

Existential Threats in the Caribbean: Democratising Politics, Regionalising Governance

Norman Girvan

www.normangirvan.info

OILFIELDS WORKERS' TRADE UNION, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

CLR James Memorial Lecture

Thursday, May 12, 2011

7:00pm

C.L.R. James Auditorium,

Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies

Valsayn, Trinidad and Tobago

REVISED MAY 17 2011



C.L.R James 1901 -1989

“CLR James was arguably, one of the outstanding personalities of the 20th century. In a life that spanned nine of the century’s decades he embraced most of its great social movements with passion, eloquence, and brilliant insights. His impact extended far beyond his native Trinidad and Tobago to the entire Caribbean, Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and Africa.

To some, CLR is best known for his tireless struggles against, colonialism, imperialism, racism and Stalinism; inspired by an overarching and infectious vision of the possibilities of establishing a just, human and participatory society. Others will remember him for the scope of his knowledge and appreciation of literature and philosophy, and for his ability to illuminate their relationship to politics and the worker day world. For many, he is quite

simply the best writer and cricket and society that the game has ever known. No one exposed to him or his work is ever quite the same again.”¹

The CLR James I knew

I was privileged to first hear CLR at a lecture he delivered on the Mona Campus of the UWI in late 1959. I was a first year student, an impressionable youth, and the experience was unforgettable. His subject was “The Artist in the Caribbean”; and he brought art, literature, politics, philosophy, and economics together within a single unified vision of the world and of human society. “The great artist’, he said, “is universal because he is national”- rooted in his or her society and reflecting and relating to the social forces of their time and place.

It was not just his content, but his style. James spoke with knowledge, feeling, authority, fluency and poetry. The words seemed to flow like a great river from the mountain to the sea, sometimes changing direction and speed, sometimes digressing, but always confident that it was headed towards some glorious rendezvous with history. A first impression, a lasting impact.

Years later, as a graduate student in London, I was part of a CLR James study group that met every week at his house in London to sit at his feet—intellectually and even literally. The subjects ranged from democracy in

¹ “Remembering C.L.R. James” <http://www.normangirvan.info/remembering-clr-james/>

advanced industrial society to West Indian politics, literature and society. There were people some of you may know or know of, like Wally Look-Lai, Ken Ramchand and Raymond Watts from Trinidad, Richard Small and Orlando Patterson and Joan French from Jamaica and Walter Rodney from Guyana. Individuals from the James Study Group were to develop ideas, scholarship and activism that influenced the course of development in the English-speaking Caribbean in the early post-colonial years.

Young people today don't know enough about CLR James and the other greats of our history. If this knowledge, this consciousness was steeped in their bones there wouldn't be so much confusion in the region today about who we are, about where we are coming from, and where we are going. I remember once wearing a T-shirt with a picture of Uriah Butler on the front and someone thought that the image was that of Col. Sanders of KFC! Of course I did grow up believing that the real Lord Kitchener was a Trinidadian Calypsonian, and only later learnt that he was a British General whose name had been adopted by Mr Alwyn Roberts as his sobriquet! And by the way, I got it right the first time around.

CLR James on Federation

James was an ardent West Indian nationalist at a time when to be a nationalist and to be a regionalist were one and the same. (That is still the case; I have always held that people who see a contradiction between nationalism and regionalism are either unaware of our history, or choose to deny it.) James's return to the region in 1958 after an absence of 36 years was to attend the ceremonies inaugurating the West Indies Federation. He

stayed on to be General Secretary of the West Indies Federal Labour Party; the party of Manley, Williams and Grantley Adams; the nationalists and social democrats. He edited the PNM newspaper, the Nation; from which platform he carried out an ultimately successful campaign to have Frank Worrell named captain of the West Indies cricket team—the first black captain. He travelled and lectured in various parts the region; he held classes, he published.



Grantley Adams, Eric Williams and Norman Manley huddle on Federation

Three months after his return there is a record of his having given several lectures in British Guiana, as it then was. The date is June 1958. At least one of those lectures has survived; the title is “Federation (The West Indies and British Guiana)”². James published the lecture himself: he had an eye for political education, and for history. The Foreword to the Pamphlet was

² <http://www.normangirvan.info/clr-james-on-west-indian-federation-1958/>; sourced from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1958/06/federation.htm>

written by Forbes Burnham; it is significant that James should have invited him and what Burnham had to say was also very significant. It reads in part

"A special invitee to the opening of the first Federal Parliament in Trinidad last April, (Mr. James) took the opportunity of visiting British Guiana, and his public lectures on "Federation", "Literature and the Common Man", "Political Institutions in the advanced and underdeveloped countries and the relations between them" were a source of controversy and education for many Guianese. Many of the latter for the first time recognised the possibilities and scope of our national movement and its intimate relation to that in the Caribbean in particular and the colonial world in general".

