

GRENADA



The Peaceful Revolution



The Hardest Struggle:

Building a New Society

Literacy lesson: volunteer teacher and learner. Photo: Arthur Winner



The International Airport: Symbol Of Self-Reliance

The construction of Grenada's new international airport is the largest and most important of the infrastructure projects undertaken so far by the PRG. An economic necessity, the airport project is also a symbol: it is proof of Grenada's forward progress, and of the people's will to free themselves from underdevelopment and dependency.

The idea of an international airport for Grenada dates back to the British colonial period, when British economic experts first suggested it in 1954. Feasibility studies for a new airport were subsequently carried out in 1969 (by the British), 1976 and 1977 (by the World Bank), confirming that Grenada needed a modern airport and that the best site would be the southern peninsula of Point Salines.¹ Both the GNP government and Gairy's regime ignored the studies, however, and no new airport was ever built.

Meanwhile, the primitive facilities at Pearl's Airstrip continued to act as a brake on the growth of Grenada's tourist industry. Situated in the mountains and buffeted by cross-winds, Pearls cannot handle the jumbo jets which deliver tourists to the other Caribbean islands. Passengers going to Grenada must change planes in either Barbados or Trinidad, which have large international airports and serve as staging points for travel to Grenada. Since Pearl's has no night landing facilities, travelers to Grenada have to overnight in Trinidad or Barbados, meaning loss of revenue for Grenada and extra expense for travelers. To complete the inconvenience, Pearl's airstrip is on the northeast coast of the island, a 45-minute drive over mountains from St. George's and the tourist hotels.

After the revolution, this enforced dependence on Barbados and Trinidad grew doubly serious when the governments of those countries assumed hostile attitudes toward the PRG. The CARICOM-owned regional airline, LIAT, threatened to cut off service to Grenada, while passengers en route to Grenada via Barbados began to encounter problems at the Bridgetown airport: long customs formalities for transit passengers, baggage searches, deliberate delays. The Adams government even withdrew diplomatic privileges from Grenadian government officials and special guests in transit to Grenada. In September 1979, for instance, the Grenadian Minister of Agriculture was harassed on his way through Barbados, and in November of the same year, a Brazilian educator on his way to assist with Grenada's literacy program received similar treatment.

In the Caribbean, islands with international airports tend to become "gateways" to the region and experience a tourist boom. Tourist arrivals in St. Lucia nearly doubled in the five years after its international airport was built.² In Grenada, tourist arrivals are expected to rise from 32,000 (in 1979) to 50,000 (when the airport begins operation in 1983),³ and revenues from tourism should triple. The benefits of increased tourism will rebound through the entire economy: by necessitating hotel construction (discussions are underway now for joint ventures), by creating jobs in the tourist sector, and by generating foreign exchange quickly while the country gradually diversifies its agricultural base. The new airport will also help the agricultural sector by making it easier to export Grenada's tropical fruits and vegetables to outside markets.

Recognizing the potential impact of the airport, the PRG began to seek funding for the project in September 1979, approaching the United States, European, Arab, and Caribbean countries for assistance. In a gesture of friendship and solidarity, Cuba gave vital aid, providing technical expertise, skilled labor, construction equipment, and materials such as cement and steel. Help also came from the Arab countries, which contributed a total of E.C. \$50 million, and from Venezuela, which gave 10,000 barrels of diesel fuel. The European Economic Community (EEC) promised to hold a co-financing conference to seek funds. Only the United States, which Grenada asked repeatedly for assistance with the airport, remained silent.

Cuban assistance has made the airport project a reality. The construction team consists of 300 Cubans and 250 Grenadians, working and living together at the airport site.⁴ Despite the language barrier, relations between the two groups of workers have been strongly fraternal. According to the Grenadians, the Cubans work extremely hard (the work continues by shifts until 3:30 a.m., six days a week) and have gone out of their way to share technical skills with their Grenadian co-workers. Said one Grenadian worker: "There's so much to learn from the Cubans; it's not boring at all. They assist you in almost everything you want to know."⁵



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The U.S. Tries To Block the Airport

To the United States government, the airport project was also a symbol: it stood for Grenada's rejection of the old dependency pattern of the Caribbean countries vis-a-vis the imperial powers. Grenada's airport is the first to be built by a Caribbean government rather than by a colonial administration or by multinational corporations and international banks. The imperialist countries have long dominated the Caribbean basin economically by exerting control over sources of funds for development projects. U.S. and other western influence over the IMF, World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank—and of course bilateral aid programs—has been used to reward "good" governments while punishing those who do not play by the rules. Grenada successfully bypassed this control mechanism by securing funding from progressive and non-aligned states.

The U.S. response was swift and angry. The airport was denounced as a military project, the brainchild of Cuba, which—according to the U.S.—wanted the Spice Island as a Soviet base. Grenadian-Cuban cooperation on the airport project lent itself perfectly to the propaganda strategy developed by right-wing elements of the incoming Reagan administration in the fall of 1980. This strategy portrays "Cuban expansionism" as the driving force behind all popular progressive developments in the Caribbean basin: the airport was cited as proof that Grenada's revolution was indeed a case of Soviet/Cuban "aggression" in the western hemisphere.

This reactionary ideological approach was presented in a widely-distributed videotape, produced by the American Security Council Foundation, called *Attack on the Americas*. In the film, State Department and Pentagon experts describe the new airport as "an airfield much larger than the small island's tourist industry will require" and assert that

With its strategic location, the airfield could serve as a staging area and refueling stop for Cuban troops on the way to Africa or South America, and another Soviet base in the Western hemisphere capable of servicing Soviet Bombers, including the new Supersonic backfire.

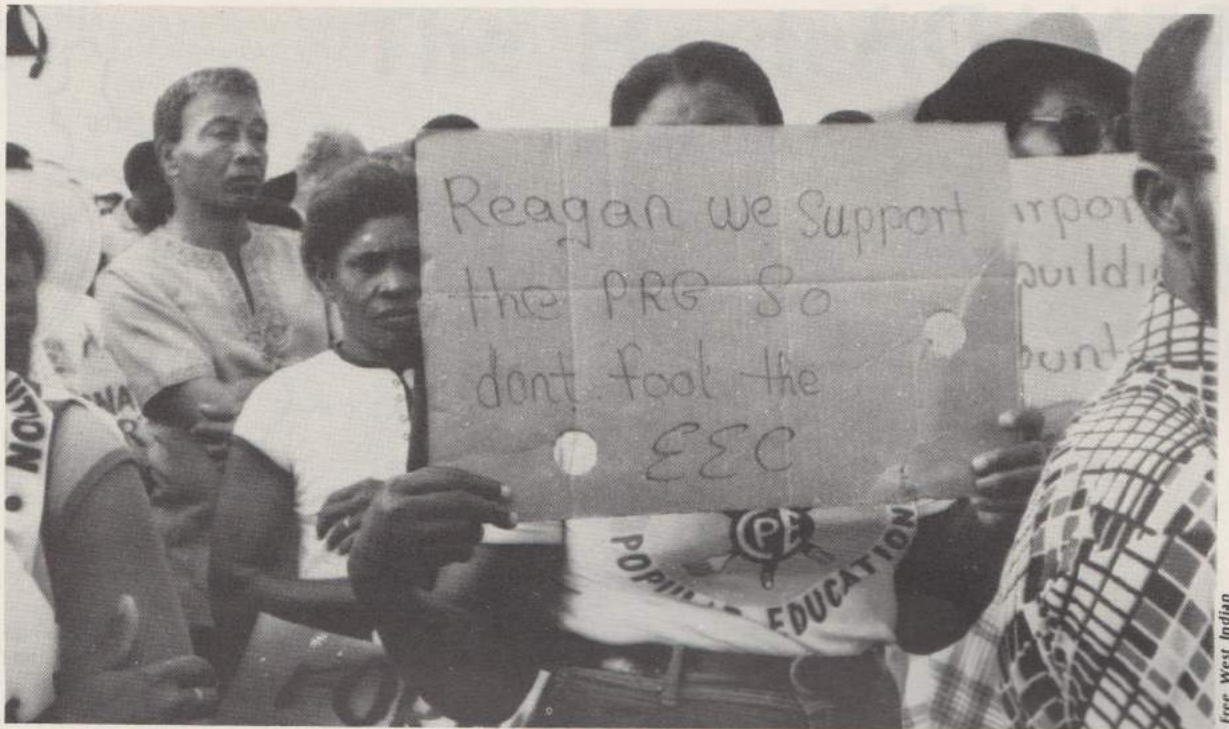
There is no mention of the fact that six eastern Caribbean islands have airports of equal or greater size (Grenada's airport will have a 9,000-foot runway, like Antigua's and St. Lucia's)—or for that matter, of the fact that Cuban troops have been reaching Africa since 1975 without assistance from Grenada.

While *Attack on the Americas* was ridiculed almost everywhere except in Washington, DC, the U.S. attempt to actually block funding for the airport has been seen by Grenadians as nothing short of economic warfare. With the co-financing conference of the EEC scheduled for April 1981, the U.S. government levelled pressure on its traditionally subservient West European allies to boycott the conference. But these tactics were too heavy-handed even for the allies: all attended the conference, and most of the requested funds were pledged by Scandinavia, Nigeria and the EEC. Claude Cheysson, EEC commissioner for developing countries,

described Grenada's request for aid as "entirely normal," saying "The only abnormal thing is the American interest. What America thinks is of no importance. Let us forget about the Americans. This is a decision for the EEC and Grenada."⁶

The Reagan administration's attempts to put the economic squeeze on Grenada have drawn sharp criticism from diverse quarters. The Caribbean Conference of Churches has repeatedly called for an end to U.S. harassment of Grenada. "There is nothing dramatic or sinister in Grenada having a modern airport," noted the publication *Caribbean Contact*.⁷ At a July 1, 1981 meeting, the twelve CARICOM countries of the English-speaking Caribbean issued a strong statement condemning the "economic aggression being waged by the United States against Grenada"—a significant step for countries which have varying degrees of support for the PRG itself.⁸ Most impressively, all 61 member countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) grouping endorsed a resolution supporting construction of Grenada's international airport and denouncing the U.S. pressures against the project.

The most determined supporters of the airport are the Grenadian people themselves, who have purchased E.C. \$850,000 worth of "airport bonds" to help finance the construction, and have formed local "airport development committees" to help raise funds.⁹ Pledges of support for the airport have come from every sector of the society: from unions, farmers, community groups, women, youth and the Church; and from the middle-class commercial sector, including the Grenada Chamber of Commerce, the Grenada Hotel Association, and the Grenada Employers Federation. On April 12, 1981, 15,000 Grenadians came together at the construction site to applaud the progress being made on the airport. The U.S. pressures against the airport project have turned it into a vibrant nationalist issue, and the entire experience has been a strengthening factor, uniting Grenadians around the revolution.



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Footnotes

The New Jewel Movement Takes Power

1. "How the Overthrow Was Organized," in *Caribbean Sun*, April/May 1979, p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Broadcast over Radio Free Grenada by revolutionary leadership, March 13, 1979. Cited in DaBreco, D.S., *The Grenada Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
4. From interviews conducted by Chris Searle and Merle Hodge, quoted in "Is Freedom We Making," (Grenada Government Information Services, 1981).
5. Maurice Bishop, broadcast over Radio Free Grenada, March 13, 1979. Cited in D.S. DaBreco, *The Grenada Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
6. Searle, C. et al., "Is Freedom We Making," *op. cit.*
7. Jacobs, W.R., et al., *Grenada: The Route to Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Caribbean Response to the Grenadian Revolution

1. *Caribbean Contact*, June 1978.
2. *Ibid.*, March, April, May, July 1978.
3. *Ibid.*, March 1978.
4. *Latin America Political Report*, June 1977, cited in *Caribbean Contact*, June 1977.
5. *Caribbean Contact*, December 1977.
6. Resolution by Caribbean Human Rights and Legal Aid Office in conjunction with the Caribbean Conference of Churches, December 1977.
7. *Caribbean Contact*, April 1979.
8. *Latin America Political Report*, March 23, 1979.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Caribbean Contact*, June 1980.
11. *Ibid.*, editorial, April 1979.
12. *Ibid.*, November 1979.
13. *Latin America Political Report*, April 27, 1979.

Controversy Over the Torchlight Closure

1. *Trinidad Express*, August 5, 1979. Reprinted in *Torchlight*, August 12, 1979.
2. "Beat Back Destabilizers!" Maurice Bishop, National Radio Broadcast, Sept. 18, 1979.
3. "Soviet in a Holiday Paradise," *Bunte*, June 1979. Reprinted in *Torchlight*, July 1, 1979.
4. *Torchlight*, Sept. 16, 1979.
5. Caribbean Press Council release, November 16, 1979, p. 1.
6. *Latin America Political Report*, Oct. 19, 1979.
7. Caribbean Press Council release, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The U.S. Reacts

1. Maurice Bishop, Broadcast over Radio Free Grenada, April 13, 1979.
2. *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 1979; *Washington Post*, April 27, 1979; *American Relations* (Institute of American Relations), July 26, 1979.

Labor Disruptions and the Role of AIFLD

1. EPICA interview on the docks, September 1981.
2. *Ibid.*
3. EPICA interview with union officials, October 1981.
4. *Trinidad Express*, November 8, 1979.
5. *Workers Voice*, October 1979. To counter progressive trade unionism, AIFLD has set up in many countries parallel "yellow unions" with the same or similar names as existing unions. Thus the genuine Dominican labor union FOUPSA was challenged by AIFLD's "FOUPSA LIBRE" in the post-Trujillo period (after 1962). Similarly, the powerful and progressive Caribbean Labour Congress (CLC), which led the fight for Caribbean federation after World War II, was subsequently challenged by the pro-AIFLD "Caribbean Council of Labour" (CCL), which has close ties with Grenada's SWWU.
6. Michael Sussman, "AIFLD, A Tripartite Venture," (Washington, DC., 1980), p. 7.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Victor Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), p. 419.
10. Cheddi Jagan, *The West on Trial*, (Seven Seas Books, London 1966), pp. 109-110.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
12. George Brizan, "The Development of the Labour Movement in Grenada," unpublished paper, December 1975, p. 34.
13. *Free West Indian*, May 9, 1981.
14. EPICA interview with trade union officials, November 1981.

