POLITICAL CHANGE
IN BRITISH HONDURAS

A Study of Decolonisation and National Integration

CEDRIC HILBURN GRANT

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh
September, 1969

------------- o o o -------------
In this study I describe the political institutions and processes that have characterised political change in British Honduras. The institutions are described in such a way that attention is focussed on the problem of national integration that has arisen during the process of decolonisation. This problem of national integration involves the political integration of the two main cultural complexes, the Creoles and the Mestizos, long separated by their settlement patterns, different occupational preferences and social values. It also involves the bridging of the elite-mass gap which cuts across ethno-cultural lines. A third problem of integration is also identified. This is the question of the country's regional attachment to Central America and the West Indies; an issue that is highlighted by the society's cultural heterogeneity, its need to establish stronger regional economic ties, and the Guatemalan claim to the territory.

In analysing these problems I have had to sacrifice a certain amount of historical continuity in the overall story of decolonisation. However, in each chapter I have tried to preserve some sense of the sequence of events and the accompanying changes in attitudes. At the same time the institutions are so inter-related that repetition of events could not be totally avoided.

Although the analysis is primarily concerned with substantive issues it is not far removed from a theoretical issue. It is whether the 'plural society' is an adequate analytical tool for the study of
societies that are multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural. This study shows that the picture of political behaviour based essentially on cultural differences which this concept conjures up is only partial and somewhat refractory. If the picture of political change is to be complete it is necessary to add the dimension of social class.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began this study in 1966 while I was a Research Fellow in the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies. Its presentation as a doctoral dissertation was made possible by the University award of a Ford Foundation Consortium Fellowship. I am therefore grateful to the University for its generosity.

Many people in British Honduras have aided me in my work. My friend and colleague, Vernon Leslie, Resident Tutor of the University of the West Indies, placed his office at my disposal. Being a British Honduran, he was an asset to my work in many other ways. Gilbert Hulse, a former Anglican Archdeacon, was a mine of information. Harrison Courtnay, a lawyer and Speaker of the House of Representatives, was never too busy to share his political experience. His private collection of newspapers and rare official reports saved me many inconveniences. Without the co-operation of other political veterans such as E.O. Barrow, retired District Commissioner, James Meighan, also a retired District Commissioner and a PUP Senator, and Edward Gegg, proprietor of the Vogue Commercial Store, I would have been unable to evoke the political climate of the 1930s. The PUP government proved to be an admirably open administration. I was granted frequent and informal interviews with members of the political executive, including Premier George Price.

The study has also benefited from the comments of several academics: Professor Harry Hanham formerly Head of the Department of Politics, University of Edinburgh and now at Harvard University, was always seeking
a clarification of my conceptual framework; Professor David Waddell, formerly a Senior Lecturer in History, University of Edinburgh and now at the University of Stirling, strove to curb my rambling tendencies; Professor John Erickson, Department of Politics, University of Edinburgh, was in his indomitable way stimulating; and Professor Bill Mackenzie, Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, with his encyclopaedic knowledge reminded me in the process of raising several comparative questions that British Honduras, though on the periphery of the colonial world, was just another colony.

Finally, I am indebted to my wife for typing the various drafts and the final manuscript.
CONTENTS

Introduction ..................................................... 1

Chapter
1 Social and Economic Conditions 1931 - 1949 ........... 24
2 Political Conditions 1931 - 1949 ......................... 53
3 The People's Committee .................................. 102
4 Political Parties ............................................ 132
5 Trade Unions ............................................... 197
6 The Church .................................................. 227
7 The Civil Service .......................................... 273
8 Local Authorities .......................................... 309
9 Conclusion: Decolonization and National Integration .............. 334

Appendixes
i Mediation - Anglo/Guatemalan Dispute ............... 348
ii Published Papers (in pocket at back cover) ......... 358

Selected Bibliography ........................................ 406
MAP

British Honduras: Rivers, Principal Cays, Towns and Administrative Districts

TABLES

1 Distribution of Main Cultural Groups
2 Residents Classified According to Ability to Speak Principal Languages - Minor Divisions
3 Statistics of Freeholders
4 Total Quantities of the Principal Exports in the Years 1920 - 1932
5 Customs Revenue for the Years 1920 - 1933
6 Occupation of Elected and Nominated Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council 1933 - 1948
7 The Population and the Electorate 1936 - 1948
8 Analysis of Voting for Legislative Council Elections 1936 - 1948
9 Voting in General Elections 1954 - 1965
10 Cultural Affiliations of the Legislators in the House of Representatives 1968
11 Trade Unions 1946 - 1960
12 Membership of the Churches 1931 - 1960
13 Salaries of Heads of Departments in British Honduras and Gambia 1932
14 Honduranization of Senior Civil Service Posts between 1954 and 1965
15 Officers Undergoing Training in April 1965
16 Ethnic-Cultural Composition of Senior Civil Servants in 1950
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ethnic-Cultural Composition of Senior Civil Servants in 1965</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Revenue and Expenditure of the Punta Gorda Town Board 1954</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Government Subvention to Punta Gorda Town Board 1966 - 1968</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

British Honduras occupies an area of 8,600 square miles and is a British enclave in the Spanish-speaking subcontinent of Central America. It is bounded on the north and north-west by Mexico, on the west and south by Guatemala and on the east by the Caribbean Sea. The nearest British oriented territory, Jamaica, lies about 650 miles to the east in the Caribbean Sea. The population which was estimated at 110,000 in 1967 testifies to the country's colonial experience and its contiguity to Mexico and Guatemala. It is composed of such diverse groups as the Caribs, Chinese, Creoles, East Indians, Europeans, Lebanese and Syrians, Mayan and Kekchi Indians¹ and the Mennonites, all with different customs, occupations, languages and to some extent religion. The 1960 census did not classify British Hondurans by racial or cultural origin but the Creoles are the largest cultural group, accounting for about 60 per cent of the population. Next in size are the Mestizos who comprise about 20 per cent of the population. The Indians and the Caribs make up some 10 per cent and 8 per cent of the population respectively and the other cultural groups account for the remaining 2 per cent.

¹ In the West Indies the terms 'East Indian' and 'Amerindian' are used to refer to descendants of immigrants from India and to the Aboriginal Indians respectively. In most of the territories the prefix 'East' is not normally used whereas in British Honduras this prefix is retained and that in Amerindian is discarded. The use of these terms in the study follows the practice in British Honduras.
RIVERS, PRINCIPAL CAYS, TOWNS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS
The divisions between the main cultural groups are emphasised by a certain amount of physical separation. The city of Belize is essentially a Creole town and the home of the majority of Creoles. To the west of the Belize District the Indians gradually predominate over the Creoles until around Benque Viejo in the Cayo District and the south-western corner in the Toledo District, near the Guatemalan frontier, the inhabitants are almost entirely Maya Indian. To the north of the Belize District the settlement pattern is the same. The population of Orange Walk, the nearest town to Belize City, is composed of Indians and Creoles, and that of the Corozal District in the extreme north consists mainly of descendants of Mexican immigrants. The other major cultural group, the Caribs, are concentrated on the south coast of the country. Stann Creek is almost exclusively, and Punta Gorda, largely a Carib town. To some extent the inadequate transportation system effectively restricts contact between the main cultural groups. As late as the 1940s there was little chance of Belize City communicating with Orange Walk, a distance of sixty miles, except by the weekly boat to Corozal, thence up the New River to Orange Walk; a journey of over two days. The proletarian passenger traffic from Belize City to Punta Gorda is still by over-night river steamer, as there are no motor roads between Stann Creek and Punta Gorda and the journey by air is expensive.

The breakdown of the population by administrative districts and by languages in the following two tables provides a valuable index of the distribution of the main cultural groups.
### TABLE 1

**Distribution of Main Cultural Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts and Sub-Divisions</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Main Cultural Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Honduras</strong></td>
<td>90,505</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>Creoles and Mestizos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belize District</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize City</td>
<td>32,867</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize Rural</td>
<td>7,217</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corozal District</strong></td>
<td>9,730</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Mestizos and Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corozal Town</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Mestizos and Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corozal Rural</td>
<td>6,559</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orange Walk District</strong></td>
<td>10,306</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>Mestizos and Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Walk Town</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Creoles and Mestizos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Walk Rural</td>
<td>8,149</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cayo District</strong></td>
<td>11,764</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>Indians and Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo Town</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benque Viejo Town</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo East Rural</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo West Rural</td>
<td>5,068</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Indians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stann Creek</strong></td>
<td>10,906</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>Creoles and Caribs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stann Creek Town</td>
<td>5,287</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Creoles and Caribs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stann Creek Rural</td>
<td>5,619</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Creoles and Caribs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toledo</strong></td>
<td>7,715</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Creoles and Caribs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punta Gorda</td>
<td>1,789</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Creoles and Caribs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo North and Central</td>
<td>4,950</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Creoles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo South</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Indians and Caribs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of British Honduras 1960*  
## Residents Classified According to Ability to Speak Principal Languages - Minor Divisions

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>90,505</td>
<td>32,907</td>
<td>7,217</td>
<td>3,171</td>
<td>6,559</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>9,149</td>
<td>1,890</td>
<td>1,607</td>
<td>8,267</td>
<td>5,287</td>
<td>5,619</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>5,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>46,000</td>
<td>27,607</td>
<td>5,780</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>3,077</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>1,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish only</td>
<td>8,887</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>1,728</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1,964</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>1,449</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya only</td>
<td>2,610</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carib only</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Spanish</td>
<td>17,624</td>
<td>4,576</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>1,705</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>1,575</td>
<td>1,165</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>2,571</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Maya</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English &amp; Carib</td>
<td>5,025</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2,619</td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish &amp; Maya</td>
<td>3,115</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,351</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish &amp; Carib</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya &amp; Carib</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1960 Census, Table 2.5, p.13
The Small Cultural Groups

Culturally, the East Indians, Chinese, Lebanese and the Mennonites are of little importance to the political process. In fact, their assimilation within the wider social system has proved easier than the preservation of their cultural identity. The most integrated group are the East Indians who are peasant sugar cane and rice farmers in the Corozal and Toledo Districts respectively. With their short-lived immigration in the 19th century, and lacking contact with other East Indian communities in the West Indies, they have lost most of their cultural characteristics. They speak no East Indian languages and have long abandoned their style of dress, religions, and marriage customs in favour of the more common social values. The Chinese and Lebanese are more contented than integrated minorities, once permitted to pursue their profitable commercial business in Belize City and the district towns. Perhaps the cultural group which occupies the most marginal position within the political and social system and seem intent on maintaining its distinctiveness are the Mennonites. Two communities, the Reinland and the Kleingemeinde, emigrated in batches from Mexico and Canada from 1957 to 1959 and settled in the remote parts of the Orange Walk and Cayo Districts only after receiving firm assurances from the government of substantial autonomy in local matters. They are exempted from participation in insurance and social security schemes and for religious reasons do
not participate in the political process. The conversion of virgin lands into highly productive agricultural areas is perhaps their main contribution to a society in which subsistence farming is the tradition. It is likely however, that their children will establish a closer social relationship with the rest of the society as they are being educated within the normal school system.

The Major Cultural Groups

Although they are distinct cultural groups the Creoles, the Mestizos, Maya and Kekchi Indians and the Caribs can be classified for analytical purposes into two broad cultural complexes: the White-Negro-Carib-Creole and the Spanish-Indian-Mestizo.

The Creole

Neither complex is easy to define and of the two the Creole complex is the more difficult. The original use of the term Creole in the Americas and the Caribbean is obscure. The term is derived from the Spanish 'criollo', meaning native to the locality and appears to have been used first by Spanish colonists in South America to distinguish their children from newly arrived Spanish immigrants and subsequently by and with reference to descendants of non-Amerindian and

2. For extended details of the agreement see British Honduras Gazette No. 44; 23rd August, 1950.
non-Asiatic peoples born and settled in the West Indies and in some areas of the Americas. Apparently, it is within the latter context that the term gained currency among the early British settlers, the Baymen, and their ex-Negro slaves in British Honduras. The original meaning of the term was probably also applicable in the sense that these inhabitants, who had found the territory largely unoccupied, witnessed the arrival of the indigenous Mayas and the Mestizos from North Yucatan in the mid 19th century and also the Caribs around 1796 from Honduras, Guatemala, and the Bay Islands where they had originally emigrated from St. Vincent.

The term, however, developed into a concept with racial and cultural connotations. A precise racial definition of Creole is as elusive as its original usage is ambiguous. Negroes constitute about two-thirds of this component but anyone with a generous admixture of Negro blood will answer the biological criterion. It is however the cultural element that is emphasised since the complex is conceived and expressed more as a social and cultural rather than a biological phenomenon. The concept is therefore used primarily to identify a non-Indian and non-Mestizo way of life and a set of values derived, with local adaptation, from Britain and Africa. Thus the few European expatriates and the dwindling group of local whites form an integral part of this complex although racially they would be excluded from it.

The African element of the culture when not devalued has been subordinated to the British. This is largely the result of the socialising influence of the Protestant Churches - Anglican, Scottish
Presbyterian and Methodists - whose membership is predominantly Creole. As standard-bearers of British values and codes of behaviour these denominations channelled their efforts mainly through the educational system which they had shaped and controlled during the Crown Colony period.

The local adaptation of an amalgam and mixture of Negro and European culture has, however, produced distinctive food preferences, social habits and a dialect called Creole which is the most obvious common cultural characteristic within the group. It is the normal language of everyday discourse in the two areas, Belize City and the eastern part of the country, where the Creoles are concentrated. It is noteworthy that, unlike in the West Indies where the local dialect is regarded as the language of the working-class, the Creole dialect in British Honduras does not suffer a social stigma. It has been embraced by the various social groups in the Creole complex and therefore helps to solidify the group. In fact, with cultural considerations playing an important role in contemporary politics it is not considered a virtue for a Creole, irrespective of his social status, to be unable to speak the dialect.

The Creole culture also has a distinctive occupational pattern. The high and middle economic status groups opt for the elite positions in law, teaching, and the civil service with little interest in a career in business. Mahogany operations, although seasonal, have traditionally been the main occupation of the lower income group but with the decline of this industry trade, construction, communication,
and services are becoming the important sources of employment. Only a small number are peasant farmers as most regard agriculture as an inferior and transitory occupation; a resting spell from the more rigorous forest activity.

Apart from its distinctiveness the occupational pattern provides an insight into the system of social stratification within this complex. A white or coloured skin usually means a high social and occupational position, while the black skin Negro constitutes the labouring class. The findings of anthropologists that occupation and colour are the main status determinants of, and are closely correlated within the Creole social hierarchy in much of the former British West Indies seem to have some relevance here, particularly before the decolonising process began in the 1950s. Club patronage provided incontrovertible evidence of the alignment of social classes on the basis of colour and occupation within the complex. It would be misleading to claim, however, that the anthropologist’s model of a three-class hierarchy could be consistently verified in present-day British Honduras, since the white-brown-black ranking is being continuously modified by occupational achievement. Other forms of social mobility are also probably modifying the basis of the system of social stratification but their identification would require sociological enquiry.

What is certain is that the Creole culture is the dominant norm of social life. It was inherent in British colonial rule that this culture should have been historically ranked superior to the Mestizo culture. Indeed, this hierarchical relationship between the two major cultural complexes invariably over-shadowed the internal differentiation within either of them.

**The Mestizo**

If the Creole culture is a mixture of English and African culture the Mestizo is a fusion of Spanish and Indian. Like its European counterpart in the Creole culture, the Spanish element in the Mestizo has been accorded a higher status value throughout South and Central America. Yet, more than the African in the Creole culture in the West Indies, the Indian element remains a conspicuous feature of the Mestizo way of life particularly in Central America and more specifically in British Honduras. This capacity for long term survival against the pressures of the European culture is due not so much to the Indian culture being indigenous but to the fact that British Honduras forms part of a concentrated area comprised of modern Mexico, Guatemala, Chiapas, Yucatan, and the north western corner of (Spanish) Honduras which was initially occupied by the Toltecs, Aztecs and Mayas whose civilizations were remarkable for their scientific achievements and
Despite its durability the Maya civilization collapsed in the 10th century. There is uncertainty about the subsequent distribution and movement of the Mayas in British Honduras but archaeological evidence\(^5\) discounts the view that they migrated in substantial numbers to Yucatan where the civilization flowered in a modified form in the 13th century. The indigenous way of life in British Honduras however remained unaffected by the Spanish conquest and colonisation of Central America in the 16th century and also by the establishment of a British settlement around the mid 17th century. For although a Spanish possession, British Honduras was never administered or settled by Spaniards while the contact of the British colonial administration with the Mayas was minimal.

The acculturation of the Maya Indian began with the influx of the Spanish colonists from Yucatan and their sympathisers, the Mestizos, who fled in the wake of the Indian uprising, the Caste War of Yucatan, 1847 - 1853,\(^6\) and settled in the northern district of Corozal and

\(^4\) A second such area centred in Peru and included parts of what are now Ecuador, Bolivia and north western Argentina. The resilience of this early civilization in these areas has been such that about one half of the population of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia still live as Indians. See George I. Blanksten, 'The Politics of Latin America in Almond and Coleman, (ed.) The Politics of the Developing Areas, Princeton 1960. p.455 - 531.


Orange Walk. Indians loyal to the Yucatecan whites, and others who merely wished to avoid the aftermath of the uprising also joined the stream of refugees. In terms of its cultural orientation Corozal in the extreme north was more an extension of Mexico than part of the British settlement. In fact the waves of migration had by 1861, transformed the Creole population into a minority, as 37 per cent of the respondents of the census in that year, the first in British Honduras, were Spanish speaking whites and Mestizos and 18 per cent were Indians. Spanish local government institutions were established in the district, and on the appeal of the refugees for pastoral care in their own faith the missionary activities of the Roman Catholic Church began in earnest in British Honduras. Although less pronounced and pervasive, Spanish influence was also established in the western and extreme southern areas where the K'iche' Maya and Kekchi Mayas from the Petén and Vera Paz areas of Guatemala respectively settled.

While its literal meaning was somewhat misleading, the very name of the war which was responsible for the waves of migration from Mexico suggests that the migrants brought with them a fairly rigid and formalised class system. This rigidity is still, to varying degrees, a dominant feature of class divisions in Latin America where the whites or 'Creoles' constitute the ruling class, the Indians, the lower class, and the Mestizos are in the cultural and social if not the economic sense

7. The Handbook of British Honduras for 1888 - 1889 compiled by Lindsay, bristowe and Wright.
the intermediate class. While the extent to which the rigidity of the class system persists in British Honduras is still to be determined by anthropological research the hierarchical lines of demarcation have probably been blurred by several factors. One is the numerical decline, mainly through miscegenation, of the Spaniards of pure European extraction; another was the inevitable decline in the Mestizos' political and social influence in a British colony. To a considerable extent the Mestizos have retrieved their influence by their success in commerce. From very modest beginnings in the district towns they are among the prominent businessmen in Belize City.

The number of Indians who have achieved the upward social mobility either within the Mestizo complex or the wider social system is, however, extremely limited. One reason for this is the limited opportunities for improvement in their economic and occupational status. Until the expansion of the sugar industry in the north in the 1960s, chicle bleeding was their main source of cash wages. Perhaps the more important reason is the Indians' commitment to their indigenous way of life. Despite attempts by the government to modernize their farming method, they have clung to their traditional method of shifting cultivation. Corn remains their staple diet, fiestas are faithfully observed, and strong, stable family ties are maintained in somewhat isolated villages.

Although slow, the acculturation of the Indians remains Spanish-oriented. The ability to speak Spanish is perhaps the principal key to their social advancement especially since the status of the
language has been enhanced by the government's increasing use of it. The hispanising tendencies are also facilitated by the relative proximity of the areas of Indian and Mestizo concentration to the neighbouring countries, Mexico and Guatemala, and by the virtual freedom of movement across the border of the former and easy physical connection with the latter. Indeed, the Mestizos' cultural affinity and familial ties with Mexico, the increasing use of Spanish by the Indians, and the actual contact have had a strong pull towards closer relationship with the Spanish-speaking neighbours.

Consideration of the Caribs has been reserved for this stage of discussion because of the problem of categorisation which this group poses. They are essentially a Negro group with a slight Indian mixture and, to the casual observer, are not easily distinguishable from West Indian Negroes. But they possess their own language, and their occupational pattern and social mores are distinct from the Creole and the Mestizo. Fishing and subsistence farming, mainly of cassava, is their traditional occupation, but many also work in the citrus industry in Stann Creek. Although of mixed Negro and Indian descent their culture is not simply a fusion of the two elements. By virtue of their unusual degree of cultural differentiation they have been ascribed a low social status by both the Creoles and Mestizos which have impelled them towards the maintenance of a strong group consciousness.

Like the Creoles, however, education ranks high in their value system. That they are the only cultural group within the teaching profession which can be persuaded to work among the Indians proves at once their low ascribed status and social aspirations. It is their social goals rather than their association as primary school teachers with the Indians by which they should be classified. Thus for the purposes of this study they are included in the Creole complex.

This structural model of two distinct cultural complexes — the White-Negro-Carib-Creole and the Spanish-Mestizo-Indian — in contrast to position is clearly an over-simplified picture of British Honduras society. It suggests a static relationship whereas differences in race, language, religion, and culture, and to a lesser extent location, sufficiently cut across each other to produce a more complex pattern of social life. There is considerable interaction between the two complexes principally among the upper and middle strata and in Belize City and the district towns. Social group formation within these strata which formerly followed the racial and cultural cleavages is ceasing to sharply reflect these distinctions. Inter-marriages between individuals of the two complexes have produced many visible cases of individuals who have been exposed to both modes of life and cannot be easily categorised. In these cases the individual’s current way of life and values provide the main clue to the relative strength of his commitment to these cultures, although studies in culture and personality suggest

that external behaviour is not necessarily a reliable guide to cultural commitment. The fact that for convenience and marital harmony a spouse may adopt the partner's way of life adds to the difficulty of determining the former's degree of commitment. To suggest however that individuals derive their values solely from either one or both of these complexes is to overlook the development over the years of common social values which are not necessarily a gross embodiment of those of the two complexes and to which each complex subscribes to varying degrees. The tendency also for the Creole dialect to become the common language of communication across the cultural frontiers also points to the existence of some form of social cohesion.

The Problem of Establishing a Polity

While British Honduras exhibits certain features of a 'plural society' it is only since the rise of the nationalist movement in the 1950s that the problems inherent in this type of society have come to be really felt. Before then the country was relatively tranquil with political consciousness being an urban phenomenon. Indeed, the dominant Creole elite acted and behaved as if Belize City was British Honduras with the result that the predominantly Latin peasantry was in the society but not of it. Although the colonial political system was unitary the application of different methods of rural administration to the various communities strengthened and preserved the communal and cultural divisions. The Indian villages, particularly in the remote
south, were administered as 'reserves' with the central government eventually conferring statutory recognition on their internal mechanism for social control. If coercive power, so often used elsewhere by colonial governments to regulate ethnic and cultural relationships, was noticeably absent in British Honduras it was precisely because the social and occupational distance separating these cultural groups was so wide that the need to invoke regulatory controls seldom arose. Visiting observers, as Waddell points out,\(^{10}\) were impressed with the apparent absence of racial and cultural frictions. But this picture was deceptive in that it encouraged the ruling elite to conclude that a highly integrated and cohesive society existed.

This absence of a national political system was typical of colonial political systems. As Almond and Coleman point out the urban-rural dichotomy is one of the modal characteristics of the political systems of developing territories in which the ruling urban strata "essay to speak and act for the society as a whole."\(^{11}\) Even more typical was the emergence and growth of the nationalist movement. British Honduras simply experienced the ferment that was sweeping the post-war II colonial world. What was significant was the extent of the elite displacement during the development of nationalist politics. The members of the old elite in the colonial territories constituted a


veritable upper class as they were the wealthy landowners, merchants
and commission agents, local and expatriate managers of European firms
and banks, lawyers, doctors, clergymen and senior retired civil
servants. This old elite invariably organised and even dominated,
notably in West Africa, the development of modern nationalist politics.\(^{12}\)
In general, however, as the upper social class they have had to share
their ruling status with members from the lower social strata who
entered into the political system through a variety of channels,
notably the trade unions and political parties. British Honduras is
one of the few colonial territories where the old elite was completely
displaced by this lower social group of politicians. Sir Hilary Blood,
the visiting constitutional Commissioner, was in 1958 "astonished to
find that there is among the unofficial members of the Legislative
Assembly not a single lawyer, doctor, nor person with a University
degree." "This," he concluded, "must be almost a unique condition of
affairs."\(^{13}\) Not only was the professional group unrepresented in the
Legislative Assembly but none of the nationalist leaders was a business
owner. John Smith, the original Leader of the nationalist People's
United Party (PUP), was a cinema manager, Leigh Richardson, the Chairman,
was a former primary school teacher and a journalist; George Price, the
Secretary and now the Premier, was also the Secretary to the local
multi-millionaire, R. S. Turton; Philip Goldson, the Assistant

\(^{12}\) Martin Kilson, *Political Change in a West African State*, Harvard

\(^{13}\) Report of the Constitutional Commissioner (Sir Hilary Blood)
Secretary was a journalist and a former junior civil servant; and Nicholas Pollard, the President and later Secretary of the PUP’s trade union arm, the General Workers’ Union, had been a commercial clerk. These leaders were not only functionally distinct from the upper ranks of the social elite but they were less affluent and more modest in their style of life.

Although the social composition of the new elite in British Honduras was perhaps the least mixed up, least heterogeneous in the West Indies, the intra-party relationship was by no means more harmonious than elsewhere in the region. In the first place the social egalitarianism of the political leaders was in itself a source of leadership rivalry. More important, despite their acculturation to the dominant Creole norms, these political leaders held differing views on cultural integration. While some upheld the superiority of the Creole culture, others set out to elevate the status of the Mestizo culture and to create societal goals and values which would combine and hopefully harmonise the two cultural groups.

It is this displacement of the old elite, the consequential egalitarianism of the new political leaders, and the doubts about the future status of the prestigious Creole culture that have been the root cause of most of the political conflicts during the decolonisation process. Even the rival attraction of closer association with the West Indies and Central America with which the political parties were preoccupied in the 1950s was bound up with social and cultural considerations.
An examination of these three factors is fundamental to this study which attempts to describe the political process in British Honduras since the rise of the nationalist movement in 1950. Our problem is to define conceptually the way in which culture and social class relate to each other and to the over-all process of colonial political change. The concept which has been most frequently used by social scientists in the analysis of West Indian political development is that of the 'plural society'. J. S. Furnival who coined the term defines a 'plural society' as one comprising two or more communal groups 'living side by side, but separately within the same political unit'.

For M. G. Smith who has systematically developed and applied the concept to the West Indies a 'plural society' is not only culturally heterogeneous but is also one in which incompatible institutional systems co-exist, with one cultural section exercising a monopoly of power. It can be readily seen that this picture of political behaviour based essentially on ethnic and cultural factors hardly does justice to the complexity of factors that influence the political process in British Honduras. The two ethno-cultural complexes certainly do not form corporate political groups arraigned against each other. More seriously, the 'plural society' concept fails to reveal the importance of social class in the political process.


The problem of establishing the extent to which this factor of social class is an aspect of cultural pluralism or transcends it, is perhaps best overcome by treating the power structure of British Honduras as a whole.

The study itself adopts the method of institutional analysis. This is a convenient way of determining the forms and levels of integration within the political process. Recruitment of both social and cultural groups into this process can be traced from a study of the nationalist movement, the political parties, the trade unions, the church, the civil service and local authorities since these institutions provide mechanisms for the expression and resolution of conflicts. The institutional approach also affords opportunity to determine the pattern of decolonisation in British Honduras. In fact, the analysis provides the basis for conclusions not only on the issue of national integration but also on the more general issues of political change and continuity of which the levels and form of integration are both causes and consequences.

Other considerations have also dictated this broad assessment. British Honduras is still largely virgin territory for the social scientist in which much of the preliminary spade work has yet to be done. So as the first attempt to systematically analyse the country's political development this study is essentially exploratory in character. It therefore makes no specific attempt to demonstrate the extent to which the emergent system in British Honduras is common to the British Caribbean where the minutiae of political events in many of
the individual territories are also still to be analysed. Indeed, this spade work is a pre-requisite to fruitful comparative work. As Lloyd Braithwaite points out, the institutional differences are sufficiently significant for us to guard against generalisations based on the data for one country. Studies of this kind are also not without value with respect to the formulation of theories on political development; for in so far as these theories are still to take into account the political process in the British Caribbean this study may throw some light on the problem of theory-building.

CHAPTER 1

Social and Economic Conditions 1931 - 1949

Lucian Pye has observed that "It has been customary to picture societies under colonial rule as having been politically dormant for a long time and then suddenly awakening when the silent effects of gradual social change dramatically came together to strike a spark over some handy political issue."¹ This viewpoint is generally considered relevant to British Honduras. The country was politically tranquil until the Governor, Sir Ronald Garvey, announced on 31st December, 1949 the British government's decision to devalue the British Honduran dollar.² The devaluation was indeed politically significant. The necessary legislation was enacted, in the teeth of unanimous opposition of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, by the use of the Governor's reserve power. More intensely opposed by the mass of the people, devaluation became the immediate occasion for the formation of the nationalist People's Committee in January, 1950. No other issue could have been more ideal in stimulating the anti-colonialist movement. Devaluation of the dollar bound the country more closely to Britain, rather than to its traditional market and source of supply - the United


States. In the short term it raised the price of imports, and thus the cost of living, at the time of an acute economic depression. It also brought into the open the conflict of interest between the business community which was its immediate beneficiary and the working class. Finally, it had a similar effect on the opposing viewpoints of the old political elite and the emerging group of young, nationalist politicians as regards the attitude to be adopted towards Britain.

While the issue was a landmark in the country's political development its importance should not be over-emphasised. No single event, however important, can adequately account for the nationalist upsurge and the anti-British sentiments which were expressed at the time, and the devaluation is no exception. The roots of the resentment were deeper. They lay partly in the appalling social and economic conditions which had resulted from the world depression in the 1920s and aggravated first by the disastrous hurricane of 1931, and then by immediate post world war II conditions. The other important factor was the absence of an open, competitive political system. In discussing both factors, the aim of this chapter and the next is to put the devaluation issue in its correct perspective and to provide social depth and reality to the post world war political development.

The Economy

There is further justification for starting a discussion of the background to post world war II political development with a study of social and economic conditions. The colony was created as a British
settlement around 1638 mainly for economic reasons. By the same token, the forestry industries should be first considered. From the inception, the settlement's pattern of economic development was firmly cast in the mould of forestry exploitation. This pursuit became an all consuming interest by the middle of the 19th century not primarily because Spain had in 1786 prohibited the development of commercial agriculture in its territory but because forestry operations were highly profitable. The industries, particularly mahogany and chicle, remained the backbone of the economy up to the 1950s, accounting for more than 75 per cent of the colony's export by value during the period under review. Of the 5,476 manual and semi-skilled labourers who were employed in 1946, 3,666 or just under 67 per cent were engaged in forestry activities. The forestry industries were also an important source of indirect employment with the result that a slump in the export trade occasioned large scale unemployment.

To note the dominance of the forestry industries is to indicate the existence of a 'forestocracy', the imbalance in the ratio of ownership to the size of holdings, and the system of land tenure. Originally, the British settlers disposed of lands by various resolutions in Public Meeting which had the force of law. In this way most of the colony was alienated; the government retaining the unproductive lands

3. For comparative figure of the value of forest products from 1931 to 1958 see Waddell, British Honduras, p.83.

including those which had been returned in lieu of the payment of the land tax after they had been denuded of their wealth. The only redeeming feature was that the 'location' as the leaseholds were called was not alienation in perpetuity. The grantee was a tenant at will, forfeiting his location if he acquired another or left the country. But when the conditional tenancy disappeared and freehold titles were granted around 1812, the more prosperous landowners consolidated their holdings. Lands were amassed on a scale that approximated to the latifundia. Thus by 1927, as shown in the following table, 96.8 per cent of the freehold land was held by 96 owners, 2.81 per cent by 550 owners, and the remaining .32 per cent by 1,006 owners whose holdings averaged 8.72 acres. 5

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Total Acreage</th>
<th>No. of Freeholders</th>
<th>Average area held by each individual</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 and under</td>
<td>1,842</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 20</td>
<td>6,947</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 50</td>
<td>8,756</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 100</td>
<td>9,240</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 500</td>
<td>27,645</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>230.3</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 1,000</td>
<td>29,785</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>827.3</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 and over</td>
<td>2,599,156</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27,074.5</td>
<td>96.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pim Report, p.217

The situation remained basically unchanged towards the end of the period under examination. In 1946, 102 persons owned 2,455,837 acres, and the remaining 126,495 acres of alienated land were owned by 3,848 persons. Indeed, the social and economic changes in recent years have included little redistribution of land holdings. In other words, very large estates, concentrated in a few hands, remain a feature of the system of land tenure.

The statistics are not as revealing as they suggest. The British owned Belize Estate and Produce Company Ltd. (BEP Company) which has been operating in the colony since 1875 owned more than 1,000,000 acres. It was also the largest mahogany concern and commandeered the northern area of the colony, Orange Walk, whose timber resources were equal in quality throughout Central America only by those of northern Guatemala and Yucatan. Owned by the Hoare family, until the Gliksten Property and Investment Trust Ltd. acquired the controlling interest in 1942, the BEP Company was indisputably the most influential concern which guided the colonial government. Its relationship with the government was overt and interlocking.


7. Ibid.

8. Sir Samuel Hoare who had visited the colony in his capacity as a director of the Company in 1921 wrote an article in which he deplored the neglect of the 'country's considerable natural resources'; 'The Problem of Crown Colony Government in the Caribbean'. Nineteenth Century Magazine, April 1921. Reprinted in Belize Independent, January, 1936. p. 8.
The Conservator of Forests, Cornelius Hummel, O.B.E., who was appointed at the inception of the Government Forest Trust in 1923 was also a part-time employee of the company. He eventually resigned his government appointment to become the company's manager and representative in the Legislative Council in 1925. The secondment of Assistant Conservators of Forests to the company was not unusual; and one of these officers spent his tour of duty in the service of the company.\(^9\)

The control which this company exercised amounted to a virtual stranglehold of the economy. Being the owner of about two-fifths of the alienated land, or one-fifth of the entire colony, it possessed some of the more arable lands. The company was neither willing to enter into commercial agriculture nor to sell these lands. It contended that their retention was necessary to secure accessibility to the forest areas,\(^{10}\) but it is also likely that the lands were held in speculation as there was no obligation to develop them. In the meanwhile the company leased the less valuable lands for both settlement and cultivation to the extent that more villages were estimated in 1933 to be established on the company's property than on Crown Lands.\(^{11}\)

The withholding of permanent occupancy from the agricultural tenants was related to the labour needs of the forestry industries.

---


11. Ibid.
As Sir Allan Pim noted in 1932, there was the tendency for "the influential classes not to encourage agricultural production for fear of its diminishing the supply of labour available for the forest industries." 12 Cattle rearing was encouraged to the point where it served the forestry interest. Thus cattle were selected neither for beef production nor dairying but primarily for the purpose of producing oxen for timber haulage in the rivers. 13 Almost every economic activity was subordinated to the interest of the forestry owners.

This economic group was by no means the only one with a vested interest in an imbalanced economy. Agricultural development was also inimical to the interests of the commercial and importing firms. For a concomitant of the neglect of agriculture was the country's inordinate dependence on imported food. Although the interruption of food supplies during world war I called attention to the dangers of this dependence, little was done to diversify the economy beyond the commissioning of four government reports between 1920 and 1928.

**Economic Decline and Social Distress**

It is generally asserted that the basic weakness of colonial economies is their dependence upon a mono-culture. Essentially, however, their vulnerability lies in their dependence upon the external market. This dependence, as we have indicated, was total in the case

13. Ibid. p.22.
of the forestry industries in British Honduras. As these industries were extremely sensitive to changes in world demand, they suffered from the world depression of trade in the 1920s. Indeed, the effect of the depression was so severe that the export of mahogany to its chief market, the United States, virtually ceased during 1931.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chicle</th>
<th>Logwood</th>
<th>Mahogany</th>
<th>Cedar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lb.</td>
<td>Tons</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
<td>Sq. Ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>3,690,641</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>9,773,150</td>
<td>674,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2,577,481</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>9,649,582</td>
<td>221,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>2,132,252</td>
<td>1,350</td>
<td>9,755,263</td>
<td>561,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>2,206,009</td>
<td>1,142</td>
<td>9,967,186</td>
<td>663,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2,462,667</td>
<td>1,311</td>
<td>12,857,845</td>
<td>641,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>3,022,196</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>12,580,836</td>
<td>465,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>3,260,172</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>18,745,537</td>
<td>292,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>3,029,210</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>24,726,313</td>
<td>733,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>3,103,798</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>16,362,280</td>
<td>578,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>3,714,018</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>16,478,180</td>
<td>703,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>4,094,415</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>10,829,331</td>
<td>382,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,186,564</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>3,240,240</td>
<td>226,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1,029,473</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>643,593</td>
<td>1,476</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fim Report, p.128.

Concern for the mahogany industry was not only aroused by the depressed conditions in the United States. There had been a progressive depletion of accessible supplies due to the over-cutting during the boom periods. Extracting, with minimum effort, the country's natural resources for almost three centuries, the community regarded the
forestry products as inexhaustible. Despite the government's repeated warning of indiscriminate cutting the forestry dominated legislature, as late as 1943, defeated the forest rehabilitation bill on the grounds that it impinged upon the landowner's rights. 14

Even if a policy of reafforestation had been pursued and the world trade was less depressed, forestry seemed doomed to eventual decline as the major industry. The cost of production was increasing because the trees within the limit of cheap haulage to a waterway were becoming scarce. The industry was also suffering from the competition of mahogany from Peru and Brazil, and mahogany substitutes from West Africa. Moreover, mahogany was being displaced by steel in the manufacturing of furniture and the construction of railway carriages and ships.

The decline of forestry exports was reflected in the colony's total trade and in the fluctuation of customs revenue. The receipts of import and export duties which represented more than half of the total ordinary revenue dramatically fell in 1931 - 1932 and reached its lowest point for twelve years in 1932 - 1933 as the table on the following page indicates.

The true effect of the decline in the forestry trade on the colony's finance was obscured by an 'adventitious' source of revenue. This was the proceeds from the whisky trade during prohibition in the United States. Although politically embarrassing it would have been an

TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Customs $</th>
<th>% of Ordinary Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920 - 1921</td>
<td>659,925</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 - 1922</td>
<td>490,163</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922 - 1923</td>
<td>509,973</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 - 1927</td>
<td>681,879</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927 - 1928</td>
<td>645,131</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928 - 1929</td>
<td>626,895</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929 - 1930</td>
<td>641,844</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930 - 1931</td>
<td>711,745</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931 - 1932</td>
<td>546,785</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932 - 1933</td>
<td>425,858</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pim Report, p.195 - 196

The act of heroism for the administration to co-operate with the United States government. In the first place the budget by 1930 could not balance without the export duty on whisky. In 1931 - 1932, this receipt, £89,878, formed 11.75 per cent of the estimated revenue or 75 per cent of the export duties. Secondly, the co-operation would not have halted the traffic as unknown quantities were being illegally transported. The country was conveniently located for the smuggling of Canadian whisky mainly through the Gulf of Mexico on mules to New Orleans.

16. Ibid.
17. Governor to Secretary of State. C.O.123/334, File 85353.
At least one merchant who had merely hoped to supplement his income from the illicit trade during the depressed mahogany market made a fortune.

The economic decline was therefore already evident when a hurricane hit the country on the 10th September, 1931. Described in the official reports as "the most awful calamity in the colony's history," the hurricane was perhaps more responsible than the world depression for the deterioration of social and economic conditions in the 1930s. Belize City was practically destroyed; over 1,000 of its inhabitants lost their lives and several thousands more lost their homes. Large areas of mahogany and pine trees in the accessible forests of the northern District were devastated. As if fate had not been sufficiently unkind, a disastrous fire occurred in Belize City in April, 1933. The unfortunate country seemed to lie under a curse.

Within five months of the fire one of the highest floods in the country's history swept the Belize river causing distress and loss to farmers along its banks.

Imperial aid which had been tentatively explored before the hurricane became a compelling necessity. For reasons which would be discussed in the next chapter the Legislative Council reluctantly agreed to the imperial Treasury assuming control of the colony's

finances\textsuperscript{19} in return for a loan of £1,100,000 in 1932.\textsuperscript{20} In transferring the initiative in public expenditure from the Legislative Council to the Governor, the financial arrangement enabled the latter to end the discriminatory use of public funds by the business interests. As legislators they were reluctant to tax their interests; their traditional "outlook ..... was that expenditure on public purposes must be limited by the amount which could be raised by a low level of indirect taxation and although they succeeded for a long period in maintaining a satisfactory financial position it was only at the cost of refraining from developing the country by means of roads, port facilities, technical departments of government to promote increased and diverse production and the provision of social services such as education and public health upon which a more progressive economy could be based."\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, "not a measure that was proposed and any chance of going through, no proposals had any chance of being accepted, unless they served the interests of the gentlemen in the counting houses of Belize."\textsuperscript{22}

If treasury control rendered the equitable spending of public funds possible, it led, as Sir Alan Burns, the Governor, pointed out, "to vexatious delays and a parsimony in administration at a time when

\begin{flushleft}

20. The Hurricane Reconstruction Loan Ordinance No.22 of 1932. 5th May, 1953.


\end{flushleft}
the condition of the colony made it more than necessary that speedy and generous expenditure should be authorized.²³ A more direct source of discontent among the ordinary people was the government's financial measures. It aided the forestry interests by reducing the tax on chicle from 1½ cents to 1 cent per pound²⁴ and abolishing that on sawn lumber produced by the BEP Company.²⁵ But this did not necessarily improve the employment situation as the bulk of the chicle exported from British Honduras was not of domestic origin, but from Peten in Guatemala and Yucatan in Mexico where British Honduran contractors, though locally based, held concessions. The working class was even more aggrieved by the outcome of the increased land tax from 1½ cent per acre in 1920 to 2½ cents in 1931. Opposition to the increase was spearheaded by the BEP Company which contended that the increase was inimical to the recovery of the mahogany trade. The company further argued that since the proceeds of the additional one cent were in theory earmarked for road and agricultural development they would be expended outside of its estates.²⁶ In fact, the landowners in protest suspended payment of the tax.²⁷ Recourse to punitive measures seemed to be the alternative to the landowners' co-operation. For the Land and

²³ Sir Alan Burns, Colonial Civil Servant, London 129.
²⁴ British Honduras Government, Governor to Secretary of State, MP.1673/33, 20th January, 1934.
²⁵ Ibid. MP.98/34, 1st February, 1934.
²⁶ British Government, Secretary of State Despatch, 257/33, 31st August, 1933.
Property Tax Ordinance was not designed to facilitate the collection of arrears taxes which stood at £148,000 in 1933 when the new rate became effective. Rather, it was designed to force the large landowners who were making little use of their lands to surrender them to the government. Indeed, the BEP Company which had made no payments since 1931 and whose arrears in May 1934 amounted to £114,933 took the opportunity to surrender several hundreds of acres of land of "indifferent value".

The law, however, when indiscriminately applied, proved confiscatory to the small landowners and "petty" tenants of Crown lands. Under the law these unfortunate peasants were first served with a notice of distraint on their goods and chattels. It was only after these were sold that the land could be attached. It was therefore possible for a landowner to be deprived of all his personal property in payment of arrears of tax before the land was sold. In the case of crown land the lease was cancelled or worse, the leaseholder was evicted without reaping the rewards of his labour. The possible adoption of less drastic government action, though humane, posed its own problems. It was of little use offering to sell the lands to the peasants. They were unable to pay down a lump sum and would have continued to fall into arrears with their instalments as they had done with their rents.

28. Land and Property Tax Ordinance, Chapter 24, Consolidated Lands 1924.

29. Pim Report, p.43.

30. B.W. Government, Governor to Secretary of State, Mp.1141/32, 10th May, 1934.
government declaration of amnesty to all debtors, which was probably the easiest and best course of action, would have been manifestly unfair to those who paid their rents. Still worse, it would have discouraged payment in the future.

Yet, in a sense, the government discriminated against the small landowners who had felt the full weight of the law. It did not only accept from the large landowners over-exploited land in lieu of their indebtedness but eventually yielded to their opposition to the tax increase. In 1935 it reduced the tax to its former rate of 1½ cent per acre with retroactive effect as from 1931, thus annulling the increase imposed.31 As Pim remarked in 1934, "the criticism that they [the large landowners] had been treated with greater consideration than the petty tenants of Crown land is therefore not without substance."32

The rural communities were not the only group among the labouring class affected by the government's financial measures. Individuals in Belize City who had mortgaged their properties to the Hurricane Loan Administration Board in order to repair their houses were in a similar position. In fact both the Board and its debtors were caught in a vicious circle. Widespread unemployment precluded the repayment of the loans. The renting of the renovated properties was to no avail since rents had fallen and their payment uncertain. It was also neither economic nor expedient for the Board to recover the outstanding loans

32. Pim Report, p.43.
by foreclosing the properties. In the first place the debtors would have been thrown on an unabsorbent labour market. Secondly, the disposal of the properties would have been equally problematic because of the depressed conditions. Thirdly, the Board would have been responsible for the maintenance of the unsold houses.

It was obvious that law enforcement would antagonise the masses without solving their social and economic problems. Yet the government harrassed the Hurricane Loan Board and dissolved the Belize Town Board in January, 1936 for being lenient to its debtors. The dissolution was keenly resented by the taxpayers because the Town Board was their political pride. Though partially so, it had been until 1936 the only elected political institution in the country. The interim Board, consisting of the Executive Council members and the Director of Public Works, predictably took legal action against the defaulters. The favourable judgements from the professionally unqualified Magistrate, the District Commissioner, by no means implied that quick payment followed. Nor was the recovery of the arrears rates solely dependent upon the financial ability of the debtors. It also depended upon the interpretation of the law itself as a change in magistracy revealed. The acting magistrate, Harrison Courtenay, a lawyer, pointed out that taxpayers in arrears for more than three years were illegally sued.

Urgent action was taken to bring before the court over 1,100 complaints for arrears rates which the interim Town Board was legally entitled to recover. But again a serious obstacle was encountered. It had been the practice to grant court summonses free of charge to Local Authorities. Courtenay refused to entertain these summonses on the
groubd that there was no legal authority for doing so. This further rendered the legal method ineffective because there was no guarantee that the Board would recover the legal cost even in cases for which judgements were obtained.

The colonial government had once more subscribed to its image of being punitive and somewhat oppressive. As was characteristic of the colonial political system the application and enforcement of the law developed as the main link between the ruler and the ruled. This assertion of authority far from humanising their relationship polarised it. Yet populist responses to the overall situation were not as a riotous as those in the West Indies which similar conditions had stimulated. A disturbance by the Unemployed Workers' Association, whose leader was Antonio Soberanis, a barber, was the high point of the demonstrations. But it was little more than a commotion although British Hondurans proudly regard it as a riot.

In general, the rudimentary industrial structure precluded more riotous forms of populist expression. In the first place the country lacked an industrial proletariat. Belize City was not an industrial town but a commercial centre in which services were the main source of employment. The industrial centre was the forests where the timber worker and the chiclero, as the chicle workers are called, spent more than half of the year. But the method of production in these industries effectively prevented the forestry workers from developing a strong group consciousness and still more from forging an alliance with other occupational groups in the city. Both the mahogany cutter
and chicolero worked on a task basis. It was a question of the worker completing as many tasks as possible not only before the end of the day but also before the rainy season began. Though favourable to the strong and industrious, the method of production bred individualism.

This outlook was underpinned by the method of recruitment. Contracts covering the two main seasons which began in January and August were concluded with individual labourers at the beginning of Christmas. An advance of wages to enable the 'migrant' labourer to provide for his family and supplement his weekly ration of 'seven quarts of flour and four pounds pork' was an important element in the contractual arrangement. But as the advance was usually spent on the Christmas festivities and parting 'sprees' the labourer was for the first few months "in debt to his employer not only for the advance but also for such articles as he may have had from the commissary" as the employer's store was called. The crediting of tools to the labourer also kept him permanently indebted to the employer. Akin to the system of indentured labour the entire arrangement was pernicious. Various penal clauses in the archaic labour ordinance of 1883 enforced the observance of the contract. It was not unusual for the Governor "to come across cases of imprisonment which in any other colony would have been regarded as a breach of contract remediable only by a civil action." It was a criminal offence, punishable by twenty-eight days


34. Legislative Council Debate, 6th April, 1943.
imprisonment with hard labour, for a worker to unilaterally leave the service of his employer. But such a provision seemed unnecessary as the solidarity among the employers virtually rendered the erring worker unemployable in the forestry industries.

Perhaps the forestry workers reacted moderately because the industrial evils appeared to lie at the feet of the rising group of local businessmen rather than in the colonial economic system. The system was perpetuated not only by the BEP Company but also by several American mahogany and chicle companies. But the control which the latter companies exercised was remote. Unlike the BEP Company, they established no elaborate administrative machinery in British Honduras; but functioned through the more wealthy local forestry owners whose operations they also financed. These wealthy contractors also subcontracted thereby pushing the American interests further into the background. It was, however, not without some justification, that the poor working conditions were readily associated with these middlemen. For the local contractors, conscious of their own vulnerability as debtors if operations were disrupted, were more resolutely opposed to industrial reforms than the established BEP Company. This widespread tendency to see the poor industrial conditions as a conflict situation between the local businessmen and wage-labouring element rather than between British Hondurans, as a community, and the foreign owned companies was reinforced by the colonial government's intervention as the champion of labour rights. In insisting, under pressure from the Colonial Office, on the repeal of the Masters and Servants Ordinance
of 1883 and the Fraudulent Labourers Ordinance of 1922 in 1943 Governor Hunter stated, "so long as we have on our Statute Book those penal clauses (which, I must say, shocked me when I first came to this Colony) we cannot hold up our heads and say we are an enlightened community. There may not yet have been sufficient development of the trade union movement in this country to enable the workers to put their case forward in a dispute that might arise in a constitutional and orderly manner, but I see no reason to suppose that, because trade unions have not yet developed, they will not develop very quickly hereafter. The trade union's ordinance has not been long on our Statute Book [1941], and, if you remove these penal clauses which go so far to nullify the provisions of that ordinance, the trade unions will surely come into being. I want it so, because I find it a very great difficulty in this Colony, that there is no real representative of labour from the ranks of the working classes, with whom I can discuss the conditions of the workers in this Colony." 35

**Ameliorative Measures**

Perhaps our image of the government would appear even less impersonal and soulless if we examine its own financial position and attempt to alleviate the social and economic distress.

It can be reasonably argued that the government was compelled by its own financial problems to adopt the drastic legal measures to

recover the arrears taxes. It was undoubtedly the largest debtor. The hurricane loan apart, the government borrowed funds on an unprecedented scale. Charges on account of the public debt more than doubled between 1931 and 1937.36 On the other hand the decline in public revenue in the same period37 reduced the government's ability to fulfil its obligation both to its creditors and the population. Moreover, the repayment of the instalments of the public debt was not susceptible of easy alteration.

Most of the loans together with grants from the Colonial Development Fund, were expended on the construction of roads. Although this expenditure can be seen as an attempt to redress the imbalance in the country's infrastructural development, it was conceived primarily as a form of social assistance. In order to spread the work among the unemployed the government adopted the rotation or 'quincena' system of employment whereby the individual labourer was intermittently employed for about two weeks. Had it not been disguised as a normal economic enterprise but recognised for what it was and given directly to the indigent, the relief benefit would have been more effective since the social distress fell more heavily on households in which a male was either absent or tended to avoid his responsibilities.

The establishment of rural land settlement schemes was perhaps the only real economic measure undertaken by the government. Several factors however militated against the success of these schemes. One

was the government's ambivalence to agricultural development, another was the continued opposition of the mercantile and forestry interests to commercial agriculture, and the third was the discouraging features of agricultural life. Although £203,075 of the hurricane loan had been earmarked for agricultural settlement funds were not "available at present (1935) from this source for Agricultural Settlements" because "expenditure actual and authorised of Hurricane Loan Funds already exceeds the total amount approved viz. £1,100,000." 38 On the other hand the BEP Company which had been originally allocated £100,000 from the Fund to build a local sawmill received £200,000 "to enable it to plan a comprehensive programme." 39 Moreover, although the company immediately repaid £43,027 in order "to reduce its interest changes .... the government was bound by the agreement to keep this sum in reserve in case it is required by the company at any time and is thus precluded from using the money for development purpose." 40 Denied government support, the development of commercial agriculture depended upon foreign capital. Banana was cultivated by the United Fruit Company in the fertile Stann Creek Valley from about 1911 until the industry was ruined by Panama disease in the late 1930s; the nascent citrus industry in the same area was developed in the 1930s by the


39. Ibid.

40. E.H. Government, Governor to Secretary of State, 1719 - 34/7, 27th December, 1934.
Sharps, a Jamaican family; and sugar in the north was produced mainly for the domestic market until Tate & Lyle Limited established a sugar refinery in Corozal in the 1960s.

When the merchants were not opposing agricultural development outright they were influencing the location of the land settlement schemes to protect their trade monopoly. They argued that the two major land settlements which were established in Stann Creek in 1932 were too far away to attract the unemployed urban Creoles. Their real reason, however, was the fear that Stann Creek, being a sea port, would attract much of the profitable import and export trade which it eventually did with the establishment of the citrus industry in the Valley. The Stann Creek agricultural interests were, however, not sufficiently influential to prevent the establishment of two land settlement schemes at Salt Creek in 1934 and Rock Stone in 1937 nearer to Belize City.

In submitting to mercantile and the forestry pressures the government condemned its own venture. The urban Creole was at best an improvised farmer who had been attracted by the high profit and comparative ease of banana cultivation to settle in Stann Creek and the banks of the Belize River. But the lands at Salt Creek and Rockstone yielded mainly the local staple—corn, rice, red kidney beans, and vegetables, and therefore did not give him the living standard which he enjoyed as a forestry worker. The inadequate marketing organisation apart, the prejudice in the towns, principally Belize City, against locally produced food also offered little incentive to the farmer to produce beyond his needs.
Little consideration was also given to the social aspects of land settlement. The government catered for the farmer but not his family. There was no provision for educational and medical services. Compelled to leave his family in Belize City the farmer forsake his agricultural holding under the slightest pretext for the relative comfort of the town. Moreover his separation from his family duplicated not only his personal expenses but his debt to the government. This included the rental of his agricultural holding and the city rates and property taxes. Far from being resolved, the problem of the unemployed urban worker became more involved. His dilemma was that although agriculture failed as a palliative, it was the only long term solution to his problem. For although there were hopes of a revival of the forestry industries there was no chance of their providing the previous high level of employment. Moreover, the neighbouring Central American republics which once absorbed a large proportion of the country's labour force had been compelled by the world economic depression to close their frontiers.

The outbreak of world war II partially relieved the social and economic problem. Despite its many adverse effects a fair measure of prosperity replaced the financial stringency during the first three years of the war. The mahogany industry which was still the life blood of the economy received a new lease of life as an essential wartime commodity. Chicle was also exported in greater quantities and at a relatively high price mainly because of the partial failure of the Far Eastern sources of supply. Equally important for the labour force
were the job openings overseas. Some were recruited to the armed forces; over 2,000 emigrated to Panama to work in the Canal Zone; and a Forestry unit of 500 experienced lumber men were sent to Scotland.\(^4\)

Apart from relieving the unemployment problem in British Honduras the migrants positively helped the financial situation by remitting between £15,000 and £16,000\(^4\) monthly to dependants in British Honduras. These remittances were also an indirect boom to the government since they reduced the necessity for a large measure of relief.

**Economic Relapse**

The economic recovery which followed in the wake of the war ended with the entry of the United States into the war. The importation of mahogany to the United States was restricted while the price of imported food soared. Essential commodities were subsidised but official efforts to promote agricultural development met with no more success than previously. The ameliorative effect of the Colonial Development and Welfare (CD&W) grants and the improved social welfare services which were recommended by the West India Royal Commission in 1940 was slight. The development programmes of the Colonial Development Corporation (CDC) which the Evans Commission had recommended in 1947 held out a ray of hope. But so little had been achieved by the end of 1949 that the plan was seen as a form of procrastination rather

\(^{41}\) Annual Report of the Labour Department, 1943, Belize, p.7.

than an indication of forth coming activities. In fact, the economic situation instead of improving had worsened by a series of hurricanes between 1941 and 1944. Affecting mainly the northern and southern areas of the colony, they intensified rural distress.

The worst years, however, followed in the aftermath of the war. The disbandment of the British Honduras Battalion in July, 1947 and the return of the ex-servicemen and other workers from abroad increased the ranks of unemployed in Belize City. To many of the poor households the cessation of the dependants' allowances occasioned much distress. Moreover, some of these people were still heavily indebted to the Hurrican Loan Board. This was a burden which they had carried for sixteen years and seemed destined to bear for a longer period. For it was not possible, from the slow rate of repayment, to foresee the liquidation of these debts in the immediate future. In fact payments were still being made in 1967.

The year 1949 was particularly disastrous. A slump in the export industries, together with an unprecedented drought in the northern and western districts, created a severe crisis that was only surpassed by the 1931 hurricane. Although there were over 1,000 unemployed in Belize City the hardship among the rural Indians was more acute because both of their normal sources of livelihood, the chicle industry and their 'milpas', had failed them. As the Governor was advised that 'looting and violence' were not beyond the normally passive Indians,

43. The Belize Billboard, 26th June, 1949, p.5.
the situation in the outdistricts was considered "more dangerous" than in Belize City where the predictable procession of unemployed was staged on the same day that social relief was instituted.  

During the year stricter measures of exchange control were also introduced to the chagrin of residents who had fewer connexions with the sterling areas than with the neighbouring republics and the United States. Import restrictions from the dollar areas also threatened the country's food supply. The restrictions became punitive when trade with the United Kingdom was adversely affected by the devaluation of the British pound and other currencies in the sterling areas except the British Honduras dollar in September, 1949. The exemption of the British Honduras dollar also discouraged British investment upon which the economy was still dependent. More specifically, it was responsible for the inaction of the CDC. The unfavourable rate of exchange also reduced the value of CD&W funds which were in sterling by 30 per cent in terms of the British Honduras dollar unless they had already been received and converted into the local currency.

Altogether, the imperial financial crisis further retarded the slow pace of economic development, and exacerbated the unemployment problem in the closing months of 1949.

In exempting the British Honduras dollar from devaluation the British government recognised the country's dependence on the United States for over 70 per cent of its imports.  

44. Governor's telegram, No.478 dated 31st October, 1949 to Secretary of State, E.H. File 865/49.  

could not prevail over the more powerful arguments for devaluation. As we indicated at the beginning of the chapter the eventual devaluation of the dollar on 31st December, 1949, ensured the continued export of British Honduran products to the United Kingdom and other sterling areas and improved their competitive position in the United States. The local beneficiaries, however, in the short term were the merchants and investors since the immediate consequence was the rise of imported food prices and a fall in the real wages of the workers. To the poverty stricken there seemed to be no end to their problems except to turn to those political leaders who promised to solve them.

The foregoing account indicates that with the exception of the three years immediately following the outbreak of the second world war the social and economic conditions from 1931 to 1949 were one of unrelieved gloom. The situation described supports W. M. MacMillan’s celebrated statement of the period that "A social and economic study of the West Indies is ... necessarily a study of poverty." The depressed conditions were partly caused by natural calamities - hurricanes, forest fires, droughts, and plant disease. The overriding factor however was the narrow outlook of the forestry and merchant interests. They frustrated almost every attempt to diversify the forestry oriented economy. In identifying the causes of the economic and social crisis, imperial neglect should not be overlooked. British Honduras has been one of the most neglected territories in

the history of British colonialism. It has received serious attention only after the liquidation of imperial rule elsewhere left the Colonial Office to focus sympathy on the residue of the empire. The accumulative effect of those long years of neglect became manifest in the middle months of 1949. The demonstration in August on the day that relief work was reintroduced suggests that the point of explosion had been reached. This was confirmed by the political outburst that accompanied devaluation.
CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL CONDITIONS 1931 - 1949

It is primarily for convenience that the economic and political conditions in the 1930s and 1940s are discussed in separate chapters. In a society that had been established largely for economic reasons and continued to conceive and justify its existence almost wholly in terms of trade, the distribution of economic and political power was highly correlated. Thus for three centuries the business of governing the country was virtually the preserve of the landed and mercantile interests.

In terms of ownership these interests did not form two distinct groups. Some of the landowning, wood exporting firms were deeply involved in the merchandising trade. Socially, however, the business element consisted of two clearly recognisable groups. One was the old established families of English and Scottish descent; the other, the new business class of local coloured and Spanish persons which the society continuously produced. It was the old families which dominated the political institutions. Access to political power was easier gained by marriage into the small circle of whites than through competition in the political process. In fact, except in municipal politics, competition was non-existent until the elective principle was re-introduced in national politics in 1936 after a lapse of sixty-
five years. On the other hand, the whites, unable like members of a 'true' upper class in the colonies to import European spouses, had been forced into some form of cohabitation with the Negro and Mestizo population. But this elite group did not lose its distinctiveness. Although a white settler psyche cannot be identified, members of this group entertained the feeling of social superiority and even of inheritance. Their forebears had fashioned the society and given it its dominant British character in an overwhelmingly Spanish subcontinent. They had also instituted self-governing institutions. Their legislature possessed inherent constituent powers and had an unofficial majority except during a short period of twenty-one years from 1871 to 1892. In brief, their forefathers had determined the distribution of political power not only within the local society but also between the local legislature and the imperial government. This chapter explores the distribution of power in both the imperial and local contexts.