I very much doubt that in later years James would have been proud of this association with Burnham. But this was 1958, Federation was a hot topic in B.G.; and when you read on you begin to see why James spoke as he did and why Burnham said what he said. The reason can be summed up in a single word: race. James:

"In Europe and the United States we discussed Federation for years before World War II and I cannot remember a single occasion in which it ever crossed our minds or the issue was raised that British Guiana would not join the Federation. ...But after the war, and especially during recent years, there began to be sounded a note which has grown in intensity. We heard that the East Indians in British Guiana were opposed to Federation (because)..They had a numerical majority over the other races, they hoped to establish an Indian domination of

the colony; Federation would bring thousands of Africans (or people of African descent) from the smaller islands to British Guiana, ..They would place the Indians in British Guiana in an inferior position...

*We heard also that the African population of British Guiana was now eager for Federation particularly for the reason that it would bring this reinforcement from the smaller islands.. I have heard these arguments constantly repeated. **That is to reduce the great issue of Federation to a very low level.**"*

He goes on to say

"It has been observed that when a colonial country is approaching national independence, there are two distinct phases. First, all the progressive elements in the country begin by supporting the national independence movement. Then when this is well under way you have the second stage. Each section of the nationalist movement begins to interpret the coming freedom in terms of its own interests, its own perspectives, its own desires. Thus the accentuation of racial rivalry at this time is not peculiar to British Guiana or to Trinidad.....

*This political excitement, however, carries with it **certain dangers....."***

He points out that in British India, Hindus and Muslims lived together in relative peace and harmony

*"Yet in the days before World War II there sprang up the movement for a Moslem state which finally succeeded and resulted in the formation of Pakistan. I do not wish to say that there were not honest and sincere elements in the movement. But in it there were three types against whom I want to warn you here in British Guiana—**fanatical racialists, scheming and ambitious politicians, and businessmen anxious to corner for themselves** a section of industrial and commercial possibilities."*

I do not think James could have said it any more plainly. It was a warning about those who fan the fires of racial or religious animosity for reasons that are less than noble. The ethnic violence that broke out in Guyana in the early 1960s lay in the future. James was prescient in the way that only a man of his genius could be. He was warning the Guyanese, he may well have been warning Trinidad and Tobago. He was probably in the presence of Forbes Burnham and I would guess that his audience was mainly Afro-Guyanese. In 1958 Burnham had already split from Jagan and the PPP. We do not know if he was one of the 'scheming and ambitious politicians' that James was talking about—CLR was a master of oblique reference where he trusted his audience to know the meaning. I would guess that he meant his audience to understand people from both sides of the political divide.

His observations clearly continue to have resonance. An ethnic sub-text continues to lie beneath the discourse on integration. But that subject is for another occasion. What I propose to do is to look at James's position on

Federation in the light of what has happened since then and the situation today.

CLR on Federation

James said in the lecture:

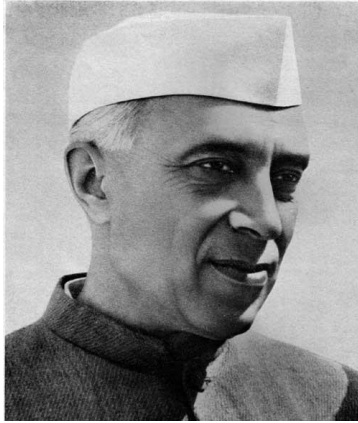
"Federation is the means and the only means whereby the West Indies and British Guiana can accomplish the transition from colonialism to national independence can create the basis of a new nation; and by reorganising the economic system and the national life, give us our place in the modern community of nations."

You will note that James saw Federation as a project of **nation-building**. But James was not just a nationalist, he was a Marxist; a Marxist who saw the proletariat, the working class, the ordinary people in any society, as the leaders of change, the source of creativity in politics and economics and culture. He had had intense debates with his political associates in the American Left on this point. He had denounced the Leninist theory of the Vanguard Party and he had denounced the Stalinist Soviet Union. He was fresh from these debates when he arrived back in the West Indies. But this lecture supports Federation as a national project, not as a class project.

James was far too holistic in his conceptions to compartmentalise his thinking. He addressed the role of the popular masses in nation-building in

his book *Party Politics in the West Indies*, published shortly after his break with Williams. He saw the Mass Party as a vehicle for the mobilisation of the people for economic and social development. So I believe that James on Federation should be read in conjunction with James on Party Politics; on cricket in *Beyond a Boundary*; on his treatment of the national question in his debates with Leon Trotsky and others in the Marxist movement; and his earlier *The Black Jacobins* and the *Life of Captain Cipriani: The Case for West Indian Self-Government*. In short, I think the absence of social agency in James's Federation lecture can be explained by reference to his wider work. And I am certain that he saw a direct relationship between the West Indian national project and realising the creative potential of the West Indian people.

You will also note that James talks about Federation and independence as the means of "reorganising the economic system and the national life (to) give us our place in the modern community of nations." He gives examples of economic integration and economic modernity--the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Common Market, federations and economic unions in other parts of the world. He goes on to talk about Nehru's establishing a steel industry in India, Nasser's project for the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, and Nkrumah's promotion of the Volta River hydroelectric scheme in Ghana.



