

movement towards political unity must come from within and not from outside the area and asking the colonies to keep federation in mind as self-governing institutions developed. The ultimate aim of a West Indian federation would be, he said, internal self-government within the British Commonwealth.

### Principle Accepted

The Legislatures of the Bahamas, Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands, Trinidad and the Windward Islands debated the idea of federation and with the exception of the Bahamas agreed to participate in a conference to discuss proposals for federation. In 1947 at Montego Bay in Jamaica, West Indian representatives met with the Colonial Secretary, agreed that closer association was desirable, and accepted "the principle of federation in which each constituent unit retains complete control over all matters except those specifically assigned to the federal government." It was further agreed that a Standing Closer Association Committee should be constituted to recommend, *inter alia*, "the form of a federal constitution and federal judiciary most likely to give effect to the aspirations of the people".

By May 1948 the legislatures of the colonies represented at Montego Bay had agreed to participate in the work of the Standing Closer Association Committee and Sir Hubert Rance, who became governor of Trinidad in 1950, was appointed chairman. Seventeen months later the Committee's report was published. The Committee worked on the assumption that the main purpose of its task was "to seek the shortest path towards a real political independence for the British peoples of the region, within the framework of the British Commonwealth". The Committee recognized that this independence could not be given substance unless an economically viable political unit could be created. Special attention was therefore given to the soundness of federation from an economic point of view.

While the Committee found that the finances of the area were sound, it also found that the causes were, unfortunately, only temporary. World prices for the exports of the region were high but the productivity of the islands, on which permanent prosperity depends, had not shown any real increase. It was further recognized that the Caribbean territories were not richly endowed with natural resources and that if a reasonable standard of living was to be achieved for the people of the islands "the not-too-abundant resources will have to be freely fertilised with brains, skill and hard work." In the opinion of the Committee, this could be done if the political and administrative arrangements of the region are such as to enable modern knowledge to be applied efficiently when and where needed; "... Federation, and only Federation, affords a reasonable prospect of achieving economic stability and through it . . . political independence".

With the basis of their thinking thus clearly stated, the Committee went on to outline in detail the type of federal structure it wished to see organized. Their report was debated in the various legislatures and, with the exception of British Guiana and British Honduras, accepted in principle. There were, however, objections to some features of the Committee's federal plan and the Secretary of State for the Colonies accordingly proposed that there should be a conference of delegates from the territories which had accepted federation in principle. This conference was convened in April 1953 in London.

Delegates from Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Christopher Nevis and Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom, and observers from British Guiana and