rican troops and wanted them in inactive theaters involving minimal shipping—not a sign of great trust. It refused to bow to any British concerns: that Puerto Ricans replace black troops in Trinidad, that this be for the duration of the war only, and that the numbers be limited. It was, however, willing to select only “white Puerto Ricans with knowledge of English and high school standard” for the West Indies. The Foreign Office had no choice but agree, and Puerto Rican troops began to arrive in September 1943.<sup>138</sup>

To Antiguans, the Puerto Ricans were a real puzzle. They considered themselves white—one even refused to work with a black man at the base—and they were treated as white by the Americans. But as Governor Clifford had foretold, the Antiguans did not accept the ascription so easily: Puerto Ricans may have ridden on the whites-only busses, but to Antiguans they neither looked nor behaved like whites. Behavior, as we have seen, was for middle-class Antiguans a key aspect of respectability. An article in the *Magnet* referred sarcastically to the passengers as “white and so-called white” employees (*Magnet*, 20 December 1943).

But while the Puerto Ricans may have been puzzling, it was the Portuguese who became the real issue for the nonwhite middle class. Since to the Americans any woman who was phenotypically white in Antigua was assumed to be socially suitable, they were immediately taken with the Portuguese women, who, lacking the Antiguans’ knowledge of their own history, they “saw” as white. Much to the surprise of nonwhite middle-class Antiguans, a group they had considered their inferiors was suddenly being treated as

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<sup>138</sup> On all this, see FO 371/File 34106: A3511/18/45; A4276/18/45; A4277/18/45; FO 371/File 34111: A8080/18/45; A8250/18/45; with enclosures. Much of this correspondence was marked “Secret” and “Most Secret” and one letter noted that the matter was “explosive” and “too dangerous to be handled on paper”—presumably because it concerned issues of race, which was tied in the Foreign Office mind to wartime security.

In one of history’s nice ironies, the black unit that had been in Trinidad went on to become part of a Puerto Rican unit, the 84th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion (see Palmer 1983: 61).-

superior.<sup>139</sup> Thus the Americans by-passed the group that saw itself as appropriate on a class basis and chose instead a group that they saw as appropriate because of its color. To the dismay of the nonwhite middle class, the definition of “white” suddenly shifted around them. Their arrivance had been short-lived: made economically insecure by the island’s continued dependence on an increasingly marginalized sugar industry and made politically marginal by their behavior in the elections, this class was now by-passed socially as well.

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<sup>139</sup> Similarly with some of the Lebanese: at least one woman who had socialized with nonwhites now began to go out with Americans: she had reclassified herself, with the help of American ignorance, as white.

## CONCLUSION

### THE CHOSEN CLASS

The West Indian nonwhite middle class has been viewed with distrust and contempt by both Europeans and West Indians, by those above it in the social hierarchy and those below. The most scorching, and best known, critiques are those of Eric Williams and C.L.R. James. In 1942, Williams wrote:

In the present society of the Caribbean the role of the people of color is by and large to collaborate, wittingly or no, with the dominant whites. The attitude of the majority of the colonial middle class to the black workers is one of open contempt.... They defend the interest of the class they enter against the class they hope they have left. (Williams 1942: 61, 62)<sup>140</sup>

In a similar fashion, James—whose comment about the “peculiar” nature of the West Indian middle class was quoted at the beginning of the Introduction—described a class that was materialistic, elitist, devoid of ideas, contemptuous of the masses below and sycophantic to the white elites above:

Their own struggle for posts and pay, their ceaseless promising of jobs, their sole idea of a national development as one where everybody can aim at getting something more, the gross and vulgar materialism, the absence of any ideas or elementary originality of thought; the tiresome repetition of commonplaces aimed chiefly at impressing the British, this is the outstanding characteristic of the West Indian middle class. The politicians they produce only reproduce politically the thin substance of this class. (James 1962: 134)