THE IMPERIAL CONTEXT

Early Constitutional Development

The status of the Legislative Council evolved more by accident than from design; and as much from the British government's ambivalence as from the unstated, but legally doubtful assumption of the 300 odd British settlers that the country was a settled territory. At times the British government yielded to the constant pressures from the
settlement by dealing with its affairs as though it was in fact a British colony. Imperial legislation dealing with the abolition of the slave trade and slavery was, for example, enforced in the settlement. In general, however, the British government preferred to ignore the settlers' pleas for protection rather than violate the various Anglo-Spanish treaties, including the London Convention of 1776 which prohibited the formation of any but a rudimentary system of civil or military government. While the Governor of Jamaica was therefore empowered to oversee the settlement and a Superintendent was eventually appointed in 1786 by the Crown, British military presence was never contemplated. In consequence the final repulsion of the Spanish attack at the Battle of St. George's Cay in 1798 was achieved solely by the settlers and their slaves who numbered about 2000.

Despite the settlers' victory the British government was still reluctant to challenge the settlement's legal position as defined in the treaties. Nor did it seize the opportunity to clarify the position of the Crown when Spain, upon conceding independence to its Central American colonies in 1821, lost practical interest in the area. The settlers' petition for a Legislative Assembly comprising 18 elected officials and 3 ex-officio in 1851 was even more an opportune moment for the British government to regularise its constitutional relationship with the settlement. For the Crown had no authority over the legislature which the settlers had instituted some years prior to

1738. The Public Meeting, as the legislature was called, consisted of the free population who were British subjects with a yearly income of £400.² All qualified persons in the community were not necessarily members, for there was a "club-like requirement"³ that a prospective member had to be proposed by a member and receive at least twenty-six votes. The Public Meeting had entrusted the administrative and judicial powers to an elective but unpaid magistracy of seven, one of whom was elected by his peers to be the Superintendent of the settlement. Whatever was their conception of this office when it was elective, the settlers resented the attempt by the Crown-appointed Superintendents to assume the initiative in government. In their view the Superintendents' function was what the title literally suggested; this was to superintend not to govern.

While the royal assent to the local act which established the Legislative Assembly represented a significant departure by the British government from its traditional negative approach, the initiative for constitutional change and the control of finance were left undisturbed with the local legislature. Despite the elevation of both the settlement to a colony, administratively subordinate to Jamaica, and the office of Superintendent to Lieutenant Governor in 1862, it was not until 1871 that the way was opened for the establishment of Crown Colony government. Unable to reconcile their differences over

the sharing of the taxation burden the landed and commercial interests voluntarily abolished the strife ridden Legislative Assembly in favour of a wholly nominated Legislative Council. Provision was made for five official members, including the Governor as President, and not less than four unofficial members. As a matter of fact there were five unofficial members but since the Governor held a casting vote there was in practice an official majority. The exercise of the casting vote on a financial bill in 1890 led to the wholesale resignation of the unofficial members and the formation of perhaps the first political organisation, The People's Committee, whose aim was to redeem the country's political inheritance. The Committee obviously received the solid support of the white community and other "suitable citizens" refused to fill the void unless an unofficial majority was established in the Legislative Council. Public servants were appointed but in 1892 a commercial firm, Steven Brothers & Company, successfully challenged an amended customs tariff in the Supreme Court on the ground that the Legislative Council was illegally constituted. Thereupon the British government advised the Governor to concede the unofficial majority.

A variant of the crown colony system of government and its attendant anomalies had been established. The colonial administration

4. C.O.123/342, 1933; File 15539.
5. Ibid.
6. For the various categories in which Crown Colony government can be classified see Colin Hughes 'Semi Responsible Government in the West Indies', Political Science Quarterly, September 1953, p38-53.
was hamstrung by the effects inherent in the separation of executive and financial responsibility. The Governor was in the anomalous position of being answerable to the Crown for the administration of the colony but unable to compel local acceptance of imperial policy.

Although the problem of Spanish sovereignty had complicated the country's constitutional development the British government had only itself to blame for its predicament. By the time it took its responsibility for British Honduras seriously the territory's development from a woodcutters' camp to a political entity had been complete and the tradition of self-governing institutions firmly rooted. Although the halcyon days of forestry were, like sugar in the West Indies, over by the mid 19th century, the social system in British Honduras was probably the least undermined by the abolition of slavery in 1833 and imperial protection in 1846, and was never challenged by the black revolts which occurred in Guyana in 1823 and in Jamaica in 1865. Thus while the West Indian oligarchies acknowledged their decline by accepting Crown Colony government between 1854 and 1875 British Honduras did not find it necessary to surrender its inherent constituent powers. Indeed, as the constitutional impasse in 1890 demonstrated the unofficial members had not enhanced the Governor's powers in 1871 to enable him to govern more effectively but to mediate the differences between the landed and commercial interests. So as not to

be indebted to the Governor for their places the unofficial members had also attempted to re-introduce the elective principle in 1890. And when the request was turned down, they insisted that the practice of nomination for life to the Legislature, which had been abandoned with the abolition of the Public Meeting in 1854, should be re-introduced.

Although the constitutional status of the Legislative Council remained in tact, social and economic changes impinged upon the relationship between the imperial government and the ruling group of some 400 whites. It was largely to prevent the domination of the non-European masses of some 29,500 by this narrow oligarchy that the British government did not re-introduce the elective principle. As early as 1820 the ruling elite had taken steps to stifle the emergence of the coloured population from public life. The Public Meeting had doubled the property qualifications for the racial group and restricted the magistracy to white British subjects. Indeed, its club-like admission had reduced its membership from 63 in 1830 to 27 in 1853. The unofficial members of the Legislative Council probably restored the practice of nomination for life not only to assert their independence of the Governor but also to exclude the growing class of nouveau riche consisting mainly of Negro and Mestizo businessmen. Although the

9. Ibid. p.2.
10. Ibid.
re-instituted practice was modified in 1912 to allow the Governor to determine appointments every five years except in the case of the then existing members the old elite retained its hegemony.

The need for a more open political system was dramatically emphasised in 1919. The latent political unrest which world war I had released in the West Indies found expression in British Honduras in a riot among the demobilised soldiers and the unemployed. Both the British government and the unofficial members of the Legislative Council reacted independently; one sent a constitutional commissioner, Hon. E. F. L. Wood, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the West Indies in November 1921 and the other renewed its request for the elective principle in the same month. In the West Indies the retention of the existing official majority and a proportion of nominated members was laid down as indispensable conditions of the introduction of the elective principle. The British government was prepared to waive the former condition in the case of British Honduras provided the Governor was given reserve powers. A local Franchise Commission which was set up in 1922 agreed to these powers provided they excluded financial measures. As this rendered the reserve powers almost, if not wholly nugatory, the constitutional bills which were introduced in 1924 were withdrawn in 1925.

In refusing to sacrifice their financial control for the elective

11. GB. Colonial Office, West Indies and British Guiana, Report by Hon. E. F. L. wood, Cmd.1679, London 1922, 102pp. Like so many other colonial office commissions to the West Indies, Mr Wood's visit to British Honduras did not materialise.
principle the unofficial members appeared to be primarily concerned with preserving the country's heritage. In effect, the British demand "was merely taken as a convenient excuse for the rejection of the electoral Bill, and the real reason was the fear of the Unofficial Members that the electoral and other qualifications would be reduced to a low level and an uncontrolled flood of democracy let into British Honduras political life."\textsuperscript{12} The Franchise Commission which the narrow oligarchy dominated had in fact recommended electoral qualifications that were in general more restrictive than those elsewhere in the West Indies. Indeed, the Colonial Office was certain that the "very limited electorate" was bound to lead to "the rise of an oligarchy of white businessmen of the kind existing in Barbados."\textsuperscript{13}

As we have seen, the problem was not how to prevent the rise of an oligarchy but how to displace it. Although he controlled appointments to the Legislative Council, the Governor had to be wary in giving representation to the new wealthy businessmen and even the professional class. For lacking an official majority and faced with a fairly homogeneous group which was solidified by intermarriage and ramifying business connections his position was likely to become untenable as in 1892.

\textsuperscript{12} G.O.123/315 (1923) File 41953.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
Constitutional Changes

The abortive proposals in 1923 had in fact suggested that an attempt by the British government to initiate constitutional changes was likely to provoke a crisis. On the other hand, it was equally clear, as evidenced in the constitutional changes in Ceylon in 1924 and in Guyana in 1928, that the British government would grasp the earliest opportunity, whether this was a political or economic crisis, to impose executive control on the Legislative Council.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the opportunity arose in 1931 when the hurricane rendered the social and economic conditions acute and imperial aid necessary. Public indignation was aroused not so much by the shift of power from the unofficial members of the Legislative Council to the Governor as by the circumstances in which it was demanded. The occasion seemed less than propitious. It raised the moral issue of whether a national disaster beyond the people's control should have been made the occasion for divesting the legislature of its financial powers.

The reaction of the unofficial members was less clear. As businessmen they needed the loan. At the same time their protracted negotiation with the British government suggested that they were not prepared to mortgage the constitution at any price. This reaction was, however, primarily a gesture to public opinion which they did not necessarily wish to alienate. For as the Governor in a telegram to the Colonial Office perceptively remarked, the unofficial members were "not intentionally obstructive and distrustful but they are very
sensitive of their position vis a vis the general public and apprehensive lest, if decision [sic] taken should prove in the future to be to the disadvantage of the Colony [sic] they would be exposed to popular odium." 14

The constitutional change which was introduced in 1932 15 revived local demands for elective representation. The reaction of the British government was as ambivalent to this aspect of constitutional reform as the unofficial members had been to the grant of the reserve power to the Governor. By the attitude it adopted some ten years earlier to the previous demand, the British government was committed to sympathetically consider the request. Nor did the example which it had set in other West Indian territories on Wood's recommendation offer the British government any other choice in British Honduras. On the other hand the Colonial Office believed that the unforeseen economic and financial deterioration of the colony had significantly altered the political situation. This was not a period for "constitutional experiment" in elective representation but for firm, "good and efficient government in the general interest of its very mixed population." 16 Indeed, the Colonial Office doubted the value of the elective principle. It was certain that "nobody better


than the old gang" would be returned to the Council, and "if there was to be any change in personnel" it "would be for the worse."\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, the Colonial Office recognised that as elected representatives, the business element would be fortified in its claim to be articulating the interests of the electorate. For these reasons, the British government in acceding to the request for elective representation ensured the retention of the Governor's over-riding powers in the new constitution even after the termination of Treasury control.\textsuperscript{18}

It should not be assumed that the sole or even primary objective of the British government's attempt to release the country from the grip of the unofficial members was to facilitate a more equitable distribution of political power in the colony or to safeguard the interests of the poorer class. The uncertain future of the British financed interests was largely responsible for its attitude. Since world war I, the BEP Company was in danger of losing its control of the forestry industries to the American concerns. The chicle industry, for example, had become a monopoly of American manufacturers, including the Wrigley Company, which controlled the market by accumulating considerable stocks during the boom periods. The position of the American companies in the mahogany industry was somewhat similar. Being a small-scale manufacturer of sawn timber, the BEP Company was unable to enter into direct world competition with American sawn

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{British Honduras Constitution Ordinance}, 1935 (No.13 of 1935)
mahogany. Indeed, with its position rendered infinitely worse by the 1931 hurricane, the BEP Company claimed that the sale of its interests to a rival American concern, Messrs. Hengel & Company, was unavoidable unless it received financial assistance from the colonial government to erect a sawmill. 19

British prestige and general confidence in an already weak economy was too bound up with the activities of the BEP Company for the British government to have rejected the loan application. Moreover, the disposal of the company's assets to American concerns was the least of the prospects which the British government wished to entertain. The American concerns were more unscrupulous than the early British pioneers in their exploitation of the country's natural resources. And if the American concerns enjoyed little confidence among the colonial administrators they were also less susceptible than their British counterparts to governmental pressures. In fact, the general political climate remained conducive to the continuation of the commercial relationship characteristic of the European imperial system. The difference now was that the United States was becoming the major beneficiary. The interest of the American concerns was confined to the extraction of the country's timber and chicle for shipment to America where these raw materials were converted into sawn lumber and chewing gum respectively and re-exported, among other countries, to British Honduras.

The American companies had little regard for the long term future of either these extractive industries or the inhabitants. Nevertheless, these companies enjoyed considerable influence in the local business circle and, therefore, in the Legislative Council which was divided in its support for the rival British and American concerns. The American companies had created business opportunities for the group of local entrepreneur which the dominance of the BEP Company and its influence both in London and the colonial administration had so long denied them. These American concerns were not only more profitable customers but they also offered scope for the local businessmen to extend their interests to the neighbouring republics. The businessmen therefore had little cause for regretting the likely collapse of the BEP Company especially when the reduction in various items of expenditure from the hurricane reconstruction loan was proposed to facilitate the financial assistance to the company. In fact, opposition to the grant of the loan to the company was particularly strong "on the part of influential persons to whom American companies reputed to have offered inducement of gain if the company should be closed down." 20

There was abundant evidence that the British government and the Governor were as frustrated as the BEP Company by the factious opposition in the Legislative Council. Reference to the unofficial members as 'corrupt', 'old gang', 'gang of superior bootleggers' (an obvious

20. Governor to Secretary of State, 28th January, 1932. C.O.123/335 File 8536.
reference to those businessmen who had amassed their wealth during prohibition in the U.S.) punctuated the minutes in Colonial Office files and the despatches of Governors in the early 1930s. More specifically, Governor Burns complained to his superiors in 1935 that Henry Melhaq, who was a landed proprietor, commission agent for several American firms and "the only member of the Executive Council since 1928 who is at the same time an unofficial member of the Legislative Council since 1927, has consistently opposed the government in every matter which has gone to the division, and, in fact, has taken a leading part in the opposition to government measures." Any doubts that the BEP Company was out-matched were removed when the British government was compelled to nominate the company's manager, C. H. Brown, to the Legislative Council immediately after his defeat in the 1936 elections by Turton, one of the company's principal local business rival. Turton's victory confirmed the political ascendancy of the local businessmen, and, more important provided the American concerns with another indefatigable parliamentary supporter. His election was also a personal triumph over the colonial officials since he had been refused a nominated seat in 1932. Given the shift in political influence, the safe-guarding of British interest by a more positive assertion of imperial authority


became a compelling necessity.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

The Business Element

There is little risk of repetition in discussing further the business element as it dominated almost every facet of social and political life. Despite the political ascendancy of the local business class of coloured and Spanish persons the established families of English and Scottish descent retained much of their influence. In the first place they were nominated to the Executive Council which was now the real locus of power. Of the three unofficial members of the Executive Council in 1937, only Henry Melhado belonged to the new group. Frank Ellis was a local born European, a lawyer and landowner who had been a member of the wholly nominated Legislative Council from 1932 until its dissolution in 1936. Charles Beattie was a white expatriate who was the manager of the only bank, the Royal Bank of Canada, and also a member of the Legislative Council in the 1920s. This old group also exerted considerable pressure through a variety of economic organisations and informal contacts. Perhaps the most important of these organisations were the Chamber of Commerce and the Belize Taxpayers' Association which jointly sponsored one of the two successful candidates, Edward Usher, a wealthy planter, in the 1939 election.

The pervasive influence of the group also touched the communica-
tion media. Of the two newspapers in the colony, the leading one, The Daily Clarion, was founded by the Wood family in 1897 and up to the 1940s still owned and edited by them. The two brothers, Philip, the editor, and Stanley, a lawyer, were Legislative Councillors; one as a nominated member from 1924 until his death in 1927, and the other as the Acting Attorney General in 1926. Although it was the only daily newspaper, with a circulation of 1,000, the Daily Clarion kept the public in political ignorance. Political issues were certainly not reported as extensively as the Supreme Court proceedings in which the legal firm of Dragten and Woods was involved. The pages were also filled with the social happenings in the provincial towns of Britain with which many of the newspaper subscribers had familial links and to which their children went for their education. As we shall see in the chapter on the civil service, this elite group also provided the senior local bureaucrats. And since the family connections were ramifying, it was not altogether uncommon for two brothers or other close relations to be members of the same committee, one serving in an ex-officio capacity and the other as a representative of the business interests.

Profiles of the Legislative Councillors in the 1930s and 1940s would bring into sharp relief the change in the type of businessmen. Space, however, does not permit their presentation although the number of unofficial members varied from 7 before the introduction of the 1936 constitution to 10 at the end of it in 1954. A table which simply indicates the extent to which the business group remained the major
element in the Legislative Council must therefore suffice.

TABLE 6

Occupation of Elected and Nominated
Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council 1933 - 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Big business Owners and Representatives (Mainly mahogany and chicle contractors, Merchants, real estate owners.)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Small business owners and Representatives. (Bakers, Tailors and Employees)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Professions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Lawyers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Minister of Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Medical Practitioners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: E = Elected; N = Nominated

* Membership increased with the division of the Southern Constituency into the Stann Creek and Toledo Constituencies (Ord. No.21 of 1938)

x Unofficial majority increased with the reduction of the official members, including the President, from six to not more than four and the addition of two nominated unofficial members. (Ord. No.4 of 1945)

Source: Compiled from the Government Gazette.
The change within the business group should not be over-emphasised as the aims of the new Legislative Councillors, as we shall demonstrate in a later section, was identical with that of the old. What is perhaps more noteworthy was the failure of the elective principle to produce any new occupational group in the Legislative Council. The special income and property qualifications (an annual income of $1,000 or ownership of real property valued at $500 and a deposit of $100) for candidates could only be satisfied by an unduly small class. Moreover, to facilitate their election in the out-districts, the influential business group had as early as 1922, when the Franchise Commission considered the elective principle, decided against residence in the constituency being a qualification for candidature. For although they possessed extensive property throughout the country the business group resided in Belize City.

The Educated Element

The educated group comprised another section of the ruling elite. This group consisted not only of members of the liberal professions — lawyers, doctors, clergymen, senior civil servants and primary school headmasters, but also the literary minded whose occupation was less prestigious. Perhaps the outstanding examples of the last sub-group

23. British Honduras Constitution Ordinance 1935 (No. 13 of 1935). This high qualification was abolished in 1945 and became the same as that for a voter.
were the Staine brothers, Calvert and Morrel, who were both tailors and musicians. Both were City Councillors, and Calvert who received the O.B.E. in 1947 was also a nominated member of the Legislative Council from 1942 to 1947.

The humble origin of the Staine brothers was typical of the members of the educated class. Except for the few who were from the wealthy business families, persons within the professional category were usually the first among their kin to hold a high social status. Their families were usually the lower or quasi-middle class Creoles who were sufficiently appreciative of the role of education as the key to social advancement to make the necessary financial sacrifice.

One of the important features of the high status professional sub-groups was their overwhelming non-British Honduran membership. In the 1930s only four of some twelve lawyers were British Hondurans - Simeon Hassock, Ezekiel Grant, Harrison Courtenay and Arthur Balderamos. Except for Grant who was a District Commissioner, these lawyers became elected members of the Legislative Council and in the case of Hassock also an ex-officio member when he was the Acting Attorney General in 1946. The other lawyers were mainly West Indians who invariably served in the Judiciary before entering private practice and politics. The priesthood and the medical profession were even more than law expatriate preserves; the outstanding British Honduran clergyman being Gilbert Hulse, a Cambridge graduate, Archdeacon of the Anglican church and a nominated member of the Legislative Council from 1946 to 1948.

It was as civil servants and to a lesser extent as school teachers
that British Hondurans fulfilled their social expectations. But the high proportion of civil servants meant that the influence of the educated group could not permeate the political process as much as that of the other two sections of the ruling elite, the colonial officials and the businessmen. For the civil servants were debarred from open political activity. A more important reason however for the limited influence of the educated group was the virtual monopoly given to the businessmen in the wholly nominated Legislative Council. It was exceedingly rare for more than one unofficial member to belong to the professional group. Even more discriminatory was the tendency for the Governor to appoint Europeans, mainly clergymen and lawyers, rather than retired local senior civil servants.

Until the restoration of the elective principle in 1936 the partially elected Belize Town Board was the only political institution through which the educated middle class Creoles could advance its overall position. Indeed the Town Board members dealt freely with national issues and as a taxing authority reminded the big business owners that their political power was not total. From time to time, however, as the dissolution of the Town Board in 1938 indicated, the colonial officials felt obliged to curb the pretensions of the educated group.

The rebuffs, however, merely strengthened their resolve to challenge the hegemony of the business group. Three of the six candidates in the two-member Belize District constituency in the 1936 elections were lawyers: F. R. Dragten, W. L. Thompson (West Indians)
and Balderamos, a British Honduran. From the time of his election in 1945 up to the dissolution of the Legislative Council in 1954, Courtenay dominated the parliamentary scene although the businessmen, notably J. S. Espat, a Lebanese chicle contractor, remained prominent.

It should not be assumed that the salaried and professional members of the ruling elite were as cohesive as the business group or were in conflict with them. In the first place, many of the lawyers were real estate proprietors and their clients were mainly businessmen. F. R. Dragten, a Guyanese, "owned considerable property in Belize and ..... a grape fruit orchard in Stann Creek." As we have seen he was also a law partner of Stanley Woods who, together with Frederick Biddle, a wealthy proprietor and member of the Executive Council from 1932 - 1936, sponsored Dragten for the 1936 election. On the other hand, Lucilio Ayuso, a Mestizo and owner of a commercial firm was sponsored by Frank Ellis, the lawyer. Secondly, the more powerful sections of the ruling elite, in particular the colonial officials, could and did play upon the aspirations of individual members of the educated middle class. Thirdly, the latter group was continuously being infused with members whose occupation and intellectual achievement varied from the dominant sub-group of salaried and professional workers.

Electoral politics in the municipality brought to the fore the differences in attitudes and political views among the educated middle class. To this the formation of several political groups bore

testimony. Perhaps the best known political group was the Progressive Party which was the out-growth of the Belize Literary and Debating Club. It was somewhat inappropriately termed 'party' as it lacked the attributes of a modern party. The group was committed to neither the broad objectives of political education nor to the search of a genuine popular feeling. None of its leaders could claim pre-eminence in politics, and if the group survived the removal of a leader from its ranks it suffered from the individualistic outlook of its members. Indeed, its existence could not be established with any certainty except during the municipal and (after 1936) national elections. Yet it survived all the other political groups and was only reduced to an anachronism on the rise of the nationalist movement in 1950.

This division of the ruling elite into three functionally specific groups - colonial officials, businessmen, and salaried and professional persons - was merely one aspect of a more complex picture at this level of society. Communal and cultural interests vied continuously with economic and occupational interests for the political allegiance of the members of these groups. This produced a situation in which each cultural element tended to rely as much on its social organisations as on its economic and occupational group to articulate its interests. Moreover, the social organisations were ranked in a manner which reflected the hierarchical structure in the colonial society. The colonial officials and the white businessmen, local and expatriate, were members of the most exclusive and prestigious club, The Belize Club. Despite their competition for control of the country's
political institutions, these two groups were unanimous in their desire to preserve the status quo. The Belize Club may not have consciously assumed a political role; it nevertheless, provided the businessmen with an informal but important link with the colonial bureaucracy. Official decisions affecting their economic interests were often a confirmation of hints given in the club or on the tennis court and cricket field.

Socially, therefore, the white businessmen were better placed than their Creole and Mestizo counterparts to influence the political process. The impact of the Creole and Mestizo businessmen on the political system was further reduced by their differing social and cultural ties. The Mestizo businessman shared almost exclusively with other members of his cultural group the membership of the Pickwick Club. Whenever he acted within his cultural and social framework his political influence was negligible. This was inherent in a situation in which the political influence of social organisations was in direct proportion to their position in the social system.

The influence of the Mestizo businessman was certainly less than that of the Creole businessman and salaried middle class. This cultural group occupied the intermediate position in the social scale but its members were divided by their occupational difference into two distinct social sub-groups. The Newtown Club was patronised by the businessmen whose devotion to sport and generous financial contribution to the club were perhaps unequalled by any of the other social groups. If the Newtown members were noted for their wealth and
interest in sport, those of the **Colonial Band Association** were noted for their intellect. Every important civil servant was a member of the CBA. The Association offered to the professional and the literary minded the social refinement of drama and music which were European in content. Pianoforte playing, in particular was the flower of education and the hallmark of a 'cultured' person. This interest in the classical model of European culture reflected much more than the roots of the educational system. It was also an attempt by the middle class Creoles to consolidate their social position.

These four clubs remain the most prestigious in the society. Although the dwindling white population, expatriate and local, has forced the **Belize Club** to lower its social barrier of admission it retains its exclusiveness. Similarly, although many members of the liberal profession hold multiple club membership, the other clubs are still identified with a particular occupational or cultural group.

Group consciousness or corporateness among the ruling elite could therefore be measured by either occupation, race, or culture. Irrespective of their cultural origin the businessmen, which it should be emphasised included many lawyers, were inclined to seek alignments with other kindred groups in articulating their economic interests. But these lawyers also gave leadership to the professional group and, as Creoles, made common cause with the Creole businessmen on communally sensitive issues. In the final analysis, the cultural yardstick appeared to be the basic determinant of social ranking within this upper strata of the colonial society. For although the well-off
Mestizos being 'Spanish' were white, they were a self-conscious cultural minority who tended to think of themselves as Mexicans and Guatemalans. In this respect, it is significant that education, which has been the most powerful agent of Creole acculturation, was not the Mestizos' main avenue of upward social mobility. A secondary education was their limit, and few of them if any, were taught by Britons and West Indians. As Catholics they were the charge of the American Jesuits whom we shall see instilled little feeling of pride in British institutions and values.

Interest Articulation and the Electorate

If the cultural and social divisions cut across economic interests, they also discouraged the development of popular interests in functionally specific groups. Labour, as we saw in the previous chapter, remained unorganised until the mid 1940s. The communal outlook of the few political groups in Belize City also retarded the development of a colony wide system of interest articulation. Little attempt was made by the Creole political leaders in Belize City to represent every social group in the urban community despite the re-introduction of electoral politics at the national level in 1936. Indeed, their social aspiration left them with a vague feeling of solidarity with the urban working class.

These leaders were even less concerned with embracing the rural population. In considering whether to recommend communal representation to
the Colonial Office, Governor Kittermaster observed in 1932 that as far
as "opinion in Belize [City]" is concerned "the other communities do
not count." It was only by equating national consensus with the
decisions of the urban based politicians that the Governor could have
declared in 1932 that "the vote of the Colony as a whole is unanimous
in favour of a change to elected representation." Of the five
memoranda received on the proposed constitutional change, four were
from Belize City and the other from Stann Creek town. Moreover, the
recommendations in the four memoranda from Belize City seemed to be the
product of the same minds. This view is held not because the recommenda-
tions "were similar in essence" but because the Progressive Party
provided the leadership to the other organisations. Apart from its own
memorandum, the party submitted one in association with fourteen
Friendly Societies which, in the absence of pension schemes, national
assistance, and trade unions, fulfilled a useful role in the society.
The Progressive Party also organised the public meeting which submitted
the third memorandum. Finally, having distinguished itself in munici-
pal elections, the party was represented on the Belize Town Board which
submitted the fourth memorandum.

The communal outlook of the Creole leaders was by no means the

25. Governor to Secretary of State, 28th October, 1933, C.O.123/337,
File 94670.

26. Ibid.

27. Governor to Secretary of State, 21st April, 1933, C.O.123/342,
File 15559.
only factor responsible for the inadequate system of articulation. As we have pointed out at the beginning of the study, the difficulties of transportation and the different patterns of occupation had kept the out-districts more or less in isolation from each other and from Belize City. Even within an administrative district the villages were widely separated. The subsistence way of life in the Indian villages was also isolative in character. Moreover, the activities of the central government in these areas were minimal and not clearly visible to the villager. For the District Commissioner was confined to his magistral duties in the capital town of the out-districts and rarely visited the villages. Such functions as revenue collection, and law and order in the Indian villages, were performed by the traditional village authority. But there were few lateral ties between the villages as their institutions varied with the cultural composition of the administrative district and also with the village communities within it. In the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts acculturation was not only different but uneven. One was inhabited by Creoles and Caribs; the other by the Caribs and the Kekchi Indians. This absence of a sufficiently homogenous community in most of the administrative districts rendered more difficult the problem of developing a system of interest articulation which would have transcended the divisions between Belize City and the rest of the society.

The electoral system which was introduced in 1936 also contributed to the weak system of interest articulation. In providing no positive safeguards for the different communities it admittedly gave scope for
inter-communal politics. This opportunity was exploited to the extent that a number of Creole residents of Belize City contested the out-district constituencies. The electoral system, however, did not altogether ignore communal differences. It discriminated against the Mestizos by requiring of the legislator fluency in the English language to the satisfaction of the Governor. As the Governor admitted, he had stipulated the linguistic qualification "to prevent the election of a Spanish speaking member from the north and south to the detriment of facility of working the Council." This was the colonial period of what Pye calls 'administrative politics'. What was required primarily, therefore, was not genuine representation but an unencumbered Legislative Council. In effect the objective ensured the political dominance of the Creoles. Of the thirty-one unofficial members of the Legislative Council during the 1936 constitution only one was a Mestizo. This was Ayuso a resident in the Belize constituency and one of its representatives from 1936 to 1939.

The over-riding concern for the smooth working of the Legislative Council, together with absence of a residential qualification, also ensured the hegemony of Belize City. Little attempt was made in the selection of the nominated unofficial members to correct the geographical imbalance in representation and residence. It might be argued that the continued reliance on Belize City and the Creoles for

28. Ibid.

nominated legislators was not unconnected with the lack of convenient
and rapid means of communication. Nevertheless, communal and cultural
considerations were the principal criterion of appointment since many
prominent Mestizo businessmen resided in Belize City.

This virtual monopoly by Creoles and Belize City of the political
process was under-written by the absence of constituency pressures on
the representatives of the outdistricts. The apathy of the electorate
was part of a vicious circle. There was no organised public opinion to
challenge the indifference that pervaded the atmosphere. On the other
hand, the narrow electorate offered little incentive to the organisa-
tion of political interests. The income and property qualifications of
£300 and £500 respectively or alternatively the payment of a rental of
£96 per annum for a voter excluded the vast majority of the population.
Few persons, especially the small property owners who had suffered from
the 1931 hurricane and the general economic depression, could have
satisfied these requirements. Indeed, the general poverty of the rural
population deprived the national election of its essence. Although
they accounted for about 30 per cent of the electorate, the out-
districts returned four of the six elected legislators. In the Corozal
electoral sub-district of the northern constituency there was in 1936,
12 registered voters in a population 6,885. The situation in the two-
member Belize constituency was not substantially different. Of a
population of 21,661 in 1936 there were only 772 voters. The overall
percentage of registered voters throughout the period of the 1936
constitution varied between 1.8 and 2.8 per cent. The slow growth of
the electorate and the extent of political interest and activity in
the several elections in the constituencies are shown in Tables 7 and
8.

**TABLE 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No. of Registered Voters</th>
<th>Registered Votes as % of Pop.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>56,071</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>58,759</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>61,723</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>64,327</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>63,139</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: "Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional
Reform, 1951", by W. H. Courtenay, Appendix No.4, p.26
Government Printer, British Honduras.

It might be reasonably argued that the absence of formal
political organisations was not an accurate indicator of political
interests. In the first place, the small electorate did not justify
electioneering on a grand scale. Perhaps the more effective but less
noticeable campaign by personal contact also concealed the true
extent of political interest. Indeed, the overall percentage of votes
polled in the five elections varied between 70 and 84.1 per cent.
(TABLE 8). Factions, no doubt, also existed as the 1936 election
campaign of the two arch business rivals C. H. Brown and R. S. Turton,
TABLE 8

Analysis of Voting for Legislative Council Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>1945</th>
<th>1948</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BELIZE DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Population</td>
<td>21,683</td>
<td>22,894</td>
<td>24,270</td>
<td>25,607</td>
<td>28,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of reg. voters</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prop. to population</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of Votes polled</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prop. to reg. voters</td>
<td>81.61</td>
<td>76.70</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>86.20</td>
<td>74.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NORTHERN DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Population</td>
<td>14,566</td>
<td>15,173</td>
<td>16,029</td>
<td>16,552</td>
<td>13,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of reg. voters</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prop. to population</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of Votes polled</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prop. to reg. voters</td>
<td>99.21</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STANN CREEK DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Population</td>
<td>6,250</td>
<td>6,561</td>
<td>6,802</td>
<td>7,053</td>
<td>6,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of reg. voters</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prop. to population</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of Votes polled</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prop. to reg. voters</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>92.74</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>95.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WESTERN DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Population</td>
<td>7,264</td>
<td>7,668</td>
<td>8,099</td>
<td>8,535</td>
<td>7,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of reg. voters</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prop. to population</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of Votes polled</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prop. to reg. voters</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>90.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOLEDO DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Population</td>
<td>6,308</td>
<td>6,463</td>
<td>6,523</td>
<td>6,580</td>
<td>6,653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of reg. voters</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prop. to population</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of Votes polled</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prop. to reg. voters</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>82.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: Prop. = Proportion
No. = Number
Reg. = Registered

Source: Courtenay, Constitutional Report 1951, p.26
in the northern constituency revealed.

The overwhelming evidence suggests, however, that the electorate was generally quiescent. The decline in the number of registered voters from 1,155 in 1939 to 822 in 1945 (TABLE 8) was due as much to waning political interest as to the absence of hundreds of adults from the country during World War II. Nor did the high incidence of unopposed candidates in the out-district constituencies indicate an abiding interest in electoral politics. In the northern constituency, the electoral contest in 1936, which stimulated considerable political interest because of the personalities of the candidates, proved to be the last under the 1936 constitution (TABLE 8). This could hardly have been an expression of confidence in the representative as Turton, who ended his parliamentary career in 1948, seldom attended Legislative meetings or contributed to the committee work of this body. The situation in other out-districts was substantially the same. Four elections occurred between 1936 and 1945 before an election contest became necessary in 1948 in the Toledo constituency. The situation in the Belize constituency was essentially the same as the election attracted few candidates once the contest lost its novelty. As early as the second general election in 1939, the contest in this two-member constituency became necessary only when a third "candidate Edward Usher who was elected" came forward on seeing the danger of allowing only two members to be nominated.30 Yet as the Daily Clarion bemoaned, two

30. The Daily Clarion, 7th March, 1939, p.3.
days before the election "not a single one of the three men who are trying to capture the two seats for the Belize Division has held a public meeting or appeared before any organised responsible group. Not one has subjected himself to the electorate to be questioned on any matter affecting this country and its inhabitants.\ldots\ldots.\textsuperscript{31}

But for the disinterestedness of the urban population the various reasons offered for the apathy in electoral politics would have sufficed. The professional and salaried middle class Creoles were at least sufficiently politically oriented to exploit the new access to political power. Yet the elections contests after 1936 attracted few candidates from this group. The additional explanation for this sudden loss of interest lay neither in the electoral process nor in the continued success of the business group but in the transfer of effective power from the Legislative Council to the Governor.

**Legislative - Executive Relations**

With a heritage of self-governing institutions the unofficial members found the Governor’s authority irksome. Armed with the reservation powers and answerable to the British Treasury alone for the colony’s finance the Governor felt no compelling necessity to seek the advice of the unofficial members and still less their support. The latter resorted to the politics of protest but were caught in a

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. 8th May, 1939.
vicious circle. The imperial government had made the balancing of the budget a prerequisite of the resumption of local financial control, but denied the unofficial members the opportunity to work towards this goal. In fact, the unofficial members claimed that the government was spending funds on services and projects which inevitably prolonged the period of financial tutelage.

In assessing the merits of this criticism it should be remembered that it was made mainly by businessmen whose values, goals, and criteria of a successfully administered enterprise differed from those which guided the bureaucracy. It was therefore not surprising that they urged the government to "discard the administrative methods which are well established in government departments, but which might be considered wasteful and inefficient by businessmen who know from experience that such methods are not conducive to success in private enterprise."32

All the conditions for a crisis between the Governor and the unofficial members existed. The prolonged period of Treasury control was frustrating and the action of successive Governors was high-handed. Finally, the unofficial members and the executive officials did not share the same values about government. The first sign of an impending crisis was conveyed in the tone and content of the unofficial members' reply in November, 1945 to Governor Hunter's address to the new session of the Legislative Council. They pointedly accused him of

not showing "sufficient regard in the past to unofficial members and their opinions" and demanded "a greater and more active part" in the government. Not unexpectedly, the vexed issue of Treasury control was mentioned. The legislative leaders referred to their exclusion from decisions relating to fiscal matters although the colony contributed between 1935 and 1944, 79.3 per cent of the total revenue.

The crisis was brought to a head the following year on the very issue of finance. As it was the practice of the government to levy taxes at any time during the financial year, the Colonial Secretary who was also the Financial Secretary introduced the Income Tax Amendment Bill in June 1946. His attitude was indicative of the strained relations. He merely moved the second reading of the bill which provoked Courtenay to express 'disappointment and surprise' that the mover "should be satisfied in making the motion ... without any further explanation." Such an attitude, he continued, was unhelpful to the unofficial members who were unaware of the purpose of the bill other than the raising of revenue. It was clear from the other speeches that the unofficial members who were in a majority since the constitutional change in 1945 had previously decided to vote against the bill. The Governor resolved the conflict by invoking his 'reserve' power to pass the bill while the unofficial members walked out of the Legislative Chamber.

33. Ibid.
In the intervening years between this crisis and the devaluation crisis in December 1949, the Executive Council made attempts to improve its working relationship with the Legislative Council. A standing Finance Committee of the Legislative Council was established and Courtenay and Espat were appointed to the Executive Council. The most important outcome of the crisis, however, was the highly successful visit of three unofficial members, Courtenay, Hulse and Henry Bowman, a businessman, to the Colonial Office in 1947 to discuss the country's financial and constitutional position. Their outstanding achievement was the remission of the Hurricane Reconstruction Loan which the Moyne Commission had recommended as long ago as 1938. The Colonial Office also agreed in principle to the delegates' proposals for constitutional reform and advised the Governor to set up a local constitutional commission whose investigation, as we shall see, was overtaken by the nationalist upsurge in 1950.

It should not be assumed that in their opposition to the executive officials the unofficial members were either revolutionaries or radicals. They were a moderate, self-serving group which simply demanded a greater share in, and a more business-like approach to government. In terms of their self-serving approach, it is not insignificant that their relationship with the executive foundered almost wholly on financial issues. As moderates, their politics of protest never went beyond the revolutionary stage except over the income tax issue in 1947. Although many of them were opposed to the dominance of the BEP Company their attachment to the British colonial connexion
remained unshaken, and its strength was carried over into the 1950s to the extent that these leaders became the chief apologists of the colonial political system.

Growth of Political Interest

Against the general background of political apathy the growth of political interest was discernible. The urban population was receptive to the idea of 'self-government' which world war II had brought into prominence. Its incipient feeling of nationalism had found expression in the 'Native First' slogan in the late 1930s. The slogan, however, was burdened with communal and racial overtones. For if its purpose was to reduce the prominence of non-British Hondurans in the country's political life it was not intended to embrace the Mestizo element. Nor did the whites of British Honduran birth fall within the meaning of the term 'native'. The term in fact was negative in that it could be defined more by those racial and communal groups which it excluded than embraced.

It is hardly necessary, however, to examine the external influences for the cause of the post-war political awareness. Political issues, not altogether unrelated to the war, had arisen at home since 1945 to stimulate this interest. Perhaps the most important of these was the British proposals to federate the West Indian colonies. The problem of interesting British Honduras in the proposal could be foreseen since for geographical, economic and cultural reasons the
country was not imbued with the feeling of regional unity. Another issue was immigration which was the subject of both the Evans Settlement Commission and the Montego Bay Conference on Federation in 1947. British Honduras appeared to be apprehensive about the type of people it would attract from the over-crowded West Indian islands. Neither the activism of West Indian professional men nor the success of their ordinary compatriots who had been recruited to the police force from Barbados after World War I and as agricultural settlers from Jamaica in the 1930s inspired much admiration for West Indians. The third political issue was the proposed constitutional reform. Here again there was the fear that the purpose of the constitutional change was to facilitate Federation. Finally, there was the revival of Guatemala's territorial claim which had been dormant during the war. This highlighted the problem of the country's future regional orientation.

Public opinion on these issues was formulated by several organisations ranging from the Open Forum on the 'Battlefield' to the exclusive Christian Social Action Group organised by the Jesuits of St. John's College. The role of each of these organisations was as different as the type of political minded which they attracted. The Open Forum provided a platform for the seasoned campaigner and the emerging labour leader. Not the least of its patrons were the newcomers to the national scene who had acquired their political awareness under the stimulus of World War II. In fact the chief organiser of the Forum was 'Kid' Broaster who had been deported from the United States
after imprisonment for advocating the non-participation of black Americans in the war. There were even more colourful forum types like Luke Dinedale Kemp, popularly known as 'Prince Dee' and 'Bangula' Barnett. The eventual formation of a Pro-British Front by 'Prince Dee' in the 1950s and 'Bangula's' well-known Creole saying "the good fo England good fo Belize" give some indication of what the Open Forum was all about.

Perhaps the only public medium which thought of a new social and political order was the weekly Belize Billboard which was founded by a Cuban national, Narciso Valdes, in 1946. Reputed for its interest in the working class, but by no means oriented towards a specific political ideology, it differed in its posture from the two older newspapers, The Daily Clarion and the weekly Belize Independent. If the newspaper at first did not achieve a wide circulation it at least was an asset to the nascent labour movement. It was largely responsible for the newly found General Workers' Union becoming a household name throughout the country. In so far as the ordinary people could grasp the essential features of colonial rule the newspapers served another useful function by placing the social and political malaise in British Honduras in its wider colonial context.

If the political ideas were disseminated by the Open Forum and the Belize Billboard their germination occurred in the study groups and debating societies. These organisations were sustained largely by the social leadership of the clergy. For a feature common to most cultural and literary groups in British Honduras during this period
was their association, however slight, with the churches. When a society did not owe its origin to the organising skill of a clergyman it at least received his patronage. There was indeed a ramifying connection between the churches, the societies, and the secondary schools which were denominational. The societies directed their appeal to the secondary school leavers who had become civil servants, teachers, journalists and commercial clerks and wished to maintain their literary and social interests. Their extra-mural pursuits were in a real sense the continuation of their scholastic relationship with their religious and educational superiors. This was particularly the case of the Catholics. To come within the influence of the Jesuits in the 1930s and 1940s was to be exposed to a political education that was anti-colonial and anti-British in content. For many of the Jesuits were Irish or German-born Americans. They were extremely conscious of their anti-British heritage as Irish or Germans and of their marginal position, as Americans, in the colonial political system in British Honduras.

From the observation of Sir Alan Burns, the Governor from 1934 - 1939, it seemed that the Jesuits held sufficiently extreme views to deliberately instil a nationalist feeling in their older students. He wrote:

"The Catholic Bishop Murphy was an Irish born American, a true Fenian at heart, with a bitter dislike for everything British which he made no attempt to conceal; he told me on one occasion that he did not mind the children in his school singing the National Anthem as they did not understand it, but he himself would never soil his lips with it. I made several efforts to be friendly with the Bishop, not only because of his prominent position in a
population more than half Catholic; but also because I am myself a Catholic. I cannot honestly say that I was successful. His priests were most loyal to him, but I feel that they themselves realised his tactlessness. It may seem absurd, but apart from my objections to his anti-British attitude I resented very strongly his assumption that because I was British I was therefore a 'heretic' at heart; he caused me to understand why so many practising Christians should be anti-clerical."

Political and religious education went hand-in-hand. Catholic ideas on social justice, culled from the Papal Encyclical 'Rerum Novarum', were the diet on which members of the Catholic Social Action group were nourished. Indeed, this group which had grown out of another Jesuit enterprise, the Credit Union Movement, became the catalyst of nationalist growth and the rallying point of the Catholics in Belize City. John Smith, Leigh Richardson, George Price, Philip Goldson, and Nicholas Pollard were members of this Catholic group. Those who were literary minded found in the Mancrove, the magazine of the St. John's College Alumni Association, a medium for their assessment of the limited influence of Catholics in politics. Less sectarian views were expressed in the Outlook, the quarterly journal of the non-denominational St. John's Literary and Debating Society. Goldson and Richardson were among the determined coterie whose names reappeared continually as editors, poets, and authors of the main political articles in the Outlook.

Although inchoate their activities pointed to the rise of a new

35. Sir Alan Burns, The Colonial Civil Servant.
generation of politicians. These were men in their twenties, some of whom had contested national and municipal elections in the 1940s. Price was elected to the Belize Town Board in 1947 after being defeated at the polls in 1943. Smith, at his first attempt in 1948, became the senior elected Legislative Council representative for the two-member Belize District constituency by topping the polls. Richardson and Goldson forsook the security of their teaching and civil service positions respectively to pursue their political interests as journalists for the Belize Billboard. But these developments were either unnoticed by the colonial authorities or if detected regarded as inconsequential. It was not until 1951 when the nationalist movement had been established that the authorities reacted in the familiar fashion of imprisoning some of the leaders and attempting to silence the Belize Billboard. The old political elite on the other hand, took the new political trend more seriously. For the unofficial members not only discussed the political situation with the representatives of the St. John's Literary Society but their unanimous decision to vote against the devaluation of the British Honduras dollar was largely influenced by the unpopularity of the measure.

The Politics of Devaluation

The events between the devaluation of the British pound in September, 1949 and the British Honduras dollar in December 1949 revealed the lack of popular confidence in the colonial political system. Few people believed that exemption was the ultimate fate of the dollar. The vast majority believed the Belize Billboard's
argument that devaluation was imminent as this was in the interest of the influential British financed enterprises.

The first official attempt to confound these rumours had the opposite effect of maintaining public concern and scepticism. Within days of the devaluation of the British pound, Courtenay, who claimed to have been accused along with his business associates of "exerting efforts to induce the government to devalue the dollar," pointedly asked in the Legislative Council whether the British Honduras government had any proposal under consideration "from any source whatever, to devalue the currency of the Colony." The Colonial Secretary replied in the negative and stated that the decision to change the rate of exchange was the responsibility of the Bank of England. Implicit in the reply was the attempt to disabuse the people's mind that a decision on the future of the currency could be influenced, favourably or otherwise, by local pressure. There was also the obvious and related attempt to exonerate the colonial government from the responsibility for any decision on the issue. But those opposed to devaluation did not accept the official distinction between the Bank of England and the imperial government or between the latter and the colonial government. All were thought to be associated and in league, and all were destined to be blamed for the devaluation. Indeed, Espat foresaw this wholesale criticism. He observed that "if by choice His Majesty's government

38. Ibid. p.12.
39. Ibid.
decides to devalue our dollar, there would be very little that we can do about it. And if that is done, the public will blame this Council. I am quite sure that after this meeting we will hear that we were up here trying to devalue the dollar, as it was said last week Wednesday when the Executive Council held their meeting."

The business activities of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council were certainly not calculated to confound their critics. They exploited the situation by indulging in speculation. Evidently, many of them fared well. The mercantile and commercial element purchased goods to cover import requirements for many months ahead to take advantage of the exchange rate. Overdrafts were raised with the local banks against sterling deposits in other colonies and the United Kingdom to cover the purchase of British Honduras timber for export. Some of the businessmen made payments locally in British Honduras dollars in advance to cover the purchase of U.S dollars and sterling which were necessary for financing approved imports into the colony. Some also contributed to the flight of the British Honduras dollar which was estimated at $2 million by transferring their funds to the United Kingdom.

The fear and misapprehension of an impending devaluation of the dollar was partially allayed by the visit of Lord Listowel, Minister of State for the Colonies, in October, 1949. Throughout his tour of the colony he was at pains to deny the rumoured devaluation. In his address to the Stann Creek Town Board, the visiting official,

40. Ibid.
"Choosing his words carefully" and "with a touch of finality told the tense audience of Town Board men, capitalists, and citizens that the British government had decided the advantages lie in keeping the British Honduras dollar as it is." 42

If further assurance was needed from the British government it was immediately forthcoming. In November, 1949, Mr. Ree Williams, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, resolutely defended in the House of Commons the decision to exempt the dollar from devaluation. 43 And while his critic, Major Ramsey, believed that the decision was unpopular in British Honduras, the Under Secretary of State claimed to have been advised to the contrary.

The fear of devaluation was however realised within five weeks of this latest assurance. Significantly, the unofficial members of the Legislative Council did not criticise the devaluation but the Governor for not taking them into his confidence. It is difficult to see how the Governor could have acted otherwise if only because some of the unofficials were among the chief speculators. In fact, the Governor, in noting the lack of confidence in the British Honduras dollar, accused the speculators of precipitating the devaluation crisis. 44

The British government's decision to devalue the dollar was not as sudden as it appears. From the time the British pound had been

devalued, the future of the dollar was "under constant review" as the Governor admitted. He had been "in close consultation with the Secretary of State throughout the past three months" and the problem "had been considered by all those officials both in the Colonial Office and in the Treasury at home who could be helpful in reaching a solution." These were astounding disclosures in view of the earlier assurances by the British government that the dollar would not be devalued.

The emerging group of young politicians were therefore justified in their lack of confidence in the imperial and colonial governments. These political leaders had been rudely reminded that the institutions which made the vital decisions were completely outside the people's control. Perhaps more important they were convinced that the unofficial members were unsuited to the task of correcting the situation. In fact, they were not impressed with the members' unanimous disapproval of the devaluation of the dollar. They considered this a gesture to the outraged masses since many of the members stood to benefit from the devaluation. In forming the People's Committee on the night of the devaluation the emerging group of political leaders were setting themselves the task of gaining control of the country's political institutions.

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.
The Summation

The devaluation was sufficiently critical to be regarded as the watershed of British Honduran politics. It has however been our contention that this issue cannot adequately explain the political outburst in the early 1950s. The long term explanation should take account of both the depressed social and economic conditions which the people had endured since 1931 and the absence of an open political system. These two factors cannot be separated. Economic hardship or poverty per se does not result in radicalism. In fact, it might probably handicap such development. There is much evidence to support the view that an impoverished people who are not exposed to, or informed of the possibilities of change are likely to be conservative and inert. McMillan has made the interesting observation that the upheaval in the West Indies in the late 1930s took place "not in the smaller islands where distress was most acute, but rather where there was a visible prospect of better things ...". The dynamic in the situation seems to be the existence of leaders who are dissatisfied with, and are demanding a change of the status quo. There is usually a correlation between the extremity of their demands and difficulties of their gaining access to the political process.

This type of leader had emerged in British Honduras in the late 1940s. As aspiring politicians they recognised the necessity of

demonstrating their interest in the group which was relatively homogeneous in regard to its economic depression although internally divided in terms of race, religion, language, and culture. These leaders found in colonialism a ready explanation for all the misfortunes of the people. Their political activities in the late 1940s, though largely academic, represented the beginnings of a real demand for radical social and economic changes and the removal of the restraints of colonialism. Although lacking the drama, force, and passion of later years, these activities were as instrumental as the devaluation in bringing about the political crisis.
CHAPTER 3

THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE

Once the political crisis had arisen it was only natural for the aspiring politicians to cohere into a distinct group to push still further their incipient movement for reform. On the same night that the dollar was devalued a protest meeting was held on the 'Battlefield' under the auspices of the Open Forum. The guest speakers were Smith and Price. The meeting was so well received that at its conclusion another was announced for the following night. It appears that within the first two days of January 1950, the organisers of the protest meetings formed a committee; for on the 3rd January "handbills told of the People's Committee [PC] with John Smith as Chairman and George Price as Secretary."¹ In a sense the devaluation issue was the midwife of the P.C for during its brief existence of nine months, it spearheaded the attack on the imperial decision.

The importance of the P.C however does not lie so much in its genesis as in its being the progenitor of the People's United Party (PUP). It bequeathed to the party its leaders and supporters, its anti-colonial and anti-British sentiments, and some of its structural characteristics. To study the PC's posture therefore is to begin to

¹ The Daily Clarion, June 29, 1950. p.4.
understand the intentions and predisposition of the PUP at least in its formative years.

**Organisation and Appeal**

From the inception the PC was a loose and informal amalgam of individuals. There was an appearance of a collective leadership of several people but in effect the internal organisation centred around Smith and Price. The former derived most of his influence from being a reliable spokesman of the committee in the Legislative Council. But the moving spirit of the committee was Price. As Secretary, he devoted considerable time to the organisation of the movement and it was at his home that most of the committee meetings were held. Apart from their joint desire for social reform, these two leaders shared at least one other feature with most of the other founding members. This was their Catholic belief which helped to stabilise the leadership.

The movement itself was sustained and unified by a popular desire to force the end of colonial rule. This was largely inherent in the situation, and in fact the PC had little difficulty in rallying popular support in Belize City. There was almost complete agreement among several disparate elements in the City - the unemployed, especially the youths, itinerant waterfront labourers, small shop-keepers, manual government workers, clerical workers and young civil servants - that their disabilities and low standard of living were to be attributed to the colonial system.
To observe the spontaneity of the urban support is not to detract from the vigorous campaign which the PC launched. Its attack on devaluation soon became part of a wider campaign against colonialism and the British. In fact, the committee fed its radical vein with almost every source of political discontent. They had little difficulty in recalling the litany of grievances which included the burden of repaying the 1931 hurricane loan, the irritation of the Governor’s reserve power, the restriction of popular participation in the political process, the economic dominance of the BBP Company, the procrastination of the CDC and the imperial proposal to federate the British Caribbean territories. The attack on the colonial system was studied and uncompromising, and it was with a feeling of denial that Smith remarked "It is preposterous that a handful of Englishmen should dictate to the people of this colony ....... We the people including me, a legislator, do not know what is going on but a lot of meetings are taking place." 

A measure of the nationalist leaders' appeal was the ease with which they captured the GWU. The leaders valued the union for its strong district branches since their committee lacked the organisational machinery to extend its campaign to the district towns and villages. But they were not content with the voluntary support of the GWU.

2. A typical anti-colonial attack is the article 'The CDC Played Their Game With A Snicker, A Smile'. The Belize Billboard, February, 5, 1950. p.3.

President, Cecil Betson, and sought control of this office at the union's annual conference in April 1950. Nicholas Pollard, a founding member of the PC and President of the weak Mercantile Clerks Union was elected President. Smith was named the Vice-President, while Price and Goldson were elected to the Executive Council. The new executive, confident and condescending, was benign enough to agree to a resolution of the General Secretary, Henry Middleton, an old colleague of the defeated Presidential candidate, that "in recognition for his seven years as a 'pioneer of the union', Mr. Betson be elected 'Past President' with the right to sit on the GWU Executive Council." As if to remind Betson that his era of trade unionism was over, the Executive Council conferred upon him the doubtfully honorific title of 'Patriarch of the Union'.

A more fundamental reason for taking over the GWU was the committee's belief that industrial objectives could be more effectively pursued by political means. These leaders extended their personal patronage to the GWU to such an extent that the fortune of the union depended upon that of individual politicians. Indeed this dependency, which the politicians seldom admitted, was the dominant feature of the trade union movement during the 1950s.

6. Ibid.
Objectives

The committee did not express its concern for social and economic reform in a concrete, executable programme. There was no compelling necessity for it to do so. It had no access to the governmental process. This exclusion in fact largely determined the committee's agitational approach. It was strategically sufficient for it to assure itself of popular support by concentrating upon and excessively simplifying those issues on which most of the people agreed. Hence its immediate objectives, as stated in its second petition to the British government, were limited to the restoration of the B.H dollar to parity with the U.S dollar, preventing the country from joining the proposed West Indies federation, the attainment of self-government, and the improvement of social and economic conditions. 7

Concentration on these objectives had the overall effect of calling into question the country's political, economic, and geographical relationship with other political entities. The devaluation and the accompanying rise in prices and unemployment had removed any remaining doubts about the unsuitability of the imperial system as a framework of economic development. But while the leaders were anxious to rid the country of British rule they showed an equal alacrity to invite the American presence. They spoke in glowing terms of their admiration for America and flew the American flag at their rallies at which "thousands of Hondurans sang ..................... with emotional gusto to the

strains of 'God Bless America'. In fact, the popularity of the American Consul was second only to that of the political leaders.

The reasons for the overtures to America are complex. It was primarily the consequence of the revolt against British rule; a negative but forceful way of expressing the anti-British feelings. As one of the 'Battlefield' orators, Kemp, remarked, "this is a thunder period in which we mean to hurt the Lion's pride and feelings." The pro-American attitude can also be seen as a psychological reaction to the feeling that Britain regarded the country as a distant colonial outpost which could receive scant and shoddy attention because the British had relatively little vested interest in the colony. There was no large European population and apart from the BEP Company, the British economic interests were relatively insignificant.

The feeling that the country was considered distant and remote was not without validity. British Honduras was and is still removed from the much traversed West Indian route. Prior to the establishment of air communication in the country in 1945, a newly appointed Governor, for example, usually travelled to Jamaica where he embarked on a warship for his destination. His outward journey was no less exacting. It took him first to either New Orleans, or Puerto Barrios in Guatemala by a local ship where he joined a banana boat bound for home. Secondly, as we shall see in the chapter on the civil service, the colony was an

unattractive assignment for colonial administrators. It was "always regarded as an official backwater" and "frequently suffered at the hands of inferior officials." 10 Most administrators were posted here either in the evening of their careers or at the beginning of them, in which case they were anxious to leave as soon as possible to avoid "the risk of being left in a political and economic backwater." 11 Many relinquished senior appointments in preference for comparatively junior ones in senior colonial territories which offered a more promising career.

This external image of British Honduras persisted throughout the 1930s and 1940s and the British still appear to view the country, despite the development of modern communication, as an isolated and forlorn place. Indeed, the British government had placed so little premium on the territory that at the Peace Conference in 1919 "there was talk of ceding it to the U.S." 12 The proposal was however rejected when "the policy of repaying American loan by the surrender of Crown Colonies was eventually found to be impracticable." 13

This strong local feeling of denial and neglect by Britain was matched by the corresponding belief that the country should look to the U.S for delivery from its dilemma. The belief also resulted from other considerations. Because it was nearer and wealthier than Britain, the

10. Sir Samuel Hoare, The Problems of Crown Colony Government in the Caribbean. The article which deals almost entirely with conditions in British Honduras was published in Nineteenth Century, in April 1921 and reprinted in The Belize Independent, January 8, 1936.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
U.S. held a strong attraction for those who wished to seek their future elsewhere. There were in fact several concentrations of British Hondurans in the United States, and the reported success of relatives won for America further admiration in British Honduras. Civil servants who were on long vacation invariably went to the United States rather than to Britain. There was in fact a greater inter-flow of visitors between British Honduras and the U.S.A than between the former and Britain. The visiting American businessman, in pursuit of new investment opportunities, also imparted a feeling of optimism about the country's economic possibilities. This earned him more popularity than his British counterpart who was invariably recruited to fill controlling positions in the British concerns. The SEP Company in particular was so impersonally organised that the British Honduran employee felt little identification with his expatriate superiors.

The constant flow of American literature - journals, magazines, newspapers, and films - to British Honduras also contributed to this favourable American image. The ease with which this literature could be obtained was in marked contrast to the difficulty of obtaining comparable material from Britain. The politically minded were therefore able to acquire a more intimate knowledge of American than British politics. In sports, baseball had by the 1940s become a strong competitor of cricket as the leading national game, and today the latter is struggling for survival. As early as 1935, Governor Burns perspicaciously commented on the colony's American outlook. He wrote:

...... "A very large proportion of the population is
Spanish-speaking and the influence of the neighbouring republics, with their Spanish cultures, is considerable. Of the English-speaking section of the population a number have worked in Central American republics but do not appear to have acquired a Spanish culture. The whole colony is, however, largely influenced by the comparative proximity of the U.S, as the people as a whole are more American than British in their outlook. This may be due to a limited extent to the cinema, but is more directly attributable to the influence of trade and education. All of the R.C priests and nuns, who are responsible for the education of more than half of the total population, are American, and the children of the better classes, who are sent abroad for their education, go more often to the U.S than to Great Britain. Owing to the lack of frequent direct communication with Great Britain local trade goes naturally to the U.S."

The contributing influence of the Roman Catholic clerics to this American outlook can hardly be over-estimated. As we have seen most of the FC leaders, being Catholics, had received an American-oriented secondary education at the St. John's College. The Jesuits were so wedded to the American education system that they assiduously avoided using the officially recommended British text books. 15 (A striking consequence of the use of British and American textbooks in schools is the curious admixture of British and American spelling in the local press and other publications.) Moreover, the Jesuits were the largest homogeneous group of expatriate intellectuals, and through their pastoral activities, were in direct contact with the majority of the population. Their strong sense of vocation, learning, and simple way of life were impressive. It was therefore not unlikely that the people tended to see America through 'Jesuit eyes'.

14. Governor's Despatch to Secretary of State, December 3, 1935.
It was suggested in interviews that the leaders of the PC merely rode on the popular wave of enthusiasm for America, and apart from offending the British had no other motives for fostering the pro-American campaign. The suggestion ignores the leaders' belief that American investments would have stimulated a more self-sustaining process of development. Their faith in American intentions, official and unofficial, was probably unequalled by any other colonial territory in political ferment at the time. The fact that private American concerns were developing the habit of unexpectedly withdrawing their investments from the country was overlooked. Nor did the opposition of some of these concerns to unionised labour deter the leaders in their demand for the substitution of American for British investments.

