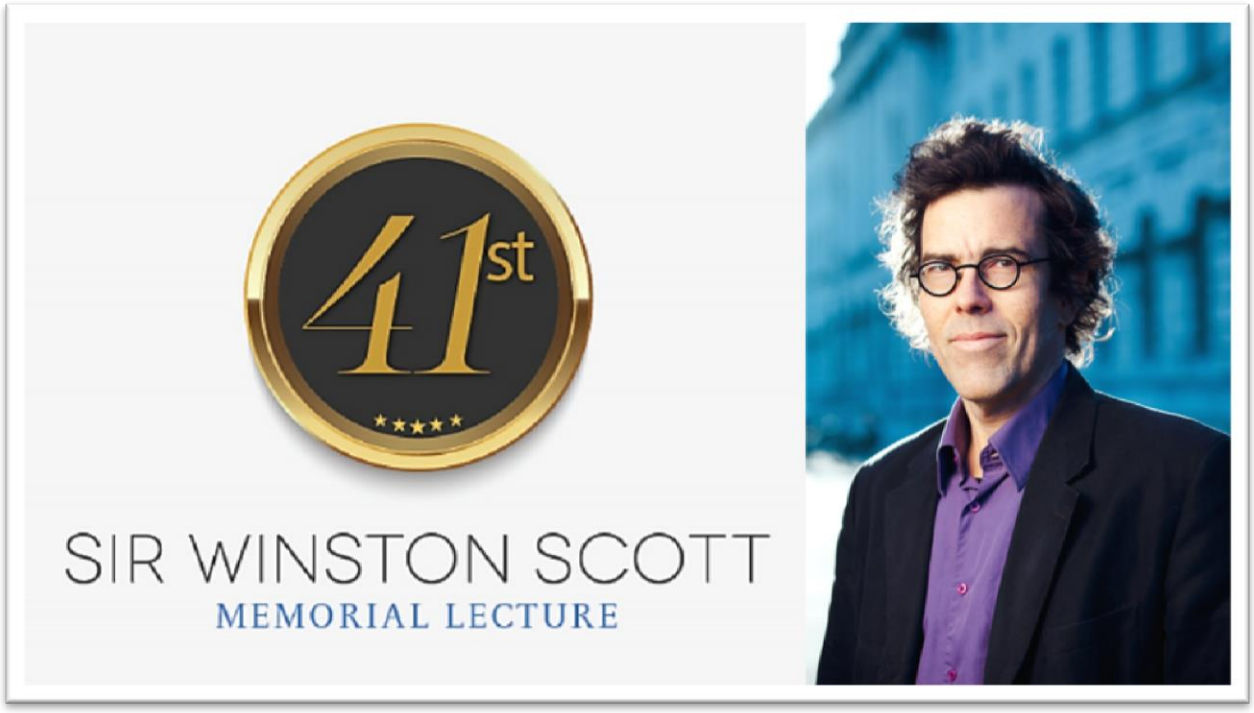

The Time of Sovereignty:
The History of Political Independence and its Future

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Frank Collymore Hall
Tom Adams Financial Centre

It is a great honour, pleasure and privilege to give the Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture of the Central Bank of Barbados. It is particularly moving to me to look out at this crowd of 500 and see so many people I have known for over forty years, and in particular so many of the elders who formed me. I am conscious that my predecessors include such senior figures in the history of economics as Ernst Schumacher and the Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and such deans of Caribbean intellectual life as Rex Nettleford and Gordon Rohlehr.

I am particularly humbled, as a Barbadian, to give this 41st Lecture as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the independence of Barbados. (Clearly, Rihanna was unavailable). I came to this island from Guyana only as a boy of 8. So it was not from hazard of birth but mature choice that I joined you in citizenship. I take no second place to the birth right Bajan in my love for this rock in which my roots are tangled with yours for all time. Our 50th anniversary is a joyful occasion. It is at the same time as a sobering one, when one reflects on the generations of ancestors, living and dying under conditions of the most extraordinary inhumanity, who made our presence today possible.

If this Golden Jubilee celebration has any meaning, we need to remember why we sought political sovereignty. Why did we break the Trident? What were the roads of policy we travelled since 1966? Where are we now, and how we might change our direction? For they can be no greater insult to the dead than for us to look with complacency at our condition. We must ask hard questions about what we are doing now with our independence. By 'we' I am not addressing simply the politicians, but you, the majority of citizens who, like me, are unlikely to ever seek election, and who belong to no political party but the party of the nation.

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Central Banks have been the partners of national sovereignty ever since the Bank of Amsterdam was founded in 1609 in the Dutch Republic as it fought a war of independence against Spain. The modern central bank is a crucial instrument of democratic government as its decisions on the supply of money, internal and external credit and debt have impact on growth and development and the lives of all citizens.

