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**THE POLITICS OF LABOUR AND DEVELOPMENT IN TRINIDAD AND
TOBAGO**

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SUMMARY

This thesis is a labour history of Trinidad and Tobago, concentrating on the period from 1937 to 1990. The study attempts to show that there is not a unified or homogenous working class, and for this reason both traditional Marxist and industrial relations theories are rejected. Instead, the history of labour focuses on how the working classes have been divided by factors such as race, gender, class structure and politics. These divisions are used as an explanation for the absence of a popular socialist party in the country. It concludes that the economic recession of the 1980s has led to the worst crisis in the history of the labour movement, but at the same time, this has laid the framework for a new strategy of social movement unionism, which attempts to constructively engage with, rather than ignore, divisions within the working classes.

The main sources of data were documentary and archival material, and in particular, reports made by the British TUC and Colonial Office, industrial relations legislation, and trade union and political party documents and manifestoes. For the contemporary period, these sources of data were supplemented by fifteen interviews with leading figures in trade union and labour politics.

The work is based on a macro approach to the study of labour, and as such constitutes a new and original approach to the study of labour in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, more contemporary trade union documents and interviews provided the researcher with new and original material.

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DEDICATION

To my parents.

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GLOSSARY

Below are some of the major trade unions and political parties, past and present, in Trinidad and Tobago's history. These, and other, less significant organisations are discussed in the main text.

ATSEFWTU - All Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers Trade Union. Formed in 1937, now known as the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union.

BEU - Bank Employees Union. Small trade union formed in the 1980s, representing bank employees at Republic Bank.

BEWCHRP - British Empire Citizens' Workers' and Home Rule Party. Formed by Uriah Butler in 1935-7, it declined after the 1956 election.

CPTU - Council of Progressive Trade Unions. One of the two trade union federations still in existence, founded in 1971, and affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions.

DLP - Democratic Labour Party. The main party of Opposition from 1961-71.

FWTU - Federated Workers Trade Union. Formed in 1937, no longer exists (see NUGFW).

JTUM - An informal alliance of trade unions from both federations, it was formed in 1989 in an attempt to facilitate long term trade union unity.

NAR - National Alliance for Reconstruction. An electoral alliance of four parties (the Democratic Action Congress, United Labour Front, Organisation for National Reconstruction and Tapia House Movement), it formed the government in December 1986.

NJAC - The National Joint Action Committee. Founded in 1969, it was the leading organisation in the 1970 Black Power rebellion.

NUGFW - The National Union of Government and Federated Workers. The largest union in the country, it was formed in the late 1960s out of a merger between the National Union of Government Employees and the Federated Workers' Trade Union.

NWA - Negro Welfare, Cultural and Social Association. Formed in 1935, this proto-Marxist and feminist organisation declined in the war years and its fragments went into various post-war labour parties (see chapter three).

OWTU - Oilfields Workers' Trade Union. Formed in 1937, historically it is probably the most influential union in the country. Since 1962, it has had a radical leadership, but a more conservative membership.

PNM - Peoples National Movement. Formed in 1955, it was the governing party from 1956-86.

PSA - The Public Services' Association. Formed in 1938, it is the second major union representing public servants.

SOPo - Summit of Peoples Organisations. Formed in 1990 as an alliance between organised labour and other social movements.

TIWU - Transport and Industrial Workers' Union. Formed in 1962, it is traditionally one of the more radical unions in the country.

TTLC - Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress. The main trade union federation, founded in 1966, affiliated to the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress.

TTUTA - The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association. Formed in the early 1980s, it is one of the two principal non-aligned unions in the country.

TUC - Refers (where specified) to either the British Trade Union Congress, the Trinidad Trade Union Council, which was formed in 1937 but no longer exists, or the Trinidad Trade Union Congress, which was formed in 1957, but split in 1965-6, and eventually became the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress.

TWA/TLP - The Trinidad Working Men's Association, formed in 1897. It became a semi-political party under the name Trinidad Labour Party in the 1930s. Eventually it formed part of the Democratic Labour Party.

ULF - United Labour Front. Opposition party after the 1976 elections. It split into two factions in 1977-8.

UNC - United National Congress. Opposition party from 1990, it was formed from the split in the National Alliance for Reconstruction government in 1988-9.

WFP - Workers' and Farmers' Party. Formed in 1966, it quickly dissolved after a poor showing in the general election of that year.

WIIP - West Indian Independence Party. Short-lived labour party that contested the 1956 election.

INTRODUCTION

1. Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island state in the southern Caribbean, with a population of approximately 1.2 million, which lies only a few miles from the South American mainland. It is justly famous for its Carnival, cricketers and calypso music. Among its most renowned public figures are the author Sir V.S. Naipaul, the former cricketer and peer Learie Constantine (who died in 1970) and political commentator, historian and cricket journalist C.L.R. James (who died in 1989). Its diverse culture - there are strong African, Creole, Indian, Chinese and European influences - is a reflection of the fact that it is an immigrant society which has evolved since Columbus first sighted Trinidad in 1498.

However, the tourist brochure image of sunny weather and sandy beaches hides a grimmer reality. Leaving aside the fact that it rains a lot, the islands have a history of exploitation, colonialism and oppression. Trinidad was a Spanish colony until 1797, when it was taken over by the British. Tobago frequently changed hands but the British finally established control of the island in 1793. The islands' original inhabitants, the Arawaks and Caribs, were either killed by imported European diseases or murdered. Slavery was the first major form of labour control and Africa was the principal supplier of labourers. Sugar was

the main export from both islands. After its abolition in 1834, indentured labour was established as the most prominent form of labour control on the sugar plantations of Trinidad, and India became the main source of labour. In Tobago, the sugar industry gradually declined and the island's economic situation grew increasingly worse, which was a major factor in the island's unification with Trinidad between 1889-98.

In the twentieth century oil became established as the main export and the economic fortunes of the twin-island state remains increasingly dependent on this sector. Colonialism established a particular pattern of production based on exporting a limited number of primary goods and agricultural foodstuffs, and efforts to industrialise and diversify the economy since the 1950s have met with limited success. Poverty and unemployment, especially among young people, are serious problems, and in 1990 an attempt was made to overthrow liberal democracy by a small fundamentalist Muslim sect. Although liberal democracy (albeit one which is very corrupt) remains intact, the economic and social situation in the country leads one to question, in the absence of radically different development strategies, the continued stability of the political system.

2. The Thesis

(i) Outline

In this thesis, I outline a labour history of Trinidad and Tobago, concentrating on the period from 1937 (when trade unions were first formed) to the present day. In doing so, I explore the divisions within the working classes, and focus on race and ethnicity, gender, the class structure, and the politics of labour. Previous labour histories of Trinidad and Tobago have either concentrated on the trade union movement (Ramdin 1982), or have crudely used an inappropriate Marxist two-class model to explain periods of conflict and consensus (Rennie 1974). While my thesis is influenced by Marxist theory, I attempt to utilise a materialist method in a flexible way, and in doing so, I link the concepts of labour and development. For example, by focusing on divisions within the working classes - and explaining them (at least partly) in terms of uneven capitalist development - I reject the idea of an inevitable class confrontation between bourgeoisie and proletariat that leads to socialist revolution, or explanations which regard the absence of such a confrontation as a product of the 'false consciousness' of the working class. The problems that are posed by the thesis have therefore not been explicitly asked before, and it is in this respect that the work constitutes an original contribution to knowledge.

(ii) Theory and Methods

The relationship between theory and method is a controversial one, particularly as many social scientists now reject the use of 'meta-theory' and concentrate on analysing the social construction of reality. Whilst I agree that social science is not value free and every theory is "in part a social product of ...society." (Gouldner 1973: 465), this does not mean that one arbitrarily chooses between competing perspectives, as if they were simply a matter of personal taste. Instead, one discusses competing perspectives, and clearly shows why some approaches are rejected and others accepted. This task is undertaken in some detail in chapter one.

Nevertheless, this still leaves the problem of relating theory to empirical data, which in turn leads on to the problem of conducting appropriate research methods. Keeping in mind my detailed examination of theories in the opening chapter, a preliminary, but brief, discussion of the relationship between theory and methods is necessary.

The problem with modernisation theory can be traced back to its roots in Parsonian 'Grand Theory.' In this approach, theory is an a priori construction - it is constructed prior to, and in isolation from, empirical material. Grand theorists "never...get down from the higher generalities to problems in their historical and structural contexts." (Mills 1961: 33) Historical sociology is reduced to the

gradual transition to 'modern' society. Empirical data is simply used to 'fit into the boxes' of grand theory (Goldthorpe 1987: 166). The process of research therefore becomes a task of finding the 'facts' which fit the theory. Of course, this becomes a problem when 'inconvenient' factors arise; in my study, one example is the existence of 'archaic' labour regimes (slavery, indentured labour) during the colonial period, from which European capital derived some benefit.

A Marxist approach does not necessarily overcome these problems. Hindess and Hirst argued that 'facts' are based on theoretical constructions, an argument with which I would not disagree. However, they go on to argue that their arguments "cannot be refuted by an empiricist recourse to supposed 'facts' of history." (Hindess and Hirst 1975: 3) Such a view is excessively rationalist and all too easily leads to a neglect of empirical data, or even to the view that no amount of empirical research can refute one's argument. Moreover, they employ a rigid separation of 'fact' and 'theory' (ibid.: 179), one that many empiricists would agree with. The Marxist method should not ignore the 'given'; as Asad and Wolpe argue, "Empiricism cannot be transcended ...by a refusal to confront 'the so-called facts'." (Asad and Wolpe 1976: 476)

Other versions of Marxism (Warren 1988; Cohen 1984) reduce history to a gradual unfolding of the productive forces, in which all societies pass through similar stages of

development. The problems of modernisation theory are therefore replicated in this approach. This has led some writers to reject Marxism as 'historicist' because the role of human agency is subordinated to an 'inevitable plan' of history. Popper, for example, defines historicism as "an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns', the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history." (Popper 1986: 3) Newer, 'post-modern' theories reject Marxism as a totalising, 'modernist' project for very similar reasons (see among others Foucault 1980; for a critical commentary see Kellner 1988).

There is no doubt that these critiques are very powerful. However, they are only applicable to some crude versions of Marxism, particularly influential in the Second International and in the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union. In this thesis I attempt to utilise a materialist method in a way that does not make class an 'all-embracing', totalising category (see for instance my discussion of social movement unionism in chapter six), nor leads to a stagist theory of history based on inevitable laws of motion beyond the control of human beings. I therefore account for human agency and consider empirical material. For example, I look at the real processes of class formation, structure and resistance in Trinidad and Tobago, rather than neglect the 'facts' of slavery or indentured labour because they do not

'fit the theory' of successive stages of history. Concepts such as class formation, imperialism or gender subordination are not separate from, and prior to, historical analysis and "can only be described, verified and linked to empirically observable events through historical analysis." (Lubeck 1986: 313-4) Processes of class formation are important because they set the limits (and generate opportunities) on what 'social actors' can or cannot do. They do not however, completely determine what people will actually do.

Clearly then, empirical material is very important. I therefore found (a) research method(s) appropriate to my subject of study. The project stands in the tradition of historical sociology, and covers a wide area of study (labour in general, rather than a specific occupation) over a long period of time. Surveys or interviews alone were therefore deemed inappropriate or limited. Those interviews that were carried out were supplementary rather than central to my work, and/or they were focused on a particular time period, the 1980s, where personal information was an important supplement to printed sources. Altogether, 15 interviews were carried out during my visit to Trinidad, which lasted from January to June 1990. They were conducted with leading figures in the labour movement, and some were especially useful because they 'opened the gates' to other sources of information, particularly documentary material. The bulk of my research methods relied heavily on 'unobtrusive' primary and secondary sources such as documents, newspapers and books. Research was conducted at

the libraries at Warwick University, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, at the headquarters of the Oilfields Workers Trade Union, San Fernando, and the Council of Progressive Trade Unions, Port of Spain. I initially familiarised myself with the secondary material at Warwick, and then moved on to examine primary sources such as old TUC and Colonial Office reports, which were available at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. During my visit to Trinidad, I used the University library at St. Augustine as the main source of access to primary material in the post-independence period. Industrial relations legislation, trade union documents, labour party manifestoes and newspapers were of particular importance. The librarian at OWTU headquarters provided me with a wealth of data on trade unions and political parties, most of which was conveniently arranged into various appropriate categories. Finally, the trade union leaders and secretarial staff at the headquarters of the CPTU provided me with a great deal of up to date documentary material, much of which was otherwise confidential. The leadership of the Labour Congress was less forthcoming, but I managed to get access to most of their documents through the collection at the CPTU.

This largely unobtrusive approach had the advantage that it gave me a long term historical perspective, and it was a time and cost saving device. As Lubeck states, this approach uniquely "enables the researcher to interpret empirical findings in relation to long term historical processes.."

(ibid.: 314) For instance, an extensive survey of newspapers published during the 1970 rebellion enabled me to assess the extent of the role played by the organised labour movement in these events (see chapter four). Similarly, internal documents and newspapers enabled me to explore what the United Labour Front stood for, and the reasons for its split (chapter five). And interviews and documents gave me access to the most up to date information concerning trade union unity and social movement unionism (chapter six).

Finally, my approach also overcame some of the problems of surveys and questionnaires, particularly those relating to the 'reactivity' of those being questioned. When somebody knows that they are being questioned or studied by a social scientist, they may change their behaviour accordingly. This is not usually the case when the sources have been collected for some other purpose.

(iii) Thesis Structure and Two Disclaimers

The thesis is divided into six chapters and a conclusion. In the opening chapter I look at various theories of development and outline the approaches to labour which accompany these theories. Chapter two outlines a labour history of Trinidad and Tobago from the period of slavery until the emergence of trade unions in 1937. This chapter explores the origins of gender and ethnic divisions amongst the working classes. The third chapter focuses on the development of the labour movement from the late 1930s to

independence and looks at the political divisions that emanated. Chapter four analyses the Black Power revolt of 1970 and concentrates on the interaction of race and class, the fluidity of the class structure, and the political potential of the so-called 'informal sector'. In chapter five I present a specific case study of the United Labour Front, the one labour party in Trinidad's history that enjoyed significant electoral support, and assess why it failed to come to terms with the long term divisions within the working classes. Chapter six looks at the recession of the 1980s and how this has exacerbated these divisions, and at responses by the labour movement to the unfavourable economic climate. I then make some conclusions about labour and development, and the links between the two concepts.

Finally, I wish to point to two unavoidable weaknesses in this study. First, although the title of the thesis includes the words Trinidad and Tobago, in practice the latter island is neglected. No organised labour movement in Tobago exists independently of that in Trinidad, and it is on this (admittedly weak) basis that Tobago is largely treated as just one area within Trinidad, while in reality, it has some degree of self-government in its own House of Assembly. Second, the term 'Third World' is used throughout the thesis. I am aware of the problems associated with this term and in particular how it homogenises a very diverse group of countries. The term is therefore used as shorthand and refers to those countries who, as late developers, have

suffered from 'competitive disadvantage' in the international economy.

CHAPTER ONE

Approaches to the Study of Labour and Development in the Caribbean

"We are told that free trade would create an international division of labour, and thereby give to each country the production which is most in harmony with its natural advantages.

'You believe perhaps, gentlemen, that the production of coffee and sugar is the natural destiny of the West Indies.

'Two centuries ago, nature, which does not trouble herself about commerce, had planted neither sugar-cane nor coffee tree there...

'If the free-traders cannot understand how one nation can grow rich at the expense of another, we need not wonder, since these same gentlemen also refuse to understand how within one country one class can enrich itself at the expense of another."

K.Marx: Speech on Free Trade 1848 (in Marx 1984: 269)

In this opening chapter, I initially examine three competing theories of Caribbean society, and relate these to the study of labour and development in the region. The three basic approaches are: firstly, modernisation and industrial relations theory; secondly, dependency theory; thirdly, the theory of cultural pluralism. Each of these is examined both

generally, and in terms of its applicability to the Caribbean region. They are then described and critically examined, and I conclude that they are all incapable of fully illuminating the subject of my study. I then present an alternative theory in my fourth section, based on the concept of uneven development, which attempts to explicitly link labour and development. As a prelude to my case study, this section is completed by a brief discussion of the politics of labour organisation in Third World societies.

Section One: The Political Economy and Sociology of Modernisation.

Introduction

This opening section examines the political economy and the sociological theory of modernisation. In my discussion of the former, I concentrate on questions concerning the industrialisation of the Third World, and in particular the Caribbean, from the 1940s onwards. In discussing the latter, I turn to more general questions of historical sociology, and focus my discussion on the differences between, and transition from, 'traditional' to 'modern' societies. In discussing these two schools of thought, I show the similarities of their proposals for developing Third World societies. My discussion then moves to the question of labour and industrial relations' systems in 'underdeveloped' societies. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of this

approach are analysed, and I argue that while modernisation theory constitutes a partial advance over neo-classical economic theory, its proponents still fail to comprehend the problems of economic and social development in underdeveloped societies, and therefore cannot provide a systematic analysis of labour.

1. Modernisation Theory Outlined.

(i) Political Economy: Neo-Classical Theory Amended

By the nineteenth century, an international division of labour had developed in which 'advanced' countries produced manufactured goods (and some primary goods) while 'backward' countries mainly produced and exported primary products. Leading economists argued that this division of labour was to the mutual benefit of the countries involved; that is, each nation obtained more goods through an international division of labour in which all nations specialised in, and exported, those goods which they produced cheaply. In other words, each nation produced the goods in which it had a natural or 'comparative advantage' (Ricardo 1981: 133-41). (See section four below for a more detailed discussion of neo-classical economics.)

Even in the twentieth century, the colonial powers continued to argue that the colonies were incapable of undergoing a thorough process of industrialisation. For example the Moyne

Commission of Inquiry (on the Caribbean labour riots of the 1930s) argued that various factors militated against industrial development. These included the temperament of the West Indian worker, overpopulation and the size of the territories. The Commission reported that the region should continue to specialise in producing those goods in which it had a natural advantage, which were minerals and agricultural goods (West India Royal Commission Report 1945: 426, 443; Thomas 1988: 61).

However, a number of economists began to challenge the view that unhindered 'market forces' equally benefited each country in the world order. The Latin American economist Raúl Prebisch (Prebisch 1959) argued that the Third World did not benefit from the international system of trade because of the unequal market powers involved in international transactions. Focusing his study on Latin America (where independence had been won in the nineteenth century but the region was still largely a primary good exporter), Prebisch argued that the 'terms of trade' that existed between primary producers and manufactured goods' producers were weighted in the latter's favour (ibid.: 261-4). Exporters of manufactured goods had a monopoly on the supply of such goods and so they could control prices. This was reinforced by the power of trade unions in industrialised countries, whose members won wage increases which in turn guaranteed that prices would remain high. On the other hand, there were many exporters of primary products and the resultant competition drove prices down.

The international division of labour therefore worked to the advantage of the industrialised countries (ibid.: 251-4).

The proposed solution for the peripheral countries was industrialisation, which would reduce the reliance on imports, and so reduce the need to export. In so doing, domestic employment would increase and the home market would expand. Prebisch therefore proposed a strategy of 'import substitution industrialisation' for Latin America, under which manufactured imports would be controlled by protective tariffs in the periphery (ibid.: 254-61).

This challenge to neo-classical economics was not as innovatory as it may initially appear. For example, the 'free-trade utopia' espoused by neo-classicists hardly corresponded to the real mechanisms of the international economy in the nineteenth century, as nascent industrial powers protected their domestic industry from foreign competition through high protective tariffs (Hobsbawm 1968 and 1988c: 140 and 39; Gamble 1985: 237). Moreover, in Latin America itself nations such as Brazil had begun to industrialise in the 1930s (in Argentina the process started at an even earlier date) precisely through the ISI strategy advocated (after the event) by Prebisch.

The work of W. Arthur Lewis on the Caribbean mirrors that of Prebisch's on Latin America. Lewis challenged the assumptions of the British Colonial Office and the Moyne Commission and argued that it was possible, indeed

necessary, for the West Indies to begin to industrialise. He regarded it as necessary because primary good production could not provide adequate employment. Indeed, Lewis argued that the constant factor of unemployment provided the region with a comparative advantage in cheap, 'unlimited supplies of labour' (Lewis 1954: 141). This was because unemployment functioned to keep wage costs down as the supply of labour outstripped the demand. Lewis argued that this advantage would encourage investment as profits would be high. It was however, recognised by Lewis that domestic entrepreneurs lacked the capital to lead the investment process, so, initially at least, foreign capital would play the leading role (Lewis 1950: 38).

Like Prebisch, Lewis was theorising a process that had already begun in the region. Indeed, labourers were using advanced technology in the Caribbean region at a comparatively early period - sugar production by slave labour in Cuba used such advanced methods as the steam mill. In terms of capitalist industrialisation, two points are relevant. Firstly, there had been some diversification into light industries in the period of the Second World War. Secondly, and more importantly, Puerto Rico had undergone a process of industrialisation from 1944. The 'Puerto Rican Model' was based on attracting foreign (primarily US) capital through tax incentives (such as The Industrial Incentives Law 1947), cheap labour and weak trade unions. US investment increased, particularly in labour intensive

industries such as textiles, food processing and leather goods (Thomas 1988: 78).

So, a good part of Lewis' recommendations were already in operation in Puerto Rico. Nonetheless, these proposals would influence the development strategies undertaken in the British West Indies in the 1950s , including those in Trinidad and Tobago.

(ii.) Sociology: Functionalist Theory Up-Dated.

My analysis has so far concentrated on the works of development economists at a very specific time period, when Latin America and the Caribbean were beginning to industrialise. The purpose of this study is to explain the factors that determine class formation, labour control and the politics of labour, both prior to, and after industrial development. Of particular concern here is the 'theorisation' of the process of transition from a traditional, pre-industrial society to a modern, industrial society. In order to carry out this task, I now examine approaches to labour and development in the tradition of 'historical sociology', and in particular the 'modernisation' school.

The origins of this school of thought are rooted in the works of the classical sociologist, Emile Durkheim. In his work The Division of Labour in Society, Durkheim contrasted

traditional and modern societies in order to explain the changing nature of order (or 'social solidarity') in society. In traditional societies, solidarity is 'mechanical', whereby society is based on shared beliefs (such as religion) and community values. In modern societies, on the other hand, solidarity is based on 'organic' values; in other words, society is no longer based on shared beliefs (for instance the modern phenomenon of secularisation) but is instead 'unified' by shared material interests and contractual relations, and an interdependent division of labour (Durkheim 1964: 70-110, 111 ff.).

Talcott Parsons was influenced by this contrast between traditional and modern societies when he attempted to explain how societies achieve social order. In a rather ambitious theory, Parsons argued that the basis for all societies lies in "an integrated system of generalized patterns of value orientation." (Parsons 1962: 203) He argued that society is 'achieved' through an agreement on beliefs and values, and that the nature of these beliefs varies from society to society. In traditional society common beliefs include an ascribed or pre-determined social status, particularist or personalised social relations and collectivist values. Modern societies, by contrast, are based on achieved status (i.e. open social mobility and equality of opportunity), universalism (i.e. standards equally applicable to all, such as the rule of law), and individualist values (Parsons 1962: 76-88).

Influenced by these ideas (albeit based as they are on a one-sided reading of Durkheim), sociologists began to theorise the process of development in terms of the transition from traditional to modern societies. The problem, then, for sociologists in the 1950s was to explain the causes of 'backwardness' and propose appropriate solutions. Some writers argued that traditional values were the cause of 'backwardness' and that the solution to this problem was to educate the traditionalists on the virtues of modern (i.e. Western) ideas (McClelland 1961: 430). Others argued that these values may impede modernisation, but they were largely a reflection (rather than a cause) of traditionalism. For instance, Walt Rostow argued that there were five stages of development through which all societies must pass: traditional, pre-conditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and high mass consumption (Rostow 1960: 4-16). Third World societies were situated at the traditional stage, which was characterised as having a basically agrarian economy, using backward technological and scientific techniques, and based on a closed system of social stratification where roles were ascribed rather than achieved. To overcome the problems of backwardness, Third World societies must pass from the traditional stage to the second stage, where the pre-conditions for the take-off to a modern, industrial society are present. These pre-conditions include the development of trade, the beginnings of rational, scientific ideas and the emergence of an elite group which re-invests, rather than squanders its wealth (ibid.: 17-35).

So, the solution to the problem of backwardness was industrialisation. Sociologists therefore arrived at similar conclusions to development economists, in that both schools of thought advocated industrial development in 'backward' countries. There were significant differences as well, particularly in the degree of attention paid to the international economy: development economists regarded the existing terms of trade as inequitable, even exploitative (and in this respect Prebisch was a great influence on the dependency school, discussed below), while sociologists tended to neglect existing international economic relations. Nevertheless, both schools agreed that industrialisation of the periphery was necessary, and both believed that corporations from the advanced countries would (initially, at least) lead this process.

Both Latin America and the Caribbean began this process in the 1930s and 1940s (or earlier). In the 1950s, the British West Indies followed suit and impressive rates of growth were recorded. Optimism concerning the transition to 'modernism' was rife. The Trinidadian sociologist Lloyd Braithwaite argued that the modernisation of the Caribbean economy would lead to a modernisation of the 'system-goals' (social aspirations) of Caribbean society. Trinidad was progressing "from the mere maintenance of law and order to the introduction of political and social institutions appropriate to a society in which universalistic-achievement values pre-dominated, and to the acceptance of a system-

goals corresponding to those of the United Kingdom."
(Braithwaite 1975: 161)

Summary

Development economics and sociology in the 1940s to the 1960s agreed that Third World societies needed to 'catch up' with advanced, Western societies and that this was best achieved by the employment of Western development strategies. These could take the form of a diffusion of Western technology or Western values, or a combination of the two. In this way, the social institutions of Third World societies would be modernised, and would take on a form similar to that in the West. One of these social institutions was the arena of labour relations, and it is to this field that I now turn.

(iii.) Modernisation and the Modern 'Industrial Man'.

Development economics and sociology amended, but did not totally reject neo-classical theories of the international economy. For instance, the neo-classical argument that the Caribbean should continue to produce those goods in which it had a comparative or natural advantage was rejected, and the need to industrialise was stressed. Prebisch argued that this was due to the imperfections of 'pure market forces',

and their resultant inequalities. However, the 'break' was only partial because the basic laws of market economies were accepted and industrialisation was premised on the existence of comparative advantages other than natural resources - for instance, cheap labour.

In the field of industrial relations, sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s similarly questioned some of the premises of neo-classical economics. Free market economists saw no need for trade unions beyond their functioning as friendly societies. This was because the wage labour contract was regarded as a contract of equals, freely entered into by the concerned parties. (It was similarly argued, as I have suggested, that international trade was based on the assumption of the existence of two or more equal partners.) However, industrial relations theorists recognised that market imperfections could arise; for example, through employers paying their workers a wage lower than that which market conditions alone would dictate. Therefore, trade unions could play a proper role in society by ensuring an adequate wage for their workers. Hence, just as protectionist Third World states modified the workings of world market forces, collective bargaining would modify the functioning of market forces in the labour market.

In the Third World, industrial relations theorists believed that the effect of industrialisation would be to modernise the prevailing system of labour relations. It was argued that the radicalism of Third World labourers would gradually

diminish: "labour protest", Kerr argued, "is on the decline as industrialization around the world proceeds...The protest of today is more in favour of industrialization than against it." (Kerr et.al. 1962: 7) This is because industrialisation "tends under any political and economic system to raise materially the level of wages, to reduce the hours of work, and to raise living standards as measured by such conventional means as life expectancy, health and education." (ibid.: 29)

West Indian industrial relations theorists such as Zin Henry put forward the view that the Caribbean was slowly moving forward to an 'industrial relations system' (Dunlop 1975: 1-32; Craig 1975: 8-20) based on the British model; a model described as "a self-administered system built upon principles of freedom and voluntarism where labour and management are free to regulate their relationship, determine terms and conditions of employment, and accommodate their problems by mutual consent." (Henry 1972: 91)

The adequacy of this theory will be examined below, but one weakness is immediately obvious. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that Kerr and his collaborators were optimistic concerning the scope of Third World industrialisation. Kerr may be correct in his assertion that protest is for rather than against industrialisation, but this in itself cannot explain why the process has been limited. The industrialisation of Haiti, Bangladesh or

Burkina Faso may lead to increased stability, but this does not address the problem of how to proceed with a such a strategy. Moreover, the limitation of industry to certain sectors in most (or even all) Third World countries calls into question the applicability of Kerr's thesis to the Third World in general, as I discuss below.

These problems with Kerr's contentions have been implicitly recognised by another mainstream IR theorist, Adolf Sturmthal. He recognises that a modern IR system is but one of a variety of systems of labour relations in the world (Sturmthal 1973: 8). However, he argues that the modern system should be the only system in the world. In other words, what is required is a continued diffusion of Western ideas and technology into other areas of the world.

2. Modernisation Theory Assessed

It is now widely recognised by sociologists that the functionalist analysis of society is inadequate. Many criticisms have been made: for instance, the model assumes rather than explains social equilibrium, it conflates the existence of an institution in society with its necessity, and it under-estimates the degree of conflict in society (Mills 1959: 39; Mann 1987). As a result of these weaknesses, functionalists cannot properly explain the causes of social change. The weaknesses of functionalist sociology are equally applicable in the 'developed' world

and the 'underdeveloped' world. For my purposes, I will concentrate on the functionalist analysis of the latter.

Undoubtedly the basic weakness of modernisation theory is its 'dualism'. Modernisation theory assumes that there is a complete separation of the inter-relationships between different parts of interdependent economies. This dualism occurs at two levels in modernisation theory: firstly, there is a failure to examine properly the relationship between a particular Third World society and the wider international economy; and secondly, there is a failure to explain the relationship between the traditional and the modern sector within a Third World economy. As Frank states, "The dualist theory and the diffusionist and other theses based on it are inadequate because the supposed structural duality is contrary to both historical and contemporary reality: the entire social fabric of the underdeveloped countries has long since been penetrated and transformed by, and integrated into, the world embracing system of which it is an integral part." (Frank 1969b: 62)

An analysis which overcomes this dualism at the international level shows the inapplicability of Rostow's analysis to the Caribbean. The original traditional societies of the Arawak and Carib Indians were largely destroyed (rather than modernised) by the Europeans. Moreover, the societies that succeeded the Indian civilisations were the creations of European colonialism, but were still 'traditional'. So the development of 'modern'

society in Europe was accompanied by the reinforcement of 'traditional' society in the Caribbean.

Indeed, the connection may go far deeper than this, for as Frank argues, 'modern' society (or to use his phrase, the 'metropolis') was a product (wholly, according to Frank, but partly in other analyses) of the exploitation of 'traditional' societies (satellites). This exploitation takes place through the expropriation by the metropolis of the satellites' surplus, which in turn leads to the development of the former at the expense of the latter. In this way so-called traditional societies are not undeveloped so much as underdeveloped, due to the "lack of access to their own surplus." (Frank 1969a: 9) The precise mechanisms (and the adequacy) of this process will be examined in sections two and four, but it should be clear that Rostow's ahistorical dichotomy between the traditional and the modern is false, and that economies do not develop in isolation from each other; indeed, one may even benefit at another's expense. It would be compatible with this analysis to argue (as some scholars - to be discussed later - have) that New World slavery promoted the industrial revolution in Europe.

West Indian writers such as Lewis and Braithwaite accept that these contentions apply to the slave period (and the period of indentured labour up to 1917) (Lewis 1950: 34-5; Lewis 1954: 149; Braithwaite 1975: 25), but they question its appropriateness once a Third World country has achieved political independence and/or industrialised. They argue

that capitalist industrialisation sweeps away the remnants of archaic economic practices and the particularistic values of traditional societies, and that a Western style of life will eventually emerge (Braithwaite 1975: 168).

However, industrialising Third World societies had to (and still have to) compete with countries that had a large 'head-start' in industrial development. This advantage allowed the advanced countries to develop further, once again at the expense of the underdeveloped societies. Some writers argued that foreign dependence actually increased through industrialisation, as Third World societies relied increasingly on transnational corporations, and that while some development had taken place in the periphery, it was still largely dominated by, and for the benefit of, the 'advanced' countries, or a small minority in the Third World (see section two for further details). For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago from 1957-65, foreign investment averaged \$86 million a year, but over the same period average annual outflows were \$111 million (McIntyre and Watson 1970: 19; Oxaal 1975: 39-40).

