



with French settlers, the culture and customs implanted by the latter are still evident in a society whose traditions are fundamentally English. These varied influences, together with ethnic differences, help to explain the divergencies among these various colonies.

Economic and Social Problems

One of the gravest problems confronting the governments of the various British Caribbean Colonies is that of raising the standard of living. Natural resources are not sufficiently developed and public revenue is often inadequate, the main source of revenue of the colonies being the collection of customs duties. Some colonies have to rely on annual subsidies from the United Kingdom.

Further, the trade balance of the colonies is unfavourable*; and as a result of hurricanes, drought and disease affecting agricultural production, the volume of exports varies from year to year. This fluctuation sometimes creates serious problems since even when exports fall in volume, imports of such essential commodities as flour, salt-fish and meat, cannot be correspondingly reduced. In spite of these difficulties, notable progress has been made throughout the whole area in the extension and improvement of social services.

The very existence of the British Caribbean Colonies is closely connected with the prosperity of their agriculture. In the past, the staple and indeed almost the only crop was sugar. Now the colonies grow and export on a large scale other products, such as coffee, cotton, spices, citrus fruit and bananas. The standard of living naturally remains dependent on the prices obtained for agricultural products on the world market; and the whole economy is affected by a poor crop or a reduction in prices.

However, the natural resources of the colonies, although limited, are far from depleted. Thus, Trinidad produces oil and natural asphalt, the exploitation of which is a valuable source of revenue for the colony. British Guiana possesses forests, only now being exploited on a large scale, as well as bauxite, gold and diamonds. British Honduras exports mahogany and chicle. In short, each of the colonies has certain resources, the development of which could be intensified and improved.

* This refers to the visible trade balance and does not include revenue from tourist trade.