It was in 1970 that Errol Barrow announced his plan for a Central Bank of Barbados and a currency which would not be tied to sterling. The British government, who wanted Barbados's reserves to continue to prop up the pound, sent a stern message that such a step would be "retrograde".[1] British diplomatic archives reveal that the late Jack Dear, whom a younger

[1] "Central Bank of Barbados", TNA: FCO 63/446.

generation will only know as the subject of the Mighty Gabby's immortal calypso, but then a senior Opposition politician, secretly approached the British High Commissioner in November 1970 to promise that if his party was returned to power it would "repeal such a Central Bank".[2] In the 1971 elections, however, voters chose to keep "Dipper" skipper, and Barrow began the Central Bank in 1972. Despite Dear's threat, when the BLP came to power in 1976, Prime Minister Adams proved to be the best possible friend of the Central Bank, reconciling mammon with God in building this landmark headquarters which meets St. Michael's Cathedral on the square. Every succeeding Prime Minister has recognized that the Central Bank is an instrument of national sovereignty. The scale of its success can be measured not just in what our economy and society have achieved, but in the disasters, visible in the experience of Jamaica and Guyana, which we have avoided.

Dr. Courtney Blackman, its first Governor, inaugurated this lecture series in 1976, recognizing like Adam Smith that the wealth of nations depends on a theory of moral sentiments and not just interest rates. Under his visionary leadership, the Bank developed a high international reputation, in particular for its research department, to which DeLisle Worrell was central. Dr. Worrell and I corresponded about the Barbados economy as early as the mid-1980s, and I am delighted to see him today in the Governor's chair. It is a difficult role. In an economy such as that of the United States or Britain, the central banker is like the captain on the bridge of an aircraft carrier, in one such as ours, she or he is more like the oarsman of a canoe fighting currents which may be survived, but not controlled. The island, with other nations, owes Worrell a considerable debt for the clarity and persistence with which he has argued that in small open economies, currency devaluations tend often to entrench, rather than correct, troughs in the business cycle.[3]

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I shall return to the question of the government of the economy of Barbados. But I want first to set our island and its independence into its larger human context. For our season of adventure

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[2] Minute of J. S. Bennett, 20 November 1970, TNA: FCO 63/446.

[3] Note among other interventions from Dr. Worrell: (with Harold Codrington, Roland Craigwell and Kevin Greenidge), 'Economic Resilience with an Exchange Rate Peg: The Barbados Experience, 1985-2000," Working Paper No.168, International Monetary Fund; "Small open economies have to be managed differently: devaluation is contractionary in both the short and long run" (2012), http://voxeu.org/article/why-devaluation-isn-t-viable-option-greece-insights-small-open-economy (accessed 10 June 2016); "Policies for Stabilization and Growth in Small Very Open Economies", Group of 30, Occasional Paper 85 (Washington, 2013), available http://group30.org/images/uploads/publications/G30_PoliciesforStabilizationGrowthSmallVeryOpenEconomies.pdf (accessed 10 June 2016).

with sovereignty was part of a larger global struggle in the Twentieth century against imperialism.

Between 1500 and 1900, international society was constructed by violence not sympathy or contract. The Harvard historian Sven Beckert in 2014 described how the making of what he calls 'war capitalism', 'relied on the capacity of rich and powerful Europeans to divide the world into an 'inside' and an 'outside'. The inside encompassed the laws, customs and institutions of the mother country…. The outside, by contrast, was characterized by imperial domination, the expropriation of vast territories, decimation of indigenous peoples, the theft of their resources, enslavement.... In these imperial dependencies, the rules of the inside did not apply. There, masters trumped states, violence defied the law and bold physical coercion by private actors remade markets.'[4]

That 'inside' and 'outside' existed in colonies like Barbados, as much as in macro across the world. For 'war capitalism' created what the Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills calls an unequal regime of 'personhood'.[5] It opposed a minority of masters and master nations bearing rights to a majority of sub-persons – slaves, servants and colonies. The liberty of the former was directly related to the slavery of the latter. The 1651 Barbados 'Declaration of Independence' which has so often been offered as a precedent for 1966, indeed by no less than Errol Barrow himself, is thus no such thing: it was not an expression of liberty, but a manifesto for an oligarchy – exclusively white, male, propertied and Anglican – and its exploitation of Irish serfs, and Amerindian and African slaves. It may have been prudent and convenient in 1966 at the moment of claiming independence to assert that this constitutional change was simply continuous with our tropical extension of the English constitution. In 2016 we need now to 'own' the extent to which the whole twentieth-century demand for equality of rights by colonials was a complete rupture with the foundation of the colony in which blacks, like women and the poor, were constitutional non-persons. We need similarly to dismiss any idea that our rights are based in Magna Carta: this was a claim of the rights of a minority of privileged individuals, which in the Caribbean was translated into the rights of slaveholders over slaves. We were less a crucible of liberty than a laboratory for domination.