As one of the leading advocates of closer economic relationship with the United States, Price was also probably influenced by his close relationship with his multi-millionaire employer, Turton. The latter not only had extensive business connections in the United States but was also a large shareholder in two local American financed companies, the Wrigley Company and I. T. Williams Company, formidable rivals to the BEP in the chicle and mahogany industries respectively. These business connections often took Price to the United States and he may well have conceived from his visits and the general success of his employer the idea of a more prominent role for American private capital.

in the economy. His criticism of the "imperial preferential tariff system," as an "infliction on the people of British Honduras" indicated his American preference, and was also an echo of Turton's complaint that the system was favourable to his rival, the B&P Company. One of Price's close associates, his unofficial economic adviser during his first term of office (1957 - 1961), was an American businessman, Ned Davis, who was eventually imprisoned in British Honduras for embezzling thousands of U.S dollars entrusted to him for investment in British Honduras by an American business partner. Price's demand for a greater inflow of American capital, had it received official compliance, would have posed a threat to the British economic interests which Turton, no doubt, would have welcomed.

It is even more likely that Price's anti-British sentiments were influenced by his association with Turton. Despite his wealth and occasional generosity to public causes, Turton, whose formal education was limited, was not awarded the social patronage of the upper strata of the society. He commanded little respect of the colonial officials and as a Legislative Councillor from 1936 to 1948 was a severe critic of the government. Moreover, he had been one of the principal casualties of the devaluation, having been earlier compelled by the administration to re-transfer his monetary assets from the U.S.A. Like other businessmen who had sustained losses he welcomed the PC. It was also believed that he financed the committee, which, a critic observed

17. The Belize Billboard.
"never rose above suspicions" that it was "only serving Catholic Action and the whims of a rich man or men."

Other long term political considerations might also have influenced Price's pro-American campaign. Closer economic association with the U.S.A would have bolstered his claim that the country's economic and political future lay with the Central American republics and not the West Indian territories. In other words his idea of a Central American destiny was more likely to be realised not through closer identity with Britain and the West Indies but through the U.S.A with its increasing interest in Latin America. An attempt to forge a triangular relationship, with the U.S.A at the base, could have been detected in Price's assertion that the country's "economy and way of life is inter-dependent with the U.S.A and with Central America." The results which he wished to achieve by contrasting Britain's tardiness in fulfilling its moral and financial obligations after the 1931 hurricane with the ready response of relief missions from the U.S.A and the Central American republics appeared to be two-fold. The comparison was intended to "inject anti-British spirit" as well as to suggest that there existed a bond between the country and its North and Central American neighbours which was once successfully tested in a crisis and

20. Ibid. p.6 - 7.
ought to be called upon again. 22

It should, however, be re-emphasised that the pro-American campaign was based more upon anti-British feelings than on the positive desire for closer economic association with the U.S.A. Even among those who gave equal consideration to closer economic ties with the U.S.A, there was little evidence of a willingness to submit the country to American control. While it would have been difficult for them to resist the increase of American influence which was likely to accompany economic aid, they did not wish to become 'a pampered protectorate of the rich U.S.'

Even the old idea, now revived by the more ardent admirers of North America, that the country should seek provincial status from Canada was not encouraged by the committee. In the first place the idea was utopian. Secondly the nationalist leaders did not accept its basic assumption that the country could not survive as an independent political unit. Their slogan was 'Self-Government' and if political association was necessary, then it should be with Central America.

The possibility of this relationship was invariably raised in discussions of the federal proposals. Completely mistrustful of the British government's intentions, Price warned that a "halter would be tied around our necks with the loose end tied to the federal capital of the British West Indies" unless the people voiced their "strongest protest in the most effective way, unceasingly and energetically, that

we are a geographic part of Central America. 

Hence the petition urging the imperial government to "Discontinue at once all endeavours to federate our country into an unpopular proposed political federation of the British West Indies" and the now familiar rider that "The people do not consider themselves part and parcel of the British West Indies, but rather a part and parcel of Central America on the mainland with whom we have long had existing economic and commercial ties." 

A notable feature of the popular movement was its lack of an ideology. Leaders of nationalist movements in addition to, or as a corollary of, being anti-colonialist, normally profess an interest in a set of principles, usually socialism. But the British Honduran leaders were not ideologically oriented and were not socialists. Not only in 1950, but throughout the post-war period one would look in vain for a socialist oriented politician. In fact, the nationalist leaders, as became increasingly evident, were unmistakably opposed to 'leftist' ideologies. The strong Catholic element in the committee showed no desire to betray its religious teachings.

From an ideological standpoint, therefore, there was little basis for Governor Garvey's fear that the leaders were creating "the atmosphere in which anarchy and Communism finally flourish." Perhaps the

fear arose partly from the fact that the formation of the nationalist movement more or less coincided with that of the "communist" government in neighbouring Guatemala, and also from Price's suspected contacts with the Guatemalan authorities. Nevertheless, it would have been odd, if not inconsistent, for the leaders simultaneously to advocate closer relationship with the U.S.A and to indulge in communist activities. The leaders' dislike of Britain and colonialism was based not upon a Marxist interpretation of history but upon their own understanding and experience of colonial rule. They opposed, for example, the BEP Company because of its firm control of the forestry industry and hostility to unionised labour and not from an ideological conviction that a private enterprise economy dominated by foreign interests was basically inimical to the interest of the country. Such ideological considerations would have demanded an opposition also to the American concerns. The leaders certainly adopted a strong stand against the British but they were not unique by colonial standards.

The Campaign

The campaign confirmed that the PC was the product of a political ferment. The leaders employed almost every recognised technique of agitation: public meetings, demonstrations and deputations to Government House, petitions to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and to the United Nations, and press campaigns. The most frequently exploited were the public meetings at the 'Battlefield' which were held almost any time
of the day. To gain a ready-made audience in the first few weeks of the campaign the committee used the rostrum and other facilities of the Open Forum. The demonstrations did not always materialise, as official permission was at times withheld because of the increasing acts of intimidation and molestation of persons opposed to the movement. The leaders interpreted the refusal as an attempt to frustrate the committee's activities but they cannot escape a measure of responsibility for the irresponsible behaviour of their supporters. One midday demonstration in March, 1950, culminated in a disturbance, and if the leaders were not the instigators they certainly were not reluctant witnesses, despite their earlier warning to their supporters not to give a "pretext or shadow of a chance to make us appear to the democratic world as blood-thirsty, lawless, race-hating mobs."26

The PC was singularly fortunate in its press campaign. In finding a ready ally in the Belize Billboard, which was edited by Richardson and Goldson, the committee was spared the financial and organisational problem of establishing its own medium. The service it rendered the PC and subsequently the PUP until the split in 1956 was inestimable. It was in fact as much a party organ as a newspaper. The columns reported extensively the near seditious speeches of the politicians, and fanned the flames of discontent in its editorials to such an extent that the indictment of Goldson and Richardson on charges of seditious intention in September, 1950 and November, 1951,

could have been easily foreseen.

At the height of the campaign it was announced that Her Royal Highness, Princess Alice, who was to be installed as Chancellor of the University College of the West Indies in Jamaica, would be paying a visit to the country. The PC welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate its anti-British feelings. The more extreme element suggested the singing of 'God Bless America' instead of the national anthem but Smith led a moderate section which advocated strong agitation without insulting the visitor. Broaster, although not an admirer of America, also attempted to counsel moderation at one of his Open Forum meetings. But he only succeeded in incurring the displeasure of Price, and it was the timely intervention of the police that saved him from the wrath of the surging crowd. Broaster not only abandoned his rostrum but disappeared from the political scene for twelve years, returning in 1962 as chairman of the meetings of the National Independence Party. During the incident tear gas was used for the first time to quell a disturbance. This was not a propitious moment for the royal visit, which was therefore cancelled. The Governor further retaliated by banning public meetings and demonstrations.

If the incident indicated Price's growing popularity it also revealed a difference of opinion between himself and Smith over strategy and ominously a growing intolerance of the extreme element towards internal opposition. These differences were however pushed aside when another specific opportunity to demonstrate their anti-British feelings arose in September, 1950. This was the annual celebration of the
Battle of St. George's Cay which commemorated the victory against the Spanish invaders in 1798. It was jointly sponsored by the City Council and the Loyal and Patriotic Order of the Baymen, a Creole dominated organisation comprised mainly of ex-servicemen and pensioners who had an abiding faith in the country's British colonial connection. One of the traditional highlights of the celebration was the Presidential Address of Loyalty to the imperial sovereign which, far from criticising the colonial system, constituted a plea for development. The Governor would then reply in suitable terms with the expected promise of increased financial assistance from the British government. The new political leaders were too militant and popular not to claim that the traditional "plea for development struck the type of subservient note long abandoned by the people of British Honduras." To the city fathers the suggestion that the Address "be a clear, unmistakable, and honest declaration to the King of grievances of the people of British Honduras," was treasonable. They could find no justification in the prevailing economic difficulties for a departure from the conventional Address and proceeded to observe the celebration in the usual manner. To demonstrate their anti-British feeling and their dissatisfaction with the official celebration, the PC held its own celebration. The two celebrations have persisted with the one having its origin in the nationalist movement becoming the official one.


In fostering a nationalist sentiment, the PC did not rely solely on the denunciation of colonialism. It also took the positive step of introducing new symbols. At the suggestion of Richardson and Goldson the patriotic song 'Land of the Gods' written and composed by two British Hondurans, Samuel Haynes and Dr. Selwyn Young, now living in the United States, was given a pride of place as the committee's rallying song and has been adopted by the ruling PUP as the proposed national anthem. The adoption of a blue flag with a white centre containing the Coat of Arms of the country as the movement's flag has since been attributed to Price, who claims that it was the ancient flag of the settlement and also wishes it to be the national flag.

The present opposition party, the NIP, objects to a national adoption of the party's flag on several grounds. It views the adoption as an attempt to identify the nation with a single party. Perhaps more disturbing to the opposition is that it sees little that is distinctive and national in these colours which are also the national colours of Guatemala. On the contrary, the opposition party interprets Price's dedication to them as a manifestation of his wish for a Central American identity for the emerging nation. What is now a source of dispute was however a source of unity among the leadership in 1950. All of the leaders enthusiastically accepted the symbols in their attempt to destroy the psychologically crippling effects of the colonial system and to foster a national consciousness.
Opposition To The Committee

Opposition to the PC came from various quarters. The principal opponent was the colonial administration who, despite its limited interest in the colony, could not have been expected to countenance the new political spectacle in silence. But countering the campaign was not easy. In the first place, the unimpressive record of the colonial administration, and the lack of legislative support for the devaluation measure had placed Governor Garvey on the defensive. He made little attempt to disprove the leaders' charges of imperial neglect but implied in his conciliatory speeches and correspondence to the Colonial Office that the public outcry was justified. In a covering despatch to his draft Development Plan the Governor stated, "I have said in the Preface of the plan that it is a prime duty to the people of British Honduras to ask for more money. There are other considerations which should be taken into account, not the least of which is the unique position of the colony in relation to the Central American Republics. British Honduras is the shop window into which they gaze to see the product of British 'colonialism'. What they see there should do Great Britain credit; what they find there should answer Guatemala's constant claim that the country in her hands she could do better, and what they assimilate there should be

the knowledge that our achievements are as high as our intentions.**

The Colonial Office seemed, however, to have been unimpressed with this plea. Apart from the price subsidy to essential foodstuffs very little was actually done to alleviate the economic depression. The CDC programme on which official hopes were pinned was destined to be a failure; its only accomplishment being the erection of the Fort George hotel. So long as the economic depression persisted the PC leaders had little difficulty in embarrassing the government.

The stress and strain within the society was probably revealed more by the criticisms of various sections of the local population than by the administration's reaction to the movement. Because of their anti-British attitude the nationalist leaders received little support among those inhabitants of United Kingdom origin and the local whites. The most vocal opposition to the growing anti-British sentiments came, however, from the better-off Creoles who felt a kindred spirit with the British. Many could have recalled with pride their Scottish or English (and West Indian) ancestry, and would have challenged Governor Burns's claim that 'the people as a whole are more American than British in their outlook'. It was their British outlook that lent them distinction and tradition in a country with a sizeable Latin population and hemmed in by Latin American republics. It was not

30. B.H. Government, Governor to Secretary of State, No. 43 53/50, April 17, 1950.

surprising therefore that they resented the committee's "attempt to
discredit British prestige and to alienate the affections of the people
from the British way of life."32

That the attempt was being made by a Catholic dominated organis¬
tion added to their apprehension. They "noticed the decided one-
sidedness of the membership of the People's Committee,"33 and believed
the committee's real motive to be the promotion of Catholic and Latin
interests. They contended for example, that the committee's opposition
to Federation was motivated by a "genuine fear that the predominance of
the Catholics and the growing spectre of Latin influence will be
threatened by the Protestant and non-Latin British West Indies."34
This was at least one conclusion that they drew from Price's persistent
claim that 'the country's way of life was interdependent with Central
America'.

The opposition did not hesitate to charge the American Jesuits of
complicity. It not only accused the committee leaders of being "the
tools of a sinister organisation in our midst which is exerting every
effort to create anti-British sentiments in the colony" but in a more
pointed reference to the Catholic Church stated that "The cry of
Communism is raised time and again but the other totalitarianism is the
greater of the two evils."35 Price's immediate refutation of the

33. Ibid. p.4.
34. Ibid. p.3-4.
charges against the church had the effect of confirming the belief. His "anxiety to answer" was interpreted as "a betrayal of his stricken conscience."  

While the Catholic Church did not openly identify itself with the PC, its racial composition and the activities of some of its organisations, particularly the Christian Social Action and the St. John's Alumni Association, encouraged the belief that if the Jesuits did not foster the committee's anti-British campaign and Price's Latin aspirations they at least welcomed them. In the first place the Church's pastoral activities were mainly among the Mestizos who lacked the cultural characteristics valued in the colonial society. Through its identity with the Mestizos the prestige of the Roman Catholic Church suffered. When the entrenched position of Roman Catholicism in the neighbouring republics was added to these considerations of prestige and cultural composition, it was not unnatural for the Jesuits to believe that the future of their denomination would be more assured in a Central American than in a West Indian environment. Their secondary boys' school, St. John's College, which was partially residential, had attracted students from Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Merida in Mexico, and it is probably not without political significance that in 1952 the present campus was named after a Guatemalan poet, Rafael Landivar S.J. The Jesuits did not welcome the establishment of

the University College of the West Indies in 1948, and when in the following year a visiting lecturer to the University, Professor Robert Peers of Nottingham University, advocated birth control as a solution to the population problem in the Caribbean the University fell into complete disfavour. The Superior of the Jesuit Mission, Fr. John Knopp, in an advertised sermon, accused the University of introducing a "new order". Observing that "secularism has set foot on the shores of the colony" he stated that "the years will prove whether we are equal to the task of maintaining the pattern of life which has hitherto been our pride, our privilege and our saving grace." 38

The similarity of views between the Jesuits and the PC leaders on the country's attitudes to Central America and the West Indies was no coincidence so far as the opposition was concerned. In support of its contention that the Jesuits had been promulgating these ideas "before devaluation," 39 the opposition recalled the activities of the Christian Social Action and the St. John's Alumni Association in the 1940s. 40 The Alumni Association consciously advocated a concerted Catholic action in politics and took steps in this direction in 1942 when it sponsored candidates for the Belize Town Board election. In 1947, its President, Edward Gegg, a convert and businessman who was a nominated member of the Legislative Council (1947 - 1954), and is a member of the Public Service

Commission urged Catholics to assume the political leadership of the country. His views were so representative of the Association's thinking that they should be quoted at length. Before noting with approval the leading role of alumni in commerce and that a "leading newspaper (the Belize Billboard) is owned by an Alumnus," he asked:

"Who are leaders? Or rather, who should be our leaders? Obviously, the ones best suited to lead, the educated class; men who in their youth received a complete and harmonious training of their every faculty; those who in their boyhood days were instilled with the right principles as regards their duty to their fellowmen, to their country, and to their God. In a word, the Alumni of St. John's College.

But do we take the lead in the affairs of our country, the lead that we should take? Is our leadership as outstanding, as pervading as it could be? Embarrassing questions these. It is true that we do really lead to some extent but ours is a timid, half interested, divided leadership, lacking in concerted and determined action toward a definite objective. A gross exaggeration, some will say. Yet the Alumni as a body think so little of the association that in the past it has been impossible to get more than a mere handful to attend meetings at which matters of importance not only to the association but to the state could be discussed, definite policies adopted and plans formulated to carry them out. In brief, how can we ever expect to work hand in hand toward a common goal with fervour and determination peculiar to that terrible Austrian referred to above (Hitler) unless we come together in full numerical strength at fixed intervals to decide what our plans of action are to be?

...... what part do the Alumni play in the politics of British Honduras? The truth hurts terribly, since we have but one Alumnus on a legislature consisting of 7 elected and appointed members, and a single representative on our Town Board. It is obvious from this that we do not exercise the influence in the
government of our country and in formulating public opinion that we should, and that as a body have seldom if ever had the temerity to raise our voices above a faint and ineffectual bleating against any measures which the government has decided upon. The result of this is that in the past, some laws have been enacted that have not evidenced that consideration for the common good which more Alumni surely would have brought to the consideration of our law makers. A glaring example of inconsideration for the best interest of natives, Alumni and otherwise, has been the laxity of our immigration laws." 41

The critics of the committee, recognising the close relationship between Federation and immigration, were not slow in interpreting such references to the immigration laws in racial as well as cultural and religious terms. In an exchange of press correspondence a 'Creole' reprimanded the 'Loyalists' for saying that "Mr. Price and the People's Committee aim at self-government. Has he not heard them say that we are not West Indians but Central Americans? ....... Keeping this statement in mind we understand their opposition to Federation. ......... In short, they do not want in the colony any more 'Creoles' (meaning black and coloured British subjects) who it seems in their opinion are interlopers ......." In an obvious reference to the Creole members of the committee he ended his letter, "It is a pity that so many Creoles (including the Editor of the Belize Billboard) are so myopic as not to see what is staring us in the face." 42

While the claim that the Jesuits were the political leaders'


mentors should not be discounted, it does not adequately explain the growing prominence of Catholics in the country's political life. This was also the consequence of the church's increasing numerical strength and the educational opportunities which St. John's College offered. In 1946, 59.5 per cent of the population were Catholics, 21.0 per cent Anglicans and 14.3 per cent Methodists, and of the five secondary schools (all denominational) two were Catholic. Of the 273 secondary school boys in 1946, 149 or 54.5 per cent were attending St. John's College. This high proportion of Catholic students was bound to be reflected sooner or later in the political field. With the exception of Courtenay who was the leader of the National Party from 1951 to 1953, the leaders of the five political parties formed since 1950 are Catholics and three of them, Price, Pollard and Herbert Fuller, alumni of St. John's College.

In so far as religion was a factor in the political process there was greater group solidarity among the Catholics than the Protestants. The opposition was in fact not organised; its criticisms being largely the result of individual personal efforts. The slowness of the critics to appreciate the value of concerted action was however more instructive of their social experience than their religious beliefs. Not only were they predominantly Creole and Protestant, but for the most part lawyers,

44. Ibid. Table 37, p.24.
retired civil servants and teachers oriented towards personal achievements. The political system also encouraged this orientation. Although the electoral candidate may have been sponsored by a political group in the 1930s and 1940s he was, like colonial politicians elsewhere, judged by his personal influence and debating skill rather than by his policy.

This lack of collective action reduced the impact of the opposition. Nor was its only medium, the *Daily Clarion*, an asset. The paper’s political stand was at best ambivalent as it strove to be neutral while obviously sympathetic to the opposition. Above all, the opposition was unable to attract working class support because it did not identify itself with the social and economic problems of this group. These disabilities were too pressing not to transcend racial, religious and cultural considerations and it is therefore not surprising that the working class tended to support the nationalist movement.

The Dissolution Of The People’s Committee

Formed in response to a specific event the PC was organisationally ill-equipped to consolidate its gains. It was in fact openly reproached of being undemocratically constituted. "What had appeared as a hasty combination to arrange for protest meetings and demonstrations of protest against devaluation," wrote Kemp, "is now used as a medium to foist a perpetual standing People’s Committee on the people of the Colony ..." "It is time," he continued, "for the People’s
Committee to cease foisting itself as a Committee of the people, if the leaders are not prepared to let the people select a People's Committee when one is needed."

The formation of a political party seemed to be the most effective answer to the criticism. A party was also necessary to exploit any real opportunities of political power which the 1948 constitutional commission might offer. If these did not fulfil the PC's expectation then the party would be more justified. As the Belize Billboard pointed out, the agitation for further constitutional advance would then be intensified and this "demands a united national front, a national party supported in ideology and with finance by the citizens of the country." The imminent Belize Town Board election in November 1950, also had a precipitating influence on the formation of the PUP as "control of municipal affairs" was considered necessary.

On the 29th September, 1950 the PUP replaced the PC. Smith was elected Leader, Richardson who had recently returned from a British government sponsored course in journalism in Britain became the Chairman, Price was the Secretary and Goldson was the Assistant Secretary. Although the PC had enjoyed a brief existence it had dramatically brought to thousands a new awareness of their political environment. No longer could it be claimed that "Politics was still the

48. Ibid.
business of the few."

The normal process of the nationalist movement was however not free of complications. It had accentuated the problem of the country's future external orientation. The differing pulls of possible Latin American association and union with the West Indies and the British Commonwealth were symptomatic of the racial, cultural and religious cleavages within the society. Significantly, the differing orientations did not only exist between the FC and its opponents. It also existed within the leadership of the committee, but was either unrecognised or unacknowledged. With the possible exception of Price, none of the FC leaders seemed to have entered politics with a clear and precise conception of the country's future relationship with the Central American republics. Nor was this conception necessary once the leaders were pre-occupied with attacking the colonial system and gaining political power. How different and divisive were their views became evident when their eventual accommodation in the colonial political system forced them to rely upon their own internal resources for unity and in consequence to define more precisely their personal attitudes towards Britain, the West Indies and Central America.

Political Parties

The relationship between the PUP and the parties opposed to it was prejudiced even before the latter emerged. Little mutual tolerance was possible once the devaluation crisis had been transformed into a conflict over the nature of the society and its future regional orientation. Moreover, like the PUP the opposition parties were the outcome of crises that were associated in one way or another with the basic conflict. Neither they nor the PUP showed any desire to overcome the circumstances of their origin until the colonial government brought the conflict to a head by dismissing the PUP leader, Price, from the Executive Council in 1957 for consorting with a Guatemalan Minister during an official visit to London.

An agreement on political goals was in the interest of the political parties and the colonial administration. None of them could 'go it alone'. The PUP was too popular for its leader to be indefinitely excluded from the government. At the same time the party had been rudely awakened to the fact that popularity by itself did not confer legitimacy in a colonial society. To achieve effective power it also had to abide by the British government's policy of self-government within the Commonwealth. This involved recognising at least the main opposition party, the NIP, irrespective of its parliamentary strength and structural viability.
Ironically, the united front which these two parties eventually presented was in response to the unpopular recommendations of separate British constitutional and economic advisers in 1959. Much more than mutual party tolerance was achieved at the ensuing constitutional conference in London in February, 1960. The basis for a British Honduran viewpoint was also established when the PUP and the NIP joined with the minor opposition party, the Christian Democratic Party, in pledging in the preamble of the Constitution, the independence of British Honduras within the Commonwealth. A PUP - NIP statement repudiating the Guatemalan claim completed the broad agreement on the future status of the country.

Naturally, this cordiality between the two parties was not maintained after the constitutional conference. Nor has the country's regional orientation ceased to be a party political issue. At the same time, however, the relationship has seldom undergone the same degree of strain as in the years before the united front. Since this event marks the turning point in the relationship of the two parties our discussion may be divided into two periods: the period before the united front and the period after it.

THE PRE-UNITED FRONT PERIOD

The Early Party Process

Whether they believed the PUP would be ephemeral or felt secured

in their close relationship with the colonial administration the anti-PUP elements did not respond immediately either to the formation of the party or to its municipal victory in November 1950. It was not until the PUP precipitated a crisis in refusing to hang the King's portrait in the City Hall in August 1951 that its opponents coalesced into the National Party (NP). Except for its urban orientation and Creole leadership the NP had little in common with the PUP. Its social composition, organisational structure, and relationship with its followers were different. The leadership was solidly middle-class. Courtenay, O.B.E., who held several government offices was the leader. In addition to being a Legislative and Executive Councillor he was also the country's representative to the Council of the University College of the West Indies and the Federation conferences and also Chairman of the constitutional commission which reported in April 1951. One of the Vice Presidents was Herbert Fuller, who came from a business family with strong British connexions, was educated in England from 1930 to 1935, and received the O.B.E. in 1952. He was also an auctioneer, a Legislative and Municipal Councillor and a member of the Courtenay Commission. W. H. Beaumont, a retired Colonial Postmaster, and Mrs. V. Seay, M.B.E., a matron and leader of the Black Cross, were the other Vice Presidents. L. A. Francis, a Howard University graduate, a representative of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and a former City Councillor was the Chairman; E. O. B. Barrow, a retired

District Commissioner, was the Secretary; and Volunteer Force Captain M. Metzgen, O.B.E., a retired Registrar General and President of the Loyal Patriotic Order of the Baymen, was the Treasurer.

Perhaps these Creole leaders were tardy in forming a political party because the Courtenay Constitution had already safeguarded the old structure of political influence. Four of the fifteen unofficial members of the Legislative Assembly were to be nominated. The differing manner in which the Creole electorate in the Belize District and the predominantly Mestizo electorate in the outdistricts was to elect their representatives also perpetuated this influence. Although adult suffrage was to be applied to the whole country, only the three constituencies - two urban and one rural - in the Belize District were to exercise the direct franchise. Each of the five district representatives was to be elected by an Electoral College comprised of the members of the District Town Board and the village councils. The members of these local authorities were however to be elected by direct vote.

This two-stage process of district representation was a clear attempt to minimise the impact of the PUP leaders on the rural population. Moreover, in so far as it encouraged parochialism the indirect franchise was likely to produce diffident representatives who would be prepared to rely, as the Commission put it, "on the general good sense of those who are in advance of the majority in their political
A more ingenious proposal was the formation of the outdistrict electorate into one constituency to elect by direct vote three additional members for the colony as a whole. This favoured the politicians who were national figures, and therefore the urban based Creoles, since none of the outdistricts had produced such leaders. The 1947 parliamentary delegation to the Colonial Office which included Courtenay had proposed the abolition of the literacy qualification. The Commission not only reversed this proposal but transformed the qualification into a test. The voter was required not only to sign but to fill the registration form in the presence of the registration officer or the Justice of the Peace. Still fearing that the unlettered rural communities would be suborned by the nationalist politicians the Commission safeguarded the influence of the Creole elite by reconstituting the Executive Council. Its composition placed the four ex-officio members and the two nominated unofficial members from the Legislative Council in the majority. Moreover, the Commission, whose Chairman was noted in the 1940s for his criticisms of the Governor’s reserve power, virtually left this power intact. Altogether, the constitutional provisions constituted a stand-still policy which imputed a second class status to the rural districts and the unlettered population.

One begins to understand why the NP machine was ill-designed to close the gap between its leaders and the ordinary people and between

3. Ibid. p. 20.
the urban and the outdistrict communities. The party made little pretence to effective organisation even in Belize City. The enlisting of members was usually associated with a political crisis or an election, national and municipal, after which the party machine reverted to relative inactivity. This fitful method of recruitment produced a rather uninspired kind of participation in party activities which was in marked contrast with the PUP.

In the outdistricts where the party machine was virtually non-existent the NP leaders relied mainly upon infrequent coverage by the Daily Clarion and The Belize Independent for its communication with the rural population. Apart from the inability of the vast majority of the Latin peasantry to buy or read the newspapers, this method of communication was less effective than the face to face campaign which the GWU district organisers carried out on behalf of the PUP. The phenomenal growth in union membership in the early years of nationalist activities was more political than industrial in character. For since the Union and the PUP had the same leadership, workers were expected to reward the union for bargaining on their behalf more by their political support than the paying of dues. This understanding was formalised when the GWU established a fund to promote its political objectives, gained representation on the PUP executive, and finally contested the 1954 election in association with the party.

It is hardly likely that the British government would have left the constitutional reform in local hands had it foreseen the political ferment. Although there was precedent in other colonies for a mixed voting system, the British government was generally unmindful of an undifferentiated electorate so long as there were no traditional institutions, such as chieftancy, and British settler interests to protect. Thus it compromised in favour of the PUP despite the support of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council for the literacy test. The direct franchise was applied and the literacy qualification confined to the voter’s ability to sign his name. These changes, announced in April 1953, were to be implemented in early 1954.

This concession should not be mistaken as a gift from the British government. In the first place it was largely the product of sustained PUP pressure. The then PUP leader, John Smith, had taken opportunity of his visit to the Festival of Britain in July 1951, as one of the Legislative Council representatives to present a petition for a more 'democratic constitution' to the Colonial Office. A nation-wide strike in 1952 in which the manual government employees participated was the

5. The 1951 Sierra Leone constitution for example provided for a mixed franchise.


7. GB. Colonial Office, Constitutional Reform in British Honduras, January 17, 1953. Secretary of State Despatch to the Governor of B.H.

8. Memorial for a Democratic Constitution for British Honduras, July 1951. Central office of the PUP.
high point of the protest. Indeed it demonstrated that the attempt to thwart the nationalist movement required much more than the establishment of a buffer electoral institution.

Secondly, the constitutional modification could not have been a gift, as the NP's negligible influence had thrown the burden of opposing the PUP upon the colonial administration. The latter's tendency to 'give and take' of which the Governor's settlement of a sedition charge against Richardson and Goldson in November 1950, was an example,9 gave way to a more belligerent approach. This was clear in the appointment of a Public Relations Officer, Commander John Proud, in 1951 and the launching of a monthly official newspaper 'The British Honduran'. The Public Relations Officer's (later Chief Information Officer) deep involvement in the political process became known during the Sharpe Commission, which investigated the official allegations that the PUP leaders were in contact with the Guatemala government.10 Although the inquiry was held in March 1954, one month before the general election, it was not simply a desperate attempt to undermine the PUP's electoral prospects. It was rather inspired by concern for the country's future orientation precisely because the PUP's victory was certain. Moreover, this basic problem had already led to the resignation of the party leader, Smith, in November 1951. Its exploitation therefore offered the

colonial administration its only real hope of further dividing the PUP leaders.

Almost every action of the colonial administration pointed to its dislike for the PUP. Not only did it take two years to modify the constitution but it denied the party an electoral opportunity in 1951 by annually extending the life of the 1948 Legislative Council for a total of three years. Unwittingly, however, this procrastination proved to be more of a disservice to the NP leaders than to the PUP. It encouraged them to cling to their view that the country's political life could stand still indefinitely. Worse, they spent these three years buttressing their declining influence rather than facing the new realities. Accordingly, they sought to deny their defeat in municipal politics by a Legislative Council resolution in 1951 which successfully urged the Governor to dissolve the City Council in retaliation for the PUP's insult to the King. The appointment of an interim council of the old City Fathers under the Presidency of (later Sir) Arthur Wolffsohn, a retired Colonial Secretary, also distorted or refracted the middle class Creoles' perception of the general conflict situation. The party's control, with the support of two independent members, of the newly elected City Council in 1952 further postponed its acceptance of the harsh political realities. Thus its leaders conveniently overlooked the fact that the returning officer, W. H. Beaumont, who organised the petition to dissolve the PUP City Council, had rejected the nomination

of Richardson and Goldson (who were political prisoners), and that the third PUP leader, Price, topped the polls.

The NP gains, therefore, really represented the last struggle of the old middle class Creoles. In fact, the Legislative Council's postponement in 1952 of a decision on British Honduras joining the West Indies Federation had marked the beginning of the end of their long standing hegemony. Their ultimate test as a political force came in the 1954 general election.

It would be superfluous to discuss the main election issue, that of the country's relationship with Britain and its future regional affiliations, as these have been analysed in the previous chapter. Instead, the remainder of this section will be concerned with three aspects of the election: the electorate, the candidates and the results.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the electorate was the correction of the imbalance in its geographical and cultural distribution. Under the old franchise Belize District provided 70 per cent of the 1,772 electors in the 1948 election. Of the 21,000 voters in 1954 only 53.4 per cent was registered in the four Belize District constituencies. Belize City's share of the electorate was actually 43.3 per cent since its rural environ was given separate representation.

Considering the literacy qualification and the low political consciousness of the outdistrict population the introduction of adult

13. See Chapter 2, Table 8, p.84.
suffrage does not adequately explain the phenomenal increase of the non-urban electorate. As the negligible number of spoilt votes indicates, the PUP's efforts to teach the illiterate to write his name and to acquaint him with the voting procedure should also be taken into account. In this connection the arrangement whereby the GWU was responsible for the outdistrict organisation enabled the urban-based PUP leaders to overcome the difficulties of the 'grass root' campaign. In any case if the registration problem had forced these leaders to concentrate their campaign in either Belize City or the outdistricts the latter was a better choice: after all these, together with the Belize rural constituency, were returning six of the nine elected members to the Assembly. Moreover, the opposition in these areas was less formidable than in Belize City, as the NP contested only four of the six non-urban constituencies.

Altogether the NP contested six of the nine constituencies; the other two being Belize South and Belize West. Its main reason for not contesting Belize North was obvious: it did not wish to prejudice the chances of the defected PUP leader, Smith, an independent candidate against the PUP candidate, Price. Being more confident, the PUP - GWU contested all nine seats. The party selected its leaders, Price, Richardson, Goldson, and Herman Jex, the GWU President, for the four Belize District constituencies while the Union selected the candidates for the five outdistrict constituencies.

Like the three PUP leaders, four of the GWU candidates and its President were in their twenties or early thirties, but their
educational and occupational attainments were not as high. All of them had risen from the rank of junior employees either of a timber merchant or of the Sharp Citrus Company or of the BEP Company. These differences between the PUP leaders and the GWU candidates were, however, overshadowed by the disparity between themselves and the NP candidates. The difference was not only social and occupational but also in terms of generation and to some extent country of origin. Fuller, who had succeeded Courtenay as the NP leader in September 1953, and was the youngest of his group, was forty-two years old. C. J. Benguche, the only other British Honduran and a Carib, was a retired civil servant and a planter who like Fuller was an outgoing Legislative Councillor for his home-town, Stann Creek. William George, an expatriate Eurasian, was a retired medical doctor, and a landowner who was likewise seeking re-election in the district, Orange Walk, in which he worked. Lionel Francis who lived in the U.S.A and Britain was a Trinidadian and managed a foreign-owned plantation. Stanley McKinstry, a white West Indian, was a retired Attorney General, and Manfred Wilson, a Guyanese primary school teacher and sanitary inspector, was a merchant and a commission agent.

Although the majority of these candidates were businessmen they were primarily representatives of the educated elite rather than the old ruling commercial and landowning group. But if the NP candidates could claim to be better qualified to undertake the proposed quasi-ministerial responsibilities the alien origin of the four candidates
was, within a nationalist context, a political liability. Moreover, in view of the unpopularity of Federation, the West Indian origin of three of them further reduced the party's chances of victory. It stood out against the fact that at least McKinstry and Dr. George were long standing residents in retirement who could therefore claim the country by adoption.

The recruitment of the NP candidates who belonged to the constituency or had a long association with it was one of the few characteristics which they tended to share with the PUP - GWU candidates. Their common cultural origin was another, as only Enrique Depaz was a Mestizo. Thus, the election could and did significantly change the social but not the cultural composition of the Legislative Assembly.

On 28th April, 1954, 70 per cent of the registered electorate voted in the country's first national election by adult suffrage. In winning eight of the nine seats the PUP received 65 per cent of the total votes, almost twice the combined total of its opponents (which included five Independents), and more than twice the amount obtained by the NP in the six constituencies it contested. In fact apart from the leader, Fuller, who was narrowly defeated by Goldson, none of the NP candidates proved a formidable opponent. As was to be expected, the four successful GWU candidates in the outdistricts won by larger margins than their PUP colleagues in Belize City. The constituency lost by the PUP was the Toledo District where the subsistence economy and the difficulties of communication did not facilitate trade unionism. The successful candidate, C. E. Westby, was a resident farmer
and an independent candidate who had represented the constituency since 1948. No less than the victories in the other constituencies, the PUP – GWU defeat in Toledo underwrote the importance of party organisation in this new era of popular politics.

The PUP Leadership Struggle

With its defeat the NP became inactive and did not stir until the next election in March 1957. There was therefore little interparty politics between the two elections. Instead the period was dominated by factionalism within the PUP. This culminated in the breaking away of the Richardson – Goldson faction in September 1956 to form the Honduran Independence Party. As the portent of the party split could have been observed in the defection of Smith in 1951 it is useful to examine the distribution of power and influence among the leaders and the nature of their differences from that time onwards. To begin, the three elements within the party that were crucial to the resolution of leadership differences should be identified. The first element was the party rank-and-file in Belize City where the party machine operated almost exclusively until 1956. The second was the Central Party Council which determined party policy and consisted of about eighteen of the ranking party officials. The third, and the most recent, element was the parliamentary group whose membership overlapped with that of the party executive.

As we observed in the previous chapter the leadership struggle
between Price and Smith centred on the strategy to be adopted towards the British. Smith’s election as leader of the PUP did not resolve the conflict. Instead the struggle all but reached its climax when Richardson and Goldson as editors of The Belize Billboard were charged for sedition against the Governor in November 1950. Using his influence as a Legislative Councillor and party leader Smith initiated the settlement between the Governor and the two editors. This involved a written retraction of the accusation in return for which the Governor offered to end the government’s advertising boycott of The Belize Billboard. Price deemed the settlement "dishonourable", more so as the editors accepted the Governor’s amendments which rendered the letter more apologetic than explanatory. In their attempt to resolve their differences Smith and Price may well have ignored the Central Party Council (then the Steering Committee). It took the view that the negotiation was more a personal than a party matter and should therefore be left to the editors. Largely because of the Committee’s attitude and also because the party was essentially a popular front the leaders referred their dispute to a general meeting which was also too divided to conclusively uphold or condemn the settlement.

This account of the settlement suggests several important conclusions about the source of party power and its distribution among the leaders. First, it showed the timidity of the Central Council about exerting a positive influence upon the leaders. This fear stemmed from

the insignificant stature of the individual member and his uncertainty of the outcome of the leadership struggle. Second, and as a result of the first, the strength of the rival leaders depended more upon mass support than their colleagues'. Considering that Price's view was in the minority among his colleagues the inconclusive meeting was a personal triumph. As a corollary it indicated that Smith's control of the party was weak.

Recognising the importance of popular opinion Richardson and Goldson set out to disprove Price's suggestion that they were moderates. Thus they exercised little restraint in their newspaper or speeches. Soon they were again in conflict with the law for Goldson's famous article 'Seven days of Freedom' which was a report on his visit to Guatemala in September 1951 as guest of the Newspaper Association. The article was deemed seditious and on this occasion neither he nor his editorial colleague sought to circumvent the course of justice. Both were sentenced to one year's imprisonment in November 1951.

There is little doubt that underlying Goldson's glowing account of life in Guatemala and the accompanying denunciation of conditions in British Honduras was an attempt to retrieve his anti-colonialist image rather than to commit the country to the Central American political orbit. But Smith was as much disappointed in his colleagues' new theme as in their loss to the moderate element. In his view they were encouraging Guatemala's territorial ambitions and therefore undermining

the dominant Creole culture. As a Creole this was more unacceptable to him than the evils of British colonial policy, and so it ought to be to Richardson and Goldson who were also explicitly Creole in culture and orientation. In other words he was their 'natural' ally; not Price who was a Creole on his paternal side and of a Mayan mother and whose Latin sentiments were probably reinforced by his years in a Guatemalan seminary.

The basic issue which polarised Smith and Price then was their different conception of the future British Honduras. One conceived of social and political changes in a British framework; the other within the Latin. The nature of this difference should be emphasised if only to guard against the conclusion that Smith's outlook was in all respects similar to that of the NP leaders. The opposition was not only against a change in the country's British orientation but wary of a too rapid social and political change. While Smith's difference with the NP leaders was not fundamental, it was nevertheless significant. Thus when he resigned in September 1951 from the PUP he did not join the NP.

Smith's resignation again demonstrated the importance of the masses in the leadership struggle. Once more the Central Party Council recoiled from taking a decision. The Council referred Smith's resolution recommitting the party to self-government within the Commonwealth to a general party meeting which rejected it. His success at the municipal election in 1952 as an independent candidate suggested that he still retained a measure of support. But the era of popular politics which he had partly inaugurated offered no permanent accommoda-
tion to the non-party politician. As we indicated, he lost as an independent candidate to Price at the 1954 election. Smith faded from the political scene and finally left the country for the United States in 1955 after giving evidence to the Sharpe Commission in 1954.

Since the party machinery had assigned to the urban rank-and-file an important role in the leadership struggle it becomes necessary to explain their support for Price’s Central American sentiments and his efforts to regenerate the Mayan cultural heritage. After all, as Creoles the rank-and-file were likely to be worse off socially in the event of closer association with Guatemala. For this reason alone their support for Price could not be automatic.

The answer lies in Price’s charismatic appeal and ability to represent his Latin sentiments in a nationalist context. The dispute over the origin of the proposed name of the emerging nation, Belize, illustrates the latter point. Citing Garcia Bauer, Price claims that it originates from the Mayan word, Belikin.16 In contradicting the time honoured view that this name is a corruption of the surname of a British buccaneer, Wallace,17 Price’s aim is not only to obliterate the

16. Bauer in his book ‘La Controversia Sobre El Territorio de Belice’ states that Gabriel Angel Castaneda shows that the word ’Belizá’ is derived from the Maya language and is made up of the words BE (a proposition which means ‘towards’) and LIEIN (which means ‘east’). Together ’Belikin’ means ‘towards the east’. Belize Times, November 4, 1958. p.2.

17. Wallace traded in logwood, and had as his source of supply the area around the 'Old River' or the Belize River. The Spaniards, whose ships and settlements the English buccaneers raided from time to time could not pronounce the letter ‘a’. For them it represented the sound of ‘B’. Hence Bailee and later on Belize. Spanish historians give another version by claiming that Belize comes from the word ‘Beliza’ which means a buoy. There is a fourth but less endearing version by J. C. S. Thompson, the renowned Mayan archaeologist, who claims that the word is indigenous but simply means ‘muddy’!
colonial past. The new interpretation also signifies his belief that the identity of the country is rooted in the ancestry of the indigenous Mayas. This belief can be made to also appeal to the nationalist minded within the Creole complex as to Mestizo element. For if it reminds the latter of its cultural affinity with the other Central American countries it also gives British Honduras autochthonous claim to power.

Despite Smith's resignation the distribution of popular influence within the party hierarchy remained distorted as Richardson became the leader. The distortion was further compounded by the emergence of the parliamentary group and the distribution of the quasi-ministerial portfolios in January, 1955. Richardson was appointed Member for Natural Resources, Goldson became the Member for Social Services, Jex, the G&U President, undertook the Membership of Public Utilities, while Price elected the part-time junior post of Associate Member for Natural Resources.

Price's employment as Turton's secretary partly explains his disinterestedness in a more senior post in the government if not the party. The over-riding reason, however, was his unwillingness to participate in the working of the colonial system. By speaking only twice, but not in a regular debate, at the nine meetings of the

18. His maiden speech denouncing Communism was on the Motion of Adjournment of the 6th Meeting on 3rd December, 1954. The other occasion was at the last meeting of the session when he moved the withdrawal of a Private Bill to extend the time for payment of the 3rd year fee in respect of Letters patent granted to an American company.
Assembly's first session (June 1954 to April 1955), Price indicated his disagreement with his colleagues' policy of co-operation. Furthermore, he declined membership of the Executive Council delegation to London in 1954 on the grounds that one of the three leaders should remain in British Honduras. But no sooner had the delegation left for London than he accompanied Turton to the U.S.A only to return two weeks after the delegation. Drawing their strength from their new role and relationship with their other parliamentary colleagues Richardson and Goldson became more alienated from Price. Moreover, they acquired a new perspective of the country's problems from participating in the West Indian conferences with the result that they not only upheld the economic ties but seemed predisposed to British Honduras joining an independent Federation.

This reversal of the party's policy on the West Indies Federation could only have prevailed if the issue was debated either by the parliamentary party or the Central Party Council. For, as subsequent events proved, Richardson and Goldson controlled the votes of these two groups. Several considerations, however, favoured a public debate. First, it was by now the established practice to submit party differences to a general party meeting. Second, because of its composition the parliamentary group was not a bona fide branch of the party. The majority of its members had been elected as trade unionists, were rural based and, because the PUP was still predominantly an urban affair, were considered outsiders.

The general meeting which reviewed the party's Federation policy
in March 1956 was significant for Richardson's emphasis on the
cultural factor in British Honduras politics. On the alternative
idea of political association with Central America he commented:

"First of all, the Central Americans themselves had a
loose kind of federation and dissolved it when they
found that for some reason or another, though they spoke
the same language and were the same people with similar
background and economic and social circumstances and were
inhabitants of the same land mass, they could not get on
together. They have so far taken no practical step in that
direction again." 19

The inference was clear. If a fairly homogeneous community of
peoples could not remain united, then it was difficult to conceive of
British Honduras with its different political tradition and a deviant
but sizeable group, the Creole, faring well among them. In tempering
Price's optimism about a Central American destiny Richardson, however,
was not advancing his own case for federation with the West Indies,
precisely because the latter territories were in the same position as
the Central American states. Moreover, membership of the West Indies
Federation would not have solved the country's cultural problem. The
only effect would have been the retention of its Mestizo population as
the deviant cultural group.

This difference over regional orientation could no more be
resolved between Richardson and Price than between the latter and Smith,
once the protagonists viewed it through differing cultural spectacles.
Political leaders in British Honduras did not appreciate the fact that
their country straddles the boundaries of two different cultural milieu

and because of its own cultural heterogeneity cannot move completely into either without sustaining a rupture. Indeed, as the split became imminent Richardson and Goldson acknowledged the divisiveness of race and culture within the party leadership in a more pointed manner.

"We are now dancing a political samba [sic] it seems. When six years ago the people rose up against colonialism there were certain persons who felt that the logical leaders ought to be the Latins among us and so they led until one thing or another swept Creole leaders into the forefront. Certain Latins have never forgotten that and have been scheming since to uproot the Creole leaders. This newspaper [The Belize Billboard] will always oppose any body who thinks with his skin. To us creed, race or colour means nothing in politics, and any attempt to create a particular pigment for instance is abominable. Attempts may yet be made to re-establish the Alumni Party, the political party formed some years ago among fellows of a certain complexion from a certain secondary school. This we regard as an insult to the intelligence of the electorate."20

The immediate occasion for the split was Pollard's expulsion from the Secretaryship of the G&U in July 1956, for alleged peculation. A discussion of the union split belongs to the next chapter. Here it should be observed that because of the close relationship between the party and the union a dissension in one was bound to have a similar effect in the other. Goldson and Richardson immediately supported the expulsion of Pollard. Their feud with Price, however, denied them his support. Moreover, in condoning Pollard's action Price was not only reciprocating his colleague's support on the Federation issue but was looking ahead to the general election in early 1957. Pollard's dynamism and rhetoric was an electoral asset and he had also retained

the support of the workers in Belize City and Stann Creek who were the nucleus of his newly formed Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Since the leadership crisis had developed on the eve of the party's annual conference it was simply a matter of time before Price emerged the victor. The unpopularity of federation was not the only factor on which this prediction could have been based. The party rank-and-file had also petitioned the removal of Richardson and Goldson from office. This reckoning of political influence in terms of active mass support was the underlying cause of Price's success. To have reckoned it in terms of the party organs was illusory because of their minimal role in the leadership struggle in the past. Thus it was of no avail to Richardson and Goldson that, together with the ten officials who supported them, they constituted the majority of both the Legislative and the Municipal groups as well as the party Central Council. The twelve leaders therefore acknowledged the odds against them by jointly submitting their resignation at the opening session of the conference on 27th September, 1956. Perhaps the only significance of this alignment was the expression of racial and cultural solidarity of the group. Of the five trade unionists in the Assembly, the four Creoles supported Richardson and Goldson.

In reckoning their political influence Richardson and Goldson also miscalculated by placing a high value on their office in the government. They claimed that "it was not [their] wish to be diverted" from fulfilling their government responsibility to conduct "a mere struggle with
Price for the personal control of the PUP." This was not only illusory but short-sighted in view of the general election which was to be held before April 1957. In this brief period of six months no newly formed party, as they were to discover as leaders of the Honduran Independence Party, could have appealed to the electorate. Like the NP leaders these two leaders had to recognise that the maintenance, still more the expansion, of the elite's political influence had become increasingly dependent not upon the ability to work the government institutions but upon mass support.

The Party Process in the late 1950s

The party process in the late 1950s was characterised by the PUP election victory in March 1957, the conflict between Price and the colonial administration over the former's relationship with the Guatemalan government, and the search for a broad base of party unity. (a) The 1957 Elections

As in the previous election a PUP victory could have been foreseen. In the first place, the party alone had a clear policy. It was resolutely against Federation and independence as a Central American republic remained its goal. Apart from the popularity of the party's anti-federation stand, the constancy and purposiveness of its new leader, Price, was impressive. On the other hand neither the NP nor the HIP dared to come out unequivocally for federation. Consequently

the PUP could and did effectively point out that their opponents did not know what they wanted.

Secondly, the PUP organisation was superior in Belize City where the machinery of all the parties was concentrated. The organisational void in the outdistricts which the breakdown of the GWU created could only be filled in this short period by the political leaders' personal influence and their judicious selection of candidates. The PUP had both these advantages. The style of Price's leadership was highly militant and personal, and he alone could claim affinity with the predominantly outdistrict Mestizo population. Moreover, the defection of all the GWU Assemblymen, except Depaz, gave him a freedom in the selection of his candidates and therefore a greater opportunity to take account of the cultural factor in party politics. The extent to which his party nominations were determined by the prospect of both local and cultural support is measured by the fact that except in the four constituencies in the Belize District none of the candidates was a Creole. Those in Corozal, Orange Walk, and Cayo were resident Mestizos and in Stann Creek and Toledo, Caribs. On the other hand, none of the candidates of the opposition parties was a Mestizo.

These three factors - a clear policy, a better organisation and the appeal to cultural sentiment - combined to give the PUP all nine seats. The third factor rendered the Legislative Assemblymen much more representative of the general population without, however, impinging on the leading roles of the urban Creoles within it. Although the outdistrict legislators' social and educational attainments were an improve-
ment on those of the GWU Assemblymen: they were still below their urban Creole colleagues. Of the four new outdistrict representatives, Santiago Ricalde (Corozal) was a mason; Victor Orellana (Orange Walk), a carpenter and farmer; David McKoy (Stann Creek), a citrus company time-keeper and Faustino Zuniga (Toledo), was a former primary school teacher and the local court interpreter. Price who became the Member for Natural Resources therefore recommended Albert Cattouse (Belize West), a retired civil servant and businessman and Denbigh Jeffery (Belize South), a former manager of an expatriate mahogany company, to be the Member for Social Services and Public Utilities, respectively, while Louis Sylvester (Belize Rural), who was educated at St. John's College and in Jamaica, became the Associate Member for Natural Resources.

Perhaps the most significant feature of the election results was the low poll. Of the slightly increased electorate of 22,000 only 53 per cent voted as against 70 per cent in 1954. A breakdown of this figure on an urban-outdistrict basis shows that the proportion of the electorate which voted in the three Belize City constituencies was reduced from 74.1 per cent in 1954 to 55.8 per cent and in the out-districts, including the Belize Rural constituency, from 65.1 per cent to 50.3 per cent. This low participation was also recorded in every constituency irrespective of its location.

Two reasons can be given for the lack of urban interest in the election. First, there was the tendency for the middle class Creoles to regard the election as a continuation of the internecine PUP
struggle in which they should not be involved. Indeed, the personal vilification that persisted after the split depressed the electoral scene and gave rise to genuine concern for the future of party politics. To a considerable extent, however, the middle class Creoles were rationalising their feeling of ineffectiveness. Their party inspired little confidence. It again contested only six of the nine seats and did not oppose Price in the Belize North constituency. A more positive outlook would certainly have turned its leader's narrow defeat by two votes into a victory over the PUP candidate, Mr. Denbigh Jeffery.

The second reason for the low poll in Belize City arose from the first. A large number of PUP supporters had either been driven by the split into neutrality or simply did not vote because they were certain of the PUP victory. In fact, the more popular the leader, the greater was the tendency for the poll, compared with 1954, to decline. This explains the sharp decline of the votes cast in Price's constituency from 75.4 per cent in 1954 to 55.6 per cent.

The organisational weakness of the parties rather than their differences accounted for the reduced participation in the outdistricts. A comparison between the two constituencies, Toledo and Corozal, with the lowest and highest polls respectively in the election demonstrates the correlation between the state of party organisation and the rate of participation. As we observed the remote location and subsistence economy of Toledo had posed an organisational problem from the outset of the nationalist movement. Of the 1,371 registered votes only 46.6 per cent voted. In Corozal, on the other hand, a new local party,
the Corozal United Party, had not only filled the organisational void created by the breakdown of the GWU but had entered an alliance with the PUP. By no means the most politically conscious outdistrict constituency, it recorded the highest poll of 63.4 per cent in the country.

Another striking feature of the elections was the decline of the PUP poll from 65 per cent in 1954 to 59 per cent although the party won all nine seats. Moreover, two of these, Belize South and Toledo, were won on minority votes. Here was a lesson for the two opposition parties: the electorate, ranging from 1,100 in Toledo to 3,500 in Belize West, was too small to accommodate three parties. Their common approach and outlook was however not sufficient to overcome the personality and other differences between their leaders. The NP leaders felt that in paying the penalty for supporting Price, Richardson and Goldson should be unaided. The HIP leaders in turn had recoiled from the idea of an electoral alliance because they did not wish to be tainted with the past failure of the NP. Now that the election was over there was little point to their separate existence. Yet more than a year elapsed before a national crisis brought them together.

(b) The Crisis

If the first colonial administration in which the PUP participated ended with a suspicion of Richardson's West Indian sympathies, the second began with a suspicion of Price's Guatemalan ties. His relationship with Guatemala (as distinct from his Central American policy) was vaguely expressed in the PUP manifesto and had received little attention
during the election campaign. Indeed, he had won the election on the policy of 'No Federation' and his victory, as Waddell points out, could not be truly construed as the voters' support for his pro-Guatemalan outlook.²²

The suspicion was fed largely by Price's contact with the Organisation of the Central American States (ODECA).²³ From the standpoint of closer regional economic co-operation the choice of organisation was eminently sound. From the political standpoint however, there were grounds for apprehension. A few months before the 1957 election ODECA had declared its solidarity with Guatemala in the territorial dispute, pronounced the re-incorporation of 'Belice' to be a Central American question, and pledged to "incorporate Belice in the movement of economic integration of Central America."²⁴ In fact, the HIP leaders recalled this declaration when a visiting senior official of the Guatemala Foreign Ministry, Senor Mendonza, proposed the entry of British Honduras in ODECA as the sixth Central American state.²⁵

²³. For three years the union's future seemed uncertain because of the ideological differences between the pro-Communist government in Guatemala and the anti-Communist government in El Salvador. The differences reached their climax with the withdrawal of Guatemala from the organisation in 1953. Following the overt row of the Arbenz regime in 1954, however, Guatemala rejoined ODECA which began to function in 1955.
If this latter proposal appealed to nationalist pride in British Honduras it intensified the suspicion within the Creole community that Price was secretly negotiating a settlement through the Central American organisation.

Price's style of conducting public affairs was certainly not calculated to confound these suspicions. Both the nature of his visits abroad and his return to the country, the last leg of which was invariably by land through one of the border routes from Guatemala or Mexico, were shrouded in secrecy. This generated rumours about his activities abroad to such an extent that he felt impelled on one occasion to explain to the Legislative Assembly his visit to Guatemala on a return journey from the United States.\footnote{B.H.Government: Legislative Assembly Debate, 7th June, 1957.}

It was in this atmosphere of suspicion that Price, together with five other Executive Council members, departed for London in November 1957 to attend a financial and constitutional conference. The other members were the Governor, the Financial Secretary, two PUP Assemblymen, Cattouse and Jeffery, and Henry Bowman, a nominated Assemblyman and Associate Member for Public Utilities. Within a few days of their arrival Price invited his three unofficial colleagues, Cattouse, Jeffery, and Bowman, to a luncheon given by the Guatemalan Minister, Jorge Garcia Granados, at which the 'Belice' problem was discussed. While there has been disagreement about the details of the discussion, the gist of it was Guatemala's willingness to assume financial
responsibility for British Honduras if the invitees would agree to the colony severing its connexion with the British Crown and entering into some form of association with Guatemala. These proposals were to be energetically pursued if the unofficial members were dissatisfied with the outcome of their mission. Alarmed by the implications of the suggestions Jeffery reported the discussion to the British authorities. The Secretary of State, Sir Alan Lennox Boyd, denounced Price's "lack of good faith and candour" and broke off the negotiations when he established that in addition to the incident Price had been engaged in discussions on his own with the Guatemalan Minister.  

This incident was instructive of Price's personal leadership and far-reaching in its consequences for the party process. No one within the party hierarchy seemed to know the precise relationship between Price and the Guatemala government and it was perhaps more surprised by the disclosure than was the suspecting opposition. Price's personal control was in a sense a natural outgrowth of the leadership struggle; it had generated a deep loyalty not only to his policy but also his person. It is not insignificant in this connexion that his confidence was breached by Jeffery, the newcomer, rather than Cattouso, a long standing party member and Deputy Leader. Another factor of Price's personal influence was the indebtedness of the new PUP Assemblymen to him for their important source of influence and income. As we have seen their social and occupational circumstances were exceedingly humble.

The manner in which Price handled the crisis on his return confirmed the development of the party as his bona fide machine. Given a hero’s welcome at the airport, he kept in play the supportive role of the masses by holding a public meeting on the same night. This was before he reported to his Executive Council and as events developed he persisted with his characteristic tendency of relegating his colleagues to a minor role. He eventually broke his promise to them not to put the Guatemalan proposals to the public until the party executive council had formerly considered them. In terms of our argument that the low stature of his colleagues contributed to Price’s personal hold on the party, it is significant that Pollard, the leading trade unionist and Depaz, who had succeeded Price as the Member of Natural Resources, alone objected to the scant treatment. The outcome was Pollard’s expulsion from the party and Depaz’s resignation in March 1958.

The reasons for Pollard’s protest were more complex than the above analysis suggests. Born to (Spanish) Honduran parents in Mexico but brought up in Belize City Pollard was desirous of becoming a naturalised British subject. His claim that the London incident convinced him that “Price is committed heart and soul and body to continue preaching the doctrine of political association with Guatemala” was therefore not entirely in the nature of a discovery. Since the 1956 split which rekindled his political ambitions he had been doing his best to demonstrate to the colonial authorities that he

was as loyal as any of Her Majesty's subjects. Continued association with the discredited Price was therefore likely to prejudice his chances of obtaining the citizenship. Indeed, the long years of association seemed to have been of little political value to Pollard who claimed that Price after winning the election seemed disinclined to intervene on his behalf.29

The difference then between Price and Pollard was to a large extent personal. This was confirmed by a subsequent legal dispute over the tenancy of Pollard's home which Price had rented on his behalf. More important, the personal nature of their differences was reflected in the rudimentary structure of the high sounding Democratic Agricultural Labour Party (renamed the Christian Democratic Party) which Pollard formed in August 1953. It served mainly as the political platform for his sundry outbursts against Price, the futility of which was seen in the party's overwhelming defeat in the 1961 general election and its absorption by the NIP soon after.

Yet, more in desperation than hope, the colonial administration supported Pollard's attack on Price. It had been forced to the conclusion that the PUP leader could not be broken by parliamentary means. In the first place, the organised opposition was still too feeble and infantile to cause his electoral defeat. This explains the colonial administration's persistence with the 1957 Assembly which contained at least two PUP dissidents. Secondly, its own efforts to eliminate Price

as the major political force were unsuccessful. An attempt to have him convicted in 1958 on a sedition charge of abuse of royalty failed. Despite being refused permission to import the gift of a printing press from ODECA in 1959 Price re-established his party's newspaper, The Belize Times which had not been published for six months in 1958 for lack of this facility. Notwithstanding his expulsion, his influence in the Executive Council was exerted through Cattouse and Sylvester. In fact this anomalous relationship with the government enabled him to speak authoritatively (and invariably to the embarrassment of the colonial officials) in the Legislative Assembly, of which he was the Deputy Speaker.

At the same time, however, the defection of Jeffery and Depaz had reduced Price to the Leader of a minority group in the 15-member Legislative Assembly. That nine of them were committed in advance of debates by virtue of their membership of the Executive Council added to his frustration. Moreover, unlike the previous occasion of a split in the parliamentary group, Price could not look forward to an early election to redeem his losses as one was not due before 1960.

It is now possible to understand the acrimonious parliamentary

32. Before publication was discontinued the newspaper published three days weekly. Today it is one of the two daily newspapers, the other being The Belize Billboard.
33. For example see his speeches in the Proceedings of the Minutes, 1959.
debates between Price and the Colonial Secretary, T. D. Vickers, and in particular their claim to be saving the country from each other. For different reasons both were frustrated parliamentary leaders. They drew their strength from contradictory sources of legitimacy. Behind the Colonial Secretary was the largely unrepresentative Legislative Assembly - the other two ex-officio members, the three nominated unofficial members and the two PUP defectors. Behind Price who continued to call himself Majority Leader stood a movement vehement in its loyalty.

