

VIII IMMIGRATION

The Committee has been particularly interested in the question of West Indian immigration to Canada because of its close relationship to both the overpopulation and "brain drain" problems in the Caribbean.

The problem of overpopulation varies widely in its intensity. Barbados, for example, has one of the highest population densities in the world, while Guyana is a huge and virtually empty frontier land. In Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the index of population density itself is not yet critical. Clearly, however, the economies of these countries are unable to absorb the available labour force. The resulting mass unemployment is, understandably, a source of continuing social and political turmoil, and one which may persist and intensify with further population growth. The immediate problem in many areas has been aggravated over the past few years since Britain ceased being an outlet for large-scale West Indian immigration.

Within the region it is hoped that Guyana will eventually be able to absorb large numbers of immigrants, but at present the migration to that country is not heavy. The United States has continued to accept large numbers of people from the area, and Canada has received a growing number of Caribbean immigrants for the past few years (recent statistics on immigration to Canada are included as Appendix E of this Report).

The seasonal movement of agricultural workers from the West Indies to Canada since 1967 has been useful in providing short-term employment for several thousand people. The arrangement appears to have been satisfactory to all concerned, and further growth in this and similar plans should be encouraged.

There are varying estimates of the gravity of the "brain drain" in the West Indies, but several of the Committee's witnesses assessed it as one of the most serious problems facing the area. Canada, of course, is unavoidably and closely involved in this problem, as a major recipient of skilled emigrants from the region. Canadian immigration standards, with their primary reliance in skill criteria, inevitably attract a disproportionate number of highly-skilled and professional workers. Not all such emigration is harmful, of course. In some fields there may be surplus trained personnel who would be unemployable and dissatisfied in their home countries. In most fields, however, skilled manpower is not sufficient, and emigration is a loss that the Caribbean countries can ill afford.

Because non-discrimination and universality have been accepted as the guiding principles of Canadian immigration policy, there are few initiatives available to Canada to help reduce the "brain drain". It must be added that the recognition and enforcement of these principles has greatly increased immigra-