Marcel van der Linden, the dean of international labour historians, has argued that seventeenth-century Barbados was the first truly capitalist society, the first economy where all

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[4] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 38.

[5] Charles W. Mills, 'Racial Liberalism', *PMLA*, 2008, 123, pp. 1380-139. For a more extensive statement of the argument see C. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, 1997) and C. Mills and C. Pateman, *Contract and Domination* (Cambridge, 2007).

labour and production was a commodity.[6] Linked to this was our role as pioneers in the binding of race and class. The Barbados Slave Code of 1661 "An act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes" is the first legislation in any English jurisdiction to correlate different kinds of legal status, protections and sanctions, with race signalled by skin colour. It was the model for the 1664 Jamaica slave code, and for all the slave laws of the British Empire. Seventeenth-century Barbados's most important export to the world was perhaps not sugar but modern racism.

The island was a central theatre in the making of a modern world order which intertwined capitalism, racism and imperialism. Our political independence was one culmination of an international inter-generational struggle by the 'sub-persons' of this system of domination. As Errol Barrow, in his foreword to the Barbados Independence issue of *New World Quarterly* in 1966 declared:

We in Barbados are part of a world-wide movement which in the post-war period has brought freedom to subject peoples in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean. Like the peoples of these areas, we are waging a war against poverty and unemployment, and against all the accompanying social and economic ills. In the face of manifold odds we are struggling to transform our economy from being colonial and backward looking, into one which is modern and progressive. It is my sincere hope that Independence will release in our people a sense of deep pride in their country, a feeling of being one people, and a self-confidence that we can overcome all obstacles that stand in the way of personal realization.[7]

Note Barrow's use of the present and future tenses – 'waging', 'struggling', and 'will release' – note too his sense that we acquired political sovereignty while lacking pride and confidence, and as a fractured people. He did not think, and we should never think, of Independence as having been achieved in 1966. If you remember one thing only from tonight, let it be this: Independence is not a date, but a process and a project of self-emancipation, for which democratic command of the state was the means, but not the end.

Like many I see here tonight, I am part of the independence generation. We were born in the years in which the new flags rose in the Caribbean. We are not just our parents' creation, we are

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[6] Marcel van der Linden, 'Re-constructing the origins of modern labor management', *Labor History*, 51: 4, 509-522. This is, of course, building on the foundations of the arguments about the modernity of the sugar plantation economy offered by C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London, 1938) and Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (Chapel Hill, 1944).

[7] G. Lamming, ed., *On the Canvas of the World* (Port of Spain, 1999), p. 162.

the first fruit of the society which the makers of independent Barbados created. That founding generation for which Errol Barrow and 'Tom' Adams, the first Prime Ministers are permanent symbols, had far more in common than their political divisions might suggest. They shared, across two Labour parties, that precious twentieth-century socialist faith that government should invest massively in public education, health and housing, reduce social inequality through progressive taxation and welfare spending, and raise living standards in partnership with trade unions and through a clear strategy of economic development. They were the heirs of an earlier generation of Charles Duncan O'Neal, Clement Payne, Clennell Wickham, Grantley Adams and Wynter Crawford, and so many others nameless heroes and heroines who confronted the poverty and injustice which was the social reality of Barbados, before, and long after, the abolition of slavery. In 1945, in the wake of the Labour Party's victory in Britain, Crawford in the *Barbados Observer* declared: "Bring Socialism to Barbados". Barrow and Adams saw first-hand how a welfare state was built in Britain, and they sought to create here too a society in which any child would have an equal chance to grow to adulthood and to unfold their talents.

It is in the nature of children to forget the debts they owe to their elders. This forgetfulness and ingratitude may even be greatest where the elders succeeded so well, that their sacrifice was concealed, and the scale of their achievement made invisible. My impression is that twenty-first century Barbadians mostly live in a condition of political and historical amnesia. The war Barrow was waging is forgotten.

Let us look back not just five decades, but 100 years ago to a colonial Barbados before modern trade unions or national politics. In 1919 of every 1,000 babies born here, 352 died before the age of one. Life expectancy at birth was 40 years of age. In 1942, during the Second World War, the Governor complained to London that British wartime propaganda about Nazi tyranny fell on deaf ears: 'no recital of horrors sustained in occupied countries will convince [the Barbadian poor] that its present lot could be worse'.

Colonial society in Barbados was a regime of mass manslaughter based on low wages, and a state which spent the minimum on public services and welfare. In 1690, Dalby Thomas had exulted that 'The pleasure, glory and grandeur of England has been advanced more by sugar than by any other commodity'. But there was little to show in Barbados for the river of wealth which the island had sent to Britain over 300 years. Only 10 percent of the adult males earned enough to qualify to vote, so that the planter and merchant elite who mastered its economy also ruled its parliament, and made laws to suit themselves. They ensured that taxes on capital and income remained low, falling on the consumption of the poor who were made to pay for the police which terrorized them. That minority's command of most arable land, even of the ground on which labourers built their chattel houses, allowed it to set the terms of the labour

market. They drove down wages in real terms: agricultural labourers in 1938 earned a shilling a day, almost the same wage paid when slavery ended a hundred years earlier in 1838. Indeed, during the agricultural crisis of the 1890s, wages for the field worker were forced down to about nine pence a day.