Attempts at Destabilization through Violence

1. Grenada Government Information Services release, May 5, 1980.
2. *Ibid.*, Feb. 18, 1980.
3. *Free West Indian*, May 5, 1980, p. 2.
4. Grenada G.I.S. release, May 15, 1980.
5. *Free West Indian*, June 25, 1980, p. 1.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Grenada G.I.S. release, June 26, 1980.
9. *Free West Indian*, May 19, 1980, p. 4.

International Airport

1. *Grenada News*, Special Airport Issue, April/May 1981. (Permanent Mission of Grenada to the Organization of American States, Washington, DC).
2. Caribbean Tourism Research Center, cited in "International Airport Project: Point Salines, Grenada" (Ministry of Labour, Communications and Works, Grenada). Based on World Bank Report No. 1994-GRD-Economic Memorandum on Grenada, May 1, 1978.
3. *Ibid.*
4. EPICA interview with airport project manager Robert Gordon, May 1981.
5. *Free West Indian*, March 4, 1981.
6. *Latin America Regional Reports—Caribbean*, May 1981.
7. *Caribbean Contact*, May 1981.
8. *Ibid.*, August 1981.
9. EPICA interview with Robert Gordon, May 1981.

The Economy

The PRG inherited severe economic problems from the Gairy regime. The *Trinidad and Tobago Review* called the Grenadian economy in the 1970s "a picture of pervasive stagnation," characterized by

negative real growth rates, heavy double-digit inflation, high levels of unemployment, and continuous deficit in the balance of payments.¹

Due to Gairy's corruption and mismanagement, the cost of living approximately tripled between 1970 and 1977, while real output *declined* in every sector except fishing.² The drop in revenues had to be made up through tourism and remittances from Grenadians living abroad. More and more people left the island to seek employment in Trinidad, England, Canada and the United States, making these remittances Grenada's number one source of foreign exchange.³

While the PRG was able to put a stop to governmental corruption and waste, it could do less to alter the severe structural problems in the island's economy, problems which are deeply rooted in the system of neo-colonial relations. Like most Caribbean countries, Grenada exports a handful of agricultural crops for pennies and imports everything else at a high price. This situation has grown worse over the past several years due to the collapse of the prices for Grenada's export crops on the world market. Bananas, cocoa and nutmeg account for 97% of Grenada's visible export earnings, so when the world market price for these commodities dropped by 22% between 1979 and 1980, the Grenadian economy reeled.⁴

The collapse of export prices is only part of the problem. Like any agricultural economy, Grenada's

production is extremely vulnerable to the weather. In the three years since the revolution, Grenada has experienced a series of weather disasters including two hurricanes, two flood rains, and a violent burst of wind that wiped out half of Grenada's 1981 banana crop within ten minutes. Losses from these disasters have totaled some U.S. \$30 million.

Grenada has what is called an "open" economy, meaning that it is so dependent on trade with the industrialized countries that whatever happens in these countries has an immediate and severe impact on Grenada's economy. The long-term inflation and recent recession in the industrialized world have been a disaster for Grenada, driving down the demand for its export crops while increasing the prices Grenada must pay for imports. Grenada has seven million pounds of unsold nutmegs sitting in warehouses. In 1979, Grenada spent U.S. \$43 million on imported manufactured goods, but in 1980, the same volume of goods cost U.S. \$50 million.⁵ Minister of Finance Bernard Coard explained the problem to Grenadians:

We depend almost entirely on these advanced countries to buy all our cocoa, nutmegs and bananas. We also depend on them to supply us with most of the things we cannot produce and must buy from abroad. In fact, our economy is so tied to the economies of these countries that there is a long-standing joke which says that any time the economy of one of these countries coughs, we must catch the cold.

The economies of these countries started coughing since the end of 1978; they coughed throughout 1980 and they are still coughing in 1981. And we have caught a very serious cold which we still have to get over.⁶

Ultimately, Grenada can only solve its economic problems through what Prime Minister Bishop has termed "disengagement from imperialism." For Grenada this means breaking out of its historically-determined role as exporter of cheap agricultural products to a handful of industrialized countries at terms set by the purchasers. Grenada's ability to do this depends on the



Workers shelling tamarinds in agro-industry plant

Free West Indian

development of economic self-reliance: eating local foods, buying fewer imported goods, diversifying and expanding production in Grenada.

A Three-Sided Strategy

Changing Grenada's relationship to the world economic order is a long-term process. The PRG's immediate goal is a *higher standard of living for Grenada's population*. This is being done through the development of a mixed economy which includes a public sector, a private sector, and a newly-created cooperative sector. Contrary to the widespread belief in the United States that the PRG has imposed "socialism" on Grenada, the revolutionary government has made only gradual changes in the Grenadian economy so far. Its stated long-term goal is a *mixed economy, state sector dominant*.⁷

The public sector: Most of the PRG's economic initiatives have aimed at creating a strong state sector of the economy which can generate profits for social programs. The PRG inherited some 30 state farms from the Gairy government, and has implemented new management policies to make these farms turn a profit instead of requiring subsidies as in the past. The government has opened several new agro-processing plants and is creating a state fishing and fish-processing industry. In tourism, a state sector has been created alongside the mostly foreign-owned private tourist industry; the buildings which used to be Gairy's "Evening Palace" and "Rock Gardens" nightclubs now house government-owned hotels.

Banking in Grenada has long been a foreign-owned enclave with a tight grip on the Grenadian economy and a minimal sense of social responsibility. It has always been extremely difficult for the "small man"—whether farmer, fisherman, or fledgling entrepreneur—to get a loan from any of the private banks in Grenada. After the revolution, the PRG permitted the private banks to continue operating, but also set up alternative public banking services which are more responsive to the people's needs.

The Grenada Development Bank (GDB) came into being as a transformation of an "agricultural bank" set up by Gairy. The latter was supposed to give loans to farmers, but because of the Gairy regime's well-known corruption the bank was virtually unable to raise outside funds for lending.⁸ After the revolution, international confidence in the PRG changed this and the GDB raised EC \$936,000 in 1979 and EC \$1 million in 1980, mostly from the Caribbean Development Bank. These funds are lent at favorable terms to small and medium farmers and businessmen with the aim of financing any project, no matter how small, which will increase employment and production in Grenada or decrease dependence on imported goods.⁹ In addition to the GDB, which channels all of its loans to development purposes, the PRG created the publically-owned National Commercial Bank, which lends half its funds to development projects and half to the established commercial sector. The NCB also offers a higher interest rate on savings than the private banks and is

already the second-largest bank in Grenada.

The private sector: The PRG sees a continuing and important role for private enterprise in Grenada. In a 1981 interview the Prime Minister stated:

The state sector alone cannot develop the economy, given the very low level of technology available, the limited human resources, the lack of capital, the lack of marketing expertise, the lack of promotional capacity. So, we must stimulate the private sector generally, but also of course in agriculture, and in particular among the small and medium farmers.¹⁰

The liberal lending policies of the Grenada Development Bank and the National Commercial Bank are part of this strategy. To further aid the independent farmers and fishermen, the PRG provides subsidies for capital improvements, such as feeder roads and fish storage facilities, which will encourage production. But the relationship which the government wants to develop between the public and private sector is two-sided: while public subsidies and financing are available for private enterprise, the government is also seeking private financing for public development projects. The PRG's policy is to look locally for development capital before approaching international donors. This approach is based on "moral suasion"—the private banks in Grenada are encouraged, but not forced, to channel some of their profits into loans for local development.¹¹

While stimulating small and medium-sized businesses, the PRG has placed some controls on big business. The island's heavy dependence on imported goods means that the commercial sector is very powerful and can exploit the population through high prices. Yet precisely because of this dependence, the PRG has chosen to move slowly and deliberately in loosening private control over imports. The government has, for instance, removed rice, sugar and cement from private control and given sole importing rights for these commodities to a quasi-public body, the Marketing and National Importing Board. This has held the prices of these vital necessities down to a level the public can afford. In the case of certain other commodities, the PRG has imposed a profit ceiling on private sector imports.¹²

The cooperative sector: This is in an embryonic state at present, but the government hopes that the cooperatives will ultimately become the third key sector of the economy.¹³ The cooperatives are not state entities—they are private ventures of the individuals in each co-op, with start-up financing from the state. The state loans money to the co-ops because it is a development strategy in which the private sector has shown no interest but which the PRG and the Grenadian people consider fundamental to the goals of the revolution.¹⁴ The goal is to have the cooperatives become a self-sufficient, vibrant sector of the economy which employs many people.

Economic Planning: Making Haste Slowly

The presence of economic "planning" is seen by some as a litmus test for socialism versus capitalism, but for Grenada, it is a way to lift the country out of the chaos inherited from Gairy. The situation before the

revolution was marked by an absolute lack of planning at every level. Things were done according to Gairy's whims, and occasionally, according to his dreams. For example, Grenadians explain the presence of traffic circles all over the island, even in remote rural areas, as the result of an order given by Gairy after he dreamt about circles.

With few resources and many needs, Grenada cannot afford expensive "white elephant" projects of the type so common in developing countries: presidential palaces, giant stadiums which are never completed, elaborate industrial projects which come to a standstill as soon as a spare part is needed. To create a productive public sector, Grenada must set priorities and make choices according to its social goals. *Integrated* planning can boost productivity by creating links between agriculture, agro-industry, fishing, livestock raising, forestry and tourism. For example, the waste from the agro-industry plant and the fish-processing plant can be used to produce animal feed, reducing the cost of livestock raising in Grenada and by extension, the cost of meat and milk.

However, long-term integrated planning does not yet exist in Grenada.¹⁵ Such planning depends on two preconditions: an up-to-date data base, and an institutional framework for planning. The bureaucracy under Gairy had no mechanism for collecting or keeping statistics; at the time of the revolution even the size of the island's population was unknown. Nor was there any capability within the government for integrated planning. In 1981, as a first step in laying the groundwork for planning, the PRG carried out a population census and an agricultural census to discover how many Grenadians there are, how they live, and what they produce. The government is also working on creating a national planning system within the Ministry of Planning, which will be tied into the political decision-making process through dialogue with the leadership and mass organizations.¹⁶

Toward a Humane Society

The objective constraints on Grenada's economy mean that structural change will be gradual. Nevertheless, the Grenada revolution is clearly pro-socialist in spirit and intent, as demonstrated by the revolution's social programs: free medical care, free milk and school lunches, loans for housing repair, free secondary education, and so on. Funds for these programs have come through the elimination of waste and corruption (which the Ministry of Finance estimates saved Grenada EC \$6 million in the first year of the revolution alone), from a renewed flow of international aid, and from a progressive tax system.¹⁷ The government's spending policies are, however, conservative: the recurrent budget is financed exclusively through revenues and taxation, so that loans from abroad can be reserved for capital improvements. The PRG is serious about long-term development and economic recovery, which will be the ultimate test of the revolution's success and its relevance to the Caribbean region as a whole.

Agriculture and Agro-Industry

... The land is the source of our wealth. We have no oil, bauxite, gold, iron or other mineral reserves.

What we have are agricultural products grown on our fertile soil and exported to foreign markets, \$58 million worth of cocoa, nutmeg and bananas. Yes, we grow and export food but we do not produce enough food to feed ourselves. In fact, we import a shocking \$57 million worth of food every year.

... Such is the terrible legacy of colonialism which foisted on us the economics of dependency...

The main goal of the PRG's agricultural policy is to make Grenada self-sufficient in food. Dependence on imported food dates back to slavery days, when colonial planters imported salted cod and corn meal for the slaves so that every square inch of land could be used to grow sugar. Today, 70% of the calories in the Grenadian national diet still come from imported food.²

Gairy treated agriculture, the basis of Grenada's economy, with astounding neglect. His 1977 budget allowed only EC \$230,000 (about U.S. \$85,000) for capital improvements in the agricultural sector.³ The state-owned farms fell deeply into debt, losing an estimated EC \$1 million per year.⁴ Agricultural laborers were scorned and exploited, and peasant farming was barely remunerative. Not surprisingly, young Grenadians systematically rejected farming as an occupation, making 62 the average age of Grenadian farmers at the time of the revolution.



Processing fruit nectar in agro-industry plant

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Workers separating mace from nutmegs. Worldwide recession has lowered demand for these spices on the international market.

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Land Tenure

There are three types of farms in Grenada: small and medium-sized peasant plots, large private estates, and the state farms. Ninety-five percent of the holdings are small: there are 67 large estates, of which 27 are state farms. The average peasant owns or rents less than five acres, on which he typically grows cocoa, bananas and nutmeg intercropped with food crops such as yams, squash, breadfruit, tomatoes, cabbages, and fruits.

Although peasant holdings are small, the PRG has avoided any action which would break up the functioning estates, since fragmentation often reduces productivity. However, an estimated one-third of Grenada's arable lands were idle at the time of the revolution,⁵ and these unproductive lands are the focus of a land reform policy. The PRG's attempts to buy and lease portions of idle lands encountered initial problems. In September 1981, a new land reform law was passed, requiring owners of idle lands over 100 acres either to farm them or to enter into negotiations for their sale or lease. The owners are given the chance to submit a development plan for their land; if they do not do so, the Ministry of Agriculture can implement a compulsory lease for a 10-year period.⁶

The State Farms

Agricultural work today is dignified labor. Our youth must understand that there's nothing degrading in soiling the hands.⁷

The PRG's approach to the state farm sector has been creative and worker-oriented. To boost production and give workers a share of the wealth they create, the PRG has implemented a profit-sharing plan in which one-third of any profit a state farm makes is divided among the workers on the farm. While the state farms still run at a loss collectively, careful management and the

elimination of corruption has already produced profits on several. In 1981, workers on these farms received bonuses of up to \$200 each.

The profit-sharing scheme is an integral part of the attempt to build morale and self-respect among estate laborers, long at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder in Grenada. The PRG has stressed that it is these laborers who create the country's wealth and permit the higher-status white-collar workers to be paid. The workers are now asked to share responsibility for running the estates: managers hold monthly meetings with workers to review the farm's financial status and decide on ways to increase production. Wages for state farm workers were raised across-the-board in 1981, although agricultural wages are still acknowledged to be very low.

Ironically, while unemployment persists in Grenada, the agricultural estates face a chronic labor shortage because of the stigma historically associated with estate work. To counter this, PRG ministers have visited the estates to praise the workers and have stressed the "creative and exciting" aspects of agricultural work. This creativity was illustrated by a 53-year-old estate worker named Norris Edwards, who invented a trap for catching cocoa beetles, and was named "1980 Worker of the Year" for his invention.