James’s critique was especially vitriolic because it was part of a political tract, but the West Indian middle class’s failure to take a leadership role in either economic or political affairs has been echoed repeatedly since. Such a blanket condemnation clearly overstates the case, as can be seen by the eminently middle-class leadership of the trade union movement, and the political parties that grew out of it, in Barbados under Grantley Adams, Jamaica under Norman Manley, Grenada under T. M. Marryshow, and Dominica under J.B. Charles.<sup>141</sup> In Antigua, on the other hand, as well as in St. Kitts (Aronoff 1973) and St. Lucia (Romalis 1969), the middle class did indeed fail to take a leadership role, thereby losing control of the anti-colonial struggle. This was in striking contrast to Barbados and Jamaica, where the middle class led both the unions and the parties from their beginnings through to independence and after. In fact, although the island societies of the West Indies are often treated as if they were alike, there are critical differences among them, and one of the most important is the difference in the social origins and economic role of the nonwhite middle

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<sup>140</sup> The final sentence is quoting British writer A. Calder-Marshall.

<sup>141</sup> James specifically excluded Grantley Adams from his category of middle class, however. Reflecting his political analysis, James argued that Adams was not a member of the middle class because he “neglected what would have been a brilliant and lucrative profession at the bar to plunge himself into politics” (James 1962: 132). In fact, according to James’ definition, there was no way for the middle class to succeed because its successful members—in his terms—could always be defined out of the class.

class. As noted in the Introduction, the middle class not only occupies contested terrain—it *is* contested terrain. The outcome of that contest has repercussions for the present day.

The question, then, is why such leadership materialized in some islands and failed to do so in others. The common explanation of failure for Antigua—that the middle class was too small (Makiesky-Barrow 1968; Carmody 1978), or even “proportionately too small” (G. Lewis 1968: 139)—is inadequate, although it is widely accepted in Antigua itself. It was not the size, or even the relative size, of the middle class that was the key variable, but its history and the role it played, as well as its consequent relationship to the white upper class above and the mass of the nonwhite population below.

A brief comparison of Antigua and Barbados will highlight some of the key differences. Although both were slave colonies, with populations of primarily European and African origin (in other words, without a huge influx of either Portuguese or East Indian indentures), small peasantries, and a heavy dependence on sugar well into the twentieth century, the role of the white upper class and the nonwhite middle class differed dramatically. In both islands, as elsewhere in the West Indies, the white population was small. But in Barbados it formed 12.7 percent of the whole at emancipation, 6.9 percent in 1921, and 5.1 percent in 1946. In Antigua, the figures were 5.6 percent, 3.1 percent, and 1.7 percent (West Indian Census 1946). Not only was the proportion in Antigua smaller by half, but the decline was far more precipitous. Further, the decline in Antigua was in absolute terms as well, because the population as a whole remained roughly static from 1800 to 1935, whereas in Barbados it almost doubled.<sup>142</sup>

This difference in relative size is significant because it was accompanied by a major difference in role. In both islands there was an amalgamation of sugar estates and a rationalization of production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in Barbados the resident white population maintained its historic hold on large-scale commerce and in addition *increased* its hold over agriculture, as absentee-owned estates passed into its hands (Mark 1966: 18; see also Makiesky-Barrow 1976; Karch 1979, 1981). The result was the development of a fairly prosperous locally born white agro-commercial elite that had a virtual monopoly on plantation agriculture and on the merchant sector.

The situation in Antigua was quite the opposite. At the end of the nineteenth century, the sugar industry was facing serious financial difficulties. Some plantations passed out of production altogether; others were bought by overseas firms. None were bought by local whites. After the crisis of the 1890s, the sugar factory was turned over to a foreign company, which led to the further amalgamation of the producing estates in its hands. We have seen the effect of this process of consolidation and centralization on the white population, which diminished rapidly. And we have seen the effect this had in providing economic opportunities to nonwhites as sector after sector of the economy opened up to them.

The result in Antigua was the creation of a nonwhite middle class that was, by the 1930s, moderately successful in an economic sense and had a small but well understood role on the Legislative Council. Contrast this again with Barbados, where, even as late as the

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<sup>142</sup> The total populations were of course very different. The population of Antigua was about 35,000 from 1861 to 1935, while that of Barbados increased from 152,000 to 192,000 in the same period. The white population in Antigua was approximately 2,500 in 1861 (its peak), 914 in 1921, and 694 in 1946.