That the Colonial Secretary was pre-occupied with dislodging Price cannot be over-emphasised. It was in relief that Price bade him farewell in an open letter in 1960. "You have been a ruthless political adversary of mine," he wrote. A part of the problem was Vickers's relatively long service and the time it began. He came to British Honduras at the height of the crisis (1953) and was influenced by it. By the time he was transferred to Mauritius the United Front had been formed and the London constitutional conference held. As the chief colonial representative in the Legislative Assembly he was caught up in the highly partisan atmosphere. More than any other colonial official, he realised that but for Price, the PUP's opposition to Federation could have been overcome. Pollard who was the only other influential party leader was since 1956 a comrade-in-arms. After his expulsion, however, the colonial strategy of playing upon party leadership ambitions ceased

to make sense. The attack on Price had therefore to be direct and personal.

The hostility of the colonial administration no doubt also arose from its disappointment in the social group that constituted the new political elite. The emergence of politicians from the lower class and the outdistricts was unexpected and upsetting. Moreover these politicians showed no intention to assume the old symbols and ritual of office. The old political elite of wealthy businessmen, Espat, J. W. MacMillan, H. T. A. Bowman and E. W. M. Bowen, who were retained as parliamentary nominees and Associate Members therefore appeared to be not only a counterbalancing but a countervailing influence.

Whatever were the reasons for the hostility towards Price it encouraged the middle class Creoles to reaffirm their faith in British protection. At the same time the London incident brought home to them the need for their party, NP, to join forces with the stronger anti-PUP party, the HIP. The HIP also welcomed the merger into the HIP under Fuller's leadership in July 1958, because of its own leadership difficulties. Richardson, the Leader, had resigned in early 1958 to take up an appointment with a publishing firm in Trinidad. Goldson, the Acting Leader, also wished to devote more time to the Belize Billboard which had declined with the popularity of its owners. Thus while he accepted the secretaryship of the fused party he eventually resigned the office before the 1961 elections which he did not contest.

It was inevitable that the pattern of organisation and the
political orientation of the old parties would influence the character of the NIP. Although district branches were formed the party machinery continued to function mainly in Belize City until Goldson became the Leader in late 1961 as a result of Fuller's illness. The social basis of the party membership remained middle class notwithstanding the disappearance of the old professional group from the new hierarchy. There was, however, a growing tendency for the party to perceive the political situation more in a cultural than a class context. This reflected the fact that the break of the HIP leaders with Price had been motivated less by the fear for the social changes that usually accompany the decolonising process than by the cultural implications of closer Central American ties. It was of course not always easy to distinguish the class and status considerations from the cultural within the party since these were still highly correlated.

As can be expected, despite the identity of purpose, the two groups of leaders did not weld instantly. There was, for example, considerable jostling for the party's nomination in the Belize City Council elections a few months later in December 1958. This led to the expulsion of James Keighan, the Deputy Leader, who having been denied nomination contested the election as an independent candidate. The lack of internal unity was also largely responsible for the resignation of Lindberg Rogers, a city councillor and the party's treasurer in 1960. What were NIP losses became PUP gains. By joining this party both Keighan, a retired District Commissioner, and Rogers, a transport owner and mechanic, provided it with a more ethnically and culturally
varied leadership and much needed ability. One is at present (1969) the party's leader in the Senate and President of the City Council, the other the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The various factional realignments within the short period of one year glaringly pointed to the urgent need for the contending forces to formulate a common goal. In fact the general situation had degenerated to the point where a top-level conference of the political elements was justified. Yet the British government stood by an earlier promise to appoint a Constitutional Commission in 1959. The outcome was Sir Hilary Blood's report which was as gloomy as the time it was written. Both political parties rejected the report as it recognised few of their demands. This unanimity was at once reinforced by the unpopular recommendation of Jack Downie, the British Economic Adviser, that massive immigration was a sine-qua-non for the country's economic development. The common outlook found expression in the United Front which in February 1960 negotiated a more advanced constitution in London.

The United Front

In presenting a united front the PUP and NIP were seeking not only a common goal for the country but their own legitimacy. The NIP was intent on convincing Price that despite the lack of parliamentary representation its presence was most vital to the welfare of the

country. Price accepted the NIP's contention for a different reason. The credibility gap between himself and the colonial administration could only have been bridged through his collaboration with political leaders acceptable to the officials. Thus he welcomed not only the NIP and the minor political groups, notably the Pro-British Front, as conference members but also two prominent citizens, Harrison Courtenay and Gilbert Hulse, the former Archdeacon, as convenors of the Front and leaders of the delegation to London. Courtenay's role should be emphasised. He had quietly withdrawn from the political maelstrom in 1953 to re-appear as the defence counsel to Price in his sedition trial in 1958 and to Goldson, his first cousin, who was convicted for obtaining and publishing in the Belize Billboard the confidential Downie Report. He was therefore eminently suited to be a political broker and in fact was the initiator of the Front. The logical outcome of his role was his appointment as Speaker to the newly elected Legislative Assembly in 1961 and as legal adviser to the government in the recently concluded round of Anglo-Guatemalan negotiations (1962 - 1968).

The notable absentee was Pollard who withheld his support precisely because he recognised the value of the Front to Price. Moreover, his British invitation to the London conference against the expressed wishes of the two political parties, proved that his legitimacy was not dependent upon them. Needless to add, he was also granted British citizenship.

The Blood proposal was the basis of the United Front discussion. Not unexpectedly, in recommending the limited constitutional advance,
Sir Hilary had conceived as "danger signals" the PUP's demand for self
government "under the United Nations" and "within the geographical
framework of Central America." In this connexion the Guatemalan
pressure which was intensified with the Presidency of Ydigoras Fuentes
had not escaped his notice. Nor did he obviously recognize the
incompatibility or even the distinction between the President's assertion
of the Guatemalan claim and Price's policy of incorporation in
ODECA as an independent entity.

The United Front did not only believe that the Commissioner gave
too much weight to the Guatemalan problem but reiterated a NIP - CDP
argument that this issue should not "hold up the internal progress of
the country indefinitely." Indeed, the Front contended that the twin
problem of West Indies Federation and closer association with Guatemala
was so fundamental that it should be the subject of a referendum. Moreover, its isolation would clear the way for any differences in the
parties' domestic policies to emerge.

This idea of separating the two issues of constitutional progress

36. Ibid. p.5.

37. For example, a few months before Sir Hilary's arrival in British
Honduras in August, President Ydigoras Fuentes had celebrated the
centenary of the Guatemalan treaty of 30th April, 1859 with a
ceremony in which a symbolic re-occupation of 'Belize' was carried
out on a concrete map.

38. Minutes of the Third Plenary Meeting of the Work Committee of the
United Front, 18th January, 1960.


40. Minutes of the Final Session of the Constitutional Conference,
17th February, 1960.
and regional orientation and postponing a decision on the colony's ultimate goal might have been accepted by the British government but for Pollard's insistence at the conference on at least a partial settlement of the latter. On the whole Pollard's attitude was essentially obstructionist. "Against the visible determined stand of [his sponsor] the Colonial Office" he objected to political parties appointing the nominated Legislators. He also threatened to withhold his signature from the report for its exclusion of his belated proposal on the propriety of local usage of the "Guatemalan imposed name of Belize."  

As we observed, cordiality was reached when the participants affirmed "their desire to remain in and to be part of Her Majesty's Dominions and of the Commonwealth." In repudiating the Guatemalan claim also in their joint statement the PUP and the KIP reaffirmed their undertaking not to introduce into the Legislative Assembly any measure for political integration with any other country "without a clear mandate ..... from the electorate at a general election."  

The extent to which Price modified his stand should not be exaggerated. He had not abandoned his Central American aspiration. While membership of the Commonwealth would have precluded any immediate possibility of political association with Central America, it did not, as Waddell points out, stand in the way of economic integration though

41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
it might determine the form. Nor was Price's denunciation at variance with his economic plans. Indeed, he had separated the two issues in order to make clear that, whatever his relationship with Guatemala in the 1950s, association with ODECA (which has been superseded by the Central American Common Market) as an independent political entity was now his goal.

As a whole the United Front and the Constitutional conference were an excellent augury for the next stage of the country's political development. This was not because the British government had conceded a greater measure of responsibility to the elected representatives but because of the British Hondurans involved in the negotiations. It would have required an act of faith in 1951 to foresee Courtenay, Fuller, Price and Goldson as signatories to a unanimous constitutional report in 1960. Perhaps their re-alignment was necessary before concessions were possible. Their common goal, however, not only ensured the further interaction of political parties but paved the way for the development of a party system.

THE POST - UNITED FRONT PERIOD

Before examining the extent to which the common goals were pursued or for that matter changed, we should discuss the changes in the distribution of the power and influence between, and within the PUP and the NIP.

Distribution of Power between Parties

A useful indicator of the nature of power and influence of the political parties is the results of the 1961 and 1965 elections. These are analysed against the background of the two earlier ones. The table on the following page at once recognises the important distinction between Belize City and the outdistricts and the main cultural components of the electorate.

Despite the PUP’s continuing election success it did not recover in 1961 the urban Creole support which it lost in 1957 to the HIP. Furthermore, this support declined in the 1965 election. This loss was sustained in every constituency, ranging from 5 per cent in Price’s, Freetown, to 10 per cent in Mesopotamia. Apart from losing the Albert constituency to Goldson the PUP narrowly won three of the other five. The most disturbing factor for the PUP, however, is not the mere decline in the Creole support but that this has occurred in the administrative and social capital. The strategic role of this section of the population in the political and economic systems render the party as the government vulnerable. This was borne out by the frequent anti-Guatemalan demonstrations and the civil service strike in June 1966. It is not surprising therefore that the urban Creoles, while recognising the vulnerability of the city to tidal waves and hurricanes should ascribe political motives to the present construction of a new capital, fifty miles to the west of Belize City.

The PUP loss of support within the Creole complex is not confined to Belize City. Its poll of the votes was reduced from 54.2 per cent in
## TABLE 9

**GENERAL ELECTIONS IN BRITISH HONDURAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Groupings of Areas</th>
<th>1954</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1965</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PUP</td>
<td>NP</td>
<td>PUP</td>
<td>NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Belize City</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Belize Rural</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carib - Creole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Stann Creek Town</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Stann Creek Rural</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Toledo North</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Toledo South</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Corozal North</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Corozal South</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Orange Walk North</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Orange Walk South</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Cayo North</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Cayo South</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total Votes</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a - Includes the largest Indian village, San Antonio
b - Includes the votes polled by the three Independents
c - The other 10% was polled by an Independent candidate
d - Polled by the Independent candidate, C.L. Westby
e - No opposition party candidates. Polled by three Independents
f - The remaining 9% polled by the Independents
g - Includes the votes of two Independents

Source: B.H Government Official Gazettes.
1961 to 50.9 per cent in 1965 in the predominantly Carib and Creole town, Stann Creek. Here again, Stann Creek Town is the most articulate outdistrict community. The neighbouring Creole constituency, Toledo North, was even more positive in its opposition to the PUP. The party's majority poll of 56.6 per cent in 1961 was turned into a minority of 43.2 per cent in 1965; the seat being lost to the new NIP candidate, Edwin Morey. Toledo South, in which the Caribs also predominate has been a marginal constituency in both elections.

While the Mestizo constituencies remain the PUP stronghold the results in the district towns have not had the character of a stampede which one associates with the party's victory in 1954. The rough division of the administrative area into urban and rural constituencies in 1961 enables a more precise assessment of the distribution of the party's influence. In general, as in the Belize District, the PUP is stronger in the villages than in the towns. Thus the party support is not simply working class but is more dependent on the conservative section of it. In other words, the town dwelling wage labourers in the sugar industry in the north and the citrus industry in the west rather than the village farmer is more likely to desert the PUP.

This analysis suggests that the loss of PUP influence to the NIP is due to both cultural and socio-economic factors. As for this second factor the difference between the behaviour of the town and village voter cannot be explained in terms of the domestic programmes of the parties, since these are essentially similar. Both parties are committed to a free enterprise system, and their views on increasing
the role of North American capital are equally favourable. The differ-
ence in voting behaviour should be explained in terms of the unequal
exposure of the town dweller and villager to national leadership. It
is only after Goldson became leader in 1961 and re-organised the party
that the NIP's penetration of the Mestizo villages began. The premium
which the minimal difference in party policies places upon personali-
ties is however a drawback to Goldson in these small, isolated
communities. Being a full blooded Creole he is unable to match Price's
personal and sectarian appeal to the Latin peasants. The NIP's
tendency to work through influential PUP dissidents has partly miti-
gated this liability. The party has also adapted itself to local
realities by recruiting its candidates from the largest cultural group
in the constituency.

Above all, however, the NIP's influence in both the Mestizo and
Creole areas has benefited from the collapse of the West Indies
Federation in 1962 and the resumption of the Anglo-Guatemalan negotia-
tions in the same year. Consequent upon the demise of the Federation
identification with the West Indies no longer constitutes a drag on
middle class Creole leadership. These leaders are free to exploit the
fears of the Mestizos, particularly the Mexican descendants in the
north, about the eventual outcome of the Guatemalan claim without
inviting suspicions of their own motives. Using Price's equivocal past
to full advantage the NIP leaders have spared no efforts to unite the
various social groups of Creoles around their own cultural values.
This is by no means solely in response to the Guatemalan threat.
Since little else divides the two parties, the NIP leaders can only offset Price's nationalist appeal among the ordinary Creoles by voicing their own in cultural terms.

One of the striking features of this pursuit of power and influence is that the communal distribution of the Mestizos and Creoles has encouraged the two political leaders to adopt at once a nationalist and sectarian image. Price built his support in the 1950s on this dual style and Goldson is employing it to chip away at the PUP edifice.

The NIP's increasing influence, however, is not fully reflected in the House of Representatives. Although it received 40.2 per cent of the valid votes cast in the 1965 election it only won two of the eighteen constituencies. These successes are a step forward for the party and confer a degree of personal legitimacy on Goldson who in the 1961 Legislative Assembly suffered the almost indefensible position of being a nominated opposition leader. But they are by no means consoling.

Noting that proportional representation would have given the opposition six seats in 1961 and seven in 1965 the NIP launched a campaign in 1968 for this system of election to be introduced in both national and local elections. It proposed a mixed system of the West German variety for national elections. One half of the membership of the House of Representatives should be elected on a constituency basis and the other half from a party list to give each party in the House seats in the exact proportion to votes it received at the polls. The seats in the Senate would be allocated in proportion to the votes polled.  

45. NIP Memorandum to Minister of Internal Affairs, 27th June, 1968.
In this culturally heterogeneous society the effect of proportional representation would go far beyond the accurate parliamentary reflection of the parties' popularity. It will also frustrate the goal of a unified society. For in so far as it encourages the parties to concentrate on their stronghold, proportional representation will in effect institutionalise both the territorial and cultural divisions. Pressure for the change is however likely to increase as the idea of independence begins to dominate the political scene. For as Ratnam reminds us, "A full transfer of power seldom (if ever) takes place without being accompanied by grave doubts as to whether the power that is to be received will in fact be properly shared." 46

Distribution of Power within Parties 47

(a) Party Machinery

In a previous section we identified three elements of the PUP machinery: the urban rank-and-file, the Central Party Council and the parliamentary group. To these should be added the Cabinet of the PUP government which dominates the formulation of party policy. This has come about for a variety of reasons. First, the nature of the party's


new role has virtually placed the decision making process beyond the rank-and-file. Even the annual party conference which is the primary governing or policy formulsting body is invariably dominated by the ministers of the government and the Assembly representatives. Another reason for the hegemony of the Cabinet in policy making is Price's personal influence. As we have seen his conception of leadership is not altogether democratic. Thus he prefers to exercise his influence through the relatively small, functionally homogeneous group of seven ministers than the unwieldy Central Party Council which in any case asserted little authority in the past.

The internal structure of the NIP is roughly the same as the PUP. It recruits members directly and also offers indirect membership through affiliated groups. Its annual conference is also the supreme body consisting mainly of the representatives of the constituencies and office holders in the ancillary groups. The ordinary NIP member has never been assigned the same positive role as was his PUP counterpart in the 1950s. There is also a Central Party Council whose function is partly "to confer with the parliamentary group on any matter relating to the work and progress of the party." In practice the Council, like its PUP counterpart, has played an insignificant role in determining party policy. This function is exercised by the National Executive Committee, which consists of twenty-seven members most of whom are ranking party officials.

Political influence is unevenly distributed not only between the organs of each party but also within the dominant body. It is therefore not sufficient to note the extent to which the PUP Cabinet and the NIP National Executive Committee are representative of the major cultural and other interest groups within the parties. In the National Executive Committee the Creoles and the representatives of urban groups virtually monopolise the major offices. Although this top-heavy Committee caters for a leader and three deputy leaders, a First Secretary and a Deputy, a Financial Secretary and Accountant Treasurer, none of the outdistrict leaders, Creole or Mestizo, holds an office above that of deputy chief organiser. Within the Creole group there is a tendency for the primary and secondary school educated who had replaced the old professional group at the time of the party merger to be overshadowed by two young university graduates. One is Dean Lindo, a lawyer; the other Colville Young, the Deputy Principal of St. Michael’s College, who are the second and third Deputy Leaders respectively. Equally significant in this respect, is the advisory role of a few other Creole professionals who are not formally connected with the party. As a predominantly Creole party, the NIP is not simply returning to its traditional source of leadership. To some extent the revival of the influence of the educated middle class is a reflection of Goldson’s personal aspirations. Despite his political commitments he is also a law student and his wife who was admitted to the bar in 1965 enjoys the distinction of being the first female lawyer in British Honduras.
The Cabinet whose seven members represent an even wider cross section of the cultural and socio-economic groups in the society also appears to have an inner group of three - Price, Rogers and A. A. Hunter who is of a Spanish father and a Mestizo mother. One of the reasons for their pre-eminence is their superior capability. This is not reflected in their formal education as shown in Table 10, but in their actual performance.

In so far as the PUP recognises high educational attainment as an essential attribute of leadership it has a problem. It has been unable to attract many members from the predominantly Creole professional class and to persuade the few supporters to contest elections. As we have seen after the 1956 split, the forces which repel influential and professional persons to electoral politics became immeasurably stronger than those which attract. The nomination of parliamentary candidates from the constituencies has also limited the number of candidates that can be selected from the intellectual repository of Belize City. In allowing A. A. Hunter, Minister for Natural Resources and Trade, to retain his Company Directorship and monthly allowance, Price admitted the party's difficulties of attracting "a top professional man, a top technical man, a top businessman into the Cabinet."49 This paucity has also impeded the transfer of power within the Judiciary. The politicising of the post of Attorney General would not only necessitate the replacing of the expatriate holder, J. Havers,

TABLE 10

(a) Cultural Affiliation of the Legislators in the House of Representatives 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Group</th>
<th>PUP Ministers</th>
<th>PUP Backbenchers</th>
<th>NIP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestizo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carib</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Formal Education of the Legislators in the House of Representatives 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>PUP</th>
<th>PUP</th>
<th>NIP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(c) Occupational Distribution of the Legislators in the House of Representatives 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>PUP</th>
<th>PUP</th>
<th>NIP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy Farmer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planter</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema Manager</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Manager</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a - The classification of members is open to objection for we observed in the introduction to the study the difficulty of neatly fitting an individual into a cultural group. Price, for example, is classified as a Creole.

b - Two are the holders of the Cambridge School Certificate.

c - Goldson - also the holder of School Certificate.

d - A. A. Hunter - did not complete his University education owing to War II.
but would also create the need for a separate non-party Director of Public Prosecution.50

It is not unlikely that Price conceived the newly instituted Senate of eight members as a recruiting agency for able politicians and technocrats who are not interested in electoral politics. Two bright Creole young men but non-party members, Vernon Courtenay, a lawyer, and Vernon Leslie, the locally born Resident Tutor of the University of the West Indies, were attracted to the Senate; the former as the Vice President and the latter as the Governor’s nominee. Another Creole lawyer, E. W. Francis was appointed President. Any intention of appointing Senators as Ministers which Price may have had appears, however, to have been discouraged by backbench opposition in the House of Representatives to this ‘royal road’ to power.

The backbenchers have in fact reacted successfully to the concentration of power and influence within the Cabinet. The House of Representatives has conceded to their demand for a Committee system and a change in the law-making process. The new law-making procedure automatically commits a bill after its first reading to one of the eleven Select Standing Committees provided by the revised Standing Orders. This is followed by the second reading of the bill after which it is considered by a Committee of the Whole House. It receives its third reading after the report stage. The object of the Committee system is

50. Since writing in 1969, Vernon Courtenay, the Vice President of the Senate has been appointed Attorney General. The fact that he has been permitted to continue his private practice highlights the leadership problem within the PUP.
to democratis not only the relationship between backbenchers and their leaders but also between the House and the public. Public hearings of Standing Committees are conducted not only in Belize City but in the districts, depending upon the nature of the subject. Consideration of the Cane Farmers' Association (Amendment) Bill, for example, took the Economic Development Committee to Orange Walk and Corozal where the sugar industry is located.51

The backbenchers do not conceive the Committees narrowly as merely a conduit for both government and public opinion. They allow cross-examination with the result that the committee is becoming a political forum. In this way the backbenchers influence the very public opinion which they are canvassing for the House. Moreover, an unfavourable report of the bill can end in deadlock between the seven ministers and the House if the nine government backbenchers act in unison. There is, in this diffusion of influence, a possibility, (as a Minister put it) of the "tail wagging the dog."52

Perhaps the backbenchers would have been less radical in their demand if the political system offered them other resources. In Commonwealth territories appointments to quasi-government bodies, such as public corporations, usually solve the problem of the discontented backbencher. Such public offices are, however, few in British Honduras


52. I am grateful to the Minister for permission to quote from his notes for his meeting on 2nd February, 1967 with the PUP members of one of the Standing Committees.
and non-renumerative. The appointment of parliamentary secretaries is another avenue of upward mobility, but neither the present high ratio of ministers to backbenchers, nor the relatively small size of the House and the civil service justifies the creation of the post. Within these limitations the backbenchers' only hope of a measure of influence is the Premier's adroit handling of ministerial appointments. 

But in order to retain the present balance in racial, cultural and district representation, Price does not change his ministers during the life of an Assembly. Backbenchers, therefore, have not been encouraged to regard themselves as potential ministers once the initial appointments are made. Those who have been elected since 1961 have in particular developed a strong feeling of permanent exclusion and consequentil resentment against the less able and elderly ministers.53

Behind the backbenchers' pressure for greater parliamentary influence is their dissatisfaction with the party leadership structure. While appreciative of the historical necessity for the concentration of power in Price's hands they do not accept this as a permanent arrangement. The dissensions are facilitated by Price's pre-occupation with governing the country. But they also encounter several restraints. Despite the advantage of belonging to their constituencies few of the backbenchers have built a strong local organisation that is independent of Price's patronage. Secondly, all of them remain dependent upon

---

53. Since writing this (early 1969), the three backbench leaders, Arthurs, Deputy Speaker, Louis Sylvestre, a former Minister of Local Government, and Santiago Peredomo have been appointed Parliamentary Secretaries.
their parliamentary status for their influence and income. In this respect, they cannot ignore the fact that since 1954, except for Goldson who was only re-elected in 1965, no PUP parliamentary dissident has been re-elected. The premium in politics is too high for them to jeopardise their position.

(b) **Party Finance**

Martin Kilson has observed that "Although the nature of a political party's financial arrangement provides some understanding of political influence, it is by no means a sufficient guide to such influence." He points this out in regard to Sierra Leonean parties, and those in British Honduras are no exception to this generalisation. The influence which the rank-and-file exerted in the PUP power struggle, for example, was in no way contingent upon its contribution. Party members were not organised for financial purposes and their membership fee of £1.00, irregular subscriptions, and ad hoc fund-raising activities are an insignificant source of the party's finances.

Not every aspect of party life is however impervious to financial considerations. The Sharpe Commission in 1954, for example, established a connection between the PUP pro-Guatemalan outlook and its receipt of financial assistance from this source. The Commissioner was satisfied that Price had received £200 from the Guatemala Consul although he was unable to identify the source in Guatemala or to say whether it was used

exclusively for the defence of the PUP leaders in the sedition trial. The question as to whether the PUP continued to receive Guatemalan assistance after the enquiry is conjectural; the student has to choose between Price's protestations and the claims of PUP dissidents. President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes' claim in June 1962 to be maintaining a fifth column in British Honduras somewhat narrowed the choice. Most of the claims, however, are vulnerable to libel action and unsupported by evidence. The latter factor, as Sharpe's qualified findings indicated, was however more a reflection of the subterranean nature of the transactions than on the credulity of the informants. It is not insignificant in this connexion that the duties of the government Public Relations Officer, Commander Proud, as the Sharpe enquiry also disclosed, was more varied than his office suggested. If Guatemala remained an important source of finance there was little difficulty in using the funds. The PUP had to establish an organ after the 1956 split, contribute to the cost of election campaigns, the candidates' deposits and presumably to Price's defence in his sedition trial. There were also to be considered, Price's tours to North and Central America in defence of his position after the London incident. Moreover the party lacked the visible support of established business.

It is unlikely however that Guatemala has remained a source of


finance since Price's assertion of political independence and the party's rise to power. The party's governing position has enlarged several of the local sources of finance. One is the salaries of the Assemblymen and the Ministers which give the party a decided advantage over the NIP. If this source has not been extensively tapped it is because the contribution of the business group has increased. These interests appear to be mainly local and American as the British and West Indian companies have generally supported the opposition parties. In this connexion it is not amiss to quote the letter of the former NIP treasurer, Rogers, to the NIP Leader at length.

"First of all, your statement that the funds to finance your campaign of hate and disrespect to the leaders in government and people in authority in general come from the 'nickles, dimes, quarters and dollars' from the little people is totally ridiculous. For it is clear that this is only a smoke screen to cover the big support you get from vested interest. At best it is a small supplement to the large funds that are at your disposal to foster your campaign against the People's United Party and your own struggle for power ....

.... The Belize Estate [BEP Company] in conversations with me and in subsequent statements, have been much clearer on this question of contributing funds to your Party. You seem to forget too, that I was once the treasurer of your organisation and know the identity of all anonymous donors to your Party. In fact a Head of a Government Department has already confessed to being the intermediate or delivery-man between that Company and the Party [CDP] with which you recently merged."57

The opposition party has not refuted this or the PUP's earlier claim that Goldson received a generous loan of $40,000 in 1959 from the Sharp Citrus Company to reorganise the Belize Billboard.58 The NIP also

benefits from the political activities of the British Hondurans in New York. The influence of their group, The British Honduras Freedom Committee, within the party coincides as much with geographical considerations as the financial. It is strategically located to lobby international support for the NIP’s views and to act as the party’s overseas clearing house.

Political Goals and Values

As we have seen, the constitutional basis of the identity of interests between the colonial government and the political parties was established in 1961 when a ministerial system of government was introduced. At no point in the subsequent adjustment has there been substantive differences between the two governments. Although the change to a bi-cameral Legislature and a general election under a new internal self-governing constitution did not take place until March 1965 the movement towards the transfer of power was progressive. In January, 1964 the Executive Council was replaced by the Cabinet in which there were no colonial officials. The post of Chief Secretary was abolished and the Attorney General discontinued his membership of the House of Representatives. The Minister of Internal Affairs and Justice, a newly created appointment, assumed responsibility for the subjects that fell to the Colonial Secretary except the civil service. The Governor has retained ultimate responsibility for this, defence and external relations, but at the same time recognises that their decolonization
should not be precipitate. Accordingly, the Ministers have an effective voice in the appointments to the fully localised Public Service Commission and, through membership of permanent Committees, in defence and external affairs.

In effecting these adjustments so smoothly the colonial authorities and the PUP government have been more mutually accommodating than could have been foreseen at the time of the 1960 agreement. One reason for this is the effect of office on Price's doctrinaire anti-British and anti-West Indian outlook. In the first place the flow of American capital on which he pinned his economic hopes has not significantly materialised. Land investments are largely speculative. In the Orange Walk District an estate of 11,762 acres was bought for $49,989 in 1959 and sold for $329,336 in 1965; the value of 14,085 acres on the Northern River appreciated from $10,000 to $200,000 in eight years. Industrial investments are difficult to retain. After three years in British Honduras, the Hercules Powder Company of Delaware U.S.A, unexpectedly removed its $55,000,000 resin plant from Independence in the Stann Creek District to Nicaragua in 1965, leaving 200 families and a number of ancillary businesses in the lurch. British Honduras also entered into the American Alliance of Progress with Michigan in 1966 but the first wave of enthusiasm has ebbed without leaving many tangible promises on the local shore.

Secondly, despite the increasing trade with Central America these

territories have so far not provided an alternative market to Britain and the West Indies for the country's agricultural products. The value of exports to Central America fluctuated between £1,312 in 1957 and £1,644 in 1965, reaching its highest point of £2,360 in 1963. Instead, therefore, of uprooting the vestiges of British economic control the country has become more dependent upon it to bring the solvency which would make independence feasible. Of the estimated foreign capital aid of £28.75 million for the three year period, 1968 to 1970, £24.75 million or 85 per cent is expected to be British.

Far from loosening its economic ties with the West Indies also, British Honduras has kept the Caribbean door ajar by being an observer to the conferences of the recently formed Caribbean Free Trade Association. In fact, notwithstanding Price's clear preference for an association with the Central American Common Market, his country's membership of CARIFTA is not altogether remote. For one thing it will be saved the difficulties (of negotiation, foregone development possibilities etc.) faced by newcomers seeking entry into an established economic union. For another, in so far as CARIFTA is regarded as the precursor of a wider Caribbean economic union British Honduras is culturally in a unique position to perform a linking role.

Drawing strength from its Spanish oriented element, it could assume the


initiative within the Commonwealth group to create the wider economic link and ultimately forge the larger Caribbean and Central American integration. This idea is not new. British Honduras was at one time conceived as "a bridgehead of British influence in Spanish America," the difference being that this role was based on geographical rather than cultural considerations.

If its fiscal incapacity has compelled the PUP government to accept the decolonising procedure, the change in the colonial world has led the British not only to appreciate but also encourage the PUP's Central American aspirations. Britain does not only want to liquidate the residue of its Empire but to develop as a European power. Thus British Honduras is seen as an imperial nuisance which should not only take its independence but seek its future within its hemisphere. For this reason, the NIP's proposals for associated status with Britain has been ignored. Admittedly, the British gave this status to the small West Indian islands but only after it failed to develop the lean rump of the West Indian Federation into another Federation. British Honduras, on the other hand, had an alternative in closer association with Guatemala.

Britain's changing circumstances were therefore largely responsible for the renewal of the Anglo-Guatemala negotiation in 1962, although the venue, Puerto Rico, supported President Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes' claim that the parley was part of a deal in which America


promised to exert pressure on Britain to settle the dispute in return for using a Guatemalan plantation to train the ill-fated Bay of Pigs insurgents. These changing circumstances also explain the NIP's mistaken belief that the British government would be characteristically unyielding to Guatemala's demands.

That Britain's conception of the dispute was no longer juridical but political and hemispheric was confirmed by America's intervention as a mediator. To some extent the appointment of a lawyer, Bethuel Webster, as the sole mediator obscured the political nature of the mediation. Essentially, however, his task was to reconcile British Honduras' aspiration for political independence with some form of economic co-operation which guaranteed Guatemala unrestricted access to the seaports in British Honduras and enabled the latter country to participate in the Central American economic union. Although its political leaders were consulted, British Honduras' colonial status, small size and population, weak international voice and economy militated against due recognition of its viewpoint. Thus the sovereignty which the mediator conceded to the colony in 1968 was at once rendered nominal by the wide powers conferred on the Joint Authority of British Honduras and Guatemala in its administering of the mutually co-operative aspects of the Treaty. The individual proposals also made few concessions to the dominant traditional social

values. For example, the exclusion of degrees "granted outside Belize or Guatemala" from the reciprocal recognition of educational qualifications undermined the British orientation of the educational system and in the absence of post-secondary facilities virtually decreed Guatemala as the new centre of higher learning for British Hondurans.

As the mediator could not have been unaware of the cultural factor in British Honduran politics, his proposals should be seen as an outright attempt to end the country's artificiality as a British enclave within the Latin environment. No allowance was made for the development of a distinctive British Honduran culture deriving its strength and character from the contributions of the two principal cultural groups. The proposals were not discursive and perhaps the mediator considered this viewpoint only to reject it as idealistic. Moreover, the gradual process of developing a common culture has had to be set against the political disposition of both the high contracting parties, Britain and Guatemala, for a quick solution. British Honduras, as we have argued, is of no intrinsic worth to Britain. On the other hand as long as it is the key to the development of the Peten Guatemala will not rest.

The proposals, one can see, neither satisfied Price's aspirations for real political independence nor guaranteed the Creoles their cultural survival. Left to fend for themselves both political parties

66. Ibid. Article 6.
reacted in the only way possible: they rejected the proposals. This caused a stalemate as Goldson, by prematurely revealing the gist of the proposals to the frenzied Creole community in June 1966, had extracted from the British government the promise not to conclude a settlement that was unacceptable to the country. Thus the problem of British Honduras' regional association and indeed its future, remains as intractable as when the PUP came into existence in 1950. The parties' rejection of the mediator's proposals indicates, however, that the basis for the expression of a united British Honduras viewpoint still exists. Recognition of the fact that the international odds are not primarily against a particular section of the population but the country's survival as an independent entity should inspire the two political parties to a greater understanding.
CHAPTER 5

Trade Unions

The discussion in the two previous chapters indicates not only that the trade unions were connected to political parties but that the relationship was also virtually one-sided. Except for the GWU strike in 1952 and the union's role in the 1954 election the political impact of the labour movement has been limited. With David McKoy, Minister of Labour, and Senator Jesus Ken, the General Secretary of the Northern Cane Workers Union, as the only new recruits since 1954, the movement's promise of being a prolific source of political leadership remains unfulfilled. Nor have the unions been a source of party finance. The movement's political influence in fact reached its peak before the 1956 split between the GWU and the PUP. On the other hand, party politics has shaped labour organisation to the extent that the PUP initiated four of the five trade unions set up between 1956 and 1962. Even the United Front had a bearing on union-party relations. As the PUP and its government established their legitimacy in the early 1960s they tended to allow the unions an independent existence. In fact, this period of relative party political stability has contributed to the grouping of the fragmented unions in two federations, the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions (NFCTU) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), which are classifiable more by their international affiliations than by the party sympathies of their members. Almost as
divisive as the PUP's former control of the unions the growing influence of the rival international organisations - the Inter-American Regional Organisation (GRIT) of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and the Latin American Confederation of Christian Syndicalists (CLASC) of the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU) - is due as much to poor union leadership and finance as to the vacuum which the PUP's disengagement created. These four aspects of the trade union movement - its relationship with the political parties and the international organisation and its leadership and financial problems - will be discussed in this chapter.

**Union-Party Relations**

Because the United Front paved the way for change in this relationship it is useful to follow the approach of the last chapter and separate the discussion into two periods:

(a) **Before the United Front**

Of the six registered trade unions at the beginning of this period the GWU was the sole example of political unionism; the others catered for urban occupational groups too small to be of political value. The GWU's relationship with the PUP, however, rules out generalisation because the situation differed in the outdistricts and

1. The details of these unions are given in Table 11
in the national centre. As we have seen, the outdistrict trade union apparatus developed, in the absence of local party organisations, into a political machine. At the centre, however, both the party and the union were divided within themselves over the extent of the PUP leaders' control of the union. Assured of the union's general support Price was indifferent to its internal management and in fact declined re-election to the Presidency and to the Executive Council in 1953.² Richardson and Goldson on the other hand argued for a tight rein in order to prevent Pollard, the General Secretary, from dominating his less able trade union colleagues. Thus while Price withdrew in order "to give much more time and energy to the purely political side of the movement"³ Richardson resigned from the Executive Council in the same year, 1953, and later from the union because he was "fed up with Pollard's irregularities."⁴ Goldson, however, continued as Assistant General Secretary until Labour was added to his ministerial portfolio in September 1955.

For their part the trade unionists viewed the union-party tie in terms of its value to their careers. Almost all of them stood to benefit from an interpenetration of the PUP and the union. They welcomed Richardson's and Goldson's protective influence, and were also interested in the high status and income accorded to members of the

2. The Belize Billboard, 30th April, 1953. p.3.
3. Ibid.
Legislative Assembly and the Belize City Council. Jex who was a shop steward and earned under $24 per week as a checker at the Belize Sawmill was the outstanding beneficiary of the PUP-GWU alliance. He was recruited into electoral politics as a PUP municipal candidate in 1952 and retained the party’s nomination in the 1954 general election. The crowning achievement was his appointment as Member for Public Utilities at a monthly salary of $300. In fact, despite his manual working-class background he had more in common with the PUP leaders than with his trade union colleagues when the union split occurred. Not only did he devote little time to the trade union movement, his style of living had been transformed.

Pollard, was the least of the beneficiaries. His legal disability to contest elections rendered politics an unattractive goal. Nor could his passion for trade unionism, which pre-dated the nationalist movement, readily give precedence to political action over collective bargaining. It is therefore not insignificant that his first major conflict with Richardson and Goldson was over the settlement of the politically inspired general strike in 1952. His insistence on prompt negotiations was, however, not wholly inspired by his trade union ideals. An equally important consideration was the doubtful financial value of the strike. This arrangement whereby the worker expressed his allegiance primarily by striking and voting in political elections rather than paying dues

5. The wage rate for supervisors and machinery operation in the sawmill industry in 1950 was $2.40 to $4.00 per day.
contributed to the union's, and therefore Pollard's, financial insecurity. Not only was his monthly salary of $130 lower than his previous income of $250 as ORIT's national organiser but it was received in "bits and pieces." 7

For a variety of reasons therefore Pollard resisted the close association between the union and the party. It contributed to the union's financial instability and his own. Above all, however, by enhancing the status of the other trade unionists the relationship threatened his leadership role. Constantly arraigned before the Executive Council for administrative and financial irregularities Pollard found it difficult to reconcile the Executive Councillors' constraints with his superior intellect and organising ability.

If the factional alignments cut across the union-party line the joint participation of these two organisations in the colonial administration deepened the rift between Pollard and the three senior quasi-ministers of the government, Richardson, Goldson and Jex. The role of these three Members demanded a less sectarian view of industrial relations, and this invariably conflicted with the aspirations of the GWU. To be sure, labour benefited from participating in the government. Employers' opposition to unionism was easier to overcome, the check-off system with the attendant auditing of union accounts at first by anyone and then by the government auditor alone was introduced, the registration of unions became compulsory, labour legislation was reformed and

greater co-operation between the GWU and the Labour Department was achieved. But the promises of higher wages and employment remained unfulfilled. More specifically, the government faced in 1955 with a decline in revenue and the hurricane 'Janet' damages of £4 million, refused a wage increase to its manual employees. Indeed, Richardson and Goldson as Member for Natural Resources and Social Services respectively had an apparent identity of interest with the dominant expatriate industrial concerns. This led the Belize Billboard to rebuke the union leaders for their expectancy of early substantial benefits. In fact, the editorial was a far cry from the sentiments expressed in 1952 when Richardson and Goldson spearheaded the strike:

"We don't know where people in this country ever got the idea from that the government of British Honduras is obliged to find work for everybody at the highest possible wages. The brutal fact is that no government can find work for all the people who wish it. A government can only find work for those whom it can usefully employ in providing services that private capital will not provide. In every country, too, there exists some unemployment. Often brought on by government shackling of private industry, admittedly. The case in B.H would seem to be that private industry is shackling itself and that too many people who can do something about the situation are standing by demanding that the government do something. The people in government are at the moment waiting until the promised allocation from CD&W funds reach this country. When that happens some of the money will go out for administrative staff and for material, the rest will be used to employ workers. Nothing can be done before April comes in."

In pointing out that the expatriate interests which were being spared government pressure were British and West Indian-owned and that one of their representatives, H. T. A. Bowman, a citrus planter, was

the Associate Member for Natural Resources, Pollard cemented his alliance with Price. In relating such statements to Richardson's and Goldson's West Indian sympathies they proved to the worker-voter that his loyalty to one of them involved support of the other. This argument eventually produced the slogan: 'Price for politics and Pollard for unionism.'

The pattern of the power struggle in the union closely followed that in the PUP. The two union factions controlled different components of the organisational structure. Through their parliamentary relationship with the G&U Assemblymen Richardson and Goldson exerted considerable influence in the Executive Council and the General Council whose membership was largely coterminous. The General Council reported to a biennial National Congress with whom Pollard was popular. Since the district branches were countrywide the Congress was much more representative of the population than the PUP annual convention. But precisely because they were widely dispersed the union members were not in a strategic position to obtain the same measure of influence in the leadership struggle which had been assigned to the urban rank-and-file in the PUP's. They, however, established their supremacy and Pollard's popularity at the eleventh National Congress in 1955 when the Executive Council urged that the Secretary be replaced. Price's plea for unity, in the wake of a break away threat by the delegates of the Belize Sawmill and the Vogue commercial store if Pollard was not re-elected, forestalled the attempt. Neither Price's intervention nor

the denouncing of an attempt to limit the Secretary's powers encouraged Pollard to be more amenable to the Executive Council's decisions. Further acts of administrative and financial irregularity were therefore bound to break the delicate truce.

The occasion arose in January 1956, when Pollard misappropriated £67.09 from the sum of £141.00 (£100 U.S) which an American union, the International Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, donated to the Corozal hurricane fund in 1955. In suspending Pollard only after a junior staff member reported the incident to the police, almost six months later, the Executive Councillors were being primarily lenient to themselves rather than to their colleague. As principal financial officers, Jex, the President and Albert Arzu, the Trustee, were convicted jointly with Pollard of fraudulent conversion of £93.16 from the same fund to the use of the GWU. A criminal charge was also preferred against the union administrator, George Gardiner, for misuse of funds. Those who were not involved in these irregularities feared the loss in influence and status that would result from a union split and its estrangement with the PUP.

Pollard's subsequent resignation was therefore a pyrrhic victory for Richardson, Goldson and Jex. As the outcome of the Congress indicated, the personal influence of these three leaders in the local

11. Ibid.
12. Ibid. 29th September, 1958.
branches was negligible. Moreover, the membership had fallen with the decline in political activity after the 1954 election. The union was therefore of little electoral value in 1957, and in fact the GWU Assemblymen, Jex, Jose Chin and George Flowers, sought re-election as HIP candidates. Finally, after the 1957 election the remaining members tended to support the CDU because of its association with the victorious PUP.

If the union's relationship with the HIP was slight its connections with the succeeding NIP was non-existent. Leadership was not shared so that Jex ceased to be a politician after losing the 1957 election. Both the party and the union were in fact preoccupied with their own survival and tended to ignore the other as inconsequential.

This relationship was in marked contrast to the intimacy between the PUP and the CDU. They functioned in the same office and shared the Belize Times which the CDU had launched. More important, the PUP leaders dominated the CDU Executive Council. Cattouse, the party treasurer and formerly the GWU Vice President, became the President; Lucas Marin, a mercantile clerk and party activist, was the Vice President; Pollard was the General Secretary; Leonard Jones, a stevedore and a militant party supporter, was Assistant Secretary; and Louis Sylvestre who was being groomed for the Legislative Assembly was the Recording Secretary.

Pollard was chary of this intermingling of union and party roles but given the paucity of able trade unionists he could do no more than regulate the tenure of the political office holders. The GWU rules
which the new union adopted were amended to prevent members of the Legislative Assembly from remaining union officials. Although this rule was not rigidly enforced Cattouse relinquished the Presidency on becoming the Member for Social Services. Several other amendments were designed to secure the independence of the union and of Pollard within it. The regular payment of dues was stipulated in order to reduce the union's dependence on non-union support. In assuming the authority to issue directives to the Treasurer subject to the approval of the Executive Council Pollard clarified his role as the chief executive officer. The Executive Council whose actual role in determining policy was superior to that of the Congress lost its disciplinary powers to "a membership meeting of the Belize urban workers." The latter could expel the national union officials and their right to appeal was to Congress alone.

The political environment, however, reduced the effectiveness of these safeguards against the penetration of PUP influence. Apart from the politician's dual office holding, the distinction between the union and the party was blurred by shared goals and strategies. Their electoral alliance in 1957 was inspired by mutual opposition to other political parties, the colonial administration and the British and West Indian business interests. The CDU's support however was not as vital as the GWU's in 1954 to the PUP's success. It provided only two candidates: McKoy, the organising Secretary in Stann Creek, and

Victor Orellana, a PUP supporter who had helped to form the CDU branch in Orange Walk. Once the election was won the PUP's influence became overpowering. Perhaps this was also another reason for Pollard's break with Price, although both leaders emphasised their party difference. In forming the DALP instead of another trade union after he was expelled in 1958 for "failing to fulfil his functions properly and generally......not acting in the best interest of the Union," Pollard was in fact recognising the primacy of political parties in the political process. As we have seen, however, his attempt to influence party politics was as unsuccessful as his assertion of trade union independence.

His successor in the CDU secretariaship was Norman Lainfiesta who was neither a trade unionist nor a politician, and was no more amenable to the politicians' control of the union. Price's pre-occupation with his own political future enabled Lainfiesta to purge the union leadership of the former's supporters. The defection of Marin who had succeeded Cattouse as President and was elected to the city council in 1958 from the PUP in 1961 robbed Price of his main link with the union. The CDU, however, paid a price for its autonomy. It lost its subsidies. Both the party and the union appeared to have a common, lucrative source of finance, as the auditor's report for 1958 indicated. The union was not affiliated to an international labour movement and its unauthorised collection of 25 cents instead of $1.00 from its male members could not, for example, account for the receipt of over

Moreover, the same voucher books were "used by both the union and the Belize Times newspaper" and the auditor was unable "to confirm that only union expenditure has been charged to union funds." Financial assistance from Mexican sources was inadequate even to maintain the union's meagre staff. By 1960 the union was a mere shadow of its former self; it slowly sank into oblivion as its members transferred their loyalty to the new trade unions that were formed in the early 1960s.

The effect of this chequered union-party relationship on the trade union movement was demoralising. Hundreds of unionists became disaffected and withdrew their support; jurisdictional conflicts were rife and the stature of unionism was lowered in the eyes of the employers. Between 1946 and 1960 nine unions had been organised with an estimated peak membership of 13,000 at the end of 1955. As the table on the following page shows only four unions survived the 1950s with a total membership of 2,200 out of the estimated wage earning population of 21,000.

Jurisdictional disputes though rife, seldom resulted in strikes. The disillusioned unionists could not be easily persuaded to take this action, and the non-unionists studiously avoided appointing leaders when work stoppages occurred, presumably out of fear of victimisation.

16. Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GWU</th>
<th>CU</th>
<th>LU</th>
<th>NLJ</th>
<th>CSA</th>
<th>MCU</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>MSU</th>
<th>CDU</th>
<th>WDU</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2242</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>3111</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>4,549</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>5,607</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>9,800</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>12,273</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1559</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| a  | General Workers' Union |
| b  | Carpenters, Cabinet Makers and Painters Union |
| c  | British Honduras Labour Union |
| d  | National Labour Union |
| e  | Civil Service Association renamed Public Officers' Union in 1962 |
| f  | British Honduras Mercantile Clerks' Union |
| g  | British Honduras Development Union |
| h  | Municipal Employees Union |
| i  | Christian Democratic Union |
| j  | British Honduras Workers' Development Union |
| k  | The Labour Department Reports: There is reason to believe that inflated figures were returned by one Union in previous years. As a result of events in 1956 more realistic returns appear to have been made. Annual Report of the Labour Department, 1956 and 1957, p.1. |

Source: Annual Reports of the Labour Department
Indeed, they renewed demands for trade union legislation which would have resulted in the "conduct \( \square \) of industrial relation by legal process."\textsuperscript{18} The Stann Creek workers seemed to be the only group interested in trade union representation and therefore in the representational conflict. The check off system operated in favour of the GWU which the Sharpe Company upheld as the "principal union" despite the obvious popularity of the CDU.\textsuperscript{19} The conflict between the two rival unions deepened when the government offer to examine the accounts of the unions to determine their financial membership foundered upon the inability of the two older unions, the GWU and BHDU, to even recognise the existence of the CDU. The attitude of the two unions also ruled out a representational poll as this required the agreement of all the parties to the dispute. In such a situation extremism had to meet with extremism before reason could prevail. Reacting to acts of incendiaryism the company agreed to all of the unions representing every category of workers. The distribution of the membership of the waterfront workers between the GWU, BHDU and the CDU was typical of the fragmentation that ensued. But for ORIT's intervention in 1958 this absurd situation may have persisted. An inter-union committee agreed on lines of demarcation in both the citrus and sugar industries.\textsuperscript{20} Residual bitterness however defeated the idea of a Trade Union Congress. Indeed the two anti-CDU unions, the GWU and

\textsuperscript{18.} Labour Department Report 1956 and 1957. p.12.

\textsuperscript{19.} Ibid. p.11.

\textsuperscript{20.} Ibid. 1958. p.9.
BHDU, could agree to little else than "mutual co-operation and support in the event of a strike or strikes called by either union."\(^{21}\) For although the GWU's pledge in 1956 to recommend the BHDU for international affiliation to ORIT had removed the stumbling block to their amalgamation this did not materialise until June 1960.\(^{22}\) Their fusion into the General Workers Development Union (GWDU), however, indicated that the optimism about the country's future which the united front and the constitutional conference had engendered was not lost upon the trade union movement.

**b) After the United Front**

If the union-party tie fragmented the trade union movement it placed the PUP in an anomalous position. Despite its nationalist claims the party had lost its base in the labour movement for it had no union support. In rebuilding this base it was not attracted to a 'blanket' union. The national leadership which this structure demanded was not available, as the few able politicians were immersed in working the new ministerial system of government. Nor did the events in the 1950s inspire outdistrict confidence in the centralisation of trade union authority. Moreover, union leadership in the outdistricts although poorer in quality was undoubtedly more stable and loyal. The PUP therefore fostered regional trade unions in 1961, under

\(^{21}\) Ibid. 1956 and 1957. p.9.

\(^{22}\) Ibid. 1960. p.18.
the control or patronage of the district elected representatives. In the north, the Northern Cane Workers’ Union was controlled by Senator Jesus Ken, its Secretary-General and at the time (1961) the Corozal South Assemblyman. In the west, the Cayo Labour Union was supervised by Hector Silva and Santiago Peredomo, the legislators for Cayo North and Cayo South respectively, who were the auditors and the general organisers. In the south, David McKoy, the Stann Creek Rural Assemblyman, became the administrator-general of the Southern Christian Worker’s Union (SCU), an offshoot of the CDU with a branch in Toledo. These unions, as Silva assured the Cayo workers, were “to be free of political domination …… but have the privilege of supporting the party of its choice.”

Regional trade unions were by no means a satisfactory alternative to a national blanket or omnibus-type of union. They accentuated the territorial and industrial discontinuities. First of all, each of the regions catered for a different type of industry, so that the Stann Creek citrus worker in the south had virtually no contact with the Corozal cane-farmer in the north. Nor, for that matter, did the stevedores in Stann Creek and in Belize City; one group was represented by the SCU and the other by the Christian Workers Union (CWU) which Pollard formed in 1962 as a breakaway of the CDU. Moreover, labour was immobile to the extent that the sugar industry depended in 1965, for example, on 512 labourers or 20.6 per cent of its work force from

Mexico while unemployment persisted elsewhere in the country. In matching the industrial structure, the union structure did not enable working-class solidarity, already unsupported by an appropriate ideology, to cut across cultural and local ties. Secondly, these unions were too small to attract independently the attention of international trade union organisations and they were (with the exception of the Stann Creek section of the SCU), inherently too weak to survive on their own. With timber-cutting and cattle-rearing as the main activity in the western region the Cayo Labour Union lacked an industrial base. In fact, the auditors report in 1963 and the static reported membership of 163 since then suggest that the union is still inactive. The Northern Cane Workers Union suffered from the migratory character of a large section of the workers. But for the undying efforts of the hard core members the decline of its membership from 345 in 1962 to 175 in 1965 would have been greater. To a considerable extent the union was also self-defeating. Its main purpose was to assist its members to cross the barrier from a worker to an independent farmer. Thus its weakness lay in its success.

Logically enough, and still under PUP inspiration, these embryonic regional unions, together with Pollard's CWU, formed the National Federation of Christian Trade Unions (NFCTU) in 1962. As


each union was to retain its independence under its own district President and General Secretary, the Federation did not seek separate registration. The NFCTU executive is reasonably well representative of the four unions, but the CWU inevitably dominates the federation. It leaders, drawn from Belize City, are more able and are better placed strategically to develop a manageable type of federal organisation responsive to government policy. In fact, the CWU representatives comprised the sub-committee which drafted the constitution of the federation. But for the assistance of these officials (and in particular Pollard, who was the national organiser of both the CWU and the NFCTU until his departure for Trinidad in 1964), the district unions would be unable to do an effective job of collective bargaining. Indeed, the CWU, impatient with the personality clashes within the NCWU and recognising the need for vigorous union activity in Orange Walk, a relatively new sugar area, broke out of its self-imposed jurisdiction in Belize City by opening a branch in the town. The influence of the CWU officials is so pervasive within the Federation that even the Labour Department claims that the outdistrict trade unions are affiliates of the CWU rather than the NFCTU. The upshot is that both the NFCTU and the outdistrict unions are judged by the activities of the CWU officials.

27. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
The reconciliation between Pollard and Price was mutually desirable. Pollard's appointment in 1962 as Assistant Executive Secretary for the British Caribbean Zone of CLASC had re-established his claim to the leadership of the local trade union movement. His association with the unions also solved their problem of international affiliation. As he immodestly put it, the Stann Creek CDU's (later SCU) application for affiliation with IFCTU "was only a formality as the three international organisations (IFCTU, CLASC and the Peasants' Federation of Latin America) in accepting him as National Organiser for the CDU Stann Creek had already accepted as their affiliate." Moreover, the Catholic and Latin American commitment of CLASC appealed to Price. But although Pollard was now more independent of the politicians it was not in his long-term interest to remain alienated from the party which he knew would some day assume full power.

Reasons for the PUP's loose rein on these trade unions are not hard to find. In the first place, it could not ignore the disintegrative effect of the close relationship on the trade union movement in the previous decade. Secondly, a too close collaboration with the trade union movement is not necessarily compatible with the PUP government's dependence upon expatriate interests to fulfil its plans for economic development. Thirdly, the outdistrict trade unions have been displaced by the party branch and the Town Boards as institutions of local political influence. Fourthly, the NFCTU and its component unions

do not constitute the entire trade union movement. The PUP can only hope for some form of co-existence with the other section of the movement, the Trade Unions Congress. One component, the GDU, is likely to resist strenuously the PUP's influence if only for historical reasons. The two other components, the POU and the British Honduras Union of Teachers (BHUT), whose members are predominantly middle-class Creoles, would be even less responsive. While there is little definite evidence to suggest that the TUC is sympathetic to the opposition party there is nothing much to indicate the contrary either. Nor, as we shall see in our discussion of the civil service, is the POU altogether wary of anti-government adventures. Finally, the development of party politics since 1960 discourages strong structural ties between the PUP and the NCFTU. Such a development may antagonise union members who support the opposition party.

This change in the relationship between political parties and the unions has had a salutary effect on industrial relations. Union demands are more job related than political, and jurisdictional frontiers are determined by representational polls rather than by strikes. It is a reflection of the improvement in industrial relations as well as the government's private enterprise philosophy that the use of the governmental machinery to determine wage levels is confined to the citrus and timber industries. The system of independent bargaining between union and management is widespread and conciliation is of necessity the watchword. For one thing recourse to litigation is financially prohibitive for the unions. For another thing, keen representational competi-
tion impels quick settlement of disputes. Of the thirteen strikes which occurred in the two years between July 1964 and August 1966 five lasted for one day, four for two days, one for three, five, seven and seventeen days respectively. Even an entrenched union cannot be complacent. In extending its interest to Orange Walk the CWU's objective was not so much to compete with its weak associate, the NCWU, as to forestall its arch rival, the GWDU, from monopolising the workers' representation in the town. The merit of its action may be judged by the fact that not long after the branch office was established the union shared with the GWDU the negotiation of a collective agreement with Taylor Woodrow International on behalf of the construction workers of the new sugar factory. Industrial relations therefore appear to benefit from spirited union rivalry.

In showing the correlation between the improvement in the political and social environment and in industrial relations the employer-employee relationship should be emphasised. British Honduras is fortunate that the major industry, sugar, has not developed as in the West Indies on the estate system. Industrial relations are therefore mercifully free of the kind of paternalism that arises when the employer is responsible for the workers' social welfare - houses, schools, medical facilities and the like. Although the causes of disputes are in general complex they appear in British Honduras to be mainly industrial. Strikes certainly do not represent a challenge to

the dominance of the economy by foreign owned companies, as this is no less ideologically acceptable to the trade union leaders than to the political leaders. At the same time the structure of production does not require a large army of expatriates in middle management who so often act as an irritant to nationalist feelings.

To summarise the pattern of union-party relations has not been uniform. The PUP is the only party that developed a clear cut relationship with the unions in the 1950s. It relationship with the GwU and CDU was at first interdependent but in both cases ended in conflict. Both unions also came out worse than the party in the conflicts. The union-party tie changed in the 1960 more in response to changing political conditions rather than as a result of the uncomfortable experience of the trade unions. For the labour organisations, except the POU, remain vulnerable to party political pressure. Their recent origin and a weak industrial base prevent the trade unions from sinking deep roots among the workers.

Financial Difficulties

We have given the impression that union treasuries are perpetually empty because of the sharp practices by trade union officials. In fact, the reverse is much nearer to the truth. Workers were not organised in the 1950s primarily for financial purposes; their low income, seasonal unemployment in the three major industries - sugar, citrus and forestry - and ultimate dependence upon the weather are basically responsible
for the unions' small due paying membership. In the citrus industry for example, employment fell by 67.5 per cent during 1965 after the reaping season ended. Another important factor is the preponderance of self-employed farmers in the sugar industry. Moreover, the intransit Mexican cane farmer has no strong commitment to unionism. Furthermore, despite its convenience the establishment of outdistrict trade unions largely based on a single industry is financially disadvantageous.

In these circumstances the trade union leaders have to make their salaries as the opportunity offers. Indeed, the unions cannot survive without financial assistance from the international organisations. A monthly subsidy of £400 and £50 from the British Trade Union Congress and ORIT respectively together with the Stockholm Congress levy of 75 cents on each its members, kept the GWU officials "going on part pay till December 1953." The component unions of the NFCTU are even more dependent on their international organisation, CLASC. One of the drawbacks of this financial dependence is that the unions are encouraged to dismiss the real problem of building a dues-paying membership as insoluble. Another is the internal dissensions which invariably arise over the distribution of resources within the union. The jostling of the GWU officials for the nomination to an ORIT conference in Cuba in 1951, for example, brought the union into international disrepute and

33. The Belize Times, 6th October, 1956.
ultimately led to the dismissal of the Secretary, Henry Middleton.  

The availability of separate sources of international assistance has also encouraged the two rival groups of the movement, the TUC and the NFCTU, to exaggerate their differences. Indeed, the two sections have become pawns of their international organisations and therefore appear to be no exception to Millen's generalisations on the consequences of the dependence of unions on international sources of finance. He writes: "Dependence upon sources outside the union movement often leads to the compromising of principles and sometimes to actual corruption; it can also produce a certain type of careerism and lead to the establishment of 'paper' unions .... There is also a type of corruption of the mind that frequently overtakes those who aid the foreign unions, when merely by virtue of their gifts they feel that they have demonstrated their superior wisdom and acquired the right to exert influence."

Even the FOU which is relatively affluent is not totally impervious to financial considerations. It played a leading role in the formation of the Trade Union Congress in 1966 which was largely in fulfilment of ORIT's desire to direct its financial assistance to its three affiliates through a central organisation.

In so far as financial assistance is a source of influence the role of the international organisation is unchallenged. Neither the

34. The Belize Billboard, 15th June, 1951.
36. Interview with Labour Official.
PUP nor the NIP appears to be a source of finance. Moreover, as we have pointed out, the PUP for its own reasons welcomed the influence of CLASC. It is hardly likely that the unions have solicited financial assistance from business groups if only because none of them is sufficiently entrenched to risk the charge of being company dominated. The government makes no direct subsidies but helps by financing local trade union courses and overseas visits to conferences.

The financial problem is not only that of income but also of administration. The G.U., in particular, launched several ill-conceived ventures in the 1950s. Its news-sheet, Social Justice, merely duplicated the Belize Billboard labour columns and within six months of its birth suffered a loss of £147.80. The union also operated an unprofitable lottery in 1950. Such unsuccessful enterprises were more the cause than the result of malpractices. As the auditor ominously cautioned in 1951 "it will be a very serious matter if Trust Fund will have to be used for loans to members, strikes and general administrative expense. The Sick Benefit Fund, as its name implies, can only be used for a particular purpose. It is suggested that this fund should be invested in the Government Savings Bank so that it may not be considered at any time available for use in connection with routine administration." Despite the warning this fund was misappropriated as the invalid so often discovered.

38. Ibid.
In the case of the new unions their unsatisfactory state of expenditure arose principally from the officials’ limited knowledge of accounting. Their incompetence is a recurring theme in the audited reports. Not infrequently the auditors are "unable to certify the union statements that have been submitted" as these "were not compatible with the principle of accounts."39 To compound this state of affairs the auditing is irregular and is seen not as a corrective measure but the fulfilling of a legal requirement. On the other hand if the government insisted on compliance with the trade union regulations it would drive most of the unions out of existence. The problem is that the incompetence can easily necessitate sharp practices, and as the two interact the latter is invariably upheld by the union members as the root cause of maladministration.