This agricultural worker, although a person with very little formal education, has successfully developed an ingenious device to catch beetles, an insect which destroys cocoa fields. The trap is made out of sticks from the African breadfruit tree, which he noticed the beetles liked. A number of small pieces of sticks are crossed over each other to form a box-like enclosure. He then sets these traps among the cocoa trees, so that they attract the beetles. Since there is no poisonous substance on these traps, he then goes and collects the beetles by hand.⁸



Fishing trawlers donated by Cuba

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The Small Farmers

In a sense, almost everyone in Grenada is a small farmer. Even the town-dwellers usually manage to find a few square yards of earth behind their houses for a kitchen garden. About 8,000 people are officially considered "farmers," meaning that they sell a portion of what they grow.⁹

Small farming in Grenada means long days of toil under a hot sun and hard rains for little profit. Farmers must pay steeply rising costs for inputs such as fertilizers and seeds, while receiving lower and lower returns for their crops each year. Grenada's food crops are almost entirely produced by independent small farmers, yet the supply of fruits and vegetables is plagued by cycles of glut and shortage, so that sometimes the farmer cannot even find a buyer for his produce.

The PRG believes that farmers can lower their costs by approaching their problems cooperatively, for example, by purchasing farm inputs in bulk. The Productive Farmers Union, a trade association to which about 1,000 independent farmers belong, distributes farm inputs cheaply and also coordinates the marketing of some produce. On a deeper level, the PFU serves as a mass organization for farmers, giving them a structure—like the labor unions and popular organizations—with which to participate in Grenada's democratic process.

The PRG's policy is to strengthen the agricultural base of the economy by assisting the independent farming sector. The Ministry of Agriculture has been reoriented toward providing technical advice, subsidies and training to farmers. In 1981, the PRG extended an EC \$4.6 million assistance package to provide credit, purchase seeds and tools, and repair roads to farmers' plots. The Mirabeau Farm School, which Gairy closed, has been reopened and trains young Grenadians in modern farming techniques. Many of its graduates have become agricultural extension officers who advise farmers in their fields.

The PRG is taking a long-term, planned approach to the problem of markets. Since the domestic market for fruits and vegetables is limited by the size of the population, the potential growth area is the export market. The Marketing and National Importing Board (MNIB) is aggressively seeking new export outlets and has been quite successful so far, especially in England and Trinidad. This has the effect of both diversifying Grenada's exports away from sole reliance on cocoa, bananas and nutmegs, and also providing farmers with a sure market for their produce (although farmers are not obliged to sell to the MNIB).

The other part of the marketing strategy is creation of an agro-processing industry, a promise made by the NJM in 1973 and fulfilled by the PRG. Millions of pounds of fruit, especially mangoes, fall on the ground every year in Grenada. To turn this waste into export dollars, the PRG opened an agro-industry plant which processes fruits into jams, juices and other products under the brand name "Spice Isle." Although the juices are still relatively expensive, there is a potential export market for them in countries where mangoes, papayas, guavas and tamarinds are an exotic treat. The plant is also aimed at import substitution. In a country blessed with an abundance of every tropical fruit imaginable, the most common fruit drink is: imported Florida orange juice.

Toward Self-Sufficiency

Grenada's goal of feeding itself requires imaginative planning and a willingness on the part of Grenadians to shift tastes in favor of local foods. The case of the fishing industry is a good example. Meat (along with rice and flour) is an area where Grenada's import dependence is most costly. One solution is a greater reliance on seafood, which is plentiful in the rich fishing beds surrounding the island. Before the revolution, however, fishing was a small-scale enterprise done mainly by aging fishermen in small boats.

The PRG has begun to modernize the fishing sector, assisting the independent fishermen with credit and storage facilities, but also building up a modern state-owned fisheries industry. At the new Fisheries Training School, Grenadians are learning modern methods of deep-sea and inshore fishing. The government is building up a fleet of fishing trawlers, including a gift of six boats from Cuba. The modernized fishing industry will be able to catch several hundred thousand pounds of fish per year.

But the plan goes further. Incredibly, Grenada, like other Caribbean islands, *imports* fish—EC \$2.5 million worth of salted cod from Canada every year.¹⁰ Not until after the revolution did anyone move to change this absurd situation. In 1980, the PRG opened a fish processing plant and Grenada started to produce and consume its own saltfish. Grenada is now positioned to become a net exporter of saltfish, as the Grenadian product is already selling well in neighboring islands (Dominica recently purchased 25,000 pounds.)

With the renewal of national pride in Grenada, Grenadians are gradually developing new attitudes toward their own local products and toward their historic occupation, farming. Young Grenadians are coming to realize that self-reliance based on increased production is one way to fight imperialism and its economics of dependence. Breaking out of the dependency trap will be a long, hard struggle, but the will is there.

And what are the solutions? Certainly not a Gairy-type money machine... We cannot dream or wish this problem away. Obeah won't make it disappear and no UFO is going to land tomorrow with bags of money.

The answer lies in sober, scientific planning coupled with a lot of sweat and hard toil... Hard work, yes, but not for massa or for Gairy but for ourselves and for our children's future.¹¹

The Cooperative Movement

Grenada's cooperative program is a response to the twin problems of idle lands and youth unemployment. Before the revolution, youth had tried to form farm cooperatives but found they could not get loans from the private banks. In order to succeed, the groups needed three things: financing, training, and access to land. To provide these, the PRG created the National Cooperative Development Agency (NACDA) in April 1980, as a statutory body within the Ministry of Agriculture. NACDA started out with a EC \$1 million loan from the National Commercial Bank to use as a revolving loan fund for starting cooperatives.

The process began with the formation of a Land Reform Commission, which organized hearings around the island at which people identified over 4,000 acres of idle land. While NACDA's land procurement team negotiated with landowners, NACDA held training seminars for 161 youths interested in forming cooperatives.

To ensure that groups which receive NACDA loans are viable and a good credit risk, NACDA requires prospective "cooperators" to meet rigorous requirements. A feasibility study is always performed to determine whether the venture is financially sound. Before registering as a cooperative, the group receives five days of intensive training in the principles and operation of cooperatives, accounting, business management, and record-keeping. The members must also show a commitment to the cooperative ideal and enough unity and dynamism to carry through with the venture.¹



Members of the Tivoli cooperative working in their cabbage patch

Cathy Sunshine

"The Maroon Coming Alive"

Grenadian Sam Kee, a former bus driver, now manages an agricultural cooperative in the village of Brizan. He reflects on the close links between the cooperative program and Grenadian traditions, and on the changes which the coops have brought to village life:

The first six months was the hardest for our cooperative, so to keep up the enthusiasm, I tried to keep them all in a maroon form by everybody in the morning bringing what they could cook. The maroon form is the way we pass round the village and ask people to give us help. Some give us corn, some give peas and yam. Then we put all

together and cook, and those who come in the maroon form on a Saturday is free community work. The maroon spirit is one of the best we have right now, because the people getting the feeling that they together again. And maroon form is what we always do, our ancestors too, so is very close to cooperatives, and with the government getting us together again, the people feeling like they are in maroon form all the time!

The cooperative has made a big difference to the village. The people now seeing about cooperatives, and other groups looking to see how to go into them. They talking about a bakery and shoemaking, and the unemployed youths looking forward to it . . . The whole community is

now looking on the cooperative side, like the maroon coming alive, taking a new form.

The cooperative do a lot to change me around . . . I used to be ignorant of agriculture, but now I moving through experience. The cooperative work is much harder than driving a bus, but when you put your back to it, you just have to make it easy. It's much harder, but I did it in order to build. I have been supporting the revolution for the longest while, and if I didn't do such a thing the village would remain just as it was. But now the people are free, and the whole country is more lively and getting together.

From "Is Freedom We Making?"



The average loan for an agricultural coop is EC \$25,000, covering inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, tools, storage and transportation, plus salaries, if the group decides to draw wages. The cooperative markets its own produce, with guidance from NACDA, and repays its loan on a monthly basis with 8% interest per year. Each coop must also place 25% of its earnings into a "reserve fund." NACDA underwrites the first venture of every cooperative, absorbing the loss if it fails; but if the coop succeeds in its first year and fails in the second, the group must use its reserve fund to absorb the loss. After nine months of successful operation, a coop can seek a second NACDA loan in order to diversify or expand.²

By May 1981, Grenada had 19 functioning

cooperatives. Most are "production cooperatives," in which the members share a plot of land (or a fishing boat) and work together, pooling all their resources and realizing a shared profit. For example, at the Fontenoy Cooperative Fisheries Production Society Ltd., the five members are experienced fishermen who have fished together over the years. After going through NACDA training, they registered as a cooperative, receiving a loan to build a modern fishing boat which will be able to catch 1500-2000 pounds of fish per week. Similarly, the members of the Brizan Cooperative Agricultural Productive Society work together raising yams and bananas on a 35 acre plot which they located themselves. NACDA trained the members, most of whom were previously unemployed, and gave them a

loan to buy tools and seeds. As the coop expands, the group plans to diversify into other crops and small-scale livestock raising. There are also two bakery cooperatives, a handicraft coop and even a cooperative of professional plumbers.

The other type of cooperative is the service cooperative, in which members work their own plots of land independently (or fish in their own boats) but join together to purchase supplies or market their produce. The Tivoli Agricultural Servicing Cooperative, for example, consists of independent farmers who purchased a vehicle jointly with a NACDA loan to transport their produce to market.

After a cooperative begins operating, NACDA staff provide supervision and technical advice, making periodic visits to each coop to monitor its books and assist with problems. The coops started in NACDA's first 18 months have been quite successful, operating at an average of 70% efficiency which compares favorably to the 30% average efficiency of Grenada's peasant farms.³

The cooperative program nevertheless faces certain problems which have slowed its progress. These problems center around land acquisition and crop marketing. Until recently, the land acquisition negotiations depended on the availability and good will of the landowners, who in many cases live abroad, and who sometimes do not negotiate in good faith. Negotiations became seriously stalled. Since the new law was passed in summer of 1981—providing for compulsory leases of idle lands over 100 acres if the owners do not plan to farm them—landowners have begun coming forward, initiating negotiations to sell or lease their idle lands.⁴

Secondly, the coops have encountered the same problems as the small farmers in marketing their food crops. While many older farmers are content to raise just enough for their families, young Grenadians view farming as an alternative to wage employment and expect it to produce a monetary return. The government is acutely aware of the marketing problem,⁵ and is formulating a careful strategy, analyzing potential markets and developing export outlets through the National Marketing and Importing Board.

In spite of these obstacles, NACDA is moving forward, and was identified as a model program by a conference of regional cooperatives held in Antigua in November 1980. The cooperatives have already had an impact on Grenadian life which extends beyond their present limited importance in the country's economy. Each coop "uplifts" the village where it is located, providing employment and a sense of community accomplishment. Most importantly, the coop program is gradually changing the image of farming among the country's youth, whose disaffection from agriculture poses serious problems for Grenada's future production. The enthusiasm of Grenadian youth for the cooperatives is limited only by the marketing question, and as that is gradually resolved, the cooperative sector promises to have a larger and larger impact on youth unemployment.

Literacy and Education

Heritage of Colonial Education*

Throughout the colonial years in Grenada, post-primary education was a means of sifting off an elite group of students to be assimilated into "a mimicry of the mother country's way of life,"¹ and become useful local appendages of the British colonial system. With the coming of independence, such "civilized" Grenadians were earmarked as candidates for leadership in an acquiescent neo-colonial government. Most Grenadians, however, never reached beyond elementary education, and many children drifted out of primary school at the third or fourth grade level because of schooling costs and the need to make a contribution to the meagre family income.

Under the colonial system, most of what the students learned dealt with what happened in England. Textbooks called the "Royal Readers" reflected the British way of life. In arithmetic classes, students were taught pounds and shillings, while the currency spent in Grenada was in dollars and cents.

The history we did, apart from Columbus and his voyages, was about English adventurers: Drake, Hawkins, Raleigh, Morgan the Pirate. We were told nothing about the Negroes—ourselves. And so we lived in ignorance of who we were and how we came to be where we were.

Singing consisted mainly of old English, Scottish and Irish ballads. If we were overheard singing calypsoes we were ordered to go and wash out our mouths because those were "devil songs."²

Maurice Bishop, in a speech given at the National Education Conference, described this system as one which fostered "self-hate" among Grenadians: a rejection of everything indigenous.

Perhaps the worst crime that Colonialism left our country, has indeed left all former colonies, is the Education System. This is so because that system was used to teach our people an attitude of self-hate, to get them to abandon our history, our culture, our values. To get them to accept the principles of white superiority, to destroy our confidence, to stifle our creativity, to perpetuate in our society class privilege and class difference. The colonial masters recognized very early on that if they get a subject people to think like they do, to forget their own history and their own culture . . . then they have already won the job of keeping us in perpetual domination and exploitation.³

*Many passages in this section are drawn from *Grenada: Education is a Must* by Chris Searle and Maurice Bishop.

Gairyism only intensified this process. Education became an almost magical concept, associated with going away and becoming a "big man." Higher education was seen as leading toward one goal: escape from the island and from its day-to-day reality of hard work and agricultural production.⁴

While this process was taking place at the level of secondary education—which was out of the reach of the mass of the population, what with the cost of fees, transportation, school books and uniforms—Gairy allowed the primary school system to virtually collapse. Schools deteriorated, furniture fell apart and was not replaced, teaching conditions became a mare. The majority of teachers were unqualified, and thousands of dollars which should have gone to the education budget were siphoned off and squandered by Gairy and his hirelings.

Revolutionary Grenada clearly needed a new kind of education—education based on a problem-solving approach which would address the difficulties faced by the masses of people. And because the PRG wanted this new education to help change people's attitudes about themselves and their country, the system had to be restructured with their active participation and enthusiasm. Toward this end, three major educational programs were launched in 1980: the Centre for Popular Education (CPE), the National In-Service Teacher Education Programme (NISTEP), and the Community-School Day Programme (CSDP).



Lyndon Adams, CPE's youngest volunteer teacher, who taught his 73-year-old neighbor to read and write.

Popular Education and the CPE

When the first stage of literacy classes began on August 18, 1980, hundreds of volunteers and modestly paid staff joined the campaign out of love and concern for Grenada's undereducated poor and working class. This marked the beginning of a whole new era in Grenadian history, in which the fundamental motivation was to serve the poorest and most forgotten people on the island and to ensure that eventually everyone in Grenada would become literate.