1950s, nonwhites were still confined to the professions, the lower ranks of the civil service, and some areas of self-employment, but had not been able to enter large-scale commerce—not even as clerks, much less as owners—the middle and upper ranks of the Colonial Service, or plantation or factory management (Karch 1979). In addition, the nonwhite middle class in Barbados did not even have a limited role in the Assembly—an Assembly, it should be noted, that had existed uninterrupted since the seventeenth century. It is therefore not surprising that this class turned to political agitation. As Cecilia Karch puts it, “Educated but denied access to economic and political power, socially stigmatized because of their color, they focused their attention on the political system” (Karch 1981: 224). And indeed, the leadership of the Barbados Democratic League, the Barbados Progressive League—which was to become the Barbados Labour Party—and the Barbados Workers’ Union were all distinctly middle class: doctors, lawyers, journalists, and businessmen (Mark 1966; G. Lewis 1968; Hoyos 1974; Karch 1979, 1981).<sup>143</sup> As Frances Mark says, “The Barbados movement exemplifies from the start the subsequent trend in the rest of the West Indies towards middle-class professional leadership of the working-class organization...” (Mark 1966: 84).

Only this was not the trend in all of the rest of the West Indies, and certainly not in Antigua.<sup>144</sup> There the middle class, while it may have felt stymied by the white-dominated government and sugar industry, had nevertheless moved ahead and had no wish to upset an applecart that it believed was rolling its way. Thus no member of this class—no lawyer, doctor, journalist, or merchant—aligned with, much less rose to lead, the emerging trade union movement. And it was not that they were not given the opportunity: we saw how they rejected it during the 1938 by-election, and only a few years later, when V.C. Bird went to the lawyer who was the “recognized leader” of the middle class to ask for help in creating a mass movement, the lawyer refused because he was “no Gandhi”—meaning that he was not willing to sacrifice his personal interests for the sake of a larger cause (V.C. Bird interview, 30 April 1981).<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Lest it be argued that the nonwhite middle class in Barbados had a much larger pool of potential leaders to draw upon, let me cite some census figures. In 1891, Antigua had 110 people listed as professionals—lawyers, doctors, dentists, clergy—while Barbados had 108 (not including clergy). In 1921, the Antigua figure was 85 and the Barbados figure 113. This is obviously only part of the middle class, but it shows that in fact Antigua had a proportionately *greater* nonwhite middle class, especially given that the Barbados figure includes far more whites than the Antiguan figure does, while adding merchants and others would increase the Antigua figure still further.

<sup>144</sup> Mark’s comment is typical of those that generalize from one island’s experience to the rest of the British West Indies. Not only was it not true for Antigua, St. Kitts, and St. Lucia, but it was only true for Grenada in the early stages, before Gairy came on the scene (see Singham 1968).

<sup>145</sup> The lawyer was Sydney T. Christian, and according to Bird he went on to say that what he wanted to do most was to become the solicitor for the factory and estates. This may or may not be a true story, although it was repeated to me a number of times (which could be because Bird and others have told it so many times), but whether true or not, it clearly reflects Bird’s sense of betrayal.

Christian was the Antiguan most similar to Adams and Manley in education and training, but it is part of the difference between the Barbados and Antigua that he played the role discussed in the previous chapter rather than lead the trade union movement. If he had been in the sample, Christian would have fit the pattern of the lower level of Set 2. His father, Theophilus Emmanuel Christian (1860-1928), was a carpenter who spent many years in Panama. Sydney Theophilus and his brother Donald Preston were accepted into the 1902 class at the Antigua Grammar School and went from there into the civil service. Donald remained a civil servant, in Treasury, but Sydney went on to law school, first in the United States and then in Britain. Donald married Bright Langley’s daughter Vera; Sydney married first Ella McDonald and then, when she died, her sister Nora. Sydney is best known

Thus while the Barbadian middle class retained its hold on the trade union and therefore on the political process—throughout the West Indies it was trade unions that formed the first political parties—in Antigua the fledgling Antigua Trades and Labour Union's first leaders came from what might be called the lower middle class—a group of small businessmen, shopkeepers, and artisans who gave the name “trades” to the union's title. These men represented a class that considered itself, and was considered by others, economically and socially below the nonwhite middle class. Yet this group was not any more successful than the middle class in leading the trade union, and its top posts quickly shifted to the working class—to V.C. Bird and his followers—as the union's founding members left or were forced out. By the 1950s, a working-class leadership was firmly in charge of the party political apparatus, as well as the government itself.

