THE FEAR of crime is on everybody's radar these days. However, for people who like to read up on the subject, empirical and theoretical literature on Jamaican criminology is scarce. So, this 10-chapter volume will be welcomed by students, academics and the average citizen with an urge to get an understanding of some of the factors that underlie the recurrence of serious crime in Jamaica.

In this regard, as Dr. Harriott, editor of the book points out, "it makes a useful contribution in terms of advancing the understanding of the role of politics in the development of the crime problem in Jamaica, makes some preliminary efforts to evaluate the impact of crime on economic and political development, and presents some policy insights and considerations."
Although written by academics who are usually steeped in the jargon of their discipline, *Understanding Crime in Jamaica* is immensely readable and will be a favourite of people of varied interests, be they economists, criminologists, students of government, sociologists or the average citizen who wants to have a better understanding of some of the problems facing the country, and how they may be solved or resolved.

Specifically, the authors focus on: the linkages between crime and politics, crime and poverty, the impact on crime and such developmental processes as tourism, and the development of policy responses that can bring about desired effects.

Dr. Harriott, author of *Police and Crime Control in Jamaica: Problems of Reforming Ex-Colonial Constabularies*, starts off with an insightful overview of the Jamaican crime problem, specifying its main features and highlighting the challenges it poses for policy-makers. This analysis compels the reader to turn immediately to his other contribution in Chapter 5, in which he discusses homicidal violence by examining the dynamics of its rapid escalation in Jamaica since the mid-1970s.

*Understanding Crime in Jamaica* becomes increasingly difficult to put down, with chapters on such topics as: 'The Historical Roots of Violence in Jamaica: The Hearne Report 1949', 'Garrison Politics and Criminality in Jamaica', 'Victimization of Jamaican Women', 'The Impact of Crime on Tourist Arrivals in Jamaica' and 'Crime and Public Policy in Jamaica.'

Of course you are not going to agree with many of the analyses, but *Understanding Crime in Jamaica*, with much useful data, will start you mulling over several questions. Like: 'What has caused the extraordinarily high rate of homicides and social violence in Jamaica?' Or, 'When are we going to identify the combination of measures that can move beyond electoral reform to attack and undermine the fundamentals of the garrison phenomenon?' Or, 'What's the best way for the Jamaica tourism product to maximize its potential?' Or, 'Will a reduction in the murder or shooting rate by itself lead to an increase in investment?' Or, 'Is the most intractable factor contributing to violent crime in Jamaica really the interconnecting network of criminal gangs, drug running, politics and the police?' Or, 'Should the budget of the Education Ministry be suspended until we get to the root of the education problem?'
But *Understanding Crime in Jamaica* is not one of those cure-alls. Dr. Harriott firmly debunks as gross oversimplification of the reality, "The popularly held view that enough is known about the crime problem, that all that is needed is for policy makers to muster the political will to deal with the problem.." He adds, "This idea is perhaps based on the erroneous view that all that is needed are tough policing measures, or to throw money at the inner-city communities."

The book has its origins at the UWI, Mona in February 2001 at the 1st Conference on Crime and Criminal Justice in the Caribbean, at which several of the articles were presented as papers.

The 3rd International Conference on Crime and Criminal Justice in the Caribbean, hosted by the Department of Government, UWI, Mona, took place at that campus from February 11 to 14, 2004. If *Understanding Crime in Jamaica* is anything to go by, readers can look forward with great expectation, to any volume that may come out of the latest conference.

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