Although a 1979 World Bank report claimed that 15% of all Grenadians were illiterate, the Centre for Popular Education—in a preliminary census carried out in April 1980—found that only 7-10% of the population was without any education. However, this percentage of the society consisted primarily of rural manual laborers—agricultural workers, nutmeg pool and cocoa plant workers, rural women and marginalized youth—precisely the sector to which the PRG not only gave high priority in terms of reversing past prejudices but which it also considered critical to Grenada's future as an agricultural country.

On the other hand, functional illiteracy affects some 30,000 Grenadians—nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total population. The long-range task of the CPE is, therefore, to re-educate these adults to at least a functional 6th-grade level, so that they can become effective participants in a modern, progressive society.

The Centre for Popular Education is headed by a National Advisory Committee representing all sectors of the society and chaired by the Minister of Education (formerly George Louison and since August 1981, Jacqueline Creft). The National Coordinator of the CPE, Valerie Cornwall, oversees its two main functional components: mobilization and technical work. The CPE's National Technical Commission (NTC) prepares the curriculum, writes the texts and supervises the process in the field.

The literacy campaign is divided into two phases. Phase 1 involved basic literacy training for those without any education, attempting to bring approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the estimated 2,738 illiterates to a condition of basic literacy in the space of six months (Aug. 1980 to Feb. 1981). The key to the success of Phase 1 was its village committees, which were composed of volunteer teachers, each headed by a village coordinator who was normally a practicing teacher, and a village technician. The committees met weekly to monitor the progress of the classes and to discuss organizational and pedagogical problems.

In October, the CPE held a "Midway Evaluation Congress"—attended by 90% of all staff and volunteers—to examine and critique the program before pushing on to reach the campaign's goal. In the end, 881 persons satisfactorily completed the course and learned to read and write for the first time in their lives.

To assist the CPE, the PRG brought in two consultants to Grenada: Paulo Freire, head of the World Council of Churches literacy program, and Angel Arrechea, a literacy expert from Cuba. These advisors made a significant contribution to the process in



A successful CPE student waits for her certificate at an awards ceremony.

Grenada at both the philosophical and practical levels. However, there were certain pedagogical problems unique to Grenada which could only be solved by West Indian technicians and teachers through trial and error.

The National Technical Commission produced two basic texts for the campaign: "Forward Ever"—a teachers' manual; and "Let Us Learn Together," a 14-lesson literacy reader. The lessons were structured so as to reflect the perceptions, needs and aspirations of the people—what Paulo Freire calls "the generative themes"—as well as the goals of the revolutionary government. One of these goals is to deepen the sense of Caribbean identity fostered by the famous Grenadian, T. A. Marryshow. Lesson 5, called "One Caribbean," used the following phrases to give the reader a sense of national identity within a regional setting:

—I AM FROM GRENADA, CARRIACOU AND
 PETIT MARTINIQUE
 —YOU ARE FROM MARTINIQUE
 —HE IS FROM CUBA
 —SHE IS FROM ARUBA
 —WE ARE FROM THE CARIBBEAN
 —WE ARE ONE PEOPLE
 —WE ARE ONE CARIBBEAN

Other lessons include "The Land Must Produce More," "We Build Our Communities" and "Our History of Struggle." All center on Grenadian reality and attempt to involve the learner in discussion of the goals and programs of the revolution.⁵

The CPE's Phase 2, which will begin on March 30, 1982, is in essence a post-literacy program. The curriculum of this second phase includes five basic courses: mathematics, English, Grenadian history, geography and natural sciences. Classes will be held at night so the working day is not interrupted, and the program will be closely linked to the needs and interests of working adults.⁶

What distinguishes the CPE program from other adult education courses in the English-speaking Caribbean is its emphasis on popular participation. It is not merely a matter of increasing people's knowledge, but of the adults *using* their new knowledge and skills to participate actively in building the society. Didacus Jules, coordinator of CPE's National Technical Commission, explains:

The construction of a participatory democracy demands the education of the working people and the "marginalized" so that they may become increasingly active agents of social and economic transformation.⁷

One of the most important aspects of CPE has been its *cultural component*, in which the people are encouraged to express themselves through poetry, drama, song and dance. "Don't Take My Soul," a poem written in 1980, reflects one Grenadian's yearning to break out of the old domination:

*Don't break me in
 Don't make me you
 Your days are past
 Let me live anew
 Not by what you say
 I have come
 And go my way*

*Don't break me down
 Don't take me apart
 I won't stand to be
 Another cold heart
 (with material chains)
 They bind too hard
 And cause great pains*

*Don't tie me up
 Don't give my spirit
 A bond like yours
 Please release it
 Free me from being
 Alive for your plans
 Don't take my soul
 Into your hands.⁸*



Just as Grenada's literacy program received invaluable assistance from Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua, the CPE reciprocated by sending two of its young teachers to Nicaragua to assist the Sandinista government in its Atlantic Coast English Literacy Campaign. Following discussions held between the Nicaraguan government and Valerie Cornwall in August 1980, James Wilson of Carriacou and Ceford Robertson of St. Andrew's parish left for the Bluefields region of Nicaragua, where they spent three months as literacy educators. When Wilson was subsequently interviewed about his experience in a small village called Barra del Rio Maiz, where 55 of the village's 60 inhabitants were illiterate, he said:

I wasn't so strange to them because I was the same race as them—we were all black people. And these people were often descendants of West Indian immigrants who traveled to that part of Nicaragua. Some of the old people even remembered when they had migrated from Colombia to that part of the Nicaraguan coast Most of the people there spoke English in a Creole dialect very similar to ours here with only a few words different from the way we speak.⁹

The revolutionary processes in Cuba, Grenada and Nicaragua are bringing the peoples of the Caribbean region back together to reestablish their African linkages and deepen their regional unity.

In-Service Teacher Training

One aspect of Grenada's inheritance from colonialism and Gairyism was the fact that two-thirds of the nation's primary school teachers (some 600 persons) were seriously undertrained. Children were taught by teachers who had themselves just finished primary or secondary school. Any improvement in the educational system clearly called for a teacher training program which would remedy this situation as quickly as possible.

The Grenada Teachers' College graduates an average of 45 teachers per year, while approximately half that number of qualified teachers leaves the profession each year for emigration, marriage or better-paid employment. Under these circumstances, it would have been extremely slow and costly to upgrade teaching standards in the traditional manner. To train 1,000

teachers in universities abroad would have taken 35 years and cost an estimated EC \$17.5 million. For this reason, an in-service teacher training program was chosen as the most practical and efficient for Grenada.

In early November 1980, the PRG created the National In-Service Teacher Education Programme (NISTEP), aimed at upgrading 612 untrained teachers over a 3-year period at an estimated cost of EC \$3.7 million.¹⁰ In the NISTEP plan, the teachers leave the schools for training one day a week, while on the other 4 days they put into practice what they have learned. Thus there is a constant interplay between theory and actual classroom work, as well as regular consultation between the student teachers and the training team. The children benefit immediately from the higher quality of classroom teaching, whereas if the teachers were sent abroad it would be years before they returned to the classroom.

Besides raising pedagogical levels, the NISTEP plan has two other important objectives: to develop a standardized curriculum to be used by schools throughout Grenada; and to establish teaching as a serious profession, erasing the image that it is merely a stepping-stone to more prestigious and lucrative employment. By raising the professionalism, prestige and pay of Grenada's teachers (teachers receive a salary increase upon completion of the NISTEP program), the government hopes to retain a higher percentage of qualified teachers in the schools on a long-term basis.

The NISTEP program is considered to be a success so far, and is already attracting attention elsewhere in the region. At a meeting of Education Ministers from the less-developed Caribbean countries in October 1981, representatives from several other islands indicated that they were considering establishing teacher training programs similar to NISTEP.¹¹

The Community-School Day Programme

The "Community-School Day Programme" (CSDP) was originally designed as a practical strategy to occupy primary school pupils on the one day each week when the teachers are out of the schools for their in-service training. Since its inception, however, the program has taken on a life of its own. On "community-school day,"

skilled persons from the communities are invited into the schools to teach what they know.

Parents, workers, farmers, "resource people" like musicians and craftsmen, and representatives of the Ministries of Health, Public Works, Agriculture and Fisheries come into the schools to give special classes and teach particular skills which until now have been considered "outside" of the school curriculum. Classes are being held in various forms of agricultural production—particularly those which center around Grenada's main exports: cocoa, bananas and nutmeg. There is tuition in Sanitary and Health Education, fishing techniques, as well as classes in the patois dialect, "Big Drum" dancing and other expressions of popular culture.¹²

The coordinator of the CSDP works closely with local "zonal coordinators" towards developing Community School Councils, a kind of parent-teacher organization. These councils not only encourage parental support of school programs, but also provide a reciprocal assistance by the students in community projects. Although the Councils are just beginning to function, they point the way towards reinforcing an "interdependent relationship" between community and school which is the CSDP's ultimate goal.

The Right to Education

A billboard in the Grenada countryside proclaims that education in revolutionary Grenada is "a right, not a privilege." In terms of national policy, this means bringing education within the financial reach of the poor and working class through deep governmental subsidies to education at all levels.

To encourage primary school attendance, the PRG began an EC \$60,000 assistance program in 1981 to help the poorest families pay for their children's school books and uniforms. These costs are significant and have kept many children out of primary school in the past. At the high school level, the PRG kept its early promise of free secondary education, first reducing tuition costs and finally making all secondary education free in the fall of 1981. The availability of secondary education is still curtailed by the lack of schools and teachers, so that entrance is limited to those students who pass rigorous examinations. The government has built a new high school, the Bernadette Bailey Secondary School—the second high school to be built by the state in Grenada's entire history.

At the university level, the PRG has dramatically increased the number of scholarships for study abroad. The government has paid back, in installments, most of the massive debt owed by the Gairy regime to the University of the West Indies, so that Grenadian students may again attend UWI. Secondly, the PRG's cooperative international relations have produced many offers of scholarships at foreign universities, particularly in Africa, Mexico, Cuba and Europe. In the last year of Gairy's regime, only three Grenadians went abroad to study on scholarship—one of whom was Gairy's own daughter. The PRG has taken a clear position against such elitism, and has moved decisively toward making education free, universal, and relevant to the lives of ordinary Grenadians.



Cathy Sunshine

Health

The 1970 nurses' demonstration through the streets of St. George's made health care one of the first issues on which the people of Grenada challenged the Gairy dictatorship. Like education, health care under Gairy was a privilege reserved for those who could pay. The upper class patronized the island's private doctors or traveled abroad for medical care, while the rest of the population was left with the decrepit public hospitals which had no equipment, medicines or even bed linen. Women gave birth on cold concrete floors as cockroaches scurried through the filthy wards. Even these services cost more than most people could afford, and many rural Grenadians received no health care at all. Dentistry was virtually an unknown science in prerevolutionary Grenada, where not a single public clinic existed for those who could not pay private dentists' fees.

This abysmal situation stemmed from two facts: the absolute lack of planning in the health sector, and Gairy's victimization of health workers. Nurses and health workers who displeased Gairy would be fired or sent to remote posts such as Carriacou. Many of Grenada's qualified health personnel emigrated to escape victimization and find a place where their skills would be recognized and valued.



Cuban dentist attends a Grenadian patient

Free West Indian

Health: A Basic Human Right

Within a few months of the revolution, the PRG brought in a team of Cuban volunteer health workers, including doctors, dentists, and specialists. This nearly doubled the number of doctors on the island (from 23 to 40) and permitted the entire health care system to be decentralized and expanded. There is now a polyclinic (health center) in each parish, as well as 28 smaller medical stations dotted over the island. A public dental clinic has been established in each parish.

The PRG also secured assistance from other countries and from the European Development Fund, which provided new departments for the main hospital in St. George's. Grenadians are going abroad for training in public health, medicine and nutrition, while many of the Grenadian health professionals living abroad have been invited home by the PRG to assume responsible posts in the health service. Most importantly, rational planning and analysis has been introduced into the health sector for the first time, with a professional health planner employed by the Ministry of Health.

In both 1980 and 1981, health received a greater share of the recurrent budget than any other sector except education. Health is an expensive social service, but it is viewed in Grenada as a basic right. All public medical and dental care became free of charge in October 1980. Doctors may still treat patients privately, but they must do so in their own offices, not in the government hospitals and clinics. People thus have a choice between state health services, which are free, and private care, which they may choose to pay for.

The revolution's approach to health care is based on the concept of preventive medicine and primary care. The aim is to have fewer people become ill enough to require sophisticated and expensive hospital treatment. The new primary health care system being developed in Grenada, which began with a pilot program in St. David's parish in October 1981, will emphasize health education at the grassroots level: in health centers, workplaces and schools. Although health education is already incorporated into the Community School Day Program and the second phase of the CPE adult education curriculum, the new primary care program represents a decisive break with the hospital-oriented system of medicine. In each parish, a team of health professionals will use films, lectures and workshops to popularize concepts of preventive medicine and involve the masses in identifying and preventing health problems in their communities. The mass organizations will play a key role in organizing the program.¹

Many health problems in Grenada relate in some way to eating patterns: undernutrition and gastro-intestinal illnesses in children, and hypertension, diabetes and heart disease in adults.² This is thought to be related to the high consumption of imported foods. To address the nutrition problem in a comprehensive way, the government created a Food and Nutrition Council (under the Ministry of Agriculture) which brings together representatives of every sector of the economy related to food supply. The Council sets policy on matters related to nutrition, while the Council's staff carries out



School lunch program

Free West Indian

nutrition and health education in medical centers, schools and people's homes. The Food and Nutrition Council also oversees the school hot lunch program—now extended to almost all schools in Grenada—and supervises the distribution of free powdered milk donated to Grenada by the EEC.

Ultimately, the success of Grenada's new approach to health depends on the evolution of participatory democracy in the society as a whole. As stated by the Prime Minister at the launching of the primary health care program in St. David's: "The link between health, democracy, and education is as critical as the link between health and production."³ There are already signs that Grenadians are willing to make health a community responsibility. In August 1981, when Dengue Fever swept the Caribbean, Grenadians turned out by the hundreds to clean their towns and villages to prevent infestation by the mosquito which carries the disease. The campaign was spearheaded by brigades of youth from the National Youth Organization summer camps, who shouted "NYO go manners the mosquito!"* as they unclogged drains and cleared refuse to destroy mosquito breeding grounds. The island-wide campaign was successful: Grenada was spared an outbreak of Dengue Fever as its first experiment in revolutionary public health paid off.