Jawaharlal Nehru



Gamal Abdel Nasser



Kwame Nkrumah

Then he says

*Some people I know with knowledge and experience of steel have challenged the value of this enormous expenditure and the general dislocation of the economy which (Nehru's Project) will cost... But to-day there are no purely economic questions. **Freedom from colonialism is not merely a legal independence**, the right to run up a national flag and to compose and sing a national anthem. **It is necessary also to break down the economic colonial systems under which the colonial areas have been compelled to live for centuries as hinterlands, sources of raw material, backyards to the industries of the advanced countries.** Independence is independence, but when you continue to live in territories which still bear the shape of the old colonial territories, it is extremely difficult to free yourself from **the colonial mentality**. And most of the best colonial statesmen are ... taking the necessary steps which will enable not only foreigners but their own populations to see that they have laid*

the basis of a balanced economy, and of an economy which is not a hinterland, a mere periphery, to the great centres of civilization. That is what the colonial areas are doing. That is what the West Indies will have to do. And I suggest that it can be done only by Federation."

I think it is pretty clear where James was coming from and where he was going. Economists today continue to debate the pros and cons of industrialisation as a strategy for small countries like ours. But to focus on James's examples is to miss the point. He was talking about a modern economy, a balanced economy, an economy capable of sustaining itself, of providing for its population. And he was saying that no one West Indian territory could do it on its own.

So what happened?

Of course the Federation failed. I remember the night of the Jamaica Referendum—I was devastated. But here I want to say that even if the vote had gone the vote other way, I very much doubt that the Federation would have survived. The Federal Constitution that resulted from the protracted negotiations was a messy compromise that satisfied no one and left everyone bitter. Key issues like freedom of movement and taxation were left unresolved, to be revisited five years after Independence. They would likely have remained deeply divisive. By 1961 distrust among the leaders had become endemic and they were hardly on speaking terms with one another (Mordecai, The Federal Negotiations). If Jamaica had been the only problem; you would have expected the others to happily bid Jamaica goodbye and proceed to form a strong Federation. This not happen, Trinidad and Tobago

left—remember “1 from 10 leaves 0’--and the others failed to agree among themselves. Once insular independence became an option, the will to federate evaporated.

But consider this. Dr Eric Williams convened a Conference on Caribbean Economic Cooperation in 1963. The Caribbean Free Trade Association CARIFTA was formed in 1965, expanded in 1968; and transformed into Caricom in 1973. In 1989 we had the Grand Anse Declaration on the CSME and in 2001 the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

The Preamble of the Revised Treaty talks about *“the commitment to deepening regional economic integration through the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in order to achieve sustained economic development based on international competitiveness, co-ordinated economic and foreign policies, functional co-operation and enhanced trade and economic relations with third States”*.

What I am trying to say here is that *virtually for the entire period since the break-up of the West Indies Federation, the same countries have been trying to forge a kind of ‘economic Federation’*. It’s like Humpty Dumpty after the fall! Surely it is significant, hugely significant, that *all* Caribbean leaders, of *all* political stripes and persuasions, in *all* time periods over the past half-a-century, have *all* arrived at the conclusion that economic integration is *imperative*. There is no better teacher than experience.

The record of Insular Independence

Half a century has passed since the first territories of the former Federation achieved their insular independence; with the others following suit. What has been the record? Has any country been able to build a modern diversified economy capable of making its way in the modern world? How much genuine independence has been achieved? And why do we keep coming back to the imperative of integration?

Well, statistics show that there has been considerable economic and social progress. Per capita income, life expectancy, educational attainment and the rest have improved—more so in some countries than in others, of course. Economies have diversified away from monoculture.

On the other hand there are downsides. A recent report notes that “there is still a significant level of poverty (in Caricom) despite the middle level per capita income that has been achieved” (CTIR 2010: 99). The level of poverty was reported to be 27 percent in St Kitts, 15.9 percent in Nevis, 37.7 percent in Grenada, 18.4 percent in Antigua and Barbuda, 14.5 percent in Jamaica, 28.8 percent in St. Lucia, and 16.7 percent in Trinidad and Tobago (CTIR 2010: 100³). Reported rates of open unemployment are relatively low (most are in the single digits) but how you measure it is another matter; and there is a large informal sector; and many people belong to the category of the working poor.

³ CTIR: *CARICOM Trade and Investment Report*, published by Ian Randle Publications for The CARICOM Secretariat, 2010.

The main downside I want to look at, however, relates to the degree of real independence that has been achieved.

The simple fact is that economic diversification has not reduced economic dependency. For the most part we have moved from agro-exporting economies to tourism-driven economies and emigration-driven economies.

Services, mainly tourism, have become the largest single export earner in 11 of 14 Caricom economies; and they are concentrated in the same markets as before.

The energy sector of Trinidad and Tobago country is similarly concentrated by market.