What I have called the “failure” of the nonwhite middle class of the first part of the century in Antigua is not without ramifications today. First, the smooth functioning of the Westminster model of parliamentary government is not only predicated on the peaceful alternation between two political parties of roughly equal strength but on the existence of a fully formed class structure as it exists in advanced capitalist states. In other words, it presumes the existence of a strong middle class. It has therefore only worked well in those islands where such a class exists. Only there has ideology and public debate played a major role in politics (Romalis 1969), and a party system developed with substantive programmatic differences between the contending parties. In those islands where such leadership has been lacking, on the other hand, debate over issues has been replaced by a reliance on personal charisma and patronage, and, when these fail, on authoritarianism and corruption.

But it is also the case that in Antigua at least, the failure of the middle class of the 1930s has been generalized into a condemnation of *any* middle class in *any* arena—economic, political, social—and to a profound mistrust of any representative of that class—I am sure, for instance, that my argument in the preceding chapters that the middle class was in any way a success will offend many Antiguans. In other words, the failings of one class at one particular point in time have been turned into a political tool, while its successes have been ignored. This has made it possible for the political leadership to continually use the middle class as a scapegoat (one among several) for the island's many ills. Such a partial understanding of the role of the middle class has turned it into part of the problem, not part of the solution.

But it is more important to understand this class than condemn it, and one of the key differences between Barbados and Antigua is key to this understanding: in Antigua, the formation of a middle class took place within the framework of a severely constrained economy and the oversight of a colonial power that was unwilling to continue large-scale financial support for its less economically viable colonies. Within two decades after emancipation, the Antiguan sugar planters faced the combined setback of lower prices and reduced production. In retrospect, it is clear that sugar planting was doomed in Antigua, but the planters would or could not recognize this and struggled on: they took the more marginal land out of production, further squeezed the labor force, begged for government help, and consolidated. What they could not afford to do, however, was modernize, either in factory or field, and so they continued to produce their outmoded brown sugar, which

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in Antigua for his work in helping create the University of the West Indies.

became increasingly less competitive with the more refined white sugar produced in other colonies or with European beet sugar.

Once it had been determined that Antigua would not continue to be important economically, the British were unwilling to put more than the minimum of money and personnel into the island to keep it afloat. Governors came and left, each with a new set of schemes that they never had enough money or time to put into effect—Antigua’s chronic inability to solve its water problem is only one indication of this. The infrastructure deteriorated. In addition, the British gave up on the local plantocracy and when the economy almost totally unraveled in the mid-1890s, the “Cinderella of the West Indies” was rescued not with aid for the Antiguan planters but by bringing in a prince from outside—in the form of Henckell DuBuisson and the Antigua Sugar Factory. At the same time, fearful of fostering a middle class that would mobilize the increasingly restive mass of plantation workers and peasants, the British tried to control the development of representative institutions by installing Crown Colony government, arguing that this was in the best interests of the entire population—that the “people require to be governed much more than they require to be represented” (Bertram 1930: 175). The planters, hopeful that the new political structure would make it possible for them to regain their prosperity, willingly renounced their elective role. Whether in forcing the planters’ hand in order to get what they wanted or in accepting the conservative recommendations of the Wood Commission or in greeting the 1932 Dominica conference with hostility and skepticism, the British systematically tried to control the pace at which a nonwhite middle class developed. Furthermore, when they finally decided to support the creation of trade unions, they bypassed the middle class entirely: as a result of the Moyne Commission recommendations, the British took upon themselves the role of sponsorship of the trade unions, a role that might have otherwise been within the purview of local government.<sup>146</sup> In addition, the Antigua Recovery Programme, discussed in Chapter 8, continued British control of the course of economic development and opened the door to additional outside investment, which further undermined the economic security of the new middle class (P. Henry 1985: 88).

