

## THE SENATE

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL RELATIONS

#### EVIDENCE

OTTAWA, Thursday, June 9, 1966.

The Standing Committee on External Relations, to which was referred the question of Commonwealth relationships with particular reference to the position of Canada within the Commonwealth, met this day at 10 a.m.

Senator GUNNAR S. THORVALDSON in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Honourable senators, before introducing our witness of today, I want to present to the committee a new member of the committee's branch, Mr. Patrick J. Savoie. I wish you a happy time with the committee's branch, Mr. Savoie.

Honourable senators, our witness today is Mr. A. W. A. Lane, Director of Section II of the Office of Trade Relations, Department of Trade and Commerce. In that office he has responsibilities for trade relations with Commonwealth countries as well as with other parts of the world. Mr. Lane is a graduate of McGill University in economics and history. I can assure you that he is very knowledgeable on the subject he is going to discuss this morning, namely, Canada's trade with the Caribbean area.

**A. W. A. Lane, Director, Section II, Office of Trade Relations, Department of Trade and Commerce:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought it might be useful to start out with a little general background about the West Indies and their economies. There are a number of things that stand out when one looks at the West Indies or, as the area is frequently called these days, the Commonwealth Caribbean. First, I think it is the relatively small population distributed among a considerable number of widely scattered islands, and two territories in Central and South America. Their total population is under 4,000,000, in other words, only about one-fifth of that of Canada.

The largest political unit, Jamaica, has only 1,750,000 people, and the smallest, the British Virgin Islands, has no more than 7,000.

There are some 14 separate political units in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Ten of them formed the West Indian Federation in 1958 but it was dissolved three years later when Jamaicans voted in a referendum to withdraw from it. Three of these territories—Jamaica, Trinidad and Guyana, formerly known as British Guiana—have become fully independent countries within the Commonwealth. A fourth, Barbados, is expected to reach independence later this year.

While the former members of the West Indian Federation still co-operate in certain fields, the plans for a customs union among these ten territories were abandoned when the federation came to an end five years ago. Three of them—Barbados, Antigua and Guyana—recently announced that they are going to set up a free trade area, and this is just getting under way now. The others are separate trading units, each managing their own customs tariffs and applying duties to goods from one another as well as to those from outside countries.

There is relatively little trade between the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean and this of course is mainly because most of them produce largely the same kind of goods.