Remittances from the Diaspora—working in the same countries--are the fastest growing source of currency inflows⁴. They are three times the total value of all agricultural exports and roughly two-thirds of earnings from tourism.

Brain drain from the Caribbean is the highest in the world: in 2000 the emigration rate for tertiary level graduates averaged 65 percent for 13 Caricom countries; in five of these the rate was exceeded 70 percent⁵. We

⁴ Remittances to Caricom countries grew from \$1.7 billion in 2000 to \$4 billion in 2009. Source: Claremont Kirton, Migration & Remittances Trends: The Caribbean Experience. PPT Presentation, Mona, UWI, March 2011

⁵ Pienkos, Andrew; Caribbean Labour Migration: Minimizing Losses and Optimizing Benefits

are unable to retain our best and brightest in the region. Is this development? Earnings from the exports of people are the most dynamic sector in Caricom economies! Is this diversification?

Structural adjustment, neoliberal globalisation and global crisis

It doesn't get better. IMF/World Bank programmes, the WTO and other trade agreements and neoliberal globalisation have resulted in a *progressive loss of policy autonomy of Caricom governments* over the past thirty years. This was forcibly brought home by the controversial EPA negotiations and by the way in which the global economic crisis that started in 2008 caught governments flat-footed and empty-handed. Consider the following.

Slowing growth and rising indebtedness. In the past 20 years regional economic growth has slowed⁶ while regional countries have gone further and further into debt. According to a 2003 IMF Study Caricom economies are among the most highly indebted in the world. In 2009 the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean reported that "the public debt of most of the English-speaking Caribbean countries has exceeded levels that could in any way be defined as sustainable"⁷. It goes on to say:

Port of Spain, International Labour Office, 2006; P. 3 and Annex Table 1.

⁶ World Bank 2008

⁷ "...except for Bahamas, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, at the close of 2009 this subregion showed levels of public debt that ranged from 60% of GDP in Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, to almost 120% in Jamaica. According to (ECLAC'S) calculations, Barbados, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica would have to post primary (fiscal) surpluses of between 2.3% and 3.9% of GDP over the next 20 years in order to reduce their current public debt to 40% of GDP, a level considered to be sustainable...In every case, it is important to bear in mind the marked

"Barbados, Belize, Guyana and Jamaica would have to post primary (fiscal) surpluses of between 2.3% and 3.9% of GDP over the next 20 years in order to reduce their current public debt to 40% of GDP, a level considered to be sustainable...In every case, it is important to bear in mind the marked recessionary effects of such fiscal adjustments, as well as their economic and social costs, which would be magnified if the current recessionary climate and economic slowdown resulting from the international crisis were to continue".

Now what does this mean in plain and simple English? It means that these countries will be at the mercy of their creditors. It means that they will need to extract between 2 and 4 percent of their national production from their national population to service their debts *for the next 20 years*, just in order to reduce their debt to what is considered sustainable! That this will itself reduce economic growth because it cuts in investment and purchasing power and this will make it even more difficult to service the debt. That health, education and other social services will need to be cut. That standards of living will fall.

What will emigration be like under this scenario? What will unemployment, social exclusion and crime be like under this scenario? Is this a scenario of viability?

recessionary effects of such fiscal adjustments, as well as their economic and social costs, which would be magnified if the current recessionary climate and economic slowdown resulting from the international crisis were to continue" http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/3/38063/Chapter_II_Economic_Policy.pdf p. 38. Retrieved 14 June 2010.

Marginalisation of entire countries under neoliberal globalisation. Up to the end of the 1980s the banana industry was the largest single employer of labour, peasant occupation and export earner in the Windward Islands. Enter the WTO agreement, American multinationals growing bananas on Latin American plantations where cheap labour can be exploited, and campaign financing for the Bill Clinton presidential campaigns. Next: the U.S. lodges a complaint to the WTO that the EU treatment of ACP bananas is discriminatory; the WTO rules against the EU; the EU opens its market to low-cost bananas; and goodbye Windward Islands banana industry.

From 1990 to 2009, banana production in the Windward Islands plummeted from 252,000 tons to 35,000 tons—86 percent; the number of active growers fell from 25,700 in 1990 to 3,000—88 percent; and the number of workers employed in the industry from 77,000 in 1990 to 16,500 in 2002—78 percent⁸. Remember that these are countries whose combined populations are less than 500,000. An economic Tsunami!