From this economic power stemmed a regime of fear. Economic vulnerability, far more than the state's capacity to use violence, has provided the most powerful discipline over social and political expression in this island, during and after the colonial period. The Barbadian planter George Carrington, in his testimony to the West India Royal Commission of 1897, calmly described the regime:

> *The Barbadian Negroes are most civil as a rule, especially in daylight, to us and to the managers, but you will see the same nigger goes down to Demerara—he will stand and look at the manager and whistle in his face, and "cheek" him in any kind of way. It is that in Barbados we have such an ample command of the labour, there is such a lot of them that they must work and behave themselves.*[8]

In Carrington's pronouns – 'we' the local planter class, 'you' the British government, and 'them', the labouring poor – we find the grid of a system of exploitation and oppression from which the only escape was emigration: to British Guiana in the nineteenth century, to Panama after 1900, and to Cuba and the United States in the teens, twenties and thirties. We should not be surprised that it was from this Barbadian diaspora that so many of the makers of a politics of liberation came in the 1930s and 40s.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of Barbadians who were raced as 'white' were as poor as their 'black' compatriots, and lived similarly hand-to-mouth surviving austerity through peasant solidarity. Many Barbadian whites, most illustriously "TT" Lewis, were partners of their compatriots in social struggles. But in Barbados, as throughout the societies of the Americas, the degree to which the signature of Africa was written on the body, as shade, as texture of hair and features of the face, was coextensive with a schedule of status. The skin was the passport, and the degree of darkness was the first indicator of safety or danger, an index from which many took a first guess about someone's social class, education, intelligence and capacity for either civilization or crime. Arising from this were not just private decisions about who one might employ, or play cricket with, or marry, but an inarticulate social agreement about who could be beaten up by police with impunity, or allowed to starve or drown.

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[8] George Carrington, testimony to West India Royal Commission (1897), *Report of the West India Royal Commission* (London: Crown Agents, 1897), appendix C, pt. 1, 79.

One of the most chilling anecdotes in Sir Frederick Smith's autobiography is the story of how in 1898 two boys were drowning in a plantation pond, and a crowd shouting 'save the white man's son' took the decision to rescue the light-skinned one, Sleepy's father, and to allow his darker cousin, to die.[9] The violence of this system of race and class cut into the inner life of families, it cut into the most intimate life of the soul. *In the Castle of My Skin,* George Lamming's first masterpiece provides a portrait of this mental world in which the image of the enemy was 'My People':

My people are low-down nigger people. My people don't like to see their people get on.… Like children under the threat of hellfire they accepted instinctively that the others meaning the white, were superior, yet there was always the fear of realizing that it might be true. This world of the others' imagined perfection hung like a dead weight over their energy.... [10]

The gaze of the other was internalized until it became a weapon in rituals of public and private self-mutilation.

That 'dead weight' hanging over the energy of the people was lived as a deep self-doubt. Across every class and shade of skin, there was a fear we were not able to make or do anything original or important, but fit only to mimic, and to seek the patronage of our betters. This fear was anchored by British colonial rule. To be educated was to know the geography of Scotland not the Scotland District, to learn lists of English kings and queens but nothing about 5,000 years of Amerindian society in this archipelago, to know about Columbus and Drake but not about Toussaint L'Ouverture. To be a colonial was to be a perpetual child, never to be trusted to manage ourselves, and destined to be perpetual importers not just of the flour or motor cars we lacked the climate or machines to make, but of science, literature, art, music and politics, even ideas of beauty. Lamming, in 1979, spoke of his generation: 'We… had to conduct the most bitter struggle just to retain a minimum of confidence in ourselves that we could, with a little luck and a fair chance, do what our instincts and gifts demanded'.[11] This crippling self-doubt was anchored not just by the local experience of colonial dependency, but by the whole international architecture of white supremacy which we call European imperialism. By its logic, we, like most of humanity, were not quite ready to be fully human.

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[9] F. G. Smith and A. N. Smith, *Dreaming a Nation: Sir Frederick Smith and the Barbados Journey* (London, 2015).

[10] G. Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (London: Longman, 1970 [1953]), pp. 26-7.

[11] 'Politics and Culture', Graduation Address to the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, 1980, in R. Drayton and Andaiye, eds., *Conversations: George Lamming, Essays, Addresses, Interview, 1953-1990* (London, 1992), p. 81.