*To "manners"—to discipline, bring under control.

Voluntary Community Work

One of the biggest problems Grenada faced after the revolution was the physical rebuilding of the country's infrastructure, which deteriorated completely during the Gairy regime. The response to this challenge has been one of the revolution's most imaginative features and one which has demonstrated to many outsiders the reawakening of national spirit in Grenada. Voluntary, cooperative labor is the basis on which the physical transformation of the island is taking place. Roads are being repaired, community centers built, public buildings restored and house repairs made by the people themselves—willingly and joyfully. As even a critic of the revolution admitted: "The people have their country back."¹

Voluntary labor is not new for Grenadians. It has its roots in the custom of the *maroon*, a collective work project akin to a traditional New England barn-raising. The rapidity with which voluntary labor has become popular in Grenada—the government estimates that 90% of Grenadians participate—shows that the tradition of the *maroon* is not forgotten.

Today, the basic arrangement for making community improvements is that the government supplies the materials while members of the community provide free labor. Cooperative work takes place in most Grenada towns and villages every Sunday morning. It is entirely voluntary: as in any community activity, some people never participate while others always do, with most people taking part at least some of the time. The mass organizations (the NWO, the NYO, and the NJM party support groups) lead the process, organizing projects and soliciting participation. Materials for the repairs come from a government office created to support community work, the Social Projects Unit in the Ministry of Communication & Works.

In January 1980, over 4,000 Grenadians donated their labor to clear, repair and refurbish all 66 of the country's primary schools, most of which had not been touched for the 29 years of Gairy's rule. The campaign was a complete success, saving the government an estimated EC \$1 million and generating a sense of pride which spurred further community work. The next year, Grenadians began repairing the country's pre-primary (nursery) schools and building them in several villages which previously had none. People are also helping to build eight new community centers in Grenada, projects jointly financed by the PRG and the European Development Fund. Donating their labor enables Grenadians to feel that the new community centers are theirs—not just a handout from a donor agency or the government. When construction began on the Birchgrove center, over 200 people turned out to help lay the cement floor, and the townspeople worked so consistently on the center for the next seven months that it was completed two months ahead of schedule.²



Free West Indian

Voluntary road work

The other focus of community work is the island's road system, which requires constant repair due to the heavy tropical rains which pound the island. Major road work is done by crews employed by the government, but minor repairs and upkeep have been taken over by the people themselves. Every Sunday morning, people come out to patch potholes, unclog drains, and clear brush from the roads through their villages.

Grenada's newly-found spirit is especially visible in the blossoming of "roadside art." Before the second anniversary of the revolution, Grenadians decorated the entire island, painting walls, posts, rocks and even trees with bright geometric designs in the colors of the Grenadian flag.

Voluntary community work has saved the PRG millions of dollars and made other needed expenditures possible. Its most important impact, however, has been to build a sense of national self-

reliance and unity in Grenada. Before the revolution, the country's problems seemed overwhelming, and any attempt at local organization was quickly labeled subversive by Gairy. The revolution has turned this process around, encouraging people to view the country's problems as solvable through their own organization and hard work.

Our great work in building our communities reflects the creative and patriotic energy of our people. The work that we have already done stands as a symbol of commitment and unity. When we use our free time to do voluntary work in our community we are doing much more than just repairing a road or cleaning our community—we are building a deep and meaningful unity among us. By working together to build a better community for all we are destroying the selfishness and petty divisions of the past and replacing them with a new spirit of understanding and sacrifice.³

Housing Repair

While some Grenadians have been able to build comfortable houses with remittances from relatives abroad, much rural housing is substandard—in some cases, mere rickety wooden shacks. To help low-income families repair their homes, the PRG offers loans of EC \$1,000 per household for the purchase of building materials, repayable over a ten-year period at \$17 per month. Families with monthly incomes under EC \$150—mostly estate laborers and road workers—repay only two-thirds of the loan over a ten-year period at \$5 per month. The EC \$1 million program, financed partly by OPEC and several Arab states, is an important element of the revolution's support for Grenada's poor.



The Sister Islands: Carriacou and Petit Martinique

Twenty-six miles off Grenada's northeast tip lie the tiny islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique, dependencies of Grenada which complete the three-island nation. Carriacou, 13 miles square, has about 5,000 people, while Petit Martinique has just 500-600. The islands are divided ethnically between people of African descent, who live in central and southern Carriacou, and a smaller population of Scottish-French-Irish extraction living in northeastern Carriacou ("Windward") and in Petit Martinique. Intermarriage has broken down racial separation over the years, and there is no divisiveness between the peoples on the two islands. Rather, they are a tightly-knit community, loyal to their extended families and kinship groups, and conscious of their historical identity as Carriacou and Petit Martinique people.

In 1656, the missionary Jean Baptiste du Tertre visited Grenada and the Grenadines to appraise them for the Comte de Cerillac, who was thinking of buying the islands. Du Tertre proclaimed "Kayryouacou" to be "the most beautiful of all the little isles," i.e. of the Grenadines, the chain of rocks and islets dotted across the sixty miles between Grenada and St. Vincent to the north. Kayryouacou, the Carib Indian name for the island, eventually came to be written as Carriacou.

When the French colonized Grenada in the 17th century, they also settled on Carriacou, where they grew cotton. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1778,

The inhabitants collected about 1,200 slaves, by whose labor they made themselves a revenue of near 20,000 livres, i.e. over 4,000 pounds a year in cotton.²

Cotton could be grown in Carriacou because the island, while not flat, does not have Grenada's steep hills and heavy rains. An entirely different tradition of agriculture emerged on Carriacou: settlers intercropped cotton, the export crop, with corn and peas, the food crops. Because cotton is less labor intensive than sugar, the slaves on Carriacou had more free time for social activities.³ This allowed them to preserve their own cultural practices, including music and religion, to a greater extent than did the Africans on the sugar plantations in Grenada. The slaves on Carriacou continued to identify themselves as belonging to African tribes or "nations," of which the most important were Coromanti and Ibo.

When the British took over Carriacou along with Grenada in 1763, they immediately started up sugar plantations on the island. But even then, Carriacou differed from Grenada due to the use of a "task" system in which each slave had to complete a certain amount of work each day. When the task was finished, the slave would have the rest of the day free to spend at leisure or in money-making pursuits. In this way, many slaves made enough extra money (mostly by raising poultry

for export) that they were able to purchase their freedom or freedom for their wives and children.⁴

After emancipation, virtually all of the Carriacou plantocracy emigrated, leaving the ex-slaves to fend for themselves as squatters on the idle land. A massive migration from the island began, with many people going to Trinidad to become wage laborers. Those remaining on Carriacou raised sheep, pigs and poultry, grew cotton and limes, and built boats to export their produce to nearby islands. Around this time, some Scottish and Irish shipwrights and sailors migrated to Carriacou and Petit Martinique, where they became shipbuilders and fishermen.

Although the Carriacou people were enterprising and economically independent, life on Carriacou was hard, especially after years of severe drought in the 1800s. In 1897, a visitor to Carriacou wrote:

Then we went on a little further and landed at a little decaying island called Carriacou, where all the people were wretchedly poor. It is all owned by a few absentee proprietors in England and the people cannot get land of their own or rent any except by the year at exorbitant terms.⁵



Free West Indian



Public transportation for the first time in Carriacou

The land tenure situation was so bad that in 1903 the colonial government broke up most of the idle estates and parcelled out the land to the peasants. By the mid-20th century there were no large estates left on Carriacou.⁶ The departure of the plantocracy and the disappearance of the plantations set Carriacou on a path which differed in crucial ways from Grenada's. Carriacou society became relatively egalitarian, without an urban or planter elite. If someone became more affluent than his peers, the community would apply pressure on the fortunate person to share the wealth.⁷

Thus when Eric Gairy arrived on the Grenadian scene in 1951 and seized upon the estate laborers' frustration with the oppressive class system, he could wield no such influence in Carriacou or Petit Martinique. The sister islands rejected Gairy and Gairyism completely. Not only was there little class stratification for Gairy to play on, but Carriacouians and Petit Martiniquans have always seen themselves as separate from Grenada. Gairy's early political opponent, Herbert Blaize of the GNP party, came from Carriacou. Later, with the emergence of the New Jewel Movement, Carriacou became an important link in the anti-Gairy underground. Carriacouians regularly hid New Jewel supporters from Gairy's police:

Any time members of our party got wind that they would be beaten, they could always take refuge in Carriacou or Petit Martinique. The people would always welcome them, always shelter them.⁸

Gairy retaliated by victimizing Carriacou and Petit Martinique. The islands' roads, electricity and telephone systems disintegrated, there were no health facilities, and Carriacouians who sought jobs in the civil service were discriminated against.⁹ The exception was the period preceding the 1972 election, when Gairy bestowed some benefits on the sister islands in an effort to win votes. A cynical calypsonian recounts this episode:

*The Premier visited here recently
Is ah political move as I could see
He giving present, making promises
As if the whole ah the place he wants to be his
But if all "kayaks" had ah mind like me*
They stay well dayday and to hell with G.U.L.P. . .*

*Light in Grand Bay, tourist gift shop
The jetty to fix, new engine to work
First thing first in building ah community
L'Esterre and Windward should be next with elec-
tricity
Now all the Premier doing just take note
He 'en building Carriacou he building where he get he
vote.¹⁰*

Response to the Revolution

In many respects, the people of Carriacou and Petit Martinique still live today as they have for years. The islanders continue to grow corn and peas, to fish and build boats, and to trade with other islands as far away as Trinidad and (French) Martinique. The cotton and lime industries, however, have died out. Carriacou and Petit Martinique men still emigrate to seek employment, returning only to attend the funerals of relatives. Many black Carriacou people still identify with their African nations, and the Big Drum dance is held regularly. As late as the 1970s, older Carriacouians and Petit Martiniquans could be found speaking *patois*, the French-based dialect which has all but died out in Grenada.¹¹

But the revolution has brought tangible changes. Since 1979, Carriacou and Petit Martinique have begun to breach their centuries-old isolation from the "mainland," and participate in virtually all the programs of the revolution. Carriacou's participation in the CPE literacy program was so high that the island was named "most outstanding parish" for the program's first phase.

To reverse Gairy's policy of neglecting the sister islands, the PRG created a Carriacou Rehabilitation Task Force and set up a Carriacou and Petit Martinique Desk in the Prime Minister's office. The government's policy toward the islands has been to upgrade their services and infrastructure as rapidly as possible, with particular attention to road resurfacing, electrification, and health care. There are now three resident Cuban doctors on Carriacou, one of whom visits Petit Martinique weekly. To stimulate the islands' economies—and, it is hoped, eventually curb the tide of outmigration—the PRG has initiated four projects. These are modernization of the fishing industry, revival of the cotton industry, an experimental farm which raises Black Belly Sheep for export (using a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank); and tourism development, which began with the opening of a hotel on Carriacou in the summer of 1981. George Prime, a Carriacou native who is now Deputy Secretary of

*"Kayaks"—Carriacou people

Carriacou Affairs, reflects on the process of change coming to the sister islands:

When I returned from England I sensed a complete change in the air. I was sent immediately to Carriacou. I saw how it had been downtrodden by Gairy in every way . . .

Our task was to regenerate the island. We had to build a sense of collective organization, and also begin to satisfy all kinds of basic social needs.

As the programs got going we began to see people's participation growing and flourishing. As the roads began to be repaired the response was very positive, as it was when we introduced a Public Transport System, opened a new hotel and started to electrify some unelectrified villages. We saw voluntary community work every Sunday morning, something entirely new in Carriacou. And the mass organizations began to grow fast.

Carriacou still has a real problem of migration, but we are now beginning to see people coming back. . . . We still have a long, long way to go and a lot of ground to be covered. It calls for unity and organization. But we have unity traditionally in Carriacou, and our organization is growing every day.¹²

The People's Militia

A Revolution which has the support of the people but which cannot defend itself very soon will be no revolution at all. The very process of building a revolution creates a backlash, creates an impetus towards counter-revolution by the enemy of all revolutions, imperialism. Having the support of the people, but not having the means for the people to defend themselves, is a lesson we have to learn from Chile and Jamaica and other countries. That is why the arming of all our people, the involvement of all our people in the People's Militia, is of such fundamental importance.

—Deputy Prime Minister Bernard Coard
Address at First International
Conference in Solidarity with Grenada
November 24, 1981

A People's Militia has existed in Grenada since the beginning of the revolution, but in its first year it was somewhat disorganized. It was the attempted assassination of the PRG leadership at Queen's Park in June 1980 that was the stimulus for a major modernization and expansion of the militia. After the bombing, thousands of people volunteered to join, particularly women, who now constitute some 35% of the militia



Cathy Sunshine



Free West Indian

Route march preceding militia maneuvers in response to Ocean Venture '81

corps.¹ The militia was restructured to improve supervision and coordination, and regular training for volunteers began on Wednesdays. Volunteers are trained in the use of all kinds of military hardware, including anti-aircraft weaponry.

The militia resembles a "national guard" in that members hold regular civilian jobs and participate in the militia on a part-time, voluntary basis. They can be called up at any time in case of a national emergency. Unlike the National Guard in the United States, however, the militia includes a wide cross-section of the Grenadian population: men and women from every age group, class, and section of the country. This universal character of the militia is reinforced by its ties with the mass organizations. Through the National Women's Organization, for example, many women attended a first aid course and subsequently volunteered for the first aid component of the militia.

The second major impetus for the growth of the militia was "Ocean Venture '81," massive naval maneuvers conducted by the United States in the Caribbean in August 1981. The fictional scenario for the war games singled out Grenada as a target for invasion, and U.S. forces carried out a mock invasion of the island at Vieques, Puerto Rico. The same month, the Grenadian militia conducted full-scale maneuvers in Grenada as a response to the U.S. initiative. Public rallies, "route marches" and mobilizations were held in sixteen centers around the island, as practice for defending the island against external attack.