Leadership Problems

The inter-relationship between a union’s financial status and the quality of its leadership is obvious. Except for the POU, the unions in British Honduras are too small in membership and finance to attract able leaders. In fact, the labour leaders have always had an amateur rather than a professional status in representing the interests of the workers although the BHDU Secretary and the C&U President are full-time officials. It is even difficult for the leaders of these two unions to build the kind of bureaucratic organisation which is required to sustain

a consistent programme of union activity because there is little 'job appeal' in trade unionism. Pollard is the only professional trade unionist in British Honduras and in fact has maintained this status as a CLANC representative which required him to work in Trinidad from 1964 to 1966.

The unions are clearly in a dilemma. Because the labour force is unskilled the movement is unable to throw up capable leaders. Even if it had wished to persist with the close structural ties with the trade unions, the PUP, once it came to power, did not have sufficient able officials for its own purpose, much less to make them available to the trade unions. The urban professional middle-class Creole politician might have provided this leadership if the unions had been more viable and the headquarters of the two major agricultural industries - citrus and sugar - had been located in Belize City rather than in Stann Creek and Corozal respectively. Instead, the urban middle-class leaders gave their service to the government wage councils and other ad hoc labour committees. In any case their leadership is likely to be spurned by the NFCTU. The federation leaders declined membership of the Trade Union Congress partly because it was spearheaded by the civil servants' organisation, the POU. Indeed they would not only deny the POU the leadership of a national movement but even its claim to be a trade union. To them civil servants and teachers have 'outside' allegiances and are therefore suspect. It appears that so long as this attitude persists the trade union movement will remain divided, as the other trade union leaders are too poorly educated, inexperienced and
often insecure to offset the influence of the civil servants.

International Affiliations

The two international trade union movements, ORIT - ICFTU and CLASC - IFCTU, are not valued in British Honduras only for their financial assistance. They are also an important source of legitimacy to the trade unions. In the absence of compulsory recognition by management, and given the chequered union-party relationship, the trade unions have had to bolster their authority through their international connexions. The dispute between Pollard and the GWU in 1956, for example, was not considered by either party to be resolved until ORIT intervened at their invitation. Similarly, as we have seen, Pollard's influence could no longer be discounted by either the politicians, trade unionists, or the employers once he was appointed Assistant Executive Secretary to CLASC. Indeed, his association with CLASC was a greater asset to his leadership role than was the support of the colonial administration between 1958 and 1961. In a society that has no inherent claim to international attention the periodic visits of ORIT and CLASC personnel also add to the status of their respective affiliates.

While finance and status were and are still the main considerations in these international affiliations, ideology was by no means totally absent in the 1950s. Pollard's association with CLASC arose more from necessity than choice, but it was not altogether surprising. Like the other young nationalist leaders, Pollard, as we have seen
earlier in this study, had absorbed in the late 1940s large doses of Catholic doctrine on social and economic issues. These conflicted with ORIT's secular outlook, to the extent that ORIT's Assistant Secretary, Serfani Romauldi, "displayed annoyance" at Pollard's attempt "to introduce certain Christian practices into ICFTU and ORIT such as the beginning and closing meetings with a short prayer." Another ORIT official, Dr. Ernst Schwartz, also "opposed Pollard's attempt in Costa Rica to introduce a resolution designed to give ORIT support to the principle of stabilizing education by state aid to religious schools." 41

These differences over the religious orientation of trade unionism should be kept in perspective. In the first place, Pollard revealed them only after ORIT had condemned his breakaway CDU. Secondly, the purpose of the disclosure was not primarily to discredit ORIT but to exploit the religious sentiments in the local trade union and political movements. For although CLASC rejects ORIT's labour structure and approach as being irrelevant to the Latin American situation, 42 there is no fundamental difference in the posture of the British Honduras affiliates of the two international organisations. More specifically, the influence of CLASC has not produced an anti-American feeling in the colony. The government's clarion call for more private American capital is no more jarring to the NFCTU than to the TUC. Moreover, there are

41. The Belize Times, 22nd October, 1956.
limits to which the CLASC affiliated unions can exploit religious feelings since, as is not the case in most Latin American countries, Christianity and Roman Catholicism are not synonyms in British Honduras. Indeed, the trade unions are now controlled by a different social group which in terms of religion is not as homogeneous as the PUP - GWU leaders in the early 1950s. In any case, being primary school leavers the present group of trade union leaders were less exposed to the Jesuits' influence. Furthermore, as the main forum of political education in the 1940s the literary and debating societies, which as we saw the clergy also patronised, have given way to the political parties.

For all these reasons the religious factor is not as strong as in the early 1950s. In fact, apart from rendering communist or even socialist penetration of the labour force remote or even impossible, religion does not enter into the trade union leaders' calculations. These leaders are essentially a pragmatic group preoccupied with seeking better wages and working conditions for their members in a spirit of keen rivalry. To note that trade unionism lacks a religious orientation is not to suggest, however, that the influence of the church as an institution within the society has weakened. It remains firmly entrenched, as we shall see in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6

THE CHURCH

Numerical Strength of the Christian Churches

The overwhelming majority of the population are nominally Christians. In the 1960 Census returns 91.2 per cent of the total population professed to be Christians. The Roman Catholic church is the largest denomination serving 60.8 per cent of the total population. It has consistently maintained this proportion since 1931 as the following table indicates.

TABLE 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership of the Churches 1931 - 1960</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>30,782</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>35,263</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>55,119</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>10,813</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>12,430</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>16,412</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7,257</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>8,475</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>10,570</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1,011</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others and Not Stated</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>5,652</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51,347</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>59,220</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>90,442</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: British Honduras Census Reports 1946 and 1960.

It is also the largest single denomination in every administrative district and the Belize district is the only one in which the Roman Catholics do not form the majority of the population.

The Anglican church has maintained its record of being the largest Protestant denomination with 17 per cent of the total population. The Methodists are the next largest Protestant church, while these two churches form the backbone of Protestantism their overall proportion of the population is on the decline possibly because they have had to share the Protestant following with an increasing number of American evangelical sects.

The 5,652 British Hondurans classified as 'Others and not stated' in 1960 in Table 12 include 1,101 Jews and 436 Jehovah's Witnesses. The Mennonites are not mentioned separately in the 1960 Census report and probably are among those totalling 3,824 or 4.2 per cent of the population which the enumerators classified as 'Other Religion and Religion not stated'. In the same census returns 63 people stated that they have no religion. This insignificant number is not surprising since the bonds of religion are too strong and underpinned by the denominational system of education to allow for a sizeable proportion of agnostics and atheists.

The Church's Role In The Society

The role of the church as an institution in society and its relation to the State is not a central issue in the contemporary politics of British Honduras. There appears to be a high degree of
consensus between the political parties that the church should occupy a central position in the society and that the Christian religion should be woven into the fabric of social life. The reaction of the Christian churches to this conception of their role is self-evident. Among the secular institutions, perhaps the most prominent advocate of this conception is the government. Its leader claims that the government's social and economic policies are based on the principles of Christian Democracy and appears to accept the assumption that there is a causal relationship between the religiosity of a country and the development of democratic institutions. Indeed there is the tendency within the PUP leadership to accept uncritically religion's social function. "Those who try to confine the Church strictly within the four walls of the church building," states The Belize Times, "are attempting the impossible...... Church and politics share a joint responsibility ... in creating a proper climate for the spiritual, intellectual and material growth of the human person."²

The opposition party has also assigned to the church a prominent place in the political process. It has claimed that the active role of religion in the education system "is a precious heritage that all political parties and all far-seeing citizens want to see continued in this country, particularly after the country becomes wholly responsible for its affairs."³ Few institutions have been given this assurance of

a more or less permanent involvement in the political process by both political parties.

What has formed a central political issue is the relationship of the individual denominations to the PUP government. The denominations do not enjoy the same degree of intimacy with the government, nor did they with the former colonial government. The Protestant churches occupied the influential position in the crown colony period but since the rise of the PUP to power they have lost this position to the Roman Catholic church. The change in the fortunes of the respective denominations has assumed political importance partly because of the PUP's ideological stand and also because denominational adherence has tended to follow cultural and racial cleavages. In no field is the change in the respective fortune of the Catholic and Protestant denominations as evident as in education. Before this is demonstrated we should discuss the common denominational features and the effect of the post-war political changes on the status of the denominations.

Common Denominational Features

Although there are several Christian denominations in British Honduras only the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian warrant consideration. It is these denominations that have influenced the social values of the society. A crucial feature of this influence is the expatriate monopoly of power and authority within the denominations. In 1964 only seven British Hondurans were among the thirty-three Roman Catholic priests, one was among the four Methodist ministers, and
none among the Anglican priests. The influence of the local Roman Catholic priests within the hierarchy is negligible as only one of them, Father Woods, is a Jesuit priest. The others of whom there were eight in 1968 are Diocesan priests who work in the outdistrict parishes and usually do not teach in the secondary schools.

The difficulty of attracting nationals to the ministry is largely responsible for the small proportion of local clergymen. The problem is compounded by the disproportionate number of Roman Catholics who fail to complete their long and exacting studies. As we observe, Price’s vocation for the priesthood was tested in both Guatemala and the U.S.A in the 1930s. Between 1960 and 1968 five other nationals were sent to the U.S.A to be trained as Jesuit priests but none of them persevered. Whether it is the attraction of American life or the ignomony of failure these students have not returned to British Honduras.

Recruitment is not peculiarly a Roman Catholic or British Honduran problem. The Protestant churches in the West Indies have, however, overcome their problem by ordaining lay preachers, mostly retired primary school teachers, after a short and intensive period of training. Indeed, J. L. Blackett, a Barbadian, who retired as the Chief Education Officer in British Honduras in 1967 immediately became an Anglican priest and remained in the colony as Principal of St. Michael’s College. In a sense the new group of Protestant clergymen are the equivalent to

the Catholic Diocesan priests although their limited influence is due more to their late entry into the priesthood rather than to their form of training. The converse to the overall training problem is the tendency for the less able British Hondurans to find a niche in the growing number of evangelicalsects whose educational requirements are less demanding than those of the more established churches.

A part of the Jesuits' recruitment problem is that their predominantly Indian and Mestizo membership is not occupationally oriented towards the liberal professions. It is not insignificant therefore that like their Protestant counterparts, the local Jesuit and Diocesan priests are almost wholly Creoles and Caribs. This would have been beneficial to the process of cultural integration but for the tendency of the Jesuit (as distinct from the Diocesan) priests to remain in the U.S.A.

It is therefore mainly as laymen that British Hondurans exert their influence on the church. The extent of their influence varies with the denomination. In the Presbyterian church which has been without a clergyman since 1957 their influence is complete. The decision making structure of the Anglican and Methodist churches is also open to the laity. The Roman Catholic structure, however, assigns a more or less passive role to the lay members as the American Jesuits dominate the ecclesiastical, educational and financial machinery. There is no deliberative body comparable to the Anglican and Methodist Synods and few of the Catholic laymen can be easily identified with the leadership of the church. Nor are the Catholic secondary schools advised by a
Board of Governors as is the case with the Protestant schools.

One special feature of lay influence is the variation in the occupational groups which command it. The important office holders in the Protestant churches are the higher status Creole professional class of lawyers and civil servants. Harrison Courtenay and Kenneth Dunn, the Commissioner of Labour, are for example, Chancellor and Secretary of the Anglican Diocese respectively. Some of the other principal functionaries in either the Anglican or Methodist churches are - Donald Fairweather, a retired civil servant and Lieutenant Colonel of the Volunteer Force, and chairman of the Public Service Commission; Ernest Fuller, Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Education; Ednay Caine, Accountant General; Daniel Gill, Head of the Economic Planning Unit; and Horace Young, a lawyer and former Crown Counsel. In contrast, the Jesuits also acknowledge the occupational preferences of their adherents by relying on the prominent businessmen, notably Edward Gegg and Andrew Burns, proprietor of the Angelus Press, for informal advice.

The expatriate control of the secondary schools is also a common denominational feature. In 1967 the churches managed fifteen of the sixteen schools; the exception being the Government Technical College in Belize City. The Roman Catholics owned nine of these, the Anglicans controlled three, the Methodists possessed two, and the Church of the Nazarene managed one. Of these fifteen schools ten were run by expatriate clergymen or nuns, three by local Diocesan priests and a Roman Catholic sister, and the remaining two by a local lay university
graduate and a lay Guyanese graduate. The two schools in lay hands, St. Hilda's College in Belize City and Stann Creek High School in Stann Creek town, accounted for 303 or 11 per cent of the 2,642 students.\(^5\)

To some extent the disproportionate number of expatriate priests arose from financial considerations. Considerable savings accrue from the voluntary service of priests, nuns, and other ministers of religion. The government grant which covers the salary of the Principal and one graduate of each recognised school is in many cases paid into the general funds of the religious body; the teacher receiving, in payment and keep, a smaller sum. Staff policy is influenced by other commitments. Except for the occasional government grant for science building the burden of equipping and maintaining the schools rests with the churches. These commitments also compete with those of the primary schools of which all but two of the one hundred and sixty were in 1967 denominational.\(^6\) The government provides the teachers' salaries but only contribute 50 per cent of the building costs. Apart from their own resources the denominations depend upon the secondary students' tuition fees (\$100 annually) which accounted for just under 50 per cent of the revenue of the secondary schools in 1962. Moreover, this is not a reliable source as in 1967 only 317 or 12 per cent of the 2,642 secondary students were government scholarship holders.\(^7\) Indeed,


\(^{7}\) Education Department Report 1966/67. p.10.
because of hardship "there are considerable remissions of fees" to private fee paying students.

Above all, however, are the religious considerations. The deep seated belief in British Honduras that church control is fundamental to a sound system of education enables the expatriate priests to maintain their hold on the schools. In the Roman Catholic secondary schools religious considerations are also calculated to keep the nominal lay Catholic teacher at bay. As the Principal of St. John's College informed a university graduate appointee who is an alumni in 1966, "It is a part of the philosophy of a denominational high school to develop students in their formative years - not only the intellect but the character, the sense of morality, and the ideals. Consequently Catholic teachers at SJC are expected to be real models of the informed Catholic layman, both on and off campus." This condition of employment and the priest's enquiry into "persistent rumours" that the appointee had 'talked down' the church forced the latter to the conclusion that he was "not the type of teacher" which SJC needed and to withdraw his acceptance of the offer. To some extent the Jesuits' orthodoxy reflects their own provincial origin. As members of the Missouri province they are regarded, as are other mid-western provinces in the U.S.A, of being less progressive than those of the east and west coast with a German or central European tradition.

9. I am grateful to the graduate for permission to cite the correspondence between himself and the Principal.
10. Ibid.
The religious considerations are obviously precious to the Jesuits as the secondary schools can hardly afford to be highly selective in the appointment of local university graduates. Both the number of university graduates and those who opt for teaching in preference to the civil service are extremely limited. Of the eighty-eight university graduates secondary school teachers in 1967 only nineteen or 22 per cent were nationals of whom about three were Roman Catholic sisters. On the other hand sixty-four or 77 per cent of the eighty-three non-graduate teachers were nationals; the other nineteen being overseas volunteers (Peace Corp, Papal and Voluntary Service Overseas). In other words, only about sixteen or 20 per cent of the eighty-three local teachers were lay university graduates. Of these sixteen graduates six were teaching in the Government Technical College and the other ten were shared by six of the seven denominational schools in Belize City.

But for the volunteers from abroad a number of the secondary schools, particularly in the outdistricts, would be unable to function. Of the one hundred and seventy-one teachers in 1967, fifty-two were volunteers as was just under 40 per cent of the eighty-eight university graduates. The financial advantages of this type of service are obvious but so also are the educational disadvantages. As the

12. Ibid. p.31.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
volunteer's tour of duty is one or two years there can be little stability of staff or continuity of teaching. Indeed, the UNESCO planning mission in 1964 noted "cases where principals delete or include subjects in the curriculum depending upon what staff becomes available from abroad at the beginning of the session." 15

The educational experts also estimated that the secondary schools would require an average of eight graduates annually over the fifteen year period, 1966 - 1980. 16 If the educational system remains oriented towards the British and university training continues to be undertaken mainly in the United Kingdom and the University of the West Indies (U.W.I) then the UNESCO estimate constitutes a formidable challenge to the secondary schools. In 1967, for example, of the three hundred and thirty-one candidates at the GCE Ordinary level examination only thirty-seven or 11 per cent were successful in five subjects or more. 17 As this is normally the level from which the civil service, commerce, industry and pre-service primary school teacher-training draw their personnel, the number of students who proceeded to sixth form studies was unlikely to have exceeded the annual average of twenty-three between the years 1960 and 1963. 18 Moreover, although success at the "A" level examination is fairly high on a subject-pass basis it is

16. Ibid. p.63.
seldom achieved in two or more subjects in the same examination. Thus in 1967 only four of the twenty-eight candidates gained two or three "A" level passes and twelve gained one "A" level pass each.19

The talent is obviously there. The problem seems to be rooted in the system of primary education which suffers from several handicaps not the least of which is the denominational arrangement. The primary schools are fragmented to the extent that in 1964 the UNESCO Mission reported "two small schools will be found close to each other - in two cases using the same building!"20 The trained teachers are also unevenly deployed. In 1964 for example, the Catholics had 61 per cent of the primary school population and 62 per cent of its teaching body, but only 8 per cent of the trained teachers.21 On the other hand the Anglicans and Methodists with 17 per cent and 14 per cent of the pupils had 20 and 25 per cent of the trained teachers respectively.22 The UNESCO mission was satisfied that the running of the schools for the most part by untrained teachers adversely affected the quality of the primary education. The expense of a secondary education does not therefore adequately explain the annual transfer of only six hundred or 15 per cent of the primary school population between the ages of eleven and fourteen to the secondary schools. "All schools expressed

21. Ibid. p.25.
22. Ibid. p.25.
the view that their intake was not all of the intellectual calibre to undertake secondary level studies despite the seven or eight years primary course which had preceded and the comparative maturity of the intake."

Another adverse factor is the limited sixth form facilities. Although the need was long standing, sixth form studies were undeveloped until the 1960s. One of the reasons for the slow development was the tendency, as we have noted, for the white British Hondurans to be educated in Britain and for the well-to-do negroes to send their children to Jamaica. Indeed two of Courtenay's children, Deryck who is also a lawyer and Jennifer, returned from Jamaica in 1955 and 1968 respectively to win the open scholarship which is awarded on the results of the "A" level examination in British Honduras. The locally educated candidates are also handicapped by the fragmentation of the sixth form. One or two forms would serve the education needs of the some twenty-five students who annually reach this standard. But each of the three major Protestant schools in Belize City as well as St. John's College caters for these students. What is a greater handicap to the student is the restricted curriculum. Rarely do secondary schools take cognizance of the reported weakness in the English language (a real problem in a multi-lingual society) and mathematics to give some weighting in the first year work to laying a sound foundation. Instead, as the UNESCO mission points out, a quarter of the time in the first year and often

23. Ibid. p.22.
right through the school is taken up with Latin and Bible study.\textsuperscript{24} The religious influence therefore is evident not only in the control of schools, and the recruitment of teachers but also in the curriculum.

The Status of the Denominations

(a) Crown Colony Period

The principal status determinant in this period was the external connexions of the denominations. The Anglican and the Presbyterian churches were accorded a privileged position; one because the colony was British, the other because the white community was predominantly Scottish. Indeed the Presbyterian church demanded parity of treatment with the Anglican church and was established in 1851.\textsuperscript{25} Like the Anglican churches in the West Indies both were disendowed in 1866 and finally disestablished in 1872.\textsuperscript{26} They however remained closely associated with the colonial government. Naturally, the Anglican church took official precedence. Governors, Colonial Secretaries, and other highly placed officials were invariably members of the Anglican church or at least extended their patronage to it. The accommodation of the Rectory in the same compound with the Governor's and Colonial Secretary's residence was also indicative of the high status of this

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. p.23.
\textsuperscript{25} A Caldecott. \textit{The Church in the West Indies}, London 1898. p.43. et seq.
\textsuperscript{26} Handbook of British Honduras for 1888-89. p.114.
denomination.

At the other end of the spectrum was the Roman Catholic church whose external connexions and orientation were non-British. The church owed its allegiance to the Pope and, after the English Jesuits relinquished control to the Missouri Mission in 1851, drew its priests, policies and funds from the United States. In a very real sense the Catholic church was the Jesuits and from an imperial viewpoint was regarded as an alien institution in foreign hands. Apart from being unable to claim the same degree of legitimacy as their Anglican and Presbyterian counterparts, the Jesuits' own dislike for British colonialism rendered their accommodation in the society difficult.

The Methodist church occupied more or less an intermediate position. Being British it was preferred to the Roman Catholic church. As a Dissenting church, however, it was not assured an influential position. Indeed, within the colonial context, the church may even have lost some of its influence when it gradually passed into the hands of West Indian clergymen in the 1950s.

There was in fact a high correlation between the differing status of the denominations and the social and cultural composition of their membership. Throughout its history the missionary activities of the Presbyterian church were confined to Belize City. It is here that almost all of its three hundred and twenty-four members are to be found and its sole place of worship is located. The church has retained its elite character as the local whites, advanced in years, still constitute the nucleus of the dwindling membership. The Anglican church possessed
more foresight and gradually opened its door to the non-white population according to the gradation of their colour and position in the social hierarchy. The new adherents became the mainstay of the church and today it counts members from all social categories among its predominantly Creole adherents. At the same time its elite origins are still discernible. On the eve of the political upheaval in 1950, Rev. S. L. Caiger reported with satisfaction that the church drew its membership largely from among the predominantly "coloured people" who "have filled with conspicuous success important positions in commerce, the civil service and the professions." 27

It was the Methodists (and the Baptists) who first carried the Protestant religion to the lower social Creole strata and the Caribs up and down the country. The missionaries followed their instructions "not to fix [themselves] in the town but itinerate along the river, seeking out the woodcutters' camps and evangelizing the Negroes remote from the means of grace." 28 This social group is the backbone of the church which in 1960 was the largest Protestant denomination in the predominantly Creole and Carib outdistricts, Stann Creek and Toledo. Of the 2,227 Protestants in these two districts just under 50 per cent were Methodists; the remainder being shared by twelve denominations. 29

What also marked off the Methodist missionaries from the Anglican were their pioneering efforts among the Indians and Mestizos in Corozal. Despite an encouraging start they did not establish a firm hold. The frequent changes of missionaries were one of the main handicaps. Few remained in the colony sufficiently long to acquire a knowledge of either the Spanish or the Mayan language. Of its 10,570 adherents in 1960, therefore, only four hundred and eight were in the Corozal district, one hundred and three in the Orange Walk district and three hundred and sixteen in the Cayo district. Stated another way, of a total population of 31,784 in these predominantly Mestizo districts eight hundred and twenty-seven or less than 3 per cent were Methodists. This represented about 13 per cent of the Protestant membership in these areas. Although the 1,870 Anglicans in these districts constituted 10 per cent of the denomination's entire membership, and 27 per cent of the outdistrict Protestants, the achievement was incommensurate with the church's greater resources and personnel stability. The much revered Archbishop Dunn, who was pastoral minded was Bishop of the Diocese for twenty-seven years (1920 - 1947). His protege, Archdeacon Hulse, served for about fifteen years (1933 - 1948) and spoke Spanish. Canon Thorton also worked unremittingly for twenty-seven years (1920 - 1947) among the Latin element throughout Central America. It seems also that the Anglicans in these predominantly Mestizo areas were mainly

Creoles as "the Church of England had little to do with the Latin section of the population in British Honduras." Caiger's explanation for this neglect is that the Mestizos and Indians were well served by numerous Roman Catholic priests and that "it has never been the policy of the English mission to 'proselytise' in such cases." His explanation however, ignores the fact that the Anglican church was the first to be established and also that it was part of the colonial establishment which tended to neglect the rural population. The church could have afforded to confine its activities to Belize City and to respect the preserves of other denominations precisely because its influence did not depend primarily on the measure of zeal with which it fulfilled its divine mandate. As the present church leaders have with nostalgia recalled, St. John's Cathedral, which enjoys the distinction of being the first Protestant Episcopal church in Spanish America, "is unique, not for its architecture, but for its association with great names in the early history of this country."

If the Methodist church failed to establish Protestantism in the Mestizo and Indian communities, it succeeded in its social integrative role among the Creoles and Caribs. By disseminating English values, and making them acceptable to the lower social Creole strata it helped to maintain a stable social hierarchy. Its socialising role was one of the

33. Ibid.
more important ways in which religion became involved in politics. As Yinger points out, though less forcefully than Karl Marx, religion impinges on politics once it helps "to create the socialised individual who will substantially abide by the norms of the society; and by its rewards and punishments religion may inhibit the violations of those who have been inadequately socialised." Caiger also draws attention to the inter-relationship between the external affiliation of the Protestant churches and the cultural and political orientation of their membership.

"The great bulk of the population," he wrote in 1949, "is either native Honduran or Negro, in both cases English-speaking and English-thinking by century old tradition. By the same token they are usually members of the Anglican church or to a lesser degree of the English Protestant denominations such as the Methodist or Baptists. They are extremely conscious and proud of their position as British subjects [which] they showed in no uncertain way during the two world wars, and even the imposing might and opulence of nearby America have not undermined their faith in the Union Jack, which has so noble a tradition in the West Indies as the standard of justice, liberty, and protection of the coloured folk." What the Anglican and Methodist churches did not recognise at the time was their potential vulnerability. Both from the standpoint of doctrine and from that of cultural composition these Protestant churches were in an alien continental environment. Their jurisdiction extended to other parts of Central America but congregations were formed only among the English-speaking communities of non-Roman European or

Americans' and the West Indians who worked on the banana plantations. Given their minority on the continent as well as in British Honduras, these churches remained totally dependent upon the colonial attachment for their favoured position.

The membership of the Roman Catholic church reinforces the view that there was something of a religious element in not only cultural but also class distinctions. Although the Mestizo and Indian communities are the Roman Catholic stronghold the church has acquired considerable following among the Caribs in the south and a large number of Creoles, possible one-third, from the Protestant community of Belize City. Though by no means all, the Catholic Creoles appear to be from the lower social strata.

It is instructive of the Jesuit activism that their adherents, Mestizos and Creoles, were on the periphery of the political system. The church devised several means to fill the leadership void among these sections of the population. The founder of the Boys Scout Movement was the beloved Brother Jacoby. In its drive to capture the imagination of the Indian villagers in the north and west, the church ingenuously identified itself with the indigenous Patron or Mayor local government system by assigning to the village leader (Mayor) the role of church leader (Mayordomo). The combination of roles not only contributed to the spreading of the Roman Catholic faith but provided the Jesuits with an entree to local affairs. It is no accident therefore that the national credit union movement has its origin in the modest efforts of a Jesuit priest, Father Marion Ganey, in 1945 in
Punta Gorda, "the most backward district capital in the colony." 37 In fact the Jesuits claimed that they possessed the qualities of "social leadership of the grass roots variety" which "the process of self-help for these poor people" demanded. 38 Their social and economic ventures were, however, not devoid of converting motives. These were vigorously promoted in the hope that "with the gradual amelioration of their economic lot, a new bond of closer attachment to the church will be forged and a deep and stronger Catholic culture will be built." 39

The activism of the Jesuits coupled with the relative neglect of the Protestant churches do not, however, provide an adequate explanation for the Catholic dominance in the Mestizo and Indian communities. The religion itself with its ceremonials, images and mysteries has a greater inherent appeal than Protestantism to these people's mind. The Jesuits have in fact acknowledged the decided magnetic effect of the ritual.

"The turning point," they claimed in 1951, "between the few struggling Catholics of the early days of the Mission and the strong, if financially poor, Catholic church in present-day Belize seems to have been a procession led by Bishop Di Pietro who carried the statue of our Blessed Mother through the muddy streets of the capital." 40

---

39. The Sower. p.3.
40. Tropical Battleground. p.5.
The Jesuits were of course not exclusively devoted to the poorer social classes. As we have seen earlier in the study most of their impact was made at St. John's College which was the major foci of the social activities of the well-to-do and promising Catholic boys. Indeed, the scant regard of the dominant Protestant elite for their activities enabled them to impose whatever social outlook they wanted upon their students.

Whether in the schools or in the parishes, the missionary success of the Roman Catholic church was unequalled by the Protestant denominations. Its well tested vitality was continuously engaged in the search for new outlets and means of attracting people to the faith. Yet its influence within the colonial power structure remained incommensurate to its numerical strength. The Jesuits were under-represented on public bodies, although it should be noted that as American citizens they were excluded from certain appointments such as to the Legislative Council. From sentiments expressed by Edward Gegg in 1947, the Catholic laity also believed that they were being denied positions of authority and influence. The situation, he suggested, would remain unchanged "unless we \[St. John's College Alumni\] come together in full numerical strength at fixed intervals to decide what our plans of action are to be." \[41\]

(b) Decolonising Period

By loosening the imperial ties, the social and political upheaval

of the 1950s robbed the Protestant churches of their main source of strength and influence. It also laid bare their minority position. Indeed they acknowledged their concern for the future by forming a Council of Protestant churches in 1952. From the beginning, however, this response seemed futile as the Anglican church was not a member.

The change in the fortune of Protestant churches was manifested less in their reaction than in the optimism within the Roman Catholic church. As we observed in the discussion of the People's Committee it was not only the negative but the positive aspects of the PUP anti-colonial stand that promised to enhance the position of the church. The party's efforts to bring the Latin peasantry into the political process, the strong Catholic element among its leadership, its Central American outlook, and its willingness to establish closer relations with the U.S.A were potentially beneficial. The education system at St. John's College had a strong American bias and a pastoral relationship had been established with the Guatemalan Indians, who "come as far as thirty miles on foot from inside the priestless territory of Peten, Guatemala, to have children baptised and marriages blessed by the travelling missionary when he comes to the Guatemalan border at Dolores or Santa Teresa." 42

The Catholic hierarchy did not officially support the PUP and it is likely that the political changes stimulated a variety of responses among the Jesuits. Some openly supported the party not primarily

because of its policies but because of its leader. After all Price could claim some affinity with them. He studied for the priesthood and still possessed, as we have seen in his opposition to Federation, a Jesuitical singleness of purpose and a religious devotion to his goals. As Pollard claimed "from personal knowledge" after his expulsion from the party in 1958, "one or two priests have supported Price, and some still like him personally for his seeming personal piety." Some of the other Jesuits were embarrassed by the close identity between their colleagues and the PUP. For one thing the opposition parties and groups did not discriminate in their condemnation of the close relationship. This marred the image of the entire religious order and the Diocese. Secondly, however favourable were the political changes to the church, the Jesuits remained an alien group. Their open involvement in the nationalist political development could be less justified than that of their Protestant counterparts in the crown colony period. Long term considerations also suggested a cautious response to the new political development. It was reasonable to assume that the church's role as a convenient political lever would diminish as the PUP government established its own legitimacy. The principle of reciprocity which was implicit in the relationship may not then work to the advantage of the church particularly in the sensitive field of education. In fact over the years the fear has given rise to two groups within the Jesuit hierarchy. One is committed to complete espousal and consists of the

43. The Belize Billboard, 16th May, 1959. p.3.
old generation of priests who are more or less the ruling group. The involvement has reached the stage where Father Leo Weber, Superior of the Jesuit Mission and President of St. John's College, became a member of the British Honduras Chamber of Commerce and was in the Premier's entourage to the annual Conference of the Michigan - British Honduras Partnership of Alliance for Progress in Michigan in 1967. The other group of Jesuits consists of the younger generation who advocate a measure of disengagement from the Establishment. Indeed they argue that the church's identification with the ruling strata is not necessarily in the interest of its pastoral work. 44

In so far as the difference is between two generations of Jesuits it is not insignificant that their respective lay support comes also from different generations of British Hondurans. Perhaps more important, is the difference in the occupations of these two lay groups. It is the established businessmen who are impressed with the Premier's encomiums to the Jesuits for showing "that they can change with the changing times" and "are helping in the building of the new Order, in the development of a whole society, and in the opening of the new frontiers for our Belizean people." 45 The younger element are mainly civil servants who argue that such praise, though not reserved for the Roman Catholics, does the Jesuits more harm than good. It irritates nationalist feelings which already can find little expression within the

44. Much of my insight of the Jesuit hierarchy was gained from the discussion which followed my lecture on The Church to the Jesuits at St. John's College in April, 1967.

Roman Catholic church. The outcome, as they observe, is the continuous flow of anonymous invectives against the Jesuits in the correspondence columns of the Belize Billboard.

Although tension exists among the Jesuits their differences should not be over-emphasised. The disagreement is over methods and strategy but not on ends. Their great strength is their dedication to Catholic expansion particularly in education and the support of all sections of the Catholic laity for this goal.

Education

Organisation and Development

Denominational control of education has varied with the type of government in British Honduras. The initiative lay with the churches during the period of the forestry controlled legislature; it was assumed by the colonial government after the constitutional change in 1932; and it has been more or less restored to the denominational bodies since the rise of the PUP to power.

(a) Church Initiative

The firm hold of the churches on education has its roots in the narrow outlook of the 'forestocracy'. As education could not improve the woodcutter's skill it was one of those social services on which public funds were grudgingly spent. The three non-paying schools which the government had established in the early 19th century were abolished together with the Board of Education in 1868. The government
limited its responsibility to grants-in-aid to denominational primary schools; the award of these grants being dependent upon the denominations' ability to raise a sufficient sum from school fees (which at least in theory obtained up to the 1950s) and other sources. The secondary schools were wholly the responsibility of the churches. Up to 1932, when the British treasury assumed control of the colony's finances, the maximum contribution to education for any one year by the government was 3.3 per cent of the colony's budget. This was in marked contrast to an expenditure of nearly 9 per cent following the introduction of imperial treasury control though the colonial government could ill-afford even this expenditure because of the 1931 hurricane and the world economic depression. This sharp improvement of government contribution to education, nevertheless, was considered by B. H. Easter, the Director of Education in Jamaica and a visiting adviser, in 1934 to be "by comparison with other places, inherently alarming." In fact, he was constrained to remark that "Far from looking regretfully backward to the former figure, persons responsible for the colony's welfare should be thoroughly ashamed of it." The churches were by no means reluctant to assume the financial responsibility since it was generally accepted that education was closely allied to evangelicism. With their extreme views on education


47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.
the Jesuits even saw these two activities as insolubly linked. Moreover, as the churches paid the piper financially they called the tune administratively. It was not until 1926 that a comprehensive education ordinance was enacted and it remains the legal foundation of the educational system. It recreated the government Board of Education but the spirit of the law then was as it is at present. The Board exercised its powers with diffidence and sometimes not at all.

(b) Colonial Government Thrust

Lester's investigation of the educational system marked the beginning of the second phase in the relationship between the churches and the government. It coincided with the growing concern for the deplorable state of the social services throughout the British West Indies, and was in a sense one of the forerunners of the 1938 West Indies Royal Commission. Among other things, Lester advised the adoption of the "Janes" supervisory system with the aim of improving the primary school system in the rural areas. The result was the appointment of J. C. Dixon, Georgia State Supervisor of Negro Education, to advise on the best method for implementing Lester's proposals.

Dixon argued that the use of local teachers was vital to the success of the system. He however noted a strong opposition to local supervision among the dominant expatriate group of clergymen, inspectors of schools and the American nuns and few West Indians who were primary

school head teachers. That management should be in foreign hands seemed to the adviser

"a tragic policy ... It admits in effect that there are no available teachers in British Honduras; or that there is no available material out of which teachers can be made; or that government is not interested in a colonial-self sufficiency or, as seems more likely to be the case, that the importation of teachers has resulted less from a desire to educate the children of British Honduras than from a desire to promote interests other than those of the children." 50

It was not only this opposition to control by nationals that struck Dixon but also the waste and under-utilization of already limited resources. "One cannot help asking whether education of the children or promotion of church interest and even proselytising are the objectives of the church when, in a small village where there are hardly enough children for one school, one finds two or more small schools of different churches competing for enrolment and attendance." 51

Dixon was not decrying the value of the missionary efforts but was rather suggesting that the time "has come ... to ask and answer the questions, what is the school for, for what purpose does it exist, and to whom does it belong?" 52 Nor were his questions necessarily informed by his American outlook as they were posed again in 1964 by the UNESCO mission of which two of the three members, the chairman and the economist, were from the United Kingdom and the third, the specialist in

50. Ibid. p.5.
51. Ibid. p.6.
52. Ibid.
technical education, was from Cyprus.

That the question remain pertinent suggests that British Hondurans either did not consider what was essentially a political problem or as was more likely had recommitted themselves to the existing arrangement. For dual control was as deeply rooted in the minds of the people at large and in those of the teaching profession as in the history of the educational system itself. Thus in 1945 Governor Hunter received little "support from the public and from the ministers of the various Protestant denominations" for "an undenominational secondary school under government control."\(^{53}\) Paradoxically his proposal did not stem from a secular outlook but from concern for the inability of the Protestant secondary schools, St. Michael's College, Wesley College and St. Hilda's College, to keep pace with the two Roman Catholic schools, St. John's College and St. Catherine's Academy. As the Governor observed, the Protestants were not as fortunate as "The Catholic community \(\text{which}\) is able to undertake such a liability because it is much larger than any single Protestant community in the colony, it is helped with money from abroad and its schools are staffed by members of a religious order who live celibate and conventual existences, and are able to give their services more cheaply than the laymen or clergy of the Protestant denominations can afford to do."\(^{54}\) But the Protestant churches were too denominationally bound to appreciate the Governor's


\(^{54}\) Ibid.
arguments. Indeed, St. Michael's College and Wesley College were the outcome of the unsuccessful attempt of the Anglican and Methodist churches to jointly manage the St. George's College. Lamenting their short-sight, the Governor ominously made "it quite clear that the pastors who grew so concerned about this imminent danger to the undenominational school to their flocks have little grounds as yet for their anxiety." 55

The relationship between the Governor and the Jesuits was even more strained. Fr. R. L. McCormack in his Presidential address to the British Honduras Federation of Teachers in 1945 and in the Governor's presence criticised the newly established Department of Education for unilaterally revising the primary school curriculum. The Governor replied in a similar vein as he "seldom refuse[d] a challenge" even when he was "unprepared." 56

The establishment of a Catholic Teachers' Training College within two months of the government's, St. George's Teachers' College, in 1954 was also indicative of Catholic fear of the government's thrust in education. Ironically, however, the establishment of the College was also an example of the colonial government's support of the denominational system. In July, 1956, the Catholic College was officially recognised, and the trainees received government bursaries equivalent to their salary. The country was therefore in the unenviable position

55. Ibid.

of having two small training colleges which in 1957, for example, had a total enrolment of twenty-seven students - eighteen at the Government College and nine at the Catholic. With an initial enrolment of three students pursuing a two year course, and an annual intake of five students from 1955 to 1957 the Catholic College did not promise to be a feasible proposition. Yet it persisted as a separate institution until 1965 when the UNESCO mission strongly urged the merger of the two institutions.

It cannot be over-emphasised that after 1932 the momentum in education came from the colonial administration rather than from the local interests. The kind of bureaucratic and professional organisation which was required to formulate a consistent educational programme was built up in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1935 a Superintendent of Education was appointed and accorded equal status with other heads of departments. For the first time the post of Inspector of schools whose holders had invariably been clergymen called for the appropriate professional qualifications. Primary school teachers were trained in Jamaica until the establishment of the Government Training College in 1954. Text-books were standardised and the need for technical education was also acknowledged in the establishment of the Belize Technical College in 1952. Though few, government scholarships from primary to secondary schools and from the latter to University were introduced. Most of these reforms were however confined to the primary schools.

The secondary schools continued to pursue their individual and unco-ordinated programmes. It is noteworthy, however, that the Protestant secondary schools despite their basic weaknesses achieved considerable progress during this period of marked governmental activity. They no doubt availed themselves of the service of the Education Department. For as the Director of Education pointed out, his relations with the heads of secondary schools, in the absence of official control, had to be personal, and he "could render them (the secondary schools) service only in so far as mutual trust was established ... that is if they wanted any guidance or aid from me."

(c) PUP Government's Permissiveness

With the return of political power to British Honduras the influence of the churches has become once more pronounced. There is an important difference, however, between the attitude of the forestry controlled legislature and that of the PUP government. The former was disinterested as to who assumed control of education once the main responsibility did not fall to it. The legislators, moreover, did not appeal to theology to justify their secondary role. On the other hand the PUP government has accepted the Catholic viewpoint that education is primarily the responsibility of the church. "The question of government control," the PUP reiterated in 1966, "would be contrary to the National..."

Manifesto." Its policy is not to assume too much of the initiative but "to support and encourage educational progress in plans devised and set in operation by the private institutions existing in the country - this is a good thing, especially under the present circumstances where government has limited resources."  

This permissive attitude is both a cause and a result of the dominant Catholic influence in the country. The political consequences of a challenge to the denominational system are incalculable and few politicians are prepared to cast a critical eye. In fact, The Belize Times, in noting the adverse comments of the 1966 Tripartite Economic Commission on the denominational system of education, stated that the commissioners had "rushed in where angels fear to tread." On the other hand, religion is accepted principally because of the Catholic background of most of the politicians. Consider this statement of the opposition Leader, Goldson, a Catholic convert, at the 6th West Indian Conference of Education in Puerto Rico in 1955 when he was Member for Social Services in the 1954 PUP government.

"As we all know, Mr. Chairman, the natural right of educating the child for this world and for the next world belongs to the parents in association with the church. Where, through financial and other circumstances, the parents and the church cannot completely fulfil the function of properly educating the child, then it is the right and the duty of the State to

60. Ibid.
assist them to fulfil this function. The State should do this without prejudicing the right of the parents and the church to teach the child those eternal values which they alone are qualified to teach." 62

This is a restatement of Catholic teaching. Goldson's remarks were the preamble to his resolution "emphasising the positive role of the family, the church and the State in Education,"63 which was defeated; the delegates on the Education committee, mainly professional educators, arguing that it was unnecessary and inappropriate. Speaking later to the British Honduras Federation of Teachers, Goldson was correct in observing "that such a resolution would have been heartily endorsed by any conference on education in British Honduras" since he was rapturously applauded for claiming "the best education in the world is a church education." 64

The permissive outlook has encouraged rather than safeguarded the growth of "a possible crop of secondary schools" in the outdistricts in competition with existing ones, but lacking "the facilities for providing a real form of secondary education." 65 In 1965 Stann Creek district with 2,000 children between the ages of sixteen and nineteen had four denominational schools, three of them Catholic and one


63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

Anglican whose enrolment ranged from one hundred and two to thirty-six. In Corozal district the situation was farcical. Two denominational schools, Catholic and Methodist, with enrolment of ninety-nine and thirty-four respectively catered for a school population of 1,600 between the ages of ten and nineteen. The fragmentation also exists in Belize City where in 1965 seven denominational secondary schools, - six of which were government grant aided and the Government Technical College - shared 1,484 students. This means that the average number of students in each school was two hundred and that government must support (in addition to the Technical College) six Principals and six school building programmes in Belize City alone. Of this arrangement the UNESCO Mission asked "If such public funds as are available are absorbed in the maintenance of small uneconomic units established by one denomination, where will the funds be found to see that children of other religious persuasions receive their education, that is, where parents refuse to have their children attend such schools, despite the preparedness of the schools to accept children of other faiths and to make appropriate allowances for their religious instruction." 

67. Ibid.
70. UNESCO Mission. p.25.
It was not only the cost of secondary (and primary) education that suggested greater inter-denominational co-operation and a more nationally integrated and centrally directed system. The multiple orientation of the educational system and its relevance to the needs of the society also compelled a re-appraisal of the denominational system of control. The experts noted that the government Development Plan "avoided these questions but we cannot." "Government," they declared, "must accept responsibility for some activities where inter-denominational co-operation fails to mature, and for key expensive institutions; and in any case government should assume wider powers of supervision, and direction if necessary, in matters of vital educational importance while leaving religious matters and purely administrative details in the hands of the denominations."71 In consequence the mission did not specifically give representation to the churches on its proposed National Education Council. Instead the advisory body was to consist of people from Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and the Trade Unions who were more likely to relate the educational plans to the country's social and economic needs.72

In general the government has recoiled from every recommendation that smacks of secularism. It yielded to denominational pressures for control of the Council. Of the fourteen Council members which were proposed in 1966, nine were directly connected with the churches: four

71. Ibid. Appendices p.45.
72. Ibid.
were nominees of the denominations, three were the Principals of a secondary school of each of the three main denominations and two were representatives of the Catholic Educational Association and the British Honduras Union of Teachers. But for the fact that it was legally deemed an abrogation of ministerial power and therefore unconstitutional the government was prepared to acquiesce to denominational demand that policy should be formulated in rather than after consultation with the Minister. In other words the churches were suggesting that the functions of the National Education Council should be more than advisory. Father F. King, the General Manager of the Roman Catholic schools went to the extent of suggesting that "consultation" was not enough and that "a super-council on a fifty-fifty scale - six members, three from the government and three from the denominations," - should be "ultimately responsible for education." 73

Although the government reluctantly assumed ultimate responsibility for education the danger of the secondary educational system retaining its divided aims and achieving neither has not necessarily been averted. Like the Protestant schools the government follows the British oriented education system as its Development Plan speaks of Sixth Form studies in the United Kingdom context. The Catholic secondary schools also prepare students for the British external examinations. At the same time St. John's College has accepted the government's challenge to the schools to make "their advances themselves" and "come

up with what they like...." 74 The outcome was the government Bill in 1967 to confer statutory recognition on the St. John's College Associate Degree which is modelled on the North American College pattern and can be awarded to distinguished British Hondurans. Protestant fears were presumably allayed when the Premier in concluding the debate expressed the government's willingness to help "anyone [who] stands ready to come up with another degree .... [since] there is nothing wrong to have a diversity of degrees ...." 75 The fate of the Bill, however, became uncertain when two of the three professionally (British) qualified Senators, Courtenay and Leslie, both Creole Protestants, urged their colleagues to refer it to a Select Committee of the Senate.

Perhaps the only immediate threat to the denominational system is the impecunious position of the Protestant secondary schools. The Jesuits are as much concerned as the Protestants; the implication being that the government would be compelled to assume more responsibility for these schools and may well be the main competitor of the Roman Catholic schools. One possible outcome of this step, they contend, is that the government will make in-roads into the Catholic preserves. While the outlook of the present government postpones this development the experiences of the Catholic church in Mexico and Cuba, do not seem to be lost to the Jesuits' sight.

75. Ibid.
Denominational Loyalty

The seemingly symbiotic relationship between the Roman Catholic and Protestant schools management rests upon the assumption that each has an ascriptive right to the loyalty of its adherents. The number of Roman Catholic primary and secondary schools, and their enrolment, for example, are more or less in direct proportion to the church's numerical strength. In 1965 it ran 86 or 61 per cent of the primary schools and 10 or 62.5 per cent of the secondary schools; and also controlled 15,882 or 62.8 per cent and 1,320 or 58.4 per cent of the students in the primary and secondary schools respectively. This suggests a fairly rigid denominational system in which parents remain loyal to their denomination. As the Creoles opt for the professions, however, there is the tendency for those who are Protestants to place academic considerations above the denominational in the choice of schools, especially in the later years of the student's education. The superior sixth form facilities at St. John's College have therefore attracted a number of Protestants from other denominations. In fact the twenty-three Protestants in St. John's College sixth form in 1968 represented 42 per cent of the form enrolment as compared with thirty-nine or 9.6 per cent in the other forms in the school. On the other hand, the number of Protestant students in the Catholic schools whose facilities are no better than the Protestant is negligible. In 1968, only three Protestants were among the fifty students in St. Catherine Academy's

fourth form and four among the thirty students in Pallotti High School fourth form. Of the entire enrolment of two hundred and twenty in the latter school only thirty were Protestants. 77

But for denominational pressures the proportion of Protestants at St. John's College would probably have been higher. Although the Protestant clergymen are today more tolerant than their predecessors it is not altogether amiss to refer to an incident in 1936 to exemplify the pressures on the Protestant layman's loyalty. A parent who was a senior civil servant in the Colonial Secretary's office preferred his son 'John' to be educated at St. John's College rather than at St. George's College. His preference was brought to the attention of the Protestant school manager, a clergyman, when the latter was asked to support the pupil's candidature for the Government Scholarship examination. The reaction of the manager to the parent's choice of school is established in the following correspondence between the parent and the primary school headmaster.

Parent: Perhaps I misunderstand 'John' but he tells me that the Minister is unwilling to sign the Application form because of the fact that 'John', if successful, proposed to go to St. John's College! I am under the impression that one's choice was free in the matter.

Seeing that my boy 'Peter' who was successful at the last examination attends St. George's College it is now proposed to send the other boy to St. John's College. If the Minister is unwilling to sign the form as

77. Figures obtained from the schools.
made out (and I find no authority for this) then 'John' will have to stand down, as I do not propose to alter it.

Headmaster: I would advise that you waive your opinion as one of the directors of the St. George's College. From a church's point of view you cannot blame them - No true Roman Catholic would do this. It is true they possess the necessary equipment - but loyalty seems to me to be the first consideration. Let him sit inspite of this.

Parent: 1. Thanks for your note. I am not, at present, on the Board of Governors of St. George's College, having resigned when I decided to send 'James' to St. John's College. I resigned because I considered my views were incompatible with sending the lad to S.J.C.

2. If your good self and the Manager of the Schools feel that 'John's' school work merits his entering the government examination for a scholarship to one of two selected schools, then by all means recommend him.

3. But if because he elects to go to a school other than that you think he should have, you feel that he should be debarred from the open examination, he will, perforce have to stand down as (as I understand it) the Manager of the ... Schools will not endorse the form asking him for a certificate that the lad is a fit and proper person to be awarded a scholarship.

Headmaster: I think you are stretching the point; as far as I am concerned - I have done my duty, but I give you my private opinion. The Manager's signature is clearly a matter for his conscience or opinion. Of course this does not debar the pupil from entering, you are at liberty to hand the matter over to S[Superintendent of] Education and the matter is settled.

I simply give you my opinion as I see things are at present in the churches.

Parent: Please be so good as to let me have 'John's' Application form and copy of registration of birth.

Thanks! 78

The Catholic church is even more unwilling to liberalise the attitude of its followers. As we have seen the Principal of St. John's

78. I am grateful to 'Parent' for permission to cite the correspondence.
College attempted in 1966 to impose upon the university graduate appointee its religious code of conduct. This drove the appointee to teach in the only non-denominational secondary school, the Government Technical College. What is of relevance to this study is the implication of these pressures for the process of cultural and social integration. The high occupational status groups alone appear capable of resisting these denominational pressures. More seriously, since the Mestizos are almost entirely Roman Catholics there is little opportunity for cultural integration within the Protestant secondary schools.

Conclusion

Religion has been at once a product and motivator of social and political forces but because of its inter-action with these forces it is not always easy to distinguish its response from its influence. Nevertheless, we have been able to identify the most important field, education, in which religious influence is pronounced. Through education, the church has had a formative influence on the country's ideological outlook. It is perhaps the most important factor which is responsible not only for keeping British Honduras within the ideologies of the West but also for the conservative outlook of the politicians. From a geopolitical view point this is not without political significance for the Central American policy of the United States. Within British Honduras, the hostility to 'leftist' ideologies is so widespread that it is not surprising that the celebrated ex-communist, Douglas Hyde, who was a guest of the St. John's College Alumni Association in November, 1960
found his audiences in Belize City and the district towns "receptive" to his lectures on communism. 79

The dominance of the Catholic church and its marked influence on the educational system is an important factor in explaining this situation. As Hyde observed at the end of his visit, "British Honduras has been spared from communist influence so far, ... because education has always been on a religious basis, the people were mostly Christian and political leaders reflected that Christian teaching." 80 Catholicism is so intrusive that if a decision of national importance had to be taken unexpectedly between 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. on any day, four of the seven ministers, including Premier Price, and the Leader of the opposition, Goldson, are likely to be found at mass.

In contributing to a common ideological outlook religion has demonstrated its integrative role. Religion, however, has also been divisive at the denominational level. Here cultural and racial differences have been emphasised, and the multiple external orientation of the country underlined. The Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches are headed and mainly staffed by Americans, Britons and West Indians respectively who have very little in common save their vocation. In consequence each group tends to adopt a sectarian outlook towards the country, thus limiting further the unifying role of the church. Their general unwillingness to look across denominational boundaries has had

unfortunate consequences for the educational system.

Once political leaders accept the view that politics should be imbued with religion the prominence and influential position of the church seems assured. But the consequences of this assurance are not wholly compatible with the country's nationalist objectives. During the past nineteen years nationalist sentiment has been finding expression in politics and the 'Belizeanisation' of almost everything except education and the churches. The cultivation of 'Belizean' art and culture is vigorously pursued and officially encouraged, and the civil service has almost been completely localised. Yet education, particularly in the secondary schools, which is widely acknowledged as indispensable to the development of a national self-consciousness remains in foreign hands. The dearth of suitably qualified nationals to fill the top positions of authority and control should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, lay-teachers in the secondary schools cannot be encouraged by the soft peddling in this field of nationalist policy and its subordination to religious considerations, and cannot therefore look forward to occupying these positions of control. In fact the limited career opportunities in these schools have helped to reduce the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Considerable control of primary schools is still in the hands of the managing authorities, all of whom are foreign clergy. Very little attempt has been made by the churches to nationalise the principalship of the secondary schools. Nor does this appear to be a long term policy. The Jesuits at St. John's College, in particular, show little indication of relinquishing their control of the
country's schools to nationals. The schools are too crucial to the church's activities for their policy to be otherwise.

Once control resides in foreign hands the educational system must necessarily remain externally oriented. In consequence the local population remains manacled to alien cultural phenomena and policies, and inappropriate ideas. The young British Honduran, searching for the freedom and independence, the sense of belonging and of personal worth which other political and social changes are offering freely to him, is caught in the grasp of foreign control of the national schools.

Within this context the church is to be considered as a formidable barrier to further social and political changes. Other powerful and competing interests and claims have however begun to pose a challenge to the churches' values and position. Urbanisation, the provision of university education for an increasing number of youths, and the increasing rejection by the new generation of the foreign domination of any aspect of national affairs are creating values other than religious ones. It is not inconsistent with a long tradition, that exposure to higher learning would loosen the bonds of religion over the individual. It is therefore likely that the young returning graduates, if only from enlightened self-interest, will be among the first to question the present educational arrangement. An appeal to the primacy of the church's authority in education may not then be an acceptable answer. It may only ensure that more rapid changes of the system, when they do come, will be extreme.
Recruitment and Promotion

(a) Crown Colony Period

Given the unattractiveness of the teaching profession and the limited managerial opportunities in business, the civil service has been the main outlet for professional and administrative skills. Yet there were barriers to admission to the civil service and to advancement within it. When the local candidate was not frustrated by the system of social stratification he was confronted with the colonial system of recruitment. One system gave priority to the high status families; the other reserved the most desirable posts to the expatriate.

As in other colonial territories, the civil service in British Honduras was too vital to the success of imperial rule to be in local hands. The senior officers were normally drawn from His Majesty’s Colonial Service. Recruitment to the Colonial Service, although institutionalised in 1932, was within the personal gift of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and required as late as 1939 satisfactory evidence of European descent as a condition for entry.¹

Few British Hondurans were therefore eligible for entry to the Colonial Service, and fewer still possessed the requisite qualification to fill the professional and technical posts, which out-numbered the administrative. The country's inability to provide qualified persons to the civil service was directly related to its limited educational facilities. Those students who by self-tuition and with the help of the Extra-Mural Department of the University of the West Indies overcame the problem of obtaining entrance requirements to British universities were still confronted with the expense of a university education. Moreover, few opted for a technical training in favour of the more prestigious professions, law and medicine, which offered greater opportunities for private practice. The services of qualified British Hondurans were also likely to be lost to the more remunerative posts overseas, particularly in the United States of America. Although in some cases it was obligatory for the recipient to enter the government service, the occasional Colonial Development and Welfare technical scholarship which was offered after 1945 made no appreciable difference to the country's inability to provide its own technical and professional personnel. British Honduras therefore remained almost wholly dependent upon outsiders for professional skill, although the wartime difficulties of recruiting Britons, the hazards of transferring Colonial Service officers during this period, the pressures from the Fabian Society and other progressive organisations in Britain, and the post-war attack throughout the colonies on the discrimination against qualified local candidates in the filling of senior positions had compelled the Colonial
Office to revise its personnel policies. Land survey was the only field in which the deficiency in professionally trained local personnel did not exist, presumably because the minimum qualification could be acquired by training on recruitment to the civil service. The technical posts continued to be filled mainly by Britons, and those in law and to a lesser extent in medicine by West Indians, as under Colonial Office guidance an attempt was made to form a unified West Indian Civil Service. 2

British Hondurans were less at an educational disadvantage in filling the administrative positions. These demanded no formal academic qualification, and while the Colonial Office normally desired a university education of its appointees to the Colonial Administrative Service, it was not uncommon for the expatriate officer to lack the expected qualification. Moreover, the responsibilities of some of the departments which were engaged in non-technical work could have been discharged by experienced local officers as was the case with the offices of Colonial Postmaster and two of the five District Commissioners. These locally held appointments were however, till the mid 1930s, the rare exception. Colonial regulations discriminated against the local candidates by stipulating that in the filling of administrative vacancies the claims of those officers in the Colonial Service "will generally

take precedence of those persons not already in the service."³ Priority had to be given to these officers if the unified Colonial Service was to retain its relevance and attractiveness. For the essence of the unified service was the substitution of the colonial world for the colony as the unit for the transfer and promotion of the Colonial Office career staff. As St. John Hamilton has pointed out, "if the Colonial Office were to remain free to move its officials from Colony to Colony there would have to be vacant posts into which they could move, hence non-Europeans would be excluded from such posts even in their respective Colonies."⁴

The racial basis of appointment to senior administrative posts which was cloaked in the Colonial Office regulations was, in British Honduras, at times laid bare even at the expense of the priority principle. Cases in the 1930s and 1940s are not unknown where jobs were immediately found for financially ruined Britons who had arrived from one of the Central American Republics with little claim to a civil service appointment other than their origin. The office of District Commissioner was their principal haven, but since in these cases the criteria of recruitment could not ensure the selection of the most able candidates it was not surprising that the Colonial Office should have subsequently entertained doubts about the Governors' choice of District


Commissioners.  

The entire method of recruitment and promotion offered little encouragement to the local aspirant to an administrative post. The normal and indeed almost exclusive means of admission of the local candidate to the administrative service was through the clerical and executive grades of the clerical service after entry at the lowest grade, and occasionally as messenger. As the clerical and executive posts were not distinguishable the local civil servant proceeded to the more senior and middle-range posts which might have been part clerical, part administrative and to the administrative posts proper. The difficulties of determining one's status and the time taken to pass through the usual ranks discouraged the person with initiative. These considerations may even have caused him to leave the civil service for non-government employment where he might think the rewards for initiative

5. Draft Despatch from the Colonial Society to the Governor of British Honduras dated 16th March, 1933. C.O.123/336. Of the five District Commissioners in 1933 three were expatriates. In the case of one whose career had been in the army and in business in the East and in British Honduras, it was discovered after his appointment at the age of forty-eight 'that he had been an undischarged bankrupt'. Little was known of the qualifications and background of another except that he first served as a Police Sergeant in 1895 (according to the Colonial Office List) before being appointed a District Commissioner in 1919, and that in 1931 he was sixty-three years old. The third had been a detective with the London Metropolitan Police before being appointed Assistant Superintendent of Police in the colony. It is instructive to compare these qualifications and careers with those of the two British Honduran District Commissioners. One was Ezekiel Grant, the lawyer, who had an impressive civil service career before being called to the bar. The other, Antonio Alcoser, a Mestizo Mexican immigrant, had an equally impressive civil service career having previously served in three of the key departments, Customs, Treasury and Survey. (Note on District Commissioners C.O.123/336).
were greater. Those candidates whose qualifications were above the minimum entry requirements, first the Overseas Junior Cambridge Certificate and later the Overseas Cambridge School Certificate, and which was particularly valuable in administrative posts were also denied inducements. Indeed, the re-assignment of a university graduate or professionally qualified local civil servant to a clerical post on completion of his training abroad was a distinct probability as Harrison Courtenay experienced on his return as a barrister-at-law in 1936. These drawbacks would have been deemed irrelevant by the colonial administration since the colonial civil service required little more of its local recruits than efficient clerks and other subordinate white collar workers.

The extent to which the professional and senior administrative positions was monopolised by the expatriates depended in the final analysis on the ability of the colony to attract and retain these officers. For the onus of territorial assignment seemed to rest largely with the serving officer, since the Secretary of State for the Colonies seldom insisted on a transfer if this could be proved to be disadvantageous to the officer. By no means one of the wealthier colonies, and with a small establishment and its inferior status, British Honduras even in its halcyon days experienced considerable difficulty in attracting members of the Colonial Service. Service in this colony, in fact, was at best seen as a prerequisite for a more important assignment in

the Colonial Service, and the minimum tour of duty seldom expired without the officer feeling that his transfer was overdue. Rejecting the principle of expatriate allowance along with other West Indian colonies, British Honduras offered salaries and other conditions of service which were much less than those obtaining in other parts of the Colonial Empire. 7 The salaries of Heads of Departments in 1932, when compared, for example, with those offered by Gambia whose status was comparable and income per capita lower constituted little inducement, as the following table indicates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British Honduras</th>
<th>Gambia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
<td>8,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td>51,347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
<td>£152,825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Justice</td>
<td>1,012</td>
<td>1,000 + 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Secretary</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>1,000 + 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>900 + 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collector of Customs</td>
<td>450 to 720</td>
<td>450 to 720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmaster</td>
<td>375 to 500 + 60</td>
<td>260 to 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney-General</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>600 to 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar-General</td>
<td>500 to 605</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent of Police</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>720 to 920 + 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Medical Officer</td>
<td>833 to 860</td>
<td>1,000 to 1,150 + 250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector of Schools</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>400 to 720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyor General</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>600 to 800 + 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Officer</td>
<td>500 to 900</td>
<td>960 to 992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Public Works</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>960 + 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservator of Forests</td>
<td>500 to 900</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Sir Alan Pim Report on Economic and Financial Conditions in British Honduras, p.51.