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It was to end this regime of economic, social, political, cultural and spiritual dispossession that we broke Britannia's trident. Errol Barrow believed that the sovereign nation state would be the means towards economic and spiritual emancipation. In this he was not original. From Ireland and the new polities of Central Europe and the former Ottoman provinces after 1918, to India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Indonesia and Vietnam after 1945, to the new nations of Africa, people felt political independence was the gate to all other things. When Kwame Nkrumah declared 'Seek ye first the political kingdom!' he was only giving voice to the faith that once a sovereign national community commanded the bureaucratic state it would transform economy, society and culture. It turned out, across the world, that things were not so easy, and the legacies of the colonial experience, which had formed how societies related to themselves and the modern world, proved resilient. The imperial powers of the West were also quite forceful in finding ways to reconstitute their disproportionate power and benefit from the wider world.[12]

Barbados provides one of the happiest examples of the good things which democratic sovereignty can do. The governments of independent Barbados, from Barrow to Adams, St John, Erskine Sandiford, Owen Arthur, David Thompson and Freundel Stuart all invested heavily in public health, education, housing and welfare with high dividends. The provision of ample clean water to the whole island was central to these. In 1950, life expectancy, after a decade of trade unions, had risen to 57.2 years, but infant mortality was still 132 for every thousand births. By 1960, after a decade of government based on universal suffrage, infant mortality was halved to 60 per thousand, and by 1971, it was 45, and by 1980, it was 24. Over all, between 1950 and 2010, life expectancy jumped 20 years to 77.2 years, the largest increase in the English-speaking Caribbean. Infant mortality declined by 2010 to 10 in every thousand live births, again the greatest improvement in the English-speaking Caribbean. In 2016 in the western hemisphere, only the United States, Canada and the Bahamas have higher Human Development Index ranks. Compare all this to what Barbadians suffered and survived in 1916, and even the state of play in 1966, and we know how political independence transformed the life chances of Barbadians, and what every citizen should be celebrating in 2016.

We have surprisingly little robust historical knowledge about how Barbados was governed in the decades after independence. Post-1966 governments share blame, for they have largely failed to transfer to the Barbados National Archives, and to open to researchers, the documents generated by the state. Ministries have hoarded their files, where they have not destroyed

[12] R. Robinson and W. R, Louis, 'The Imperialism of Decolonisation', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1994, 22, pp. 462-511.

them, or abandoned them to flood, rot and rats. Apart from Sir Frederick Smith's memoir, no personal accounts survive of the early decades. Historians have failed to interview figures like the late Sir Carlyle Burton and Sir Steve Emtage who were at the centre of all decision making. I urge the Central Bank, every Ministry and public institution, and every woman and man in the island who is or has been in public life, to begin to think of themselves as historical actors, to feel the future's all-seeing-eye upon them and to organize records of their work for historians.

The Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs two years ago advised me that all the archives of our external relations from the 1960s to 80s are lost. It is thus only from published documents that we can know Barbados's central role in the history of Caribbean integration. Most tragically, we have no inside record of what is perhaps our proudest moment as a nation-state, which is our support for Cuba when Fidel Castro, blessed be his memory, intervened in Southern Africa to defeat white supremacy. From 'Sleepy' Smith's memoir we know that the Cabinet voted secretly to allow Cuba to use Seawell airport as a stepping stone to Africa. Forty-one years ago, Operation Carlota, named after 'Black Carlota', the leader of a slave rebellion in 1843, carried 100 Cuban Special Forces with heavy weapons, via this island, to Angola. Over three months, some fifty flights, five of them in a single night, used Barbados to send over three thousand crack Cuban troops with advanced weapons, which sent the South African Defence Force into retreat from Angola, and forced Rhodesia's white minority regime to the negotiating table. What we know from Wikileaks is that after 1976, Tom Adams and Henry Forde held the line, refusing to bend to United States pressure to condemn Cuba's military presence in Africa.[13] They set a precedent of foreign policy independence which extends to Owen Arthur's brave refusal to sign the 'Shiprider' Agreement with the United States, and his and Billie Miller's refusal in 2003 to support the Iraq War in a speech I hope will be immortal:

We do not need any tutelage in relation to the conditions under which we should support international engagement with sovereign states … We do not support the precept nor the practice of regime change. We believe that every country has the right to self-determination. We do not believe in the practice of unilateralism, no matter how powerful the country that seeks to practice it may be…. "[14]

Better documented is our economic government.[15] We know that by a mixture of luck and judgement, Barbados positioned itself to do extremely well in the global economy, given its

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[13] https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978BRIDGE00846_d.html.

[14] Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados, in the House of Assembly, Barbados, March 17, 2003.

[15] For which see, in particular, the development (and later 'strategic' plans) prepared throughout the period of independence every four to five years.

resource base, over the last fifty years. Its governments had two main economic priorities. The first were welfarist, seeking to reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment. The second was to grow and diversify the economy away from its historic dependence on sugar. The state's fiscal power would be its key instrument towards both ends, increasing tax yields to pay for education and health, while using tax advantages to attract foreign capital and jobs.