The dualist analysis is also inadequate in its assessment of the internal structure of Third World societies. Kerr's argument that labour protest declines as modern industry delivers a higher standard of living relies on a purely 'technicist' account of industrialisation, which does not account for the real contradictions of the process nor its effects on people's lives. Indeed, Rostow carried out such

an analysis of the British case, arguing that the transition to an industrial society led to a uniform increase in living standards (Rostow 1948: 122-5). This view is open to question in the British case (Hobsbawm 1968: 154-71), although there may have been a slight increase in living standards from 1790-1840. However, even this debate, useful as it is, can become sterile because it tends to neglect an enquiry of the very real social changes that industrialisation brings about (Hobsbawm 1968: 79-96). For instance, who benefits most (and least) from the process? Moreover, the British (and any other) case was a 'catastrophic experience' under which people were drawn off of the land and were forced (by economic necessity) to seek employment elsewhere (Thompson 1988: 231).

In the Third World, this process has been even more uneven and 'catastrophic'. Rostow's analysis does not take into account the links between the 'backward' and the 'traditional' sectors, but instead treats them as two separate entities (thus repeating his dualist analysis, this time within the 'internal' economy). The task of development theory is not to state that the former must simply 'catch up' with the latter; instead, it should examine how the development of one sector affects the development of the other (just as it should question how the development of one country affects the development of another). Indeed, the presence of the supposedly modernising influence of foreign capital has underlined the need for such an analysis. Capital investment in the Third World has often reinforced

'archaic' labour relations (or alternatively invested in labour intensive industries and paid very low wages, as in the Puerto Rico case above). For example, the British dominated sugar industry in Trinidad encouraged the development of sugar cane farming in the 1880s (see chapter two). And in Jamaica, United Fruit similarly discouraged wage labour by selling land to potential independent producers in the 1930s (Post 1978: 125). Moreover, both national and foreign capitalists behave very differently from the expectations of modernisation (and neo-classical) theory, a point to which I return in section four.

The more all-encompassing industrialisation process that has taken place since the 1940s has been similarly uneven. Contrary to Lewis' intentions, Caribbean governments have zealously encouraged industrial development, but at the expense of the rural sector. The result has been "a growing impoverishment of rural economies" (Cross 1979: 19), unaccompanied by an 'incorporation' of those forced off the land into the urban sector. This has meant that unemployment remains a constant factor, along with the growth of a large 'marginal sector', selling anything from coconuts to their own bodies in order to survive. These 'marginals' also perform certain functions for capital, such as reducing the social reproduction requirements of capital and acting as a reserve army of labour, which capital can draw on in a boom period and can discard in a slump. (The existence of the marginal sector cannot, however, be explained solely in terms of their 'functions' to capital, and one must instead

explain their origins in terms of uneven capitalist accumulation - see section four.)

This last point is particularly important in any assessment of the role of organised labour in the Caribbean. Henry argues that 'political unionism' will disappear as industrialisation develops, and will be replaced by a modern IR system (Henry 1972: 83). I discuss below how this argument neglects the unevenness of industrialisation in the Third World, but for the moment a brief examination of political unionism more generally is necessary.

Firstly, political unionism still exists, in the narrow sense of union-party relations, in the 'advanced' countries; for instance, there is an 'organic link' (based on finance and voting rights) between the Labour Party and the trade union movement in Britain.

Secondly, mainstream industrial relations theorists regard political unionism as a sign of the 'political immaturity' of a particular labour movement, but this is because they do not concern themselves with power relations (in other words, politics) at the workplace and in the wider society. Kerr, Dunlop et. al. focus their attention on how conflict is contained and controlled; in other words, they regard conflict as an anomaly and consensus as the norm. The problem with this analysis is that consensus is simply assumed and there is no attempt to explain what gives rise to conflict in the first place. The question of ownership

and control is 'left out' of the analysis and is assumed to be a natural rather than a social phenomenon. By moving beyond this assumption, and recognising the social character of ownership, the underlying mechanisms of the workplace are more accurately understood. As Hyman states, "industrial relations is the study of processes of control over work relations; and among these processes, those involving collective worker organisation and action are of particular concern." (Hyman 1975: 12; also Allen 1975: 35) Relations between capital and labour are therefore political by their very nature. Right wing politicians and academics denounce 'political' strikes in liberal democracies on the grounds that they undermine the sovereignty of democratically elected governments. This analysis is similarly one-sided because it again 'leaves out' the question of ownership and control and, therefore, the political power of capital; as Hyman states, "the power of capital is a permanent constraint on the economic and social objectives which can 'realistically' be pursued." (Hyman 1989: 44)

Moreover, there are good reasons why political unionism is even more overt in underdeveloped societies than in advanced capitalist countries, and these relate to the unevenness of industrialisation in the periphery, as I have already suggested. The collective bargaining relationship is heavily weighted in favour of the employer in the Third World who can draw on the large pool of available surplus labour; that is, the reserve army of labour. So as Cohen states, "To rely solely on collective bargaining in these circumstances is

simply unproductive - not unnaturally the unions cast about for additional or alternative systems of bargaining in order to redress the imbalance between themselves and the management." (Cohen 1974: 148) Kerr and Henry are therefore incapable of developing such an analysis of political unionism in the Third World because they repeat the errors of Rostow's dualist analysis and fail to see how one sector affects, and is affected by, another.

Sturmthal's analysis is similarly one-sided. He implies that while collective bargaining is not the norm, it should at least be so. The problem with this analysis is that it is not actually attempting to understand social reality; rather, it hopes that the prescription will one day become reality. A real analysis of Third World labour is therefore precluded by a tendency to see things through Western tinted spectacles. As Cohen argues, "(d)iscussions of the relation between reproduction and production, or of the way in which the world of industry is parasitical upon or interdependent with the world of domestic and peasant labour, do not appear in traditional IR research." (Cohen 1983: 4)

In short, modernisation theory is too Eurocentric and weighted in favour of the capitalists' view of the world. One researcher on working class values in Trinidad and Tobago, sympathetic to this school of thought, has admitted that "(i)t seems impossible to deny that the sociological use of the word 'modern' has been and still remains ethnocentric." However, she then states that "(t)he value

judgement that equates 'modern' with 'Western' is regrettable, but nevertheless it operates." (Lengerman 1971: 152) Such a blatantly biased approach to social science leads one to concur with Cohen when he states that "(i)n so far...as their ideas have provided ready ammunition for cold war warriors and the agencies of foreign policy in a handful (but a powerful handful) of Western nations, the extent to which comparative IR research can be seen as anything more than an ideologically limited and culturally and historically specific form of discourse must be raised." (Cohen 1987: 8)

Although the value and scientificity of theories have to be assessed in their own terms, the close association between particular political practices and advocates of modernisation suggests that one cannot accept their claims to value neutrality. For example, Rostow was himself an adviser to President Johnson during the Vietnam war, and there has been a remarkably high degree of US intervention in the Caribbean Basin region this century. US intervention has taken many forms, from frequent invasions of 'sovereign' territories, to covert operations (such as the promotion of surrogate armies and dictators, and the illegal mining of ports) and the perhaps lesser known 'trade union intervention', which includes checking the political affiliations of trade unions and specific individuals (for instance in Trinidad and Tobago in 1972), as well as encouraging economic and political sabotage against nationalist and 'socialist' regimes (for example in the

Dominican Republic 1963-65 and in Grenada 1979-83) (Spalding 1988: 279; Pearce 1982; Blum 1986; Als 1977: 1-7). The justification for such support has often been couched in the language of modernisation theory (for instance based on support for 'modern' systems of collective bargaining), although the 'Reagan doctrine' openly espoused a willingness to support 'authoritarian' (i.e. right wing) regimes (Brenner 1984). Needless to say, the reality has been that these same right-wing governments have not been sympathetic to organised labour or the peasantry, but have collaborated with US interests (the most notorious example being United Fruit in Guatemala in 1954 and The Dominican Republic in 1965). In this way, modernisation theory is useful more as a justification for Western interests, and less as a theory that corresponds to Third World reality.

Section Two: Dependency and the Theory of the Plantation Economy

Introduction

This section draws on, and extends, the critique of modernisation theory outlined in section one. I examine dependency theory in both Latin America and the Caribbean, and show the importance of the international economy in shaping these societies. This school of thought is criticised however, because it lacks a sufficient analysis

of internal factors in underdeveloped societies, including labour.

1. Outline

It should now be clear that the development process in the Caribbean was very different to that of nineteenth century Britain. Industrialisation led to an increased reliance on the import of capital goods, a high capital intensity and a consequent maintenance of high unemployment. From 1951-65, Jamaica's industrialisation had created only 9 000 jobs, while the labour force had increased by 20 000 a year; in Trinidad and Tobago from 1950-63, less than 5 000 jobs had been created by industrialisation, whereas the total labour force had increased by 100 000 over the same period (Thomas 1988: 90).

In both the Caribbean and Latin America, a new theory emerged in the 1960s as a response "to the need to understand the failure of post-war economic policies to internalize the growth process, and the persistent external dependence of the economies." (Girvan 1973: 15) The United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (set up in 1948 and led by Prebisch) began to radicalise and question some of Prebisch's proposals for overcoming dependence, while in the West Indies, an intellectual current with very similar outlooks - the New World Group - was set up in 1962.

The basic hypothesis of both groups was that their respective regions were unfavourably incorporated into the international economy, as Prebisch and Lewis had contested, but they went on to argue that industrialisation had not overcome this problem. The Latin American economist Theotonio dos Santos summarised the basic hypothesis: "Dependence is a conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others." The 'advanced' country may advance through self-impulsion, but the dependent economy can "only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their immediate development." (Cited in O'Brien 1975: 12)

As I showed in the previous section, one weakness of modernisation theory was that it neglected an analysis of the international economy. Dependency theory stressed this 'international' factor, and how one nation could develop at another's expense. Thus in Frank's theory the Caribbean had played an historical role as a 'satellite' in the world capitalist economy.

One of the leading theorists of the New World Group in the 1960s was the Trinidadian, Lloyd Best. He characterised West Indian economies as plantation economies, which are basically "..externally propelled..", and "structurally part of an overseas economy." (Best 1968: 283 and 302) Best, in partnership with Kari Levitt, argued that there were three

stages of the plantation economy (Best and Levitt 1969; Levitt and Best 1975: 34-60). Firstly, there was the stage of the 'pure plantation economy', which was the slave period (including apprenticeship, up to 1838 in the British Caribbean). The economies in this period were basically plantations, whereby Europe provided the organisation, decision making, capital, transport, supplies and markets; Africa provided the labour and the Caribbean provided the land. Production (mainly sugar cane) was for export to the European market. The second period (plantation economy modified 1838-1938) starts with the abolition of slavery and apprenticeship and ends with the aforementioned Commission of Inquiry into the causes of labour unrest in the 1930s. This is a period of free trade in which British capital benefits from higher productivity and is therefore able to capture wider markets. Some changes take place in the Caribbean, such as the emergence of an independent peasantry and a system of indentured labour. However, there is no genuine transformation of society because of the legacy of pure plantation economy. Government is still run by, or on behalf of, planters, and the peasantry 'carry a legacy' of tastes which require continued exports. And ultimately, the plantation sector retains the best land.

So far there is much in this analysis that was compatible with Lewis and Prebisch's arguments. However, Best and Levitt's characterisation of the third period is critical of the actual process of industrialisation in the British West Indies. This is the period of 'plantation economy further

modified', which dates from the late 1930s to the present. Modifications include new, high value goods and services (bauxite, petroleum, tourism and some manufacturing), and an active public sector. However, many of the features of the plantation economy still exist, primarily because of the dominance of foreign, transnational companies (TNCs), which play a similar role to that of the joint-stock trading company of the pure plantation economy i.e. the TNC combines organisation, capital, technology and entrepreneurship. Moreover, in the 1970s, licensing agreements to nationalised industries (including oil and bauxite) were often used to maintain foreign control, as the licensing of technology, management and the marketing of products are often in foreign hands (Jenkins 1987: 178; Thomas 1988: 207). (However, these localising factors in a sense undermine Best's analysis, as I point out in my critique below.)

The Jamaican economist, George Beckford, similarly argued that the Caribbean is made up of a number of 'plantation societies'. He defines the plantation system as "the totality of institutional arrangements surrounding the production and marketing of crops." (Beckford 1972b: 8) Beckford argues that all development paths are largely determined by agricultural organisation, and plantation agriculture leads to distortions in the economy: persistent unemployment, low levels of national income (and its unequal distribution), and under-utilisation of land and underconsumption (ibid.: 154-82). This in turn means that plantation societies are underdeveloped as expansion of food

supplies are inhibited, the terms of trade are unfavourable and there are few internal linkages in the economy (ibid.: 183-214).

The work of the plantation economy school is remarkably similar to that of Celso Furtado's on Latin America (Furtado 1970). Like Best he divides the history of the region into three distinct stages: the colonial period (1600-1850), where production (of precious metals and agricultural goods) is for export; a period of externally oriented development (1850-1930), based on low wage capitalist agriculture (due to unlimited supplies of labour), and the period after 1930, based on import substitution industrialisation. Furtado argues that industrialisation fails to alleviate dependency because of the high import content of new investment (which leads to balance of payments problems), the capital intensity of production (which means that high unemployment persists) and the limited market for goods. Development is therefore highly uneven, and subject to stagnation.

Dependency theorists disagree on what strategies are required for Third World countries to overcome their disadvantageous situation. Frank and Wallerstein (see below) believe that only a revolutionary strategy can overcome underdevelopment and dependency, but most theorists argue that a reformist strategy is sufficient. For example, Best is not critical of Lewis' conception of capitalism; the latter's mistake was to apply a Ricardian model (albeit amended) to a 'national economy', in a case where a

'national economy' did not exist. Best's strategy entailed creating the conditions for the existence of a 'national economy'. In this respect, his outlook "did not imply a radical break from capitalism, but rather its reverse: localisation would create the prerequisites for this vital engine of the capitalist dynamic to operate within Trinidad for the first time in its history." (Oxaal 1975: 43) Indeed, members of the New World Group have actively tried to promote indigenous capitalist development in the region. Norman Girvan was head of the National Planning Agency of Jamaica in the 1970s; Owen Jefferson has been Director of the Central Bank of Jamaica; and Alister McIntyre and Havelock Brewster have been senior officials at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (Payne 1984: 8).

Best also argues that 'localised development' can be achieved by a popular alliance which does not take into account class boundaries. Indeed, he contends that Caribbean societies cannot be analysed in class terms (hence the rather sketchy detailing of different forms of labour control beyond the blanket term plantation economy) for a number of reasons. Post-slave societies are said to be too flexible to have social classes; the social boundaries that exist between individuals are limited as wealthy professionals achieve their position through sacrifice and have no tradition of values separate from the rest of the population; and class solidarity is not the crucial factor

in Caribbean societies (as exemplified by the phenomenon of nationalism) (Best 1971: 7-22).

2. Further Elaboration and Critique.

Dependency theory points to some of the weaknesses of modernisation theory, and begins to analyse the unequal relationship that exists between the 'First' and 'Third' Worlds. It also provides a powerful critique of Third World industrialisation, and shows how this process has failed to overcome Third World subordination to the West. However, the model contains a number of serious weaknesses, which relate to its failure to analyse labour in any significant detail.

Probably the most common criticism of dependency theory is that it analyses external forces (i.e. the international economy), at the expense of internal ones. There is some truth to this argument but it is an exaggeration. All dependency theorists incorporate internal factors into their analysis. For instance the Caribbean dependency economist Havelock Brewster defines economic dependence as "a lack of capacity to manipulate the operative elements of an economic system. This lack of inter-dependence implies that the system has no internal dynamic which would enable it to function as an independent, autonomous entity." (Cited in Girvan 1973: 11) Beckford and Best similarly analysed internal factors (Beckford 1972: xvi; Best 1975), and it was Best's claim that the Caribbean was a 'classless society'

(see above) that led him to advocate a reformist strategy of change in Trinidad and elsewhere. (Beckford later changed his position, accepting the need for an analysis of dependency based more specifically on class relations - see Beckford and Witter 1982.)

Frank also examines internal factors, and by implication, tries to link labour and development. He analyses classes in terms of groups of people located in spatial categories, in which some people benefit at the expense of others (through surplus appropriation) in the network of metropolis/satellite relations (Frank 1969b: 340-9).

The most systematic attempt to unite labour and development however, has come from the advocates of world systems theory. Wallerstein has argued that with the development of capitalist production "there has been the development of an ever more delineated interstate system that has enabled states within which core activities were located to develop strong state structures (in relation to those in peripheral areas), such that they could shape and reshape the world market in commodities, labor-force, and capital in ways that would maintain, in favor of large entrepreneurs located in core zones, both the capital-labor relationship as a social form and unequal exchange between core and periphery."

(Wallerstein 1983: 18) The argument that countries with strong states formed the core while those with weak states became the periphery has been convincingly challenged (Skocpol 1977), but of more relevance here is Wallerstein's

approach to the study of labour. In an earlier work he argued that "the relations of production that define a system are the 'relations of production' of the whole system and the system at this point in time is the European world economy. Free labour is indeed a defining feature of capitalism, but not free labour throughout the productive enterprises...(F)ree labour is the form of labour control used for skilled work in core countries whereas coerced labour is used for less skilled work in peripheral areas. The combination thereof is the essence of capitalism. When labour is everywhere free, we shall have socialism."

(Wallerstein 1974: 127) While his focus on combinations of 'free' and 'unfree' labour may be useful, the particular manner in which Wallerstein attempts to unite labour and development is questionable. His basic contention is that different modes of labour control are simply the (functional) results of the requirements of the world system. However, modes of labour control are the results of human struggle and it should not be assumed a priori that these will always 'fit the logic' of the world capitalist system. As Connell points out "(w)orld-systems approaches to theorising the international dimension of class confront us with characteristic problems: a tendency to treat classes as categories of economic actors; an a priori cast-list of classes; the appeal to a logic-of-the-system that carries a presupposition that there is a well-formed, coherent system; and difficulty in grasping class formation other than through functionalism or through the distinction of class-in-itself from class-for-itself." (Connell 1984: 182)

Wallerstein's insistence on the all-embracing nature of the world system also leads to problems of political strategy, as I discuss below.

These problems can be extended to dependency and underdevelopment theorists more generally. While it is true that dependency and underdevelopment theory does employ an analysis of internal factors, the adequacy of this analysis is questionable. Dependency theorists argue that satellite or plantation status was a product of integration into the expanding world market, and that the internal mechanisms of dependency are ultimately produced by this integration. For example, the 'absence of interdependence' that Brewster refers to (above) is caused by the presence of transnational corporations in the economically advanced Western countries, and these in turn emerged because of the favourable conditions enjoyed by Western nations in the world market. The problem with this approach is that the division of the world into 'metropolis' and 'satellite' is never adequately explained. Britain and the Caribbean were both incorporated into the world market but only one 'developed' while the other remained (comparatively) 'underdeveloped.' The transfer of surplus from the Caribbean to Britain and Europe on its own can only be a partial explanation for this process, because, it does not explain how one region 'became' the metropolis and the other, the satellite; in other words, "it obviously is not trade per se which accounts for whether a country or area stagnates or expands." (Mandle 1972: 53) In order to understand the

effects of trading relationships on particular regions of the world, the specific market powers of the regions involved must be explained. Internal structures (including labour) must therefore be examined prior to, rather than after, an examination of trading relationships. This task is undertaken in section four.

A second, related problem is the ahistorical nature of dependency theory. Best's analysis of the three periods of plantation economy "portrays self enclosed movements in time and static relations which are mechanically transposed from one period to another. And underlying all this is the unrealistic assumption that in the long interval between the establishment of plantations and the society of today no significant developments have taken place." (Sudama 1979: 75) Indeed the continuing utilisation of the term 'plantation economy or society' is inaccurate and largely metaphorical (Craig 1982b: 149).

The consequence of such a static model is that while it may point to an important part of social reality in the Caribbean (its satellite status), it fails to specify the precise mechanisms, and the changes in them, which cause the problem. As O'Brien has written of Latin American dependency theory, "The actual mechanisms of dependency are seldom spelt out in detail...One looks in vain through the theories of dependency for the essential characteristics of dependency. Instead, one is given a circular argument: dependent countries are those which lack the capacity for

autonomous growth and they lack this because their structures are dependent ones." (O'Brien 1975: 23-4)

This lack of dynamism in the dependency approach is caused by its failure to properly analyse the processes of class formation and class conflict. In Best's analysis "(t)he relationship between the international bourgeoisie through its local representatives (the managers of foreign controlled firms and the agents of international organisations) and the local bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is not explored." (Sudama 1979: 79) He argues that the professional 'class' is not a capitalist class distinct from the rest of the population, but never tells us "what they do constitute, and what their relationship to local and foreign capital may be.." (Craig 1982b: 167)

In the cases of Frank and Wallerstein, a local/foreign capital alliance is said to exist, but their static approach militates against an analysis of the changes and contradictions in this alliance. For instance, the national/international alliance in Jamaica underwent substantial change after Abolition, and this process cannot be explained solely by the needs of the world system, as members of the old planter class declined at the expense of a wealthy and increasingly capitalist orientated peasantry (Post 1978: 36).

The faulty sociological analyses of the dependency and world system schools also leads to weak political programmes.

Wallerstein's focus on an all-embracing world system leads one to question how this system can ever be replaced, beyond a rather impractical support for autarchy, or simultaneous world-wide revolution (Brenner 1977: 91; Worsley 1980: 324-5). Best's more reformist strategy is similarly problematic. His argument that factors other than social class are considered to be important by social actors does not negate an analysis rooted in the social relations of production. Indeed, the strength of such an analysis is that it can begin to explain the 'missing link' in dependency theory (its mechanisms). The argument that post-slave societies are too flexible to be considered class societies is a caricature of a class analysis, which does not deny the existence of social mobility. Indeed, one of the sources of conflict in capitalist society (both its 'advanced' and 'underdeveloped' varieties) is that there are limits to the number of 'higher' places in society. In other words, the 'exceptional' Caribbean is nothing of the sort because social mobility operates in all societies, but always within certain limits. Best's argument that foreign capital is the problem, rather than capital itself, is also very weak. For example, there is no valid reason for suggesting that local capital would act (or actually has acted) any differently from foreign capital in terms of the high import content of capital goods or the export of local capital. Indeed, this vague strategy of 'localising production' through a non-class based popular alliance has in many ways already been carried out. In Trinidad and Tobago since 1956, various attempts have been made to localise production and decision

making (for example, through the nationalisations of oil and sugar companies, and the development of an indigenous natural gas and fertiliser industry), but "there is no evidence of a commensurate degree of structural transformation." (Sudama 1979: 81)

Summary

Dependency theory constitutes a significant advance over modernisation theory, because it focuses on the international economy. However, the centre of its analysis neglects the internal processes of 'underdeveloped' societies, and the mechanisms that lead to peripheral status in the world system. Systems of labour control are one-sidedly seen as the outcome of the functioning of the world market.

Section Three: The Theory of Cultural Pluralism.

1. The Theory Outlined.

While the theory of cultural pluralism is not explicitly concerned with either labour or development, its major focus

has important implications for both of these factors. In the Caribbean the main exponent of this theory is M.G. Smith. The basic contention of this approach is that West Indian societies are based on conflict and not consensus, and that the root of this conflict lies in different institutional systems, which in turn are based on conflicting cultures. According to Smith, "(e)ach institution involves some forms of activity, grouping, rules, ideas and values." (1978: 767) These include "marriage, the family, property and the like and are common to the total population." (Smith 1965: 14) A population that shares a single set of institutions is deemed to be culturally and socially homogeneous, while one that shares a system of basic or compulsory institutions but practices different 'alternative' institutions is heterogeneous. Finally, a population that shares neither basic or secondary institutions is said to have a plural society. For Smith, "(c)ultural pluralism is a special form of differentiation based on institutional divergences." (ibid.: 770).

Smith claims that Caribbean societies are plural societies because different sections of the population practice different forms of common institutions. The two factors that unify these societies are government and the economic system. For Smith, "(g)overnment acts to limit the chances of conflict, and to limit, maintain, or increase the opportunities for acculturation; the economic system embraces the entire population, although in different degrees and different ways." (Smith 1965: 16)

The implications of this theory for a study of labour should be clear. Cultural pluralism maintains that the basic conflict in Caribbean society is between different cultural groups. Labour studies should therefore recognise the existence of this primary contradiction, rather than other alleged sources of conflict such as class or gender (the theory has nothing to say on this latter factor). Smith argues that cultural pluralism is "quite distinct from other forms of social heterogeneity such as class stratification in that it consists in the coexistence of incompatible institutional systems." (Smith 1978: 774) There is undoubtedly a need to take account of culture and ethnicity in examining Caribbean (or any) societies, and my analysis in chapters two to six emphasises how these factors have divided the labour force in Trinidad and Tobago. However, in my critique below I show why I think that the claims of this particular theory cannot be substantiated and instead propose an alternative framework which incorporates class, ethnicity and gender, and relates these to the concept of development.

2. A Critique and Alternative Framework for Analysing Labour and Development.

The basic strength of the plural society model is its challenge to both crude functionalist and Marxist theories of society. The contemporary reality of ethnic conflict

undermines theories of society based on value consensus or purely class conflict. However, the model itself is particularly weak because it is both reductionist and lacking in explanatory power. It describes society in terms of one basic category -cultural variation - and neglects other differences in society based on gender and class. Secondly, the model is essentially static; as Cross argues, the thesis has a classificatory scheme and labels various stages in a social order, but "it does not account for how one came to change for the other...(T)o define a society as 'plural' and to propound a concept to cope with that society is not to understand how that society came to be 'plural' and neither is it to show that in reality we are justified in applying that particular concept." (Cross 1971: 484)

Stuart Hall has similarly argued that the theory is ahistorical because it fails to explain how the different ethnic groups arose. Furthermore, he argues that the origins of 'cultural pluralism' cannot be divorced from the class relations of society and that "(f)undamentally, it is economic production which draws these two social groups into a relation of domination/subordination, conquest and the institutions of slavery which define the relations, and the 'extrinsic' composition of the two groups.." (Hall 1977: 160).

These criticisms seriously undermine the plural society model. As Mills has argued, "(a)n adequate explanation of the dialectics of cultural development must leave the

empirical level of simple description and investigate the underlying structural forces which break up, as well as maintain, a given cultural configuration. Smith's failure to do this leaves him seriously vulnerable." (Mills 1987: 83) However, it does not follow that a reductionist Marxist approach is more useful. As Mills states, factors such as ethnicity require investigation and should not be ignored. Contrary to the claims of Smith, I will attempt to show that class is a central category for any analysis of labour and development, but it should not be given a primacy that would lead to a neglect of ethnicity or gender.

Advocates of the plural society model share with other Caribbean critics of Marxism the belief that the latter doctrine must be based on a two class model of inevitable polarisation which ignores non-class conflict. One writer sympathetic to the plural society thesis has argued that "(i)n Trinidad and Tobago, it is not easy to identify a working class. This is why here, workers refuse to behave in Marxist terms." (La Guerre 1978: 27) This view is (rightly) critical of a narrow, positivist Marxism, but it fails to examine more flexible approaches which recognise that human beings make their own history, and that conflicts other than those based on social class exist.

Carl Stone's more subtle examination of social class in Jamaica also criticises a particular kind of Marxist analysis. While he accepts that the capital-labour conflict exists, Stone argues that this is secondary to a wider

'rich-poor' conflict. An over-emphasis on the capital-labour conflict is misconceived "because of the fragmentation of interests based on differential benefits that accrue to various categories of wage labour and the owners of property." (Stone 1973: 20) In other words, the two-class model is too rigid because it fails to examine both wider conflicts and the uneven development of social classes.

I would accept much of Stone's analysis but this does not mean that a Marxist approach should be rejected wholesale. Instead, I will employ a conception of uneven development (outlined in section four), together with an analysis of the origins of gender and ethnic conflicts (outlined in chapter two), to show how the working classes in Trinidad and Tobago have remained divided. In other words, I reject the Marxist prophecy of proletarian unity but still accept the validity of much of the Marxist method.

Such an approach implies a rejection of positivist conceptions of social class (as outlined by La Guerre above) and notions of 'true' or 'false' class consciousness. As E.P. Thompson states, "(c)lass eventuates as men and women live their productive relations, and as they experience their determinate situations, within 'the ensemble of the social relations'..(and) (n)o actual class formation is any truer or more real than any other, and class defines itself as, in fact, it eventuates.." (Thompson 1978: 149, 150)

This 'human action' approach implies that a 'minimalist' definition of class 'structure' is required, especially in 'Third World' societies like Trinidad, where class formation tends to be very uneven and fluid. Any approach that uses class as a central concept must be one "that recognises the incomplete and embryonic character of class formation and development on the one hand, but that nonetheless attempts to derive a meaningful frame of reference for explaining a class-based act, on the other. We may thus recognise the relative infrequency and ephemerality of overt class action, but also be careful to acknowledge the existence of such acts and not underestimate their political significance." (Cohen 1972: 252)

Class reductionism should therefore be avoided, and one should recognise that conflicts other than those based on class exist. However, class remains a central concept and, as I argue in section four below, Caribbean history cannot be properly understood without utilising the category of class.

Section Four: Labour and Uneven Development in the Caribbean

In this section, I attempt to move beyond the modernisation, dependency and cultural pluralist approaches by utilising (and in some respects, going beyond) the Marxist method and more explicitly applying it to Caribbean history. The purpose of this section is to show the close linkage between

labour (based on a 'minimalist' class definition) and development and how one cannot be properly analysed in isolation from the other. My argument proceeds by analysing, in individual sub-sections, three periods of labour control and development - slavery, indentureship and the period of 'peripheral capitalist development'. This is followed by a fourth sub-section which attempts to draw some of the implications for my assessment of the politics of labour in Trinidad and Tobago.

Part One: Slave Labour and Development in the West Indies

(a) Regional Political Economy: The 'Origins' of Slavery in the English Caribbean

From the 1640s, a "regional political economy" (Cohen 1987: 5-6) emerged based on English merchant capital, African labour and Caribbean land. Gunder Frank's characterisation of this relationship as capitalist has already been rejected (see section two), but his argument that merchant capital transforms relations of production has some plausibility. The impact of merchant capital on the Caribbean was such that it led to the creation of a 'new' system of production - slavery - based on labour imported from Africa. The main commodity produced was sugar, which was then exported to the European market.

However, this increase in English trading activity had its basis, not in a 'propensity to trade' (Frank's argument), but in the development of the productive forces: as more goods were produced above immediate subsistence requirements (i.e. the surplus product), so there was more wealth available for trade. Moreover, this increase in the productive forces was determined by changes in the relations of production in England. Feudal relations were breaking down and capitalist relations were developing, a process that continued into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hilton 1987a: 116). The increase in merchant capital activity that had such an impact on the Caribbean therefore had its roots in the relations of production (i.e. social classes) that existed in England at the time.

Labour at the African 'end' of the system was also vital to the process, because one must understand how and why the slaves from Africa were available as slaves in the first place. As Brenner points out, "Before they could be bought, the slaves had to be 'produced'; more precisely, they had to appear on the market as 'commodities.' But this poses large questions, namely of the formation of class systems of 'production' and appropriation of slaves in Africa (or elsewhere)." (Brenner 1977: 88)

(b). The 'Laws of Motion' of Slavery.

The production processes that existed in England and Africa were therefore vital to the development of slavery in the

New World. Once established, the precise mechanisms of production were of primary importance because it was these that explained the contradictions of slavery, and its competitive position in the world market.

Slavery was organised in such a way that the slave owner, or 'planter', "gained access to the total product of the enslaved person's labour power, in return for which subsistence (or the means of subsistence) was provided." (Miles 1987: 79) Slaves therefore entered the production process as constant rather than variable elements (as is the case with free wage labour) as they were guaranteed means of subsistence. Slaves were both producers and means of production which limited the ability of their masters to regulate the size of the labour force and burdened them with inflexible labour costs, which in turn limited their ability to reorganise the labour process on more efficient lines. As Post argues, "The masters are forced to organise the production process along the lines of closely supervised gang labour, making the only possible methods of increasing labour productivity the intensification of labour and the migration of labour to more fertile soils." (Post 1982: 34; also Post 1978: 23) This 'archaic' form of labour control is also 'inefficient' compared to wage labour in that there is little incentive to accumulate, as I explain below.

The slave relation of production was not as straight-forward as this analysis might suggest, however. In some cases there existed a hidden wage, whereby slaves were paid in tradeable

commodities, which were sometimes used as currency (e.g. tobacco). In order to overcome the constant reproduction costs of slave labour, planters often allowed slaves to grow food on their own plots of land. According to Mintz, this independent subsistence production "ran entirely counter to the whole conception of how the slave mode of production was supposed to operate." (Mintz 1978: 93) This was because slaves could work in groups of their own choice, make their own calculations, and sell some of their surplus on the market place. This last factor enabled a large number of slaves to purchase their freedom.