Salaries of the senior officers were not only comparatively lower but were reduced in 1933 below those of 1922 as a result of the economic depression and the disastrous 1931 hurricane. This all but placed the country outside the competitive colonial world. Neither medical practitioners with British qualifications (except pensioners who had retired from professional services in the West African colonies) nor experienced jurists could be induced to work in the colony.8

Successive Governors, notably Sir Alan Burns, solved the problem in the administrative service partly by amalgamating several posts and departments and partly by drawing heavily on local personnel in the filling of vacancies. Localisation of the administrative service reached the summit when R. E. Gabrouel was appointed Assistant Colonial Secretary in 1942 and (later Sir) Arthur Wolffsohn to the combined post of Colonial Secretary and Financial Secretary in 1943.

Virtue had arisen from necessity but was inconsistently maintained. Administrative appointments tended to revert to expatriates with the improvement of the colony's budget in the early 1950s. The Colonial Secretariat in particular was too much the inner citadel of the governing power to remain permanently in local hands, moreso as the post-war nationalist agitation intensified. Hence, on their retirement in 1948 and 1956 respectively, the local Colonial Secretary and his

8. In fact, between 1913 and 1931 the previous appointments held by all the Chief Justices were magisterial in small colonies. The local bar having 'reasons to regret these appointments' unsuccessfully protested against a similar appointment in 1931. C.O.123/334. File No.85308 - Vacancy: Chief Justice.
assistant were succeeded by expatriates.

Governors were highly selective in their choice of local administrative personnel. It was inherent in the system of colonial administration that the Governor, as the resident custodian of British authority, should be predisposed to share his prestige with whom he felt the closest social and cultural affinity and who in consequence could be relied upon to safeguard the existing social and political system. These considerations conferred the advantage in appointments on members of the Creole community. Within this community further discrimination in administrative appointments could be observed. Priority went to those civil servants who were from the high status families with a long tradition of public service. And since within the Creole community there was a correlation between colour and class a high proportion of the local senior civil servants were of unmistakable European descent or of light complexion. As members of the Creole elite they had traditionally lent support to the status quo and if they were not always rewarded with full admission to the inner circles of expatriates they at least won their social approval. Together the two groups as we have seen had given leadership to the society, set its social tone and values, worshipped in the leading Protestant churches, participated in inter-club activities, and held common membership to other prestigious organisations such as the Volunteer Defence Force.

The social background and career of the local Colonial Secretary, Wolffsohn, exemplify the close affinity between the expatriate officials and the local civil service elite. Born to a German-Jewish immigrant
father and local white mother of Scottish descent, both with extensive business connexions, he was sent to Scotland at the age of seven to be educated. He attended the private school of Mrs. John Jackson, the widow of Rev. Jackson, a former Presbyterian Minister and Inspector of Schools in British Honduras. Wolffsohn completed his Scottish education at the Dollar Academy and entered the British Honduras civil service as a copyist in 1906. In the following year he was transferred to the Survey Department where he qualified as a Surveyor in 1910. Wolffsohn then went into private employment and was on holiday in England when the world war I began. He saw active service as a second lieutenant before being appointed Assistant Engineer, Sea Defence Department, in Guyana in 1919. In 1922 he returned to the Surveyor General's Department in British Honduras and after becoming head of the Department in 1934 he received the unusual promotion from a professional and technical post to the head of the civil service in 1943. Service in a colonial society, however, was not considered by a local official to have been adequately recognised, despite an impressive career, unless it was rewarded with imperial honours. This distinction could not have been conceivably denied the local Colonial Secretary and he was twice the recipient of these honours, the C.B.E., in 1943 and the C.M.G. in 1947, before receiving the knighthood in 1961.

Not all of the local senior civil servants became members of the Colonial Service or had the benefit of the Sir Arthur Wolffsohn's education and overseas experience, but they shared with him a similar family and social background and functioned as a privileged group. The
bureaucracy in fact tended to develop a social stratification of its own, which, together with the limited number of senior administrative posts, rendered admission to the higher echelons of the civil service difficult.

The claim that social and cultural discrimination was practised should, however, not be pushed too far. The notable absence of Mestizos and Catholics from the higher ranks of the civil service should also be attributed to other factors. In the first place not many Mestizos were civil servants and fewer still were eligible for senior appointments. They lacked the requisite educational qualification for entry into the civil service because the curriculum at St. John's College, until the mid 1930s, was unsuited to the Cambridge Examinations syllabus. The curriculum reflected the preferences of the American Jesuits, who encouraged and arranged for their more promising students to continue their studies in Catholic institutions in the United States. This was another contributing factor to the absence of Mestizos and Catholics in the civil service since few of them could be induced by the less lucrative opportunities to return to British Honduras. A third factor was the relative ease with which the Mestizos could have entered the family owned business as well as the commercial banks.

It was not until the financial and economic crisis in the mid 1930s that the Mestizos were inclined to embrace the civil service, in large numbers, as a career. But although the economic depression had made conditions of employment in the civil service more attractive than elsewhere it had also limited recruitment. The resulting pressure on
clerical vacancies, together with the continued tendency for the recruitment system to emphasise ascription rather than achievement and to be operated by a local personnel with strong denominational loyalties, reduced the new group's chances of admission.

These difficulties of admission and promotion meant that the large body of civil servants had to be modest in their career expectations. The post of Class I clerk was the normal ceiling of their career. Those civil servants who retired as Higher Grade clerks were very fortunate since these posts were extremely limited and the rate of promotion to them equally slow. In 1944, the general clerical service called for only five of these clerks out of a complement of eighty-nine. The four officers actually in this grade in that year had so far served an average of twenty-six years in the civil service; two of them taking twenty-eight and thirty-three years respectively to reach this grade. The statistics are not as revealing as they suggest, for the clerical officer would have served a probationary period of about two years which were discounted in the calculation of his years of service.

In theory the clerical grade formed a single cadre, but since departments differed in importance the status of a clerk depended not only on his position in the hierarchy of the clerical class but also on the department to which he was attached. The Class II clerk in a District Commissioner's office in the outlying districts for example did

not carry as much status as his counterpart in the Surveyor General's Department, the Customs Department or the Treasury in Belize City where the officer came into frequent contact with the influential landowners and merchants. Service in the Colonial Secretariat carried the highest status, and was the ambition of almost every serving officer or new recruit. The fact that the number of clerical posts in the Secretariat never exceeded three (and transfers to and from this Department were infrequent) made the incumbents the envy of their colleagues. The senior clerk in particular who was also clerk to the Legislative and Executive Councils occupied a privileged position. Not only was he privy to the decisions of the Executive Council and to establishment and personnel matters but he was also strategically placed to catch the eye of his superiors on whom advancement depended. In fact, the subsequent careers of all the clerks who worked in the Colonial Secretariat in the 1930s and 1940s suggest that their services were amply rewarded with an administrative appointment, invariably to the post of District Commissioner after this office ceased to be the preserve of expatriates.

Status differentiation in the clerical service based on departmental postings merely emphasised the difficulties of advancement. A measure of relief to the frustrations of the clerical officers, however, came in the 1940s with openings for advancement in financial administration. The posts of accountants and allied jobs were filled from the general clerical service. No minimum qualification was prescribed as a condition of appointment to these posts and the perceptive clerk such as
Rafael Fonseca, C.B.E., the Financial Secretary, welcomed an assignment to this section of the civil service. The increased volume and complexity of Treasury work which resulted from the implementation of various Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes and the ten year Development programme after the second world war offered new promotion prospects to officers with a knowledge of accountancy. The abolition in 1948 of the arrangement whereby the Colonial Secretary also held the post of Financial Secretary, and the consequential appointment of a separate Financial Secretary within the Secretariat but directly responsible to the Governor added to the status of financial administration; while the appointment of a local officer as senior accountant in the Treasury in 1952, the creation of several accounts posts in the senior salary scale in 1951, and the interchangeability of these posts in the Audit, Income Tax, Public Works and Treasury Departments further enhanced the career prospects of the accounts officer. Moreover, a professional qualification in accountancy, up to the intermediate stage, could be pursued at home with relative ease. If an incentive to study was needed, it was provided in the recommendation of the Ramage Salaries Commission in 1951 that after 1954 holders of accounts posts should possess an accounting qualification. The acquisition of specialised knowledge in accounts and in some instances of a formal professional qualification gave the


11. Ibid.
accounts officer a decided advantage over his clerical colleagues, not only in their advancement in the civil service but in the open market.

Despite its generally limited promotion prospects employment in the civil service retained a strong appeal for the middle class and its aspirants. If employment discouraged initiative in the clerical grade and was not the most remunerative in the society it was certainly one of the most prestigious. The dominant English values of the colonial society had placed a high premium on white collar work, and to be associated or identified with an institution in which real power resided was probably the most important way of either maintaining or enhancing one's status. Employment also guaranteed the civil servant the security of tenure which the economic and financial crisis had denied his counterpart in business. The civil servant could also speak knowingly of annual rates of pay, and hopefully of assisted overseas passages when on vacation leave and retiring benefits, however penurious the latter may have been. Hope of a more rewarding career could also have been entertained, as constitutional advances from 1954 onwards called for far reaching changes in the organisational structure and personnel policy of the civil service.

Decolonising Period

Table 14 on the following page shows a two-fold increase in the number of senior civil service posts between 1954 and 1965 and also the extent to which the office holders were British Hondurans. Although it is not readily apparent the professional British Hondurans were the main
TABLE 14

Honduranisation of Senior Civil Service Posts
between 1954 and 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Local % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Local % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Local % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Local % of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Civil Service Staff lists

beneficiary of the change in the recruitment policy. In the first place, without the government training scheme many professional ambitions would have remained unfulfilled. Secondly, the claims of this group upon government resources were greater and received priority as Table 15 on the following page shows. Only five of the thirty-four civil servants with a university degree were in the administrative grade in April 1965. Thirdly, unlike the administrative,
much of the professional skill such as in forestry and agriculture could only be utilized by the government.

### TABLE 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Number of Officers</th>
<th>Length of Courses in years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountancy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 to 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 to 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 to 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity Surveying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Surveying</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Civil Service Staff list, April, 1965.

Because of the relatively long time which professional training demands the lay civil servants were, however, the immediate beneficiaries of the Honduranisation policy. From the inception of the quasi-ministerial system in 1955 nationals were appointed to the six newly created administrative posts in the Colonial Secretariat. These officers were drawn from various grades of the service. Nevertheless, doubts about their
capability arose. While the membership system had signalled the demise of the Colonial Secretariat it initially imposed a heavier administrative burden upon this department. Every submission to the Executive Council from the Member's office had to go through the Colonial Secretary's office. The Colonial Secretary's surveillance became marked after the more able Members, Richardson, Goldson and Price were removed from office. In this situation, the administrative officers, quite apart from their inexperience, tended to exert little influence on their respective Members. Nor was their confidence bolstered by the direct access of the technical and professional heads of departments (mainly expatriate and university graduates) to the Colonial Secretary.

Any attempt, as was suggested by two Commissions, to reinforce the administrative service with experienced officers from the Central Pool which the Colonial Office created to meet such contingencies in the overseas territories was politically untenable. Constitutional and political progress was judged by politicians and local civil servants alike not only by electoral and legislative reforms but by the extent to which British Hondurans were admitted to the administrative and


professional services. The idea of recruiting expatriates on second-
ment or contract in any case was hardly likely to have the desired
administrative effect. It did not ensure the continuity in policy and
personnel which was so vital to the successful completion of the
various programmes. There were periods when several important posts
were without a substantive incumbent. In August 1956 for example,
officers were acting in the posts of Colonial Secretary, Financial
Secretary, Director of Agriculture, Director of Education, Superinten-
dent of Police, Social Development Officer, Postmaster General and
Assistant Colonial Secretary. The reasons for the high turn over of
expatriates were the same which obtained in the crown colony period.
The series of salary increases in 1947, 1951 and 1956 did not improve
the relative attractiveness of the establishment since other British
overseas territories had maintained their advantages by upward revision
of salaries and conditions of service. The country therefore
remained a "rung in the ladder for a promising (Colonial Service)
officer on his way to the top." For a variety of reasons, therefore, British Hondurans formed the
administrative cadre within the Ministries which were established in
1961. Of the sixteen administrative officers in the Ministries in
October 1961, eleven were British Hondurans; one, A. S. Frankson,
Principal Secretary to the Ministry of Education, was a Jamaican; and

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
the remaining four were British expatriates. The initial tendency to select the administrative officers from the various sections of the civil service was not maintained. It became the practice to recruit this staff from the clerical and clerical-executive grades and from among university graduates. A definite career pattern for both the clerical and the professional and technical staff has therefore been established with the lay administrative officers constituting a distinct professional group. In fact the structural change to a ministerial system of government had transformed the position of the lay civil servant from one of permanent subordination to the chief professional officers to that of superiority. Within the colonial structure the professional posts carried greater authority in the decision making process than either the specialised or lay administrative posts outside the Colonial Secretariat. The advice of professional officers could not be easily overlooked by the Colonial Secretary who was the Governor's chief of staff. Their proximity to him also gave them an advantage over the District Commissioners who were the most important group of lay administrators. In fact, the heads of the key departments, Agriculture, Forests, Survey, Public Works and Medical were invariably ex-officio members of either the Executive Council or the Legislative Council or both.

Under the ministerial system the Permanent Secretary is the civil service head of the Ministry and exercises overall responsibility for all the departments within the Ministry. In 1965 all of the eight

Permanent Secretaries were lay civil servants and the Ministries for which they were responsible were Finance and Economic Development (including the Treasury, the Central Planning Unit, Customs and Excise, Income Tax); Education and Housing; Internal Affairs and Health (including District Administration, Belize City Firebrigade, Police, Printing and the Volunteer Guard, Immigration and Legal Affairs); Labour; Local Government and Social Welfare (including Co-operatives and Credit Union, Prisons, Social Development); Natural Resources and Trade (including Agriculture, Archaeology, Forestry, Survey and Lands); Public Utilities and Communications (including Civil Aviation, Ports and Harbours, Post and Telecommunications, Public Works). A directive to heads of departments in 1961 not "to take any action involving a change of policy or the likelihood of public controversy without the approval of the Minister" merely emphasised that the role of principal adviser on policy had passed to the Permanent Secretary as well as the more fundamental change in the role of the civil service from that of being the government to that of being the main executive instrument of it.

Studies on the ministerial system of government elsewhere have indicated that the change in the relationship between the professional and administrative officers has been characterised by friction. This obtains not only in the situation in which the professional officers


are expatriates and the lay administrative group are local civil servants but also where both groups are composed of local officers. There is a general unwillingness on the part of the professional officer to accept the loss in status and the new source of recruitment to the apex of the civil service Ministries. Essentially, these officers contend that there is a change in the criteria by which leadership ability is judged. The basis of rewards in terms of salaries and other conditions of service has been changed by the setting aside of the yardstick of educational qualification and professional skill.

There is little evidence to suggest that this friction has been marked in British Honduras. For this there are several likely explanations. First, the limited educational achievements of the Principal Secretaries inhibit their assertion of their position. Moreover, the superior educational qualifications of the professional officer and their scarce skills are reflected in their salary. The Chief Education Officer's salary, for example, exceeds that of the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Housing by £1,300 per annum. Secondly, the transition from the old colonial administrative structure to a ministerial system was sufficiently gradual to allow for the necessary adjustments in attitudes. Admittedly, the Membership System which lasted for seven years offered as much opportunity for conflict and confusion as for a re-orientation in attitudes, since the respective areas of jurisdiction were continuously being redefined during this period. The continued existence of the Colonial Secretariat up to 1964
may have also instilled some intransigence among professional officers, especially as they were almost entirely expatriates. But recognition of the Colonial Secretary as the source of authority and decision making in this period implied abiding by his personnel policies. Acceptance also of nationalist aspirations and the high turnover of expatriate staff perhaps reduced the possibility of tension between the expatriate professional officers and the local administrative officers. As we have pointed out, expatriate officers did not come to British Honduras with, or develop, a dedication to long service in the colony. Thirdly, the dual post of chief professional officer and head of department had lost its pre-eminence before it was occupied by local civil servants. In other words, if the chief professional officers were local civil servants when the Ministerial System was established they would probably have been less willing to accept a change in their status.

But as late as 1965, only one of the eight chief professional officers, the Survey General, was a local civil servant. The personnel situation at this level of the department was in fact the same as in the 1930s. Nevertheless in terms of their humble beginnings as clerks and junior technical officers, and the limited promotion prospects and opportunity for training up to 1954 the present position of local professional officers is an immeasurable improvement in their status. It amounts to a greater revolution in their career expectations than in the administrative officers'. Moreover, their professional pursuit is perhaps more absorbing and varied as it lends itself to research and other academic interests.
As Tables 16 and 17 on the following page show, one of the enduring features of the composition of the civil service is the disproportionate number of Creoles among the senior civil servants and in fact the entire staff. Whereas Table 14 included all the civil servants in the senior salary scales, those in the following two tables are confined to the administrative officers in the Ministries, and the departmental or executive heads and their deputies or assistants.

As can be observed the Creole monopoly of the locally held posts in 1950 was complete. This Creole predominance reflected both the earlier educational experience and the occupational preference of this group. For the Kestissos who held the senior posts in the ministries in 1965 had joined the civil service during the late 1930s when the economic depression had rendered employment in business unattractive. It is hardly likely that the Creole predominance would be challenged in the foreseeable future. Although the Creoles constituted about 60 per cent of the entire population almost 70 per cent of the adult population which had received a secondary education hailed from the predominantly Creole Belize District in 1960. The proportion of illiteracy (based on the ability to read or write either English or Spanish) in the various districts followed the distribution of the ethnic and cultural group. It was highest in those districts, Toledo (33.9 per cent), Corozal (21.0 per cent) and Cayo (19.4 per cent) where the Indians and Kestizos are most numerous and lowest in the Belize District (1.8 per cent) and Stann Creek District (9.4 per cent) where they are fewest. The significance of these figures is that although primary education is compulsory and a secondary education is available in the outdistricts
Table 16
Ethnic-Cultural Composition of Senior Civil Servants in 1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departmental Head</th>
<th>Sur.</th>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Creole</th>
<th>Estizo</th>
<th>Carib.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Local Off.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Head</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/Assistant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Professional Head</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>55.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Civil Service Staff List

Table 17
Ethnic-Cultural Composition of Senior Civil Servants in 1965

(a) Ministries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sur.</th>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Creole</th>
<th>Estizo</th>
<th>Carib.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Local Off.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Secretaries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Secretaries</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Ass. Sec.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Departmental Head

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sur.</th>
<th>I.</th>
<th>Creole</th>
<th>Estizo</th>
<th>Carib.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Total</th>
<th>Creole % of Local Off.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Head</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Professional Head</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy/Assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Civil Service Staff List
it is largely the Creoles who possess the entrance requirements to the civil service.

Even if more Mestizos were eligible civil servants their entry into the clerical grade would not significantly alter their position for the next ten years or more. A bottle-neck exists in the middle range executive and more senior specialised grades of the service. This is likely to persist for sometime as most of the heads of the non-professional departments are relatively young. The average age of those of Social Development, Information and Broadcasting was thirty-two on their respective dates of appointment in the early 1960s. Moreover there are limits to further expansion of the civil service now that the ministerial system is established and given the government's reluctance to directly undertake economic enterprises. Furthermore, priority is being given to the young university graduates in senior administrative appointments. It is therefore mainly as professionals that the Mestizos can exercise a countervailing influence. In 1965, however, only about six of the forty-six civil servants who were pursuing professional courses were Mestizos.²¹

In sum, the changes in the civil service have contributed very little to cultural integration. The development in the present decolonising period is basically a matter of professional British Hondurans replacing the expatriate personnel. Of the forty-three expatriates in 1965 only eighteen were permanent and mainly in occupations—five in

Law, four in Medicine, two each in Agriculture and Forestry, and one each in Audit, Public Works, Police and the Governor's Office - where their skills were still required. Another significant change in the civil service has been the breaking down of its social stratification. This was largely inherent in the situation in which the number of civil servants from the old, high status Creole families was insufficient to fill the newly created posts. It was also the concomitant of the development of a more open and competitive political process. The establishment of a Public Service Commission has facilitated this lowering of the social barriers of recruitment and the substitution of the ascriptive by the achievement criterion for appointment. Since the discrimination in the colonial period was not only cultural and social but also religious the balance in the differing denominational loyalties of the two leading members of the Commission, Fairweather and Gegg is not without significance. In these two members the balance is also party political. In the British tradition, the Public Service Commission is supposed to be politically neutral but it is far from being politically anonymous. In fact, it is the known divergence in the political views of the two prominent members that inspires confidence in the impartiality of the Commission. This has, however, not prevented the civil service association, the POU, from charging the members of the Commission of indulging in political patronage and of "relaxing their vigilance and permitting a number of irregularities in
appointments and promotions to receive their sanction."  

In so far as the openness or fluidity of social stratification within the civil service is dependent on the availability of government jobs and the related pre-requisites, its development as a permanent feature of social change is not altogether assured. Neither the jobs nor the government resources for training is limitless. Of course, there are several professional categories such as Medicine and Agriculture in which the civil servants as an elite group can justify their claim upon the limited government resources. But as the scope for expansion and therefore for promotion diminishes, senior civil servants may well use their power to regulate the admission of the aspiring officer who is equally dependent upon direct government assistance in his training for a senior government job.

Politics and the Civil Service

This heavy dependence upon limited government resources for their advancement is not the only way in which civil servants are involved in the political process. Another way in which they are involved has a bearing on the small scale of the society. When their numerical strength, local origin and bureaucratic skills are combined, civil servants are better placed than the other elite groups, lawyers, doctors, school teachers, for fulfilling the social roles in the society. In fact, they are brought into contact with each other and with leaders.

from other components of the political and social elite over and over again. Thus in 1965, Gill was not only the Principal Secretary to the Minister of Local Government and Social Welfare but also a member of the Cricket Board of which the Minister, Cattouse, a keen sportsman, was the Chairman. Cain, the Accountant General, does not only approve the salary of the Rev. Coleridge Barnett, Principal of Wesley College but is also a decision maker in the Methodist church. So also is Gill who is a member of the College's Board of Governors. Besides disseminating government news, Rudy Castillo, the Chief Information Officer, is also the Reuter Correspondent. None of these civil servants can however serve these 'outside' interests too long without running into the government. The Cricket Board is as dependent upon government's patronage as is Wesley College on its financial assistance. In this situation the political awareness of the civil servants is not only heightened but impinges upon his occupational role in the sense that the latter is increasingly looked at in terms of family, religious and social ties and the overall political change within the society.

A logical outcome of this multiple role performance was the POU's interest in the wider community. As its members explained in their famous Stann Creek Declaration of national goals in 1962,

"The National Public Service embraces the cream of those sons of the community, who, by virtue of the lofty idealism and sacrifice of our parents, have achieved the highest average level of formal education that the nation has to offer or that the national government can provide funds for in institutions of higher learning overseas. We fully recognise that a binding obligation follows from this for the public servant consciously acknowledge and discharge the obligation to be truely
servants of the community and this obligation extends beyond the immediate obligations of his paid employment. The public service therefore undertake to assume a front rank position in the battle against ignorance, poverty, disease, crime and any other form of perversity which threatens to blight the face of the nation or to impede the full realisation of national emergence and achievement." 23

The POU's concern for the wider community certainly led it into strange fields. It also conceived its obligation to the community as a guardian of "the basic freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in particular, freedom of worship, of association and assembly, ..... of free speech, trial by jury and by fair judicial process ....." 24 To assume the guardianship of civil liberties was noble, but the union could hardly have been unaware that it was skirting on the edge of politics. In so far as the threat to these liberties invariably comes from the government, any attempt by the POU to honour its self assigned obligations was likely to bring it into conflict with the ruling PUP. In fact, apart from the NIP, the POU was the only organisation to deplore the PUP's claim on the eve of the 1965 election, that "the one-party system, with the PUP as the governing party" was "fit and proper" 25 for British Honduras. The Union felt that it "would not be worthy of calling itself a responsible organisation if it failed at this crisis moment to bring to the attention of its members some of the occurrences which reflect insecurity. In the

24. Ibid.
first case except we be insane, could we agree that the best system is a one party system? Such a system as seen in Ghana, means oppression and eternal slavery for a great number of the inhabitants ....."27 And in an obvious reply to a PUP criticism of its involvement the union continued in a subsequent newsletter:

"Why should anyone hate us for pointing out to our members that a true pattern of democracy is a two party system and a one party system dangerous? .. Yes we know that the two party system was not annointed with any holy oil whereby it has become sacrosant. But we know too that absolute power can be a dangerous thing and that the world is full of examples even today. On the other hand the world shows today that those countries whose pattern their political structure off the British model, have attained a more stabled way of life. Workers must be free to express themselves and this type of freedom is taken away from a large number of people under a one party system." 28

It can be easily seen that the POU's protective role was also self-serving. If the overall political change had provided civil servants with incomparable opportunities for professional advance it also rendered their position insecure. Their attitude had been seriously affected by the lower social status of the political executive. Neither the educational attainments of the politicians nor the rural origin of most of them reflected the social and urban values of the civil servants. In fact, the PUP exploited these class divisions by holding up the civil servants to ridicule on the public rostrum.

What was more disconcerting to the civil servants than the ascendancy

of the new political elite was the FUP's Central American orientation and the British support for it. They constituted the bulk of the Creole world which all but collapsed in June 1966 when Goldson claimed that the British Foreign Office was favourably disposed to the American mediator's proposals on the Anglo-Guatemala dispute. As they put it, "Public Officers as citizens had come to feel that their country was being lost to them and had been unable to secure adequate reassurances." 29

The PCU had reached the conclusion that reassurances were lacking through a process of elimination. Neither of its two allied unions, the BHUT and the GWDU, was capable of exerting pressure on the government. Those members of the POU who as citizens were favourably disposed to the NIP appeared to have little confidence in its ability to represent their interests effectively. The party did not seem capable so far as electoral performances went of effecting a change of government. Nor was the POU prepared to place its faith in the departing Governor, Sir Peter Stallard, who was ultimately responsible for the civil service and offered his good offices to the Union. How low was the Governor's personal stock became known when a few months before the strike a seemingly innocuous suggestion to invite him to declare open a civil service seminar jointly sponsored by the Union, the UWI, and the government was vetoed by the Union. In short, the POU was experiencing a crisis of confidence. For varying reasons, it lacked confidence in the government's role in the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute, the departing Governor, its allied

29. Resume of the Meeting held between the Governor and the POU, 26th July, 1966.
trade unions, and the opposition party. The logical outcome of its own crisis was its interference, sooner or later, in the political process.

On Friday, 30th June 1966, the civil servants began a forty-eight hour sit down strike. For all practical purposes the strike ended at 12 noon on the following day, Saturday. Though brief, the strike demonstrated the relevance of the small scale of the society by impinging on other relationships within the wider community. So as not to be outdone, the government appealed to the Jesuits of St. John's College who unhesitatingly gave permission for the use of their students to break the strike. The morality of giving approval to students entrusted to their care, without the prior knowledge or consent of their parents, was obviously not apparent to the Jesuits. In failing to appeal as well to the other denominational colleges, the government, whatever its views about their likely response, had exposed itself to the charge of looking in one direction for assistance. Its failure in fact confirmed the widely held view that there is an alliance between the government and the Jesuits. This in turn brought into sharp relief the conjunction of religious and political attitudes in the society.

It cannot be over-emphasised that the decisions of the civil servants were as much influenced by the smallness of the social field and the many roles they perform in it as by their middle class background and cultural orientation. When combined, these factors gave

---

30. For a detailed discussion of the strike, see my published article: *The Civil Service Strike*, Appendix ii.
rise to particularistic as opposed to universalistic relationships.\textsuperscript{31} In other words, relationships of one kind could not be easily distinguished or separated from that of another. As the civil servants told the new Governor, Sir John Paul, "very often conclusions were made regarding an officer's political affiliation solely on the basis of his family, and on that basis, an officer was sometimes subjected to abuse regardless of how he performed his official duties."\textsuperscript{32} In this situation the notion of a non-partisan, insulated civil service is irrelevant. Few civil servants are 'pure'. Moreover, possession of this quality is not necessarily a virtue as the holder is usually regarded as ineffective. Even the government recognises this as those civil servants who give partisan support to the ruling PUP are the ones who are dutifully held up to the 'malcontent' by a section of the press as a model of non-partisan proficiency.

Yet it was to this conceptual purity that the new Governor, Sir Paul, appealed. He informed the union's Council of Management that "It was most certainly not for the civil service to arrogate unto itself the right to criticize the government or to try to embarrass it by entering itself in the political arena, and, in effect, allying itself with one or other political factions."\textsuperscript{33} Viewed against the post


\textsuperscript{32} Resume of meeting between Governor and POU officials, 28th July, 1966.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
independence development in other small scale political and social systems the old British concept on which the Governor based his argument is not only irrelevant but obsolete. Indeed, there is also scepticism in Britain about the conceptual purity of the ethos of the British civil service. In the new nations the concept is being redefined in terms of a triangular relationship between politicians, civil servants and the army. In British Honduras the civil servants are in many ways also 'the men on the horseback'. They provide the leadership to the British Honduras Volunteer Guard; the two previous Commandants being Fairweather and Major W. A. Johnston, Comptroller of Customs and Harbour Master. As we have seen the Volunteer Guard is as much a social as a para-military organisation; the Mestizos being conspicuously absent from it. More important perhaps are the POU’s organisational strength and its members’ strategic role. These are unlikely to be undermined as the society lacks a sufficiently large reservoir of professional personnel to operate the spoils system or a variant of it. Even if there were more qualified civil servants the present arrangement might still be preferred. As we observed at the beginning of the chapter, suitable alternative employment for trained personnel is severely limited. Under the spoils system, therefore, these civil servants may be inclined to plunge furiously into party politics.

It would be misleading to leave the impression that tension is the dominant characteristic of the relationship between the civil servants and the PUP government and that its nature is wholly political.
Ministers are impelled to cultivate a close relationship with their chief advisers precisely because the civil service is the main repository of skill and information. The PUP organisation, which is one of the more obvious alternative sources of information, lacks the necessary expertise. The result is that civil servants may be called upon to perform services that are marginal to their normal duties. These requests are not necessarily addressed to the Permanent Secretary but directly to the officer who can provide the necessary information. In fact, Ministers do not allow themselves to be hidebound by formal civil service procedure, and this informality frequently brings them into direct touch with the professional and technical officers. This tendency to overlook formal civil service procedure further blurs the distinction between the roles of the Minister and the civil servants.

Partly because they lack the permanence of civil servants and are under the obligation to account periodically for their stewardship, Ministers tend to identify themselves with the people by being involved in the execution of programmes. While this may lend weight to the efforts of the officer responsible for implementing the programme it also exposes his judgement to political influences. It also encourages the public to by pass civil servants, particularly field officers, and to want their consultations at the highest level. Thus within the same legally defined relationship weak Ministers and strong officials can, and apparently have, produced results totally different from those which would have been produced by a combination of strong Ministers and weak or diffident officials.
CHAPTER 8

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

No other institutions have been as expressive of the cultural differences between the Mestizo and the Creole complexes as the traditional local government institutions in the villages. During the crown colony period the highly structured Alcalde system in the Indian village was in marked contrast to the informal ad hoc organisations in the Creole villages. Both functioned independently of each other and of the District Town Boards whose structure was uniform. Neither of the two village institutions significantly linked the villager to the national government. For all practical purposes, central control of local government began and ended in the district capital town. It is therefore necessary to discuss these local government institutions separately before assessing the impact of post-war political change on them.

The Alcalde System

The Alcalde System is the only political institution which is not of Anglo-Saxon origin. It originated in the Spanish colonial period in Central America and was brought to British Honduras by the Mayas and Mestizos from Yucatan in the mid 19th century. It is confined to the south and west of the country. In 1962 there were twenty Alcaldes - three in the Stann Creek District, six in the Cayo District and eleven
in the Toledo District where the largest Alcalde village, San Antonio, is located. The Mestizo and Indian villages in the north operate the 'Patron' or 'Mayor' system which is akin to, but not as structurally developed and as established as the Alcalde system.

In theory, the Alcalde village was an open political system in which leadership was competitive. The Alcalde was normally elected for a year; his successor being chosen by the male villagers who met in conclave. The runner up in the election became the Deputy or Second Alcalde. The men then elected a body of five persons as councillors who constituted the Alcalde's Court. It was rare for the District Commissioner to disapprove of the Alcalde-designate and rarer still for his recommendation to be turned down by the Governor.

In practice, however, the political system was closed. Leadership was shaped by the kinship organisation. The Indians were highly familial in their approach to living, and respectful to age with a marked paternal pre-eminence and authority. The Alcalde's Court tended therefore to be composed of the oldest respected members of the village. The position of the First Alcalde was usually achieved after years of faithful service; the incumbent having begun his career as a village policeman and working towards the supreme position. No one who came from a numerically weak family or who failed to receive the blessings of his own group could aspire to leadership, despite his personal qualities. The leading men tended to alternate in the office of Alcalde and the same group of people fulfilled all the leadership roles in the village.
This multiple office holding endowed the Alcalde with immense resources. His court determined the amount of produce to be contributed from the village community, the sale of which was appropriated for public works. It also determined the amount of land to be cultivated and the beginning of the planting season. The decision on the beginning of the agricultural season was made in consultation with the heavenly bodies, an art in which the Mayas were skilled. The Court also selected the days for fajina which was the voluntary cleaning of the village and the communal execution of village works. Objections to the proposals were rare since the objector risked being ostracised. Failure to honour communal obligations was an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment in the village cabildo with hard labour. These petty fines were an important source of local revenue.

If the Alcalde system could be culturally justified, it was from the standpoint of the central government's budget a form of administration-on-the-cheap. As early as 1858, the system was statutorily recognised because it provided "for the speedy and economical administration of justice in the rural districts ......." As in other colonial territories with traditional local government institutions it was also incorporated in the central administrative system when in 1884 the Secretary of State for the Colonies approved the "appointment of alcalde and constables in the Indian and Carib villages throughout the

country and the exercise by alcaldes of a voluntary jurisdiction subject to appeal to the District Magistrate. Its success in the Carib villages was limited as the system could not be easily super-imposed upon another cultural group. The judicial functions were placed on a former legal basis in 1952 by the Inferior Court Ordinance. The Alcalde could impose a maximum fine of $25BH and the criminal jurisdiction of his Court was to be exercised in accordance with the criminal law and practice of the country. To be sure the Alcaldes were given financial incentives in the performance of the central government duties and were permitted to make claims on local resources. These included a stipend for their judicial role, about 30 per cent of the occupancy fees collected on behalf of the Survey Department, and a monthly allowance of $4 and $2 for the Alcalde and his deputy respectively from the village funds. Considering that the village was essentially a subsistence economy these financial incentives were an important determinant of the Alcalde's status. In the final analysis, however, his source of legitimacy was local. It was the villagers who upheld the office and anyone, even a former Alcalde, who behaved in an unseemingly manner towards the incumbents was ostracised. It was of course much more difficult to deal with an unpopular Alcalde although his removal before his term of office ended was not unknown.

2. Colonial Secretary's Circular Letter No.7 of 1884 dated 14th June, 1884. Cited in Handbook of British Honduras, 1891 and 1892. p.132.

Perhaps the only external agency which effectively penetrated the traditional power structure was the American Jesuits. The traditional theocracy of the Maya Empire ensured a harmonious relationship between the religious and political leaders. Indeed by trading their influences both leaders maximised their authority. The lay church leader (Mayordomo) who as we have seen was invariably the Alcalde attended to the traditional religious feasts. Fully tutored in the rational norms and procedures of the central colonial administration, the Jesuits complemented the traditional leadership structure by representing the needs of the villagers in Belize City. In fact as we saw they preempted the role of the central government in both social and economic endeavours.

Any resemblance of the Alcalde system to other local traditional institutions elsewhere, such as chieftancy in Africa, is superficial. The Indian political structure was neither created by the colonial authorities nor used as an instrument of indirect rule. Apart from using the institution as a revenue collecting and law enforcing agency for which it was necessary to subject the Alcalde's election to the approval of the Governor, the colonial administration had very little to do with the village organisation. Because of this distant relationship, the villagers did not perceive their political and social relationship in a colonial context. Populist pressures were directed against the Alcalde rather than the colonial administration. Apart from major crimes, disputes were also resolved by the priests or the family without recourse to the external authority structure. This local handling
handling of grievances was determined as much by the geographical
factor as by cultural consideration. Being widely scattered and remote,
the villagers were forced to rely on themselves for internal harmony.

The Creole Village Organisation

The orientation towards authority among the Creoles was different.
The familial bonds were not as strong and the pre-eminence of the
paternal authority was certainly not as automatic as in the Indian
family. These bonds were also undermined by the traditional forestry
occupation which took the men away from the villages for long periods.
In consequence the Creole women were more active in village affairs
than their counterparts in the Carib and the Indian villages. The
equalitarianism also prevented the development of a village organisa-
tion with a strong internal structure. No one could remain a leader
for long unless he possessed some distinctive occupational attribute.
Thus leadership tended to devolve on those villagers who had the
necessary contact with the timber contractors to provide job opportuni-
ties to their colleagues. That occupation was a function of leadership
was more clearly demonstrated in the activities of the school teacher-
cum lay preacher, the government policeman and the rural health nurse.
Whereas these government officials were overshadowed by the Alcalde and
the priests in the Indian villages they were the mainstay and in some
cases the organisers of village organisations. One only has to recall
their multifarious duties to appreciate their value to the villages.
They were the church's social worker and agent for the Post Office and
other government departments. Yet their authority was not as pervasive or overpowering as the Alcalde’s. For one thing there was a high turnover of personnel and the transient official did not have the same vested interest in the welfare of the village.

Given the traditional leadership roles of teachers and government officials the Creoles did not consider external authority structure as an intrusion. Indeed, the mechanisms of social control in the Creole village were not as strong and varied as those in the Indian village and were often exhausted without the disputes being settled. Recourse to the central government machinery was therefore more frequent among Creole villagers, who, in any case, were more favourably disposed to the external authority structures because they were operated by members of their own cultural group.

The District Town Boards

District Town Boards operated in the seven areas designated as towns - Corozal, Orange Walk, San Ignacio, Benque Viejo, Stann Creek, Punta Gorda and Monkey River. The 1938 District Town Boards Ordinance provided for either wholly nominated or partly elected Town Boards. The membership of the Town Boards varied from five to seven including the District Commissioner and the District Medical Officer who were ex-officio members. Of the seven Town Boards, the Stann Creek Town Board alone was permitted an elective element in 1940. The economic advance of the town and its social and cultural composition had combined to give the Board this higher status. More specifically, the citrus
industry had not only given rise to a Creole and Carib proletariat but also attracted a number of established businessmen, senior retired civil servants and other influential families as residents. For example, William Bowman, O.B.E. who was partly European was a resident citrus grower. He was also the Legislative Council representative for Stann Creek from 1936 - 1939, and a nominated member of the Town Board in 1938. He was succeeded in both offices by his son, Henry, who retired from active politics in 1948.

The socio-economic background of William and Henry Bowman was typical of the local (and national) leadership. For the nominated members of the other Town Boards represented the more conservative element in the local social order. Many of them were the leading landowners. William Schofield, J.P., who was of Dutch origin and a member of the Corozal Town Board from 1939 to 1958 owned nearly the whole of Corozal Town which he sold to the government after Hurricane Janet in 1956. Others were mahogany and chicle contractors who had a ramifying connexion with the local economy. They were the owners of the retail stores, sawmills and sugar distilleries and also the money lenders. When a nominated member could not be identified with an economic interest he was connected to one of the respected or established families in the district or the society as a whole. This explains the disproportionately high number of Creole members on the Town Boards in such predominantly Mestizo towns as Corozal and Benque Viejo. For differing reasons therefore, both the Mestizos and Creoles had a common interest in maintaining the structure of economic and social relationships.
The professions were the only occupational group that was not represented on the Town Boards. This was largely because the primary school teacher could not claim the same ramifying relationships with the town dweller as with the villager. The multifarious duties which he undertook in villages were performed in the district towns by the District Commissioner and representatives of other government departments. The conspicuous absence of the clergy was perhaps also instructive of the poor relationship between the colonial administration and the American Jesuits. For the latter's social leadership in the towns was as marked as in the villages.

It may be argued that the Town Board members were recruited from the higher socio-economic group not because of their wealth in se but because it enabled them to be of public service. Unlike the Belize City councillors, for example, the Town Board members were unpaid. But the Town Board members, except those in Stann Creek, do not appear to have been caught up in local government affairs. For one thing, the scale of activities was small and the favours and rewards to be distributed limited. Until the government gave the Town Boards an annual grant for sanitation in 1952 only the budget of the Corozal Town Board exceeded £10,000. The revenue and expenditure of Punta Gorda Town Board in 1954 on the following page gives a fair idea of the limited functions of the Town Boards.

Since personnel emoluments and the maintenance of the Board's properties consumed £4,691.53 or 69 per cent of the locally derived revenue few social services could have been provided from this source.
TABLE 18

Revenue and Expenditure of the Punta Gorda Town Board 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cash Balance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Personal Emoluments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,150.88</td>
<td>2,935.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Taxation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Upkeep of Board's Property</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,388.01</td>
<td>1,656.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fire Brigade</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>235.85</td>
<td>146.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government grant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sanitation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for sanitation</td>
<td>5,600.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,750.00</td>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Light Plant revenue</strong></td>
<td>565.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,477.02</td>
<td><strong>Lighting Plant Account</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950.00</td>
<td>1,400.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>Balance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£12,881.76</td>
<td>577.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the nature of their functions the Town Boards were essentially regulative. This was another reason for the Town Board members' limited involvement in local government. After all it was not in their economic interest to be sticklers about local government regulations or even to be too identified with them. Their role was to help the District Commissioner to maximise the belief that all was well in the town and thereby minimise any likelihood of substantial change which might undermine their hold on the essentially peasant communities.

For all these reasons the Town Boards were run by the District Commissioner and the Medical Officer. The emphasis on sanitation may even have drawn the Medical Officer deeper than the District Commissioner in community affairs. It is therefore not surprising that the retired Medical Officer, Dr. George, after ceasing in 1954 to be the Northern
District elected representative in the Legislative Council, remained the self-appointed spokesman of Orange Walk town. In assessing the District Commissioner's role his other duties should not be overlooked. His annual report was more informative of his judicial, treasury, and customs duties than of the activities of the Town Board. This did not only reflect the limited impact of local government on the community but also the peculiarity of the District Administration in British Honduras. The office lacked the prestige and authority of its African counterpart as Governor Kittermaster who served in Africa informed his superior.

"He is the chief representative of the Government in his District and as such he has relations with all Departments in some form or another .... These duties are performed with varying degrees of efficiency according to the personality and ability of the individual officers. But the fact remains that the District Officer is not in British Honduras the 'Head' of his District in the same way as in other Administrations. In commercial language his position is more that of an Agent for the Departments, merely carrying into effect the instructions issued to him by the Head of the Department rather than that of a Branch Manager who gives effect in his own way to the policy laid down at Headquarters. Whether this is due to the tradition of the Service or to the type of officer appointed to the office or to the fact that the absence of any indigenous native race has not emphasised the necessity of the exercise of local initiative, I have been unable to judge. The necessary machinery appears to be available to enable an officer of sufficiently strong personality and initiative to obtain for himself the same status as District Officers enjoy elsewhere, and I have endeavoured as much as possible during the past three years to encourage officers to exercise more initiative. Nevertheless it frequently happens that matters even of the simplest nature are submitted for instructions without any constructive recommendation by the officers. This criticism does not apply with equal force to all officers but except in one case officers may be said generall to
be content to carry out instructions and not to assume any responsibility." 4

In judging the institution and office holders on the basis of his African experience the Governor distorted the picture. Indirect rule was never the aim nor the outcome of the District Commissioner system in British Honduras or Guyana which is the only other Commonwealth Caribbean territory that possesses the institution. The local civil servants who were District Commissioners therefore differed from their European counterparts in Africa in their motivation and conception of the office. If the post in British Honduras was the envy of local servants it was not because it was a source of authority, actual or potential, but simply because it was one of the few offices for which their education and civil service experience befitted them. In terms of colonial political change, it was also salutary that the office was free of the assumptions of indirect rule. For as Kilson reminds us, 'Indirect rule, after all, was a method of administration more suited for controlling backward populations undergoing colonial change than it was for facilitating the depth and scale of such change.' 5 In fact by not being too closely associated with colonial rule the institution has survived the colonial change albeit with its status somewhat undermined.

4. Governor's Despatch to Secretary of State, 29th May, 1933. C.0.123/336.

5. Kilson, Political Change in a West African State, p.33.
National Influence on Local Authorities

Changes in the local political institutions were first put forward by the old political elite. As we saw earlier in the study, the Courtenay Constitutional Commission had recommended the establishment of statutory village councils which, together with the District Town Board, would have constituted an Electoral College in each of the outdistricts. It should be emphasised, however, that the primary aim of the proposal was not to raise local horizons beyond the village and the town or even to lay the foundation for a nationally integrated local government system. It was rather to make the local political institutions pivotal to the working of the entire political process. Indeed, the Commission held tenaciously to the British colonial concept of the role and purpose of local government: "We attach the greatest importance to the development of efficient organs of local government. A sound and democratic system of local government is, in our opinion, the best foundation on which to build a solid democratic central structure. If local government is democratic and we can through it ensure that the principles of democracy are cherished, we need have little fear that its principles will not be cherished at the centre also." 6

However, theoretically plausible, the argument was unrealistic. Local political change had been influenced by the nationalist upsurge even before the Courtenay Commission reported in April 1951. For instance, the PUP had captured the Belize City Council in November, 1950.

The party's failure to obtain a majority on a single Town Board when local government elections were held for the first time in six of the seven towns in December 1955 in no way suggested that party politics had not penetrated the outdistrict towns. It simply pointed to the organisational vacuum which the decline and later the split in the GWU created.

Apart from pre-dating electoral politics in the outdistrict towns, party politics was bound to impinge upon the local arena. Being a government institution, the District Town Boards were an important source of legitimacy. Both the urban based politicians and the colonial administration regarded the local election as an index of the parties' popularity in the country as a whole. Thus the colonial administration hailed the results of the 1955 elections as a "set back for the PUP." 7 Similarly the PUP turned its municipal success in December 1958, eleven months after Price was dismissed from the Executive Council, to good account. It informed Sir Hilary Blood that the twenty-nine seats which it won out of thirty-three in seven municipalities (including Belize City) "can be considered as a fitting mandate from the vast majority of people to the People's United Party to speak for them on constitutional reforms." 8

The penetration of national influence was also facilitated by the multiple role performance of local politicians. We have seen that

because of local and cultural particularism and the attempt to bring the outdistricts into the national political framework both the PUP and the NIP recruited their candidates for national elections from among the local leaders. Because it was a more stable and widely recognised institution, the Town Boards displaced the trade unions as the point of entry for these aspiring politicians. Indeed, in a few cases the interest in local politics was incidental and the councillors severed their conxssions with the Town Boards after being elected to the House of Representatives. By and large, however, the district elected representatives have retained their association with the Town Boards and are also the main link between the party, the town and the centre.

A case study of Stann Creek town illustrates this interrelationship and the impact of national influence on local politics. In this town Alan Arthurs and Albert Arzu are the leaders of the PUP and NIP respectively. Arthurs is the manager of the local cinema and was not associated with the trade union movement. Instead he became a member of the Town Board in 1951 when the PUP was still dependent upon the GWU for organisational support. It was not until the trade unions proved to be an unsuitable source of recruitment and the Stann Creek District was divided into two constituencies that he became the party's nominee in the Stann Creek town constituency in 1961. Arzu, on the other hand, was a Trustee of the GWU and broke away from the PUP after the split in 1956. With the decline of the GWU he became more involved in local government affairs. In the 1965 general election he unsuccessfully opposed Arthurs but returned to the fray in 1966 as leader of the NIP
candidates in their attempt to capture the PUP controlled Town Board of which Arthurs was the Mayor. Both leaders were again appealing to the same set of voters. For the electorate formed one constituency for both national and local elections; the voter in the latter election voting for the seven members of the Local Authority from the list of candidates.

In this situation, where the same elements were engaged in national and local politics, national issues were bound to enter the local elections. This was to be expected even without the intervention of the urban based politicians. The political stature of the two principal protagonists was sufficiently high for the constituency to retain its dual status as an arena for national and local campaigns. The campaign was really a continuation of that at the national election, the outcome of this and subsequent local government campaigns to be seen not as an end in themselves but as the prelude to the next general election. In fact, the election was of national interest as, early in the year, Goldson had revealed the gist of the American mediator's proposals. It was transformed into a vote of confidence in the PUP government's ability to safeguard the nation's interest in the negotiations. The election was so important to the PUP, that Premier Price felt obliged to travel to Stann Creek town to wind up his party's campaign. In a poll that was as high as at the general election the electorate gave the control of the Town Board to the NIP.

The electoral system and the results of the 1966 Town Board election in the other towns suggest, however, that national and party
political considerations do not always transcend all other issues. If the voters were unswerving in their party loyalties then the party’s victory should be complete. But only in three of the seven towns was this the case. Corozal town and Punta Gorda returned all the PUP candidates while Monkey River town did the same to the NIP candidates. If national party political considerations were also overpowering the PUP’s overwhelming success in the general election should be repeated in the local election. But its fortunes have fluctuated. It regained Benque Viejo town in 1966 which it had lost in 1964, but was only able to retrieve two seats in Orange Walk. This mixed party representation in four of the seven Town Boards, and the periodical swing to and from the PUP suggest that in these towns the personality of the individual candidates was of some consequence and that voting was across party lines. There is certainly not the same life and death political struggle in these towns as in Belize City where the municipal voter feels the direct impact of national party leadership. It is, however, noteworthy that personalities are only important within the party political framework as no local leader can realistically aspire to membership of the District Town Board without the party label.

Political parties also vie for control of the District Town Boards because of the central government resources which they command and the services they provide. The Punta Gorda Town Board, for example, depends upon the central government subvention for more than half of its revenue as the table on the following page shows. Control of the Local Authorities is obviously more vital to the NIP than to the PUP.
TABLE 19

Government Subvention to Punta Gorda Town Board 1966 - 1968

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Subvention</th>
<th>Subv. % of Revenue</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>£33,390</td>
<td>17,439</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>34,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>35,405</td>
<td>18,575</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>26,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>28,565</td>
<td>18,575</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>28,529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is the only means by which the former party can offer the local (and national) electorate resources in return for their support. Conflicts between the local and central governments are however more likely to arise when the Town Board is NIP controlled. Central government resources can be distributed in such a way as to deny a NIP controlled Town Board, within statutory limits, transactions between the central government and the local population. An example of the central government's astute manipulation of its resources was the control of the new vocational centre in Stann Creek town. In the 1966 local government election campaign the ruling PUP held out a vague promise to the electorate to entrust the administration of the centre to the Town Board. However, with its defeat, responsibility for the centre was given to the Ministry of Labour whose political head, McKoy, is a resident of Stann Creek town and the representative of the Stann Creek Rural constituency.

Conflict can also arise because the relationship between the District Officer (as the District Commissioner has been restyled), the
elected district Assemblyman and the District Town Board is ill defined. Except in Stann Creek, the District Officer was the chairman of the District Town Board during the colonial period. His leadership role in the community was also unchallenged by the Legislative Councillor who as we saw seldom resided in the constituency. The District Officer has however ceased to be intimately involved in the affairs of the wholly elected Town Board which is directly responsible to the Ministry of Local Government and Social Development. His overall status has also been undermined by the constitutional changes and the development of party politics at the district level. Local issues which were brought to the attention of the colonial government through the District Officer are now channelled through the offices of the local politician and the district Assemblyman. This situation is encouraged by the fact, that with the exception of one, the district representatives are of the ruling PUP, and by the tendency for Ministers, when addressing their directives, to overlook the District Officer in favour of the representative. There are, however, issues which must be eventually referred to the District Officer and whose solution depends upon the harmonious relationship between this incumbent and the political representative. But the position of this latter functionary in the local political process has not been formalised. The District Town Board Ordinance, for example, takes no cognisance of him. A narrow legalistic view by the District Officer and the Town Board (of a different party political

persuasion) of their relationship with this representative can therefore result in conflict. There is also the possibility that the overzealous district representative may impinge upon or seek to influence the work of the District Officer. These conflict situations are basically the result of the development of the institutions of District Officer and political party at different times, and in different contexts as well as the functionaries' different perception of their role.

There is perhaps a case for reviewing the institution of District Officer in the light of the political changes. In fact, the PUP had suggested to the Blood Constitutional Commissioner in 1959 that the institution be politicised. But it should be noted that in those African countries where the District Officer is a politician the change was either preceded or followed by the establishment of a one-party system government. Since the PUP's proposals, however, a two-party system has more or less been legitimised in British Honduras and the government is compelled to retain at least the semblance of impartiality at the district level which the civil servant provides.

In the villages the ruling PUP appears to be adopting a variant of the new arrangement in Africa. It annually sets aside funds for sports and other community projects which can be recommended by the district elected representative. The funds are administered by the Social Development Department but the Social Development Officer and the District Officer are not necessarily directly involved in the decision.

making process. In the interest of cordial relationship with these officers and to benefit from their administrative experience, the elected representative usually solicits their views before submitting his programme to the Minister of Local Government and Social Development to whom he is directly responsible. By participating in the administrative process the elected representative obtains an insight into the complexities of government and comes to appreciate the need for his demands to be realistic. But perhaps more significant is the fact that participation gives him an opportunity to dispense political patronage. One is encouraged to hold this view when it is observed that the government, in allocating administrative responsibility in the sole constituency, Toledo North, which did not elect the PUP candidate in 1965, has overlooked the elected representative in favour of the party's Senator who lives in the neighbouring constituency, Toledo South. The bypassing of the elected representative has destroyed the sense of impartiality in that the deviant rural community does not expect to receive the full advantages of government-sponsored projects.

Village politics is by no means only about the extraction of resources from the central government and their allocation within the village. It is also party political as the NIP has been encouraged by its electoral success in the district towns, particularly the Mestizo, to also challenge the PUP hegemony in the villages. The problems in the villages, however, are more social and administrative than political. For one thing the PUP made no attempt to uproot the traditional authority structure in the Indian village. Apart from the fact that
this structure was not an integral part of British colonial rule an
assault upon it was not necessary for the party to gain village support.
In the first place, as we just indicated, the PUP's influence was until
very recently unchallenged by the NIP. Secondly, its close relations
with the Jesuits appealed to the entire Latin peasantry. Thirdly, there
has been little local political pressure for change in the traditional
village institution. Any diminution of popular allegiance to the
traditional authority has been due to the social changes within the
villages. Although the Indian villager still spends a great part of the
year in the traditional setting he is increasingly involved in the
modern market. This has compelled him to produce cash crops for the
market rather than for subsistence especially during periods of unemploy-
ment in the sugar, citrus and forestry industries. This is at once
reflected in the breakdown of communal activities in the villages.

It was largely in response to the inadequacies of the various
self-governing organisations that the government promoted voluntary
village councils throughout the country, with the ultimate aim of giv-
ing these bodies statutory powers. The long-established and flourish-
ing village councils in four Creole villages - Placentia, Seine Bight,
Gales Point and Barranco boosted the programme. By 1960, these councils
increased to fifty-nine in the six administrative districts and over the
next four years to ninety-two. 11 These councils function under a
standard constitution prepared by the Social Development Department and

11. B.H Government, Report on Policy for Social Development Services
their programmes are influenced by the welfare orientation of the department. Thus they are essentially community self-help councils through which the department channels and administers its community development programmes.

In so far as the village council symbolises progress and modernity it is in conflict with the traditional power structure. There is no doubt that it detracts from the prestige of the Alcalde. It seems also that the government's policy is to reduce the Alcalde to a judicial and handy government officer. This redefining of jurisdictional boundaries does not necessarily resolve the conflict between the old and the new institutions. Though the village councils appeal to the young, these leaders do not represent job possibilities as is customary among Creole leaders nor are they necessarily from the elite family of the Mayas and Mestizos. And while the young leaders are prepared to embrace the new democratic ideas they are also caught in the vicious net of expectations of reverence, respect and obedience due to elders in the village. This detracts from their drive and initiative. The situation varies from village to village. In some the conflict is so intense that there is a stalemate in which little is attempted except for the efforts of the elders to maintain the status quo.

Another problem which hinders the rationalisation of the local government arrangement is that of size. The villages are so small in size and population and are so widely dispersed and fragmented that their formation into viable administrative units is a real challenge. When the low social and economic standard and the weight of tradition
are added to their small size and population it is difficult to conceive any but the welfare approach to their problem. The village councils are still to prove themselves as community councils and are too new to be given the status of local authorities carrying out statutory functions. The conferring of statutory powers on these councils may not even be desirable, especially if it involves local taxation and paid services since these will undermine the self-help basis of the community development programme of the Social Development Department.

Larger and more integrated local authorities can be created by a tiered structure of local government. In this connexion the establishment of non-statutory District village councils comprising the village councils in each administrative district has been officially mooted. The possibility of a link between either the village councils or the proposed District village councils and the District Town Boards is, however, problematical. Under this arrangement the District Town Boards would presumably undertake the major services for the entire administrative district, and the village councils those services of lesser importance. It is, however, doubtful whether these local authorities with their differing approach to local government will be able to mesh. In any event it is unlikely that the volume of work to be given to local authorities in British Honduras in the foreseeable future would be sufficient to warrant two tiers of local government. Moreover, the villages at their present stage of economic development are clearly unable to contribute to the additional administrative cost which a two tiered system entails. It appears therefore that the direct administra-
tion of these rural areas by agents of the central government will continue indefinitely.

While the local authorities were not a starting point of the overall process of political change as the Courtenay Commission had hoped, they have nevertheless contributed to it. The extension of electoral politics to the six towns on a party political basis led to a change in the backgrounds and experiences of the Town Board members. In turn the Town Boards have become an important source of admission into the national political process. With the introduction of the village councils political power in the village has been diffused. What is of interest is the extent to which the traditional and modern styles of politics in the Indian villages can co-exist and still more interact. For despite the diminution in allegiance to the traditional authority, the Alcalde system remains an effective means of mediating socio-political relations. On the other hand, the process of modernization throughout the country favours the village councillors, and it is their attitude which would decide whether a multi-structural political system in the villages would develop.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: DECOLONISATION AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

This study has related the story of decolonisation in British Honduras in such a way that attention was focussed on the problem of national integration. Both the process of decolonisation and the problem of national integration are multi-dimensional. One of the dimensions of decolonisation was the political differences between the young nationalist politicians and the colonial oligarchy. There was nothing novel about this conflict. The political ferment is associated with a specific event, the devaluation of the British Honduras dollar in 1949, in the same way as the beginning of nationalist political development in the Commonwealth West Indies is associated with the series of disturbances in the 1930s. Like the situation in those territories the political agitation in British Honduras climaxed a long period of gestation. It was the memories of the harsh conditions of the 1930s and 1940s that sustained the nationalist movement long after the devaluation of the dollar had been forgotten. Like the movements in India and Ghana, the PUP had to fight for its legitimacy. It was not until 1960 that the colonial government tacitly recognised the new political elite as its successor. Thus the constitutional structure was re-shaped to accommodate two parallel systems - the colonial and the emergent British Honduran controlled governments.

If this new structure was designed to favour nationalist interest
there is still considerable difference as to how this could be achieved. Independence should be the ultimate outcome of this transitional arrangement. But with every unsuccessful attempt to resolve the Anglo-Guatemala dispute the nationalist goal recedes. Moreover, the process of decolonisation in British Honduras, far from implying local control of the country's economic destiny, seems to be essentially a question of imperial succession. In its relationship with the U.S.A, British Honduras accepts the 'Big Brother' philosophy. From time to time doubts about American intentions are expressed: witness the unequivocal rejection of the American mediator's proposals for the settlement of the Anglo-Guatemala dispute. But British Hondurans usually regain their composure and settle comfortably back into their belief that America will eventually respect their political aspiration and is committed to the alleviation of poverty in the underdeveloped countries.

The second dimension of decolonisation stems from the first. Hardly had the political differences between the young local political elite and the colonial oligarchy begun than the familiar pattern of conflict among British Hondurans became evident. The popular movement was opposed by the old political elite and then torn asunder by internal strife. It is this conflict among British Hondurans that has determined the dimension of the problem of national integration. Our analysis shows that this conflict did not arise from the cultural and regional differences between the Protestant Creoles of Belize City and the Roman Catholic Mestizos of the outdistricts, pure and simple. The cleavage also arose from the attempt by the upper social strata to
retain its dominance of the political leadership. Indeed, without consideration of social class our picture of British Honduras society would not have been complete.