While the idea of "defending" tiny Grenada against the military might of the United States might seem ridiculous, Grenadians do not see it that way. They are conscious of the fact that patriotic Cubans turned back the Bay of Pigs invasion in a matter of hours. Short of

dropping an atomic bomb, an invasionary force would have to attack Grenada from the air or sea, and Grenada's territory would be defended in that case by a huge percentage of the population, making the cost of an attack high. The trust between the PRG and the Grenadian people is nowhere more evident than in the picture of an armed people voluntarily fighting *with* their government—not, as in so many tragic cases in the region, against it.

The Army and the Police

In addition to the People's Militia, Grenada has a regular army of full-time soldiers. In peacetime, the People's Revolutionary Army helps with community development projects and raises vegetables and livestock at their camps. The Army's goal is to feed itself, and thus be less of a burden on the national economy.

What distinguishes the Army and the Police in revolutionary Grenada from their counterparts under Gairy is their respect for and connection with the masses of the people. Rather than being an arm of the government used to dominate the people, they are public servants, accountable to the people. In keeping with this relationship, the residents of an area outside St. George's recently called the Commissioner of Police before a public meeting to listen to their complaints about police performance—in this case, the failure to apprehend an escaped prisoner who was menacing the area.² The prisoner was duly caught, and the relationship of trust reinforced between the security forces and the people through the process of accountability and popular power.

Footnotes

The Economy

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
3. EPICA interview with Grenada Ministry of Planning staff, Sept. 1981.
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7. Minister of Finance Bernard Coard, address at First International Solidarity Conference with Grenada, Nov. 24, 1981.
8. *Free West Indian*, April 18, 1981, p. 7.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
10. *Granma Weekly Review*, July 12, 1981, p. 4.
11. EPICA interview with Ministry of Planning staff, Sept. 1981.
12. *Ibid.* In 1981 this limit was 7%.
13. Interview with Prime Minister Bishop, *Granma Weekly Review*, July 12, 1981, p. 4.
14. EPICA interview with NACDA staff, May 1981.
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16. R. Cole, draft, "A Proposed Orientation and Approach for the National Planning System," Grenada Ministry of Planning, May 22, 1981.
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2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. EPICA interview with NACDA staff, September 1981.
5. EPICA interview with Unison Whiteman, Minister of Agriculture, May 1981.

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
3. *Ibid.*, citing Maurice Bishop address at the National Education Conference, July 2, 1979, p. 19.
4. Searle and Bishop, *Education*, p. 19.
5. Grenada Ministry of Education, "Let Us Learn Together" (Centre for Popular Education, St. George's, Grenada, 1980), p. 31.
6. *Free West Indian*, "CPE Special Report," Feb. 28, 1981, p. 7.
7. *Ibid.*, "Volunteers Battle Illiteracy," Feb. 28, 1981, p. 8.
8. Grenada Ministry of Education, *Freedom Has No Price* (Centre for Popular Education, St. George's, 1980), p. 3.
9. Chris Searle interview with James Wilson, May 1, 1981.
10. *Free West Indian*, Nov. 1, 1980.
11. Grenada, *Government Information Services release*, Oct. 29, 1981.
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2. *Free West Indian*, May 16, 1981, p. 15.
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3. Donald Hill, "The Impact of Migration on the Metropolitan and Folk Society of Carriacou, Grenada," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of History*, vol. 54 (1977), p. 401.
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The People's Militia

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2. EPICA interview with Police Commissioner Ian St. Bernard, Nov. 1981.



Headley D'Acres—Jamaica Journal

The Growth of Popular Democracy



Is Freedom We Making



Women

People who opposed Gairy always lived in fear. Our own home was searched by his Mongoose men on many occasions. People were always saying "who next" would be searched, and women were particularly afraid to speak in case their husbands or children were victimized.

Women usually had to sell their bodies to get work, either to Gairy himself or his Ministers. Other women who spoke out against the rising costs of sugar or other goods would find victimization for themselves and their families. Other women who spoke out, like nurses, would be transferred to Carriacou or far away from their homes.

We had NWO groups underground before the Revolution. Women in the different villages would organize, and we had six underground groups. We printed pamphlets, attacking the high cost of living, and calling for equal pay for equal work. We used to do house-to-house underground, and speak to the people who were against Gairy about why change was important and how women would benefit from it.¹

Gairy's regime was famous for "sexploitation": the widespread practice of demanding sexual favors from women in exchange for scholarships or employment. Private employers, too, responded to the same general climate, demanding sex from female employees and firing pregnant workers. Some 70% of women between the ages of 15 and 30 could not find jobs, and women routinely earned less than men for doing the same work.²

As the anti-Gairy movement grew, Grenadian women began to play an active, behind-the-scenes role. This activism cut across all divisions of age and class, involving uneducated rural women as well as professionals like teachers and nurses. Women sold the *New Jewel* paper on street corners, conveyed messages secretly, and offered their homes as meeting places and shelters for the NJM. On revolution day, women cooked for the soldiers of the People's Revolutionary Army, helped make arrests and occupied police stations until Gairy's forces surrendered.

In the months following the revolution, women made several major gains. The PRG put an immediate and complete stop to sexploitation by government officials, and passed a law prohibiting all forms of sexual discrimination. After extensive consultation with women's groups, unions, and employers' associations, the government passed a Maternity Leave Law giving female employees in all occupations the right to two months' paid leave for each childbirth.³ Both laws are enforced, although violations are usually corrected by a warning since employers know that women are now protected by law.⁴ The government also committed itself to a policy of "equal pay for equal work," and has equalized pay for male and female laborers on the road crews and state farms.⁵

The government established a Women's Desk in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Social Affairs to be the "state vehicle by which women can make their needs known."⁶ This office coordinates national programs for women and advises the PRG on matters which affect them. One of the projects of the Women's Desk is to review all the criminal and civil laws of Grenada for elements which discriminate against women.



Arthur Winner

pride of bearing

*The women walk
bodies balancing
each day's measure
of history's weight.*

*Belly's birth
toil's triumph—
the fruits of our labour
early and late.*

*On hips
in hands
on heads held high,
each one's load
determines her stride,
paces her future,
becomes her pride,
yesterday's pressure,
the new day's guide.*

Michelle Gibbs



The National Women's Organization

If it is true that the revolution has changed the status of women in Grenada, it is even more accurate to say that *through their involvement in the revolution, Grenadian women are changing themselves*. Advancement has come not so much through pressure for women's rights as an isolated issue (the model of the U.S. feminist movement) as through women's active participation and leadership in the revolution as a whole.

The National Women's Organization (NWO) is the structural expression of the women's movement in Grenada. It has two main functions:

- it is the catalyst for women's involvement in the programs of the revolution, recruiting women to volunteer as participants and leaders; and
- it is the main pressure group for women's rights, education and advancement in Grenada. The NWO's goal is to see Grenadian women achieve full equality *as part of the overall development process* taking place in Grenada.

The NWO is based on its 161 local groups, which women have formed in towns and villages all over the island. Each local group decides upon and carries out its own projects, with guidance from a Parish Coordinating Team.⁷ Groups often undertake projects such as painting a clinic or school, or sewing toys for a day-care center. Since 1980, the NWO has become increasingly involved in projects of a national scope in cooperation with the PRG. The NWO led the campaign to repair all the primary schools and pre-primary schools in the country. The creation of a string of day



Free West Indian

Cuban and Trinidadian women attending a work-study camp at Pope Paul Ecumenical Center in Grenada.



Many women have joined the militia

care centers is a joint effort between the NWO and the Ministry of Education: the NWO local groups repair and furnish the buildings for the nurseries, while the government trains and pays the nurseries' staff. The NWO is also working with NACDA and the Women's Desk to start up cooperatives for women in the areas of baking and home canning; the first opened in December 1981.

As the NWO expands its membership and influence, it has become instrumental in carrying out the revolution's social programs. For example, the NWO is playing a key role in setting up the new national primary health care system which began in the fall of 1981. Such programs cannot be imposed from the top down; they depend on active participation by the people at the grassroots level. The NWO and the other mass organizations reach out to people and bring them into this process.

As the NWO has matured, it has come to focus on education, skills, and leadership training as the only long-term solutions to the problem of women's inequality. The NWO's national work plan for May to October 1981 reflected this concern by emphasizing education for its members. The Women's Desk offered a series of talks which local groups could request on topics such as nutrition, child care, family planning, Grenadian history, political issues, and the economy. The NWO also offered leadership training sessions for women in executive positions within the local groups and parish coordinating teams.⁸

Top women in the government

Dessima Williams, *Ambassador to the Organization of American States*

Government Ministers

Jacqueline Creft, *Minister of Education, Youth and Social Affairs*

Phyllis Coard, *Vice Minister for Women's Affairs and President, National Women's Organization*

Claudette Pitt, *Vice Minister for Community Development*

Permanent Secretaries (Senior executives responsible for running of ministries)

Marcella David, *Cabinet Secretary* (coordinates work of the PRG Cabinet)

Dorcas Braveboy, *Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Health*

Lew Bourne, *Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Housing*

Gloria Payne-Banfield, *Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Planning*

Faye Rapiere, *Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Legal Affairs*

Program Heads

Valerie Cornwall, *National Coordinator of Center for Popular Education*

Jane Belfon, *Director of Tourism*

Merle Hodge, *Coordinator of Curriculum Development Program*

Yvonne James, *Health Planner in Ministry of Health*
Candia Alleyne, *Coordinator of Food and Nutrition Council*

Joan Ross, *Program Director for Television Free Grenada*

Regina Taylor, *General Secretary of Agency for Rural Transformation*

Angela Cape, *Deputy Manager of National Marketing and Importing Board*

Bridget Horsford, *Manager of Agro-Industrial Plant*

Toward Equality

Grenadians see full equality for women as something which cannot be achieved overnight, but which will emerge out of the process of building the whole society in a revolutionary way. As a step toward erasing occupational stereotypes, the PRG awards scholarships to women for technical studies abroad, and encourages them to enroll in the vocational training schools in Grenada (such as the Mirabeau Agricultural School and the Fisheries School.) Women are slowly moving into non-traditional occupations such as carpentry, plumbing, fisheries, and agricultural cooperatives. They are steadily rising in the government hierarchy, with the appointment of a female Cabinet minister in July 1981.

Most importantly, women at the grassroots level are taking an active part in the building of participatory democracy in Grenada. They attend the parish and zonal council meetings in force: at some of these meetings well over half the attendance is female. There is a fundamental compatibility between the revolution's emphasis on community organization and voluntarism, and the interests of Grenadian women, who have traditionally based their identity on family and community ties. This does not mean that women have shied away from the more militant aspects of the revolution. Following the June 19 bombing, when three young girls were killed, slightly over 50% of the new militia volunteers were women.⁹ Although the revolution cannot transform the status of women instantaneously—and there is still much ground to cover—Grenadian women are conscious that their advancement and that of the revolution are inextricably linked.

Women is real, real out now, you know. Before, they had no kind of say, no privilege, no stand in Grenada. Women was the lowest. But now we pushing on, pushing on. We feeling more confident, we heart is open now.
72-year-old woman, Birchgrove¹⁰



Free West Indian

Youth

More than any other group, Grenadian youth were the driving force behind the 1979 revolution, the "front-line soldiers" for the New Jewel Movement. The anti-Gairy forces married the disillusionment and oppression of the peasantry with the energetic anger of the youth and urban workers. So identified with youth was the NJM that Gairy tried to use this to discredit his opposition, claiming during the 1976 election campaign that the NJM planned to kill everyone over forty and turn the churches into discoteques.

Underlying the militancy of the youth during the Gairy years was the reality of the social conditions they faced. The crippling 50% unemployment rate convinced youth that they had no future under Gairy. This was true even for those who completed secondary school, since Gairy awarded employment and scholarships along lines of personal and political loyalty rather than according to qualifications.¹ Being better educated than many older Grenadians, youth viewed Gairy in a different light. They were embarrassed by his crude affectations, his ignorance and his superstitions, and they deeply resented the international ridicule to which Gairy's regime had subjected Grenada. Young Grenadians did not remember "Uncle Gairy, the Workers' Hero," so he had no psychological hold over them; all they knew was his brutality. It was the youth who most often suffered the brunt of police violence for taking part in demonstrations and opposition rallies, in which even primary school children were beaten and tear-gassed.

After the New Jewel Movement took power, the problem faced by the leadership was to maintain the intense commitment and militancy of the youth during the longer process of social rebuilding. Many youth who helped to overthrow Gairy had an inadequate understanding of the revolutionary struggle which would follow. Some expected the new government to instantly solve major problems such as unemployment—a miracle no government could produce. Thus the leadership and the more conscious youth had to educate the youth as a whole as to the hard work and prolonged commitment necessary for a social transformation.

The NYO

The National Youth Organization (NYO) is the liaison between Grenadian youth and the PRG. Its task is to organize and educate youth to take part in the revolutionary struggle. Before the revolution, the NYO was the youth arm of the NJM, operating underground with about 40 members. It was opened to mass membership in June 1980, and claimed over 7,000 members by the end of 1981.²

Like the NWO, the NYO encourages its members to become involved in the programs of the revolution.



Free West Indian

About 65% of the volunteer teachers in the Center for Popular Education literacy drive came from the NYO. The NYO has also been extremely successful in recruiting volunteers for the militia.

The NYO's programs emphasize sports, culture and employment training. Sports such as cricket and soccer are important to Grenadian youth, but were suppressed by Gairy ("The only game which Gairy didn't squeeze was lawn tennis, which he played with the upper class.")³ Cultural expression likewise did not flower until after the revolution. Youth are now beginning to produce prodigious amounts of creative work in the form of songs, dances, poetry and plays, commenting on Grenadian history and present reality.

"Youth Camp '81" represented the NYO's move into the area of skills training in a decisive way. Eight hundred teenagers signed up for the camps, which lasted for six weeks during the summer of 1981. Each of the camps chose a name from regional or Grenadian history: Camp Fedon, Camp Che, Camp Rodney (named for murdered Guyanese intellectual Walter Rodney), Camp Richardson (named for Grenadian martyr Jeremiah Richardson) and Camp Noel (named for Scotilda Noel, a Grenadian woman activist killed in 1979.) The campers could choose between a wide range of program offerings, of which the most popular at every camp was the agricultural "work-study."

It was a real tight and interesting program. We had skills training: that included sewing, handicraft, wood-work, first aid. We had sports administration and training. We had leadership training, and there was also the regular military training, the usual Wednesday afternoon militia day, for all the members of the militia.