On the plantation itself, the labour process had similarities with that of industrial capitalism. There was a large concentration of labour working with relatively advanced technology (Moreno Fraginals 1976: 33-40); as Mintz states, "(s)laves or no, these labourers were compelled to work in some ways that, were or not for slavery, would have been just as accurately described as the regimen of factory proletarians." (Mintz 1988: xv)

However, despite the similarities, slavery cannot be accurately described as 'capitalist'. The 'anomalies' that Mintz refers to arose out of the contradictions of the slave mode of production, and of its incorporation into a world economy that was dominated by the nascent capitalist powers of Europe, and especially England. Three points illustrate this argument: firstly, slave labour remained the dominant relation of production. Secondly, the non-slave relations

arose out of the contradictions of slave labour (just as wage labour in agriculture became increasingly generalised in feudal England). Thirdly, the 'laws of motion' of slavery were derived from the slave relations of production and it was these 'laws' that account for the Caribbean's unfavourable incorporation into the world market. For instance, slave relations of production arrested technological innovation. Even though some degree of advanced technology was utilised, especially in Cuba, it was insufficient compared to the dynamics of capitalist production techniques; as Moreno Fraginals has argued, slavery "differed from .. capitalist production ...in the form...of the impossibility of constantly revolutionizing production methods, an inherent part of capitalism." (Moreno Fraginals 1976: 18) The Caribbean was therefore integrated into the world economy in such a way that its market power was weak compared to parts of Europe, who benefited from superior productive techniques.

(c). English Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery.

Capitalism emerged in Britain primarily as a result of the instability of feudalism and the rise of a class that employed wage labour. In other words, a qualitative change took place in English society, culminating in the Civil War of 1640-49. However, there was a quantitative element to the rise of British (and European) capitalism: the plunder (of

which slavery was but one form) of the colonial world. This plunder benefited European capitalism by extending the European market for goods such as sugar and tobacco, providing certain raw materials (such as cotton) and generally increasing the amount of wealth in the economy. This last point is important because the conversion of this wealth into productive capital was not automatic (Frank's assumption) but instead required the existence of capitalist relations of production. Indeed, there was no large scale increase in investment in Britain in the late eighteenth century (the period when slavery was at its height). The profits acquired from slavery "increased British income whatever the recipients of the income chose to do with it: whether they spent it on land or coaches or wine - or on textile machinery." (Solow and Engerman 1987: 8)

The capitalism/slavery relationship demonstrates the 'uneven and combined' development of the world economy (Trotsky 1936: 25-37). England (and later Britain) and other European powers 'got ahead' of the rest of the world (just as the latter had before) on the basis of 'more advanced' class relations, and therefore superior productivity. These powers were in a position to influence the development of the rest of the world, and did so by inflicting on them 'backward' labour regimes. In the Anglo-Caribbean economy, the uneven development of the two regions was combined through slavery, which enabled the former to move further ahead, and left the latter 'underdeveloped'. Frank is therefore correct when he says that one country may develop at the expense of another,

but he never explains the mechanisms that sustain the system, which classes, ethnic groups or gender most benefited or lost out, or what created the system in the first place.

A class-based analysis also helps to explain why slavery was abolished. As I have shown, slavery was subject to its own internal contradictions, which in turn influenced the 'market power' of its products when they came to be sold on the world market. In the climate of European rivalry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, each power adopted an 'exclusive' policy for its colonies under which each individual colony was protected from competition. However, by the late eighteenth century Britain had emerged as the major industrial power of the world. The use of more efficient labour systems in Britain, employing more efficient technology, led to higher labour productivity, including in agriculture. The products of slave labour became increasingly unprofitable as a result. Both slavery and the monopoly system had become unnecessary expenses to Britain, because it could under-sell its competitors on the world market. The gradual shift to abolition (1834) and free trade (1846-52) reflected Britain's (short-term) emergence as the dominant industrial power of the world. As Williams points out, abolition was more than an attack on slavery. "It was an attack on monopoly...The reason for the attack was not only that the West Indian economic system was vicious but that it was so unprofitable that for this reason alone its destruction was inevitable." (Williams 1987: 135)

Abolitionist sentiments were reinforced by the fact that domestic demand expanded more quickly than the foreign market in the nineteenth century, especially after the 1812 War as Britain lost its major market (North America). An end to slavery in the 1770s would have led to a loss of demand for English manufactures, but this was not the case in the 1820s onwards, as a far wider internal market existed (Solow and Engerman 1987: 14-15). Other factors of importance included the Abolition Movement and unrest on the part of the slaves themselves, most notably (but far from exclusively) in Saint Domingue in 1791 (James 1989).

Part Two: Indentured Labour and Development in the Caribbean.

After slavery was abolished in the Caribbean (officially in 1834, but this was followed by four more years of effective slavery under 'apprenticeship'), a system of indentured labour was introduced. It was most common where the soil was most fertile - in particular in Trinidad and British Guiana). The system lasted until 1917 and was based on the importation of labour from various parts of the world, but in particular from India, and to a lesser extent China (for details of the Trinidad case see chapter two). Indentured labour was based on a system whereby people worked for a number of years for a particular employer (they were forced into this position through destitution), in return for free

passage back to their country of origin or a plot of land in the country to which they migrated. Although the system was based on wage labour, in practice it was combined with non-economic coercion where planters utilised a pass system which restricted labourers' freedom of movement beyond the estate on which they worked. In the absence of adequate regulating mechanisms, planters could effectively treat the labourers as they wished and so competed with other estate owners on the basis of low wages rather than rapid technological innovation.

This system of labour control once again left the Caribbean in an unfavourable trading position in the world economy. The planters were far from the 'revolutionary bourgeoisie' described by Marx in the 'Communist Manifesto'; instead of attempting to improve sugar production through constant technological development, they decided to try to maintain short-term profitability through either cheap, indentured labour, or unequal exchange with the peasantry. As Sebastien argues, "The fact that they could pay wages to indentured laborers way below the value of their labor power, and below that of other laborers, impeded the widescale use of machinery in the cultivation process, so that though in the short run it may have proved less costly, in the long run it was the downfall of many." (Sebastien 1979: 131-2) This was reinforced by state encouragement of labour intensive methods of production (for instance in sugar and cocoa in Trinidad - see chapter two) outside of the indentureship system.

In Trinidad, permanent labour settlement was actively encouraged by the colonial government (see chapter two), and this process aided a process of proletarianisation as independent production became more difficult.

Part Three: Labour and Peripheral Capitalist Development.

(a) Peripheral Capitalism and Uneven Development

In parts one and two I have placed much emphasis on the relationship between different systems of labour control and particular patterns of development. In Trinidad from the 1930s, the capital-free wage labour relation was established as the main relation of production. However, this relationship was established far more unevenly than in advanced capitalist countries, and this again has important implications for the wider process of development. This point is crucial because it undermines both neo-classical and neo-Marxist theories of development, as well as the basic assumptions upon which government economic strategy in Trinidad has been based since 1956.

The Lewis model, neo-classical and some neo-Marxist theories all share the belief that capitalism has certain 'equalising tendencies'. The late Bill Warren for instance utilised a Marxist approach to argue that imperialism was a progressive force in the 'Third World' because it enabled backward

countries to 'catch up' with advanced capitalist countries (Warren 1988). As I showed in section one, the Lewis model was based on a similar belief that Caribbean countries could exercise their comparative advantage in cheap, 'unlimited' supplies of labour in order to attract foreign capital and thereby reach a level of development similar to that in the 'First World'.

These theories have their roots in (a one-sided reading of) the work of Ricardo, and were most fully developed in the work of Eli Heckscher and Bertil Ohlin (Ohlin 1933). They have also enjoyed a revival in development economics in the 1980s (see especially Bauer 1981; Lal 1983), as well as in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (see chapter six for details of the Trinidad case). I have already stated in section one that the basis of the theory is that each country or region in the world economy should specialise in producing those goods that it can make most cheaply - in those goods in which it has a comparative advantage. According to the Heckscher-Ohlin model, equilibrium in exchange is based on equally available factor endowments throughout the world (Ohlin 1933: 34-49). Country A may have an initial comparative advantage and therefore produce say, corn and cloth, more cheaply than country B. However, if country A produces cloth more cheaply than it produces corn, it should specialise solely in the former, because it could then produce more cloth which it can exchange with country B's corn. In this way world production

of both cloth and corn is stimulated and both countries benefit from the trading relationship.

In the model, if corn is labour intensive relative to cloth, and if labour is relatively abundant in country B, then that country will specialise in corn production. As production continues, there is a tendency for wage rates (and other factor endowments) to be equalised; Heckscher and Ohlin argue that this is the case because as country B specialises in corn production, its production pattern becomes more labour intensive, thus reducing labour abundance and increasing marginal labour productivity and wages. Meanwhile, in country A, as cloth production increases, labour will become less scarce, and marginal labour productivity and wages will fall. What this means in monetary terms is that country A cannot indefinitely run a trade surplus with country B because the inflow of gold (or its equivalent) from B to A will lead to an increase in prices in A and a decrease in B. Therefore, in the long run, equilibrium will be restored (for summaries see Edwards 1985: 17-43; Shaikh 1979).

In practice, equalisation of factor endowments across the globe (especially wage rates) has not occurred. I will attempt to explain why this is so below, but before doing so I provide some evidence to show that capital flows to the Caribbean have not been (nor are likely to be) sufficiently large enough to lead to an equalisation of factor endowments

between North America and Western Europe, on the one hand, and the Caribbean, on the other.

Successive post-war governments in the Caribbean adopted programmes designed to encourage foreign investment, such as tax holidays (see section one and chapter four for more details). However, these policies did not have the desired effect of attracting a substantial inflow of foreign capital. For instance, while direct foreign investment in Trinidad rose from TT \$48 million in 1956 to TT \$100 million the following year, it had fallen to TT \$42 million by 1966 (McIntyre and Watson 1970: 18). Moreover, in only one year between 1957 and 1965 did direct foreign investment exceed investment outflows (ibid.: 19). United States' direct foreign investment in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1945 constituted 37 per cent of total US direct foreign investment; by 1981, the proportion of US direct foreign investment allocated to the region was down to 17 per cent (Ramsaran 1985: 85). These figures follow a pattern which is typical of the Third World as a whole: in the early 1980s, just over one quarter of all direct foreign investment was in developing countries, and over half of this was concentrated in just eight such countries (Jenkins 1987: 13).

The underlying reason for the failure of all trade equilibrium models is that they lack an adequate account of the production process. As Brett argues "(t)he fundamental weakness of bourgeois theory is not that it ignores dynamic

changes in production relations, but that it assumes that capitalist development will take a particular form - one characterised by even development throughout the system, reciprocal benefits to all of those engaged in its exchange relationships, and equilibrium solutions to the input-output equations generated by the international division of labour." (Brett 1983: 90) By looking at the production process, and how this is integrated with exchange and distribution, one can see the (relative) advantages that accrue to 'early developers' - generally those countries that were not colonised and subject to regimes of forced labour, or escaped them early enough to enjoy a competitive position in the world market.

Neo-classical theory's assumption that the world economy is made up of equally competitive individual units is a fallacy. In practice, some economies are far more powerful than others and are therefore in a far greater position to attract capital than others. Economies of scale ensure that increasing returns prevail when average costs are a decreasing function of output. The strongest countries secure economies of scale through factors such as the exploitation of mass production techniques (for instance - specialisation of labour, machinery and management, the accumulation of knowledge), access to credit and to cheap inputs (such as wage goods and capital equipment), which in turn improve the prospects of substantial infrastructural facilities, and the organisation of Research and Development facilities (around 98 per cent of which - in the capitalist

world, at least - is concentrated in the advanced capitalist countries - see Griffin 1978: 15) (Brett 1983: 90-3). In monetary terms, the effects are very different from the expectations of the Heckscher-Ohlin model - the outflow of gold from country B will not automatically lead to a reduction in prices and the restoration of a trade equilibrium with country B, but will instead have the effect of decreasing the supply of credit, which will in turn decrease production and raise interest rates. In country A, gold flows will be absorbed by the expanded circulation requirements of increased cloth and corn production, increased luxury production and expanded bank reserves. This final factor will increase the availability of credit at low interest rates and therefore promote the continued expansion of production. Finance capital may be attracted by the high interest rates of country B but this does not lead to a new equilibrium because the credit still has to be paid back to country A with interest, which eventually leads to an ever greater flow of gold from B to A (see Shaikh 1980: 38-9).

So, capitalism creates hierarchies at both the level of production and the level of the world market, the latter of which is based on a "tendency towards locational agglomeration, a tendency based on the search for the economy of time." (Murray 1972: 171) At the level of the world market, productive activities tend to be gathered together into agglomerations, and most capital is invested in these areas. Capital will continue to be invested in those areas where 'agglomeration tendencies' are relatively

low for a number of reasons - exhausted markets in the advanced countries, or vital raw materials, cheap labour or protected markets in the Third World - but none of these (on their own) are sufficient to overcome the competitive advantage (Edwards 1985: 123-65) enjoyed by the advanced capitalist countries and so most capital remains there. Indeed, even more crucially, there is a net capital flow from Third World countries to the 'advanced' world, as Third World capitalists seek to maximise their own profitable opportunities by investing (often illegally) in the First World. In section two I referred to capital outflow in Trinidad around the period of independence, but even during the boom years from the mid-1970s to early 1980s, there was an endemic problem of capital outflow. It has been estimated that from 1976-1984, there was a capital outflow of more than US \$1 billion. At the height of the boom (1976-80) capital outflows amounted to 63 per cent of the growth in external public debt during the period (Bennett 1988: 64). This export of capital, based on a particular conjuncture of production, exchange and distribution, has important consequences for class formation, as I discuss below.

Finally, the direct foreign investment which does go to the Third World is not as benevolent as is supposed in the neo-classical and Lewis models. Many labour organisations in Trinidad and elsewhere have been critical of foreign ownership of important parts of the economy, especially, as I show in my case study, the oil industry. They have argued that the national interest of small developing societies

have been subordinated to the global concerns of large transnational corporations. (This is discussed in more detail with reference to the Trinidad oil industry in chapter six.) Although this argument is often couched in overly nationalist terms (which all too often fail to condemn local capitalists who are just as prone to export capital), its basic premise is useful. Neo-classical theory regards international economic relations as market transactions between national units. In practice trade is increasingly dominated by large firms exchanging with their own subsidiaries. The result is that prices are 'administered' and not 'arm's length' market prices; in other words, transnational companies transfer price. Transfer pricing refers to "the setting of prices on transactions between different parts of the same firm, as distinct from the setting of market prices on transactions between independent producers." (Murray 1981b: 1)

Transnational corporations may transfer price in order to reduce the tax burden in specific countries, to avoid limits on profit remittances, to take advantage of a more favourable exchange rate where a dual exchange rate mechanism exists, to avoid accusations of 'imperialist exploitation' or to obtain greater flexibility as transfer prices can be used to generate a continuous flow of funds as imports or exports are made, whereas profit remittances usually have to wait until the end of the financial year (Jenkins 1987: 117-8).

(b) Class Formation and Third World Labour Studies

The implications of my discussion of uneven development should be clear for any study of labour in the Third World. As I argued in section three, class formation is highly uneven and so an industrial relations model is not very useful. In Trinidad, the capital-labour relation is the main relation of production in that the direct producers are separated from the means of production, but the export of capital which is so common in peripheral capitalist economies ensures that the processes of class formation and development are highly uneven. The result is that the securely employed, unionised, usually male, wage worker of the industrial relations school represents at most a large minority of the labour force, and there is large-scale and constant unemployment and a large informal sector (often with close links with the peasant or domestic economy). In Trinidad, out of an estimated labour force of 369 600 in 1985, approximately 100 000 workers were unionised (Council of Progressive Trade Unions 1985c: 1). Moreover, the labour force as a whole is stratified along the lines of race and gender, and these factors must be accounted for in any study of labour. It is therefore more accurate to use the term working classes rather than the singular working class.

Part Four: Labour Organisations and Labour Resistance

The case study outlined in chapters two to six focuses mainly on the organised labour movement, and in particular on political parties and trade unions. However, I argue that the character of these institutions must be seen in the context of wider uneven class, gender and ethnic relations. Before moving on to my case study, I will briefly discuss the general character of trade unions and political parties, and relate this to the specific conditions in peripheral capitalist economies.

The orthodox Marxist-Leninist view of trade unions is that they are not particularly effective institutions in advancing the cause of socialism. Lenin distinguished between economic, trade union consciousness and the revolutionary socialist class consciousness embodied in the vanguard party (Lenin 1988). Perry Anderson has similarly 'written off' trade unions as vehicles of socialist advance, arguing that they "do not challenge the existence of a society based on a division of classes, they merely express it. Thus trade unions can never be viable vehicles of advance towards socialism in themselves; by their nature they are tied to capitalism. They can bargain within the society, but not transform it." (Anderson 1978: 334) A general strike is dismissed as "an abstention, not an assault on capitalism." (ibid.: 336) This view of trade unionism is contrasted with the political party, which is seen as "a rupture with the natural environment of civil

society, a voluntarist contractual collectivity, which restructures social contours: the union adheres to them in a one-to-one relationship...Thus, the political party alone can incarnate a true negation of existing society and a project to overthrow it." (ibid.: 335)

Such a sharp dichotomy between 'economic' trade unionism and 'political' parties is not dissimilar to the views of Kerr and his colleagues, discussed in section one. In Trinidad, this view has informed both right and left wing politics in the labour movement. For instance, in the 1940s and 1950s British TUC advisers in colonial Trinidad advocated a complete separation of industrial and political demands (see chapter three), while in the 1970s many Marxists took a similar position in the United Labour Front (see chapter five). Two left-wing Trinidadian writers have even argued that "(t)he biggest barrier to further development of the workers' self organisation and initiative is the trade union which emasculates and limits the scope of working class activity, channelling it in a particular direction as determined by the wage system and bourgeois democratic process." (Howe and Rennie 1982: 135)

In section one I outlined the reasons why the 'economic' demands of trade unions can never be wholly separated from politics. If one takes a socialist perspective, it should be stressed that, for all its limitations, 'trade union consciousness' is never wholly compatible with capitalism. For instance, the basic trade union demand of a 'fair day's

work for a fair day's pay' can develop into more radical objectives; as Hyman states, "(i)f workers were to define 'fairness' in terms of 'the full fruits of their labours', a demand which is superficially economic would have obvious revolutionary implications...In some contexts, any demands for improvements are unrealizable; and in any situation, there will be some point in excess of which demands are intolerable." (Hyman 1978: 386) Lenin himself took a far more subtle position than is often credited to him and he was fully aware of the 'educational functions' of a strike. He wrote that "(a) strike...opens the eyes of the workers to the nature, not only of the capitalists, but of government and the laws as well...Strikes, therefore, teach the workers to unite...This is the reason that socialists call strikes 'a school of war', a school in which the workers learn to make war on their enemies for the liberation of the whole people, of all who labour..." (Qu. Hyman 1978: 387)

In Third World societies, trade unions often play a more explicitly political role than similar organisations in advanced capitalist countries. As I stated in section one, the presence of a large reserve army of labour weakens the collective bargaining position of trade unions and so compels trade unions to take positions on wider political issues - one factor behind the phenomenon of 'social movement unionism', discussed in chapter six. Moreover, as Hyman points out, "(f)or a ruling class pursuing rapid capital accumulation within the constraints of an imperialist world economy the options are clearly limited: a

fact which does much to explain the lack of tolerance for independent and assertive labour organization by most post-colonial regimes." (Hyman 1979: 329) In other words, given the unevenness of development in peripheral capitalist societies, Third World capitalist states often attempt to control organised labour. Thus in practice, many states take a far more realistic view of the political nature of trade unions and often pass legislation which attempts to curtail their power - as was the case in Trinidad and Tobago in 1965 (see chapter three).

Conclusion.

The approach of this thesis is influenced by, but in some respects attempts to move beyond, Marxist theory. Neo-classical, modernisation and cultural pluralist theory are all incomplete because they do not adequately conceptualise the link between labour and development. Dependency and world systems theories at least have the merit of focusing on the international economy, but they tend to one-sidedly regard systems of labour control as the functional outcome of the mechanisms of the world system. While numerous Marxist approaches are overly reductionist and stagist, this does not have to be the case. A theory of uneven development, combined with a 'human action' approach to class, race and gender, provides the theoretical framework for an analysing labour and different periods of development, such as slavery, indentureship and peripheral capitalism.

Analysing development in order to explain the context in which labour operates is necessary, but is still insufficient. Labour is not simply a factor in explaining development; in terms of understanding the dynamics of history, it is the key factor. As my quotation from Marx at the beginning of the chapter illuminates, the exploitation of one country by another is based on the exploitation of one class by another. Robert Brenner has argued that three conditions must be fulfilled if there is to be an unprecedented expansion of the productive forces. Firstly, there must be a potentially mobile labour force (i.e. one not tied to the land or a particular owner). Secondly, there must be the potential for developing labour productivity through the specialisation of tasks. Thirdly, the potential must exist for enforcing continued pressure to increase labour productivity: "Only under conditions of free wage labour will the individual producing units (combining labour power and the means of production) be forced to sell in order to buy, to buy in order to sell and reproduce, and ultimately to expand and innovate in order to maintain this position in relation to other competing productive units." (Brenner 1977: 32) In the Caribbean, such conditions have largely not existed and so it has generally had a weak competitive position in the world market.

Even in the period of post-war capitalist industrialisation, the region has either had to compete with countries that have superior technology and therefore higher productivity, or it has been forced to produce low productivity,

unfinished goods, where the 'value added' is low and so potential for 'modernisation' is not high. In the case of the former, the region has therefore had to import technology which has led to balance of payments problems, and has failed to attract sufficient capital investment (due to capitalism's 'agglomeration tendencies' within the world market) in order that new employment opportunities could be created. In the case of the latter, the terms of trade are generally unfavourable. This is not due to the higher wages of workers in the metropolitan countries, Prebisch's argument, but is instead caused by different rates of labour productivity (of which wages are a reflection).

The politics of labour should therefore be analysed in the context of uneven capitalist development in the periphery. 'Political' trade unionism should not be seen as a sign of the 'political immaturity' of a labour movement but should be regarded as a rational response to the conditions of capital accumulation in the Third World. Divisions within the working classes, both class and non-class based, should come under scrutiny. The political potential of less organised groups such as those working in the petty commodity sector should be assessed. These tasks are undertaken in chapters two to six.

CHAPTER TWO

Class Formation and Labour History

"...the Britain of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was admired and envied the world over for its liberty, (and) for the comparative well-being of its inhabitants."

Margaret Hilda Thatcher (1979: v)

As I showed in chapter one, the Caribbean's integration into the world economy was an unfavourable one, a situation strongly influenced by processes of class formation in the area. While Trinidad suffered a similar fate to the rest of the region, the actual process of class formation was significantly different (with the partial exception of British Guiana) from the rest of the West Indies. My purpose in this chapter is to examine the particular way that classes developed from the late eighteenth century to the late 1930s, and in doing so show how these patterns helped to shape labour resistance. In particular, I am concerned with how uneven development interacted with ideology to create a fluid class structure divided by race and gender.

To clarify the events of this period, the chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, I look at the period of slavery, from its comparatively late establishment in the 1770s to Abolition in 1834. The second section investigates

the period from 1838 to 1917, and in particular the system of indentured labour, the development of 'reconstituted' peasantries (Mintz 1984: 132) and the unification of Trinidad with Tobago. Finally, the period from the 1890s to the 1930s is examined, a period characterised by intensified proletarianisation and the beginnings of organised labour, the development of the oil industry and the emergence of 'modern' trade unionism.

Section One: The Period of Slavery

(i.) Introduction: Trinidad as a 'Colonial Slum': 1498-1770s

Columbus is alleged to have discovered Trinidad on July 31, 1498. In fact this 'discovery' was the beginning of the island's contact with the developing European commercial network, led at this stage by Spain and Portugal. The actual discovery of Trinidad was made by the Arawak and Carib Indians who inhabited the island for hundreds of years before Columbus' arrival, and had established an agrarian society based on soil cultivation, hunting animals and gathering shell-fish (Williams 1964: 1).

The Spanish colonisation process was markedly slow in Trinidad, and the first permanent Spanish settlers probably did not arrive until 1592. Even after this, Trinidad remained undeveloped compared to the rest of the Iberian Empire. It was basically an "outpost of Spanish colonialism"

(Brereton 1981: 2), where a few Spaniards and Spanish-Americans (mestizos) cultivated a little tobacco and cocoa for export, but most production was for direct subsistence. The plantation form of production did not yet exist, but attempts were made to develop it in the seventeenth century.

Up to the 1780s, the Arawaks and the Caribs provided much of the labour for the developing estates. Production was based on the *encomienda* system, whereby the Spanish *encomendero* was granted a parcel of land, and had the right to extract tribute (in the form of labour and/or crops) from the Indians living on the land. This system of production was typical of the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century but was limited in Trinidad to just four *encomiendas*, and in 1712 only about 600 Indians lived in them (Brereton 1981: 5). Most Indians still lived in the forest, in independent settlements.

There were further attempts to control the labour of, and to 'Christianise', the Indians, such as the mission villages established between 1687 and 1708. Each mission was ultimately controlled by the Capuchin missionaries, and Indians were required to work for several days a week on the settlement. These efforts to increase labour control met with only limited success and they were abolished in 1708. Nine years previously, the Indians at the mission of San Francisco de los Arenales rose up against the Capuchins and killed them (Brereton 1981: 6).

Various half-hearted attempts to establish forced labour systems continued, but until the late eighteenth century, slavery was not utilised. Up to this period, Trinidad remained "a colonial slum of the Spanish Empire", in which "(n)o serious attempt was ever made to develop its resources..." (Millette 1985: 1).

(ii.) The 'Modernisation' of Trinidad, 1773-97.

It was clear by the 1770s that if Spain wanted to maintain its Empire, it must develop its colonies. This view was reinforced by the fact that Britain was increasingly dominant in the region. From 1761, Spain and France were allies, and by 1776 the Spanish recognised that immigration was necessary to develop Trinidad. The following year Trinidad's Spanish governor, Manuel Falquez, received a visit from the French-Grenadan planter Roume de St. Laurent. The latter became the semi-official spokesperson for a group of French planters who suffered discrimination at the hands of the British after the latter had taken Grenada in 1763. Under St. Laurent, these planters were encouraged to move to Trinidad.

Almost immediately, foreign immigration commenced and this procedure was given official recognition in the 1783 Cedula of Population. This decree offered incentives to prospective new planters, such as a free grant of land to every settler who came to Trinidad with his slaves. The size of the land depended on the the number of slaves owned by the planter;

i.e. the larger the number of slaves owned, the larger the amount of land awarded. A free-coloured property-owning class was also encouraged to settle, as they too were awarded land (albeit half as much as their white counterparts), often as slave owners. Also, provisions were made for the granting of full Spanish citizenship for all free settlers, including coloureds, after five years residence, provided that they adhered to Roman Catholicism.

The effect of the Cedula was quite clear. In 1784, there was a population of almost 6 000, of whom 2 627 were slaves (there were a further 1 495 Caribbean Indians. This section of the population was in decline due to overwork, food shortages, contact with European diseases and murder); by 1797, the population had increased to 17 643, of whom over 10 000 were slaves (Brereton 1981: 14-15; Williams 1964: 47).

Unlike many of the other islands, Trinidad's economy was not based solely on one crop and the production of sugar was (at least initially) accompanied by that of cotton, cocoa and coffee. Nevertheless, by the 1790s, the economy shared most of the features of slave society outlined in chapter one and it was centred on the production of sugar for export.

(iii.) Trinidad as a British Slave Colony, 1797-1838.

Spain's attempts to prevent further British expansion were in vain and the latter conquered Trinidad in 1797. This

takeover reflected the increasing dominance of the British in the region. It was tolerated by the planters because they feared that the revolutionary events in France and Saint Domingue would spread to Trinidad if it continued under weak Spanish rule.

The conquest was led by Sir Ralph Abercromby, but he left the island after a few days and left one of his officers, Sir Thomas Picton, as Military Governor and Commander-in-Chief. From 1799-1802, Picton ruled Trinidad as an effective tyrant. Harsh treatment such as flogging and executions were inflicted on people of all classes and colours, but the most severe was usually reserved for the coloureds and blacks and, although Picton was eventually disgraced, successive governors were only marginally more humane.

The slave owner had absolute power over the slave; the slave was the master's legal property. There were laws which supposedly protected slaves from the worst kind of abuse by her or his master, but in practice murder or rape often went unpunished (Patterson 1975: 82). Work on the plantations was very hard, particularly in the sugar crop season. Slaves were also subject to ill-treatment on the estates by overseers, and once again received little effective protection.

There was no sexual division of labour under slavery. Female slaves were expected to work on the estates from an early age and, on at least one island (Jamaica) there were more

women field slaves than men (Reddock 1985: 64-5). As Patterson argues, "Slavery abolished any real social distribution between males and females. The woman was expected to work just as hard, she was as indecently exposed and was punished just as severely. In the eyes of the master she was equal to the man as long as her strength was the same as his." (Patterson 1975: 67) The family was generally treated with contempt by slaves, and women were not keen to bear children, probably because of their demanding tasks on the estates. Abortion and infanticide were widely practiced (Patterson 1975: 106-7). This suited the planters' interests, as it was usually cheaper for them to buy new slaves, rather than pay the social reproduction costs of children.

Slave resistance was a common occurrence, thus belying the myth of the 'passive, happy, negro'. At times, this resistance took the form of open rebellion (e.g. Jamaica 1798 and 1831), or even revolution (Saint Domingue 1791), but more commonly it involved everyday, 'hidden' forms of protest such as laziness, satirising their master's prejudices (the Quashee personality), running away, and poisoning their masters (Patterson 1975: 261; Heuman 1986b; Bauer and Bauer 1942). In Trinidad, resistance tended to take the form of more covert protest, but even in the most 'passive' of slave colonies there were planned open rebellions. In 1805, martial law was declared by Governor Hislop in response to the fear of an imminent slave revolt. As a result of this planned uprising, four slaves were

executed, five were deported after their ears had been cut off, and many others were flogged (Craton 1982: 236). There was no other known planned rebellion in Trinidad before Emancipation, but resistance in its everyday form persisted. Open rebellions were the exception rather than the rule and they usually affected only a small minority of slaves. However, this had less to do with the so-called 'happy, contented Negro' than with the fact that the slaves "had to accept the institution of slavery and make their adjustments to their institution." (Bauer and Bauer 1942: 390) The monopoly of the means of coercion by the planters was such that everyday resistance could only realistically take covert forms.

Slavery was abolished in 1834 although an apprenticeship period of six years (reduced to four) was inaugurated, under which former slaves had to work for their master for three quarters of the week without a wage, while they were free to seek paid work for the rest of the week. The planters were also paid £20 million compensation. The announcement of the apprenticeship period led to spasmodic resistance by the former slaves, some of whom protested outside Government House in Port of Spain. These protests eventually died out, a reaction reinforced by the conduct of Governor Hill, who ordered the arrest and flogging of the protestors.

Section Two: 1838-1917: Indentured Labour, 'Reconstituted Peasantries' and the Unification of Trinidad and Tobago.

(i.) Trinidad after Emancipation

The end of the apprenticeship period in 1838 opened up a new period in the history of the Caribbean, and the newly emancipated societies followed divergent paths of development. In Barbados, for example, the plantation system was easily maintained as there was a limited availability of land to which the former slaves could move. In Trinidad, on the other hand, a period of covert, yet intensified, class struggle took place in which the planters attempted to maintain a labour supply for the plantation, but the former slaves tried to secure a degree of freedom beyond that of 'free' wage labour. The former slaves wanted to leave the plantation and become independent peasant proprietors; they "demanded control over their own labor and access to their own lands to use for the production of food and other crops." (Klein and Engerman 1985: 256)

This struggle was initially balanced in favour of the former slaves. In 1838, only 20 656 former slaves inhabited the island, a high proportion of whom were domestics. At the same time, only 43 000 out of a total of 1.25 million acres of land was cultivated (Brereton 1981: 77). This abundance of land relative to population aided a movement by the ex-slaves off the estates on to land that was previously uncultivated. By 1861, there were 5 833 freeholders owning

land of between one to ten acres. One should not conclude from this, however, that population was the decisive factor because natural factors exist in an historically determined, social environment. A situation of widespread land availability, or 'open resources' (Nieboer 1971: 384-5), can only aid social phenomena, they cannot determine them. In post-emancipation Belize, for instance, former masters maintained their mahogany-producing labour force, in a situation of 'open resources', through a system of debt peonage (Bolland 1981: 608).