'Fiscal colonialism'. The Harmful Tax Competition Initiative of the O.E.C.D. is a unilateral imposition by the rich countries of rules devised to protect their own interest; which has severely hurt the international financial services sector of several Caribbean jurisdictions. I am reliably informed that "the offshore sector in Dominica is virtually wiped out, and it has diminished considerably in Antigua and Barbuda, St Kitts-Nevis, St Lucia, and Grenada;

⁸ Information supplied by Renwick Rose of WINFA. Source: "The European Union and Windward Islands Bananas", a publication of Delegation of European Union to Barbados and OECS (2009), corroborated by official annual stats. in W.I.)

and that even in larger jurisdictions such as the Bahamas and Cayman Islands, the offshore banking sector has declined”⁹. Fiscal colonialism!¹⁰

Economic neo-colonialism. In 2007 Caricom countries were resisting some of the most unreasonable demands of the European Union in the Economic Partnership Agreement. The EU threatened to impose tariffs on Caribbean exports benefitting from duty-free treatment on the EU market; and Caricom governments caved in. The EPA will eventually remove tariffs on the majority of imports from Europe; and free of most service sectors in Caricom for investment by EU firms. It will bind Caricom governments’ policies in trade, services, investment, intellectual property and government procurement; indefinitely. It commits Caricom countries to negotiate further liberalisation in 2013. A similar agreement is being negotiated with Canada after that country announced the ending of CARIBCAN.

Economic vulnerability. Because of its dependency on the North Atlantic economies, the Caribbean was one of the regions of the developing world that was worst hit by the global financial and economic crisis. ECLAC estimated that in 2009 the Caribbean subregion lost 10% of its GDP; 10 of 14 Caribbean countries experienced negative growth; unemployment increased in at least six countries¹¹. The 2010 recovery was forecast to be less than one-sixth the rate of recovery of the South American region.

⁹ Private communication from Sir Ronald Sanders, 11 May 2011

¹⁰ Term employed by Sir Ronald Sanders

¹¹ <http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/dire-economic-prospects-for-the-caribbean-shown-by-eclac-report2.pdf>

By the way, the sole exception to these trends in the past decade indebtedness is Trinidad and Tobago—a country that is still a ‘mono-cultural’ export economy in which the energy sector is about 40% of GDP and 80% of exports. As a consequence it was hard hit by the global crisis; losing over 3 percent of its GDP in 2009. And the CLICO meltdown, a spin-off of the crisis—has already cost T&T taxpayers over US\$1 billion—and still counting.

IMF Trusteeship. Since the onset of the crisis four Caricom countries have entered into major IMF programmes¹². The IMF Jamaica agreement is one of the most stringent cases imaginable of financial supervision of an independent state. There are nine listed conditionalities covering Government Finances, Public debt management, Public entities, Institutional Fiscal Reform, and Financial sector reform. Jamaican officials are required to report to IMF staff resident in Jamaica on a daily basis in some instances. There will be quarterly reviews: for example “the first ..review will focus on the FY 2010/11 budget and the implementation of the fiscal responsibility framework; ..examine the plans for recapitalizing financial institutions. The second will focus on fiscal reforms, specifically in the debt management, tax, and public financial management areas. It will also review progress in the various initiatives aimed at strengthening financial system regulatory and supervisory framework. The third review will focus on public bodies and employment reforms as well as progress in financial sector reforms”¹³. The

12 Antigua and Barbuda <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10279.pdf>;; Grenada <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pr/2011/pr1199.htm>;
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1014.pdf>; Jamaica <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10267.pdf> and St Vincent and the Grenadines <http://www.imf.org/external/np/loi/2009/vct/043009.pdf>. Refers to Stand-by, Extended Credit Facility and Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with conditionalities relating to public finances, government policies and the structure and practices of public institutions. Antigua and Barbuda St Vincent and the Grenadines <http://www.imf.org/external/np/loi/2009/vct/043009.pdf>
13 <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr10267.pdf>

latest news, which came on May 11, is that 10,000 public sector workers are to be retrenched.

Energy dependence. Most Caricom countries are energy-dependent and have only survived the spike in energy prices in the 2000s thanks to the generosity of Venezuela through PetroCaribe. No one knows how long this will last.

Food dependence. It is likely that the Caricom region has become more food-dependent and food-insecure in the past 40 years. Food imports is one of the fastest growing items in the overall import bill and at \$3.5 billion, are about three times the value of exports of agricultural products. The recent spike in the prices of food commodities in international markets, due largely to speculative purchases, has left most countries without a cushion and created severe political pressures.

James said that "*Freedom from colonialism is not merely a legal independence*". It is about charting your course in the modern world. The reality is that insular independence has become largely shambolic and economic sovereignty an illusion. And what about the "colonial mentality" that he spoke about? Is it behind us? We still take our cases to the British Privy Council! Most of our 'Independent' countries still have Governors General that are required to swear allegiance to the Queen of England! And now we have the globalisation mentality—everything local is judged by some international standard, of competitiveness, of investor-friendliness, of good governance.

I am not saying that some of these measures aren't useful; it is an attitude of mind that I am talking about—an attitude of mind where you only value what you have if it is valued by the global market and validated by a global standard. The colonial mentality has been globalised! Where is the critical thought that CLR James epitomised; where is the independent thought that Lloyd Best called for?

Allow me to quote a colleague on this point. Commenting on the outcome of the EPA negotiations, Mervyn Claxton has observed:

A fundamental element influencing both the approach to, and the outcome of, the EPA negotiations was a shared world view on the part of both sets of negotiators, a factor that Clive Thomas underlines (quoting Thomas) "The EPA was considerably aided by the successful implantation of the EU's world view of the region and its future among significant sections of the region's intellectual and ruling elites, including those holding influential positions in the negotiations."