One thing I shouldn't forget to mention is that great work-study program, where the youths went out to the state farms and worked there three days a week for three hours on the farms. And one day in the classroom, doing the theoretical agricultural work. That program was the largest program. It did have an impact on the youths because most of them came from non-agricultural areas and they were very interested in being there with the agricultural workers, being able to help them. Being able to see for themselves how you plant the banana trees. All it takes from the time you plant it until the time you remove the flowers, sleeve it, and it's ready for exporting.

The youths from that work-study program had the highest spirits. In fact when they came back from the farms and entered the center, you would hear them shouting: "Long live the Revolution—It's Agriculture!" and "Grow More Food, Build the Revolution!" Those were the kind of slogans you would hear them shouting when they came back from the farms each day.⁴

The success of the agricultural work-study was important for two reasons. It made a concrete contribution to the national economy: in three weeks, the campers harvested 2,000 lbs. of nutmeg, cultivated 1,400 banana trees, planted 2,600 eggplants and helped in many other ways. Secondly, the campers' enthusiasm for the work indicated a growing awareness among the youth that agriculture is fundamental to the revolution and to their own futures. This marks a beginning departure from the negative attitudes toward agriculture long held by many Grenadian youth.

The question of agriculture is closely linked to the greatest problem facing Grenada's youth: unemployment and underemployment, which exist in epidemic proportions all over the Caribbean. The PRG's attack on the problem is two-fold: expanding and diversifying the economy to create new jobs, while at the same time attracting youth back to farming through programs like the Youth Camp and the development of agricultural cooperatives. The PRG believes that unemployment has fallen from 49% to 28% in the first two years of the revolution,⁵ which would bring Grenada's unemployment rate roughly into line with that of other Eastern Caribbean islands. But the problem is still severe: there is no "quick fix,"



Women and youth have led the way in voluntary community work.

only a long slow process of building up the economy through labor, investment and technological improvements. While most youth are fairly optimistic about the employment question, many are still worried and are prone to frustration if progress does not seem rapid enough.⁶ The relationship of Grenadian youth to the revolution is thus a dynamic one: their commitment is active and vocal, but at a deeper level depends on solving the problem of underdevelopment. As the youth come to understand the role of imperialism in creating Caribbean underdevelopment, they have become more serious in their commitment to the revolution and more patient in their timetable for change.

The Dialogue Between Labor And the PRG

In traditional disagreements between labor and management, third party arbitration is a common practice in the Western capitalist world. In revolutionary Grenada, the arbiter has frequently been the PRG. In most strikes and unresolved labor disputes, the government prefers to first let things "run their course," allowing union leadership and management to work out their differences before the government intervenes. What management has increasingly discovered, however, is that under the PRG it must now deal with two new dynamics: a) that union leaders and rank-and-file workers are becoming more politically aware and increasingly supporting the revolution; and b) that when the government does act, it usually comes down on the side of the workers.

These two new factors have not come about either spontaneously or immediately, but through continued dialogue. The growing political consciousness of workers has been the fruit of regular visits by government officials to work places and Workers Parish Council meetings. The arbitration of strikes by the PRG often involves months of discussion in order to work out grievances. In both cases, the tradition of arbitrary action by union leadership, management or government has in Grenada been increasingly replaced by the PRG's "secret weapon"... dialogue.

To resolve labor disputes while at the same time seeking improvements for the workers might have been easier during "normal" times when the economy was relatively healthy. Today, however, Grenada, like most Caribbean island economies, is struggling to survive the present Western economic crisis with its high inflation and collapsing world markets. Even more serious for Grenada is the fact that the United States is actively trying to weaken the island's economy, hoping to turn the working class against the revolution. Given these harsh realities, telling the people the truth about the economy and insisting on open dialogue between labor and government have become essential aspects of the revolutionary process.

In January 1981, public workers threatened to strike if their demand for an immediate 35% salary increase was not met. Despite the fact that negotiations were underway, with the PRG offering a 12% increase, the leaders of the Public Workers Union (PWU), the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT), and the Technical and Allied Workers Union (TAWU) called a large-scale "sick-out" action just before the 2nd anniversary celebration in March. Only about 40% of the union members supported the sick-out, however, while a majority of the workers challenged the action.¹ Hundreds marched in protest, carrying signs which read: "Sick-out can't stop we festival" and "If you sick-out, stay out forever." While issuing warnings of disciplinary action to some 70 persons, more than half

of them school principals, the government reiterated its desire "to resolve this dispute speedily and in the best interests of all concerned."²

Progressive labor in Grenada is represented by a newsletter called the *Workers' Voice*. In response to the sick-out crisis, the *Voice* supported the public workers' right to bargain and called for a careful examination of all the facts and figures, emphasizing that the public workers had been working hard to build up the country. But at the same time, the newspaper cautioned the workers to remember the economic situation and the need for everyone to sacrifice:

But even when all that is done, it will still be the duty of the union negotiators (on behalf of their members) and the government negotiators (on behalf of all of our people) to look to see how they can find the best possible terms for the public workers. There is, and will always be, a limit to what the country can afford. As unpleasant as it may be, that is the harsh economic reality.³

The sick-out, coming as it did just before the anniversary celebrations, had all the earmarks of an attempt to discredit the PRG. A number of the foreign reporters in Grenada for the anniversary made this anti-government protest the focus of their coverage; and subsequently, some of the foreign press, such as



The Bankers and General Workers Union is Grenada's largest trade union, with over 3,000 members.

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Time magazine, played it up as proof of widespread worker dissatisfaction with the revolution. Responding to these charges, the PRG said:

"[The PRG] recognizes the rights of all workers to take legitimate and reasonable industrial action," [but] it felt that these rights carried an equal obligation to protect the country's interests. [The sick-out is] "part of a plan by certain unpatriotic and counter-revolutionary elements to disrupt the second anniversary celebrations of our glorious March 13 Revolution and embarrass the PRG and the Grenadian people in face of our numerous friends and well-wishers."⁴

This statement by the government was not enough to resolve the problem, even though mediation continued. The PRG realized that open discussion with the rank-and-file was needed at the workplace. In April 1981, the Prime Minister visited some 23 factories, union halls, market places, banks and farms, and attended a general meeting of the Agricultural and General Workers Union (AGWU) where a crowd of 1,800 workers showed up. Discussing work conditions, pay demands, and the PRG's labor policies, Maurice Bishop placed these issues in the perspective of the national struggle to build a revolutionary society. The result of this grassroots dialogue was a massive turnout for May Day 1981, in which nearly all the unions participated, including the PWT, GUT, and TAWU workers. This represented a clear turnabout from the tense climate reflected by the sick-outs in March.

The crisis involving the public workers was finally resolved through union-government negotiations on August 6, 1981, with a wage agreement between the PRG and the leadership of the GUT, PWU and TAWU. This agreement involved a 3-year contract with salary increases of 17.3%, 10% and 12.5% in 1981, 1982 and 1983 respectively.

This is but one example of the PRG's approach to labor disputes through dialogue. The method is slow, personal and usually takes a longer time to reach resolution than traditional methods of arbitration. But in the end, it is having a creative impact on Grenadian workers, who now see they can resolve their differences with management with the backing of government.

The matter did not end there for the Public Workers Union, however, as the workers continued to press for greater democracy within the union. In November, over 300 PWU workers convened a "special general meeting":

The meeting was called by the workers after consistent failures of the executive of the union (PWU) to hold general meetings. The workers claimed that the union was in a state of disorganization, that the present structure of the union does not provide for full worker participation, and that there is no accountability to the workers.⁵

Thus the government's encouragement of democratic participation in the society as a whole is producing a parallel process within the unions themselves.

The Peasantry and Estate Laborers

Despite the historic ties between Grenada's independent peasantry and estate laborers, they divided over the question of support for Gairy. Gairy ignored the small farmers, who in turn showed little support for him. The farmers reacted to Gairy's seizure of the nutmeg, cocoa and banana producer boards by demonstrating through the streets of St. George's and even appealing personally to the then-Governor General of Grenada, Dame Hilda Bynoe, for a return to democratically-elected producer boards. Many small farmers were involved in the New Jewel Movement, and they participated in the March 1979 takeover along with the majority of Grenadians.

The estate laborers, on the other hand, were tied firmly to Gairy by their lack of education and their emotional memories of 1951, and they remained largely loyal to him up to the time of his overthrow. Their reaction to the March 1979 revolution was one of fear.

However, the NJM moved quickly to win the support of the rural laborers by showing more concrete concern for their welfare than Gairy ever had. Within a week of the revolution, the new government created an Agricultural Workers Council which visited all the



Michelle Gibbs



Coordinators of house repair program visit home to be repaired

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estates and held sessions with the workers, discovering that:

- Workers on many estates were receiving less than the minimum daily wage of EC \$6.80 for men and \$5.80 for women. Some were getting as little as \$2 per day (U.S. \$0.80).
- Workers received no benefits such as sick leave or overtime pay. Hours of work were arbitrarily determined by the estate owners.
- Estates lacked facilities such as toilets, running water, or lunch rooms for the workers.¹

The government immediately moved to correct these shocking conditions by meeting with the estate owners and setting deadlines for remedial action. As their pay and working conditions improved, the rural laborers gradually became more receptive to the idea of entering into an organized relationship with the revolution. Many were initially reluctant to join a new union, after their long experience with Gairy's corrupt GMMWU, but members of the Agricultural Workers Council organized persistently in the rural areas, discussing the need for a democratic labor union to protect workers' rights. When the Agricultural and General Workers Union (AGWU) was initially registered in November 1979, it had a membership of 1,000, including laborers on both government and private estates and workers on state road repair crews. The union received permanent registration one year later and by the end of 1981 had grown to 2,300 members.²

In September 1981, AGWU led a successful strike on eight estates after two weeks of negotiations with management had failed to secure an agreement to pay workers on national holidays. The *Free West Indian* noted that the strike differed fundamentally from the random violent uprisings of the Gairy years:

Unlike striking agricultural workers of 1951, who were reacting spontaneously to oppression, the Bagatelle and Lesterville workers were an organized, united, conscious, and militant section of the working people, demanding their rights without a fabric of uncertainty.³

AGWU bargains with management on both the private estates (many of which are still run along semi-feudal lines) and on the state farms, which are managed by the Grenada Farms Corporation. Although the GFC is a state entity, it includes some politically conservative elements with ownership interests in the private estates, retained by the PRG because of their technical expertise. The ties between the GFC and the private sector mean that sometimes these managers resist the introduction of benefits for state farm workers, for fear of setting a precedent with respect to the private estates.⁴

Shortly after the revolution, AGWU worked out with the government a profit-sharing scheme which was implemented on government estates last year. In what is shaping up as a major battle between workers and owners, AGWU is pressing for the adoption of profit-sharing on the private estates as well.

The result of the PRG's support for the agricultural laborers has been the virtual elimination of "Gairyism" in this sector. The revolution's social programs, especially housing repair, maternity leave (many estate workers are women), equal pay for equal work, and free health care and schooling have raised the estate workers' standard of living for the first time in many years.⁵

The rural peasantry has also benefited from these social programs, and from the substantial assistance programs of the Ministry of Agriculture. Despite their fierce tradition of independence, the small farmers are gradually becoming more interested in farmer-to-farmer cooperation, and the Productive Farmers Union now has over 1,000 members. Farmers meet monthly at Farmers' Parish Council meetings to discuss their concerns as well as national and international issues. Through these meetings, the PRG has involved farmers directly in analyzing the problems which affect the agricultural sector. By placing farmers at the center of its agricultural strategy and supporting their production, the PRG has ensured solid support for the revolution from this sector.



The Torchlight

Willie Bishop, head of Gairy's Mongoose Gang, during his court trial in late 1979. He is serving a 12-year prison term on counts of grievous harm and attempted murder.

The Problem of Political Detainees

In a revolutionary situation, the only way to avoid detaining counter-revolutionaries and terrorists is through exile or the firing squad. The PRG has rejected both of these paths. Nor has the government created any special court to try political prisoners. Instead, the PRG has followed a policy of bringing groups of detainees up for review and releasing the majority of them.

Persons still in detention fall into two categories: members of Gairy's Mongoose Gang and secret police, of whom about 14 of the most dangerous are still being held; and persons implicated in counter-revolutionary and terrorist violence since the revolution. Twenty-eight persons have been charged so far under the 1979 Preventive Detention Regulation or the 1980 Prevention of Terrorism Law, and a number are now before the courts.¹

There have been two types of criticism of the PRG on the detainee issue. On the one hand,

the Catholic Church and the ecumenical publication *Caribbean Contact* have criticized the PRG for the holding of detainees without charge or trial. The reasons given by the PRG for this delay are the lack of competent lawyers, and the need to try political cases under the new constitution on which preliminary work has just begun. *Caribbean Contact* reported in January 1982 that the PRG was undertaking a high level review of the cases of nearly all the detainees still held without charge, presumably as a prelude to their release.²

On the other hand, allegations of brutal treatment of the detainees have come from the United States government, conservative Caribbean governments, and the U.S. and Caribbean reactionary media. These allegations have not been substantiated, and Grenadian church leaders who have visited the detainees in prison have made no complaints about their treatment. In an effort to clear the air

on the brutality issue, CCC General Secretary Roy Neehall wrote to Maurice Bishop, receiving in response a firm assurance that "the Grenada revolution continues to live up to its humanitarian principles." The PRG has also invited the Organization of American States to send a delegation to inspect the conditions under which the detainees live.³

Caribbean Contact has been quite clear in its analysis of the real motivation behind the United States' vocal allegations of human rights violations in Grenada. Like "free elections," political prisoners are of concern to the U.S. when a revolutionary regime is in question, but are never mentioned in the case of U.S.-leaning regimes such as Haiti, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, Guyana, the Philippines, and so forth.⁴ The question of whether the PRG is justified in holding detainees without trial must be separated from the United States' very political use of the detainee issue.

Building Revolutionary Democracy

To be genuinely revolutionary, a people cannot merely overturn oppressive social and political structures; they must replace them with new ones which fulfill their needs. This is the essence of what is taking place in Grenada today.