In Trinidad, the planters carried out a variety of measures in an attempt to maintain a constant labour supply. These included relatively high wages (which were also in part forced on them as the demand for labour exceeded the supply), and accommodation and food for labourers. Wages increased from 15d. in 1838 to 25.5d. in 1839 (Sebastien 1979: 53), and payment was also made by 'task'. Under this system a specific piece of work was given to the labourer and a fixed payment was made, so high wages could be made by those who completed a number of tasks in one day. The planters also used their dominance in the Legislative Council and passed a Territorial Ordinance which prohibited the purchase of land below one hundred acres.

None of these measures were particularly successful and the ex-slaves responded to the Territorial Ordinance by squatting on Crown land or abandoned estates. There were 11 000 field slaves in 1834; only 4 000 of these had remained

on the estates by 1859 (Brereton 1981: 79). The former slaves became independent producers of cocoa and coffee, or petty traders, while the prosperous few became shopkeepers. Many combined 'independent' work with occasional work on the plantations. These independent producers were by no means wealthy and they led a materially precarious existence, but they at least had freedom from direct control by the plantation owners.

Attempts to remove squatters were largely ineffective. Communications and policing were poor, and some of the smaller planters were happy with a system of occasional and/or seasonal labour because it meant that wages did not have to be paid all the year round. The larger planters, such as W.H. Burnley, who could afford to pay annual wages, were the real opponents of squatting. A Proclamation of March 30 1839 empowered Stipendiary Magistrates to evict squatters of less than one year's standing. However, many of the smaller estate owners "were unwilling to lay information before the Magistrates about those squatters who were a source of labour for their own estates." (Wood 1968: 51)

The larger plantation owners therefore began to look to external sources for a supply of labour. The first source was the Eastern Caribbean, and from 1839-49 over 10 000 immigrants arrived from Grenada, Nevis and Montserrat. A steady inflow continued throughout the 19 century, particularly from Barbados, but few stayed on the plantations and instead went to the towns or settled as

independent cultivators. Alternative sources from China, Sierra Leone, St. Helena, Madeira, and even France and Germany suffered a number of setbacks such as the high mortality rates of the settlers, expense of importation (in the case of China) and insufficient numbers to fill the gaps in labour supply. However, an alternative supply was found and the Fatel Rozack arrived in Trinidad on May 3 1845, complete with the first load of labourers from India.

(ii.) The Indentured Labour System and the Recovery of Sugar.

The sugar planters' need for a steady labour force was highlighted by the crisis that hit West Indian sugar immediately after emancipation. Sugar production declined from 14 312 tons (1838) to 12 228 tons in 1840 (Brereton 1981: 82). The arrival of the first ship-load of labourers from India in 1845 was therefore directly linked to the crisis of the sugar industry. In the first wave of immigration, from 1845-48, 5 167 Indians arrived in Trinidad (Wood 1968: 114). At this time, it was widely believed that the appearance of Indian labour would be a temporary phenomenon, and part of their labour contract included provision for a return passage (see below). However, in 1846 the Sugar Duties Act was passed by the British government, which made provisions for the equalisation of duties on foreign and British colonial sugar. One consequence of this Act was that Trinidad (and the rest of the English

Caribbean) would have to compete with cheaper sugar, including that produced by slave labour in Cuba and Brazil.

This prospect convinced planters of the need to re-open the link with India and in 1851, the second wave began, which lasted until 1917. Altogether, from 1845-1917, Trinidad imported 143 939 Indians, and it was their labour which re-stimulated the sugar industry (Sebastien 1979: 223). In the 1850s, production consistently expanded, and by 1866 had reached 40 000 tons per annum (Brereton 1981: 84).

The labour system utilised by the planters was not one based on free wage labour. Instead, a system of indentured labour was used. Changes were made to the immigration rules over time and were embodied in the 1854 Consolidating Ordinance. Indians who had entered Trinidad before 1854 were entitled to a free return passage after five years, while others had to spend ten years in the colony. Both groups had to serve as labourers for a period of three years, and could then re-indenture themselves for a further two years or buy out their remaining time by paying a certain sum to the colonial government. These conditions were subject to continual amendment throughout the century; for example, under Governor Gordon (1866-70), the Indians were awarded a plot of land at the end of their period of indentureship, and by the 1890s, Indians wishing to return home were expected to pay a substantial proportion of the package themselves.

As well as conditions concerning duration and termination, the contract contained a number of additional stipulations. The labourer was guaranteed medical attention, housing and a wage under the contract. However, although a wage was paid the labourers were not 'free' wage labourers. This was because regulations were introduced (initially in 1846, but they were also incorporated into the 1854 Ordinance) that made it illegal for Indians to move off the estates without a pass granted to them by their employers, and which disallowed them from giving up work with one employer without a certificate of discharge. Moreover, negligence and absence from work were defined as criminal offences.

This degree of control over the labourers enabled planters to pay low wages. The Immigration Ordinance of 1870 stated that indentured labourers should not receive less than the average wage, but planters could easily ignore these regulations. Even when the labourers broke the rules of the pass system, and illegally left the estates, they were not always guaranteed a sympathetic hearing. In giving evidence to the 1909 Sanderson Committee (on indentured labour in the Empire), W.H. Coombs, Trinidad's Protector of Immigrants described his usual response to Indian complainants: "I take down their complaint and I tell them plainly that I do not believe them...If the man comes to me and makes what I consider a frivolous complaint...then I give the manager a certificate to that effect so that I can prosecute him." (Qu. Tinker 1974: 432) Six years previously, Coombs did precisely this in response to a strike at the Harmony Hall

estate, after sixty seven labourers marched off the estate, complaining about conditions and wages. The strikers refused to return to the estate after Coombs dismissed their grievances, and 64 of them were given seven days imprisonment. The strike leader, Daulat Singh, was repatriated to India (Tinker 1974: 228-9). It was hardly surprising, then, as Coombs himself noted (though apparently oblivious to the reason why), that complaints "got less and less every year...there are scarcely any." (Qu. Tinker 1974: 309)

Although wages were fixed, this did not help the Indians, even in times of economic recession. During the sugar crisis of the mid-1880s, employers still had to pay the statutory minimum wage of 25c per task; their response was to simply increase the size of the task, which had the same effect as reducing wages. The wages of indentured labourers may have fallen by as much as an average 60c per day to 35c in the 1880s (Tinker 1974: 186).

Wages for Creoles were consistently higher, and they monopolised the supervisory positions on the plantation. As Sebastien notes, "The very principles on which the indentureship system was founded divided labour within itself. Especially during the early period of the system, the creole was virtually the coolie's policeman." (Sebastien 1979: 249) Numerous ordinances empowered Creole servants to arrest a 'coolie' who had fled the estate. In the district of Tacarigua, a Bounty System was introduced in 1862,

awarding servants a bounty of six pence for every mile away from the estate for capturing escaped 'coolies'.

Social conditions on the estates were very bad. Although the labour contract guaranteed housing and medical treatment, the actual quality of these services was very poor. The 1897 Royal Commission on the West Indies described hospitals as "pig sties...unfit for human habitation." (Qu. Sebastien 1979: 273) A Creole witness told the Sanderson Committee that the Indians were housed in "something like a mule pen, about 150 feet long, and about eight to ten feet square; and sometimes two or three are housed in each room." (Qu. Tinker 1974: 208) Alcoholism was common among the Indians, and the practice of the truck system often went so far that a monetary transaction did not take place and the labourer received payment in rum in its place.

The degrading conditions that the Indians lived under, and the superior economic and social position of the Creole led to a "process of voluntary segregation" (Oxaal 1968: 44), reinforced by the compulsory pass system, on the part of the Indian population. Mutual suspicion and racial stereo-typing became common, and Indian men were regarded as wife-murderers, perjurers and misers. Ill-feeling was also increased by the fact that the abundance of labour that indentureship engendered led to a decline in the bargaining position of the whole of the labour force. This was especially the case during the sugar crisis of the 1880s. These factors led the Indians to resist assimilation into

the European or Creole cultures, and Hinduism remained their major religion.

It was, however, the minority Muslims who successfully established a festival that rivalled the Carnival of lower class Creoles. The Muharram festival of the minority Shi'ite Muslims commemorated the deaths of Mohammed's grandsons, Hassan and Hussain. Although the festival's religious significance was restricted to a tiny section of the population, by the 1880s it had genuine mass appeal and some Creoles, as well as Sunni Muslims and Hindus, took part. In the economic crisis of the 1880s (see below), the Colonial authorities became increasingly intolerant of the festival, and prohibited the 1884 festival from entering any towns. The procession attempted to enter the town of San Fernando, only to be shot at by the colonial police and British soldiers. Sixteen people were killed as a result and over a hundred were wounded (Singh 1987: 1-41).

The division between 'African' and 'Indian' was therefore 'racialised' at this time. A process of racialisation occurs in instances "where social relations have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities." (Miles 1989: 75) The ideology of racism is not therefore a capitalist or a colonial conspiracy, or simply a function of capitalist exploitation, as some writers have implied (Cox 1959). Racism is a way of 'making sense' (albeit wrongly) of the way in which the world

operates (Miles 1989: 80-1; Hall 1978: 26). In Trinidad, the newly freed slaves of African descent, saw that their bargaining position with the planters was undermined by the arrival of indentured labourers from India. Their response was to 'blame the victims', the East Indians, rather than the perpetrators, the plantation owners. The impact of these developments on what is now called 'race relations' in Trinidad is particularly significant, because it shaped the pattern of labour resistance that persists (in a modified form) to this day. The roots and nature of racism may have changed, but its origins lie in this period. The significance of the impact of racism on dividing the labour force should not be underestimated, as most labour histories have done (see for instance Rennie 1974; Ramdin 1982), but at the same time the historical roots of racism must be explained, rather than described (as is the case in the plural society model), in terms of a timeless cultural group conflict. East Indians, like Africans before them, were taken to Trinidad to perform a specific task, as labourers, and as labour control and social life became segregated, so too did labour resistance.

(iii.) The Development of Other Classes.

(a) Cocoa Farmers

As I have shown, after emancipation a new peasantry emerged, but they owed their existence largely to the lack of

enforcement measures against squatting. Under the governorship of A.H. Gordon (1866-70), a new policy was carried out which encouraged the development of a small, legally recognised, peasant class. The price of land was reduced to £1 per acre and the minimum requirement for purchase was reduced to just five acres. The result was an increase in the sale of land, along with a simultaneous move against squatting (a policy reinforced by programmes to develop communications and transportation). Most people bought their land and forests were cleared to accommodate the increase in land-ownership.

Most of the new land-owners cultivated their land in cocoa and this became very lucrative (at least for the larger planters) from the 1860s onwards. By the 1890s, cocoa had emerged as Trinidad's largest export earner. As sugar production became increasingly concentrated in fewer, mainly British hands, so cocoa became dominated by planters of French-Creole origin. Technological advances in the processing of cocoa in Europe turned cocoa and chocolate into goods of mass consumption, which in turn led to an increase in the demand for unprocessed cocoa (cacao).

The development of cocoa in Trinidad was largely built up through two similar means. Firstly, a peasant would buy a portion of Crown land, clear it, and plant cocoa trees. After the trees began to develop, they would sell the plot to a cocoa planter and buy new land, and repeat the process. Secondly, there was the contract system, under which a

planter would buy a large amount of land and fell the forest. He would then contract out the land to a peasant on the condition that the latter would plant cocoa trees. When the trees developed the owner took over the land, paying agreed sums for each tree. During their period of occupation of land, the contractor/peasant was allowed to grow food on the land. The major contractors were initially the peons, who were of Spanish-Indian origin, but the other ethnic groups (including in the 1870s, the Indians) followed.

While many of the cocoa peasants may have regarded access to land as a means of independence from the plantation, the contract system actually increased the growing hegemony of capital. Temporary land tenure was often insufficient in terms of food provision and so peasants were often forced, by economic necessity, to try to find work on the cocoa estates. Secondly, the actual contract system was, from the point of view of the planter, a cheap way of developing cocoa, as they 'bought cheap and sold dear'. As Sebastien states, "Cocoa contractors were in truth and in fact hired underpaid laborers of the big cocoa planters." (Sebastien 1979: 403)

(b) Sugar Cane Farmers

The development of cocoa was reinforced by the crisis of the sugar industry of the mid-1880s, caused by competition from subsidised European beet sugar, and overproduction on the world market. The response of the sugar planters was to

encourage the development of 'independent' sugar cane farming. This had existed before the 1880s, but it was in spite of the large planters, rather than because of them. The planters now became more willing to foster the development of an independent peasantry because they bought the crushed sugar cane relatively cheaply, and after grinding, it was sold at a more expensive price. By 1899, cane farmers produced 20 per cent of all the cane that was crushed; by 1919, it had increased to 49.5 per cent (Sebastien 1979: 408).

Although cane farming was initially taken up by the Creoles, it was the Indians who became increasingly dominant in this sector. From 1869, under Governor Gordon, a new policy was introduced whereby Indians could be awarded a plot of land at the end of their period of indentureship, in return for a relinquishing of the right to a passage back to India. Most Indian cane farmers simply purchased their land, however. From 1891-95, 34 per cent of the sales of Crown lands were to Indians and, although some was utilised for rice and cocoa production, the majority was for the purpose of sugar (Sebastien 1979: 408).

These developments led to the restoration of Indian women to a position of subservience to Indian men. Women were always a minority of the indentured labourers, and those that entered Trinidad were often single, or separated from their husband (Reddock 1986: 35). A major reason for their leaving was to escape the patriarchal relations that existed in

India, and their work on the estates gave them some independence from Indian men (although not from male planters or their overseers). The increase in sugar cane farming resulted in a reduction in the demand for female labour on the estate and provided the basis for a reconstitution of the traditional Indian patriarchal family (Reddock 1986: 35). The challenge to women's independence manifested itself in a number of ways, including a high rate of wife murder among the Indian population (Wood 1968: 154), which in turn increased the incidence of racial stereotyping amongst the African population. By 1891, 54.7 per cent of Indo-Trinidadians were resident outside of the plantation system (Poynting 1988: 233), and the traditional Indian village, and patriarchal relations, were revived. Some women were forced to work unpaid on Indian land, and with the continued scarcity of women, child marriage became the norm. So, by the late nineteenth century, a complex pattern of class, race and gender stratification had emerged.

(c) The Development of an Urban Indian and Chinese Middle Class

An urban middle class was also established among the Indian population. A significant number became shopkeepers, merchants, and even estate owners. According to the Royal Protector of Immigrants, in 1874 all the wealthy Indians were of high caste origin (Cited Sebastien 1979: 279-81). Wage labour alone was not sufficient to provide the means for movement to the middle class. Instead, "(i)t was wage

labour above the average, in the form of the headman (Sirdar) and men of upper caste, many of whom were also sirdars and who readily won status on the plantation both among management and workers, that advanced their social position above the average worker by using above average means." (Sebastien 1979: 84) On the estates, the sirdars acted as overseers for the planter and they used this position to accumulate wealth at the expense of the field labourer. For instance they often made the 'coolie' pay a percentage of their wage to them. Once a certain amount of wealth was accumulated, the sirdar would buy a shop near the estate, or alternatively they may have controlled the shop owned by the planter. These shops were generally run along the lines of the truck system and the credit given to labourers was often repayable at extortionate rates of interest. Sirdars also loaned money to indentured labourers in order that the latter could purchase their freedom. However, this led to a new system of bondage to the sirdar - debt peonage. Interest rates were again extremely high, and generally varied from 60-120 per cent, but far higher rates were also recorded (Sebastien 1979: 288-9). On the whole, the Indian population continued its isolation from the rest of the population, and tended to confine itself to the rural areas.

The smaller Chinese population was more easily accepted by the rest of the population than the Indians, but they too suffered harsh treatment. A great number of the Chinese indentured labourers were denied the chance of social

mobility because maltreatment, on both the journey to Trinidad and the plantation, led to a very high mortality rate among them. A large proportion of those that survived did prosper and became artisans, market gardeners, butchers and shopkeepers. By 1895, there were Chinese rum and grocery shops throughout the island, some owned by the Lee Lum family, who later developed their business interests and formed an influential part of the national bourgeoisie.

(d) Class Development among the Creole Population

The period after emancipation also saw the development and consolidation of a black and coloured middle class. This sector of society originally emerged before emancipation, from the coloured and black population freed from slavery. With the concentration in sugar ownership after emancipation, this small group was forced into new occupational groupings including small business operations, such as pharmacies and printers. Others were lawyers, doctors and newspaper editors. Some members of this group were 'self-made' and basically owed their position to the education system. Education expanded after Lord Harris founded 54 primary schools in 1846, but its development was held back by religious differences, poor attendance and bad administration. Nevertheless, the system still provided one of the few means of escape from a life of poverty and drudgery. Mobility did not, however, always involve entry to a higher class; it also led to the development of an 'upper

working class', composed of teachers, and low ranking civil servants and clerks.

Some members of this new class attempted to shed their cultural roots, and disassociated themselves from the black masses. On the other hand, a significant number, particularly those in white collar work such as teaching, championed the cause of 'black pride'. One of the outstanding black figures was J.J. Thomas, who in 1889 wrote a perceptive reply to a racist diatribe by James Anthony Froude, in which he outlined how the black population was subject to racial discrimination and social and economic exploitation (J. Thomas 1969; Froude 1888). Thomas was himself a victim, and was continually passed over for the job of Inspector of Schools, despite his superior qualifications for the job. Other leading black teachers included H.A. Nurse and Henry Sylvester Williams, who later founded the Pan-African Conference in the US in 1900. Nurse had a son called Malcolm who, under the pseudonym George Padmore, became an influential Communist and later led the Pan-Africanist movement.

The urban working class, which was still primarily of African descent, increased dramatically from the 1870s, mainly because of internal immigration from the rural areas and external immigration. The net immigration into Trinidad between 1871-1911 has been estimated at around 65 000 (Brereton 1979: 110). These immigrants entered occupations such as domestic servants, petty traders, shopkeepers, cab-

drivers, dockworkers and shopworkers. Some light industry also developed, including a brewery, some bakeries and a match factory. Most of the working class lived in barrack ranges, situated behind the front of each city street (with their respectable shops), hidden from the passer-by. The barrack ranges were long sheds built along a back wall, each one divided into a number of small rooms. Water supply was communal and shared among a large number of people.

Overcrowding was common and made worse by urban growth. A Building Ordinance of 1868 prohibited the erection of new wooden buildings, thus worsening the situation. Disease was common, and the inadequate health system was run on the basis of curative rather than preventative medicine, an arrangement conducive to the interests of the wealthier classes, but one that did not benefit the urban poor in their overcrowded conditions. The infant mortality rate was high: in 1891, 18.4 per cent of children under the age of one year died, and children under the age of five accounted for 44.6 per cent of all deaths (Brereton 1979: 120).

An urban working class culture began to develop, especially during the 1880s, when the sugar depression led to increased unemployment. This did not yet take the form of organised labour resistance, because there was no major concentration of the labour force in any one industry; although sugar was a partial exception, even in this sector, labour was dispersed and isolated through the growth of cane farming. There was also the factor of the urban masses' cultural diversity, as the population had cultural roots in St.

Helena, Sierra Leone, North America, the East Caribbean, and pre-Columbus Trinidad. Nevertheless, a common black culture (one which excluded Indians) began to develop on the basis of a response to exclusion from political life, racist discrimination and a low socio-economic position. Of particular importance were the gangs of unemployed, the jamets, who took over the Carnival in the 1860s. Many of these gangs were involved in petty crime and there was a great deal of tension between the Colonial Government and the jamets at Carnival, culminating in riots in 1881.

(e) 'Race relations'

'Race relations' in this period were extremely complex because Creole-Indian tensions tended to conceal the fact that European culture was still predominant. As I have shown, middle class and white collar blacks and coloureds were the victims of discrimination. The Trinidad Telegraph reported in 1872 that a Secretary of State had told a West Indian Governor "that on no account whatever was the 'subject race' to be employed in any office...of trust and responsibility." (Qu. Brereton 1979: 100) Such a view was reflected in the crude racist tracts of the time, most notably Thomas Carlyle's Discourse on the Nigger Question and Anthony Trollope's The West Indies and the Spanish Main (Trollope 1968). It was also developed by pseudo-scientific theories of 'social Darwinism', which regarded black people

as lower down the evolutionary scale, and therefore biologically inferior.

Such views 'justified' social discrimination against blacks and Indians throughout the Empire. In Trinidad, the Government often 'promoted' the most capable of the middle class to positions in remote areas, thus making sure that they were safely out of the way; this was the fate of the aforementioned J.J. Thomas, who was 'promoted' to the Clerkship of the Peace for Cedros in 1871-2. Nevertheless, it was the lower class Creoles and Indians, who were the chief victims of racial discrimination. As well as socio-economic exploitation (i.e. low wages and poor living conditions), attempts were made to deprive the workers and peasants of their 'inferior' cultural roots. The practice of obeah, a form of magic that had its origins in Africa, was subject to criminal punishment. This failed to curtail its practice, however, and the Creoles, as well as the Indians, were generally successful in maintaining some of their values and traditions (best reflected in Carnival, which was still potentially subversive at this time). These traditions were important because they were "a source of strength and comfort to people whose material living conditions were usually wretched, just as religion and traditional cultural forms performed the same function for the Indian population." (Brereton 1981: 135)

(iv.) Social Structure and Underdevelopment.

This was the shape of Trinidad's basic social structure from 1845 until the early twentieth century, when oil production became significant. In chapter one I outlined the link between forms of labour control and development and argued that the system of indentureship left Trinidad in a disadvantageous position against the economies of western Europe. This can be demonstrated by looking at the international sugar industry at the time.

Over the period 1840-90, sugar beet's share of the world market increased from four per cent to 60 per cent (Sebastien 1979: 480). Germany produced more than all the Caribbean territories put together. As Williams points out, "The European beet sugar industry represented the triumph of science and technology. Beet was the great school of scientific agriculture. Where the Caribbean planter remained dependent on the man with the hoe, the beet cultivator introduced deep ploughing..." (Williams 1964: 154) The average output of sugar per factory was slightly more than a quarter of the German average (Williams 1964: 155).

Trinidad's sugar economy was the most advanced in the British Caribbean, but its development was 'held back' by its comparative lack of technological advance. A contemporary observer commented that "The planters of this island are not very advanced in the science of agriculture, if we measure their skill by the product of their estates.."

(Sewell 1862: 102) This was measured at 1-1.5 hogsheads of sugar to the acre. At this time, 165 mills were worked with steam, around 100 with cattle, and a few with water-power (Sewell 1862: 102). Planters were reluctant to improve sugar cultivation methods and were content to make profits through cheap labour. This was because there was little incentive to innovate as commodity production was not generalised: i.e. the direct producers still had direct access to land (see chapter one).

However, while science could narrow the gap between beet and cane, it could not overcome it. This was because cane had a superior sucrose content. According to the 1897 Royal Commission on the West Indies, the yield per acre in Trinidad was 18 tons, compared with 10.7 tons of beet in France and 12.85 in Germany (Williams 1964: 156). While superior technology almost overcame these differences (the rate of extraction was 12.5 per cent in Germany, compared with only 9.5 per cent in Trinidad - Williams 1964: 156), production costs remained slightly cheaper in Trinidad compared with Germany. The crisis in sugar was actually brought to a head by the European practice of subsidising beet production (the Bounty System) and flooding the European market with cheap sugar. This led to West Indian sugar losing a substantial proportion of the British market, and to the collapse of some of the most backward sugar producers (including those in Tobago, as I will show).

The use of out of date methods was more common in the rest of the British West Indies, British Guiana apart, than it was in Trinidad. While many of the islands concentrated on producing low grade, muscovado sugar, almost one-third of Trinidad's sugar (in 1891-2) was produced by the more advanced vacuum pan method (Sebastien 1979: 128). The result was that the crisis affected those manufacturers that employed the most out of date methods. This in turn led to a concentration of capital in the sugar industry. In 1878, there were 130 estates; by 1917, the number had been reduced to just 49, with only 13 owners (Sebastien 1979: 113).

With the crisis of the sugar industry in the 1880s, cocoa emerged as the nation's leading export, and remained so until the 1920s (when the crop was devastated by witchbroom disease). Although production methods were similarly 'backward' in this industry, it did not matter so much because there was little foreign competition. Trinidad was in fact one of only three producers (the others were Ecuador and Venezuela) of fine cocoa in the world at this time. However, archaic methods of production meant that decline eventually occurred and Trinidad's proportion of world production was reduced from 14 per cent in 1895 to 5 per cent by the late 1920s (Sebastien 1979: 506-08).

(v.) Tobago.

Tobago was also 'discovered' in 1498 by Columbus, and like Trinidad developed very slowly. It was subject to the

rivalries of competing powers and control of the island changed hands many times. It was annexed to Britain in 1763, (although it was briefly re-captured by the French in 1781, who controlled the island until the British re-established control in 1793) and the production of sugar by slave labour was rapidly generalised. Slave rebellions were common, including two particularly bloody revolts in 1771 and 1774 which were brutally suppressed by the British. In the case of the latter, six rebels were burnt to death after their hands had been chopped off (Craton 1982: 156).

Production on the estates was probably the most inefficient in the Caribbean. On his arrival in Tobago in 1807, Governor Young commented on the "distressed condition of the Colony.." (Qu. Craig 1988: 3) The situation was aggravated after emancipation by Britain's free trade policy and a hurricane in 1847, which destroyed 26 sugar works and damaged a further 33 (Woodcock 1867: 106). The major problem, particularly in the long term, was Trinidad's social structure and the effect that this had on living and working conditions, and on Tobago's international competitiveness.

Tobago's social structure after emancipation, and particularly from the 1850s, was based on the *métayage* system, under which the *métayer* worked on his or her own plot of land, but also worked on the plantation. This represented "a 'halfway house', in which planters could secure labour, and labourers, land, since under the economic

and political conditions of the island neither class could fully achieve its goals." (Craig 1988: 7) The social structure was such that there was little incentive to innovate and planters relied on the system as a provider of cheap labour and profitability. The métayers therefore had a number of grievances, including low wages, the truck system, and debt peonage, and these were the chief factors behind the 'Belmanna Riots' on the Roxborough estate in 1876 (Brereton 1984: 113). It was largely as a result of these riots that 'representative government' (representative, that is, of a few planters) was abolished and Crown Colony Government introduced the following year.

While Trinidad's sugar industry was backward vis-a-vis European production, Tobago was backward vis-a-vis the rest of the Caribbean. The inefficiency of the system of production was exposed by the virtual collapse of the sugar industry in Tobago in 1884-5. Unlike Trinidad, the sugar produced in Tobago was almost totally the low grade muscovado variety, which European-subsidised beet could easily undersell. The British no longer regarded Tobago as an island with a viable separate economy and polity, and it was united with Trinidad in January 1889. Originally Tobago retained its own separate Treasury and financial board, but in October 1898 these last vestiges of independence from Trinidad were removed, and Tobago was declared a 'Ward of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago'.

Section Three: Proletarianisation, Resistance Movements, the Oil Industry and the Development of Trade Unionism.

(i.) Proletarianisation

In the period from 1898-1938, wage labour became more generalised, and some light manufacturing and the petroleum industry developed. This was reinforced by the aforementioned (see chapter one) policy of encouraging Indian settlement within Trinidad, which made independent peasant production more difficult.

It was also in this period that the role of women as independent labourers was further undermined, especially amongst the Creole population. The European concept of the family wage was imported, and where women remained employed, it was usually in a subordinate role to that of men (Reddock 1984: 274-306). The percentage of women employed in the labour market declined from 73.9 per cent in 1891 to 26.1 per cent in 1946 (Reddock 1987: 13). However, the withdrawal of many women from the formal labour force did not always lead to them working as housewives, and many continued to work as peasants or petty traders.

(ii.) Early Resistance Movements

In the late nineteenth century, sections of the coloured middle class began to question the justice of colonial government. They resented the domination of sugar interests,

the racial discrimination that held back their life chances, and their lack of political representation. A petition in 1887, containing about 5 000 signatures, called for elections to the Legislative Council. Demands for representative government continued in the 1890s, but the British response was unsympathetic. In 1898, the Unofficial majority on the Legislative Council was removed by the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, and the following year, the Port-of-Spain Borough Council was abolished. These measures were regarded as further examples of authoritarian colonial rule, especially so in the case of the latter, because it was the one institution that allowed for some autonomy from the colonial government.

A number of short-lived resistance organisations were formed at this time, partly as a response to such measures, including the Pan African Association. By 1902, many of its members had defected and had joined the Ratepayers Association, an organisation that was designed to safeguard their interests in the absence of the Borough Council. Protest became centred around government plans to cut off water supplies to homes where taps leaked and to introduce a meter system. This issue seemed unlikely to attract working class support, because most workers did not have their own water supply. Nevertheless, it did attract widespread support, possibly because of a threat to communal water supplies, and because workers may have regarded it as an issue of wider significance, indicative of authoritarian colonial government. A mass protest against the government's

planned measures, known as the 'Water Riot' of 1903, led to police killing sixteen people and wounding many others. In a Colonial Office inquiry into the causes of the riot, it was argued that the matter was simply a dispute between ratepayers and the planned Water Bill. However, Chamberlain told Governor Moloney to pay more attention to the wishes of the Unofficials in the Legislative Council, and in 1914, the Borough Council was revived (albeit, once again, on a limited franchise).

Working class opposition was also developing at this time, although this was at a comparatively slower rate. In the late 1890s the Working Men's Reform Club and the Trinidad Working Men's Association (TWA) were founded. Although the former rapidly declined, the latter, formed by Water Mills in 1897, eventually emerged as an important political force. In its early days, it was basically a friendly society, although it also had a number of policies on political and social matters. Under the leadership of Alf Richards (1906-14), links were established with the British Labour Party, and in particular two MPs, William Summerbell and Joseph Pointer. However, the weakness of the TWA's (and Pointer's) essentially urban, Creole-centred, approach to politics is shown by its attitude toward indentured labour. The Indian population was basically regarded as passive and uninterested in politics. On a visit to Trinidad, Pointer failed to denounce the harsh conditions faced by the Indians on the estates, and instead stated that "creole labour was paid less than it would be if there were no Indians." (Qu.

Charles 1978: 5) In its submission to the Sanderson Commission, the TWA expressed regret that indentureship had not been abolished, not on the grounds of opposition to forced labour, but rather because of who the forced labourers were. The Indian population responded by forming their own organisations, such as the East Indian National Association, which refused to work with the TWA as it believed that "opposition to indentured immigration was actually opposition to their presence per se." (Charles 1978: 5)

Sporadic resistance continued up to 1914 but trade unions, regarded as 'criminal conspiracies' under common law, did not yet exist. The colonial authorities had not yet considered the introduction of widespread labour legislation, and they would only be forced to do so by the events of 1919.

(iii.) Post-1918 Labour Revolt and its Aftermath.

Indentureship was abolished in 1917 and after the First World War, the oil industry successfully sustained the boost of an increased demand for its products. The abolition of the indentured labour system was largely a result of pressure within India, particularly from G.K. Gokhale's Indian National Congress, rather than opposition from the indentured themselves. The development of the oil industry was particularly marked in the war years, although its labour force only became a significant actor in the

rebellion of the 1930s. Nevertheless, its development was important because although the majority of its labour force was Creole, there was (and still is) a significant Indian minority, far larger than is generally assumed (on this point see Ramsaran 1989: 55-6). Although this desegregation of the labour force did not alleviate mutual suspicions, it did manage to break down some barriers and there were a number of strikes in the oilfields as early as 1917.

Of most immediate importance however, was the impact of the First World War. This was fought by Britain on the alleged basis of a war for democracy against tyranny, and this rallying cry had an impact in the British West Indies. The British West Indies Regiment was formed to 'join the fight for democracy', but these soldiers instead suffered racial discrimination (for example, through lower wage rates and racial abuse by officers), and so they began to question the legitimacy of British rule. In Italy in 1918, the Caribbean League was formed by some of these soldiers, and plans were made to improve the grievances of West Indians at home. Feelings of injustice were increased by news of racist attacks on blacks, including West Indian sailors, at Liverpool and Cardiff. On their return to the West Indies, the soldiers and sailors recounted their experiences, and this in turn influenced the growing consciousness of the working classes, particularly among the Creole sectors. This was reinforced by the importation of black nationalist literature (despite official hostility), especially the Garveyite movement's (officially banned) Negro World.

It was clear then, that employers and the government faced a different situation to that existing prior to 1914, when resistance was spontaneous and individualised. However, they did not at first appreciate this change and in 1918 the Habitual Idlers' Ordinance was passed. This particularly repressive piece of legislation stated that any male worker lacking means of subsistence should be made to work; if he failed to do so he could be confined to a government run agricultural settlement to be taught the 'habits of industry' and then handed over to private industry where he would be paid a low wage. The bill eventually became law in 1920, after some doubts by the Colonial Office, but it was never effectively implemented and the 'agricultural settlements' were not constructed. The legislation was of more immediate significance because of the ill-feeling that it bred. Workers regarded it as a replacement for indentureship and a means of maintaining low wages. By the end of 1919, the cost of living had increased by 148 per cent since 1914, while wages had increased by 36 per cent for men and 28 per cent for women (Basdeo 1983: 26).

