

Preface

My purpose in writing this book is to illustrate how a young person with very modest means could overcome the obstacles in the way of his own personal development, particularly in securing a higher education and developing a professional career. Those two pathways converged to provide me with very many opportunities for personal satisfaction in the career that I chose in pursuit of Caribbean and global development.

The opening chapters of the book contain reflections on my early life growing up in Grenada; the compulsion that I experienced for securing a higher education; the knowledge that I accumulated about the working world that, in the end, made me more humble in dealing with people and situations; and the period during which I secured my higher education and the satisfaction and frustrations which arose out of that. During this period, I began receiving important exposure to the rationale for, and the advantages to be derived from, West Indian economic integration.

On the whole, my period in pursuit of higher education in Britain, and the opportunities for strengthening my academic capacities that became available in the United States, served to make me more focused and confident about the contributions I could endeavour to make, particularly to the English-speaking Caribbean. It also alerted me to avoid prescriptions and assessments that were not sufficiently founded on reliable information, to judge issues on their merits and to guard against relying on unsubstantiated assumptions.

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As the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean moved into independence during the 1960s, they had to contend with a series of public issues that materially affected their opportunities for economic development.

At a more general level, they needed to respond to a network of economic and financial institutions, starting with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These two institutions had been set up after World War II to implement the decisions taken at the Bretton Woods Conference that established ground rules for the conduct of international payments, and to complement the decision to establish an open system of multilateral trade. The work of these two institutions was reinforced by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which provided for the freeing of international trade in goods and services, apart from exceptions that conformed to specified criteria.

The first two independent Caribbean countries, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, set a pattern that in subsequent years was followed by other Caribbean countries. In effect, by membership of these international institutions, the English-speaking Caribbean had established rules and procedures that, with some exceptions, were virtually common to all of them. This was later to make it possible for them to establish special arrangements among themselves for the integration of their trade. In other words, paradoxically as it might appear to many, the decision at independence to join the World Bank and IMF on the terms established turned out to be one of the first building blocks towards the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) and the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM).

Like other developing countries, the Commonwealth Caribbean experienced the shortcomings and constraints of the global system of trade, aid and finance. This was further underlined by their growing acquaintance, over the years, with the economic work being undertaken by the United Nations and, in certain respects, by leading personalities in the international academic community. Most influential was the work of the Argentine economist, Raoul Prebisch. He made an important mark on the thinking of senior officials in the United Nations about the problems of international

trade and development in the newly independent developing countries. As his work gathered increasing international attention and support, it became the foundation for reform of the international arrangements applicable to developing countries for their trade and payments.

Prebisch's work became increasingly the foundation for discussion within the United Nations about how to proceed with the issue of reform. This led to a decision by the United Nations General Assembly to convene a conference on international trade and development which took place in 1964. At that meeting, the decision was taken to establish the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) of which Dr Prebisch became the first secretary-general.

Among the insights emanating from the deliberations and work of UNCTAD was enhanced interest in economic integration among developing countries. This contributed towards the resurrection of the notion of integration among the countries that first established the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

As will later be discussed, the growth of interest in the development of international trade and payments along lines favouring economic development lit a spark in the minds of several Caribbean intellectuals who, as the text will indicate, contributed to creating a technical basis for Caribbean integration. My own espousal of the case is contained in two articles and papers that I wrote and published during the mid-1960s: 'Aspects of Development and Trade' (*UN Economic Bulletin for Latin America*) and 'Decolonization and Trade Policy in the West Indies' (First Conference of Caribbean Scholars, 1964). These were intended to join the earlier work of fellow economist and Caribbean integrationist, William Demas, known as 'Willie' to many of his friends and colleagues. The work that we both did on integration and development laid the basis for continuing intellectual collaboration with Willie that I enjoyed for the remainder of his life.

At a wider level, Caribbean economic integration became the leitmotif for the work of both of us in the succeeding years. In fact, Lloyd Best – a close colleague and Research Fellow at the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) – was not far off the mark

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when, in a public lecture, he described Demas and me as belonging to, and leading, a West Indian political party!

This constituted the philosophical platform from which I tried to contribute to the advancement of the economic integration process and the development of supportive institutions, of which the University of the West Indies (UWI) was and is the most important. It also gave a *raison d'être* for the work that I have done over my life for individual Caribbean countries – the public activities in which I engaged at different times throughout the region, but especially in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago where I lived, are described in this book. However, my stance had always been that, coming from the UWI and later from the CARICOM secretariat, I had a fundamental obligation to make myself available to all the countries in the region where I had the relevant skills and experience to contribute to particular issues of problem-solving.

Without going too much ahead of my text, I leave to others to assess the outcome of all of these mostly hurried attempts at problem-solving. In this connection, I would like to use this opportunity to thank those governments and institutions that have honoured me for my work. Despite the frustrations that arose, in the end I was a more rounded individual for having undertaken the assignments and the opportunities they gave me to broaden my perspective and increase my knowledge of the world.

I tell friends that over my career I have been privileged to visit 81 countries – or perhaps I should say airports in 81 countries! But whatever the particular experiences, they certainly served to widen my vision and make me a more perceptive and understanding person.

In ending the account of my life and career, my thoughts inescapably extend to the future. I find this an exciting venture, although at this stage I can only make very preliminary suggestions about some of the principal tasks that might become apparent. However, I hope that they will provide sufficient food for thought for readers who, in the end, will be better placed than I am to take those brief reflections further into concrete discussion of the specific possibilities that lie ahead. In that endeavour, I wish them every good fortune. I look forward to hearing more in the future about the subjects involved.

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In putting together these preliminary paragraphs, my thoughts turn naturally to the persons who provided me with valuable support and assistance in completing this manuscript. I single out for special mention Ms Rosalie O'Meally, who has been of outstanding support to me at every stage of the book. I cannot speak too highly about the indispensable support that she has provided and I thank her sincerely for it.

My wife, Marjorie, has been at every stage, an indispensable ally and an invaluable source of friendship, encouragement, and wise counsel. I take this opportunity also to mention my four children – Arnold, Andrew, Helga and Nicholas – who have been sources of encouragement and support at every stage of the work.

Other members of my family, especially my brother, Dunbar, deserve acknowledgement because of the consistent interest they have displayed throughout the preparation of this text.

I underline the role that members of my family have played throughout my career by including a few photographs of them, along with others illustrative of personalities and events which have significance at different times in my career.