Grantley Adams, Barrow and 'Tom' Adams were all strongly influenced by W. Arthur Lewis's model of industrialization by invitation. The St Lucian economist in *The Industrialisation of the British West Indies* (1950) and his seminal essay "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour" (1954) had proposed that cheap labour and tax incentives might attract foreign investment which would drive modern economic development. His vision underpinned Barbados's Pioneer Industries Act (1958), the Custom's Act (1962), the Industrial Incentives Act (1963), the Industrial Development (Export Industries) Act (1963), the International Business Companies Act (1965) and, the Fiscal Incentives Act (1974). In 1969, Barrow launched 'Operation Beehive' (clearly modelled on Puerto Rico's 'Operation Bootstrap'), creating the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation with eight 'industrial estates' (1969), which mostly attracted textile manufacture. Adams continued the strategy, targeting, for example, the emerging hi-tech multinational Intel. Some 9,000 new industrial jobs created by 1980.[16] This was achieved by tax holidays limited to 7, 10 and 12 years.

The limits to the success of this strategy were internal and external. First, as our wages and living standards rose, we could never compete with competitors, in particularly in Asia. It was ultimately in China, where labour was truly unlimited and resiliently cheap that Arthur Lewis would be proved right, not in his native islands. Second, transnational corporations tended to move the moment tax breaks ended, while also constructing their supply and value chains to minimize what remained in the island. From Sandiford and Arthur onwards, Barbadian governments were less sanguine about Barbados having a significant future in manufacturing industry, with initiatives such as Stuart's Cultural Industries Act (2013) instead targeting niches of high-value activity.

Agriculture has been the consistent loser in terms of national planning. Except for the mid-1970s spike in sugar prices, and periods of encouragement of Sea Island cotton, it has played a declining role in employment and priorities. From the 1980s, land, even in fertile 'red soil' areas, has instead been diverted to housing and speculative property development, to which Adams's plan for an ambitious road network cutting through the heart of the island proved central. The gamble was been on a combination of consumption-driven growth and foreign investment.

[16] R. B. Potter, 'Industrial development and urban planning in Barbados', *Geography*, 1981, 66, 225-8.

From 1986, Richie Haynes as Minister of Finance sought to extend this with a brief attempt at kick-starting growth through tax cuts. I recall watching Owen Arthur's response to Haynes's first budget, in which he presciently noted that the risk in this experiment lay in the high imported component for this consumption, with its foreign exchange implications (once in government, however, it is not clear if these concerns figured very prominently in Arthur's economic decision making).

From the Adams government of 1976, Barbados turned instead to attracting the farmers of capital, positioning Barbados as a low tax jurisdiction for transnational business companies. Tax treaties with Britain in 1970, Canada in 1980 and the United States in 1984, were matched by accompanying offshore industry legislation. All succeeding government have sought to build on this, with modest success. Barbados's legal environment, for good and bad reasons, has not been attractive to many offshore entities. At the same time, the degree of 'trickle down', from the IBCs to the rest of the economy has been modest, in particular in its impact on low skill and low wage employment and living standards.

Ultimately, tourism has been the economic champion, absolutely central to employment, revenue and foreign exchange capture. Owen Arthur sought to dovetail tourism with foreign direct investment in real estate, which led to a construction boom yielding many new jobs. Riding the global economic booms of the 1994-9, and 2001-6 period, Barbados did extraordinarily well, achieving almost 6% growth, for example, in 2006.

Since 2008 the administrations of David Thompson and Freundel Stuart, with Christopher Sinckler as Minister of Finance, maintained more or less the same strategy as Arthur. But the blow of the global economic crisis of the 2007-9 created a very sticky wicket for the economic batsman, and they have had to play continual crisis management in unprecedentedly difficult global conditions. Their strategy to use the state's capital investment and borrowing power to maintain aggregate demand in the midst of the downturn is surely right, even if we may have debates about investment priorities and methods. Without Stuart and Sinckler's intervention, the 2008 shock would certainly have led to a spiralling unemployment and incomes crisis, and perhaps a deep economic and social collapse. They are equally correct to approach privatization with the greatest caution: what the post-1980 neoliberal experiment has shown around the world is that privatization, while improving the state's balance sheet in the short term, usually leads to higher prices for consumers, poorer service, and diminished wages and working conditions. Privatization is a particularly dangerous strategy where there are natural monopolies, such as in the supply of water.

The pro-growth policies of the Barbados governments since 1994 have however clashed with two other interests. First, private and public construction and investment in hotels, luxury

homes, roads, Cricket World Cup and so on has imposed new debt and foreign exchange burdens. These remain wholly manageable: high debt to GDP ratios are sustainable, as in Japan and Italy, while there is a high domestic component to public debt, so long as Barbados continues its unblemished record of honouring its obligations to domestic bondholders. Second, more worryingly, the state has allowed private property development and helter-skelter construction which has had a catastrophic impact on the natural environment and on public access to the sea, for which the paradise lost of the Four Seasons project is only one emblem. Foreign investment should never be allowed to become a new kind of colonial occupation, where coral reefs are dynamited, and ancient trees and archaeological sites bulldozed to yield enclaves bounded by gates and guards which poor Barbadians enter only as servants.