It was against this background that the labour unrest of 1919 took place. The first major strike in May 1919, involved asphalt workers, who employed the services of a rejuvenated TWA to demand a wage increase, a reduced working day, and better overtime rates. In November 1919 the waterfront workers, the sector with the most concentrated labour force, struck for higher wages and better working

conditions. The strike actually reflected wider issues such as repressive management, the lack of any institutional bargaining mechanisms, and the heightened consciousness of the developing working class (Rennie 1974: 25). Strike-breakers were used to ensure minimum operations, but on December 1 the strikers chased them off the waterfront, and then proceeded to march to Port of Spain. This led to an increase in strike activity, as workers in other sectors, including sugar, oil, construction and council employees, made similar demands to those of the dock-workers. Two days later a compromise was reached and the dockers were awarded a 25 per cent wage increase. This agreement did not lead to moderation on the part of the workers and instead encouraged others to strike for higher wages. Riots also continued, most notably in Tobago, where an attack on a government wireless station was suppressed by troops from HMS Calcutta. The events of 1919 were the first time that Creole and Indian had cooperated on any significant scale: the 1919 strikes "seem to indicate that there was a growing class consciousness after the war and this transcended racial feelings at times." (Samaroo 1972: 218)

The significance of the events of 1919 cannot be underestimated and were in many ways the forerunner of 1937 and 1970 (Samaroo 1987: 21; Elkins 1969: 75). Their importance was not lost on the employers at the time, but rather than respond with widespread reform, as in Jamaica and British Guiana, where (limited) trade union laws were passed in 1919 and 1921 respectively, the government

introduced new repressive measures. A number of arrests and/or deportations were made, including TWA leaders active in the strikes. The Dispute Settlement and the Industrial Court Ordinances passed in 1920 together had the effect of prohibiting strikes and making arbitration compulsory. The dilatory attitude towards labour reform at this time is demonstrated by the fact that the proposed Industrial Court was never actually set up and so the law remained a dead letter. A Sedition Ordinance, also passed in 1920, made provisions for strong penalties for seditious libel and the circulation of seditious publications.

Some reforms were made, however, including the Truck Ordinance 1919 which required (with some exceptions) that wages be paid in money, and the Labour Bureau Ordinance, which attempted to improve recruitment practices through the provision of information to employers. In 1921, the Wood Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the social and political climate in Trinidad and Tobago and, after extensive consultation with a number of informants, including the TWA, made its recommendations the following year. As a result of this report, it was decided that the first ever elections to the Legislative Council would be held in 1925, albeit with a very limited franchise.

(iv.) The TWA and Colonial Labour Policy in 1920-31.

The events of 1919 showed that there was still not a consistent labour policy on the part of the British

government. The haphazard reforms which followed were clearly inadequate, and pressure for more far-reaching reforms was made by various institutions, including the British Labour Party and the TUC, and the newly established International Labour Organisation. In 1920, the Labour Party set up a Colonial Affairs Committee, followed two years later by a Labour Committee, whose task was to examine colonial labour problems. Links were re-established between the TWA and the Labour Party in 1921 when the former sent J. Howard Bishop to London to discuss social and economic questions.

Within Trinidad and Tobago, the TWA reached new heights of popularity, and despite a limited franchise, returned three deputies to the Legislative Council in the 1925 elections. One of these was A.A. 'Captain' Cipriani, who had fought in the war, and on his return had emerged as the champion of the labouring masses (colloquially known as the 'bare-footed man'). He was chosen as leader of the TWA in the hope that a 'neutral, white man' could unite the Creole and Indian working classes. His success in this regard was limited, and the TWA remained a primarily Creole supported movement. Support for Indian petty bourgeois organisations such as the East Indian National Association remained strong among (largely male) East Indian workers and peasants.

Nevertheless, under Cipriani's leadership the TWA became a popular organisation and campaigned on a wide variety of issues, including the abolition of child labour (an

Ordinance was passed to this effect in 1925), the need for trade union legislation, and the introduction of an eight hour working day. Cipriani was not a radical however; his campaigns were not fought through popular demonstrations or strikes, but were instead limited to pleas to the Colonial Office and debates in the Legislative Council. Furthermore, he placed great faith in the ability and will of the Labour Party to carry out reform in the colonies. In 1925, Cipriani visited England and met with Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, and attended the Labour Commonwealth Conference. The following year, the Labour MP Frederick Roberts visited Trinidad and British Guiana. Cipriani joined him in British Guiana, where they attended the Conference of the British Guiana Labour Union.

These links reinforced Cipriani's commitment to the belief that a Labour government would introduce labour reform in Trinidad and Tobago. He therefore placed much faith in the imminence of change when the second Labour government was elected in 1929. A Royal Commission on West Indian sugar was set up and chaired by the Caribbean specialist, Lord Olivier, which recommended continued imperial preference for Empire sugar and some loans to producers. These measures were carried out but it was trade union legislation that most concerned Cipriani. In 1930, the Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield chaired a Colonial Conference which discussed the need for labour legislation in the colonies. Two months after the Conference (in September), the 'Passfield Memorandum' was issued, which requested to the colonies that

workers' compensation and trade union legislation be introduced as soon as possible.

However, in Labour's period in office (1929-31), no significant labour reforms were carried out in Trinidad and Tobago. The basic excuse used by the Trinidad government was that economic depression (see below) made labour reform impossible. For instance, in response to the request that Masters and Servants Ordinances be repealed, the Trinidad government said that this would be done "when a suitable opportunity presents itself." (Qu. Basdeo 1983: 92) The Labour government in Britain appeared to accept this explanation. There was widespread disappointment with the performance of the Labour government in office, and by implication (due to his heavy reliance on the Labour Party), Cipriani. This disillusionment was to increase in the period of unrest in the 1930s.

(v.) The 1930s: From Labour Rebellion to Trade Unionism.

The labour rebellions in the 1930s were of great significance because they paved the way for the emergence of an organised labour movement in the Caribbean. Their importance is in fact deeper than this because the riots also led to the adoption of universal suffrage, which operated first in Jamaica in 1944, and in Trinidad two years later. The rebellion also expressed, albeit in an incomplete way, growing (and, more importantly, organised) anti-colonial feeling in the region. In this section, I examine

the background, the main events and leading figures, and the consequences of the disturbances in Trinidad and Tobago.

(a) Economic and Political Background.

Trinidad and Tobago's economy was still comparatively underdeveloped in the 1930s. Although 'free' wage labour was more widespread than it was under indentureship, it was now difficult to industrialise in the same way that Britain had because the 'rules of the game' had changed. Underdeveloped countries had to rely on the import of machinery from, and more profitable opportunities in, the 'advanced' countries. As a result, despite the increased existence of free wage labour, Trinidad and Tobago's economy remained particularly vulnerable to changes at the international level such as those which occurred in the depression of the 1930s.

Sugar recovered from the crisis of the 1880s, and the industry enjoyed a boom period both during and immediately after the First World War. Although prices fell in the early 1920s, production steadily grew and sugar once again became the major export. However, this was at the cost of large state subsidies and low wages paid to agricultural workers. The sugar cane farmers were particularly vulnerable to 'market forces', as the sugar companies often prohibited them from selling alternative crops. The economic recession of the 1930s significantly worsened the situation as world demand for sugar contracted and as a result, wages declined, peasants could not sell their crop, and unemployment

increased. By the mid-1930s, the dispossessed organised hunger marches to the capital, protesting against bad working conditions, poor wages (in the case of those who had work) and squalid living conditions.

Cocoa's boom period ended in the 1920s as increased production elsewhere, and the decline in importance of fine cocoa, led to a collapse in the world market price for Trinidad's produce. Problems were re-inforced by the spread of witch-broom disease in the late 1920s, so that by the recession of the 1930s, it was only low wages and subsidies to planters (such as the Agricultural Relief Ordinance 1921) that kept production going.

Even more critical, however, was the development of the oil industry. The existence of oil in the south of Trinidad was well known, but it was only with the development of the internal combustion engine that ongoing attempts were made to develop it. This was reinforced by the conversion of British ships to oil power (from the first decade of this century), which led to British investment of capital in the sector. Higher wages, unemployment, the importation of labour and the problems in the sugar and cocoa sectors meant that a labour force for the industry was guaranteed. By 1913, there were two major oil companies, United British Oilfields of Trinidad, a subsidiary of Shell, and Trinidad Leaseholds Limited. The industry enjoyed a sustained boom period during and after the First World War, and, except for

a brief recession in the early 1930s, it largely escaped the problems that beset sugar and cocoa at this time.

Nevertheless, there were a number of long term grievances, including debates about foreign ownership, and the small amount of taxation paid by the industry. The workers also suffered racial discrimination, low wages (these were higher than in other sectors, but low in comparison to productivity levels), poor working conditions and the infamous 'Red Book'. Under this system, any worker wishing to change her or his job had to show a book describing her or his employment record to any prospective employer. However, it was not the grievances per se that were of most significance, but the changing context in which they operated. The development of the industry had entailed the creation of a highly concentrated (around 14 thousand people) and potentially powerful labour force.

The changing economic, political and social circumstances also aided the demise of Cipriani's leadership over the Creole working class. Constitutional methods and reliance on the Labour Party were insufficient in the context of depressed living standards. This had been demonstrated as early as 1927 when he introduced the Workers' Compensation Bill, which planned to compensate labourers injured at the workplace. This was passed but it only applied to a small number of workers, and not to domestic servants or field labourers. Cipriani's position was further undermined by the aforementioned disappointments of the second Labour

Government, and by his failure to support the liberalisation of laws on divorce, which divided the TWA and led to the mobilisation of prominent women (of which Audrey Jeffers - the first woman to be elected to the City Council - was the most famous) against him. Finally, Cipriani failed to give unequivocal support to hunger marchers from Caroni in 1935.

There was one further piece of legislation which simultaneously hastened Cipriani's decline and demonstrated the necessity for extra-parliamentary activity: this was the Trade Union Ordinance of 1932. The passing of this piece of legislation was a response to the Passfield Memorandum, but it did in fact constitute a reform of limited value.

Although trade unions were now accorded legal status, the Ordinance did not include provisions for peaceful picketing or immunity from civil actions by employers for restraint of trade (which effectively deprived trade unions of the right to strike). The Ordinance also called for the compulsory registration of trade unions, and the strict audit of funds (which could not be used for political purposes, for example). After two years discussion with the British TUC, Cipriani decided not to register the TWA as a trade union and instead re-formed it as a political party under the new name of the Trinidad Labour Party.

(b) Labour Unrest and the Rise of New Leaders.

With the decline in Cipriani's leadership of the Creole working classes, new organisations and leaders emerged to

fill the void. These included the Marxist and proto-feminist Negro Welfare Cultural and Social Association (NWA), which was founded in 1934 and led by Elma Francois, Jim Barrette and Christina King. The NWA was very effective in mobilising the urban Creole working classes in protest against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935, and in particular against Britain's conciliatory approach to Mussolini. This issue was instrumental in raising the consciousness of blacks in the world, and it played a significant part in increasing tension in the West Indies. A contemporary observer noted that "West Indians felt that in that issue the British government betrayed a nation because it was black, and this has tended to destroy their faith in white government, and to make them more willing to take their fate into their own hands." (Lewis 1977: 19)

The NWA was however, largely confined to Port of Spain, and the real 'centre of gravity' had shifted to the oilfields and the sugar belt in south and central Trinidad. This was clearly demonstrated by the strike at the Apex Oilfield in March 1935. Although the strikers settled for a small wage increase, its real importance was the emergence of Tubal Uriah Butler as a working class leader. During the strike Butler led a march to Port of Spain which was intercepted by Cipriani, who was mayor at the time. Cipriani promised to take up the strikers' grievances, but once again his constitutional methods were a failure. It was this lack of action that led to a final rupture between the radicalising working class and the conservative Cipriani.

Butler was among those who had previously sympathised with Cipriani (he was a member of the TLP) but in August 1936 he formed the British Empire Workers' and Citizens' Home Rule Party. The name of the party reflected Butler's belief in the legitimacy of the Empire, despite frequent outbursts condemning it. His attitude to the Empire was expressed at the Party's foundation when he stated that "We are British...I am proud to be British." (Qu. Rennie 1974: 79) In an open letter dated June 10, 1937, Butler wrote that "(w)e who have sworn to lead you on to victory or die in the attempt, order you to prepare if necessary to shed your loyal Black British Blood so that Black British Trinidad might enjoy the principles of British freedom and Justice on equal terms with all others in our Trinidad." (Oilfield Workers Trade Union n.d.) As well as a conciliatory approach to the Empire and a view of British justice almost as naive as that of the quotation which introduced this chapter, Butler's party lacked a consistent political approach and was poorly organised.

Nevertheless, Butler remains one of the most significant figures in the labour history of Trinidad and Tobago. His importance lies in his role as a 'catalyst', whose historical role was "to crystallize and articulate the grievances that people had long nursed, and to offer them an 'acceptable' outlet for aggressive dispositions which Cipriani had held in check." (Ryan 1974: 56) His emergence as a labour leader reflected the consciousness of the

working class in the 1930s. He was a physically disabled oil worker who had left his native island of Grenada, in search of work in Trinidad. Unlike Cipriani then, he was a 'man of the people', sharing a similar under-privileged background and similar economic and social grievances. He therefore found a willing audience among workers and peasants of both African and Indian origin, playing the role of "an agitator, with the gift and energy for prolific emotional word spouting, that sometimes meant very little when analysed but...nevertheless, at that time, touched the depths of working class feelings which proved to be enough." (Rennie 1974: 64) Butler was also unique in Trinidadian labour history in that he managed to achieve a significant degree of unity between Creoles and East Indians.

In Tobago, on the other hand, the TLP remained dominant among the more radical sections of society. There was not yet a sector in which a concentrated working class existed. The TLP enjoyed a strong base in the more populous Leeward district, where there was some wage labourers, but they did not generally share the more radical politics of the strategic sectors of Trinidad's economy.

(c) 1937 and its Aftermath.

The general climate of Butler-inspired unrest continued and hunger marches and strikes persisted, and Police leaders in the south of Trinidad were keen "to deal with him as an undesirable person." (Oifield Workers Trade Union n.d.) In

June and July of 1937, the unrest reached a climax. The rebellion started with a sitdown strike at the Forest Reserve Oilfield on June 19, which turned into a bloody riot after the police attempted to arrest Butler. He was forced into hiding, but the absence of the workers' main agitator did not stop the momentum of the strike. The following day, other oilfields joined the strike, and by the 21, it had spread to other sectors, including sugar. Within a week, most of the economy in Trinidad (but not Tobago) was at a standstill.

In Butler's absence, leadership had passed to his assistant, the East Indian, Adrian Cola Rienzi. He realised that the spontaneous nature of the rebellion meant that it would only last for a short while, a view reinforced by the arrival of the Ajax and the Exeter three days after the start of the strike. This view was confirmed and by July 6, the rebellion was over.

In the meantime, Rienzi set about winning concessions from the relatively liberal governor, Murchison Fletcher. A Mediation Committee was set up to investigate the causes of the rebellion, but this was suspended (through employer pressure) pending the arrival of a Commission of Inquiry from London. This inquiry, chaired by John Forster made no specific recommendations concerning wages and working conditions, but did advise the establishment of the machinery for collective bargaining, and of Labour Departments to assist in this process (and withhold

recognition in 'unsatisfactory' circumstances) (Forster Commission 1938: 81, 86-7).

This recommendation had already been forced on the Colonial Office and the more sympathetic Trinidad-Tobago government and by the end of 1937, several trade unions had obtained government recognition. These included the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union (OWTU), the All-Trinidad Sugar Estates and Factory Workers' Trade Union (ATSEFWTU), the Federated Workers' Trade Union (FWTU), the Amalgamated Building and Wood Workers' Union (ABWWU), the Public Workers' Trade Union (PWWTU), and the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Union (SWWTU). In 1938, on the advice of the British TUC General Secretary, Walter Citrine, the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Union Council was founded. The Trade Disputes (Arbitration and Inquiry) Ordinance 1938 laid down the conditions for a tri-partite system of collective bargaining, although peaceful picketing and immunity from civil actions were not introduced until 1943, when the Trade Disputes and Protection of Property Ordinance was passed.

The unions still faced many problems such as the continuation of poor wages and working conditions, high unemployment, and employer recognition, so the context in which collective bargaining was to operate was automatically unfavourable towards the working class. There was also the problem of the diffuse nature of the working classes as capitalist development was very uneven. In the oil industry, where there was a large concentration of workers, union

membership was high. In sugar, on the other hand, where a high proportion of production was still carried out by cane farmers, union membership was low. These problems were to be reinforced in later years as rival unions competed for the right to represent workers. Any prospective labour party that would arise out of the trade union movement would also have to deal with the question of uniting a labour force divided by race and gender.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the development of trade unions was an important step forward for the working class. A further stride was taken when the Moyne Commission recommended universal suffrage for the English speaking Caribbean, in response to the labour rebellions that took place throughout the West Indies in the 1930s (West India Royal Commission Report 1945: 379-80). In the post-war period the British government played a more active role in the colonies, including in the field of labour relations, as they prepared for gradual, 'constitutional decolonisation' (Munroe 1983). Trinidad's post war labour history will be discussed in chapter three.

Summary and Conclusion.

The labour history of Trinidad and Tobago cannot be described as one notable for the 'liberty' or the 'well being of its inhabitants'. British colonial rule in Trinidad and Tobago was actually quite mild compared to Ireland,

India and parts of Africa, but it still had the classic hallmarks: repression, racism, exploitation and uneven development, and neglect when economic and political interests turned to other parts of the world. Intellectuals therefore had to invent justifications for colonialism, and it was on this basis that (judging by the view cited at the start of this chapter) still powerful falsehoods emerged. The actual history was one in which economic growth benefited a tiny minority and social and political factors, including labour relations, were largely neglected.

At the risk of over-simplification, the history of Trinidad and Tobago from 1776-1937 can be divided into five major periods.

(i) 1776-1838.

In this period, slavery became the dominant form of production, and Britain established its rule in both Trinidad and Tobago. Sugar became the major crop in both islands. Slavery was abolished in 1834, although this was followed by a four year 'apprenticeship period'.

(ii.) 1838 Onwards.

The period following emancipation saw a struggle in both islands between the planters and the newly freed slaves. In Tobago, a compromise was reached and former slaves won access to land and the métayage system became the dominant

form of production. In Trinidad, planters used the state apparatus and legislation secured new supplies of labour, in particular from India. Although these labourers were paid a wage, they were still unfree because they were subject to a number of restrictions, including a pass system which limited freedom of movement. It was in this period that race and ethnicity became powerful political factors as the major 'racial' groups became divided, both as producers and in the wider social sphere.

(iii.) 1866 Onwards.

New peasant classes emerged after 1866, as it became easier to purchase land. The production of both cocoa and, from the 1880s, sugar, was carried out by many 'independent' farmers. This can be regarded as a partial victory for the lower classes (at least in the case of cocoa) as they successfully resisted direct subordination to the employer (or his or her agents) at the workplace, but they were still indirectly controlled by capital because of the latter's stronger market position; indeed, in the case of sugar, planters actually led the way in encouraging the growth of small farmers. Planters benefited from these arrangements by paying low prices for peasant produce, a process facilitated by their control of the later, more lucrative, stages of production. It also meant that planters could pay low wages to those casual labourers that worked directly for him or her.

In this period a growing sexual division of labour emerged, in which women were forced into the home or into certain professions that were considered to be consistent with their 'domestic role'. This process was intensified during the period of proletarianisation from the 1890s.

The other major event of this period was the union of Trinidad and Tobago in 1889. This was forced on Tobago as the island was practically bankrupt, due to the crisis in West Indian sugar from 1884. The *métayage* system was too inefficient to effectively compete with the technologically superior methods of production employed in Europe.

(iv.) 1890s Onwards.

In Trinidad, this period saw a wider, but still highly uneven, process of proletarianisation, and the beginnings of organised resistance to the worst excesses of colonial rule. A number of middle class organisations developed, such as the Ratepayers' Association and the East Indian National Association, but there were also organisations that attracted some working class support, of which the Trinidad Working Men's Association was most important. In Tobago, on the other hand, there was still little organised resistance and in this period the peasantry flourished.

(v.) 1919-37.

Resistance reached higher levels in Trinidad, as workers became concentrated in certain sectors, particularly in oil and at the waterfront. Labour unrest and widespread strikes, especially in 1937 forced the colonial government to make some concessions to labour. As Lewis observed at the time, "...the general strike and the riot have been the worker's only weapon for calling attention to his conditions." (Lewis 1977: 19)

The events of 1937 are important because they (albeit momentarily) united the working classes across the lines of gender, race and politics. Despite the long term process of 'housewifeisation', women played a key role in the rebellion, in both the Butlerite movement and the NWA. Butler was also successful in uniting both of the major ethnic groups behind his political programme. This unity was to prove short-lived however.

In terms of the development of the labour force in Trinidad (less so in Tobago), the period from 1797 to 1937 saw a transition from forced labour regimes to the development of a proletariat. Given the uneven character of this process (see chapter one for an explanation for such unevenness), class formation was extremely complex and diverse. The working classes were made up of the proletariat (both urban and rural), the peasantry (which was itself highly stratified), 'informal' petty traders and producers (again

present in both town and countryside), the unemployed and lumpen elements such as vagrants (more common at this time in rural areas). These divisions were further reinforced by racial and sexual divisions of labour and ideologies of racism and sexism, which were not simply products of colonialism or capitalism. Women were increasingly assigned domestic and related tasks, especially (but far from exclusively) among the Indian population, which left them in a subordinate position, both in the developing labour market, and in society more generally. Indians arrived in Trinidad as indentured labourers and were initially the poorest ethnic group among the working classes. An Indian petty bourgeoisie emerged in the 1870s and 1880s, but the majority of Indians remained part of the working classes. These differences shaped the politics of the emerging labour movement in the period after 1937.

CHAPTER THREE
Labour Parties and Trade Unions in the
Independence Period

The period from 1939-65 saw a number of political conflicts among workers and (to a lesser extent) the peasantry, which were expressed through political parties and different conceptions of trade unionism. No single political party managed to establish hegemony over a working class divided by ideological and ethnic boundaries. These divisions enabled a party dominated by the black middle class, the Peoples' National Movement (PNM), to establish its leadership of the black majority and pave the way for independence in 1962.

This chapter documents and analyses the processes whereby the nascent 'labour movement' lost the initiative it had established in 1937 to an organisation led by the black middle class. It is divided into four sections: firstly, I briefly return to a discussion of the relationship between trade unions and politics (see also chapter one), concentrating on Third World societies in the era of decolonisation. I argue in this section that it is essential to grasp the political role of labour in order to understand events in Trinidad and Tobago (and elsewhere) before and after independence. This leads on to my second section, which describes the political conflicts among trade unions and political parties from 1939-56. Section three covers the

period from the first election victory of the PNM (1956) to independence in 1962. Finally, I examine the conflicts between the PNM and a militant section of the trade union movement after independence.

Section One: Trade Unions and Politics in the Independence Period - A Critical Analysis of the 'Berg-Butler' Thesis.

Before documenting the 'politics of labour' in Trinidad and Tobago from 1939-65, I will first briefly return to a discussion of the relationship between trade unions and politics, this time confining the argument to colonies in the period immediately before and after independence. More specifically, I will discuss the work of Elliot Berg and Jeffrey Butler. In an influential article on trade unions in Africa, they ask three questions concerning the relationship between trade unions and politics in the independence period. Firstly, what are the structural relations between trade unions and political parties? Secondly, what political activities did trade unions engage in, and how successful were they? And thirdly, how significant were unions after independence? (Berg and Butler 1964: 341) They argue that "(i)n the period before independence, African trade unions were rarely the instrument of political parties. To the extent that they entered the political arena their role was usually negligible. After independence they were quickly subdued by governing parties.." (Berg and Butler 1964: 341)

Their basic argument then, is that trade unions in Africa generally limited themselves to industrial, rather than political demands. Although their analysis is confined to Africa, Berg and Butler's thesis could equally 'fit' the case of Trinidad and Tobago. The trade union movement failed to establish a political party that led the movement for independence, and it failed to win substantial concessions from the PNM for labour representation during, and after, 1956. If one takes Berg and Butler's arguments as a starting point, then one can easily conclude that trade unions were irrelevant to the political struggle for independence.

There are, however, valid reasons for rejecting the thesis as a starting point, because it is based on certain untenable assumptions. I argued in chapter one that the separation of the industrial and political spheres is purely arbitrary; as Alan Fox has stated, "(i)ssues have no intrinsic quality which lead us to put some in one category and some in the other. The difference simply lies in the methods by which we try to provide for their resolution." (Fox 1985: 162)

This arbitrary separation leads to two basic weaknesses in the argument. Firstly, Berg and Butler show an "almost obsessive concern with trade union/nationalist party relationships.." (Sandbrook and Cohen 1975: 18); a separation of a nationalist political party and trade unions does not necessarily imply that the latter is apolitical in nature. In the case of Africa "(m)any unionists

were...conscious of the need to preserve a power base independent of the nationalist party even where they were in accord with common anti-colonialist objectives." (Cohen 1974: 243-4) Secondly, strikes "have frequently had both an immediate and long term political impact unintended by the strikers." (C.H. Allen 1975: 118) In the African case this has, for example led to government changes in economic policy and undermined the security of governments.

Berg and Butler's attempts to marginalise the political role of labour in the independence period is therefore not a very useful starting point. Rather than assume that trade unions did not play a political role in this period, it is more fruitful to analyse the conflicting political tendencies among would-be representatives of the working class and peasantry. The basic idea of the Berg-Butler thesis, namely the rejection of political unionism and trade union confinement to industrial demands, can then be analysed as one particular political project among others. In section two, I show that such thinking was behind the British TUC's policies for developing 'responsible' trade unions in the colonies.

Section Two: Trade Union and Party Conflicts, 1939-56.

In this section, I document the divisions in trade unions and political parties up to the first election victory of the PNM. The history of the trade unions and labour parties is analysed in three parts, in chronological order.

(i) The Impact of the 1937 Rebellion and the Second World War.

I showed in the last chapter that trade union organisation accelerated after 1937, and that the Colonial Office began to take a more active interest in the labour affairs of the colonies. The new unions still faced the problem of small membership, as well as the problem of organising in what was still a predominantly rural society. There was also the problem of what political direction the unions would take. Would they, for instance, simply organise as defensive institutions at the workplace, and rely on the Colonial Office to introduce reforms culminating in a gradual process of constitutional decolonisation? Or would they organise outside of the workplace, through a political party, in order to promote their demands? And would the racial unity that had begun to develop during the July events continue, or would the old divisions re-emerge? These basic questions of trade union strategy were to dominate the nascent labour movement after 1937.

Contrary to the intentions of the Colonial Office, the formation of trade unions did not initially lead to a moderation in the demands made by labour. This was reflected in struggles for employer recognition of unions and for higher wages. The Colonial Office therefore adopted, in addition to its reformist approach, a strategy of repression. A number of labour leaders were tried for

sedition, including Butler, and NWA leaders Elma Francois and Jim Barrette. Although Francois was found not guilty, Barrette and Butler were both sentenced to imprisonment. Butler successfully appealed to the Privy Council, but by the time this appeal had been upheld, he had already been released after serving twenty one months of his prison sentence.

On his release, he was welcomed by the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union, but relations quickly turned sour, and he was expelled in August 1939. Butler formed a rival union, the British Empire Workers', Peasants' and Ratepayers' Union and he resumed his strategy of widespread protest, which rejected the separation of 'political' and 'industrial' demands. As I showed in the previous chapter, the colonial authorities in Trinidad were particularly concerned about Butler because his agitation had brought the oil and sugar workers together, and these two sectors were the most important (in terms of foreign exchange earnings and employment) in the economy (Forster Commission 1938: 12). Almost immediately after his release, Butler was put under police surveillance, and there was a general feeling in official circles (in both Port of Spain and London) that, with war approaching, Butler's agitation must be curtailed. The Colonial Office in London regarded it as especially important to curb unrest in Trinidad because it was one of the largest suppliers of refined oil in the Empire in the 1930s (and this supply became even more significant during the war years). In November 1939, Butler was detained for an

'indefinite period', which in practice meant that he was imprisoned for the duration of the war. The Colonial Office was also concerned about the activities of other labour leaders, including Adrian Cola Rienzi, but differences were settled in July 1940 when the Trades Union Council (of which Rienzi was President) passed a resolution supporting the defeat of fascism.

During the war years, the economy recovered from the recession of the 1930s. The most important reason for this was the signing of the leasing agreement in March 1941 under which the British government gave land and military bases to the United States, in return for a number of old US warships. Construction work at Chaguaramas, the site of the main military base led to the employment of a large number of workers - at one stage, 28 000 men (Cross 1988: 294). Labour was imported from Barbados, but the main source was indigenous labour attracted by relatively high wage rates. The oil industry also boomed in the war years and by 1943 it employed 15 000 workers and was responsible for 80 per cent of Trinidad's exports (Brereton 1981: 211). People abandoned traditional agricultural exports and as a result output declined in these sectors during the war years.

Despite the increased concentration of the workforce, labour made little advance in the war years. Labour parties were formed, but their development was hindered by personal and political rivalries and "ready made alternative symbols to those of class.." (Cross 1988: 296), factors that retained,

and indeed increased their significance after the war when universal suffrage operated, and industrial unrest revived. The most important of these 'alternative symbols' was ethnicity. My analysis in chapter two showed how tensions emerged between African and Indian during the indentureship period as the former were given supervisory positions on the sugar estates and blamed the latter for effective wage decreases. The Indians similarly distrusted the Africans and generally regarded them as inferior. The events in 1937 were the first time that real ethnic unity had been achieved (with the possible exception of 1919 - see chapter two), but the long-term mutual suspicions quickly returned as the labour struggle began to wither. This process was reinforced when a major symbol of ethnic unity in 1937, Adrian Cola Rienzi, resigned from the trade union movement in 1943, and accepted a government post the following year.

Political rivalry for the labour vote after 1937 also became apparent in this period. In 1942 the West Indian National Party was formed, and included David Pitt, Patrick Solomon and Roy Joseph among its leading members. Despite the party's pro-labour programme, it failed to attract the support of unions beyond the Federated Workers' Trades Union. The Trades Union Council was already divided and it had formed its own party, the Socialist Party of Trinidad and Tobago, in 1941. However, the support of the WINP was largely confined to the north (with the partial exception of Pitt who won some support in San Fernando), while the

Socialist Party dominated in the south, and there was no attempt to overcome these geographical divisions.

(ii) Labour and Politics, 1946-50.

In 1946, the first elections based on universal suffrage were held. As well as many independent candidates, there were five major parties, four of which claimed to represent labour. These were: (i) The United Front, led by Jack Kelshall, which included the West Indies National Party, the Indian National Council and the Negro Welfare Association (NWCSA) among its supporters; (ii) the Trade Union Council and the Socialist Party of Trinidad and Tobago, led by John Rojas, whose main support came from the OWTU, the Seamen's Union and, contrary to its position in the war, the FWTU; (iii) the Trinidad Labour Party, which, after Cipriani's death in 1945, was led by Gerald Wight; and (iv) Butler's British Empire, Workers', Citizens' and Home Rule Party (Butler was released at the end of the war). In the elections, political parties won eight of the nine seats, but the labour vote was fragmented: the United Front won three seats, the Butlerites three, and the Socialist Party two. The leaders of these three parties were all defeated by rival labour candidates. The divisions between the parties, and the dominant personalities, enabled middle class politicians to dominate successive governments after 1946.

These differences were reinforced by the appointment of four of the elected members (Gomes, Joseph, Abidh, Roodal) to the

Executive Council, in which they usually gave support to the Governor. This was best exemplified by the debate on constitutional reform. In spite of the introduction of universal suffrage, the Legislative Council still had a majority of non-elected members. A Constitutional Reform Committee set up in 1947 outlined its Majority Report the following year, and, despite recommending an elected majority in both the Executive and Legislative Councils, fell short of recommending responsible self-government. Some members resigned from the Committee, including Patrick Solomon who published a minority report recommending self-government. However, the Majority Report was accepted by the Colonial Office, with some modifications, and it formed the basis for the 1950 elections. Among the leading advocates of the report was Albert Gomes, who two years previously had strongly advocated self-government.