In response to the growing popularity of the revolution in its first two years, the PRG decided in the spring of 1981 to open membership in the party support groups and the mass organizations to the general public—that is, to all supporters of the revolution, rather than only to party members and the most active supporters. The result was a huge influx of people into the existing organs of popular democracy, the Parish Council meetings. These started in 1978 as monthly meetings of all the NJM party support groups in each parish, and continued after the revolution as a forum for dialogue between the leadership and the people. As the Parish Councils mushroomed, they had to be decentralized to accommodate the new volume of participation. Each of Grenada's six parishes was broken down into several zones, and a new structure was incorporated into Grenada's evolving political process: the Zonal Council meetings.¹

Simultaneously, the NJM set up parallel structures for each of the major groups: workers, farmers, women and youth. Issues of specific concern to these sectors are discussed at monthly Workers' Parish Council meetings, Farmers' Parish Council meetings, and parish meetings of the NWO and NYO.

The purpose of all of these structures is to provide formal and regular channels for interaction between the Grenadian people and the PRG. The process is based on the principal of *accountability*: the political leadership and the officials in charge of government programs must face the masses on a regular basis to account for their performance in running the country. A member of the PRG Cabinet is always present at the meetings, and the people may also request in advance the presence of any government official whom they wish to question. These have included, among others, the head of the Water Department, the manager of the electric company, and the Commissioner of Police.

At the first Workers' Parish Council meeting in St. George's, attended by 500 workers, people raised complaints about the road system, transportation, water supply, and telephones.² A month later, at the second meeting, the Minister of National Mobilization reported back to the people on specific steps the government had taken in each area. In response to complaints about the electricity supply, the manager of Grenlec was called forward to discuss the functioning of the electric company and the problems which prevented the company from delivering enough power.³ The workers' and zonal council meetings have been growing in popularity. The fourth Workers' Parish Council meeting for the parish of St. George's drew over 800 workers, who questioned officials from the Department of Public Health and the Price Control Division.⁴ Discussions at the meetings generally reflect the particular concerns of the area in which the meeting is held. Thus a Workers' Parish Council meeting in the agricultural parish of St. Andrew's listened to AGWU President Fitzroy Bain discuss a recent strike on several agricultural estates, and an explanation of the new land reform law by the Minister of Legal Affairs.⁵



1980 congress of the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union

Free West Indian

In addition to the accountability procedure, the meetings serve as a channel of popular input into the legislative process. From the beginning, the making of laws in Grenada has been based on the concept of consultation with the public. The Maternity Leave Law, for example, was not passed in final form until every organized body in the country concerned in any way with the law had offered its comments and criticisms on the draft.⁶ With the expansion of the organs of popular democracy, the channels for such input are becoming more formal. For example, complaints raised at Zonal Council meetings about exploitative landlords and high rents spurred the Ministry of Legal Affairs to draft a proposed Rent Restriction Act. A fact sheet on the draft law was then distributed at subsequent meetings for the people to take home and analyze in their unions and mass organizations. Through these organizations, they then responded formally to the government with

their suggestions, on which the final law was based.⁷ A land reform law was passed and then amended in a similar manner.

The process of democratizing national legislation and policy-making moved forward seriously in the fall of 1981 when the government announced that

In its continuing efforts to deepen the process of people's democracy now taking place in the country, the People's Revolutionary Government will, for the first time, present the national financial budget for 1982 to the people for criticisms, suggestions, and recommendations.⁸

The budget was formulated through a four-step process. First, the Ministry of Finance studied expenditure requests from all governmental departments and met with officials from the other Ministries to discuss their financial needs. At the end of November, a preliminary draft budget was submitted to the PRG Cabinet for discussion.

The Election Question

Probably no other issue has generated so much controversy with regard to Grenada as the PRG's decision not to call general elections in the first three years of the revolution. Shortly after the NJM came to power, Prime Minister Bishop announced that the PRG expected an early return to "free and fair elections." Subsequently, the leadership made clear that general elections could only take place under the auspices of a new constitution, and that this constitution would be drafted by the people through the new democratic structures being put in place. Since the formation of these structures is a long-term process, the PRG's position was quickly labeled a "failure to call elections" by critics of the revolution. Even some sympathetic observers, such as *Caribbean Contact*, publically wondered why the PRG had not bothered to immediately call elections they "could easily have won."¹

The PRG's answer is that the majority of Grenadians were not anxious for a speedy return to any elements of the system which had oppressed them. Like the North American colonists, who waited for 14 years after the American Revolution before holding elections, Grenadians are giving

highest priority to the consolidation of the revolutionary process and the urgent task of raising the standard of living for the majority. Elections are a part of this process: they occur every day within the mass organizations and the unions, as members choose officers and delegates and vote on policy. But the focus of this activity is on united people and enabling them to work together, not dividing them. Trinidadian Merle Hodge comments on the way in which traditional two-party politics has contributed to Caribbean underdevelopment:

We are insulted and we insult ourselves for as long as we continue to swallow the idea that where people are not divided into two camps facing each other across an imaginary line drawn by those in command, there is no democracy. This is the most criminal legacy of Westminster in our Caribbean.

Instead of working toward the unification of all the energies and talents of our people, the channeling of all our human resources into the task of development, our leaders prefer to keep us divided against ourselves.

What better way to turn Grenada back into one more cul-de-sac of infighting than to force a General Election? Get the campaigning and the

platforming and the posturing going again, artificially polarize people once again into warring factions of equally dispossessed people. Get people to divide for any available reason—race, as in Trinidad and Guyana, urban versus rural, farmers versus blue-collar workers, North versus South—anything, any pretext which allows you to drive a wedge between people who have the same basic needs but who are powerless to fulfill these needs for as long as you can keep them from banding together.²

The PRG is in a difficult position on the election question. As politicians conscious of international and regional opinion, they are under pressure to move the country toward national elections or make some other provision for the peaceful transfer of power. According to PRG spokesmen, preliminary work on the new constitution has begun.³ At the same time, as revolutionary leadership, the PRG wants to allow the country to develop its new political structures before these are tested by a national election. General elections would also threaten the revolutionary process by inviting outside interference through financial contributions or covert manipulations. Only time will show how the PRG resolves this double-bind.



Worker states her opinion at a worker's parish council meeting.

Beginning in December, officials from the Ministry of Finance went before the trade unions, mass organizations, and the workers' and zonal council meetings to discuss the draft budget. In January, delegates from all the mass organizations attended a national conference on the economy, where they did further work on the draft. The budget will now go back to the Ministry of Planning for final revisions and to the PRG Cabinet for approval.⁹

Popular Power vs. the Westminster System

Such a personalized method of policy-making might seem incredible and impractical in the North American context, but Grenada is a country of 110,000 people. Grenadians are experimenting with new political structures which might not be effective in a larger or a different type of country—just as the Westminster Parliamentary system, with its “official opposition” and its elections every five years, did not work for Grenada.

Grenada under Gairy had a constitution, but it was written and approved by Gairy and the British government alone. The Grenadian people had no say whatsoever in its formulation. Having a constitution did not prevent Gairy from defrauding the 1976 election, railroading laws through Parliament, restricting freedom of speech and rights of assembly, and brutalizing or killing those who opposed his rule.¹⁰ A Trinidadian living and working in Grenada points out that the Westminster system itself creates conditions which permit the growth of dictatorship:

The system of government that we have inherited in the Caribbean invites us to hand over our political rights to a small group of people who (we hope) will speak and act on our behalf miles away in the chief town where the decisions are made.

We are called upon at five-yearly intervals to choose one person to represent upwards of 10,000 people, and here endeth our political power, for the great majority of us have nothing to do with what is called “politics” from one election to the next. Our elected representative is un-

der no obligation to consult us or report to us with any regularity.

... The process underway in Grenada shows up plainly the sins of omission of Westminster government—the way this system succeeds in not delivering power to the people. Because power is exercised away from the eyes, the ears, and the understanding of the people, power is liable to develop in any direction, all within the legality of elections, two-chamber Parliaments and the like.

People are removed from the heart of decision-making, their affairs are run by proxy; so that in a situation where ignorance and illiteracy are endemic, the stage is set for the emergence of monsters like Gairy.¹¹

Revolutionary Grenada has departed from this pattern in two important ways. One is the process of accountability to the people which all officials must take part in. The other is the creation of strong popular organizations.

In the Parliamentary system, the country is run from the capital. No serious attempt is made to have the people organize themselves at the community level and sort out some of their problems. Everywhere in the Caribbean, institutions of local government (county councils and the like) are either non-existent or in a pitiful state of decay.

In this situation, the growth of vocal and vibrant people's organizations in different parts of the country is regarded with suspicion, not actively encouraged. (Note how readily such groups are branded “Communist.”) Strong, organized action groups are seen as rivaling the government.

In Grenada today, every such group is an active part of the process of government. It is the State which actively stimulates and creates the conditions for the healthy growth of mass organizations, a process initiated by the NJM in opposition and culminating today in the setting up of a Ministry of National Mobilization.¹²



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The mass organizations in Grenada are the crucial link between the individual, the party, and the government. They relay ideas, suggestions, criticisms and complaints from the grass roots up to the leadership, while at the same time mobilizing people to take part in the revolution's programs. This two-way process is illustrated by the comment of a 40-year-old mason and member of the Technical and Allied Workers Union:

*Democracy is where one knows and can give a good picture of where your government is going, why they are going there and what you would enjoy and benefit on reaching there. We serve this end by keeping in line with the party structure and carrying out the plans. Then if I suggest things—like I came up with the idea of workers' education on the job, then I discuss it with my union and they take it up with the party, and the next thing we know we get two blackboards and it begins!*¹³

Evolution of a Democracy

In Gairy's Grenada, all decision-making took place in York House, a barricaded building in the capital where 15 men from the elite sectors of Grenadian society would conduct the charade known as Parliamentary debate. In Grenada today, government has moved out of York House and into community centers, school buildings, farms and workplaces: everywhere where people gather.¹⁴ Grenada's new democratic structures are not yet fully formed. They are

evolving and expanding day by day, and are undergoing a period of testing by the people before any decisions are made on their final form. The next step in the process is expected to be the decentralization of the zonal councils into village councils, but this stage has not been reached yet.¹⁵ The decentralization of power is a gradual process which cannot occur overnight in a society which has never known anything but colonialism and dictatorship: a society in which the people have never been allowed to make decisions about their own affairs. This process can only be worked out by the Grenadian people themselves, together with their leadership, and free from outside interference.

Revolutionary democracy is not completely built in Grenada; we have only started the process of building it. But we must all work to build it, because it is only when a people actively exercise full power in their own society that they would have a freedom and a democracy that can prevent any form of dictatorship in the future. We must get used to expressing our opinions and to taking decisions, because in the future we will all have to decide what type of governmental structures we will put into our new constitution.

*But let us remember what our experience has already taught us—that no constitution, no election, and no parliament can guarantee freedom for a people UNLESS THEY ACTIVELY TAKE PART IN WHAT IS GOING ON IN THEIR SOCIETY. Only revolutionary democracy, people's democracy, can ensure people's power and freedom for all our people.*¹⁶

Footnotes

Introduction: Popular Response to the Revolution

1. Maurice Bishop, Address at opening of First International Conference of Solidarity with Grenada Revolution, St. George's, November 23, 1981.

Women

1. Patsy Romain, 26-year-old mother of four and member of NWO National Executive. From interview in Hodge and Searle.
2. *Free West Indian*, Nov. 22, 1980. Interview with Phyllis Coard, President of NWO and Secretary for Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Education.
3. Pregnant employees are entitled to take up to three months' maternity leave with the right to return to work after their leave. An employee who has worked for the same employer for at least 18 months previously is entitled to full salary for two of the three months' leave. Violation of the law is punishable by a \$1,000 fine or six months imprisonment. An employer who fires a worker because she is pregnant is liable for higher penalties. Source: Maternity Leave Law 1980.
4. In 1981, the proprietress of a St. George's restaurant was charged, convicted and fined for violation of the Maternity Leave Law, the first time the law had been tested in court.
5. This does not mean that men and women workers are always paid the same, but merely that they are paid equally for performing the same task. Women do not have to perform tasks considered men's work but they may choose to do so if they are physically capable of it.
6. Phyllis Coard, workshop on education and women, Nov. 24, 1981.

7. In every parish, each of the local groups elects three of its members to sit on the Parish Coordinating Team, which meets monthly. Two of the delegates from each local group also sit on the NWO National Council of Delegates, which meets twice yearly to draw up a six-month general work plan for the NWO. The National Council of Delegates is composed of the local delegates plus the NWO National Executive, which is the organization's supervisory body. The National Executive is elected every two years by the members of the National Council of Delegates plus the members of the outgoing National Executive.
8. NWO Work Plan, May-Oct 1981.
9. *Free West Indian*, Nov. 22, 1980. Interview with Phyllis Coard.
10. Hodge and Searle, p. 48. Interview with Catherine Ventour.

Youth

1. Jacobs and Jacobs, p. 102.
2. NYO members are aged approximately 14-22. For children from 5 to 14 years old, there is a parallel mass organization, the Pioneers, with about 7,000 members. Pioneer activities emphasize sports and culture.
3. *The New Jewel*, Aug. 14, 1981.
4. EPICA interview with members of the National Youth Organization, October 1981.
5. Minister of Foreign Affairs Unison Whiteman, speech at Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC, November 19, 1981.
6. EPICA interview with NYO staff, May 1981.

The Dialogue Between Labor and the PRG

1. *Free West Indian*, March 7, 1981, p. 2.
2. *Ibid*, p. 2, quoting an official PRG statement.
3. *Workers Voice*, Jan. 22, 1981, p. 1.
4. *Free West Indian*, March 7, 1981, p. 3.
5. Government Information Services release, Nov. 13, 1981.

The Peasantry and Estate Laborers

1. EPICA interview with Fitzroy Bain, President of Agricultural and General Workers Union, Nov. 1981.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Free West Indian*, Oct. 3, 1981.
4. EPICA interview with Fitzroy Bain, Nov. 1981.
5. EPICA interview with Jim Wardally, General Secretary of Technical and Allied Workers Union, May 1981.

The Church

1. "The Church in Grenada," *100th Anniversary of the Diocese of the Windward Islands* (Anglican Church brochure, St. Vincent, 1977), p. 31; and *150th Anniversary of the Anglican Church in St. George's* (Grenada Publishers, 1976), p. 36.
2. Bishop, p. 60.
3. *Ibid*, p. 83.
4. Lewis, p. 165.
5. Jacobs and Jacobs, p. 49.
6. DaBreo, pp. 47 and 54.
7. Jacobs and Jacobs, p. 101.
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