

# West Indian Week At U of A Feb. 23-26



By Patrick Dyer

As a prelude to West Indian week to be held on campus from February 23-26, I would like to tell you a bit about the West Indian islands, the people of the West Indies, their education and culture.

Vivian Virtue, the West Indian poet in his poem, "The Hour", set the tone for the West Indian today and tomorrow.

Your homage now is over. You must up,  
Gird in the calling morning, set your face  
With granite purpose to the mountain way.  
Prepare your bosom for the bitter cup;  
Steel for endurance in the wearing race;  
Yours is the triumphing, if yours the stay.

The discovery of the West Indies was one of the accidents of history. In those days, late 15th century, Constantinople and Venice were at peak and the great voyages were

occasioned by the urge to find a short easy route to the fabulous East. Columbus never knew that he had stumbled on what was to become the even more fabulous West, for in reality, the West Indies are exciting islands that challenge the imagination of the most exacting traveller.

The West Indies stretch a thousand miles from Jamaica which lies between Cuba and Haiti, to Trinidad, only a dozen miles from the South American continent. Between these, the two largest islands, we find some 4 million people occupying some 8 thousand square miles.

If you have no aversion to 70° to 95° temperature, if you can scoff at a few earthquakes and an occasional hurricane, then, be you historian, geologist, sociologist, educationist, businessman or just plain tourist, you will find that there is a rich reward in these islands for the curious and the industrious.

There is more in the West Indies than sea and sunshine, than carnival and calypso singers. The travel literature tells of: natural beauty

of tropical warmth and of the peaceful calm of the less industrialized islands. The West Indies are islands where many races live together in harmony, where people can differ without acrimony, where people are themselves and have the ability to laugh at themselves. Maybe it is this last ability that keeps the suicide rate down.

Education in the West Indies is more on line with English patterns than American. With the training that many of our students obtain in Canada, the trends away from English methods is bound to be evident.

There is Elementary, Secondary, Technical, Vocational and University education available in the West Indies. The child goes to school at 4 or 5 years (5 officially). Anywhere from 11 to 15 years he can go on to the Secondary School. The Universities in Guyana and in Jamaica with branches in Trinidad and Barbados cater to the needs of some high school graduates. Many, however, go abroad since the available space at these institutions is inadequate.

Whereas most people in the West Indies pursue education either to

the Elementary or the Secondary level, all are closely linked with their culture: art and sculpture, the dance, music and literature.

Music is universal we know. Each nation has developed some form that is peculiar to its own area. The Canadians, the Americans, the Germans, the Italians, all have distinctive forms of musical expressions. The West Indies is not backward in this respect. Its music is a beat which is expressive of the joys and fears, the rejoicings and depressions of the people of these sunny lands. Its music is the effusion of a sprightly imaginative, and at times, carefree people.

Twenty years ago, it might not have been possible, but today, we can boast of a West Indian literature—novels, poetry, plays. These are all of a high standard and West Indians are justly proud of their literature.

The novelists are many and their range is extensive. They deal with a wide variety of subjects—philosophy, sociology, sex, white-black relations, West Indian history, in an intelligent humorous and lively way.

## Schedule of Events

February 23rd: 8 p.m. — Pybus Lounge, SUB

- (1) Display of West Indian handicraft, etc. declared open by Dr. D. M. Ross, Dean of Science, U. of A.
- (2) Keynote Address: "Canada and the West Indies" by Commissioner for the West Indies.
- (3) Films.

February 24th: Pybus Lounge.

- (1) 12 noon — Displays reopen.
- (2) 8 p.m. — Illustrated talk: "The Origin and Development of the Calypso".
- (3) Films.

February 25th: Pybus Lounge.

- (1) 12 noon — Displays continue.
- (2) 8 p.m. — Panel discussion: "The West Indies, past, present, and future".

February 26th: 9 p.m. — King Edward Community Centre—  
7709 - 85th Street.

GRAND CARNIVAL DANCE AND VARIETY SHOW  
Music: John Mackie and his "Four Sharps"

All are welcome — Come as you are.