Yet it is exactly this factor of social class that the plural society theory neglects. But before we discuss the inadequacy of this theory to British Honduras it is appropriate to note that the views expressed on the place of cultural pluralism in the West Indies are diametrically opposed even when they are based on studies of the same society. On the one hand, R. T. Smith maintains that the cultural differences between the Africans and East Indians in Guyana are residual; the East Indians being as much acculturated as the Africans to the Creole norms.\(^1\) In his opinion "to re-interpret what has happened in the past \[racial strife\] as an expression of a fundamental social division between 'African' and 'Indian' sections is to ignore the conflicts of interest over economic questions and the effect of alignment with outside forces and interests."\(^2\) On the other hand, Leo Despres conceives the Guyanese society in a purely cultural context.\(^3\) In constructing his plural society model Despres recognizes two related sets of 'facts'. One is the cultural differences of the institutional activities of particular groups, and the other is the level at which these activities serve to maintain cultural differentiation as the basis for socio-

cultural integration. If the institutional activities of at least one of two social groups are within local communities and are not nationally organised then the society is culturally and socially heterogeneous. The society becomes 'plural' when institutions integrate the local activities of culturally similar and distinctive groups at the national level. The local groups are also transformed from a "minimal" to a "maximal" cultural section of the society while the institutions through which the transformation takes place are deemed 'broker' as opposed to 'local' institutions. Despres considers his model valid as he "found that Africans and East Indians form separate and comparatively different kinds of social communities." At the communal level of socio-cultural integration," he continues, "there are no social structures which serve to bring Africans and East Indians together in the expression of a common system of cultural values." At the national level it is mainly those government agencies which serve to co-ordinate activities and regulate relations throughout the society that are culturally integrative. Even then, Despres contends, the cultural differences are so formidable that those 'broker' institutions are unable to generate a national culture equally acceptable to both groups.

The divergent views held on the scope of cultural pluralism in a changing social and political order may well be correct in themselves.

4. Ibid. p.271.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
Both represent a partial view of the changing order: they are an expression partly of the ambiguities of concept of cultural pluralism itself and partly of the fluidity in the total social system. That there was racial strife in Guyana in the early 1960s cannot be disputed. Into the riotous forms of racial expression, however, could have been read several 'hidden' features. Thus R. T. Smith warns that while ethnicity may be invoked and even perceived as the major cleavage in Guyana, it may be an expression of quite different bases of conflict. Despres also recognises that the split in the People's Progressive Party leadership in the 1950s was not entirely racial. As he puts it, "disintegration resulted from a critical conjuncture of several factors, all of which made it increasingly difficult for nationalist leaders to control organisationally the forces of pluralism. These factors included the ideological factionalism that erupted to the surface within the People's Progressive Party, the organisation of a conservative opposition to the movement, and the internal pressures that were generated by external international developments." Because of these factors Despres could not "invoke a constant (e.g., the plural structure of Guianese society) to explain a variable (e.g., the success or failure of the nationalist


movement to solve the organisational problems that confronted it)."  

But in a Foreward to Despres's book, M. G. Smith, the principal exponent of the plural society notion in the West Indies, chides the author for regarding the plural structure of Guyanese society as fixed and for seeking exogenous determinants for this split. Far from retaining "an unchanging character, form, and significance throughout these nationalist political developments" the plural structure, M. G. Smith states, varied greatly in "nature, scope, and composition ...." But it is precisely these changes in the character of the plural society that R. T. Smith interprets differently.

In our study of British Honduras, we were confronted with the same problem of identifying and determining the importance of the cultural factor in the political process even though the cultural differences between the Creole and Mestizo complexes are much more marked than between any two cultural sections in the West Indies. Following Despres's analytical model most of the institutions which we have analysed in detail are 'broker' institutions because they link the outdistricts to the urban headquarters. Nevertheless, the basic or local institutions were also discussed. The differences between the Indian and Creole family and kinship systems and their implications for the traditional local government arrangements in the villages were observed. The Alcalde system rests on customs that are alien to the

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. p.xii - xiii.
Creoles and Caribs; hence its failure in the Carib villages. The traditional Indian religious feasts and the rites that are performed at the beginning of the agricultural season are also unknown within the Creole culture. The religious differences are by no means superficial as they underwrite the pattern of authority in the Indian villages. Social contact between the Indians and the Creoles, and even between the Maya and Kekchi Indians are minimised by linguistic differences. Nor is this contact improved by the occupational preferences of each group. Within the forestry industries, the domain of the Indian and the Creole is chicle bleeding and mahogany works respectively. The location of the two major agricultural export crops, sugar and citrus, in different regions offers little opportunity for cultural integration. Nor does the organisation of most of the trade unions on a regional and industrial basis encourage working class consciousness to cut across ethnic and cultural affiliations.

The cultural differences are also maintained in the more remunerative and prestigious occupations. The Creoles virtually monopolise the professions and are dominant in certain businesses such as construction. Although there are several industrial and commercial organisations in which both cultural groups are involved inter-cultural partnerships are limited as personal and family connexions, especially among the Mestizos, play a dominant role in the choice of business associates. The denominational system prevents education from fully exerting its unifying influence. As we have seen the educational experience of a Creole student in a Protestant school is devoid of social contact with
his Mestizo counterpart. And because of their different external connexions the Roman Catholic and Protestant educational institutions are incapable of fostering new national values that are equally acceptable to both the Creoles and the Mestizos.

It is when we try to establish the relationship between cultural identity and political behaviour that the structural model of plural society receives its crucial test. In our discussion of political parties we saw that the conservative opposition to the nationalist movement in the 1950s, though consisting mainly of professional Creoles, was by no means based on cultural considerations. It also represented the cream of the British Honduras middle class whose members were seeking to deny their defeat by ritualizing the values and positions associated with their previous hegemony. Their apprehension sprang not only from the PUP's Central American orientation but also from the fact that they were being displaced by a new social group which, it should be emphasised, was predominantly Creole.

Preoccupied with their discussion of the new political leaders the 'plural' theorists tend to overlook the resilience of the old conservative group in the West Indies. That members of this group in various territories are not politically popular does not necessarily mean that they have ceased to influence the political process and in the interest of their socio-economic class. Many of them in fact return to the political leadership through a variety of channels as the nationalist politicians, bent on retaining power at all cost enter into compromises of one kind or another. In British Honduras where the nationalist
leaders never interpreted their role in ideological terms the old political elite has had little difficulty in retrieving some of its influence. Thus the two surviving British Honduran lawyers of the 1930s, Harrison Courtenay and Simeon Hassock, are once more political leaders; one is the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the other a NIP Senator. Despite the political changes J. W. MacMillan, O.B.E., a wealthy local white businessman and a Presbyterian church leader, was a parliamentarian for seventeen years (1948 - 1965) without contesting an election. Nor was it necessary for him to be a PUP member in order to become the first Minister of Education, Health and Housing in the PUP government in 1961. Despite its cultural differentiation the business community is one of the most politically revitalised group in British Honduras. Through its weekly medium, The Reporter, the British Honduras Chamber of Commerce continuously exerts pressure upon the political process on behalf of its members and their American associates. The posture of this organisation is in fact uncomfortably reminiscent of the 'forestocracy'. If the conflicts within the society are not expressed in terms of social class it is not because the cultural differences override the economic differences between the business and professional components of the middle class on the one hand and the labouring community on the other. It is rather because of the politicians' belief in the sanctity of private enterprise and the moderate, divided and inarticulate trade union leadership.

In terms of our own argument at the beginning of the study about elite displacement, we can see that this process has been qualified at
several crucial points. The role of the civil servants remains decisive in many spheres. Their relatively vast bureaucratic and professional resources and the sociological setting of their relationship to the wider community ensure this. The business component of the middle-class has reasserted its influence and, largely because of the dearth of talent in the PUP, members of the high status families are being re-admitted into its political leadership.

If we concentrate on the nationalist politicians it cannot be denied that the major PUP split in 1956 had its source in Price's Central American commitments and their implications for the cultural and social character of an independent Honduras. This was expressed in the differing reactions of the two PUP factions to their accommodation within the colonial framework and in the subsequent organisational strategies of the PUP. Although his Creole connexions are not tenuous Price had less to lose culturally than the other political leaders from closer political relationship with Guatemala. The cultural groups of the fragmented movement were, however, never completely polarised.

While the national leadership of the opposition to the PUP remained highly sectional that of the PUP became more culturally varied. It may be argued that in the absence of ideological differences in British Honduras and given the PUP's electoral success and consequential ability to distribute favours and rewards, the party had little difficulty in improving its multi-cultural image. At the same time, however, the split and the subsequent strife have not produced a national leader whose culture is exclusively Mestizo. All of the outdistrict elected
representatives are local notables. Their 'outside' relationship is almost entirely with the urban headquarter and it is confined mainly to attending meetings of the House of Representatives, the Senate and party caucuses. Again it can be argued that this merely shows that the political integration of British Honduras society is based upon a system of social relations between cultural units of unequal status and power.

According to Despres's model one also expects that after they had split, Price and Goldson would appeal more and more to cultural sentiments and that the electorate would respond appropriately to it. As we have seen the PUP has not regained its share of the urban Creole support which in fact dropped from 68.5 per cent in 1954 to 52.1 per cent in 1965. This could be attributed entirely to the cultural factor but for the fact that the party's support has also declined in the Mestizo constituencies. The decline is particularly marked among those Mestizos of Mexican origin whose fears of a possible Central American association in which Guatemala is involved had been released by the elimination of the West Indies Federation issue. In other words, they had endorsed Price's Central American policy in the past not because it was inherently advantageous to them but because it was the lesser of two evils. We also noted that the PUP's strength is greater in the villages than in the towns irrespective of their cultural composition. Thus, for example, the percentage of the PUP poll in the predominantly Creole rural constituency, Belize Rural South, was greater in the 1961 and the 1965 elections than in the predominantly Mestizo town constituency, Orange Walk North.
In one the PUP received 81.2 per cent of the votes in 1961 and 70.2 per cent in 1965; in the other its share of votes was 57.5 per cent and 55.4 per cent. As we have argued the explanation for this voting pattern is socio-economic. The difference in behaviour supports Lipset's thesis that communities which are poor and inadequately exposed to the possibilities of change, as are the village communities in British Honduras, are more conservative than those which are better off and are more aware of a better way of life. On the other hand, our findings suggest that M. G. Smith's assessment of British Honduran politics, based on the plural society model alone, is too simple. In one of the few scholarly comments on British Honduras he writes:

"The position and society of British Honduras are structurally unique. This territory straddles the boundary of two quite different worlds, the Negro-White Creole and the Spanish-Indian Mestizo culture areas. This cleavage divides British Honduras culturally, linguistically and by race. In consequence Hondurans hold conflicting loyalties and orientations. Many wish to quit the British Commonwealth and the Creole cultural province for Guatemala and the Central American Mestizo field. Others wish to remain Creole and British. As Honduran autonomy increases, this cleavage will tend to deepen, and some choice between association with the West Indies or with Guatemala will have to be faced. The final decision may then be determined by the balance of forces within Honduras."

It cannot be over-emphasised that until we add the socio-economic dimension to our analysis of multi-racial and multi-cultural societies our picture will never be complete. The West Indies

Federation, on which the middle class Creoles had pinned their hopes, is dead, and even if it is resurrected the mass of Creoles and the Mestizos for differing reasons still would not wish to be saved by it. These Creoles fear the economic competition from a large influx of immigrants; an apprehension which is more a reflection of the slow economic growth than the industry of West Indians. For their part, the Mestizos fear the inevitable reinforcement of the Creole culture. The Guatemalan claim which was a useful anti-colonial tool to Premier Price has also rendered the politics of British Honduras sterile. New ideas and issues, however, intrude. As V. S. Naipaul observes, "The sons of people once content with the Premier's benediction go away to study. They come back and curse both parties. They talk of Vietnam and Black Power. They undermine the Negro loyalty to the slave past." Whether the professional group, which includes a lawyer and an American-trained journalist, can provide a new political frame of reference, let alone attract populist attention to it, will remain conjectural for some time. Unlike previous generations of professionals, the group's conception of nationalism is more than a projection of its status yearning. But in this small society, the pressures to conform can be exceedingly overpowering. Moreover, as British Honduras is cut off from the main traffic of ideas, political views remain radical long after they become orthodox or outmoded elsewhere. Unless their number is continuously

reinforced by like minded nationals these young British Hondurans may discover that they are cribbed, cabined, and confined.
APPENDIX I

MEDIATION - ANGLO/GUATEMALAN DISPUTE

DRAFT

DRAFT TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AND
THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA RELATING TO
THE RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE OVER
BRITISH HONDURAS (BELIZE)

Her Majesty The Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, and The President of the Republic of Guatemala:

Mindful of the request made by Her Britannic Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic of Guatemala to the Government of the United States of America to mediate in the dispute over British Honduras (Belize) and to formulate suggestions on the basis of which the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Guatemala might be able to arrive at a final resolution of the dispute;

Taking Note, with appreciation, of the suggestions which have been conveyed by the Government of the United States of America through its representative, Ambassador Bethuel M. Webster;

Reaffirming their desire to strengthen the friendly relations between the peoples and Governments of the United Kingdom and Guatemala;

Recognizing the common interests of the people of British Honduras (Belize), the people of Guatemala, and the other peoples of Central America, and desiring to increase the ties of friendship between the people of British Honduras (Belize) and the people of Guatemala;

Further recognizing that peaceful settlement of the dispute, which for many years has unfortunately harmed the relations of the United Kingdom and Guatemala, is desirable for the successful development of, and the security of, the area concerned;

Desiring to achieve the resolution of the dispute in such a way that the position and rights of both High Contracting Parties are reconciled with the interests and aspirations of the people of British
Honduras (Belize), and in such a way that the relationship of British Honduras (Belize) with Guatemala, and consequently, in the near future, with Central America, is constructively resolved;

Have decided to conclude this Treaty and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries for this purpose;

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories, Head of the Commonwealth:

The President of the Republic of Guatemala:

Who, having communicated to each other their respective full powers, which were found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1

(1) The territory hereinafter referred to by Her Britannic Majesty as British Honduras shall be known as Belize after the appointed date mentioned in paragraph (2) of this Article and shall hereafter in this Treaty be referred to as Belize.

(2) On a date hereinafter referred to as "the appointed date", which shall not be later than December 31, 1970, the Government of the United Kingdom shall grant to Belize its independence from the United Kingdom and shall transfer to Belize supreme authority in respect of Belize. Thereafter sole responsibility for, and the right to exercise, all and any powers, both internal and external, of government, administration, legislation, and jurisdiction shall vest in Belize.

(3) The exercise of the authority described in paragraph (2) shall be consistent with the international obligations of Belize including the treaties under which it has assumed such obligations. The Government of the United Kingdom shall take measures to secure that Belize, on the appointed date, accedes to this Treaty, thereby assuming the obligations, responsibilities, rights, and benefits under this Treaty which apply to Belize.

ARTICLE 2

(1) Using one or more transit routes, the products of Guatemala may be exported, and any goods destined to Guatemala may be imported, through Belize without Belize imposing tariffs, duties, taxes, or any other restrictions of that nature. Nothing shall be done to impose restrictions upon the proper use of the transit routes. A transit route is hereby established along the roads indicated in the Annex to this Treaty.
leading from Belize City and Stann Creek Town to Melchor de Mencos. Other transit routes may be established by decision of the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty.

(2) The products of Belize may be exported, and any goods destined to Belize may be imported, through Guatemala without Guatemala imposing tariffs, duties, taxes, or any other restrictions of that nature.

ARTICLE 3

(1) Areas within the ports of Belize City and Commerce Bight, as agreed between Belize and Guatemala, shall be set aside as duty-free ports for the use of Guatemala under the control of the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty. Belize and Guatemala may agree to establish other duty-free port areas to be under the control of the Authority.

(2) By duty-free port is meant, for the purpose of this Article, a place to which merchant vessels of all States shall be allowed unrestricted access (within the limits of the facilities available) for loading of goods from, and unloading of goods destined for, Guatemala. The importation of such goods into, their export from, transit through, or storage within the duty-free port shall be free from any payment of duties or taxes, but not charges reasonably levied for services rendered. Operations necessary for the preservation, sale, shipment or disposal of such goods shall be permitted within the area of the duty-free port, but nothing in this Article shall authorize the manufacture of goods within that area, without permission of the Government of Belize.

(3) The Government of Guatemala shall, at the request of the Government of Belize, make available duty-free port areas in Guatemala, as agreed between Belize and Guatemala, for the loading of goods from, and unloading of goods destined for, Belize.

ARTICLE 4

(1) Subject to regulation by the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty, Belizeans and Guatemalans may travel freely between and within Belize and Guatemala without presentation of documents other than valid identification documents issued

(a) in the case of Guatemalans, by the authorities of Guatemala; or
(b) in the case of Belizeans, by the authorities of Belize; or
(c) in the case of Belizeans or Guatemalans, by the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty, pursuant to regulations to be formulated by the appropriate authorities of Belize and Guatemala.
(2) Belizeans shall be accorded in Guatemala the same treatment that is accorded Guatemalans, and Guatemalans shall be accorded in Belize the same treatment that is accorded Belizeans, with respect to the protection and security of the following personal and property rights:

(a) access to courts of justice and to administrative tribunals and agencies, both in pursuit and defense of their rights;
(b) engaging in commercial, industrial, financial and other activities for gain, subject to local labor legislation, and scientific, educational, religious and philanthropic activities;
(c) acquiring and disposing of property, including testate and intestate succession;
(d) obtaining and maintaining patents of invention, rights in trademark, trade names, and trade labels;
(e) the assumption of undertakings for, and the making of, payments, remittances and transfers of monies and financial interests.

(3) The Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall conclude arrangements to secure the return to the one from the other of persons accused or convicted of criminal offences.

(4) This Article does not affect rights of Belize or Guatemala to deport from their territories undesirable persons.

ARTICLE 5

The transportation and communication facilities of Belize and Guatemala shall, insofar as they involve co-operation between Belize and Guatemala, be improved and co-ordinated as soon as practicable and, where feasible, integrated, by means to be determined by the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty. The Authority shall, as soon as it is established, take steps to achieve this objective. These steps shall include provision by the Authority for the construction or improvement of a road which shall provide an effective link between Belize and Guatemala. The Government of the United Kingdom shall, through its contribution to the funds of the Authority pursuant to Article 9 of this Treaty, assist in that endeavor.

ARTICLE 6

(1) Educational degrees, certificates and diplomas recognized in Belize shall in Guatemala be accorded the same significance as, and shall be recognized as evidence of achievement in the same manner as, those of Guatemala of equivalent level; and educational degrees, certificates and diplomas recognized in Guatemala shall in Belize be accorded the same
significance as, and shall be recognized as evidence of achievement in the same manner as, those of Belize of equivalent level. Degrees, certificates or diplomas granted outside Belize or Guatemala shall be excluded from the provisions of this Article.

(2) The Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty shall organize educational exchange programs under which students from Belize may study at, and receive valid degrees and diplomas from, Guatemalan educational institutions and under which Guatemalan students may study at, and receive valid degrees and diplomas from, Belizean educational institutions.

(3) Exchanges in the cultural field shall also be arranged by the aforementioned Authority.

ARTICLE 7

(1) Belize and Guatemala undertake, through the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty, to cooperate in furthering the exchange and use of scientific and technical knowledge, particularly in the interests of increasing productivity and improving standards of living within their respective territories.

(2) Studies and programs relating to cultural and scientific resources of mutual interest and to land use and soil improvement, watershed management and protection, wildlife protection, and nutrition and health of Belize and of Guatemala shall be initiated, and thereafter regulations relating thereto shall be promulgated, under the supervision of the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty.

ARTICLE 8

(1) Belizean vehicles of all types, for land, water and air transport, may enter into, and travel in, Guatemala subject to no greater restrictions and conditions than those imposed on vehicles of Guatemala; and Guatemalan vehicles of all types, for land, water and air transport, may enter into, and travel in, Belize subject to no greater restrictions and conditions than vehicles of Belize. Vehicles of Belize traveling in Guatemala shall not be required to be licensed or registered in Guatemala, and vehicles of Guatemala traveling in Belize shall not be required to be licensed or registered in Belize.

(2) Paragraph (1) of this Article:
   (a) does not pertain to the travel of military vehicles of any type;
   (b) does not authorize Belizean or Guatemalan vehicles of any type to engage in the schedule carriage by air or otherwise of
persons of goods for remuneration or hire, whether such carriage is solely between points in the territories of Belize or Guatemala, or originates at or continues to one or more points outside either of those territories. After the appointed date such carriage shall be regulated by the Authority established under Article 9 of this Treaty, although the negotiation and grant of air traffic or air transit rights and all matters pertaining thereto shall remain a matter to be settled between the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala.

**ARTICLE 9**

(1) The Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall establish an Authority for the purpose of performing the functions conferred upon the Authority in Articles 2 through 8 of this Treaty, and shall take all measures, including the enactment of legislation, as may be necessary to ensure the proper functioning and administration of the Authority.

(2) The Authority shall consist of seven Members. Within 30 days of the entry into force of this Treaty, the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall each appoint three Members, all of Ministerial rank. Within 45 days of the end of that period, the Members so appointed shall appoint a person of international prominence as the seventh Member, who will serve as Chairman. If the Members are unable to appoint a seventh Member within the period referred to, they shall request the Government of the United States to make such an appointment.

(3) The Authority shall have the powers necessary to enable it to perform its functions, and, in addition to any other powers expressly provided in the present Treaty, the Authority shall have the power to:

(a) initiate and perform or supervise studies necessary to the performance of its functions;

(b) promulgate such regulations and issue such directives as may be necessary for the Authority to perform its functions or for the internal administration of the Authority's affairs;

(c) take such action to enforce the regulations and directives referred to in paragraph (3) (b) of this Article as may be both necessary and consistent with the laws where such enforcement takes place;

(d) take steps to obtain technical assistance and external financial support in order to enable it to formulate and to carry out its plans in connection with the exercise of its functions;

(e) levy reasonable fees and charges for services performed by it in the exercise of its functions;

(f) suggest legislation that may be necessary in Belize or Guatemala for the performance of its functions; and

(g) perform other acts which it may be authorized to perform by
both the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala.

(4) Decisions of the Authority shall be taken by a majority of the three Members appointed by the Government of Belize and the three Members appointed by the Government of Guatemala. In the event of their votes being equally divided the Chairman shall have a casting vote.

(5) The Chairman shall be a full-time servant of the Authority.

(6) The seat of the Authority shall be Belize City, but the Authority may establish other offices at convenient locations.

(7) The Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall by agreement fix the terms of employment and salaries of the Members of the Authority.

(8) The Authority may recruit such staff and acquire such facilities as are necessary for it to fulfill its functions. Its administrative expenses shall be covered by Belize and Guatemala in proportion to their budgetary resources.

(9) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (10) of this Article, the United Kingdom shall pay to the Authority, to assist it to perform its functions under this Treaty, and in such installments and at such times as the Authority may need,

(i) the sterling equivalent of United States dollars 4,000,000; and
(ii) the balance, if any, of the sum referred to in paragraph (4) of Article 10 of the Treaty, which may be unexpended on the appointed date.

(10) The payments made by the United Kingdom in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (9) of this Article and of paragraph (4) of Article 10 shall not exceed in total in any one year the sterling equivalent of United States dollars 1,200,000. For the purpose of this paragraph, each year shall be deemed to commence on the same day and the same month as those on which this Treaty enters into force. Except as provided in this Article, the United Kingdom shall have no obligation to pay any sum to the Authority.

ARTICLE 10

(1) With a view to developing and strengthening the agricultural, industrial and commercial activities of Belize and of Guatemala, and to permitting the association of Belize with the economic integration of Central America and ultimately with the broader economic integration of the Hemisphere, the Government of the United Kingdom shall undertake studies relating to the participation of Belize in the institutions and
treaties of the Central American economic community.

(2) At such time as Belize should decide to join the Central American Common Market, the Government of the United Kingdom shall arrange to continue for a transitional period (envisioned as being not less than ten years after joining the Central American Common Market) to accord the primary produce of Belize, when imported into the United Kingdom, tariff treatment which is no less favourable than that accorded to such products which are the produce of other Commonwealth countries, insofar as those countries receive that treatment by virtue solely of their membership of the Commonwealth Preference Area. Belize for its part shall give sympathetic consideration to the continuance of preferential tariff arrangements during the same period for goods from the United Kingdom when imported into Belize.

(3) Guatemala shall use its good offices with the other countries of Central America to secure the acceptance of Belize in the various institutions and treaties of the Central American community.

(4) Should the Government of Belize, with the agreement of the Government of the United Kingdom, enter, before the appointed date, into one or more of the institutions of the community referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article, the Government of the United Kingdom shall pay to the Government of Belize such sums, not exceeding in total the sterling equivalent of United States dollars 1,000,000 and subject to paragraph (10) of Article 9 of this Treaty, as it may need to enable any financial obligations to be discharged which it incurs on such entry and which come due before the appointed date.

ARTICLE 11

(1) Documents of all types duly issued in Guatemala shall not require authentication for acceptance by the courts or administrative authorities or agencies of Belize, and documents of all types duly issued in Belize shall not require authentication for acceptance by the courts or administrative authorities or agencies of Guatemala. The foregoing does not affect the probative efficacy of the documents.

(2) The authorities and courts of Guatemala shall, at the request of the courts of Belize, render judicial assistance in cases pending before the courts of Belize, and the authorities and courts of Belize shall, at the request of the courts of Guatemala, render judicial assistance in cases pending before the courts of Guatemala.

ARTICLE 12

The authorities of Belize and Guatemala shall consult and cooperate in the use of police resources in matters of internal security of mutual
interest affecting Belize and Guatemala.

ARTICLE 13

(1) In the formulation and conduct of their foreign policies, the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall consult and cooperate on such matters of external affairs of mutual concern as may be raised by either the Government of Belize or the Government of Guatemala;

(2) After the appointed date, the Government of Guatemala shall afford assistance to the Government of Belize in the conduct of its international relations. In particular, when requested, the Government of Guatemala shall:
   (a) act as the channel for communications between the Government of Belize and other governments and international organizations;
   (b) undertake the representation of the Government of Belize at any international conference at which Belize is entitled to be represented;
   (c) supply the Government of Belize with information concerning international affairs;
   (d) undertake the diplomatic protection of nationals of Belize in other countries and perform consular functions on their behalf.

(3) Before the appointed date, the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Guatemala shall consult on matters of mutual concern affecting the foreign affairs of the Central American area.

(4) After the accession of Belize to this Treaty, the Government shall support the entry of Belize into the Central American community and into the Inter-American community and in particular into the Organization of Central American States, the Organization of American States, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

ARTICLE 14

(1) After the appointed date, the Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall conclude arrangements concerning matters of external defense of mutual concern to Belize and Guatemala. These matters shall include:
   (a) Measures considered necessary for the defense of the approaches to Belize.
   (b) Consultation and coordination in case of any external threat to the security of Belize.
   (c) The use of port facilities in Belize for repair, refueling, victualing and maintenance of those Guatemalan naval units which
have been requested to assist the security forces of Belize in the external defence of Belize.

(2) The Government of Belize and the Government of Guatemala shall establish a Joint Consultative Committee which shall meet regularly to consider those matters of external defense governed by the arrangements referred to in Paragraph (1).

(3) The defence of Belize should be handled within the framework of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance signed at Rio de Janeiro on September 2, 1947, to which Belize should become a party, to the end that Belize would not need to conclude bilateral defence arrangements with other countries.

ARTICLE 15

Any dispute as to the application and interpretation of this Treaty shall be settled by negotiation, enquiry, good offices, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of the parties' choice.

ARTICLE 16

In view of the foregoing, the United Kingdom and Guatemala affirm that their dispute over Belize has been honorably and finally resolved and accordingly that the mediation by the Government of the United States is concluded.

ARTICLE 17

This Treaty shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Washington, D. C., as soon as possible. It shall enter into force on the date of exchange of the instruments of ratification, provided that if the Government of the United Kingdom does not secure, in accordance with Article 1 (3) of this Treaty, the accession of Belize, this Treaty shall be deemed to have no force and effect and the Parties shall be relieved of all obligations hereunder.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the above-mentioned Plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty and affixed thereto their seals.

DONE in duplicate at Washington, D. C., this ............. day of ............., 196 , in the Spanish and English languages, both equally authentic.

FOR HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY:

FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA:
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

(a) General


Macmillan, W. M. Warning from the West Indies. London. Faber and Faber, 1936.


(b) British Honduras


OFFICIAL REPORTS

(a) Unpublished Official Correspondence

Original despatches exchanged between the Governors of British Honduras and the Secretaries of State for the Colonies on record in the Public Record Office, London, and in some cases in the Archives, Belize City. Those in Belize City have not been filed or indexed. Of those in London, the following volumes in the series C.O.123/  

| 315 | 336 |
| 316 | 337 |
| 334 | 342 |
| 335 | 350 |

(b) Debates

The Debates of the British Honduras  
Legislative Council 1942 - 1954. Belize City  
House of Representatives 1956 - 1957 (Cyclostyled) Belize City.

(c) Departmental Reports

The Annual Departmental Reports of British Honduras. The most important were those of  
The Labour Department  
The Education Department  
The Social Development Department  
The Forestry Department
(d) Other Reports 1934 - 1968


NEWSPAPERS

The Belize Billboard and The Belize Times are an invaluable source of information. They are the organs of the National Independence Party and the People's United Party respectively and since 1961 have been the only two daily newspapers. Bound volumes are in the Archives, Belize City.
FORUM

BRITISH HONDURAS: TWO VIEWS

I. George Beckford: B.H. and Regional Economic Integration

One of the characteristics of colonial society is that writers and politicians alike, for the most part, continually use frames of reference which have little relevance to their particular situation. The current discussion about whether or not the destiny of British Honduras should lie with Central America or with the Commonwealth Caribbean is a case in point. It will be argued here that Caribbean (broadly defined to include all areas surrounding the sea by that name) integration should be an objective for future development; and that British Honduras has a strategic role to play in promoting such integration. In short, that the future of British Honduras lies both with Central America and the narrowly-defined Commonwealth Caribbean.

International economic relations in the second half of the twentieth century will be dominated by international groupings of one sort or another. The trend is already discernible. The Central American Common Market and the Latin American Free Trade Association, as well as economic unions elsewhere, are already in operation. The Central American experience has so far demonstrated some of the benefits to be derived from such types of association; and economists in the region have been busy assessing the benefits and costs of different types of integration. On the whole the economic evidence suggests that substantial benefits are to be derived. Furthermore, the dominance of large-scale foreign corporations in the region's economy calls for a unified approach to harness the region's resources for the benefit of its peoples, otherwise international politics may frustrate any efforts of individual countries.

If total economic integration is to be an objective, what then must be the strategy in working toward this and what role can British Honduras play? The Central American states of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica have forged ahead. Like Britain in Europe, Panama is now knocking at the door to get in. There is some evidence that Commonwealth Caribbean countries are contemplating some kind of association — the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) between Antigua, Barbados and Guyana is in the planning stage and other territories in this narrower region
are beginning to discuss closer types of association. It does not seem very unlikely that a Caribbean Common Market could soon emerge but it is likely that this grouping may be restricted initially to the English-speaking Antilles. A further intermediate step could be the integration with the latter of the Spanish, French and Dutch Antilles as a precursor to a wider Central American and Caribbean integration. And the viability of such a union could provide the basis for a longer-term integration with the rest of Latin America.

British Honduras stands in a unique position to provide the links necessary for the type of development here envisaged. Its geographic position is strategic, but perhaps no more so than Jamaica and to a lesser extent Cuba. It is unique in the sense that it has cultural and historical roots in both the Antillean and the Mainland Caribbean. What Cacho regards, implicitly at least, as conflicting ends (New World Quarterly, High Season 1967) and what Grant describes as "problems of a heterogeneous society" with a British-oriented Creole element and a Spanish-oriented Mayan element dominating the picture (see comment below) are precisely the elements that could provide the links for regional economic integration; and in so doing help to create the British Honduran identity which Grant (and Hondurans no doubt) regard as necessary. Cultural particularism frustrates development of this identity only if the interests of the different cultures are thought to be conflicting. When these interests are harmonized and when each culture group becomes aware of its own and the other's contribution to the achievement of common objectives, then cultural diversity could become an asset for development and change.

Operationally, if a Commonwealth Caribbean programme of economic integration gets underway in the near future it may suit British Honduras to join that scheme from the beginning. The alternative of joining the Central American Common Market alone at this time involves all the difficulties (of negotiation, foregone development possibilities, etc.) faced by newcomers seeking entry into established economic unions. Besides there are already established economic ties (sugar, citrus, etc.) and trading relationships with the Commonwealth Caribbean which would facilitate this first-round association. Subsequently, British Honduras drawing strength, from its Spanish-oriented cultural element could assume the initiative within this narrow Antillean grouping to create a wider Antillean economic union and to forge the larger Central America and Caribbean integration.

Viewed in this context, the debate which Federation with the West Indies and the Guatemalan issue are said to have provoked seems in a real sense irrelevant. Historically and culturally British Honduras is a part of the two smaller regions which in their own interests need eventually to come together in order to secure economic independence and viability. The cultural and political groups in that country need to be aware of the special role British Honduras can play in the future development of the region. Awareness of the possibilities seems essential for developing the national cohesion without which the country could hardly assume the role prescribed above.

If political leaders in British Honduras (and in the rest of the region,
including Guatemala) can see and appreciate the potential here outlined for that country, then they should quickly put an end to British colonial rule and get on with the work ahead. The region must begin to make efforts to forge its own destiny. Incidentally, Britain is quite busy as usual, trying to forge its own destiny, this time with Europe.

II. Cedric Grant: The Cultural Factor in B.II. Politics

Since the end of World War II there has been a proliferation of new states. Territories which were once considered by the metropolitan powers too small, or too underdeveloped, or too culturally or ethnically heterogenous to achieve independence have joined the comity of nations. Considered by Aldous Huxley in the 1930's to be a geographical absurdity — leading from nowhere to nowhere — and more recently by the historian, Wayne Cleghorn, to have been a 'Colonial dead end' at the turn of the 20th Century British Honduras has not only survived the last 60 odd years but aspires to nationhood. Neither is fiscal incapacity for independence, its relatively small population of 109,000 (composed of Creoles, Caribs, Mestizos, Kekchi and Mayan Indians, Europeans, Chinese, East Indians and Syrians), the problem of welding together this diverse population into a nation, nor the Guatemalan territorial claims has deterred the quest for independence. The initiative for arranging the final constitutional conference appears to rest with the Premier, Mr. George Price, since the British Government has repeatedly stated that British Honduras can have its independence whenever it is ready.

With independence in the offing, almost all the problems of a heterogeneous society loom large. Generally speaking there are two foci of social life in British Honduras which can be analytically, if not empirically, separated. The most important centres are Belize City (and its environs) and the South Eastern region with overwhelming Creole and Carib populations. Politically the Creoles were the most dominant and influential group in the colonial society. Its leaders are familiar with British social and political institutions, and during the period of Crown Colony rule, essayed to speak on behalf of the entire country. The better-off Creoles feel a kindred spirit with the British and recall with pride their Scottish or English (and West Indian) ancestry. Creoles are mainly Protestants and the majority of them received a British-oriented education in Protestant schools under the control of British and West Indian clergymen. Few of them considered learning Spanish, for example, a worthwhile exercise. Their British outlook is still evident. It was this that gave them identity and tradition in a country with a sizeable Latin, Catholic population and hemmed in by Latin American republics. This outlook which was advantageous in the colonial society has had a decided psychological influence on their political behaviour.

If the predominantly Creole community in Belize City represents the main centre of gravity, it is not the only one. In the Northern and Western
parts of the country the population is predominantly Mayan Indian with a generous admixture of Spanish elements while the Kekchi Indians are to be found mainly in the extreme south. Spanish is the main language and Roman Catholicism their religion. Their pattern of life is similar to that of parts of Guatemala and Mexico and many of them are descendants of the Guatemalan and Mexican immigrants. Easy physical connection between the border towns in British Honduras and these neighbouring territories and a common cultural outlook have kept alive the close relationship between these people.

If in the country's history there has been no overt strain between the Creole and Spanish communities it is because there has been little interaction between these two cultural groups except in Belize City. The cleavages however have been clearly visible ever since the Creole community which provides the opposition to Mr. Price's government began to seek a clarification of the country's long-run political future. The question in a sense had been broached initially not by British Honduras but simultaneously by the British Government with its federal proposals to the West Indian colonies and by the Guatemalan Government's revival of its claim to the territory immediately after the Second World War. The debate which Federation and the Guatemalan issue provoked confirmed that one of the main, if not the overriding, problem in British Honduras was cultural. Race, religion, languages, mode of living, and social values were all strands in the cultural web.

The middle class Creoles were the leaders of the pro-Federation drive and regarded federation with the West Indian territories as the answer to the Guatemalan problem. Espousing federation was vital to the survival of their cultural identity. Their submergence linguistically, racially, and religiously — was certain once the alternative of closer political relations with Central America was pursued.

More vocal and better organised, the PUP with its strong Latin, Catholic rural following spearheaded the opposition to Federation. This opposition became an integral part of the party's anti-British, anti-colonial campaign with the latter having a strong appeal to the urban working class Creole population. Denunciation of Federation by the party's leadership, which for the six years 1950-56 included the present opposition leader Mr. Goldson, was invariably accompanied by a reminder that British Honduras was firmly located in the Central American orbit. But although all the leaders testified to this claim it appears from the subsequent split in the leadership that Mr. Price was the only leader who entered politics with a clear conception of what should be the country's future relation with the Central American territories. His constant reference to British Honduras as an integral part of Central America was more than an assertion of a geographical fact.

From the sentiments he expressed it was clear that if it was necessary for the country to enter a regional political association it should be with the Central American territories. Mr. Price's role in the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute has not always been equivocal. In 1954 the Sharp Commission came to the conclusion that Mr. Price had strong Guatemalan sympathies and when three
years later he was found consulting with the Guatemalan Ambassador in Lon-
don during an official visit, the Creole community became unalterably con-
vinced of Mr. Price's Guatemalan intentions. Any suggestions that Mr. Price's
interest in Guatemala was a tactical ploy in his struggles against the British
Government would be unacceptable to the Creole community. So too would
be the suggestion that he has modified his stand since achieving effective
power in 1961 and is genuinely committed to the establishment of a sovereign
nation. To the Creoles, Mr. Price is incapable of undergoing a change of heart
with the result that they view with suspicion almost all of his actions from the
daily wearing of a Guyaberra shirt to his visit with his chauffeur and mes-
senger alone to the Guatemalan border in search of a lost road.

The strength of the differing regional sentiments has placed a con-
siderable strain on the unifying forces within the society. Nor is the process
of social and political integration facilitated by each group focussing too much
attention on its cultural heritage. When one group frequently extolls the
virtues of its Mayan ancestry, and the others the military superiority of its
British forebears over the Spanish invaders in the 18th century, this encour-
eges other immigrant sub-groups to attempt to rediscover their identity at the
expense of the search for a national identity. Hence it is not surprising that,
led by the sole Carib Minister in the Government, the Carib community (which,
in terms of its social aspiration, can be accommodated within the Creole com-
plex), is currently engaged in raising funds to invite the Carib community in
St. Vincent to send a prominent representative to their forthcoming Settlement
Day Celebration. It is important to be aware of one's cultural past and racial
origin but what British Hondurans need above all, is their own identity. This
is likely to remain elusive, despite official attempts to foster a sense of national
pride, once cultural particularism is overemphasised.
This paper surveys the nature and the history of education in British Honduras, showing the impact of the political, economic, and religious situation. The reports of B. H. Easter and J. C. Dixon in the 1930's on the condition of education are discussed and their current significance can be seen in comparing their conclusions with those of a 1964 Unesco report on education in British Honduras. The present state of educational provision is also examined in the light of its historical context.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION IN BRITISH HONDURAS

NORMAN ASHCRAFT AND CEDRIC GRANT

**British Honduras** is a small British possession on the east coast of the Central American mainland bounded on the north by Mexico and on the west and south by the Republic of Guatemala. Its maximum extent is 175 miles from north to south and 68 miles from east to west. The total area is approximately 8,866 square miles, that is, about the size of Wales. The population at the 1960 census was 90,505. The school population during the 1964/1965 academic year was 28,760; 26,523 children were enrolled at the primary level and 2,237 at the secondary.¹

According to the 1960 census approximately 60 per cent of the respondents profess to be Catholics. The other main denominations listed are Anglican and Wesleyan. The churches have been at once integrative and divisive elements in the society. The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, with its active view of the role of education, has made a significant contribution towards increasing and improving primary and secondary school facilities in rural areas. Through welfare programs it has also helped to reduce the social isolation of various rural communities. Beginning its humanitarian activities in the mid-nineteenth century among the Spanish refugees from Yucatan, it has widened its appeal in the past two or three decades—a fact reflected in the increasing number of converts from other groups. But the Church, run mainly by American Jesuits, has also maintained its traditional exclusiveness and has established Catholic organizations duplicating existing national organizations. This disinclination to cross denominational boundaries is particularly notable in education where, for

¹ Education is compulsory from 6–14. Students who transfer from primary to secondary school usually do so between the ages of eleven and fourteen. The majority of children who stay in school until the age of 16 remain in the primary school (British Honduras, Annual Report of the Education Department, 1964/65; unpublished ms.)
example, there is a separate Catholic Teachers’ Association and, until recently, a Catholic Teachers’ Training College.

Another divisive factor of political importance is that denominational differences tend to correspond to both racial and cultural differences and the urban-rural division. The British oriented Creoles, especially in Belize City, provide the membership of the Protestant churches while the Catholic Church, although it claims an increasing number of Creole converts, is for political purposes clearly identified with the Latin segment of the community. The prestige and power of the Roman Catholic Church has grown considerably with the rise to power of the People’s United Party, whose standard-bearer—and Premier of the country—once studied for the priesthood in Guatemala and the United States.

Denominational differences have always been of great significance in the political process and in the educational system. Both primary and secondary education are controlled by the three main denominations. From its inception, education was closely allied with Evangelicism, and the Jesuits in particular acted, and continue to act, on the implied assumption that there is an indissoluble union between education and religion. They have been able to put this idea fully into practice at the secondary level where governmental intervention has always been negligible.

The responsibility for education has rested with aliens of differing cultural orientations. Principals of the Protestant secondary schools, with one exception, are either British or West Indian clergymen and their schools inevitably have had a British bias. The values, standards of behavior, and textbooks are of British derivation. The Roman Catholic secondary schools, particularly St. John’s College, were, and are, staffed overwhelmingly by American Jesuits. Although the Jesuit colleges have been compelled to prepare their students for the British system, their curricula have had a strong American bias. They have even avoided using the officially recommended British textbooks. The country, therefore, has not only had the so-called “dual system” of control of education—i.e., State and Church—but also two differing and invariably conflicting systems of education at the secondary level—one British, the other American.

British Honduras was created mainly for economic reasons. Although the Bay of Honduras (the original name of the territory) provided a haven for the British buccaneers from their Spanish enemies, it was the lucrative trade in logwood and mahogany which ultimately determined the foundation of the settlement and its retention in the late eighteenth century when the defeat of the settlers by Spanish invaders seemed imminent.

It was essentially a frontier society whose members were preoccupied with exploiting the economic potential of the forests. There was little incentive to establish a permanent community. The very nature of forestry exploitation, which

---

took the forest owners and their workers into the heart of the forests for at least six months of the year, and the constant danger of attack by the Spanish encouraged men interested primarily in amassing wealth as quickly as possible. In short, it was an acquisitive group of people, a community of woodcutters hardly concerned with developing an elaborate system of education for their children.

Intent on pursuing their main economic objective, the settlers neglected other sectors of the economy and the social services in general. Since they controlled the government almost completely, the forestry owners and timber merchants could protect their interests. They controlled public finances and they showed a strong reluctance to spend public funds on any project or service other than those directly benefiting the forest industry. For example, attempts to develop agriculture were frustrated; the construction of roads was neglected since the forest industry relied on river transport. There was opposition to levying an income tax since the persons most immediately affected would be the forest group.3

The situation remained basically unchanged after the settlement became a colony in 1862. Financial control continued to reside in the legislature, which was dominated by the forestry element. The frontier mentality of the forest owners persisted. They continued to regard the colony as a place where a fortune could be made in a short time with little notice paid to the general welfare.

Welfare services were considered to be the responsibility of anyone except the forestry controlled government. This was evident in the field of education. Although the government was able to provide adequate funds for education and other social services, its contribution was limited. Up to 1932 when the British imperial treasury assumed control of the colony’s finances, the maximum contribution to the schools for any one year by the forestry controlled government was 3.3 per cent of the colony’s budget.4 This was in marked contrast to an expenditure of nearly 9 per cent following the introduction of imperial treasury control, though the colonial government could ill-afford even this expenditure because of the devastating hurricane in 1931 and the world economic depression. This sharp improvement of government contribution to education, nevertheless, was considered by B. H. Easter, a visiting educational advisor, in 1934 to be “by comparison with other places, inherently alarming . . . [and] far from looking regretfully backward to the former figure, persons responsible for the colony’s welfare should be thoroughly ashamed of it.”5

From the beginning, the responsibility for education had been assumed by the churches. A Board of Education was established in 1850, but the initiative always rested with the churches. The three Free Schools which the government had established early in the nineteenth century were abolished in 1888 together

5 Ibid.
with the Board of Education; the Board's powers went to the Executive Council of the colony. The government’s responsibility was limited to grants-in-aid to denominational schools at the elementary level, the award of these grants depending upon the denominations' ability to raise a sufficient sum from school fees or other sources. At the secondary level, schools were wholly the responsibility of the churches. There were no vocational schools, nor did the government provide any scholarships to help students proceed from the elementary to the secondary school or from the latter to the university. The government did, however, contribute to an industrial school.

In 1926 a comprehensive education ordinance was passed into law and it remains the legal foundation of the educational system. The central government retains general control of education through a re-created Board of Education, but effective control and management of the schools lies with the ministers of religion in the local parish or district. Each denomination has a general manager of schools who is usually its representative on the Board of Education. The general manager acts as intermediary between the Board and the local managers in all school matters, including the payment of government grants for construction or other purposes.

When Easter investigated the educational system in 1934 at the request of the colonial government, the churches' control of education, both primary and secondary, was firmly established. Easter's visit to the colony coincided with the growing concern over the deplorable state of the social services throughout the British West Indies. He was invited to the colony specifically to examine the educational system and to make recommendations for changes. Among other things, he advised the appointment of agents of the “Jeanes” teacher type, with the idea of improving the school system in the rural areas. The immediate outcome of the recommendation was an invitation to J. C. Dixon, Georgia State Supervisor of Negro Education, who was familiar with the operation of the Jeanes system, to investigate and advise on the best methods for inaugurating Easter's plan. Dixon's report is a close examination of the educational system in British Honduras and his conclusions are crucial for understanding the organization of education from the 1930's to the present.

Dixon argued that for the Jeanes supervisory system to function as intended, the use of local people was important. However, he noted the existence of a

---

6 British Honduras, Department of Education Triennial Report, 1952-53-54 (British Honduras: Printing Department, n. d.), p. 1. The colony was governed by the Governor in Council; the Council was a nominated body.
7 Ibid., p. 4 ff.
8 Ibid.
9 See the Report of the British Guiana and British Honduras Settlement Commission, op. cit.
10 The system was modeled on the type then employed in the southern states of the United States. In British Honduras, the Jeanes teachers were trained mainly as supervisors to teachers, particularly those in the rural areas, to improve methods and standards. Later, the scope of the supervisors extended to include administrative duties. The term “Jeanes” was dropped in 1942 (cf. Triennial Report, 1952-54, op. cit., pp. 5-7).
rather strong opposition to this idea. Most of this opposition to local control and supervision arose from the missionary nature of the rural schools. The preponderance of teachers, and all supervisors, in the Roman Catholic schools were United States nationals. In the Protestant schools, they were mostly West Indian and British. It would be unlikely that these missions would be eager to submit to local supervision. In fact, Dixon adds,

the nationality of the teaching personnel of British Honduras is predominantly foreign. To the writer this seems a tragic policy. . . . It admits in effect that there are no available teachers in British Honduras; or that there is no available material out of which teachers can be made; or that government is not interested in a colonial self-sufficiency; or, as seems more likely to be the case, that the importation of teachers has resulted less from a desire to educate the children of British Honduras than from a desire to promote interests other than those of the children.

It was not only this opposition to control by local nationals that struck Dixon, but also the multi-denominational organization of education. He laments, “no reference to the place of the church in the scheme of education in British Honduras would be made if it were possible to make this report without doing so. There seems to be, however, no way to do this for the church is too much a part to the program to ignore it. One might reasonably say, in fact, that education is an appendage of the church.” It is indeed difficult to avoid the conclusion that many of the rural schools were established primarily to win converts rather than to disseminate knowledge. This was particularly true of the Roman Catholic schools whose walls were “more frequently decorated with religious pictures, than with matter of more general educational value.”

The eagerness with which each denomination strove to establish schools in the rural districts often resulted, according to Dixon, in a sacrifice of educational efficiency to missionary efforts: “one cannot help asking whether education of the children or promotion of church interest and even proselytizing are the objectives of the church when, in a small village where there are hardly enough children for one school, one finds two or more small schools of different churches competing for enrollment and attendance.” The denominational system of education, therefore, created a great deal of duplication and waste of limited resources in the small country.

In the operation of the system, Dixon observes, “church boards work independently of each other in all matters of school administration and organization. . . . [The] church [also] has provided the building . . . and has selected the

\[11\] Ibid., p. 9.
\[12\] Ibid., p. 6.
\[13\] Easter, op. cit., p. 8.
\[14\] Dixon, op. cit., p. 6.
teacher. This means, of course, that the teacher is both teacher and catechist. As both the church managers and the department of education supervise the primary schools, “the teachers do not know whether their major responsibility is to the school manager or to the Superintendent of Education.” He adds, however, that “no one would minimize the big contribution the denominations have made to education in British Honduras, nor would one decry the value of their efforts. They have carried on education since its beginning . . .” but, the time has come, he suggests, for a reassessment to be made and “to ask and answer the questions: what is the school for; for what purpose does it exist; and to whom does it belong?”

The present arrangement remains basically unchanged from that described by Dixon in the 1930’s. Among the few but notable changes which have been made at the secondary level is the establishment of government controlled institutions—the Teacher’s Training College and the Belize Technical College. The government has also increased its financial support of the denominational secondary schools by making a more substantial contribution to the payment of teachers’ salaries and to the churches’ building programs.

In 1964 a UNESCO team was commissioned to comprehensively examine the dual system of education. The commission followed Easter and Dixon in criticizing severely the denominational basis of the system, particularly at the secondary level. Throughout the report there is an implied criticism of the government’s failure to control secondary education, which had permitted the denominations to plan and implement their differing programs with little attention to the government’s economic and social goals. In the absence of inter-denominational cooperation and government supervision and direction, the members of the team doubted whether a rational and co-ordinated system of secondary education could be realized:

Fulfillment of aims and achievement of targets is not possible unless there be extensive and intensive cooperation and pooling of resources by all the partners in the educational effort, and an acceptance of the principle that overall direction of a small, integrated system with limited resources must come from the Ministry of Education as also the supervision of the purely educational activities of the schools.

---

26 Ibid.
27 Triennial Report, op. cit., p. 11 ff. Ultimate responsibility for educational matters lies with the Minister of Education and Housing. Immediately under the Minister is the Principal Secretary, and the chief advisor on professional matters is the Chief Education Officer, who is also responsible for the administration of the educational system. This latter officer heads the Department of Education, which is staffed by civil servants separate from the Ministry of Education. There is also an Advisory Council for Higher Education on which the three main denominational bodies are amply represented. Immediate control and administration of the schools is vested by law in the denominational managing authorities. Legally, the role that the Department of Education can play at the secondary level is minimal.
29 Ibid., p. 25.
While recognizing the well-meant attitudes and plans of the adherents of the present system, the UNESCO team nevertheless pointed out the many isolated and badly planned projects. “If such public funds as are available are absorbed in the maintenance of small uneconomic units established by one denomination, where will the funds be found to see that children of other religious persuasions receive their education, that is, where parents refuse to have their children attend such schools?” The commission also noted such examples as some schools being without teachers of science, while another school had a highly qualified graduate of science who was not teaching science. In Belize City alone there are eight secondary schools—six of which participate in the government grant-in-aid program—with a total enrollment of only 1,484 students. This means that there are less than 200 students per school and that government must support six school-building programs, six expansion programs, and six different faculties while having no direct control or supervision over them. Moreover, it is not unlikely that the two other schools will soon qualify for government assistance.

Regardless of advice, suggestions, and proposals over the years, the entire arrangement appears to be caught in a vicious circle. There seems to be little possibility of interdenominational cooperation between the Roman Catholics and Protestants, and, for that matter, among some of the Protestants. On the contrary, the religious schisms are steadily widening. Each school continues to pursue its independent policy, making little attempt to harmonize and standardize the content of courses, much less to relate these to the national, social, and economic goals. To further complicate the issue, the Roman Catholic schools continue their strong American bias, while the Protestant schools maintain their British bias. These differing orientations are likely to persist so long as the schools are predominantly staffed by foreign nationals. The Jesuits, in particular, have shown little inclination to transfer professional and managerial control to local nationals.

The differences and disparities are not only denominational, but also geographic. The rural secondary schools, most of which are run by the Catholic Church, are too small, ill-equipped, restricted in curricula, and poorly-staffed to provide adequate educational facilities. Moreover, because of their denominational character, they often cannot cater to the whole community. The problem goes deeper. Under the present arrangement, students in secondary schools must pay tuition and other school expenses. Obviously, in a low-income society the number of government scholarships does not provide the equality of educational opportunity consistent with the stated aims of a “Christian Democracy.” In fact, of 2,237 students enrolled in secondary schools in the school year 1964–1965, only 262 received government scholarships. Approximately 600 students

20 Ibid.
now transfer annually from primary to secondary schools, or less than 15 per cent of the total potential transfer enrollment. This low percentage must be the result of either inability to pay school fees, rural location, or both.

In the absence of interdenominational cooperation, the need for central control and direction is even more obvious. But the government's attitude, despite the glaring examples of fragmentation and duplication, remains relatively passive. The government shows a marked reluctance to assume the initiative, claiming that its function is primarily to help the churches financially. "The question of Government control," the government has recently reiterated, "is contrary to the National Manifesto." Its policy is "to support and encourage educational progress in plans devised and set in operation by the private institutions existing in the country—this is a good thing, especially under the present circumstances where Government has limited resources."

The government's claim that financial reasons prevent it from assuming a more prominent role in secondary education is still to be proven. Under the present grant-in-aid program the government probably spends more on secondary education than it would within a more centrally co-ordinated system. Under the present arrangement the government provides 50 per cent of the cost of a project and in some cases lends the remaining portion. Given the denominational initiative and rivalry, the government is compelled to support financially duplications and over-lapping efforts. Moreover through its policy of donating land to the churches for educational purposes, the government has also relinquished part of the national wealth.

Democratic principles demand that equal opportunity be afforded in education, and the political leaders of British Honduras have taken a firm stand on the side of the principles of Christian democracy and social justice. Yet, the present arrangement does not insure the equal distribution of opportunities among the population of the various denominations or of the rural and urban areas. The development of education among the denominations has been uneven, principally because of the disparity in resources and the traditional philosophies of education. In both regards, the Roman Catholic colleges have a decided advantage. They have been able to acquire far more substantial aid from the United States than have the other denominations from their affiliates in Britain and the West Indies. In acquiring funds from local sources, their numerical superiority and the fact that the majority of wealthy people are Roman Catholic have also strengthened the Church's financial position. Moreover, the Jesuits at St. John's College do not receive a salary. The overall result is that this college has at its disposal more funds for development. The government's basis for financial contribution—it matches the contribution of the schools—perpetu-

---

22 Ibid., p. 2.
23 Minutes of the National Assembly, December 13, 1966.
ates the financial imbalance and contributes, though unwillingly, to the inequality of educational opportunity. In consequence, the student at St. John’s College has a distinct advantage over his counterpart at a Protestant school; and, similarly, the urban student has an advantage over his rural counterpart.

The basic weakness of the dual-control system is the fragmentation of educational effort in a country with very limited resources. Yet, both the churches and the government seem agreed that their present relationship should not be modified. The Catholics, in particular, are opposed to government assuming the major role in education. One glaring example of both Catholic fear of government competition and the persistent irrational duplication is found in the development of the teacher-training program. Shortly after the government established a teacher-training college in the 1950’s, the Jesuits opened their own training school. The small country was thus in the position of maintaining two training schools, which in 1957 had a total enrollment of only 27 students—18 at the government school and only 9 at the Catholic college. Partly from lack of students and partly under the urging of the UNESCO team, the Catholic college in 1965 abandoned an uneconomic venture.

Some of the Jesuits have expressed concern over the growing financial problems of the other denominational schools, the implication being that the government would be compelled to assume more responsibility for these schools with the likely result of government becoming the main competitor of the Roman Catholic schools. The logical outcome of this step, they contend, is government making inroads into the Catholic preserves. In the matter of facing government competition the experiences of the Catholic Church in Mexico and Cuba, for example, have not been lost to sight. However, if the educational system is to be modernized and resources efficiently utilized, then a more positive approach by the government is inevitable.

The Civil Service Strike In British Honduras: A Case Study Of Politics And The Civil Service

ON 30TH JUNE, 1966 the British Honduras Public Officers' Union achieved the doubtful distinction of staging the first civil service strike in the country. The immediate occasion for the strike, the POU claimed, was the gloomy report of the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Philip Goldson, on the London Conference in early June between the United Kingdom and British Honduras Governments. The conference reportedly discussed the proposals of the U.S. mediator, Ambassador Bethuel Webster, in the longstanding Anglo-Guatemala dispute. According to Mr. Goldson the effect of the proposals is to make British Honduras de facto, if not de jure, an integral part of Guatemala. The British Honduras delegates were neither permitted to take away the documents nor to take notes at the conference, and both the United Kingdom and British Honduras Governments in denying Mr. Goldson's report claimed that his memory played him false. The United Kingdom Government declined to comment further on Mr. Webster's ideas as they are still confidential, but has given the assurance that no decision on the country's future will be taken without the consent of British Hondurans.

It is however evident that the POU gave credence to Mr. Goldson's report since in stating the immediate reason for the strike it claimed that "Public Officers as citizens had come to feel that their country was being lost to them and had been unable to secure adequate reassurances". The POU did not rest its case here. As a further justification for the strike, it recalled long-standing grievances against the Government and the fear that political patronage is becoming the main determining factor of advance in the civil service. The Union, a few years earlier, "had felt obliged to express fears that the Public Service Commission were relaxing their vigilance and permitting a number of irregularities in appointments and promotions to receive their sanction."

It is clear from the grounds on which the POU justified its action that the strike was inspired not by an industrial dispute but by political considerations. The strike was not altogether surprising. It climaxed the strained relationship between the People's United Party

2. POU'S resume of a meeting held between the Governor and the POU on July 28, 1962.
government and the POU which had developed during the past five years. It is even open to doubt whether a rapport between the Government and the Union ever existed. The strained relationship between the civil service and the Government was in a large part due to differences in attitudes. The civil servants, at least those in the administrative and executive grades, are middle class in origin or aspirations. The People's United Party, on the other hand, receives most of its support from the lower class and tended in its formative years to articulate lower class hostility towards the middle class. The party's attitude inspired the civil servants to have little confidence in the Government. Indeed, in 1962 the chairman of the POU in his report on 'Politics and the Civil Service' was "convinced that a crisis was fast approaching" and another speaker in urging members to unite stated, "As far as the Government of the day is concerned you are on your own." The union also rarely concealed its feeling of mistrust in its weekly newsletter which commented freely on political issues that bore little relevance to civil service matters.

The Government in turn indicated that this feeling was mutual. Perhaps more important than the feeling itself were the occasion and manner in which it was expressed. Public political meetings were often chosen as the opportune moment and the speakers seldom couched their views in discreet language. This merely added to the discomfort of the civil servants. If confirmation of the strained relationships was needed, it was provided in the spirited reply of the POU Chairman at the Union's annual conference in 1964 to the address on 'The role of Government and the Public Service' delivered by the guest speaker, the Minister of Labour.

At times the tension tended to develop into a crisis as for example when the POU delegate (the administrative secretary) was debarred from attending a Government-sponsored Trade Union Seminar in 1964. The Union had received an invitation to the seminar from the Department of Labour and had actually participated in the drafting of the programme. A rival trade union, the Christian Workers Union, objected to the POU delegate's attendance at the seminar on the ground that the POU was an elite, and not a genuine working class union, although it represented several categories of industrial workers. The Minister of Labour in obvious deference to the objections of the Christian Workers Union, withdrew the invitation to the POU, but this did not prevent the POU delegate from attending the opening session from which the Christian Workers Union walked out. A further ministerial request for the delegate's non-attendance was of no avail, and Police intervention was necessary to bring to an end the delegate's disregard of the Minister's instruction. The remaining sessions were attended solely by the Christian Workers Union; the third participating union, the General Workers Development Union, having boycotted the sessions in sympathy with the POU.

4. Ibid, p. 15.
5. Ibid, p. 4.
The main significance of the strained relationship was its reflection on the political and cultural cleavages in the society and it is these which we should discuss for a deeper insight into the causes of the strike which were more complex than the stated reasons of the POU suggest.

The Cultural and Political Factors

British Honduras can be analytically if not empirically separated into two broad cultural categories. There is the Creole complex whose culture is historically rooted in the colonial system in which English values predominate. They have a generous admixture of Negro blood but the African element of their culture has been devalued and the ideal forms of institutional life such as government, law, religion and education are of European derivation. The Creoles are concentrated in Belize City which is the administrative capital and the repository of the dominant English culture.