The continued problem of ethnic differences was also highlighted by a second minority report, drafted by the one successful independent candidate in the 1946 election, Ranjit Kumar. His report was similar to Solomon's, but Kumar's differed in that it did not support immediate responsible government. He argued that Trinidad was not an economically viable institution independent of Britain, and he expressed fears for the Indian minority if independence was achieved: "In Trinidad we have a minority problem, and it is the duty of the majority to gain the confidence of the minorities by showing them that in any proposal for self-government, the minorities would have equal rights. I am

afraid that in this colony, the majority community has not yet done that." (Qu. Ryan 1974: 82)

Meanwhile, industrial unrest had returned after the interval in the war years. The major strike of this period took place in December 1946 over the oilfield employers' recognition of Butler's union. Although Butler's call for a strike led to an initially strong response, the strikers quickly drifted back to work. This strike showed the ideological differences in the trade union movement between Butler's conception of trade unions as a political instrument and the more conciliatory approach of other leaders. For instance, OWTU leader John Rojas consistently expressed his support for socialism and the Soviet Union at this time, but this was mere rhetoric and he was unwilling to support calls for strike action by oil workers. In this particular oilfield strike he actually co-operated with the employers and supplied them with labour during the strike.

Unrest persisted among Butler supporters until 1948 (when Butler went to England where he hoped to win an audience for his demand for home rule), but the trade unions as a whole remained weak. In 1948 there were as many as twenty seven trade unions with a total membership of only 20 000 (Trinidad and Tobago 1950: 8), while the total population in 1946 was 557 970 (West Indian Census 1946: vii).

Ideological differences were reinforced by the segregation of the international trade union movement in 1949, caused by

the Cold War. According to the British TUC's adviser in Trinidad, Western trade unions (with some exceptions) left the World Federation of Trade Unions because of the Soviet bloc's attempts "to turn the WFTU into an instrument of the Cominform - the organ of Soviet Communist policy." (Dalley 1954: 57) After 1949, on the one side there was still the pro-Communist World Federation of Trade Unions; on the other was the new, pro-West International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Within Trinidad, the Trades Union Council refused to adopt the British Trades Union Congress' advice to leave the WFTU and join the ICFTU. However, six trade unions, led by C.P. Alexander's Seamen's Union, split from the TUC and formed the Trinidad and Tobago Federation of Trade Unions, which became an ICFTU affiliate in 1951 (Oilfields Workers' Trade Union 1986b: 16).

Attempts were also made to form a Pan-Caribbean trade union movement and in 1945 the Caribbean Labour Congress (CLC) was founded, which included the Trinidad and Tobago Trades Union Council among its affiliates. The CLC in turn affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions, and organised on the basis of a belief in an independent West Indies Federation and the need for a corresponding labour organisation (Caribbean Labour Congress 1945: 15). However, efforts to develop the CLC as an influential political force were hindered by internal divisions over questions like anti-colonial attitudes and political unionism (ibid.: 15-16; Harrod 1972: 239), and these were exacerbated by the split in the international trade union movement. The CLC remained

affiliated to the WFTU, but the former had by this time become largely ineffective, and the resultant loss of membership that the CLC decision entailed, simply hastened its decline. In 1952, it was effectively disbanded as the Jamaican People's National Party adopted a pro-British stance on trade unionism.

This period also saw an increase in direct TUC involvement in the colonies, which was largely a response to the activities of Butler and his followers in 1946. The following year, at the request of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, a TUC adviser, Fred Dalley, was sent to Trinidad. He noted the continued existence of low wages, poor living conditions and casual labour, including unofficial child labour (Dalley 1947: 4, 27), but his major task was to 'educate' the labour movement on the strategies of 'responsible' trade unionism. Of particular concern was the strike prone and 'impatient' nature of trade unions and Butler's refusal to separate industrial and political demands. His report concluded that "all the Trade Unions...should dissociate themselves from Uriah Butler and his methods. This is not a matter of 'lines of demarcation' or of trade union rivalry. Responsible Trade Unionism and 'Butlerism' cannot exist side by side; they are incompatibles, and the workers of Trinidad should be helped to realise this by all the responsible elements in the Colony." He also commented on Butler's alleged "mental abnormality" (Dalley 1947: 35).

While trade union influence extended beyond its small membership, its continued lack of strength in numbers both reflected and facilitated ideological divisions that hindered the development of working class political leadership before 1956. Four basic tendencies existed among those claiming to represent the working class and peasantry: firstly, there were those predominantly black workers who were inspired by the populist rhetoric of Butler; secondly, there were the more conservative elements that supported Gomes, the British government, and the British TUC, and were prepared for a gradual process of de-colonisation; thirdly, there were the East Indians in the rural areas who were conscious of ethnic differences, and, despite Butler's attempts to revive 'Afro-Indian' solidarity in 1947-8, were concerned about the consequences of black majority rule; and fourthly, there were a number of more organised, and more explicitly socialist (or labourist) parties, but they lacked stable support, especially in the trade union movement (Cross 1988: 295).

(iii) 1950 Onwards: The 'Knox Street Quintet', Union Rivalry and further TUC Intervention.

The new constitution permitted competition for eighteen seats to the legislature. Divisions were once again common, particularly among those parties claiming to represent labour. The five main political organisations were: the Political Progress Group, a moderate party led by the increasingly conservative Gomes; the Trinidad Labour Party,

now led by Raymond Hamel-Smith; the Caribbean Socialist Party, founded by Patrick Solomon after the collapse of the United Front, but which also suffered from internal divisions; the Trade Union Council, who vainly called for labour unity; and the Butlerites, who stood on a platform of 'Afro-Indian' unity, and for a break with the existing trade union movement.

The result was a minor triumph for Butler, whose party returned six candidates (four of whom were Indians), but the election was again inconclusive as the TLP, CSP and the PPG each won two seats, and six were won by Independents. The Butlerites won the support of two of the successful Independent candidates, but this only gave them eight out of twenty six seats in the legislature (eight members were still unelected at this time). Butler's 'radical' politics were clearly unacceptable to the Colonial Office which, together with manoeuvres by Governor Rance and the other parties, ensured that no Butlerite held a seat in the Executive Council.

A far more acceptable and conservative regime was instead established, which was based on collective leadership and known as the 'Knox Street Quintet'. This system lacked party discipline, but it had the great virtue (from the British viewpoint) that it would not challenge British (or US) interests in the region, whereas Butler advocated nationalisation of the oil industry. The quasi-ministerial regime implemented a far more a conservative economic

strategy. This bore the hallmarks of the Puerto Rican model discussed in the first chapter: efforts were made to attract foreign capital through tax incentives (the Pioneer Industries Ordinance 1952 for example), thereby (or so it was believed) facilitating the transition to an advanced capitalist economy.

Meanwhile, ideological and personal differences continued in the trade unions and were most clearly visible through the phenomenon of trade union rivalry. As well as two rival trade union federations after 1949, union competition existed in particular sectors. For example, in 1947, six unions competed for representation of the railway workers. In 1952, a similar number existed in the the sugar industry, and an uneasy 'alliance' (secured in in December 1953) between the ATSEFWTU and the Sugar Industry Labour Union was broken after a strike was called at the Usine Ste. Madeleine estate in November 1954 (Dalley 1947: 7; Catchpole 1955: 3-4).

In 1954, concerned with what they regarded as the continued backwardness of trade unionism in Trinidad and Tobago, the British TUC again sent Fred Dalley to advise on the 'proper' direction that trade unionism should take there. This visit was decisive in convincing TUC leaders such as John Rojas to leave the WFTU and affiliate to the ICFTU. In an attempt to establish trade union unity in the region, the ICFTU also set up a Caribbean Area Division of ORIT (the Latin American Regional Organisation) and most Caribbean unions affiliated

to it (a notable exception was the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union in Jamaica).

This second report again expressed concern with the state of labour organisation in Trinidad and Tobago, and cited three major problems for trade unions and labour parties. Firstly, there were no established political parties; secondly, "politicians and political aspirants cultivate and sponsor certain trade unions..to further their own political careers (rather) than to assist the union and their members.."; and thirdly, voters did not give much support to trade union candidates anyway (Dalley 1954: 38).

The TUC also sent an adviser, Martin Pounder, to help sort out the problems of unionisation in the sugar industry. He spent nine months in Trinidad, and with TUC financial help, the All Trinidad union increased its membership from around 350 to 4 000 (Roberts 1964: 39). This reconstitution of the 'All Trinidad' as a 'responsible' union failed to completely marginalise a group of 'rebels' who quite legitimately demanded democracy in the union. However, trade union democracy was not one of the primary goals of TUC advisers; as Pounder said in his farewell speech, "what these rebels are doing is a lot of damned nonsense. It is a tragedy. While others try to build good relationship (sic.) between the workers and the employers, the rebels who possess only nuisance value try to destroy it." (Trinidad Chronicle June 27, 1958) So, for Pounder, the establishment of a moderate, 'responsible' trade union took precedence over the

establishment of a democratic one. The rebel movement, however, was not totally defeated and, in collaboration with the OWTU, it became an increasingly powerful force, as I show below.

The underlying premise of British TUC advice was the belief that there are separate industrial and political arenas and that trade unions should confine themselves to the former (Davies 1964). (The 'social scientific' equivalent of this view, held by Clark Kerr, is discussed in the opening chapter.) In other words, Dalley was concerned that trade unions should play a purely 'economistic' role in the context of a voluntarist collective bargaining environment in which the state would abstain from intervention in the industrial sphere. Such a theory of trade unionism was hardly adequate from the point of view of the defensive interests of the nascent working class in a peripheral capitalist economy, as I argued in the opening chapter. Moreover, such a view of trade unions hardly corresponded with the historical reality of British industrial relations; as Hyman has pointed out "trade union economism has always rested on certain historically contingent preconditions... Voluntarism had its roots in an era when unions were relatively weak (through limited membership and often high unemployment) and willing to exercise considerable self restraint in the use made of power they did possess." (Hyman 1989: 46-7) The TUC turned this 'historical moment' into a dogmatic programme for trade unions in the colonies, which was important in steering trade unions into a 'more

acceptable' direction (again from the British and American viewpoints).

Section Three: 1956-62 - The Rise of the Peoples' National Movement, the Trade Unions and Independence.

(i) The Rise of the PNM.

While the non-party government from 1950-56 had shown a high degree of unity, the population generally felt that a united, nationalist, political party was needed to lead Trinidad to independence. In 1948, the prominent scholar Eric Williams returned to Trinidad as a deputy chairperson of the Caribbean Research Council of the Caribbean Commission. By the early 1950s, he was carrying out public lectures throughout Trinidad and Tobago. At the end of 1954 he emerged on the centre-stage of Trinidadian society as he engaged in a formal debate on education with Dom Basil Matthews. By this time he was involved with the Peoples' Education Movement and in June 1955 he announced his dismissal from the CRC and formally launched his political campaign. After consultations with C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Arthur Lewis, the Peoples' National Movement was officially founded in January 1956.

The elections of 1956 were fought by a large number of parties, and again included parties claiming to represent labour. As well as the PNM there were three other new parties: the Caribbean National Labour Party, the West

Indian Independence Party, and the Peoples' Democratic Party. The CNLP was led by John Rojas and emerged from the failure of trade unions to win concessions from the PNM. At the inaugural conference of the PNM, union attempts were made to seek guarantees of candidates, but these were rejected. As Williams later stated, "With the experience of the British Labour Party before us, we were careful not to allow our movement to be dominated by the trade union block vote." (Williams 1969: 146)

Rojas and Williams were also divided over the issue of Texaco's takeover of Trinidad Leasehold Limited in 1956. Rojas opposed this and argued that the state should be the majority shareholder. Williams' support for the Texaco deal (Trinidad Guardian 22.6.1956) was important in convincing the British government that the PNM did not represent a threat to its interests, which by now had come to represent a close (but highly unequal) alliance with the United States and a growing political disinterest in the declining Empire.

As well as rejecting direct connections with the trade union movement, the PNM rejected a socialist strategy. Instead, Williams advocated the Puerto Rican model of industrialisation and diversification in an attempt to move the economy away from an over-reliance on oil (Williams 1955: 16-21). He acknowledged that the previous regime had given tax incentives to industry, but argued that increased tariffs were needed to allow industry to develop. Above all, he denounced politics based on religion, colour or class and

called for "the united efforts of the entire population." (Williams 1955: 34) However, the reality of the strategy was that it would promote the interests of already privileged groups and it was hoped that this would lead to the creation of a dynamic, indigenous capitalist class. In practice, such a strategy was compatible with sections of foreign capital and the political and strategic interests of western countries playing the 'cold war game'.

The other new parties were the WIIP and the PDP. The former was a Marxist-oriented organisation that had been created in 1952 and was led by Lennox Pierre and John La Rose. Its membership was always small and it only fielded one candidate in the 1956 election, advising its supporters to vote for the PNM. The PDP, on the other hand, was an Indian-based petty bourgeois party which appealed to Indians on the basis of their ethnic origins. Its leader was Bhadase Maraj, who was also a leading figure in the ATSEFWTU. Of the older parties the Political Progress Group, Trinidad Labour Party, and the Butlerites all stood. Butler's party began to decline almost immediately after 1950, when Butler went to Britain to agitate for the end of colonial rule. He believed that his party could win the 1956 elections but underestimated the appeal of Eric Williams and the PNM, and they won only two seats.

During the campaign it became clear that the two major parties competing for office were the PNM and the PDP. Both parties were of basically petty bourgeois origin and both

had pro-capitalist programmes. By far the most divisive issue was that of race. With the absence of a united labour party alternative, the two parties appealed to labour according to its racial origin. The PNM effectively combined populism at the ideological level (in other words, the promotion of nationalism and a barely concealed racism) with clientelism at the organisational level (in other words, a highly restrictive recruitment of key political personnel, including, as I will show, trade union leaders). As Sudama states, "the method of selection of the top party personnel and the thinly disguised propaganda emphasizing the historical and continuing discrimination against Negroes (though at times couched in nationalist terms) was sufficient to keep the organization firmly in the hands of the Negro petty bourgeoisie and at the same time make an emotional appeal to the Negro working class." (Sudama 1983: 85) Williams' claim to represent the whole population was therefore rather hollow. Instead, the PNM appealed to sufficient sections of the population to secure electoral victory, even if this was at the cost of further racial disunity in the country. The PDP, for its part, presented itself as the protector of the cause of East Indian cultural interests, and its leaders argued that such a 'champion' was all the more necessary as Trinidad was close to independence and the prospect of black majority self-government.

Race was the most important and emotive issue in a bitter election campaign. The informal leader of the Knox Street Quintet captured the mood during the election campaign when

he later stated that "the dismal fact is that exploitation of race had been the decisive factor in the elections, a fact which everyone recognised, even though, as with a guilty secret, people hesitated to make public mention of its existence." (Gomes 1974: 175)

The result of the election was not decisive. The PNM won 39 per cent of the popular vote and thirteen of the twenty four contested seats, while the PDP won five seats, with 20 per cent of the popular vote. The TLP, the Butlerites and Independents each won two seats. The Political Progress Group, which largely represented the indigenous white and 'off-white' population, clearly lacked a social base and failed to win any seats. This result did not give the PNM a majority in the Legislature, as seven seats were still non-elected. However, Governor Beetham was convinced that a PNM government was not incompatible with British or American interests (as the Texaco deal had shown) and successfully persuaded the Colonial Office to allow the PNM to form the government and guarantee them support among the appointed members. As a result, the PNM formed the government and Eric Williams became the Chief Minister (Ryan 1974: 166).

(ii) Trade Union Activity 1956-62.

After the 1956 elections, the Trinidad Labour Party, the Political Progress Group and the People's Democratic Party united to form the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). The white

and 'off-white' population was numerically the smallest, but economically the most dominant group in the country, but the 1956 election results demonstrated the necessity of entering into a political alliance with an organisation that had wider popular appeal than the Political Progress Group. Whites were particularly concerned that black majority rule would threaten their economic interests so they were prepared to enter into an alliance with the PDP.

In 1958, elections for the West Indies Federation (a colonial experiment which collapsed in 1961) were held, thus providing the DLP with the first test of its popularity. To the dismay of the over-confident PNM, the DLP won six of the ten seats. Racial hostility became more overt as Williams denounced DLP appeals to the Indian nation and described Indians in Trinidad as a "recalcitrant and hostile minority masquerading as the Indian nation, and prostituting the name of India for its selfish, reactionary political ends." (Qu. Ryan 1974: 192) The objective of such an attack was clear; as Sudama states, "the Negro petty bourgeoisie was determined to mobilize the whole Negro working class behind it to maintain its power by projecting the racial threat of the East Indians." (Sudama 1983: 87)

The PNM therefore correctly perceived that the DLP was a serious electoral threat and took appropriate action. Changes were made to the electoral boundaries for the national elections of 1961 which would increase the PNM's chances of victory (although, in fairness to the PNM, the

changes also made the results more representative of the national popular vote). Williams also combined a strategy of attracting black labour support through anti-Indian scare-mongering with a pro-labour stance. He continued to reject any direct trade union base because he did not want to present the PNM as a party dominated by labour and a trade union bloc vote. The image put forward was one of a nationalist movement capable of uniting the 'whole population' (which in practice actually meant the black population plus some secular Indians) in its movement towards independence. Nevertheless, the working class was by far the largest sector within the black population and so Williams gave his vocal support to a number of strikes in this period.

For instance, in March 1957 he supported workers who wanted union organisation in a US firm which assembled office equipment. Williams said that "any industry coming here and behaving decently will be given decent treatment. If they do not like our action, let them pull out." (Trinidad Guardian 23.3.1957) This support continued in June-July 1960, when oil workers at Texaco and Apex went on strike over threatened redundancies. By early July the strike had spread to Shell. There was also a shortage of cooking oil, the price of coal had increased, and public transport was affected. Despite mounting pressure on the government to intervene in the dispute, their only concession was to call a meeting between the parties, and secure an agreement to maintain essential services. The strike ended a few days

later and Williams continued to defend the right of workers to withdraw their labour power. Williams also described workers as his 'friends' and stated that "(i)f there is one group in the community which is going to defend democracy and self-government, that group is the workers." (Qu. Parris 1976: 14)

Williams also won popular support during his 'left turn' in 1958-60, and in particular over the issue of Chaguaramas. This reached a peak in April 1960, as PNM leaders marched to Chaguaramas to demand that the United States return the land to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The PNM later adopted a far more conciliatory attitude (the US abandoned Wallerfield and Carsen Field, but only part of Chaguaramas), and Williams assured the Colonial Office of his support for the West. Once this guarantee was ensured (to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain MacLeod, in 1960) Britain was prepared to let the PNM lead the country to independence (Ryan 1974: 220).

But the Chaguaramas issue showed that the PNM was committed to some, albeit rather tame, nationalist principles, and the black working class for its part was sympathetic to the nationalism of the PNM. The election campaign of 1961 had a distinctly populist tone as Williams, appealing 'over the heads' of black trade union leaders, claimed that the old days of the plantation society were over, that 'massa day done'. The PNM also expressed its support for independence in the 1961 election, and relations with the black working

class and the trade unions reached a peak. The Trinidad and Tobago Trades Union Congress (created in 1957 out of the reunification of the two rival labour federations) noted that the DLP supported restrictive labour legislation, while the PNM claimed to oppose any policy of this kind. However, TUC leaders rejected too close an allegiance to the PNM because they felt that "it would be dangerous for labour to become too closely identified with the PNM.." (Ryan 1974: 256). This was because they feared the consequences for labour should the PNM lose the election, and, as Cohen (writing on Africa, but still of direct relevance) states, "(f)or the unions to stand consistently shoulder to shoulder with parties deriving their power base from traditional rulers or from members of the political class was tantamount to giving up any claim to represent the working class." (Cohen 1974: 243) In other words, Berg and Butler's contention that unions were apolitical in the transition to independence is incorrect in the case of Trinidad and Tobago (as well as several African countries, as Cohen points out), precisely because of the absence of this direct union-party link.

Even without this direct link, the TUC still played a directly political role in the 1961 election campaign. The Civil Service Association, political dissenters in the TUC, decided to organise demonstrations against the government. There were strong suspicions of collusion with the DLP, but the government decided to take no action and allowed the demonstrations to go ahead. This was important in the TUC as the marches "provided the excuse which pro-PNM labour

elements were looking for in order to get the TUC to come out openly in support of the PNM." (Ryan 1974: 257) Demonstrations in support of the PNM were organised and these probably contributed to the size of the PNM victory.

Racial tensions reached a climax during the election campaign as Indians were attacked and DLP leader Rudranath Capildeo incited racial violence (Ryan 1974: 266-70). A major crisis was only averted by the declaration of a state of emergency in some areas, and the willingness of both sides to ultimately hold back from full-scale confrontation. The outcome of the election was that the PNM won 58 per cent of the popular vote and twenty seats, while the DLP won the other ten, thus establishing a two-party system (in which the two sides were divided by race). After the election, Williams decided to opt for independence for Trinidad and Tobago.

After consultations with the population, including sections of the trade union movement, independence was granted on August 1, 1962.

Section Four: Trade Unions and Politics, 1962-65 - 'Political Confrontation' and the Industrial Stabilisation Act.

The PNM therefore won office and led Trinidad and Tobago to independence by 'courting' the black working class

independently of the official trade union movement. A year after independence, Williams attempted to carry out a coherent corporatist strategy of institutionally co-opting trade unions which would actually lead to their effective control. The National Economic Advisory Council was formed, consisting of representatives from business, labour and government, and in which the co-operation of (undemocratic but responsible) trade unions was secured. Control over the trade union movement was reinforced by a policy of incorporation of trade union leaders into the PNM hierarchy.

However, the ascendance of 'responsible' trade unionism was not fully secured and the aforementioned 'rebels', claiming allegiance to Uriah Butler, had increased their influence in a number of unions. Most significantly, in 1962, a new rebel leadership was established in the OWTU under the leadership of George Weekes. Bhadase Maraj's authoritarian leadership of the ATSEFWTU continued to be challenged, culminating in the creation of the National Union of Sugar Workers in 1963. The conservative leadership of the Amalgamated Workers Union was challenged by workers at the Princes Town Bus Company, and this led to the formation of the radical Transport and Industrial Workers Union. So, by the time that independence had been declared, there were two clear divisions in the trade union movement: on the one hand, there were the 'responsible' trade union leaders who believed that the role of the trade union was based on a collective bargaining approach; on the other, there were the more radical unions whose leaders believed "we had to

negotiate for improved wages and for better working conditions...but we also felt that the trade union had to politicize workers so that they could accept the view of a more just and equitable social order." (Young 1976: 164)

Rivalry between the PNM and these rebel leaders was visible from as early as 1960. For instance, the afore-mentioned oilworkers' strike of that year was significant in the long term for two principal reasons. Firstly, it had been largely forced on the increasingly conservative John Rojas by the increasingly influential 'rebel' group in the OWTU, and George Weekes later remarked that "(t)he 1960 strike marks the achievement of maturity and the realisation that the workers are now powerful enough not only to seek, but to fight successfully for their rights." (Qu. Kambon 1988: 48)

Secondly, and not unconnected to the first point, Williams hinted at his later stance on labour relations when he wrote that "(i)rresponsible elements on the workers' side injected race into the strike, talked about emulating Castro, advocated nationalisation of the oil industry.." (Qu. Kambon 1988: 46). These radical trade union leaders enjoyed the support of a membership disorientated with the undemocratic practices of most trade unions, but they did not constitute a threat to the PNM or the DLP at the electoral level. These leaders were regarded by their members as trade union leaders only, and not (at least in the short term) as potential political leaders. Nevertheless, the rebels were still considered to be a 'threat' because the PNM government was concerned that its inability to control some trade

unions would discourage capital investment, and so weaken its industrialisation strategy. In the 1960 strike, these differences were set aside as both parties shared the immediate goal of independence, and so the radicals largely supported the PNM (with some reservations) in the 1961 elections. After independence, this situation rapidly altered, and culminated in the PNM's decision to introduce the Industrial Stabilisation Bill in 1965.

Hostilities between the PNM and the more radical elements of the trade unions became more visible in the context of an economic recession, increased post-independence expectations on the part of organised labour, and a consequent decline in the industrial relations climate after 1961. Economic growth had increased by an average of 10 per cent a year from 1955-61 (Thomas 1988: 280), but in 1961 and 1962 the world price of oil fell, sending the economy into a significant downturn. Economic growth slowed down to just one per cent in 1962, and, with a population increase of three per cent it meant that per capita income actually fell. Per capita income grew very slowly in the following two years as well (Farrell 1975: 46-7). The Government response was to blame the trade unions (Williams' 'friends' in 1961) for the country's economic difficulties. During the passage of the Industrial Stabilisation Bill through the House of Representatives in 1965 (see below), Williams outlined the strike statistics for the years 1960-64: in this five year period there were 230 strikes, involving 74 574 workers; the total number of work days lost (for each individual) was 803

899. Williams expressed particular concern at the disproportionately high number of days lost in the oil and sugar industries: 144 363 related to the sugar industry and 286 001 to oil (Cited Thomas 1984: 49-50). The number of work days lost in 1964 was actually less than for each of the previous four years, but by 1965 this hardly mattered to Williams. By this time "(w)hat was escalating was official hysteria about strikes and official identification of strikes with political subversion.." (Kambon 1988: 123).

The 'honeymoon period' between the PNM and the trade union movement had, however, actually ended two years earlier. In February 1963, BP oil workers went on strike over the company's planned retrenchment of two hundred workers. The OWTU expected Williams to support the strike but he instead announced his intention to set up a Commission of Inquiry into subversive activities in the trade union movement. Williams was particularly concerned that the climate of labour unrest was discouraging foreign investment. Instead of attempting to respond to the demands of radical sections of organised labour, Williams tried to placate them. This clearly demonstrated the differences between the PNM's and the radicals' conceptions of nationalism. For the PNM, "nationalism was now subservience (sic.) to the multinational corporations, in the national interest as they saw it. For Weekes and the OWTU, it was war against the multinational corporations, in the national interest as they saw it." (Kambon 1988: 70)

The divisions in the trade union movement were formalised when the National Trade Union Congress, now led by George Weekes, boycotted Tripartite Committee talks in October 1964. Weekes justified this position on the grounds that the government was now openly hostile towards the trade union movement, but a number of unions rejected this argument and resigned from the TUC. The ATSEFWTU and the Amalgamated Workers Union (later joined by the Communication Workers Union, the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union and the Union of Commercial and Industrial Workers) set up an alternative federation, which they called the National Federation of Labour.

The Commission of Inquiry (Mbanefo 1965) was set up in 1963 and its findings were laid before the House of Representatives on March 18 1965. It was particularly concerned with politically 'subversive' activity in the trade union movement. A number of trade union leaders co-operated with the Inquiry, including Anthony Geoffroy and Rampatap Singh (ATSEFWTU), Daniel Reid (SWWTU), W.W. Sutton (AWU) and James Manswell (CSA). However, the most sensational (some would say sensationalised) evidence was given by the former OWTU President General John Rojas, who repeated his allegations (first made in Senate in August 1962) that there was a plot by Marxist trade union leaders to lead a revolution in Trinidad and Tobago (Mbanefo 1965: 7). Rojas claimed that in 1962, at the twenty fifth anniversary celebrations of the OWTU, CLR James had confided in him that "(t)he country is ripe for revolution" (Mbanefo

1965: 9). James Manswell of the CSA denied Rojas' allegations and the Commission politely dismissed the former OWTU leader's evidence (Mbanefo 1965: 10). In fact, given that the government was using the radical trade union leaders as a scapegoat for the failure of its development strategy, the findings of the Commission were surprisingly balanced. Although Weekes was described as a communist (ibid.: 35), the Commission argued, contrary to Williams assertions, that "(t)he fact that the strikes (of 1962 and 1963) were spread over all the major unions negatives (sic.) the suggestion of subversion." (ibid.: 45)

Its specific contents were however less important than the general atmosphere in which the report was presented to the House of Representatives. Undemocratic practices in the sugar workers union continued, as the leadership failed to implement a pension plan in 1963 and agreed to a wage freeze without consulting its members. Sugar workers collected a petition calling for a Special Conference of Delegates in accordance with ATSEFWTU rules, but the leadership refused to concede. The ATSEFWTU membership decided that there was only one course of action open to them. On February 21, 1965, a strike was called by sugar workers at the Ste. Madeleine Factory. Industrial action quickly spread, and by March 8 the entire sugar industry had withdrawn its labour power, in a protest against the union as much as the company (Caroni Ltd.). The following day the OWTU leadership gave its support to the sugar workers. There were also strikes at the Lock Joint sewerage scheme, at Federation Chemicals, and

in addition the Civil Servants Association was threatening to institute a go-slow over wage demands. The government's response was a request to the Governor-General to introduce a State of Emergency in the sugar belt (as he was entitled to do under the Emergency Powers Ordinance 1947). Emergency regulations were introduced the following day which restricted freedom of movement and banned public meetings in the sugar belt area, thus effectively banning contact between the oilfields and sugar belts.

New legislation was presented to the House of Representatives on March 12, and after the presentation of the Mbanefo Commission's report on the 18, the Industrial Stabilisation Bill was rushed through Parliament and received the Governor general's assent on the 20. The debate on the bill in the Senate clearly showed that the trade union movement was being blamed for the economic difficulties in the country. For instance, Senator Walke stated that "(t)he trade unions have brought this on themselves. They have been given a long rope in which to operate, and have succeeded in hanging themselves." (Trinidad and Tobago 1966: 794) Government Senator and trade union leader Carl Tull spoke of a communist plot in the OWTU and called on the workers "to eradicate these evil forces." (ibid.: 852) In introducing the Bill in the Senate, the Attorney General stated what the new legislation had in mind: "the necessity to maintain a certain level of capital accumulation with a view to increasing the rate of economic growth; the necessity to maintain and expand the level of

employment was necessary; the necessity to prevent gains in the wages of workers not being adversely affected by unnecessary and unjustified price increases." (ibid: 788)

The third and final consideration did at least place some limitation on the power of capital, and some measures for the establishment of price controls were undertaken in the Act (Trinidad and Tobago 1965: 6), but this part of the Act was never implemented (and quietly dropped from the amendment in 1972). The first two considerations are of more interest because they show that the government blamed the 'irresponsible' trade unions for low capital investment. Williams himself believed that the problem was simply one of the impact of high wages "on the rate of of investment in the whole economy and on the competitive position of exports." (Williams 1965: 5) However, as my discussion in chapter one suggested, it was the development strategy itself, rather than the capacity of the trade union movement to win high wages, which was at fault.

The Industrial Stabilisation Act broke with the tradition of voluntarism under which the state had played a restricted role in the field of industrial relations (the Boards of Inquiry set up since 1948 were the notable exceptions) and basically outlined provisions which restricted the right to strike. Strikes and lockouts were forbidden in essential services - electricity, fire, health, hospital sanitation, water services and sanitation. An Industrial Court was also established which functioned "to hear and determine trade disputes...(and) to register industrial agreements and to

hear and determine matters relating to the registration of such disputes.." (Trinidad and Tobago 1965: 6) Any party to a dispute could report its existence to the Minister of Labour, who then had to certify that such a report had been made, and take steps to settle the dispute. If the Minister was unable to settle the dispute within twenty one days, the matter had to be referred to the Industrial Court for settlement. A strike could only take place on the condition that the Minister had been given fourteen days notice, and strikes (or lockouts) were prohibited if a dispute was before the Industrial Court or the Court of Appeal (Thomas 1984: 55-7). The official justification for these limitations on the right to strike was that the interests of 'the people', or the 'general community', had to be protected (Trinidad and Tobago 1965: 10). So once again Williams appealed 'over the heads' of trade union leaders (particularly those that did not support the government) and used the inconvenience caused by strikes as the basis for an appeal to the 'people'.

On the day that the Industrial Stabilisation Bill passed through the House of Representatives, a number of organisations, including trade unions, expressed their support for the Bill by demonstrating outside the House. Most prominent among these were the Communication Workers Union and the Amalgamated Workers Union. Their leaders (Carl Tull and W.W. Sutton respectively) forcefully denounced the TUC and successfully encouraged some unions to join their rival federation. Divisions also opened up in the TUC and

Weekes resigned from his position as President General later in 1965 (Weekes 1965 reprint).

The basic purpose of the ISA was "to depoliticize organised labour." (Parris 1976: 5) Williams himself argued that trade union leadership "is not going to be able to utilise legitimate trade union activities, or to subvert them, for purely political ends." (Williams 1965: 6) He later described the ISA as "(m)y outstanding responsibility in Parliament in the second five year period" and explained that it was necessary because "(t)he subversive elements in the society...were at work; the background was an open attempt to link the trade unions in oil and sugar."