Claxton goes on:

It is that "successful implantation of the EU's world view of the region and its future" which made it possible for the CRNM and the "the region's intellectual and ruling elites" to come to a meeting of minds on the EPA, an agreement which fits within a model of development that is, at best, inappropriate for the Caribbean and, at worst,

detrimental to a region whose needs and circumstances differ so greatly from those of Europe.”¹⁴

Shared world view. Globalisation. Colonial Mentality. None But Ourselves Can Free Our Minds!

Climate Change

There are two other things to mention that were not present in James’s time. First, global climate change. I quote briefly from a recent report prepared for the Caribbean Community Centre for Climate Change:

*In the Liliendaal Declaration of 2009 the CARICOM Heads of Government expressed grave concern that the region’s efforts to promote sustainable development and achieve the MDGs are under severe threat from the devastating effects of climate change and sea level rise. Of particular note is the increasing intensity of extreme weather events, resulting in severe damage to the region’s socio-economic resource base... dangerous climate change is already occurring in all Small Islands and Low-lying Coastal Developing States (SIDS) regions including the Caribbean and (that) many SIDS will **cease to exist** without urgent, ambitious and decisive action by the international community.*

¹⁴ Mervyn Claxton, “The Cariforum-EC EPA Seen in a Wider Context”, [http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/cariforum-eu-epa-seen-in-a-wider-context1 .pdf](http://www.normangirvan.info/wp-content/uploads/2008/06/cariforum-eu-epa-seen-in-a-wider-context1.pdf)

As some of you may know, the international community has so far failed to reach agreement on reducing GHG emissions to keep the average rise in global temperatures to 1.5 C., which is regarded as the upper limit permissible before irreversible damage is done to SIDS. The principal culprit countries are too busy spending billions of dollars on bombing countries and fighting imperialist wars to give priority to dealing with the greatest single threat facing the planet.

The total potential annual cost of climate change to CARICOM countries has been estimated at about \$10 billion in 2007 prices by the World Bank, which is about 11% of the region's GDP (World Bank 2009 cited in Firth Report). But I wonder if this is not an under-estimate as new information is always coming to light, models are being refined and so on; and most importantly these estimates and models don't take account of feedback socio-economic repercussions such as growing social and ethnic conflict, political instability and social breakdown. I don't want to sound alarmist; but I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that under a business as usual scenario, the Caribbean as we know it will have ceased to exist by the middle of the present century.

Transnational crime

The second is transnational crime. This is a globally multibillion dollar business, with resources dwarfing those of small states. In the Caribbean we have the misfortune of sitting astride key transshipment routes in the drug trade. We are all aware of the alarming increase in gun-related violence associated with the proliferation of criminal gangs warring over the drug

trade in several regional countries. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago now have among the highest homicide rates in the world; both over 50 per 100,000 which are about 25 times the rate in Canada¹⁵. It is like a cancer: the effects have spread to establishment of parallel systems of authority in depressed communities; corruption of various arms of the state, notably the police and the justice system; corruption of the political process and capturing of the executive branch of the state by criminal organisations. Jamaicans and Trinidadians know what I am talking about. Just a few days ago the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda was speaking of the “enormous security and economic challenges” to the region posed by organised crime, coming at the same time as countries are trying to cope with the effects of the global economic meltdown¹⁶.

To put it plainly, governments do not have the resources to cope with the threats posed by transnational crime and climate change at a time of slowing economic growth and rising indebtedness. And this becomes a vicious spiral. This is why one speaks of ‘Existential threats’—a constellation of economic, social and environmental pressures that threaten the viability of our societies as functional entities in any meaningful sense. And these challenges are too wide in scope and too vast in scale for any one Caribbean country to cope with by itself.

Whatever may have been the logic of insular independence at the time and the possibilities it may have afforded; that logic has been overtaken by

¹⁵ Data from Norman Girvan, Reflections on Armed Violence and Development in the Caribbean, <http://www.normangirvan.info/girvan-reflections-armed-violence-caribbean-development/>

¹⁶ http://caricomnewsnetwork.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3422:caribbean-antigua-pm-warns-about-the-impact-of-organised-crime-on-the-region&catid=294:crime&Itemid=514

events and those possibilities have been exhausted. Insular independence has run its course.

Regionalising governance

I want to argue that the regional option is a survival imperative, a development imperative; the only means of realising the 'national project'—in the *spirit* of those who dreamed it and conceptualised throughout our history.

I recited a litany of problems afflicting our region. The good news is that we pretty well know how to fix them, or at least how to *start* fixing them. And while regionalism is not a *panacea*, it is a *crucial dimension* in addressing them.