It is largely from this element of the population that the civil servants are drawn. Possessing a long tradition of education, the Creoles not only dominate the bureaucracy but also the other elite functions in law and education; and also provide managerial and technical personnel to industry and commerce. The elite group of creoles has played an important role in the social life of the country, and being familiar with British political institutions, essayed in former years to speak and act for the entire society.

The orientation of the Creole complex is in contradistinction to that of the Maya and Kekchi Indians and the Mestizos who are predominantly rural dwellers and whose pattern of life approximates to that described for parts of Guatemala and Mexico. These ethnic groups were politically marginal to the society in the period of crown colony rule and living in the rural areas lacked the educational opportunities of the urban Creole. Committed to a traditional way of life, they also felt little necessity for an education. In consequence relatively few of the Mayas and Kekchi Indians in proportion to their population are qualified to enter the professions and the civil service. Moreover, the more enterprising have shown a preference for commerce. Irrespective of their achievements, they have maintained their contact, facilitated by easy physical connections, with Guatemala and Mexico. Indeed, the cultural affinity, the widespread use of Spanish by this element, and the actual physical contact have had a strong pull towards closer relations with their Central American neighbours.

One of the questions which the process of decolonialisation has raised is the future orientation of the territory to outside political entities. This orientation is at present multiple. The country's geographical position and cultural heterogeneity has made its relationship with its Central American neighbours as important as that with the United Kingdom, the United States and the Commonwealth.
Caribbean. But because of its colonial history and traditional commercial links with the United States, its relationship with the latter countries are stronger.

The Creoles steeped in British tradition and having a correspondingly weak commitment to the Mestizo culture advocate closer relations with the English-speaking territories. This view is articulated by the Civic Committee’s membership being drawn almost entirely from among the Creoles and to a lesser extent by the opposition National Independence Party whose leader, Mr. Goldson, is explicitly creole in culture and orientation.

Mr. George Price, the Premier, on the other hand, has always envisaged a Central American destiny for the country and is opposed to any form of political association with the West Indian territories. He has focussed attention on the former Mayan civilization, insisted that the country be called Belize which name, he states, is of Mayan origin, and has adopted as the national and his party flag a blue and white banner which he proclaims ‘few many years ago near the Court House in Belize’. These suggest that he supports the idea that the identity of the country is rooted in a Mayan ancestry and that this gives the country autochthonous claim to sovereignty. He has conducted a very effective campaign on behalf of the People’s United Party among the strongly Catholic, Spanish-speaking peasantry in the rural areas and it is from this element of the population that he receives most of his electoral support. His stand in the Anglo-Guatemala dispute in the 1950’s was not always clear and unequivocal and he was expelled from the Executive Council in 1957 for consorting with the Guatemalan Ambassador in London during an official mission to the British Government. In recent years he has repeated his intention to seek independence within the Commonwealth but the opposition appears suspicious of his intentions and tends to view his insistent claims that the identity of the country is rooted in the ancestry of the Mayans not as a search for a national identity but as a preparatory step towards some form of political association with Guatemala and an attempt to place the Mestizo element in a favoured position.

The differing orientations of the two main cultural groups have also been fostered by religion, the political importance of which lies mainly in the tendency for denominational adherence to follow closely along the lines of racial cleavage and the urban-rural dichotomy. Generally speaking, the Mayas, Mestizos and Caribs who are predominantly rural dwellers are Catholics while the Creoles provide almost the entire membership of the Protestant denominations. The Catholic Church has earned the reputation of being anti-British and anti-colonial, which has been partly attributed to most of its clerics being of Irish or German descent. Another contributory factor is that the Church draws its priests, policies, and funds mainly from the United States which, in the heyday of British colonialism,

---

6. The full name of the Committee is Citizens Integrated to Voice Interest of Country.
had strong reservations against colonial rule. The antipathy towards the British cannot be overlooked if only because the Catholic Church has always evinced, however guardedly, an interest in the country's political affairs. To compound the issue, the Premier's earlier vocation was for the priesthood and this was tested in the United States and Guatemala. He has retained a simple way of life and is a practising Catholic. The Creole Protestants tended to identify themselves in former years with a colonial Establishment and existing privileges with the result, as Waddell points out, of Protestantism being linked with the British connexion on the one hand, and Catholicism to anti-colonial nationalism on the other.

To pinpoint these differing orientations is not to suggest that there is no interaction between these two complexes, that individuals can be neatly fitted into either category, that political alignments rigidly follow cultural and racial cleavages, or that there are no common values shared by these cultural groups; it is to indicate one of the underlying causes of political conflict which arises in the search for acceptable institutions and values during this transitional period to statehood.

The Government's emphasis on a Central American destiny and the appeal, support and opposition which it has engendered not only reflects the differing orientations and conflicting loyalties of the two main cultural groups but perhaps more important suggests that changes in their traditional position within the society are taking place. The suggestion must necessarily be treated with caution in the absence of a study of the country's social structure. Nevertheless, there is a clearly recognisable attempt to reorientate the social values of the society by political action and an appreciation of this fact is crucial to an understanding of the behaviour of the creole dominated civil service.

The possible change of the social order which closer association with Guatemala will conceivably hasten, poses a threat to the interests, values, and influential position of the Creoles who, having believed Mr. Goldson's report, saw this threat as imminent. Consideration of the political tension which Mr. Goldson's report created was a short step towards the contemplation of one's personal position. As the POU indicated, civil servants were acting primarily as citizens with a vested interest in the future status of their country and merely used the Union as their vehicle of protest. Whether their loyalty to their civil service code of conduct ought to have taken precedence over that as citizens is a question which has bedevilled political philosophers since Aristotle and need not delay us. What we should note is that once they had conceived a vested interest in the crisis it became difficult for them to remain aloof. As Bertram Collins has pointed out in his discussion of the Civil Service strike in Guyana. "The civil service is a very human organisation recording like a sensitive seismograph the stress and strains of the society it serves and

in which its members are also citizens... when the service is localised or independence comes (whichever is earlier) the civil service cannot stand apart from the society.\textsuperscript{8}

The question of whether the civil service should have expressed its concern by way of a strike is related to the degree of its political involvement but nevertheless can be discussed separately. Perhaps the POU would have refrained from such extreme action had it not lost faith in the then departing Governor, Sir Peter Stallard. How low was his personal stock with the Union became known when a few months earlier a seemingly innocuous suggestion to invite the Governor to declare open a civil service seminar for senior officers jointly sponsored by the University of the West Indies, the Government of British Honduras and the POU was vetoed by the Union. During the crisis, the Union claimed that in the past the Governor had failed to give the public officers the protection to which they felt they were entitled when subjected to public abuse from politicians and did not anticipate a satisfactory assurance on this occasion. An unsuccessful meeting of the two parties a few hours before the decision to strike was taken merely underwrote the limits of the Governor’s influence on the POU. To have expected a positive assurance seemed unrealistic since the Union having taken an active interest in the crisis had alienated the residue of the Governor’s sympathy. Moreover, from the statements of both the United Kingdom and British Honduras Governments it was clear that the Governor who had also attended the conference could not support the Union’s view that there was justification for grave concern.

The POU might also have been unconsciously prompted into taking this extreme action by the inability of any other organisation opposed to the Government’s stand on the mediation to do so effectively. It was the only organisation with a large anti-P.U.P. element capable of crippling the Government and indeed a small but hard core of its militants openly envisaged a protracted strike which if not precipitating the resignation of the Government would at least bring business and communications throughout the country to a virtual halt. An allied union, the British Honduras Union of Teachers, which a few months earlier had staged a public demonstration against the unsatisfactory salary increases was obviously incapable of causing the resignation of the Government by a strike. Still less capable was the sole anti-P.U.P. industrial trade union, the General Workers Development Union.

Even the opposition National Independence Party, to which the POU seems favourably disposed, did not appear capable from its electoral performance of effecting a change of Government. Indeed, the POU appeared to have little confidence in the ability of the Opposition to effectively represent its interest in the political sphere. The POU was in fact experiencing a crisis of confidence. For varying reasons it lacked confidence in the Government, the departing Governor,  

its allied trade unions, and the opposition party. The logical outcome of its own crisis was its interference, sooner or later, in the political process.

The Union

The POU's predisposition to political involvement was reflected in its posture, and in this regard its name is not without significance. Formerly known as the British Honduras Civil Service Association, the organisation changed its name in 1962 partly to reflect more accurately the various categories of Government employers it represented. It not only represented the classified civil service but also quasi-Government departments such as the Electricity and Marketing Boards and employees of the privately owned Cable and Wireless Organisation. Perhaps a more important reason for the change was the organisation's dissatisfaction with the term 'Association' which suggested a self-centred professional body. The organisation had made significant adjustments to its thinking and was reaching beyond the confines of routine civil service matters. It had not only identified itself with the trade union movement but declared an interest in the wider community. In its famous Stann Creek declaration of its national goals in 1962 it pledged to "assume a front rank position in the battle against ignorance, poverty, disease, crime and any other form of perversity which threatens to blight the face of the nation or to impede the full realisation of national emergence and achievement". Its concern for the wider community certainly led it into strange fields. For the Union also conceived its obligation to the community as a guardian of the basic freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in particular, freedom of worship, of assembly, of the place of worship, of free speech; trial by jury and by fair judicial process; ...". To assume the guardianship of civil liberties was noble, but the Union could hardly have been unaware that it was skating on the edge of politics and that any attempt to honour this self-assigned obligation was likely to bring it into further conflict with the Government. There was adequate evidence in other new and emerging states that the threat to these liberties invariably comes from the Government.

Although the Union has a strong middle-class bias it is the most militant and articulate union in the country. This militancy has tended to increase commensurably with the Union's sensitivity to what it considers to be a threat to its members' position. But it is at once an asset and a drawback to the Union's membership drive. It appeals to the clerical and executive ranks but many of the senior officers who are otherwise sympathetic to the Union seem doubtful of its propriety. No doubt they consider the Union's mode of thought and pose of combativeness a breach of the civil service ethos and this may be partly responsible for their withdrawal from active participation in the Union.

10. Ibid.
On the other hand the Union has accused the senior officers of indifference to the problems of their junior colleagues, having claimed that "senior officers tended to sit back like fat Chinese Mandarins and count the assets of their years of gain instead of throwing in their weight along with the younger set." 11 Attempts "to put an end to the withdrawal of senior officers from the Association's front line" 12 have been unsuccessful with the result that the leadership is without a strong tempering influence.

The Strike

Press reports of the alleged proposals had reached the country in advance of the chief delegates' return from the conference and the tension which it generated was kept alive by the public meeting organised by the opposition party. The tension developed into a crisis with the return of the leaders and the levelling of accusations by both political parties. The crisis was marked by spasmodic acts of violence and the threatening social breakdown was probably averted partly by a nightly eight-hour curfew which was jointly enforced by the Police and British Troops and also by the banning of political meetings.

On 20th June, at the height of the crisis, the Chief Broadcasting Officer dramatically interrupted the radio programme to announce a recorded BBC report that "in London, a Foreign Office spokesman had described as nonsense a statement by the leader of the opposition in British Honduras that Britain had drawn up a secret treaty with Guatemala." 13 The opposition leader immediately cabled the BBC informing them that he had been misquoted in the news broadcast to which the BBC replied that the statement had been attributed to him by the local Reuter correspondent, and advised the opposition leader to make his statement available. It transpired that the Chief Information Officer was the Reuter correspondent and this had the effect of intensifying anti-Government feelings. The leader of the Opposition not only accused the correspondent of deliberate distortion of his statement but added that "for a long time Reuters News Service has been used by its local correspondent as a mere vehicle for pro-Government propaganda." "News", he continued, "have been sent or suppressed to suit pro-Government propaganda so that the world at large could never get a true picture of the situation in British Honduras." 14

The incident was not forgotten at the POU emergency general meeting which discussed the crisis. The meeting "viewed with disgust the conduct of the Chief Information Officer in the performance of his duties, as epitomised in his recent deliberate attempt to mislead opinion abroad and further confuse the minds of citizens here at home." 15 The members unanimously agreed "to demand the removal from public

office of the Chief Information Officer for conduct which besmirched the integrity of the British Honduras Civil Service and the good name of the country." The Chief Information Officer has since been exonerated by a visiting Reuter representative who investigated the charges, but neither the POU nor the opposition party has withdrawn its statements.

Perhaps the Union regarded the occasion fitting to honour its Stann Creek pledge to protect 'the basic freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. For it did not hesitate "to record its abhorrence of the denial of radio time to groups which do not support or agree with the ruling government party." "Let the people hear all sides," the statement exhorted, "and let them decide." Finally, the Union called on public officers "to unite now to save the country, and pledge their fullest support to the Council of Management of this Union in any action it may seem fit to take." 

The statement had been prepared by the Council of Management following the decision by a joint meeting of the Council and selected senior officers that one should be issued. Perhaps in inviting these senior officers the Council hoped that by participating in its deliberations the senior officers would be sympathetic to its view-point, and in any case that its bargaining position would be enhanced. It appears the senior officers were a moderating influence. For a suggestion that a Union delegation should be sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices in London to demand satisfactory guarantees about the Anglo-Guatemala mediation gave way to the more realistic suggestion that these guarantees should be sought from the Premier. The Premier had earlier made a parliamentary statement on the London conference and in his reply to the Union stated there was nothing more he wished to add to his statement. He, however, assured the POU that the terms and conditions of public officers would not be affected by the mediation. In making this observation, the Premier was probably indicating to the Union that it should confine its interest and concern to professional matters.

It is not known whether strike action was discussed at the joint meeting of the Council of Management and senior officers but rumours of an impending strike became widespread following the release of the Union's statement. The effect of the rumour was clear. It alerted the Government and incensed the politicians of the ruling party. This was obvious from the tenor of their speeches at the public meeting of the People's United Party immediately following the release of the statement. The entire public service was held up to public ridicule and even the Police did not escape the criticisms of the politicians. This attitude merely strengthened the hands of the extreme element of the POU executive and made the rank and file members more resolute.

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
A second emergency meeting of the Union was summoned and it was clear from the mood of the members that they had come to approve no other executive decision but to strike. Contrary to their expectation, there was little indication that the Council of Management was clear about the action it should recommend. Its hesitancy was partly the outcome of separate meetings which it had with the Governor and the Union's legal adviser hours before the emergency meeting. The Council reported that the Governor had offered to issue a statement on the London Conference which would be prepared in consultation with an acceptable union representative presumably in the hope that the Council would in return refrain from any extreme and ill-advised action. It appeared that the moderate element in the Council was at least willing to consider the offer, but a large body of union members, uncompromising and distrustful, warned that the Governor was probably a modern Greek bearing his gift. They advised the Council not to compromise its position by becoming a party to a Gubernatorial statement.

The Council of Management also reported that the legal adviser had counselled caution until the legal implications of a strike were studied. There was indeed little evidence that the Council had debated the implications of the strike and again the moderate element seemed willing to do so now. Such issues as the possible loss of pensionable service and victimisation were raised. But hopes of a moderate decision receded when a council member in an intemperate speech, and in what was in effect an appeal to the general body of unionists over the heads of his executive colleagues, advocated a strike. The popular and spontaneous response and the supporting speeches mainly from the junior ranks of the service left the decision in no doubt. The duration of the strike was the only remaining issue to be decided, and here moderation prevailed. The meeting decided on a sit-down strike for forty-eight hours beginning on the following day, Thursday, 30th June at 1 p.m. In fixing the time for the commencement of the strike the Union was not wholly unmindful of the inconveniences its decision would have inevitably caused the public. It hoped that the public would avail itself of the normal facilities during the period of grace.

In insisting on a strike when the Council seemed to be wavering, the rank and file, especially the junior officers, were not unmindful of past experiences with their leaders. On two occasions the junior officers had demanded a strike: the first in 1964 when the Government refused their request for an immediate salary increase, and the second early in 1966 when they expressed dissatisfaction with the increases received. On both occasions the Council failed to comply with their demands although on the second it had threatened to strike. The junior officers had probably formed the belief that the Council would not catch its threats by action unless forced to do so. It appears that the junior officers had partly acquired this determination to strike from their experiences with this and previous Councils.

The strike was too short to either test the solidarity and organisational capacity of the Union or to seriously cripple the public services;
moreso as those deemed essential remained largely unaffected. Yet considerable concern and interest centred on the operation of certain departments. The Post Office, not unexpectedly, attracted the most attention. It was the Union's main stronghold. Almost the entire staff obeyed the call and the assistance of non-strikers from other departments was inadequate to keep the service going.

The Government, however, was not to be outdone. Certain of their sympathy, it appealed to the Jesuits of the St. John's College who unhesitatingly gave permission for the use of students to break the strike. The morality of giving approval to students entrusted to their care, without the knowledge or consent of their parents, was obviously not apparent to the Jesuits. The recruitment of the students aroused the hostility of the strikers and perhaps more important stimulated public discussion of the relationship between the Government and the Roman Catholic Church. In failing to appeal as well to the other denominational colleges, the Government, whatever its views about their likely response, had exposed itself to the charge of looking in one direction for assistance. Its failure was in fact interpreted as confirmation of the widely held view that there is an alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the Government. This in turn brought into sharp relief the conjunction of religious and political attitudes in the society.

The political activities of the Catholic Church are particularly objectionable to many civil servants. It has been noted that in countries where the Catholic Church has, as it were, a co-partnership with, and a predominant influence on the Government, in Malta for example, the Government has tended to reserve high public offices for Catholics. Civil servants and others claim to have detected the undue influence of the Jesuits on governmental policies, particularly in the field of education, and have attributed this to the religious affiliation of the Premier and most of his colleagues and also to the learning and activism of the Jesuits. The recall to the United States of one of the Jesuits whose political activities were well-known has not dispelled the widespread fear among non-Roman Catholics that the continuing aim of the Catholic Church is to be 'the power behind the throne' and that religious affiliation will eventually play a decisive part in public and other appointments.

It is estimated that 70 per cent of the civil servants were on strike. It is impossible to determine the variety of motives that influenced individual civil servants in their decisions although some of the motives were established from interviews. Those who remained at work included the majority of senior civil servants — Permanent Secretaries, heads of departments, and District Officers. Irrespective of their views about the strike they felt that they should not have abdicated their responsibility. Some civil servants however genuinely believed the strike justified but lacked the courage of their conviction. On the other hand many strikers who were not in agreement with the strike felt that they owed a loyalty to the Union. Then too, there were both strikers and non-strikers whose decisions had been informed by their
respective political beliefs. There were also cases of strikers who, having given a second thought to their action decided to resume work. It can also be conjectured that personal motives entered many decisions. A person, for example, with an unimpressive record may have continued working in the hope of being restored to favour and of regaining opportunities of promotion. Similarly, it can be assumed that some strikers who were nursing what they considered to be personal injustices saw the occasion as their vendetta.

Implications of the Strike

The significance of the strike was far-reaching. It revealed some of the underlying conflicts within the society, and jolted those who smugly believed that the otherwise calm society was immune from social and political disturbances. The strike also called into question the impartiality of the civil service, the limits to be placed on the political activity of the POU, and the attitude of the Government to civil servants.

The strike suggests that the continued impartiality of the civil service is far from assured. It should however be noted that it is not the strikers alone who have created this uncertainty. There is also a number of civil servants whose partisanship to the ruling party is destroying the concept of an impartial civil service and who may prove to be unsympathetic to, and unwilling to zealously execute the policies of a NIP government. It is obviously difficult to distinguish their partisanship from loyalty and indeed these civil servants far from being criticised are dutifully held up to the ‘malcontents’ by a section of the press as a model of non-partisan proficiency. It is appreciated that a Minister will not feel safe to be advised by a civil servant whose loyalty is suspect and who may be a security risk, but for him to look too kindly on a civil servant who would equally have reservations in serving a different political master is to forfeit his claim to be promoting an impartial civil service.

If an impartial civil service cannot be completely realised in practice it nevertheless appears to be the only workable arrangement. The society lacks a sufficiently large reservoir of trained personnel to function the spoils system or a variant of it. Even the present permanent civil service lacks the minimum complement of trained staff and the deficiency persists in almost every professional field. The acute situation becomes evident when it is observed that the Planning Unit and the Development Programme are without the services of either an economist or statistician. Even if there were more qualified civil servants the permanent civil service might still be preferred. Suitable alternative employment for trained personnel is severely limited and under the spoils system these civil servants may be inclined to plunge furiously into party politics creating in the process an undesirable breed of sycophants and opportunists.

Much of the present state of affairs is due also to the absence of a formal negotiating machinery. The Whitley Council has fallen into disuse and the reasons for this are by no means clear. The POU claims
that the decline in the Council's activity and importance is largely the result of the official side "issuing instructions affecting conditions of service of Public Officers without hearing the Union's views in Whitley Council."20 Constitutional changes and the 'Honduranization' of the Civil Service might also have been a contributory factor. Most of the senior civil servants who until recently would have represented the civil service vis a vis the Colonial Secretary are required to represent the official side with the result that the level at which the staff is represented has tended to decline. Further, the civil servants, like the public which have few inhibitions in applying directly to a minister, have a tendency to want their consultations to be at the highest level. The result is that the value of discussions with even the most senior officials necessarily has less appeal than the direct access to the Minister of Finance which portfolio the Premier also holds or his Financial Secretary. But this method of conducting negotiations with the highest authorities is not without its defects. The negotiations tend to be on an ad hoc basis and their outcome too dependent upon a few personalities. There is also no certainty that significant groups of the Union are adequately represented. Altogether, the present arrangement is an unsatisfactory alternative to Whitleyism and efforts should be renewed on both sides to either resuscitate the Whitley Council or to establish a more effective and agreed alternative.

The importance of a negotiating machinery cannot be over-emphasised. As the recent U.N. report on the Jamaica Civil Service has observed, "Nowadays, it is almost an article of faith that no large organisation can genuinely flourish unless the managerial side has the collaboration of a responsible and representative staff side, encouraged to put forward its views with frankness and a high sense of purpose."21 It is salutary to note also that the report in a general appraisal of the attitude of the staff side of Whitley Councils observed that the civil service representatives "acquire and retain a sense of responsibility in direct proportion to the degree in which, over the years, their serious proposals are given full and understanding consideration."22

In so far as the negotiating machinery can contribute to the creation of mutual confidence its establishment is not only necessary but urgent. For the present uncertainties and lack of understanding cannot persist indefinitely without having a detrimental effect on the nation-building process. The role which the civil service is required to play in this task is too vital for the effect to be otherwise.

C. H. GRANT,
Institute of Social and Economic Research.

22. Ibid.
Some Notes on Public Service Commissions in the Commonwealth Caribbean

Political Leadership and Administrative Communications in New Nation States

The Ministerial System at Work: A Case Study of Guyana

Rural Local Government in Guyana and British Honduras

The Senate of Trinidad and Tobago
Rural Local Government in Guyana and British Honduras

By

C. H. Grant

I

Guyana and British Honduras are the only two Commonwealth Caribbean countries whose systems of rural local government include the institution of District Commissioner. A creature of the colonial administration, the institution was the mainspring of District Administration during the period of Crown Colony rule. In addition to being the Governor's representative and the senior official in the administrative district, the District Commissioner coordinated the activities of the various central government departments and provided them with a local agent for the carrying out of small and sporadic duties. However, with the advent of party politics and a ministerial system of government the institution has ceased to occupy this pivotal position which is reflected in the diminishing role and stature of the District Commissioner in both countries.

Despite possessing this institution in common, the two systems of rural local government are dissimilar in many respects. The basic approach to rural local government is different and the District Commissioner's local government responsibilities vary. The structural and functional similarities and differences are so striking that a comparison of the two systems is worthwhile.

The local government institution in Guyana will not be described in detail because this has been done in various academic studies and official reports to which reference will be made. The inclusion of detailed description in the case of British Honduras is however both unavoidable and desirable since there is a dearth of literature on the subject. There has been no comprehensive official review of the system and except for an unpublished Diploma dis-

1In the analysis of local government in British Honduras I have benefited from my discussions with Mr. D. R. Gill, former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Local Government, and Mr. R. E. Bennett, Social Development Officer; and also from a recent Public Administration Seminar for senior civil servants jointly sponsored by the University of the West Indies, the Government of British Honduras, and the British Honduras Public Officers Union. The responsibility for the views expressed in this article is however mine.

2In British Honduras the title, District Commissioner, was changed to District Officer on 1st July, 1965, Statutory Instrument No. 20 of 1965.

3The most comprehensive study is Allan Young, Approaches to Local Self-Government in British Guiana, Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd. 1958.

4There is however a "Report on Policy for Social Development Services 1965-70" by A. V. S. Lochhead, Director, Social Administration Courses, University College, Swansea.
the subject has received little scholarly attention.

In an attempt to redress this imbalance this article focuses more attention on the system in British Honduras than in Guyana and interprets the term "local government" widely to permit the discussion of the various non-statutory village organizations in the former territory. It discusses first the salient social and economic features of rural life which have influenced the pattern of rural local government in the respective countries and attempts to analyse the various local government institutions in their respective social contexts. Finally, the article discusses some of the problems common to rural local government in these countries.

II

Social and Economic Factors

Perhaps the only comparative statement on the system of local government in Guyana and British Honduras was made in 1944 by Professor T. S. Simey, then Social Welfare Adviser to the Comptroller for Development and Welfare in the West Indies. He was impressed with the system in Guyana and had "given special consideration to the possibility of extending local government services (in British Honduras) on a representative basis" similar to that in Guyana. For this purpose he had brought to British Honduras copies of Governor Denham's Minute of Local Government prepared in 1930, and of the Report of the British Guiana Local Government Committee of 1931 to be "studied by the Governor and his advisers". He however concluded from his visit that the time was not "ripe for the introduction of a system of representative local government even along the lines which have met with success in British Guiana". His reasons were that: "There are few, if any villages properly so called in British Honduras; the rural people live for the most part in loose settlements which do not lend themselves to the development of a sense of community and community activities in them." He recognized that: "There are certain possibilities ... in this direction on the Indian reserves, but these need to be carefully explored; for the time being at least I am of the opinion that the 'welfare' rather than the formal 'local government' approach to the social problems of rural communities is the correct one in British Honduras."

These observations are still relevant. The villages in British Honduras remain small, scattered and fragmented. Their populations range from 100 to 300 and there are difficulties of communication between the widely separ-
ated villages within an administrative district. It is not unusual for two vil-
lages in the Toledo District, for example, to be separated by a distance of
forty miles, the journey between them occupying three days by road and
river. These villages have had to rely so much on their individual resources
for their existence that they can be described as self-contained communities.
It can be readily seen that the relative inaccessibility of the villages creates
difficulties of effective central administrative control and places considerable
importance on village organization.

In addition to their small size and geographical distribution the villages
do not fulfil other basic conditions of formal local government such as the
attainment of a reasonable stage of social and economic development and
sufficient financial resources. British Honduras has not had a plantation
economy and its agricultural history is one of low productivity and output
per caput, wasteful methods of subsistence farming with the system of shift-
ing cultivation and few tools beyond the machete. Of the 10,450 persons
working in agriculture some 7,400 or 75 per cent are engaged in domestic
production at a very low level of production per man.11 The villages farm
in small units and nearly half of the farmers cultivate less than twenty acres
of land on annual tenancies.

The country’s two main export crops, sugar and citrus, which are culti-
vated in the northern and southern parts of the country respectively, con-
stitute the main source of cash wages to the villagers. But these industries
do not employ even the major portion of the labour force. One reason for
this is the general aversion of the Creoles, who are traditionally timber work-
ers, and the Caribs, to a lesser extent, to agricultural labour. Unable to at-
tract sufficient labour from these two ethnic groups the sugar and citrus in-
dustries have had to rely partly on Mexican and Guatemalan labour res-
pectively.

The subsistence way of life is pursued mainly by the Maya and Kekchi
Indians, and the Mestizos in the northern, southern and western parts of
the country. They live in traditional types of houses with strong, stable family
and community ties, and their adherence to traditional values has bred con-
servatism and contentment with their subsistence living. In recent years how-
ever, and with the expansion of the sugar industry, those living in the north
have been entering the modern stream of social and economic life, as is
reflected in their new consumption pattern. Indeed a silent, social and econ-
omic revolution can be dimly perceived in the north. Nevertheless subsist-
ence farming remains the basis of their social system.

The obvious economic disadvantages of subsistence farming are matched
by social disadvantages in health and a high infant mortality rate. Another
ill-effect of subsistence living and the commitment to traditional attitudes has
been the relatively high incidence of illiteracy among the Mayas and Mestizos. A primary education, if it was available, did not seem worthwhile

when the son and daughter could assist in the farms and in the domestic chores respectively. In the districts in which Mayas and Mestizos predominate, the percentage of illiteracy is higher than the national average of 10.4 per cent. In the Corozal and Toledo Districts, for example, the percentage is 17.5 and 29.1 respectively. These social disadvantages have helped to dictate the “welfare” approach to local government.

Although the population is small, it is racially, culturally, and linguistically heterogeneous to an unusual degree. It includes such diverse groups as the Kekchi Indians, the Mayans and Mestizos, the Caribs and Creoles, all with different customs and different concentrations of settlement. The cultural pluralism and the pattern of population distribution have given rise to differing forms of village organization in the various administrative districts. Indeed, a recognition of the cultural factor is indispensable to an understanding of the traditional form of village government in the Mayas, Kekchi and Mestizos villages, as will become evident in the discussion of the relevant local government institutions.

In Guyana, the scene of local government activity is confined mainly to the coastlands where there is a concentration of about 94 per cent of the population. In this area, rural conditions have permitted the development of “formal” local government which was first introduced in the mid-nineteenth century when the voluntary village councils established by the former Negro slaves were placed on a legal basis and given statutory powers. However, as economic and administrative units, the villages are not sufficiently viable to make social and economic changes within them permanent and for the voluntary village councils to undertake major local government functions. When compared with the villages in British Honduras, however, they are larger in both size and population. There is also easier physical connection between the villages in each of the administrative districts.

An important feature of the villages in many of the administrative districts is that they are within easy reach of the privately-owned sugar plantations which have been traditionally the main source of employment to the villagers. Small-scale farming of vegetable plots and rice cultivation are the main occupation in the villages and the latter has been successfully pursued by the East Indians who are the largest ethnic group and also predominantly rural dwellers. That they reside mainly in the rural areas and constitute the majority of the rural population is not only due to their being the largest ethnic group in the country, but, more important, to the fact that they have remained wedded to the land. The Negroes, who are the second largest ethnic group, have never been able to command a decent return from small-scale farming on their village plots and in addition to plantation work, have earned wages from a variety of other sources, including diamond and gold mining, employment in the bauxite industry and in road repair gangs. These external sources of employment combine to off-

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}Population Census, 1960.}\]
set the limited employment opportunities in the villages and provide an indirect source of local government finance.

Unlike the Maya, Kekchi, and Mestizo villages in British Honduras, cultural factors have little bearing on the system of rural local government. The chief determinants of village leadership are education, occupation, wealth and in recent years party affiliation. It is the educated and better-off members of the village, such as the primary school teacher, justice of the peace, minister of religion and shopkeeper that have historically provided leadership to the village councils.

It is these differences in the geographical position and size of the villages, the ethnic distribution of the rural population, the agricultural tradition and productivity of the rural workers, their social and educational achievements, and the role of the cultural factor which have compelled a differing approach to local government in these two mainland territories. In British Honduras the district towns alone answer to the social, economic and financial criteria of formal local government. Their institution, the District Town Board, is analogous in form and function to those of the village council in Guyana and a comparison of these two institutions belongs to the next section.

III

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

The main rural local government institutions in Guyana are the village councils and the country district councils. The former enjoy a higher status, being partly elected, while the latter are wholly nominated by the Local Government Board. Their functions are basically similar, and both are subject to the same degree of central control. These councils are found throughout the country, although the privately-owned sugar estates and some villages are outside the local government system. The residents of the sugar estates lack experience in local government, since they do not share in the management of the estates and are provided with services by the estate management.

The “unorganized” villages are deprived of normal local government facilities, and village works are done by ad hoc groups on a self-help basis. As a part of the administrative districts they are however within the purview of the District Commissioners and a few departments of the central government also provide them with services. It is the intention of the Government to bring these sugar estates and “unorganized” villages within the formal local government system along the lines recommended by Dr. A. H. Marshall in 1955.\(^{13}\)

British Honduras possesses a wider range of local government institutions. These vary with the ethnic and cultural groups from the formal, statutory

Alcalde system in the southern Maya and Carib villages to the loose, non-statutory Patron or Mayor system in the northern Mestizo villages. There are also the informal Creole village organization, the District Town Boards and the recently introduced village councils which have superseded the traditional institutions in some villages, and are expected to work in co-operation with the existing local government institutions in others.

The question which arises is how can comparison fruitfully proceed when some of the institutions in British Honduras do not have their counterparts in Guyana and their differing forms are dissimilar to that of the Guyanese village councils. It will be profitable to be less concerned with the difference in forms and try to analyse the functional relationship of these institutions to their respective social contexts in the two countries.

The Alcalde System in British Honduras

The Alcalde System which originated in the Spanish colonial period in Central America was adopted by the settlement following the successive wave of migration of Mayas and Mestizos from Yucatan in the mid-nineteenth century. It seemed expedient for the British settlers to administer the new settlements through institutions which were familiar to the immigrants. An Act was therefore passed in 1858 “to provide for the speedy and economical administration of justice in the rural districts of this settlement and for that purpose to invest certain fit and proper persons resident therein, with a limited civil and criminal jurisdiction”. The system was not supplanted by the colonial administration when the settlement became a British colony in 1862. Instead, as in other colonial territories with indigenous local government institutions, it was incorporated into the administrative system when in 1884 the Secretary of State approved the “appointment of alcaldes and constables in the Indian and Carib villages throughout the country and the exercise by alcaldes of a voluntary jurisdiction subject to appeal to the District Magistrate”.

The Alcalde system is not known to have existed in other Commonwealth countries, and in British Honduras was apparently confined to the Indian and Carib villages in the south and west of the country. It is not known in the north, and Placencia in the south was the only Creole village with an Alcalde.

Originally, the system was a form of village government by which the men of the community agreed to vest in an elected group the government of the village in defence matters, law and order, settlement of disputes and the provision of public works. The outgoing Alcalde conducted the annual election and the successful candidate became the First Alcalde, and the runner-up the Second Alcalde. The village then elected a body of five persons as

15 Colonial Secretary's Circular Letter No. 7 of 1884 dated 14th June, 1884, Cited in Handbook of British Honduras, 1891 and 1892, p. 132.
councillors who constituted the Alcalde’s Court.

At the first meeting of the Court the Alcalde appointed five persons as Officers of the Peace whose duty was to ensure the enforcement of sanctions. The Court then agreed on the amount of produce to be contributed from the village community, the sale of which was appropriated for public works. It also determined the amount of land to be cultivated and the beginning of the planting season. The decision on the beginning of the agricultural season was made in consultation with the heavenly bodies, an art in which the Mayas were skilled. The Court also selected the days for fajina which was the voluntary cleaning of the village and the communal execution of village works.

The programme was then laid before the meeting of the entire village of men, but discussions were normally postponed to another meeting. There were seldom objections to the proposals, since the objector risked being ostracized. Once the programme was approved it became law for twelve months. Failure to comply with any part of the plan was an offence punishable by imprisonment in the village cabildo with hard labour. The offences were few, the deterrent being mainly the opprobrium that rewarded such deviant behaviour rather than the severity of the penal sanctions.

There is a close relationship between the family organization and leadership within the Alcalde system. The typical characteristics of the family are a strong “in-group” feeling resisting outside influence and agencies of social change, suspicious of strangers, familial in its approach to living, self-reliant and respectful to age with a marked paternal pre-eminence and authority. The males are expected to be provident to their families and the females are modest and retiring, with the home being the centre of their interest. Strict obedience and filial respect is required of the children and the reciprocal honouring of kinship obligation is expected. Marriages are usually contracted between persons of the same village, with the result that in an average village of forty families everyone tends to be related. The fact that marriages between relations beyond first cousins are permitted reinforces this tendency. These intra-village marriages maintain the “closed” nature of the village and generate village solidarity.

From the family organization it is obvious that the Alcalde’s Court tended to be composed of the oldest respected members of the village. The position of the First Alcalde was usually achieved after years of faithful service, the incumbent having begun his career as a village policeman, and working towards the supreme position. The village government was composed of the numerically strongest families, since the first loyalty of the villagers was to the family. Thus the young and the old, with the support of relatives, combined to make the system work.

No one who came from a numerically weak family or who failed to receive the blessings of his own group could aspire to leadership, despite his personal qualities. The same group of people fulfilled all the leadership roles
in the village and were assisted in the discharge of their duties by the manner of speech and dress befitting the occasion. The women with their prescribed domestic role, took no part in public affairs.

The Alcalde’s Court was both a mechanism of social control and a judicial body. It tried to ensure the settlement of disputes without recourse to “external” assistance, except for major crimes. This attempt was determined as much by the geographical factor as by cultural considerations. Being widely scattered and remote, the villagers were forced to rely on themselves for internal harmony.

It was inevitable that this self-regulatory type of village government would be subjected to review once the building of roads and improved communications had facilitated official contact with these villages. The aim of the central government was to regularize this form of government by placing it on a legal basis. This was achieved in 1952 by the Inferior Court Ordinance. It defined the duties of the Alcalde, especially his judicial powers. A maximum fine of $25B.H. was prescribed and the criminal jurisdiction of the Court was to be exercised in accordance with the criminal law and practice of the country. Administratively, the election of the Alcalde and his deputy was subjected to the approval of the Governor in Council.

Not unexpectedly, the Government’s intervention was resented and has tended to undermine the confidence of the villagers in the system. They are inclined to see that the appointment of the Alcalde is by an “external” agency although his election is purely a village concern. It is however possible, with the development of party politics in the rural areas, for someone who does not have the support of the family to become an Alcalde if he is persona grata with the government.

The increasing loss of confidence of the villagers is reflected in the neglect of civic obligations. Public works and fajina have declined and the villagers are less hesitant to pay fines in lieu of their labour contribution to village works. The breakdown of communal activity is also due to the development of a cash economy in the villages and the consequential need for the villagers to spend more of their time on their milpas. The village council which is expected to co-operate with the Alcalde is also undermining this institution, as will be seen later. Moreover, the Government’s policy appears to be the gradual elimination of the institution, which it believes has served its day.

Notwithstanding these observations, the Alcalde still has considerable authority. He overshadows the other village elites such as the school teacher and the government police. Quite often the former has been his secretary and the latter normally seeks the co-operation of the Alcalde’s officers of the peace in apprehending criminals. A further indication of his authority is the fact that few appeals against his decisions are made to the District Magistrate.

The system of Alcalde government was superimposed on the Caribs who

adapted it to their needs. Yet it was not as effective as in the Maya and Kekchi villages. There were no public works of note and no cabildos were built. At best the Caribs struggled to carry out fajina to keep their villages clean, but because of the occupational pursuits of the farmers who were also fishermen and the individualistic nature of the people, they never achieved the degree of communal action of the Mayas.

This account of the Alcalde system is reminiscent of the organization of the Negro villages in Guyana in the post-emancipation years. These villages were administered on a co-operative basis, primarily in response to natural conditions. Because of the low coastlands, an elaborate system of drainage and irrigation works had to be maintained if the villages were to be saved from a semi-aquatic existence. Drainage maintenance admitted no neglect and depended upon unanimity and combined action.

This co-operation was not always forthcoming. The villagers found it difficult to meet the demands made upon their labour when they wished to work on the sugar estates. The payment of money in lieu of labour contribution to village works did not always compensate for the loss of the village labour force to the sugar estates. The village headman could not compel persistent defaulters since neither his authority nor the obligations of the defaulters rested on a legal basis. In this case, the initiative for Government’s intervention came from the villagers. Governor Light thought that the villagers should be left to themselves until they “were satisfied that they have been unsuccessful in mutual bonds of self-government, [for] then will they ask as a boom what, if forced on them by legislative enactment, they might be made to believe was unjust”. Formal rural local government began in 1845 when the Queenstown villagers successfully petitioned the Governor for a statutory council in the hope that a more regularized local government arrangement would bolster the authority of the village leaders, and create a regular, if not wholly adequate source of village finance.

The Patron or Mayor System in British Honduras

The system which is found chiefly among the Mestizos in the west and north is similar to that found among the Spanish-Indians in Mexico. The two words — Patron (protector) and Mayor (elder or brother) — suggest the purpose for which the leader is chosen — to protect and safeguard the interests of the community.

Here again the men elect the leader, whose responsibility it is to settle disputes, arrange the terms of milpa allocations and represent the village interests in “external” affairs. Here also, because of the kinship system, the Patron or Mayor normally belongs to the numerically strongest family. There is however no village tax as among the Mayas and fajina is confined to keeping the village clean. Village justice is not as developed as within the Alcalde system. Disputes are settled within the family and as a last resort are brought to the attention of the Patron. The more serious offences are

17 Light to Lord Stanley, 16th October, 1945 C.O. 111/225.
referred directly to the District Magistrate.

This form of village organization is less entrenched than the Alcalde system and consequently it has been easier to replace it by the non-statutory village councils. In fact, the village council has been so widely adopted in the north that the villages in which the Mayor system still obtains are few. The Government's immediate problem is to find a method of encouraging the participation of women in civic life without disturbing the existing family structure to the point of breakdown. The problem is formidable because the milpero is also a chiclero and is therefore absent from the village for four months each year. The Patron represents him in his absence and this includes ensuring his wife maintains her present role of non-participation in village affairs. No administrative re-organization, however well intended, can ignore these powerful cultural forces of belief, family structure, and the pattern of authority. These factors are not crucial to the future development of local government in Guyana.

The Creole Village Organization in British Honduras

Of the three types of village organization this is the weakest and most rudimentary. There is no formal administrative machinery and village government takes the form of ad hoc bodies which are formed for the attainment of short-term goals. In former years the school-teacher-cum lay preacher was the mainstay of these bodies and the most prominent member of the rural elite. One only has to recall his multifarious duties to appreciate his importance to village organization. He was the Church's social worker and the representative of various government departments such as the Post Office and Public Health. He is, however, being relieved of these governmental responsibilities as the various government departments assign their own staff to the administrative districts. Moreover, the Church no longer commands the young teacher's allegiance to the same extent and most of the social work which he undertakes is out of deference to his religious head. There is also his reluctance to undertake leadership roles which might bind him to the village at the week-ends.

Occupation is also, from another standpoint, a function of leadership in the Creole village. The male Creole villager is traditionally a forest worker and is accustomed to spend about six months of the year in the forests. This has given his farming experience the character of a transitory occupation, a resting spell from the more rigorous occupation. Leadership in the village tends to devolve on those persons who have the necessary contact with the timber contractors to provide job opportunities to their colleagues.

It is noteworthy that the Creole women are more active in village affairs than their counterparts in the Carib and Maya villages, mainly because they are alone for such long periods and also because the family organization does not prevent their participation.
Village Councils in British Honduras

Although the various village organizations fulfilled a need, they cannot provide the basis of a modern, representative local government system. In the case of the Alcalde system we have seen that the Government’s attempt to regularize the judicial and administrative procedures in the 1950’s has had a disruptive influence on the institution. The Caribs also found the system unsuitable. The development of a cash economy has also undermined both the Alcalde system and the Mayor system. The ad hoc bodies in the Creole villages are perhaps the less democratic and their internal organization certainly less developed.

The Government, recognizing the inadequacies of the various self-governing organizations, adopted in the 1950’s the policy of promoting voluntary village councils throughout the country, with the ultimate aim of giving these bodies statutory powers after they had gained experience. These councils function under a standard constitution prepared by the Social Development Department and their programmes are influenced by the welfare orientation of the Department. They are essentially community self-help councils through which the Department’s Community Development programme is channelled and administered. The councils are mainly concerned with the building of community centres by self-help, environmental sanitation including the beautification of the village, providing homes for the aged, and organizing fiestas.

The Social Development Department also organizes training courses in leadership and appears to make little use of the family organization in this exercise. One of the consequences of this training programme is the villagers’ widespread fascination with the working of parliamentary procedures. The potential village leader sees oratory as a function of leadership and indulges in long speeches that are often remotely related to the subject under discussion.

In those villages where the village council is expected to co-operate with the existing institution its mere existence has placed it in conflict with the older institution, especially the Alcalde. The council symbolizes progress and modernity and the elders in the Alcalde villages tend to keep aloof. There is no doubt that it detracts from their power and prestige. Moreover, it appeals to the young who appreciate the need for reform and are quick to perceive the leadership possibilities it offers them. Here again the conflict between the old and the young is expressed. The young leaders do not represent job possibilities as is customary among Creole leaders, nor are they necessarily from the elite family of the Mayas or from the ancient village leadership system of the Mestizos. But while they are prepared to embrace the new democratic ideas of leadership and community development techniques they are caught in the vicious net of expectation of reverence, respect and obedience due to elders in the village. This detracts from their drive and initiative. The situation varies from village to village. In some, the con-
lict is so intense that there is a stalemate in which little is attempted except for the efforts of the elders to maintain the status quo. In others, the young men have withdrawn from the council and formed their own.

If the introduction of the village councils has placed a strain on hitherto harmonious family relationships, it has also diffused political power within the village. The Alcalde is compelled to vie with the village council leaders for popular support. From a democratic viewpoint this may be healthy but as we have seen it has led to inaction in some villages.

The village councils are also developing a political character. Some of them are more concerned with impressing the central government with their loyalty, presumably in the hope of obtaining favours, than with formulating and executing programmes. In this connection pressure is exerted by the party activists in the village and it is not unusual for a competent member of the council to be forced into resigning if his loyalty to the ruling party group in the village is suspect. Such pressure often touches off a long trail of conflict between contending village factions and this appears to be prejudicing the council’s chances of success.

The community development functions of these councils are similar to those of the rural sub-committees of the Regional Development Committees established in Guyana in 1954 as part of the country’s new community development programme. Unlike that in British Honduras, this programme emphasized economic as opposed to social development. The virtues of the programme were extolled through the distance of feeder roads constructed, the number of sluices built, the miles of drains and canals dug, and the acres of farmland fenced. The technique of voluntary labour contribution to self-help schemes was however employed, as in the case of British Honduras. The Guyanese programme was politically motivated and this was partly responsible for its limited success. It was introduced by the interim government following the removal of the popular P.P.P. government in 1953 and rather than appealing for aid from the force of nationalism the programme was intended not only to act as a brake on it but to reverse the prevailing trend. The choice of department for the administering of the programme was also responsible for the results. It was administered by the District Commissioners whose method of normal administration was inappropriate for the execution of community development projects. It has been argued elsewhere that the Social Welfare Division which had a long experience of working with voluntary groups and communities was a more appropriate department.

As in British Honduras, the community development village committees were expected to collaborate with the local authorities, but this objective was seldom realized. Conflict of interests occurred between the village councils and self-help groups. For example, a local authority might have decided

---

19 Ibid., p. 175-77.
for prestige or political reasons, to site a project in a place that was unacceptable to the self-help group. If further opposed, the local authority was likely to invoke its statutory powers, thereby initiating a chain of conflict between the two contending parties. The antagonisms bred by such conflict invariably had the twin effect of undermining the stature of the local authority and of smothering the enthusiasm of the self-help group.

The strained relationship between the old and new institutions in both countries is inevitable despite official ideals, since the latter institutions invariably impinge on the work of the former. The conflict is further aggravated by the reluctance of the long established institutions to share their authority and influence with the new.

**The Town Boards in British Honduras and Village Councils in Guyana**

District Town Boards operate in the seven areas designated as towns — Corozal, Orange Walk, San Ignacio, Benque Viejo, Stann Creek, Punta Gorda and Monkey River. These areas are, however, essentially rural and with the exception of Benque Viejo and Monkey River are the main centres of administrative districts. These Boards and the village councils in Guyana are broadly similar in organization and functions, although the Boards enjoy a relatively higher status. Their chief executive officer is the Town Clerk and Overseer respectively, whose appointment, dismissal and renumereration are subjected to the approval of the central government. Their functions are confined to normal local government affairs such as the levying of taxes and rates, the establishment, maintenance and control of markets, and repairs to village roads. Almost all of their functions are statutory and this is perhaps the main factor that distinguishes them from the other rural local government institutions in British Honduras whose administrative functions are more or less permissive. Moreover, the District Town Boards and village councils in British Honduras and Guyana respectively are similarly financed — partly by local revenues and partly by grants and loans from the central government. It is noteworthy that in both countries these subventions are in lieu of the payment of taxes on government property.

An important difference between the District Town Boards in British Honduras and the village councils in Guyana is that while the former are directly responsible to the Ministry of Local Government and Social Development the latter are subjected to detailed control by the District Commissioner. Since 1962, the District Town Boards have been free of this detailed control. The District Officer has ceased to be intimately involved in local government affairs at this level. His role has been circumscribed and his status undermined by the constitutional changes in 1963 and the development of party politics at the district level. The Town Board elections are conducted on a party basis and four of the seven Boards are controlled by the ruling People's United Party. This gives the Government additional local machinery and an opportunity to promote its interests.

One of the consequences of the development of party politics at this level
and the granting of more functional autonomy to the District Town Boards is that cases which were brought to the attention of the central government through the District Officer are now channelled through the offices of the local politicians and the elected district representatives of the House of Representatives. This situation is encouraged by the fact that, with the exception of one, the elected district representatives are of the ruling party, and by the tendency for Ministers, when addressing their directives, to overlook the District Officer in favour of the representative. There are, however, issues which must be eventually referred to the District Officer and whose solution depends upon the harmonious relationship between this incumbent and the political representative. But their relationship is ill-defined. The District Town Board Ordinance\textsuperscript{20}, for example, takes no cognizance of the elected district representative and a narrow, legalistic view by the District Officer of his relationship with this representative normally results in conflict. There is also the possibility that the over-zealous district representative may impinge upon or seek to influence the work of the District Officer. These conflicts are basically the result of the development of the institution of District Officer and political party at different times, and in different contexts as well as the functionaries’ different perceptions of their role.

Bereft of most of his local government duties in the district towns the District Officer’s magisterial duties have become his main function. Moreover, these duties have increased considerably as a result of a statutory order made under the Inferior Courts Ordinance which requires him to attend his court most days of the week to hear petty cases and to take preliminary hearings into the more serious cases. This function, coupled with the normal office work, bind the District Officer to his desk so that he has little time to travel extensively in his administrative district. His visits to the outlying villages in the more inaccessible areas are brief and perfunctory and this has led a visiting salaries commissioner to believe that District Administration in the villages is “largely at a discount”.\textsuperscript{21}

The District Officer’s magisterial duties, however, are not solely responsible for the limits placed on his local government activities. We have also noted the restrictive influence of party politics and the granting of more functional autonomy to the District Town Boards in 1962. Another delimiting factor is the welfare approach to local government in the villages. Once social and economic conditions do not permit the organization of village councils along normal local government lines it seems that the Social Development Department and not the District Officer should be directly responsible for welfare projects in the village. Indeed, the activities of the village council are likely to suffer from being the responsibility of the District Officer. The latter’s magisterial functions do not always combine happily with welfare work, since the peasant tends to be wary of those who admin-


\textsuperscript{21}R. J. C. Howes, Report on an Enquiry into Salaries and Other Conditions of Service in the Civil Service of British Honduras, 1956, p. 11.
ister the law. This is not to say that the District Officer should not be directly interested in community development projects; his role of co-ordinating the various departmental programmes alone demands this interest.

In Guyana the District Commissioner’s statutory powers have remained unchanged, despite the constitutional changes at the national level. One of the prominent features of District Administration is the close control over local authorities exercised by the District Commissioner on behalf of the Local Government Board. While his authority prevents the misuse of power by the village council it also has the effect of stifling local initiative. Unlike the District Officer in British Honduras he performs no magisterial functions — the Hector Joseph Committee on Local Government in 1931 decided against the conferring of magisterial powers on District Commissioners. Nevertheless, since then the District Commissioners have been assigned multifarious duties and in 1955 they estimated that local government business accounted for about 50 per cent of their work.

Despite the close control which the District Commissioners exercise over the village councils their status is also waning. The causes are similar to those which operate in British Honduras. Village politics is increasingly influenced by party considerations and there is also no formal link between those party functionaries who are not village councillors and the District Commissioner. There is also the tendency for villagers to channel their grievances and demands through the local party representative to the central government. The fact that complaints might be referred to the District Commissioner by a Ministry does not deter the complainant from by-passing this functionary on future occasions.

There is a case for reviewing the institution of District Commissioner in both countries in the light of political changes. Dr. Marshall has recommended the abolition of the institution in Guyana on the grounds that it is "undemocratic" and "amateurish", and that the larger local authorities which he has proposed should be directly responsible to the Ministry of Local Government. There is however a body of opinion in Guyana which favours retaining the institution on the ground that, irrespective of local government reform, a co-ordinating agent of the central government is necessary at the district level. The same argument is likely to be advanced in British Honduras if a similar recommendation is proposed.

An alternative idea might be to follow the example of some African states and politicize the institution. It should be noted, however, that this process in the above-mentioned states was either preceded or followed by the estab-


24 A. H. Marshall op. cit., p. 73.

25 Ibid., p. 73.
lishment of a one-party system of government. The Governments in Guyana and British Honduras, however, claim commitment to a multi-party system of government and would therefore wish to retain at least the semblance of impartiality at the district level which the civil servant provides.

The Government of British Honduras, however, appears to be adopting a variant of the new arrangement in Africa. It annually sets aside funds for village projects which are recommended by the district elected representative. The funds are administered by the Social Development Department but neither the Social Development Officer nor the District Officer is directly involved in the decision-making process. In the interest of cordial relationship with these officers and to benefit from their administrative experience, the elected representative often solicits their views before submitting his programme to the Minister of Local Government and Social Development to whom he is directly responsible. By participating in the administrative process the elected representative obtains an insight into the complexities of government and comes to appreciate the need for his demands to be realistic. But perhaps more significant is the fact that participation gives him an opportunity to dispense political patronage. One is encouraged to hold this view when it is observed that the Government, in allocating administrative responsibility in the sole district which did not elect the P.U.P. candidate, has overlooked the elected representative in favour of the party's nominated senator from the neighbouring electoral district. The bypassing of the elected representative has destroyed the sense of impartiality in the district, with the result that the disfavoured section of the community does not expect to receive the full advantages of government-sponsored projects.

If the civil servant is to be retained as the District Commissioner there is still the problem of regularizing his relationship with the elected representative. The problem admits of no easy solution, since in the nature of the existing arrangements precise definition of respective areas of authority is impossible.

IV

Some Common Problems

Our discussion of the different socio-economic conditions, cultural factors, and approaches to rural local government in Guyana and British Honduras suggests that their local government problems are different. But behind the variety of institutions, functions, names, and forms there is a basic problem common to rural local government in both countries. It is whether local administration can be effectively undertaken by these local councils or whether it is necessary to retain indefinitely the varying degree of control at present exercised by the respective central governments.

In theoretical terms the problem is whether the “democratic” and “efficiency” concepts of local government can be reconciled in developing ter-
ritories such as these. There are two extreme schools of thought on this issue. One school advocates that local authorities should have all the independence and autonomy compatible with the existence of a modern state. The denial of functional autonomy, this school argues, will have certain detrimental effects on the social and political vitality of the rural areas which outweigh the benefits of centralized local government services. Dr. Marshall is evidently in support of this school of thought when he states in his report on local government in Guyana:

For many reasons good local government is generally accepted as an indispensable part of the democratic way of life. It gives a country a way of meeting needs in the way the inhabitants want; it harnesses local enthusiasm; it teaches both electors and elected their civic duties; it trains politicians and officials destined to play important parts in the wider sphere of national government; it avoids bureaucratic government; it gives practice in the use of power; it encourages community mindedness; it avoids the expensive alternative of doing the local work by a series of separate outposts of the central department; and finally it provides the means by which stable, local government can continue, irrespective of political convolutions at the centre.26

The opposing viewpoint holds that local government institutions should be essentially executive agents of the central departments. The arguments of this school are based on the economies of large-scale operations that can be realized from centralized administration. The concentration of power and control in the hands of the central government, it is further argued, facilitates central planning in the economic field, and the manipulation of resources involved in national development — productive, administrative, financial and even cultural. Finally, it is contended that centralized control discourages local separation and a multiplicity of semi-autonomous communities often at odds with one another and with the central government.

Any attempt to strike a balance between the "democratic" and "efficiency" elements in Guyana and British Honduras calls into question the small size of the villages, and the limited finance and poor staffing of the local authorities.

The villages in Guyana, as we have observed, are neither viable economic units nor an adequate source of local government finance, and as administrative units are also too small and numerous — more than one hundred — to be efficient. They can neither expect to attract the able and ambitious citizen, nor support capable professional administrators. Indeed, the small size of the present local authorities is mainly responsible for village councils being poorly developed political institutions. Most of the functions which bear an obvious significance to the lives of the villagers and to the future development of their communities have either been removed or withheld from the local authorities by the central government. The action of the central government has left its mark on rural local government. Local authorities do not engage the attention of the whole community, despite the development of party politics at this level, with the result that the authorities have lost all awareness of any real social purpose in their activities.

A part of the problem is that the sugar estates and some villages are out-

26Ibid., p. 15.
side the formal local government system. The sugar estates in particular have traditionally been entities unto themselves and until they are brought within the jurisdiction of local authorities and contribute to local government finance the local authorities will be incapable of undertaking important functions. The idea of including the sugar estates in the formal local government system is not new. It was first proposed by the Hector Joseph Committee in 1931, and Dr. Marshall also recognized their inclusion to be a *sine qua non* of large, viable local government units. Successive governments too have recognized the need, but little has been done to translate the idea into reality.

The problem of size is even more obvious in British Honduras. The villages are smaller, both in terms of size and population, and are so widely dispersed and fragmented that their formation into large administrative units is a real challenge. When their low social and economic level and the weight of tradition are added to their small size and population, it is difficult to conceive any but the welfare approach to their problems. The village councils are still to prove themselves as community councils and are too new to be given the status of local authorities carrying out statutory functions. The conferring of statutory powers on these village councils may not even be desirable, especially if it involves local taxation and paid services since these will undermine the self-help basis of the community development programme of the Social Development Department. It appears therefore that the direct administration of these rural areas by agents of the central government will continue indefinitely.

The District Town Boards are firmly established as formal local authorities and have a greater degree of operational autonomy than the village councils in Guyana. But they are also handicapped by the smallness of the areas under their jurisdiction. This has not only limited the scale of their operations but also their financial resources. Like the village councils in Guyana, the employment of officers of high calibre is neither financially possible nor functionally justifiable. Yet without larger, viable units, adequate local finance, and better qualified staff these Boards cannot be vested with wider powers by the central government.

Larger local authorities can be created by a two-tiered structure of local government, and in British Honduras there is an official plan to create non-statutory District village councils comprising the village councils in each administrative district. The possibility of a link between either the village councils or the proposed District village councils and the District Town Boards is, however, problematical. Under this relationship the District Town Boards would presumably undertake the major services for the entire administrative district, and the village councils those services of lesser importance. It is, however, doubtful whether these local authorities with their differing approach to local government will be able to mesh and work out a satisfactory arrangement. In any event it is unlikely that the volume of work to be given to local authorities in British Honduras in the foreseeable future
would be sufficient to warrant two tiers of local government. Moreover, the villages at their present stage of economic development are clearly unable to contribute to the additional administrative cost which a two-tiered system entails. Dr. Marshall had taken these factors of additional cost and the limited volume of work into account when deciding against the two-tier system for Guyana.

These are some of the organizational problems which will arise whenever the reform of local government in British Honduras is considered. They do not admit of an easy solution, especially in the villages which will have to retain their loose, informal character indefinitely. In Guyana, Dr. Marshall's report provides a basis for the re-organization of local government and it is hoped that its implementation will be seriously considered.

No reform of the administrative machinery of local government is, however, by itself sufficient to make local government an activity which will engage the interests of the villages. Even if there were to be larger units of local government in both countries, exercising greater control over finances and with more opportunity to provide local services, local authorities may still find themselves removed from the lives and interests of the village community. If they are to permeate the lives of the villagers then they should act as an instrument of economic activity. In so far as short-term rural development projects are necessary to complement the more dramatic and long-term schemes of any development programme, the local authorities should sponsor such projects since they are manageable with limited resources.

Such activities have other virtues. The repair of the road that leads to the farmlands or the empoldering of a canal to effect better drainage can stimulate the output of a cash crop within a single region. Because benefits are immediate, the villagers will be anxious to participate in order to maximize the benefits. Moreover, in observing the life cycle of a scheme, the rural community will come to relate, for example, the improving of a village street with the "local economy" and to appreciate the efforts of the local authorities.

The need for this economic orientation of local authorities is perhaps more urgent in British Honduras where peasant farming is poorly developed. The Social Development Department which has tended to ignore the economic aspects of rural development should encourage the village councils to take an interest in small-scale economic enterprises; more so as the present welfare schemes are unlikely to take root unless they are concerned with the economic needs of the community. It is only by linking community and economic organization in the closest association with those who are to benefit from them that the various village groups will be encouraged to look after their own affairs. In this respect a close relationship between the Community Development officer of the Social Development Department and district officers of the Agriculture and Co-operative Department is vital.

Emphasis on the economic role of the village councils in British Honduras
will however necessitate a review of the land tenure system. Most of the village lands are leaseholds and the occupiers have had little more than a transitory identification with their holdings. The problem of stimulating an interest in agriculture can be made easier for the village councils by placing the ownership of the land on a more permanent basis.

It is in the economic field that most can be done to promote the development of local government in both countries. By becoming a productive agency and therefore assuming a positive role in the economic life of the villagers, the local authority can occupy the central position in local affairs and contribute to economic development on which its own development as a political institution ultimately depends.