Finance Ministers have tended to discover that they have no magic powers. Errol Barrow in his somewhat saturnine 1973-77 Development plan, after his first decade in power, in the midst of the turmoil of the post-Bretton Woods moment, offers the most acute analysis of the limits of policy in Barbados. He noted that

The economic growth of a very small country is more likely to be externally derived than that of a large country with a broad range of domestic resources.... Because of its narrow domestic production possibilities, our economy will continue to be dependent on imports. Such dependence on foreign trade will therefore expose our socio-economic system to external transmission effects.[17]

This is as true now as when Barrow wrote it.

As Dr. Worrell noted in 2015, 'the Barbados economy runs on foreign exchange'.[18] We carry the systemic risk that any serious collapses of tourism will send the entire economy into crisis.

Our clear economic priority should be to find paths to growth and ways of living which are less import input and foreign exchange dependent. Living more cheaply might also mean living more richly. What if, for example, we pushed a hard pro-bicycle transport policy? In England, the Governor of the Bank of England, the Mayor of London, Foreign Secretary and the Leader of the Opposition all go to work, through perpetual rain, on bicycles. Workplaces provide showers, and people change at work into business clothes. In Barbados, protected cycleways would have to be built, but every car taken off our roads would save thousands of dollars of foreign exchange,

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[17] *Barbados Development Plan, 1973-77*, section 2, p. 5.

[18] DeLisle Worrell, 'Keeping the economy stable and achieving growth', 28 October 2015, http://www.bis.org/review/r151215b.pdf.

and fight our epidemic of chronic disease. A drive to change what we eat, to increase the share of ground provisions and vegetable protein in our diet, would yield similar economic and health dividends. We need to farm more: if after slavery we wished to leave agriculture, now as sovereign citizens to learn to love and live more off the land. Every garden should grow food. We need some joined-up policy thinking. The political classes will have to lead by example in how they travel, eat, dress, to claim that role in cultural change which they more or less abandoned in the 1970s. When the government of Barbados is forced, at times, to cut its spending, the sacrifices of those at the helm of the state should be visible to the junior public servant and the ordinary citizen. What is clear is if politicians seek to achieve that high end of changing how their people live, and want to live, they must show, and not just say, what this change means. As Barrow insisted in 1974, 'the development of a greater degree of self-sufficiency... can only be maintained by political persuasion'.[19]

We need courage for this. Barrow was deeply concerned in 1966 by the psychological legacies of slavery and colonialism, that self-doubt, lack of confidence, and distorted self-image to which he would return in his 'Mirror image' speech of 1986. He used the power of the state in a war against that 'sense of inferiority'. The landmark policy of free secondary education is central to this, as was the foundation of the National Independence Festival of Creative Arts. But we might also see Cabinet's decision in 1966 to strip the honorific “Royal” from the title of the Barbados Yacht Club because of its membership policy, and in 1969 to disestablish the Anglican Church. These are all parts of what I have called elsewhere the 'Secondary Decolonization of Barbados', that work of economic, social and cultural decolonization which began after 1966, to which the foundation of the Central Bank of Barbados, as much as a cultural as an economic and state institution, was a key part.[20] The governments of the Barbados Labour Party have equally shared in this work of cultural liberation, and we should especially celebrate Tom Adams's significant investment in the hosting of Carifesta in 1981, which yielding extraordinary long-term benefits in the development of all the creative arts, and Owen Arthur's opening a dialogue with the Pan-African movement.

And yet, if we are honest with ourselves, our cultural liberation is still a work in progress. George Lamming in his prophetic *Season of Adventure* (1960), showed how Caribbean national politics was made fragile from within by the social and cultural gap between the educated minority of the new governing class, what in 1979 he called 'the new black planters', and

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[19] *Barbados Development Plan, 1973-77*, section 2, p. 6.

[20] R. Drayton, 'Secondary Decolonization: The Black Power Moment in Barbados c. 1970', in K. Quinn, ed., *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2014), DOI:10.5744/florida/9780813049090.003.0006 (accessed February 1, 2016).

working poor. We need to fight against the persistent colonial idea that there is a political class distinct from the people, a kind of thinking which disconnects government and the economy from the creative energies of the majority. I strongly support the proposition that Barbados become a republic – as Errol Barrow were he alive would argue, it is absurd and an insult to our democracy that we preserve a Crown, let alone the British royal family, at the centre of our constitution. But more urgent is that we confront how the Westminster system reduces democracy to a five year choice between political parties. Both political parties should aspire in this small island to create an Athens without the slaves, in which we more fully engage the wisdom and patriotism of the people in decision making. We must find new democratic ways of engaging citizens with the work of government, for which Norman Girvan's vision of involving citizens in making national budgets is one example.