Most of these problems, if not all of them, have been the subject of regional studies, regional resolutions, regional declarations and regional decisions over the years. We know what needs to be done to diversify the economies, to reduce vulnerability, to increase resilience, to promote production integration, to foster innovation, to reduce food and energy dependency. I do not have time to list them all. But we have had the Brewster-Thomas study and other Integration studies by UWI economists in the 1960s; the Compton Bourne report in the 1980s; the CTAG Report of the early 2000s. In 2007 we had the Single Development Vision; a Strategic Plan for Regional Development is now being finalised. We have a Regional Food Security Plan, the Jagdeo Initiative for Agriculture; a Regional Agri-Tourism Project, a

Renewable Energy Project. The Report of the Regional Task Force on Crime and Security was in 2001. A framework for promoting Climate Change Resilient Development was approved in 2009; an Implementation Plan is being finalised.

Our problem is not lack of thinking, lack of technical and analytical work, or even lack of formal decisions. Our problem is, and has always been, *lack of implementation due to obsession with the trappings of insular sovereignty.*

At the root of Caricom's 'implementation deficit' problem is the impossibility of reconciling insular sovereignty, as a *legal* construct, with effective regional action, as an *operational necessity.*

That is the dilemma that the Europeans faced in the 1980s and they eventually bit the bullet with the Single European Act, the Treaty of Maastricht and the Lisbon Treaty—over a period of several years and in measured steps. I am not saying that we should follow the European model slavishly. I am arguing that we need to move in that direction.

Caricom leaders have grappled with this problem for the past 20-odd years and they have not bitten the bullet. All kinds of devices have been tried—Caricom Bureau, Quasi-Cabinet, Revised Treaty, Conference, Council, Committee of Ambassadors—you name it. None of them has worked, really.

Whether you call it 'supranationality', 'collective sovereignty', 'pooled sovereignty', 'shared sovereignty' or whatever; governance of the Community *has to have an element with the force of law among member states*. The principle was endorsed in Rose Hall Declaration—that was eight years ago. The legal technical work has been done. The governments have before them proposals to this effect—have had for some time. Mr Rickey Singh, in his column in the Trinidad Express of May 11, 2011, refers to a working document from current the Caricom Chairman prepared for the upcoming 'Retreat' of Heads of Government:

"Recognising that the current "implementation deficit" that plagues progress within Caricom must be speedily corrected, the working document is reported to have placed strong emphasis for a new governance system that would provide a "legal basis" for implementation of decisions within specific time frames for which all member governments must honour in a new spirit of "shared sovereignty".

This proposed new approach on "shared sovereignty" would de-emphasise the expedient application of "sovereignty of states" argument often used to justify, or rationalise failures by member countries to implement decisions unanimously adopted by a Heads of Government Conference which remains the primary organ of the Community.

http://caricomnewsnetwork.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3433&Itemid=410

Will Caricom leaders rise to the occasion? These days it is difficult to find a leader in Caricom who is a leader *of* Caricom; a statesman or stateswoman who looks beyond the next election or the next IMF test or the next corruption scandal; who is willing to provide some regional leadership. But we must hope--sorry; we must agitate, we must educate, we must create the climate of political opinion that impels these leaders to act.

The Clement Payne Movement in Barbados has launched a campaign for a Union of Caribbean States; with a Constitutional Convention to be convened in 2015¹⁷. A group of young people calling themselves the Caribbean Movement for Civic Empowerment¹⁸ has been formed here in Trinidad, with similar objectives. Editorials in several regional newspapers are calling on governments to stop the dilly-dallying on regional integration.

Earlier this year the UWI Institute of International Relations conducted a survey of over 100 civil society representatives in several countries of the region. To a person, they expressed dissatisfaction with the state of the integration movement and support for a stronger Caricom with real teeth in it. And also for greater civil society involvement, greater people involvement, in building a genuine Caribbean Community—a community not just of states, but a community of *people*.

¹⁷ <http://www.normangirvan.info/caribbean-political-union-cpm/>

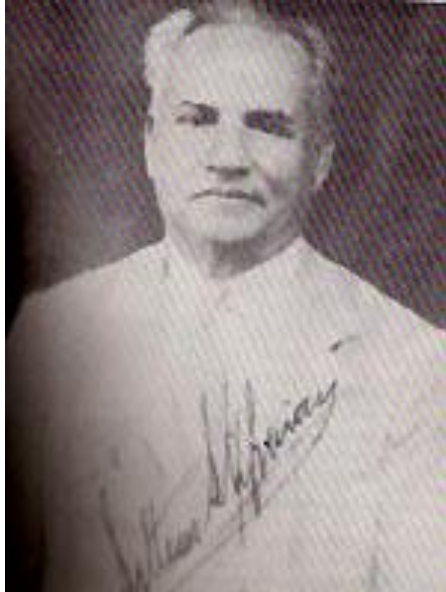
¹⁸ <http://www.normangirvan.info/ccsn-caribbean-integration/>