This returns us to the history of how this class came into being and the effect of its particular history on its attitude toward the mass of the population below and the planter-merchant class above. Although it is a truism of much class analysis that classes are the result of class struggle—that classes do not exist in isolation but only in contest with one another (i.e., Thompson 1978)—the analysis of the creation of the Antiguan middle class also shows the extent to which classes can be *chosen*. Even though demographic and economic pressures forced the Antiguan white population to give way, they were still able to exert enormous control over the process and pace of change: they not only instituted certain selection mechanisms, but they did a great deal of the selecting and they did it in an intensely competitive and economically impoverished environment. Thus the headmaster of the Antigua Grammar School personally *chose* who would attend the school, particularly the important scholarship winners, while the governor personally *chose* who would be appointed

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<sup>146</sup> The Colonial Development Fund of 1929 and the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 made it the duty of the Secretary of State for Colonies to see that each colony provided for trade union activity, that the wages paid were agreed between union and employer, and other similar regulations (P. Lewis 1984: 57).

to the administrative branches of the Colonial Service—indeed, as one Antiguan put it, it could almost be said that the middle class was “manufactured for the civil service.” And between 1897 and 1937, the governor also *chose* the entire Legislative and Executive councils. The head of Brysons personally *chose* his clerks, as did the managers of the Antigua Sugar Factory, the banks, and so on. The Masons *chose* who would join their organization, as did the cricket, sports, and social clubs.

Once a grammar school education became the necessary prerequisite for the best middle-class occupations, controlling entry through its narrow gates became a powerful means of implementing such choice. Gordon Lewis has caustically described the West Indian education system as a “murderously competitive regimen, with pupils exercised like race horses in a steeplechase only a chosen few could hope to win” (Lewis 1968: 230). The grammar schools were central arenas of socialization, and classroom behavior, manners, dress, and speech were as much subjects as were reading and writing, Latin and Greek. The grammar schools also inculcated the conviction that higher education should be the exclusive prerogative of the few: from J.T. Thibou in the 1890s, quoted in Chapter 6, to leaders of the new middle class of the 1930s, the belief held firm that too much education for the laboring classes would lead to sloth, crime, and eventual anarchy.

Much has been written, particularly in novels, about the way in which this hierarchical, examination-driven system affected the students by discouraging risk-taking and encouraging caution. Gordon Lewis, for example, has described how such an “educational culture” meant “the ornamental development of the privileged individual, not the general enlightenment of the community” (Lewis 1968: 230). It was a system that rewarded careful hard work more than great flights of creativity, and in Antigua it resulted in a middle class that included many civil servants, lawyers, doctors, and clerks, but very few artists, writers, or even entrepreneurial businessmen. (Indeed, the few entrepreneurs had all lived in the United States, where they were able to accumulate cash.)

Yet it is also important to remember that this was a class whose very existence was precarious. The occupations of its members may have been considered prestigious, but their incomes were meager, which undoubtedly reinforced the tendency to be cautious: poorly capitalized merchants in a low-wage economy can hardly afford to take risks. Far more people moved away than stayed, so its very size was constantly in question. Its members, almost all of whom had recently entered the middle class, were always anxious that they would lose their newly won status, always fearful of falling back. It is therefore not surprising that when they began to dominate the government bureaucracy, teaching, the churches, and the legal and medical professions, they used their positions in those institutions to maintain the system as it was. It was such cautiousness, coupled with a sense of hierarchy and exclusion, that eventually provoked this class’s demise. The middle class had not heard, much less learned, the lessons of 1918—that a shift in favor of the rights of the working class was underway, not only in West Indies but in Britain as well. And so when that class in Antigua began to find its voice in the late 1930s, the middle class preferred to lecture and cajole rather than lead. Unable or unwilling to defend the interests of the working population, it was not to this class that the trade union turned when it needed leaders for its movement.