(Williams 1969: 311) The ISA was introduced because the trade union movement had played a political role in the movement for independence, and precisely because the government, former allies of nearly all the trade unions, feared that this process may, at least in some cases, become uncontrollable. Williams had appealed to black labour before independence on the basis of their support for independence and as the major social group that represented 'the national interest'. After independence, the PNM government became concerned that sections of this group were a threat to the national interest, as embodied in the PNM's strategy of industrialisation by invitation. Williams continued to appeal to black labour on a populist, non-class basis, arguing that the establishment of the Industrial Court was necessary to protect 'the general community' (the third party in disputes presented to the Court) from 'political

subversives' in the trade union movement. He therefore simply by-passed those unions which challenged the government's development strategy, and appealed 'over their heads' to the black masses (including many OWTU members).

These developments in turn altered the racial and class alliances that had occurred since 1956. Relations between the black and white petty bourgeoisies improved after the 1961 election, and by 1965 there were close consultations through employer bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Manufacturers Association. This reflected the fact that the PNM was not concerned with radically threatening their interests. The East Indian petty bourgeoisie also played an increasingly ambivalent role, as some co-operated with, or chose to tolerate the PNM, and the DLP ceased to play an active role in opposition (see chapter four).

Conclusion

The events discussed in this chapter can be divided into three periods. Firstly, from 1937 to 1956, several attempts were made to form a mass labour party out of the trade union movement. The failure of these endeavours can be attributed to the racial divisions among the labour force, and the diffuse nature of the class structure, which militated against the formation of a unified class-based organisation. Added to this were the problems of trade union rivalry, conflicts of personalities, and official attempts to depoliticise trade unions. The second period, from 1956 to

1962, can be characterised as one in which a black middle class movement, eschewing direct links with trade unions, led the country to independence. In the third period, after 1962, the PNM became hostile to some trade unions and this led to anti-union legislation in 1965.

The absence of a trade union-based party does not confirm the Berg-Butler thesis that labour was largely irrelevant in anti-colonial movements. The PNM was successful in capturing the support of the black working class on the basis of non-class politics, but trade unions were vocal in supporting the party in the 1961 election. Moreover, after independence trade unions continued to play a political role and this was a major determining factor in the government's decision to pass the Industrial Stabilisation Act.

By 1965-6, non-black petty bourgeois opposition was largely vocal (the DLP still won its 'safe twelve' seats in the 1966 elections, but it ceased to provide an effective Parliamentary Opposition), as it became increasingly clear that their interests were largely compatible with PNM policy. The only other significant challenge to the PNM, represented by the 'political subversives', had been contained by the ISA and the split in the trade union movement.

The most immediate labour dilemma for the PNM concerned the administrative difficulties that were now faced in regulating industrial relations. The creation of the

Industrial Court failed to resolve (on its own terms) the problem of unstable industrial relations, as it quickly became clear that the court was ill-equipped to deal with the large number of disputes presented to it (Okpaluba 1975: 70-1).

The absence of political opposition to the PNM was also short-lived, as I discuss in chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR

Race, Class and the 'Informal Sector': The Black Power Revolt of 1970

Introduction.

The increase in capitalist industrialisation after 1950 intensified, rather than alleviated, uneven development, and so the size of the urban unemployed and 'informal' sectors dramatically increased. These processes formed the economic and social framework for a new opposition to the Peoples' National Movement, centred in the urban, predominantly black areas, where unemployment and underemployment was high. Inspired by the Black Power struggles in the USA, new political organisations were established that challenged the direction taken by the PNM government since independence. These new organisations won widespread support for their ideas among the ranks of the dispossessed, and the new opposition took its grievances on to the streets, culminating in the uprising of February to April 1970.

On February 26, students from the University of West Indies, St. Augustine, led a march in Port of Spain to protest against the trial of West Indian students in Canada who had occupied the Sir George Williams University computer centre. After the march, the students staged a sit-in at a Roman Catholic Cathedral and later protested outside the local bastion of privilege, the Chamber of Commerce. The following

day, nine of the protesters were arrested and various charges were made against them. This led to an escalation of unrest as students, some workers, and the unemployed sustained a fairly spontaneous protest against economic policies and social conditions. A series of mass demonstrations were held throughout March, culminating in the 'Long March' to Caroni, which was an attempt by radical black youths (through the most important organisation of the period, the National Joint Action Committee) to win the support of East Indian sugar workers and transcend traditional 'racial' boundaries. The PNM government appeared to regain the initiative but on April 6, the police shot a young NJAC supporter, Basil Davis, which provided the stimulus for further activity. From April 6-21 there were further marches, ministerial resignations, rumours of unrest in the armed forces, and an increase in organised labour movement involvement. Widespread strikes and marches were planned for April 21, but they never took place as the government declared a State of Emergency, which restricted freedom of movement and led to the arrest of the leading figures in the revolt. While there was spasmodic opposition to Williams' decision, the most serious challenge to his authority came from a section of the army which initially regarded the seizure of state power as its ultimate goal. However, the mutineers eventually decided to negotiate with the government, by whom they were out-manoeuvred and the mutiny came to an end on May 1.

In this chapter, I look at the causes of the 'February Revolution', and the role played by different fractions of the working classes (and their organisations) in it. The chapter is divided into four sections, the first of which examines the social effects of the economic strategy employed by the PNM government, and the rise of the new opposition that arose out of this. Section two examines in more detail the movements and ideas behind the events of 1970, and assesses the degree to which they provided the basis for a long term political alliance of the working classes. In section three I briefly examine the mutiny in the army and finally, section four examines the unrest that persisted until the dramatic change in the government's economic fortunes in 1973.

Section One: The Economic and Social Background to the 'February Revolution'.

(a) Government Economic Strategy and its Social Consequences.

It became clear by 1969 that the 'Lewis model' of economic development, discussed in chapters one and three, had not succeeded. The average annual growth rate from 1955-68 was high (eight per cent), but the major objective of 'balanced growth' had not taken place. Three weaknesses were particularly manifest by the late 1960s: firstly, tax incentives offered to attract foreign capital meant that the

state lacked the resources needed for sustaining a programme of economic expansion; secondly, manufacturing had failed to provide the substantial increase in employment that was expected; thirdly, the industrialisation strategy had led to a neglect of agriculture. (Sandoval 1983: 252-5). The capital intensive nature of investment was such that in 1967 it would have required more than three times the (second) Five Year Plan development budget to provide employment in pioneer manufacturing industries for the unemployed (Carrington 1971: 145). According to official figures released in 1968, the 74 pioneer industries (those industries granted tax holidays, depreciation allowances and duty free imports) and 180 additional enterprises granted concessions (such as free import of raw materials and equipment) provided employment for only 7 959 people (Cited Ryan 1974: 385).

More generally, the strategy was also typical of the weaknesses of import-substitution-industrialisation programmes. The internal market for domestically produced goods was too small to generate sustained economic growth, and the strategy was heavily dependent on importing foreign capital goods, which led to balance of payments difficulties (R. Ramsaran 1989: 115-17). On the other hand, those industries that attempted to cater for the international market (such as the fertiliser industry) were effective enclaves under the control of foreign capital, and which lacked internal linkages (Sandoval 1983: 255-6).

The strategy also failed to create the strong, indigenous capitalist class that Lewis and the PNM had hoped for: in 1970, there was TT \$2 billion in foreign investment in Trinidad and Tobago, including over TT \$500 million in oil; the seven major commercial banks were all foreign; almost half the land was owned by foreign capital; and perhaps most importantly (from the point of view of the PNM's economic strategy), 80 per cent of manufacturing investment was by foreign capital (Kambon 1988: 207). Williams himself recognised the inadequacy of the programme and proposed a new 'third way' between the Castroite and Puerto Rican models (Williams 1970: 111-2), which formed the substance of the third Five Year Plan in 1969. A draft of this plan expressed concern about the economic state of the nation and in particular criticised local business persons for their failure "to seize the numerous investment opportunities in agriculture, industry, fishing, tourism, and housing" (Qu. Sebastien 1985: 116).

So, to reiterate my discussion in chapter one, the basic problem of the PNM's economic strategy was that it was premised on the belief that there were 'equalising tendencies' within capitalism. If the government provided the right incentives, so it was believed, capital would be attracted to Trinidad and Tobago. When it became clear that this strategy was not working, the government blamed 'political' trade unions for discouraging capital investment through their 'excessive' wage gains and anti-capitalist politics (which conveniently left aside the fact that most

foreign capital investment was concentrated in the sector - oil - where these 'problems' were most acute), and passed the Industrial Stabilisation Act. But despite this piece of legislation, foreign capital investment (outside of the oil sector) continued to be largely insignificant, and often (due to their high import content or failure to provide linkages to the rest of the economy) not particularly beneficial.

Nevertheless, the government's economic strategy had a major impact on the development of the working classes. From the 1940s to the 1960s there was a high rate of growth in, and important changes in the social structure of, the population. Between the two censuses of 1946 and 1960, there were "startling increases in the population of a few parts of the country...as people continued to move from the rural areas to rapidly growing urban centres at ever increasing rates." (Simpson 1973: 11) In 1946, the proportion of the population that lived in urban areas was 23.25 per cent; by 1960 this had increased to 36.39 per cent (ibid.: 15). The proportion of the population involved in agriculture or agriculture-related activities declined from 27.5 per cent in 1946 to 21.1 per cent in 1960 (Harewood 1960: 77). This process continued in the 1960s: the proportion of the population that lived in urban areas in 1960 was 40 per cent; by 1970, this had increased to 53 per cent (Cross 1979: 75). The major reason for migration was the perception that urban areas could offer the advantages of employment and affluence, which were not readily available in the

poorer rural areas. The emphasis placed by the government on industrialisation meant that it was at the expense, and therefore further impoverishment, of the rural sector, which served to reinforce the growth of urban areas.

The problem with these developments was of course that industrialisation failed to 'deliver the goods'. The proportion of the population involved in mining and manufacturing showed little change between the 1946 and 1960 censuses. In 1946, the figures were 3.2 per cent for mining and 19.1 per cent for manufacturing; by 1960, the proportions were five per cent and 17.5 per cent respectively (Harewood 1960: 77). In the period up to 1970, the proportion may have actually declined to 21 per cent of the total (Craig 1982c: 401). There was also high unemployment, especially among the young. While the official rate of unemployment stood at 14 per cent at the time of the crisis, among the 20-24 year age group the figure was 20 per cent, and the rate for school leavers (in the 15-19 year age group) it was as much as 30 per cent (Sutton 1983: 119; Muschkin 1980: 50-1; Trinidad and Tobago 1975: 56). Moreover, the official rate does not tell the whole story as a significant part of the labour force was only seasonally employed. For example, the Census of 1960 showed that 71 per cent of the population were regularly employed, but the official rate of unemployment at the time was recorded at around 14 per cent, which left another 14.5 per cent as underemployed (Harewood 1960: 71). According to one scholarly publication, by 1967 seventy thousand people (that

is, one in every five employed person) worked for less than 32 hours a week, and of these, 26 000 (seven per cent) worked for less than 16 hours a week (Tapia 28.9.1969). Given the level of poverty, it is fair to assume that most of these people were genuinely underemployed rather than part-time workers by choice.

The devaluation of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar in 1968 paved the way for further retrenchment, including the loss of 8 000 jobs in the public sector. This came at a time when the PNM's expansion in education (introduced in 1961) began to take effect. Secondary school courses lasted for six years, but the recession in the late 1960s meant that a significant number of well educated people could not find employment. This process further discredited the government in the eyes of young people.

The PNM's industrialisation strategy also largely failed to redistribute income among the population. The actual distribution of income was quite equitable by Third World standards: one study found that the upper 10 per cent of income earners shared 33 per cent of national income, compared to 43 per cent in Jamaica (1958), 30 per cent in the United States (1950), and 46 per cent in Mexico (1957) (Ahiram 1966: 105-08). It was generally felt, however, that income differentials remained too wide. According to the 1970 Census, the median income of professional and technical workers was TT \$304 per month, compared to TT \$158 for construction workers and TT \$85 for service workers. The

average monthly wage for women in the latter group was only TT \$45 a month (Trinidad and Tobago 1973: 2-3). Income was also unevenly distributed among the different ethnic groups, as I show below.

The continuation of unequal income distribution was accompanied by another characteristic of the colonial era - racial discrimination. In an important article published in 1971, Acton Camejo examined the racial composition of executive and managerial staff in (private) firms employing more than a hundred people. He found that whites constituted 53 per cent of this 'business elite', 'off whites' 15 per cent, mixed 15 per cent, Chinese nine per cent, Indians nine per cent and Africans four per cent (Camejo 1971: 300). He also found that of the 71 directors that inherited their position, 41 per cent were white, 25 per cent off white, 14 per cent Indian, and seven per cent mixed (ibid.: 301). No director of African origin inherited his or her position. These figures suggest, but do not demonstrate, the existence of racial discrimination by private enterprise: for instance they do not tell us anything about the educational qualifications of the elite. Most revealing then, are Camejo's findings concerning those with low educational qualifications who were appointed to top and middle positions in the business elite: of these, 71 per cent were white, 24 per cent off white, and five per cent were mixed. No one of African or Indian origin had this easy access to managerial and executive positions (ibid.: 302-4). At this time, there were also frequent accusations that white, often

foreign, managers discriminated against and abused black workers. This was the case at transnational companies like Dunlop and Badger (Turner 1972: 125).

The distribution of income also 'cut across' racial, as well as class, boundaries. According to the 1960 Census, the median monthly income for white male employees was over TT \$500, compared with TT \$104 for those of African origin, and almost TT \$77 for Indians. Income distribution was also affected by a third factor - gender. The median monthly income for white women in the same period was TT \$176, compared with TT \$42 for Indian women and TT \$38 for African women (Harewood 1971: 278). This inequality obviously reflects differences in skill and education, but Camejo's statistics suggest that these alone can only explain part of the income differentials, due to unequal access to better paid jobs. Moreover, differences in educational and skills levels suggest unequal access to these facilities among different racial, class and gender groups.

So, industrial development led to major changes in the economy, but it failed to create a stable, 'modern' economy with full employment and a relatively equal distribution of income. The old planter and merchant classes had been weakened by the rise of manufacturing and mining capitalists, generally of foreign origin, and a black, middle class, political elite. The problem, however, was that unequal income distribution, racial discrimination, and urban deprivation continued, the latter on an unprecedented

scale. Nevertheless, some sections of the organised working class had managed to win a fairly privileged position for themselves. This was particularly true of the workers in the oilfields, who enjoyed far higher wages than other labourers.

(b). The Resurgence of Opposition to the Government and the Rise of 'Unconventional Politics'.

The radical, 'subversive' elements in the trade unions had been defeated by the introduction of the Industrial Stabilisation Act, and effectively by George Weekes' resignation from the Presidency of the TUC in 1965. This defeat was reinforced by the dismal performance of the newly formed Workers and Farmers Party (WFP) in the 1966 election, in which all the candidates lost their deposit. The WFP was formed by radicals in response to the passing of the Industrial Stabilisation Act. Its leaders included CLR James, Weekes, Lennox Pierre and Stephen Maharaj, the latter of whom was formerly a leading parliamentary figure in the DLP. Its primary aim was to break the racial bases of the two major parties and create a "political organisation based on politics not on race." (Daily Mirror 11.8.1965) Apart from this appeal to African and Indian class unity, the WFP had a rather vague political programme which did not differ significantly from the PNM or the DLP. In its election manifesto, the WFP called for limits to ownership of the sugar estates and, more ambiguously, 'planning', 'control of

public finance' and promotion of 'local industry, commerce, labour' (Workers and Farmers Party 1966: 2). In the election campaign, both the major parties used the idea of a 'hidden agenda' and 'communist bogey' to discredit the WFP. The Minister of Home Affairs, Gerald Montano, claimed that all that the WFP "can offer is dictatorship." (Daily Mirror 27.7.1966) Even more importantly, the PNM and the DLP once again successfully appealed to race for their respective constituencies. The WFP ultimately failed because it simply appealed to class unity and ignored the 'social reality' of race. As Kamron argues, "(t)he tools of analysis put the racial realities out of focus instead of creatively seeking to come to terms with their implications." (Kamron 1988: 162) After the 1966 election, the WFP quickly disintegrated as Maharaj became ill, James left Trinidad, and the other leaders appeared to lose interest.

Meanwhile, challenges from the official Opposition became equally mute, as the Democratic Labour Party was left in disarray over attitudes to the ISA and Maharaj's defection to the WFP. Its leader, Rudranath Capildeo, pushed the DLP in an ill-defined social democratic direction, while others maintained a strictly 'centre-ist' (Vernon Jamadar) or even right wing (Ashford Sinanan) path. The party still won 34 per cent of the popular vote in the 1966 election, and so continued to be the official Opposition, but ideological divisions, reinforced by a new crisis over who was to lead the party, weakened its effectiveness.

Williams had not, however, defeated all political opposition in the country. As I explained in section one, his political victory over the radicals in the trade unions, (which itself was short lived - see below) was tempered by the fact that government economic strategy failed to 'incorporate' large elements of the population in the way that he had in the case of the black working class.

This was obviously the case with the unemployed and underemployed, but it was also true of a radical intelligentsia based at the University of the West Indies. New organisations and newspapers were formed, such as Moko, which was started in 1968, and two years later became the official organ of James Millette's United National Independence Party (UNIP) and Tapia, the paper of Lloyd Best's Tapia House Organisation. These newspapers were run by university lecturers, but the ideas contained in them reflected a wider disillusionment with the outcome of independence at home, and, related to this, a challenge to North American imperialism in the Third World. In 1968 Millette debated with local business person Tommy Gatcliffe in the Trinidad Express on the nature of the transnational corporation and its effects in Trinidad and Tobago. This affair heightened public consciousness of the issues in a way not too dissimilar, at least in the short term, to the Williams-Matthews debate 13 years earlier.

The challenge to the power of the United States of America did not only come from Vietnam and other regions of the

Third World, but also from within its own borders. The Black Power movement was a particularly potent symbol, and it served as an inspiration to the 'underclasses' and their sympathisers (particularly students) in the West Indies. The first major rallying point for Black Power sympathisers occurred in October 1968, when the radical activist and scholar Walter Rodney was expelled from the Mona campus of the University of West Indies in Jamaica. There was a major student and lecturer demonstration in support of Rodney, which, largely through the police's heavy handed tactics, became violent and led to fatalities (Moko 28.10.1968).

A second major protest took place in Trinidad on February 26 1969, this time over the visit of the Canadian Governor General, two weeks after the arrest of eleven Trinidadian students at Sir George Williams University in Canada. On the evening of the demonstration, the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) was formed by two young radicals from the St. Augustine campus, Dave Darbeau and Geddes Granger (now known respectively as Khafra Kamboon and Makandal Daaga).

NJAC was particularly important in the events of 1970 because, unlike UNIP and Tapia, it won support for its views outside of the narrow confines of the university. Its views 'struck a chord' with discontented urban youth, who were too young to be impressed by Williams' populist leadership. Most of them could not remember when the PNM had led the country to independence, and those who could remember were disappointed by the outcome. Populist nationalist appeals

were meaningless to those that faced unemployment and urban slums.

NJAC described the PNM government as 'phoney nationalists', arguing that colonialism had been replaced by neo-colonialism, based on an alliance between the 'Afro-Saxon' PNM government, international banking and transnational companies. In other words, the government was accused of failing to challenge the power of the white national and international capitalist class. Westminster style politics were also criticised for leading to racial divisions and corrupt, ineffective government and opposition. The precise relationship between race and class was unclear, as I argue below, but NJAC placed heavy emphasis on a new black identity, which they called Black Pride. Black Power in the Trinidadian context therefore came to mean ownership and control of the economy by the black 'majority' (the relationship with East Indians is discussed below).

Meanwhile, radicals in the trade union movement had begun to recover some of their momentum. Trade disputes continued, albeit largely within the confines of the Industrial Court. In the oil industry, there were important disputes with Shell and BP in 1967 concerning plans to lay off workers. There was a three per cent decline in the number employed in the oil industry between 1965 and 1969, and automation in the sugar industry also led to retrenchment (Turner 1972: 111). Weekes led a 'March of Resistance' of around 10 000 workers in June 1968, protesting against retrenchment in the

industry. The government agreed to nationalisation of part of the industry, through a National Oil Company, in 1968, but they were slow in carrying out their promises. There were however some challenges to the ISA, most notably when 45 members of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union were charged with violating its regulations when they went on strike at Sissons Paints in September 1967. The union was fined TT \$3 000, but this did not stop its leader, Joe Young, from calling bigger strikes in public transport in June 1968 and May 1969. The second of these, despite its failure to save bus workers' jobs, was significant because different sectors of the working classes gave active support to the strike by bus workers, including members of NJAC.

(c). Conclusion.

The long term causes of the 'February Revolution' lie in the fact that the Williams government was unable to maintain its social base among the black labouring classes. The Industrial Stabilisation Act tried to depoliticise sections of the trade union movement who did not support the PNM, and who had challenged the disunity between the Indian and African labourer. This operation was a short term success, but a new challenge was presented to the government from an increasingly 'marginalised', young urban black population. This challenge was reinforced by the radicalisation of university students and lecturers who were strongly influenced by international events and increasingly

alienated from the PNM and DLP. These changes gave renewed confidence to the radicals in the trade unions, some of whom led strikes which contravened the regulations of the ISA. The government's development strategy after 1956 laid the framework for the forging of new alliances. The chief critics of the PNM in 1956 were local and foreign capital, the press and the Roman Catholic hierarchy; by 1970, they were its main supporters. The main supporters of the PNM in 1956 were black workers, progressive intellectuals and the unemployed; by 1970, progressive intellectuals and the urban unemployed, together with sections of the black proletariat, were its chief critics (Craig 1982c: 412).

Section Two: Black Power, Race and Class and the 'Alliance' of the Labouring Classes in 1970.

One of the most important problems related to the study of social classes in underdeveloped societies concerns the prospects of an alliance between the (rural, as well as urban) working class, the urban marginals and the rural peasantry, and how the most progressive sections of these classes hope to achieve this unity. In this section, I highlight some of the difficulties of achieving such an alliance, which are compounded in the Trinidad case by the questions of race and ethnicity.

(a) Black Power Ideology, its Trinidad and Tobago Context and NJAC Leadership.

Although, the 1970 revolt won sympathy and/or active support from the progressive intelligentsia and sections of the working class, the leading social forces of the 1970 revolt were the urban marginals and radical students. These forces rallied behind the cry of Black Power. As I have already stated, this was a phenomenon which had its origins in the United States, and this led to a number of difficulties for the movement in Trinidad and Tobago.

The basic problem was that the context in which Black Power operated in the United States was bound to be different from the Caribbean. In the former, Black Power was a reaction by an oppressed black minority to urban squalor; in the West Indies, blacks were usually the majority of the population, or at least the largest ethnic group (as they were in Trinidad at the time). Moreover, the government was largely composed of black members. NJAC attempted to deal with this problem by arguing that the political system was weak compared to the economic system, which was largely owned and controlled by whites.

While this argument was useful in that it identified the oppressor, it did not deal with the problem of an alliance of the oppressed. The difficulty with the slogan Black Power was not so much its applicability to the West Indies, as its inherent ambiguity. Indeed, this was (and still is) just as

big a problem in the ethnically differentiated United States, as anywhere else. In Trinidad, the term Black Power was ambiguous because, like the United States, it was an ethnically heterogeneous society, and most importantly had a very large Indian population. In 1970, almost 43 per cent of the population were of African origin, compared to figures of 40 per cent Indian and 14 per cent 'mixed' (Trinidad and Tobago 1975: 6).

The slogan Black Power could therefore mean two different things. On the one hand, it could represent a movement of a particular section of society, organised along racial, but not class lines. Or it could mean 'all' the oppressed (although feminism had little impact at this time, and so, in practice the term oppressed often excluded women) of the Third World. In other words, this position would combine a race and class analysis. After the death of Malcolm X in 1965, Stokely Carmichael (now known as Kwame Toure) emerged as the leading Black Power activist in the United States. In the last months of his life, Malcolm X appeared to be moving his political position from one of Black nationalism and separatism, to one of black nationalism combined with a class analysis of the United States. Thus, he began to move away from the first position to an approximation of the second. Carmichael however, continued to advocate a highly ambiguous position. In The Running Man, he stated that "we got brothers in Africa, we got brothers in Cuba, we got brothers all over the world." (Cited in Nicholls 1971: 444) This may imply that a class analysis (albeit a crude one),

that moved beyond skin colour was necessary, but it could also mean that the oppressed in the Third World constituted a homogenous mass in which internal conflicts did not occur. Carmichael appeared to accept this latter position during a visit to Guyana at the height of the rebellion in Trinidad, when he expressed admiration for the fact that the states in both Trinidad and Guyana were run by blacks and so argued that "the black man held position"; in other words, 'Black Power' already existed (Evening News 9.4.1970). Furthermore, he said nothing about state repression, which was often directed against black people, and appeared disinterested in the population of Indian origin. However, in a speech to a crowd at Brooklyn, New York, less than one month later, Carmichael referred to the "heroic uprising" in Trinidad and Tobago (Evening News 4.5.1970). As well as these ambiguities, Carmichael at times betrayed a particularly distasteful attitude towards the role of women in the Black Power movement. In 1964 he is alleged to have said that "the only position for women in SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee - R.K.) is prone." (Cited in Solomon 1989: 84) Such a view which was apparently shared (according to its Public Relations Officer, Clive Nunez) by at least some NJAC sympathisers (Express 11.3.1970).

The inconsistencies of Black Power ideology were not just a product of its leaders in the United States. The far more articulate and capable Walter Rodney was the leading exponent of Black Power in the West Indies, but he too had inadvertently demonstrated the vagueness of the term Black

Power. In 1969 he wrote that Black Power in the West Indies meant three things: "(i) the break with imperialism which is historically white racist; (ii) the assumption of power by the black masses in the islands; (iii) the cultural reconstruction of the society in the image of the blacks." (Rodney 1969: 28) Rodney recognised that the term Black Power was complicated by the variety of racial types and the processes of class formation in the West Indies (although this conclusion could equally be applied to the United States), but stated that "(n)evertheless, we can talk of the mass of the West Indian population as being black - either African or Indian." (ibid.: 28) However, he later refers to blacks almost exclusively in terms of African identity, and states that "(i)f we, the blacks of the West Indies, accept ourselves as African, we can make a contribution to the development of African culture, helping to free it from European imperialism." (ibid.: 52-3, 37) Rodney also referred to the United States' "neo-colonialist puppets in the West Indies." (Ibid.: 52)

It should be clear then, that there were a number of problems with the ideology of Black Power. Nevertheless, given proper clarification it could have provided a useful rallying point for an alliance of the East Indian and black working classes in Trinidad. Indeed, I show below that there was the beginning of some unity among sections (from both major 'racial' groups) of the organised working class, and that politics was as big a factor as race in explaining the defeat of the movement. Nevertheless, it remains the case

that in Trinidad a large majority of support for the movement came from the black population. Attempts were made to forge 'African-Indian unity', most notably through the 'Long March' to Caroni on March 12, but, despite Geddes Granger's best efforts, this met with limited success. One observer present in Trinidad at the time has estimated that less than one per cent of those attending the marches between February and April were of Indian origin (Nicholls 1971: 447). Indian petty bourgeois groups were hostile to the movement and many Indian workers and peasants were ambivalent, regarding the Black Power versus government confrontation as "an affair which concerned Negroes." (Nicholls 1971: 455)

The problem with Black Power in Trinidad and Tobago was not the alleged inapplicability of a US ideology to the Caribbean, but the way that the leading organisation in Trinidad (NJAC) reproduced the ambiguities of the general term Black Power - that is, the problem was not Black Power per se so much as NJAC's particular interpretation of it. Many of NJAC's critics argue that the organisation borrowed too many ideas from the United States and falsely applied these to an inappropriate setting (La Guerre 1972: 9). My argument is that Black Power was as appropriate to Trinidad as it was to the United States, but I would question how this was articulated in both countries. The ideology of Black Power was unclear and even incoherent, but these problems, given the right leadership, were not insurmountable. The basic problem with NJAC was that it did

not attempt to overcome these ambiguities and indeed probably exacerbated them. On the question of racial unity, Granger argued that "Black Power has not turned against the Indian community...If you are not white you are black. Black Power is not confined to those of the African race. The Indian is the brother of the Negro." (Express 7.3.1970) Similarly, in one of its most important political tracts, NJAC stated that "African-Indian unity must be the basis for a new society." (National Joint Action Committee 1971a: 34) However, in practice NJAC largely confined itself to propagating African history and culture, and at least some of its supporters (but not, it should be emphasised, the leadership) were openly hostile to the Indian population.

This problem of ambiguity extended beyond the question of racial alliances. While the populace had a reasonable idea what NJAC was against (although even this was open to question), it was not clear what NJAC was for. Moreover, this was a situation that the essentially populist NJAC openly encouraged: for example, in its April 1970 pamphlet 'Why Black Power', its leaders wrote that "(o)ur demands are simple; we want our freedom, we want our manhood, and we want it now...what we are involved in is a Revolution. A Revolution knows no manifesto." (Cited Riviere 1972: 25) Aldwyn Primus led the Black Panther movement, a small and largely insignificant rival of NJAC. In an otherwise bitter and sectarian attack on both NJAC and the Tapia House Movement, he alluded to this fundamental weakness of NJAC: "The marches organised...represent a politcal confrontation

with the government - the aim of which is forcing Williams and his gang to pack up and go...Nothing is wrong with that...but if that is the intention of the National Joint Action Committee and Lloyd Best, then for God's sake, Let The People Know." (Express 9.4.1970)

It is not surprising that the question of state power was not posed by NJAC because its leaders did not have a consistent political analysis of the PNM government. They tended to regard the government either as agents or as puppets of imperialism, which led to two conflicting political positions. If the PNM was a mere puppet, rather than a conscious agent, then there was some hope that they could change their policies for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and so the question of state power need not be posed. However, if the PNM consciously supported imperialism, the slogan of Black Power loses some of its potency, because the PNM leadership was predominantly black in composition. NJAC described the government as 'Afro-Saxon' because of its support for 'neo-colonialism', but this implies the need for a deeper class analysis than NJAC allowed for. It was ironically the reformist Tapia House Movement that showed the contradictions of NJAC's conception of Black Power in Trinidad, arguing that activists "ought not to be thinking that 'black power' has to do with the colour of one's skin. If Castro is the blackest man in the Caribbean, the whitest, in these terms, are medieval figures such as Bradshaw of St. Kitts or Bird of Antigua - or Marie Antoinette Gairy of Grenada, the noted libertine who has now

prescribed floggings for obscene language and obscene behaviour." (Tapia Special Issue on the Current National Crisis 1970: 2) Race was a major issue, as I showed in the first section, but it was not the only issue.

To summarise: NJAC's leadership of the Black Power mobilisations was weak because it failed to clearly articulate the links between race and class and, following on from this, it failed to challenge the power of the state, as embodied in the PNM government. As Turner notes, "NJAC engaged in a celebration of the creativity of the masses and a condemnation of the regime rather than a conscious directing of popular resources toward the seizure of power and its transfer from one class to another." (Turner 1972: 232) NJAC's leadership of the Black Power movement is one of two major reasons why the so-called 'February Revolution' did not actually constitute a revolutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation. The other is discussed below.

(b) The Role of Organised Labour in the Events of 1970.

There were three central features of the 1970 rebellion. Firstly, it was a spontaneous revolt by 'marginalised' sections of the population, as I have attempted to show. Secondly, it was a period of marked industrial unrest, and thirdly, it was followed by a mutiny in the army.

It is the second of these features that I now want to discuss. However, before moving directly to an examination and assessment of organised labour's role in the rebellion, I want to first briefly reiterate why organised labour in general is so important a social force, even in situations where it is a small fraction of the size of the 'informal sector' or peasantry. While this is not the case in Trinidad, it is true that in terms of numbers the urban unemployed and underemployed was by far the most important force in the rebellion. However, even though the proletariat did not play a revolutionary role, in a sense its numerically small contribution was more important, because the government's decision to introduce a State of Emergency cannot be comprehended without understanding the strategic significance of organised labour.

The revolt of 1970 took place against a general background of unrest throughout North and South America at this time. The 'cult of the ghetto' existed in the United States, where the Black Panthers hoped to emerge as a major political force. Within the Third World, some writers believed that the traditional working class would not play the role assigned to it in traditional Marxist theory and that the new revolutionary force were the urban marginals. For instance, Frantz Fanon wrote that "(t)he lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe, and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and most radically revolutionary forces of a colonised people...It is within this mass of humanity, this people of

the shanty towns...that the revolution will find its urban spearhead." (Fanon 1967: 103)

The evidence for such an assertion has been questioned (see Cohen and Michael 1973: 33-5) and Fanon himself noted the necessity that they be "urged on from behind" by other agents of revolution (Fanon 1967: 103). While Marx undoubtedly over-emphasised the ease with which the organised working class would acquire revolutionary consciousness, there are still strong grounds for believing that their potential for radical political action is greater than that of the informal sector. The latter is too dispersed and disorganised to undertake political action without strong leadership from outside its ranks. NJAC was not an organisation which seriously challenged the PNM government. The organised working class is certainly not automatically revolutionary, but it is more likely to play a leading role in undertaking radical change. Moreover, its organisational strength makes it a much greater constant threat to any government and this was the basic reason why the government declared a state of emergency in 1970. Any examination of the 1970 events must therefore look at the role of organised labour.