Democratising politics

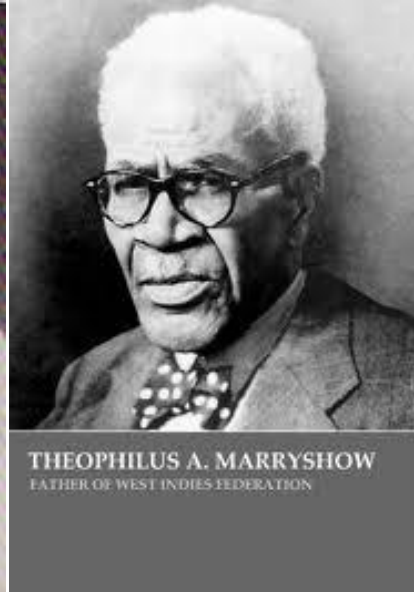
Lloyd Best, I think it was, insisted on the distinction between *government* and *politics*. Some years ago Lloyd gave a lecture in this series—I had the privilege of driving him to the OWTU/San Fernando that evening.

He said something that stuck with me. He said that the problem with Caribbean integration was the absence of a *regional politics*. There was no regional political party or political movement. People from one Caricom country did not feel free to practice politics in another—the repressive actions of governments associated with the Rodney Riot in Jamaica in 1968 and the February Revolution in Trinidad and Tobago in 1970 had put a stop to that. “Somebody is going to have to get locked up” he said; meaning that if a regional politics is to be re-born; people are going to have to defy the insular polities.

You know, we had regional politics in the time of Cipriani and Marrayshow, the Caribbean Congress of Labour, Manley, Adams and Williams, James himself, the New World Group and the Black Power. We have the Assembly of Caribbean people—with due respect to those present, I am not sure that it is functioning in the way that we are talking about.



Captain A.A. Cipriani



T.A. Marryshow

Again, there have been several initiatives and declarations aimed at fostering popular involvement in Caricom. In the 1990s there was The Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians. It was composed of representatives of the national parliaments of several countries. It never served the purpose, and it soon expired.

There was the Regional Economic Conference of social partners in 1994. A great success, I am told, but never repeated.

The Caricom Charter of Civil Society is a model for citizens' rights and citizen participation. Adopted by governments in 1997, it has never been given

legal status. Yet look how quickly the governments rushed through legislation on Cricket World Cup!

The Liliendaal Declaration adopted in 2002 sets out a wonderful framework for strengthening the relationship between governments and civil society, nationally and regionally. It has yet to be put into practice.

The problem originates at the national level. We have a set of constitutional arrangements, and a culture that goes along with it; that is the very antithesis of people participation. Winner Take All, Prime Ministerial power, Ministerial prerogative, domination of the legislature by the executive; voting every five years—that is government, politics and governance rolled up into one. Access to decision-making is by social networking, Party financing, lobbying, and media pressure. It is granted as a favour, not as a right. Workers go on strike.

In virtually every regional country Constitutional Reform has been on the agenda for some time. That pressure can only grow. And it ought to include a regional element—establishing a mechanism for popular participation in the regional project.

I have suggested something like a Caricom Popular Assembly, one that has quasi-legislative powers¹⁹. For example, it could have the right to approve or modify those decisions of Caricom organs that have the force of law; the right to approve the budgets of Caricom institutions that are funded from the

¹⁹ <http://www.normangirvan.info/girvan-caricoms-original-sin/>

Community's budget; and the right to deliberate and pronounce on regional policies and regional affairs.

Such an Assembly could be composed of a mixture of delegates elected on a national and geographic basis; and delegates representing the organisations of civil society: business, labour, religious organisations, professional organisations, women, youth, the indigenous people, and so on.

The Clement Payne Movement in Barbados has proposed a Constitutional Convention in 2016 to draft a Constitution for Federal state of the Caribbean Community. It is an extremely laudable objective, but I am not sure that region is ready for it. I think we need to make haste slowly, in measured steps. Regionalising governance, democratising politics.

And as Sunity is always pointing out to me, we need a regional communications strategy or network; so that people can get to know and understand each other better—a tool of mutual and continuing self-discovery.

In conclusion

Let me close with an extended quote from James's lecture. I have taken the liberty of substituting the word "Integration" for the word "Federation"; and with that change, I believe his words remain as true now as they did then.

*Integration for the West Indies is the means by which it will claim independence, modernize itself and although small in numbers, be able to take its place as one of the modern communities living a modern civilized existence. Without Integration, I do not think this can be done. It **has** to be done or the consequences for these islands would be dreadful.*

I see Integration therefore (and I am not alone) as the process by which the West Indies, in common with the rest of the world, seeks to leave one stage of its existence which has lasted for some 300 years, and move into a new sphere, with all the privileges, the responsibilities, the difficulties, and the opportunities which the transitional stage of existence offers to all who are able to take part in it.

We are becoming free in a world of chaos and disorder.

We too must recognize that we are in a new world. And the first thing that we must do is to see the method by which they are attempting to meet the challenge of the changed

***conditions. I can sum up their method in one word—
Integration.”***

Thank you.