Part of the reason was that once chosen, the middle class set out to distance itself from those below it economically and socially. Its social life revolved around family, schools, and

membership clubs that solidified its sense of belonging—and of being able to exclude others—and reinforced the social bonds and standards that it believed crucial to maintaining its status. In a society in which every part of life was a hierarchy—a hierarchy of schools, of jobs, of cricket clubs, of fraternal organizations, even of churches—this class became as successful at excluding those below as those above had been successful in excluding it. Women, as noted earlier, played a key role in this status-definition, in maintaining the boundaries of class by controlling social life in general and by managing that ultimate aspect of class membership, marriage. It is not, however, that this class wanted to *be* white, or to ape European cultural patterns and deny its African ancestry: this accusation, a common one, ignores both a strong sense of identification as West Indian and an equally strong rejection of discrimination based on skin color. But it wanted to get ahead and was realistic about where promotion lay.

To say that the nonwhite middle class in Antigua did not want to *be* white is not to ignore the fact that the class system in Antigua was built in the context of racial stratification. As noted in the Introduction, much of the literature on the British West Indies had linked class and race in a hierarchy in which white is equated with upper class, brown (or colored) with middle class, and black with lower class: class is reduced to skin color. Those few scholars who have challenged this conception have simply turned it on its head: influenced by the Pan African and Black Power movements, they have posed the issue as one of race *or* class, arguing that one or the other is the dominant ideology at any one point in time (e.g., P. Henry 1985; Phillips 1988; Mills 1987). But both these analyses or conceptions simplify a far more complex and shifting reality—in fact, both are ideological statements that serve different interests. The three-tier phenotype>equals-class conception was how the British wanted to see these societies: it was the British who insisted that color be considered the key to social mobility, and who continued to do so after this was unacceptable to white Antiguans, who had found that legitimacy could successfully substitute for skin color as a means of operationalizing their exclusivity. On the other hand, the race-or-class conception is that of the marginalized lower classes (or those seeking to lead them), whether the argument is that class replaces race or race replaces class as the operative ideology (P. Henry 1985: 176 for the first; Phillips 1988: 117 for the second).

Rather than adopt either of these two dichotomies, it is more productive to see the point at which race and class intersect as an arena of struggle, and to analyze the ways in which both are contested and manipulated. Thus while the British colonial authorities tried to use skin color as the basis for exclusion in their effort to maintain their domination, the nonwhite middle class and the Portuguese resisted, with different degrees of success.<sup>147</sup> Many nonwhite Antiguans understood this: as Antiguan writer Jamaica Kincaid has said, “I think it’s just a question of power—who can enforce race, who can enforce class” (quoted in Garis 1990: 78).

Both groups, however, knew that the two were linked: in this sense, they shared an understanding of how the society was organized. The Americans did not. The Americans arrived in Antigua with a very different conception of social reality, and saw Antigua through

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<sup>147</sup> The fact that the nonwhite middle class struggled to be seen in class terms does not mean that other classes did not use race. Even before Garvey's influence, members of the working and lower middle classes had at various times argued that the "black man" should run Antigua.

this lens. Without history and memory, class and race have different meanings for different groups. While Antiguan reality contained within it a distillation of past (Antiguan) experience, American reality did not: each group represented what Bill Roseberry has called the "sedimentation of particular historical moments and encounters" (Roseberry 1989: 89), and could not therefore understand the other's behavior. Both British and Americans used phenotype as a means of exclusion, but because they saw skin color differently, they excluded, and included, different groups. Thus the shock the middle class felt when the Americans arrived, turning their world upside down and inside out. It was not simply shock at blatant racial discrimination, but shock at the unexpected rejection of middle-*class* behavior. Manners, respectability, education, family—none of these sufficed to win acceptance from the newcomers.

The coming of the Americans signaled the final defeat for the nonwhite middle class. By the mid-1940s, it was confined to one of the three nominated seats on the Legislative Council, with all five elected seats firmly in the hands of the trade union movement. This middle class also began to migrate in large numbers. The grammar schools rolls of the 1940s and 1950s included far fewer of its sons and daughters and more and more of the sons and daughters of the class below. These men and women in turn began to enter the civil service, although it took many more years for them to dominate the professions. In the end, the middle class of the first half of the twentieth century, like the middle class of the last half of the nineteenth, was by-passed by still another middle class—the middle class of the 1950s and 1960s. But that is the topic of another book.