We must give power to citizens, and end our attachment to those forms of top-down elite governance which are the legacies of our colonial experience. As I argued in the Distinguished Jurist's Lecture I gave to the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago in 2016, we are across the Caribbean in the grip of a profound and unacknowledged constitutional crisis.[21] It is a crisis of both governors and governed, and it has to do with our relationship to government and the collective good, and is linked to many social and economic problems, from productivity, to petty corruption, to crime, to the dumping of garbage. Because of the origins of our society in the interlocked experiences of slavery and colonial subordination, many of our citizens, despite having the right to vote and even to sit in parliament, or serve in the Civil Service, have no sense of ownership, or of a duty of care towards the land and sea, the state, or the law. People have a predatory relationship towards the government and the natural environment viewing them as things from which resources are to be extracted. This is a disease which erodes the capacity of all areas of government and economy to deliver on their promise and potential. The only medicine for it is to find ways of concretely giving people a sense of ownership and inclusion, and not just the right to decide, once every five years, at the ballot box. More democracy is the only remedy to democracy's ills.

In 1969, the national poet Kamau Brathwaite referred in his poem 'Negus' to the incompleteness of our decolonization:

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[21] R. Drayton, *Whose Constitution? Justice, History and Law in the Caribbean* (Port of Spain, 2016), available from http://www.ttlawcourts.org/jeibooks/books/djl2016.pdf.

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of the dragon...

The essence of colonialism is alienation, and the core of the de-colonial project, which every citizen should claim, is to dis-alienate ourselves, to wrest our eyes away from the spectacle of ourselves through others' eyes, to bring us into an intimate, loving and creative relationship with each other and our environment. Every one of should know the soils of this island, its architecture and the parts of its economy, the name and nature of every plant and animal, every part of the pain and heroism of our history. Our economists should harness those feats of domestic economy through which generations of women wrested survival for their families. Every one of us should know what we share with our Caribbean neighbours, with whom we retain a rendezvous with destiny. These are the resources through which we will be able to build new paths towards our independence.

We have to become our own founding fathers and mothers in new kinds of patriotic movements, not in competition with the political parties or the state, but below and through them, giving life to democracy. Sovereignty did not come with a flag in 1966. The time of sovereignty is now, always now, if we dare.

Bio of Dr. Richard Drayton

Richard Drayton was born in Guyana in 1964. His great-grandfather, the Reverend David Drayton, was a Barbadian who migrated to Barbados in the 1890s. In 1972, his family migrated to Barbados, where from 1974 to 1982 he attended Harrison College, where he was President of the Student Council and Captain of Armstrong House. In 1982 he won a Barbados Scholarship to Harvard University. At Harvard he was at the centre of the anti-apartheid movement, graduating magna cum laude in 1986, with a prize-winning thesis on the history of Sugar Cane Breeding in Barbados. He went on to Yale for graduate study in History, receiving his M.A. in 1987, then in 1988 winning the Caribbean Rhodes Scholarship which took him to Oxford. He returned to Yale in 1990 to complete his doctoral study, receiving the M. Phil degree in 1991, and the Ph.D. in 1993 for a dissertation entitled "Imperial Science and a Scientific Empire: Kew Gardens and the Uses of Nature".

In 1992 he began his career as a Research Fellow in History of St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge. In 1994 he moved to Oxford to become Darby Fellow and Tutor in History at Lincoln College, then in 1998 to the University of Virginia, where he was Associate Professor of British History from 1998 to 2001. In 2001 he returned to Cambridge as University Lecturer in Imperial and extra-European History since 1500, and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, where he also held office as a Tutor and Director of Studies in History. In 1992, he published in Conversations, the first collection of George Lamming's Essays and Speeches. In 2001, his book Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the 'Improvement' of the World was awarded the Forkosch Prize of the American Historical Association. In 2003 he was awarded the Philip Leverhulme Prize for History. In 2009, while retaining a Praelectorship at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, he moved to King's College London to become the sixth Rhodes Professor of Imperial History. He has been Visiting Professor at Harvard, the École des hautes études in Paris, the Advanced Research Collaborative of the City University of New York, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Drayton has maintained a close involvement in Barbados, the Caribbean and their diasporas. He has been a regular speaker at events of the National Council of Barbadian Associations in the United Kingdom. He gave the 21st Elsa Goveia Lecture in Barbados in 2004, he served as chief nonfiction judge for the Bocas Literary Prize in 2013, and in March 2016 gave the Distinguished Jurist's Lecture to the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago. The High Commission of Barbados in the United Kingdom has nominated him for the Golden Jubilee Award for service to Barbados in the United Kingdom.