The first important point to be made about the organised labour movement in 1970 is that it was a period when there was a marked increase in industrial unrest. There were 99 600 work days lost through strikes in 1970, a large increase on each of the previous five years since the ISA was passed

(Turner 1972: 175). Moreover, less grievances were being referred to the Industrial Court, which shows that more and more workers were willing to ignore the 1965 legislation. Given the wider Black Power context in which many of these strikes operated, it was likely that these 'purely industrial' disputes could have wider implications. The question of the extent of proletarian support for the Black Power movement is therefore vital to an understanding of the reasons for its failure.

At a leadership level, some trade unions had close contact with NJAC from the time of its formation. This was true of the Transport and Industrial Workers' and the Oilfield Workers' Trade Unions. However, at the start of the demonstrations in February there was little organised labour involvement. George Weekes quickly became associated with the Black Power movement, but there is no evidence to suggest that the OWTU membership followed his lead on any significant scale.

One trade union leader, Bhadase Maraj (the veteran of the ATSEFWTU - see chapter three) was openly hostile to Black Power ideology and publicly threatened NJAC leaders after they had announced their plan to march to Caroni. Bhadase Maraj was a popular cultural leader among the Indian community, and some writers have argued that his cultural hegemony over Hindus was a major factor in the lack of support that NJAC won from this section of the population (Gosine 1984: 27-8). While there is a lot of truth in this

assertion, its weakness lies in its underemphasis on the dynamics of how the situation developed in 1970. Such an approach assumes that Maraj's cultural hegemony was 'total' and all embracing, and therefore incapable of being challenged. However, at the trade union level, he had faced persistent opposition to his leadership, most seriously in 1965. His threats to NJAC should be seen in this light: his popularity among the Indian community notwithstanding, Maraj's authority as a trade union leader was continually under threat from a membership alienated by his undemocratic and corrupt practices. Indeed, significant links were established between sugar workers (who were mainly Indian) and NJAC, albeit tentative and short-lived ones. This point is examined in more detail below.

As the momentum of the Black Power marches developed in both Trinidad and Tobago, developments were taking place in the trade union movement. There were some changes firstly in the OWTU. The day before Basil Davis was killed (April 6) by the police in Woodford Square the OWTU General Council (rather than just Weekes) expressed its support for the Black Power struggle. More significantly, as it concerned the rank and file workforce rather than its politicised leadership, on April 8, OWTU members at the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission rejected management wage offers. At this point however, this development was entirely separate from the Black Power struggle.

These events were followed by the surprising decision of the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress to give its support to the Black Power movement. The Labour Congress had been established in 1966 by those conservative unions whose leaders had given support to the Industrial Stabilisation Act. On April 11 1970, its President, Clive Spencer, called for joint May Day celebrations between the Black Power movement and the Congress. He stated that in these planned marches the emphasis "shall be on the recognition and furtherance of Black Awareness. The Congress welcomes and invites all organisations and individuals to join with it in demonstrating on May 1 in the interest of overcoming oppression of the masses." (Express 11.4.1970) However, Spencer's statement also contained an implicit criticism of NJAC, one which was to become more significant once the State of Emergency was called. Echoing Williams own limited support for 'Black Power', Spencer argued that "Black Power can best be achieved by constructive planning, forceful persuasion and the transformation of ideas into activities which will create opportunities for the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Black Man." (ibid.) In the event, Clive Nunez of NJAC and the TIWU rejected Spencer's invitation on the grounds the Labour Congress still supported the ISA and that "Congress leaders are being used by the power structure - as they always have been -to attempt to infiltrate the Black Power movement." (ibid.)

What is more significant is the extent to which many workers in Labour Congress unions were implicitly challenging the

authority of their leaders by following the example of the 'progressive unions' and going on strike. In mid-March workers walked off their jobs at George Wimpey, at Trinidad Cement and at a hotel construction project at Mount Irvine, Tobago. By mid April, industrial unrest had spread to postal workers, construction workers at the Hilton Hotel, pumping station workers at the Water and Sewage Authority (WASA), and factory workers at Bottlers Ltd.. The stoppages at the Hilton, WASA and Bottlers were important because they each involved members of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers. This union was formed in the late 1960s by a merger of the National Union of Government Employees and the Federated Workers Trade Union and so it became the largest union in the country and the backbone of the Labour Congress. These stoppages therefore struck at the heart of the Congress leadership which continued to support the strict limitations on strike activity embodied in the ISA.. Strikes had also taken place since March at the docks, at Charles McEneaney, at Textile, at Batoo Brothers Ltd. and among non-academic staff at the university (Express 21.4.1970). The majority of these strikes were carried out independently of NJAC but, given their context, were not regarded as completely autonomous from the events in the capital and the ideas of Black Power.

While some industrial action began to show signs of ending, most notably the strikes at the Hilton and Bottlers, the momentum of others increased. Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Postmen's Union demonstrated in Port of Spain and

then moved on to the 'People's Parliament' where the Union Vice President Albert Charles told Black Power supporters of their grievances. By the 20, the union was threatening to turn its work to rule into a full scale strike. Although, there were moves to settle the dispute at WASA, around three hundred workers decided to continue their stoppage. At an OWTU rally on April 15, President General Weekes expressed the hope that "when we look forward for action from you the oilworkers, whenever it is necessary and when we give the call...you will come out." (Guardian 17.4.1970) Two days later the TIWU leadership called for a mass work stoppage on April 21, and for workers to join in a mass protest demonstration against the refusal of Public Transport Service Corporation officials to reinstate workers who had lost their jobs in the 1969 bus strike (see above for details). Members of this union also picketed the Industrial Court, calling for the repeal of the ISA.

Perhaps even more significant, at least from the point of view of unifying the two major racial groups, were the events in the sugar industry. On April 19 workers at the Brechin Castle sugar factory (owned by Caroni) stopped work in a protest against an Industrial Court decision which related to grievances dating back to January 1969. Although the Court awarded a wage increase, the workforce protested against the Court's rejection of union claims for pension and insurance plans, severance benefits, a guaranteed minimum wage and guaranteed employment throughout the year. ATSEFWTU leader Bhadase Maraj was called to the factory to

appeal to the workers to return to their jobs, but his pleas were in vain. The following day the stoppage spread and, according to Caroni's public relations manager, over two thousand sugar workers were on strike (Express 21.4.1970). The same day over a thousand strikers marched in Couva with NJAC leader Geddes Granger and OWTU Research Officer Winston Leonard. This march then linked up with other demonstrations at the 'People's Parliament' in Woodford Square. A delegation of workers at the Brechin Castle sugar factory also called on Weekes for help in their strike, and he promised to take up the matter at OWTU Executive level.

So, by April 21 the country was in a state of industrial and social unrest, and there was the renewed threat (from the point of view of the government) of unity between sugar workers and the oil worker leadership. The situation was far more ominous for the government than in 1965, however, because, as the Express stated at the time, "these strikes are not isolated from the unrest which has swept this country since the February 26 invasion of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception." (Express 21.4.1970) It was therefore perceived that there was a danger that the 'sectional' industrial unrest could be transformed into something far wider.

It was at this point that Williams decided that action had to be taken and a State of Emergency was declared on the night of April 20. A curfew was imposed for 12 hours a day and the police were given wide powers of arrest and the

right to restrict a person's freedom of movement. Rioting followed and shops and banks were damaged. The Black Power leaders, including those in the OWTU, were arrested and sent to the remote Nelson Island prison. The strike in the sugar industry came to an end and a settlement at WASA was impending.

The momentum of the rebellion therefore came to an abrupt halt. While I do not want to suggest that the mobilisation of organised labour was sufficiently politically conscious or widespread enough to carry out a social revolution (given the right leadership), the timing of the declaration of the State of Emergency is significant. Williams was certainly aware of the dangers of organised labour resistance and he justified the decision to introduce the State of Emergency by stating that "(i)t was only when the total breakdown of the trade union movement was imminent that I decided to act." (Express 4.5.1970)

This statement becomes of greater import when one examines correspondence (revealed a year later) between Williams and Labour Congress leader Clive Spencer. At the 1971 PNM Party Convention, Williams revealed that Spencer presented Williams with an ultimatum on April 20. According to Williams, Spencer's ultimatum was that "(i)f immediate action was not taken by the Government to bring the whole situation under control, then the Labour Congress...would bring the whole community to a standstill by calling out the workers in the Port, the Airport, external and internal

communications, the Civil Service and the daily paid workers...It was clear to the Ministers present and particularly the Prime Minister that the time had come for decisive action; it was no longer a problem of aimless marches and wild public statements; the whole labour movement was threatened." (Guardian 25.9.1971) An Emergency Cabinet session was called which gave the Prime Minister the power to declare a State of Emergency when he saw fit. Spencer denied that he had actually told Williams to declare a State of Emergency but he accepted that he complained to the Prime Minister failing to take any action. He also disclosed that "members of the National Joint Action Committee had been engaged in activities at the Water and Sewerage Authority..and...had caused the workers to go on strike" (Guardian 28.9.1971). It is clear from this statement that the leadership of the Congress, under challenge from sections of their membership, openly encouraged Williams to take 'decisive action'; and after the declaration of the State of Emergency, Spencer told Williams that the right course of action had been taken.

In the absence of action by the government, Spencer was effectively calling for a mass strike by his members against Black Power and the progressive unions. Whether he would have got the desired response from them can only be a matter of conjecture. 'Responsible' trade unionism and the 'racial' disunity of the working class was under challenge, but this was confined to a minority of the labour movement. Moreover, the strikes that had arisen in March and April were quickly

settled during the State of Emergency. The strikers' 'confrontation' with their leaders' philosophy of trade unionism was short-lived (but it did have beneficial long term effects, in that it paved the way for the emergence of younger leaders more willing to challenge sections of the bureaucratic leadership in the Labour Congress - see chapter six), and conflict with the government had hardly started. While sections of the proletariat had won higher wages and better working conditions, the momentum of these struggles had only just begun to be taken further, and it is unlikely that NJAC could have provided the coherent leadership necessary to continue this task. The political legitimacy of the PNM had been undermined, but it was far from broken, most crucially in the eyes of many workers in a politically divided labour movement. The movement was therefore likely to fail "as long as the trade union movement itself remained bitterly divided, with one faction largely supportive of government policy and the other, in its leadership, alienated from it." (Sutton 1983: 126) This is the second reason why the events of 1970 did not constitute a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation.

Section Three: Mutiny in the Army.

An army mutiny may not appear to be of direct significance to a study of the politics of labour, but the mutiny from April 21 to May 1 is relevant for two reasons. Firstly, because it placed the question of state power on the agenda,

the mutiny constituted the most serious political challenge to the government in 1970. Secondly, there were some informal links between the rebels in the army and individuals active in the organised labour movement. For these reasons, I now briefly examine the army mutiny.

The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force had been formed in 1962 out of the West India Regiment that had collapsed along with Federation. The Officer Corps had been carefully selected by the former British commanders, largely on the basis of political reliability rather than military skill. After independence, political patronage continued and, in the words of the leading mutineer in 1970, Raffique Shah, "the senior officers had no military background whatever (sic.). They were what one might term political appointees who were appointed to such positions because they were loyal to the ruling party." (Caribbean Dialogue 1976: 22)

The army was therefore left as an inefficient force whose sole purpose was to suppress internal dissent, rather than repel external aggression. However, opposition to patronage and inefficiency arose, most conspicuously among the junior officer corps. Links were established with some of the former members of the WFP, including CLR James (who had regularly lived in England, where many of the junior officers were trained) and activists involved in the production of the OWTU's newspaper, Vanguard. There were not however, any ties with NJAC (Shah 1990: 3).

Indeed, this newspaper appeared to know more about the problems of the military than the government. In an article published two weeks before the coup, an anonymous writer outlined the basic features of a 'crisis in the army': "Inefficiency, mental oppression, victimization and threats, deplorable conditions of work, racism and black rebellion.." (Vanguard 4.4.1970) The writer described how the invasion of neighbouring Anguilla by British marines trained in the Caribbean had increased discontent among junior officers and the lower ranks and how the Black Power uprising had inspired them.

When the State of Emergency was declared on April 21, the junior officers, led by Raffique Shah and Rex Lassalle, took control of the army. Shah later reasoned that "the one thing we could do was to prevent the government, which had obviously become unpopular at that point, from using the army against the people." (Caribbean Dialogue 1976: 23) Some of the mutineers wanted to go to Port of Spain to challenge the government and it was at this point that the question of state power was posed. This is why the mutiny was a more serious threat to the government than the NJAC-led revolt on the street. There were undoubtedly some who (rather adventurously) believed that the road to socialist revolution lay in an army coup backed by radical leaders in the trade unions.

In the event, the young, inexperienced mutineers decided to settle their differences with the government by negotiation.

The government's position was strengthened by the presence of US and Venezuelan battleships in Trinidad's territorial waters, and by the fact that two British frigates were placed on alert (Shah 1990: 5; Express 23.4.1970). The rebels were tricked into a negotiated settlement, and were then arrested and charged with treason. The government had therefore survived the most serious challenge to its authority.

Section Four: The Consequences of 1970 and Continued Unrest 1970-73.

The leaders of the Black Power rebellion were detained until November 1970, when the State of Emergency was lifted. (The leaders of the army mutiny were detained until they were tried for treason in 1971. Although they were found guilty, Shah and Lassalle were later freed on a technicality, and the former went on to play a very active role in labour politics in the 1970s - see chapter five for details.) Despite the government crackdown, and its defeat of NJAC, industrial unrest continued and around 70 000 workdays were lost through strike activity in 1971 (Turner 1972: 175).

The most serious of these strikes involved members of the OWTU. Strikes took place at Dunlop and Federation Chemicals over delays in wage negotiations, the dismissal of six workers for insubordination (at Fedchem.), and the employment of expatriates in senior positions (at Dunlop).

The strikes, which involved around 600 people, rapidly spread as nearly 4 000 oil workers came out in sympathy with their fellow workers (Guardian 2 and 3.7.1971). They were eventually settled but there was still a police raid (one had already taken place in 1970) at the OWTU headquarters. Documents were seized and four OWTU officials were detained (Vanguard 17.7.1971). This raid showed that the mutual distrust that had existed between the PNM and the OWTU leadership since independence had now developed into open hostility.

Two further developments led to the government calling a second State of Emergency in the space of 18 months. The first involved the OWTU and three transnational companies: Texaco, Badger Pan-American and Wimpey. Texaco contracted Badger to construct a desulphurisation plant at its Pointe-a-Pierre refinery, and over a thousand workers joined the OWTU. Wage agreements were made, but Wimpey, which was also carrying out construction work at the plant, refused to pay a similar wage rate. Wimpey workers went on strike, and Badger workers followed in sympathy. However, Badger then responded by pulling out of Trinidad altogether, which left its workers without a job.

The second factor involved relations between the leadership of the OWTU and the Labour Congress. Workers at the Water and Sewerage Authority (active during the 1970 rebellion), the Telephone Company and in particular the docks, wanted to join the OWTU. The Labour Congress accused the OWTU, and in

particular George Weekes, of poaching: according to one of its leaders, Nathaniel Critchlow, the consequences of Weekes' alleged action would be "the destruction of industrial peace in the country, the destruction of the investment climate, the creation of unemployment and discontent and the fomentation of political strife thereby making the country fertile ground for the propagation of an ideology of which he is a local protagonist." (Express 11.10.1971) Critchlow warned that if Weekes did not stop his 'poaching activity' the Labour Congress would respond by: calling for the expulsion of the OWTU from the ICFTU and the International Federation of Petroleum and Chemical Workers; requesting to all maritime organisations to cease handling goods consigned to companies which give recognition to the OWTU; instructing the SWWTU and the Caribbean Air Transport Trade Union to do the same to any goods entering the country which involved companies that recognised the OWTU; instructing unions in the communications and the postal services to do the same with goods produced, installed or repaired within the country (ibid.).

However, Critchlow's claim of poaching by Weekes was probably erroneous - Weekes was still in prison when the dock workers requested representation by the OWTU. The OWTU Executive argued that the reality was that some dock workers "have expressed dissatisfaction with the representation they got from the Seamen and Waterfont Workers' Trade Union and have individually applied to this union for membership. We have, of course, accepted them, as we believe that Trade

Unions are in duty bound to uphold the constitutional right of all workers to choose the union of their choice to represent them...No organisers have been sent...to solicit membership." (ibid.)

Nevertheless, the government used the events at Badger and the claims of the Labour Congress to justify the declaration of another State of Emergency, in October 1971. Under this particular state of emergency, there was no curfew but public meetings were restricted and 10 activists were detained. Those detained included George Weekes, OWTU legal adviser Jack Kelshall, Geddes Granger and the President of the Badger branch of the OWTU, Alain Campbell (Guardian 20.10.1971).

Despite the efforts of the Labour Congress to uphold it, the events of 1970-71 had effectively destroyed the authority of the Industrial Stabilisation Act. The government, having decided that new legislation was necessary, introduced the Industrial Relations Bill shortly after the State of Emergency was declared. This bill became law in 1972, but it was less a replacement to the ISA than an amendment. The key limitations to the right to strike and the functions of the Industrial Court were retained. The provisions for price controls, which had never been implemented, were withdrawn and a new clause (aimed directly at the OWTU) stated that a trade union was not permitted to represent more than one group of workers in what were considered as essential industries. Public utilities, port operations, public

transport, sugar and oil and related industries all came under this category.

Critchlow's statement (above), and the events which followed it, showed that the political differences between 'responsible unions' and 'radical unions' still existed and that the former still adhered to their pre-ISA position that capital investment would be attracted if government and unions employed the correct policies. The radicals decided that an alternative trade union federation was necessary and in 1971 the Council of Progressive Trade Unions was established. At this time the federation was not aligned to any of the international trade union federations (it later affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1980). Although the federation attracted several unions, the OWTU and TIWU were initially the only two of real significance.

Conclusion.

In terms of the numbers involved, the Black Power rebellion of 1970 was the most serious challenge to the 30 years (1956-86) of PNM government. In a sense however, it did not challenge the government at all because the urban poor and its NJAC leadership never posed the question of state power. The rebellion of the black poor therefore represented a challenge to the power base of the PNM, but it did not challenge the government's right to rule. It was only when the organised labour movement became a significant actor

that Williams declared a State of Emergency. Therefore, the 'danger' of an alliance between the organised working class (the proletariat), both Indian and African, and the urban poor, prompted Williams to act.

The question of unity among the working classes in 1970 is a difficult one to assess for two reasons. Firstly, the 'alliance', such as it was, had only just begun to be formed when the government acted. Secondly, and related to this first point, there was no organisation that was likely to confront the right of the PNM to continue to rule. A few tentative conclusions and observations can be made, however. While race and ethnicity continued to divide the working classes, and the ideology of Black Power may have reinforced this, there were developments (the links between NJAC, and African and Indian workers on strike) which suggest that unity on a scale similar to 1937 was not out of the question. Writers that 'explain' the failure of the rebellion in terms of a timeless cultural divide between Indian and African (the plural society model), describe divisions of the greatest significance, but they do not explain either how these are rooted in history, or, related to this point, the dynamics of the 1970 events (see in particular La Guerre 1972; Gosine 1984). Racial and ethnic divisions were (along with politics) the most important reasons for the failures of 1970, but these divisions were constantly changing and never static. The changes that took place just before the crackdown indicate that relations between sections of the two ethnic groups were developing in

a positive way. Secondly, notwithstanding the developments among sections of the rank and file within the Labour Congress, the proletariat itself remained divided by politics. Many workers remained loyal to the Labour Congress and to the PNM. This factor cannot be dismissed as 'false consciousness' on the part of the working class, but can instead be attributed to the fact that the PNM had led the country to independence and had governed in a period when substantial numbers of workers had won material gains. Those workers that were alienated from their 'responsible union leaders' and the PNM government were not necessarily in favour of their replacement by revolutionary means. And finally, the rank and file of the OWTU never followed the wishes of their leaders during 1970 and so never went on strike during the February-April period. So long as this remained the case the rebellion of 1970 was unlikely to develop into a revolution.

The period from 1970-73 was one of intense unrest. By 1973 it appeared that Williams had decided to resign, but the oil price rise (1973-4) led to a dramatic change in the country's economic fortunes, and the popularity of the government, and so he remained Prime Minister. The economic boom which followed also paved the way for a new period of labour history, and I turn my attention to this period in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Struggle for a Labour Party: The United Labour Front

In chapter three, I described how trade unions unsuccessfully attempted to form labour and/or socialist parties that would win political office and lead the country to independence. It was, instead, the People's National Movement that undertook this task. However, there remained a conflict of interest between the PNM development strategy and the interests of the progressive trade unions, which culminated in restrictive labour legislation in 1965. There were renewed attempts to forge a new mass politics based on class rather than race in 1966 (namely, the WFP), and to some extent in 1970 (see chapter four). These were defeated however and the PNM continued to govern the country and promote a capitalist development strategy.

After 1974, the country entered a period of rapid economic growth which gave to the labour movement a new feeling of confidence that its demands could be met. An informal alliance of progressive trade unions was formed in 1975, which acquired the name of the United Labour Front (ULF). After government suppression the decision was taken to convert the ULF from a union based interest group into a political party. Unlike its predecessors, the ULF had considerable initial electoral success and it won 10 seats at the 1976 general election and control of the majority of

local councils the following year. However, within 12 months of the general election, the ULF had split into two factions, and so the most serious attempt yet to form a popular labour and socialist-oriented party in Trinidad and Tobago fell into disarray.

In this chapter, I outline in four sections how the ULF emerged and rapidly disintegrated as a united political force. Section one briefly examines the basis for the emergence of the ULF by referring to the economic boom which gave the labour movement an unprecedented degree of confidence. Secondly, I describe how this newly found vigour led to the formation of the ULF and explain why it then transformed itself into a political party. In section three I examine the divisions in the ULF and assess the reasons for its failure. In this section, I take issue with a number of 'Marxist-Leninist' analyses of the ULF which regard its failure as an inevitable manifestation of trade union 'economism' and the lack of a political 'vanguard'. Instead, I argue that the real reasons for the split were partly organisational, but were above all based on crude factionalism, the 'politics of personality' and race. Finally, I examine the outcome and the aftermath of the split.

Section One: The Economic Boom

In 1973-4, the world price of oil sharply increased. The precise reasons for the increase are far more complex than the 'third world challenge' to western hegemony that is often alleged by both neo-classicists and 'third worldists'. In fact, although they may not have instigated them, western oil companies played a leading role in maintaining high prices through limiting production and allocating markets, and the Third World as a whole lost more than it gained (through the increase in the price for oil imports). For oil exporting Third World countries like Trinidad however, the oil price rise provided an opportunity to finance new development projects and overcome its subordinate position in the world market.

In Trinidad the oil windfall between 1974 and 1978 was proportionately higher than other oil exporting countries like Ecuador, Venezuela and Nigeria; in this period it constituted the equivalent of 39 per cent of non-mining gross domestic product (Auty and Gelb 1986: 1163). Government revenue from oil rose from US \$33 million in 1972 to US \$1.58 billion in 1980 (MacDonald 1986: 195). These changes laid the basis for a revised government economic strategy which aimed to create large scale resource intensive export industries. The state played a major role in government economic policy. An industrial estate was developed at Point Lisas which included a chemical

fertiliser industry and an iron and steel works. Government finance was used to improve roads, telecommunications, water and electricity supplies and other state services.

In the long term, the strategy was largely a failure and the reasons for this - and government and union responses to it - will be discussed in chapter six. For the moment, the short term results and their effects on the working classes will be analysed.

The social effects of the boom and the government's development strategy were contradictory. Per capita income increased from US \$1 231 per annum in 1973 to US \$3 168 in 1978. Unemployment declined to 8.8 per cent by 1980 (MacDonald 1986: 191), and the amount of money in circulation ensured that many in the informal sector had a better standard of living than before 1973. Prime Minister Williams claimed that 'Money is no problem', a slogan which acquired some popularity. The low income sectors of society were given some degree of protection as the government intervened (directly and indirectly) in the economy in order to ensure a supply of cheap essentials.

Nevertheless, poverty and inequality remained major problems. In a Household Budgetary Survey conducted in 1975-6, it was found that the bottom 50 per cent of income earners earned 18.2 per cent of total income (Harewood and Henry 1985: 48). While there was some redistribution of income in this period, the main beneficiaries were the

middle class and the highest paid members of the working class (ibid.: 47-50). The survey also found that 32.2 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line, 32.7 per cent did not have flush toilets, 41.4 per cent did not have pipe-borne water in their homes, 23 per cent did not have electricity, and 89.5 per cent were without a telephone (Cited in Ryan and Jacobs c.1979: xx).

As the boom was sustained, the extent of poverty decreased and so it is very likely that there was a considerable improvement in these statistics. While uneven development continued and poverty remained a major social problem, improvements in living standards were still considerable. The economic climate helped to shape a renewed confidence in the PNM government and so any new political party, particularly a socialist one, was going to find it difficult to defeat the PNM in a general election. On the other hand, the boom provided the basis for a renewed vitality in the labour movement, as lower unemployment improved the bargaining position of the organised working class. The birth of the United Labour Front was based on this premise.

Section Two: The Birth and Early Development of the United Labour Front

(a) The United Labour Front as an Alliance of Unions

The ULF was initially formed as an informal alliance of four trade unions: the OWTU, the ATSEFWTU, TIWU, and the Island-wide Cane Farmers Trade Union (ICFU). The leaderships of both the OWTU and TIWU were still in the hands of 'progressives' and in 1973-4 there were significant developments in the two sugar unions. Bhadase Maraj had died in 1971, but the ATSEFWTU, under the leadership of Maraj's deputy Rampartap Singh, remained undemocratic and corrupt. The other major sugar union was the pro-PNM Trinidad Island-wide Canefarmers Association (TICA), led by Norman Girwar. By 1973, a significant rival to TICA had established itself - the ICFU, which was led by the former army mutineer, Raffique Shah. The ICFU executive also had strong representation from the explicitly Marxist United National Independence Party. Rampartap Singh (rightly) saw this challenge to the TICA as a challenge to his own union and so he recruited the charismatic Basdeo Panday as a bulwark against the ICFU. Panday had worked as a lawyer for the OWTU and had been a member of the WFP and so Singh was taking a gamble - one which he was soon to regret.

At the start of the sugar crop season, the increasingly popular ICFU inaugurated a no-cut campaign until employers recognised it as the sole bargaining agent for cane farmers. This campaign was supported by the ATSEFWTU as Panday staged an internal coup and established himself as its leader, and set about restoring democracy to the union. Panday then won a 100 per cent wage increase and guaranteed work for the whole year for sugar workers, and these victories won him a strong loyalty among sugar workers.

In late 1974, Panday again called a strike at Caroni over the company's failure to negotiate a profit sharing scheme. Shah's union had still not won recognition from Caroni who argued that legislation passed in 1965 (the Cess Act) made the TICA the only legitimate representative of cane farmers. Meanwhile, negotiations between the OWTU and Texaco over wage increases had reached a standstill and a strike seemed likely.

By early 1975 tension had increased and the government owned radio station banned interviews with Shah, Weekes and Panday and dismissed journalists who publicly disagreed with this decision. The OWTU regularly called out members from work to attend mass union meetings and the sugar workers' strike spread to the government owned Orange Grove Estate, and to Forres Park Estate and Caroni Distillers. Negotiations between TIWU and Neal and Massy were not progressing and a strike seemed likely. By March 1975 there were around 17 thousand sugar workers on strike and 9 000 cane farmers

boycotting the sugar harvest (Baptiste 1976: 18; Express 11.3.1975).

In an effort to reduce the industrial unrest, the Employers' Consultative Association met with the two union federations. The ECA President, Ralph Rostant, repeated the arguments of senators before the ISA was passed in 1965 (and the leaders of the Labour Congress in 1970), when he stated that "(i)t is almost naive to believe that we can attract foreign investors in this situation. And we believe that it is almost impossible to correct the unemployment situation in this country without these investors." He was most critical of the OWTU and claimed that "(w)e don't believe that industrial relations should be used as a tool for political ends." (Express 9.3.1975)

The talks were not successful and the four unions of what came to be known as the United Labour Front made plans for a mass rally to be held on March 18. The government claimed that any march would be illegal as no permit had been granted by the Police Commissioner, but the ULF argued that the rally was not a political meeting. It would in fact be a religious occasion where there would be prayers 'for bread, justice and peace', and so a permit was not required.

The rally went ahead at Skinner Park, San Fernando and the ULF leaders presented its six demands to the government in front of an unexpectedly large crowd of around 15 000 people:

"1. To repeal Act no. 1 of 1965 - the Canefarmers Cess Act, and the immediate recognition of ICFTU.

2. To repeal Act no. 23 of 1972 - the Industrial Relation (sic.) Act - IRA.

3. To protest the delay of Texaco, Caroni Ltd., and Neal and Massy Ltd., in concluding negotiations with the OWTU, ATSEFWTU and TIWU respectively.

4. To demand the withdrawal on Texaco's Writ and Injunction preventing the Recognition Board from pursuing OWTU's claim for recognition of the monthly paid workers of Texaco.

5. To demand withdrawal of the levy on sugar.

6. To let those who labour hold the reins." (United Labour Front 1975: 1)

In the short term these demands were overshadowed by the response of the legal authorities as the police broke up the rally and arrested thirty two ULF leaders (Express 19.3.1975). The specific grievances of the ULF as a union alliance were settled over the next few months by compromises on both sides. More significantly, the suppression of the Skinner Park rally (which came to be known as 'Bloody Tuesday') convinced the ULF leaders that the interests of the working class could only be served in the long run by the formation of a new political party. The ULF as an informal union alliance had won considerable

industrial support from both African and Indian workers; its leaders hoped that this could be extended to politics.

(b) The United Labour Front as a Political Party.

After 'Bloody Tuesday', there was widespread discussion about the form that a labour party should take. Some members (such as Lennox Pierre, Allan Alexander and John Humphrey) argued that the ULF should remain a union alliance and that there should be a separate (but organically linked) political party. There were also fears that ultra-left wing organisations would use the ULF for their own ends (see below for details). Nevertheless, sufficient agreement was reached and "realising the limitations of Trade Union Action the ULF held a COSSABO (Conference of Shop Stewards and Branch Officers - R.K.)...on January 3 and 4, 1976 at which a decision was taken to bring into being the Party of the Working Class." (Transport and Industrial Workers' Union 1976: 1) At a further COSSABO a decision was taken to hold the Founding Congress of the ULF on March 21, 1976.

The organisational structure that emerged out of this Congress was complex and never stringently implemented, and it formed the basis for a major division in the ULF. On the one hand was a tendency which wanted a highly centralised party structure in which a Central Committee would play the leading role in the running of the ULF. At the Founding Conference, this tendency (led by old UNIP members James

Millette and Richard Jacobs) argued that the existing leadership should elect the Central Committee. In other words, this tendency believed in an interpretation of the Leninist organisational principle of democratic centralism which placed the emphasis on centralism rather than democracy. On the other hand, another tendency argued that the party should be organised 'from below' through party blocks, which would be divided by region but could also be organised in workplaces and other communities. This group recognised that there would have to be some degree of centralisation, but they argued that the Central Committee should be elected by the total membership of the party.

Lennox Pierre, the former leader of the West Indian Independence Party (see chapter three), was the main figure in this group. In practice, the Central Committee became the leading structure and the party blocks were never properly instituted, and this factor became a major point of contention in the 1977 split. At this stage, Basdeo Panday and Raffique Shah, the two major protagonists in the split, did not take clear sides.

The organisational issue was complicated by the participation of a number of tiny ultra-left wing groups in the ULF. As well as UNIP these included the New Beginning Movement (NBM), the National Liberation Movement (NLM) and the National Movement for the Total Independence of Trinidad and Tobago (NAMOTI). The NLM and NAMOTI were basically Maoist while the NBM was a basically Jamesian inspired organisation (and not Trotskyist as is usually asserted -

see for instance Phillips 1984: 380). NAMOTI was by far the most significant of these organisations, and many 'independents' in the ULF feared that it was being used as a battle-ground between Maoists (NAMOTI) and Stalinists (UNIP) to promote their own interests at the expense of the ULF.

These issues of contention were originally controlled as the new party set about drafting a constitution and political programme, and preparing for the general election which was due sometime in 1976. A draft constitution was eventually agreed which set out the aims and objectives of the ULF:

"(a) To unite the working class as a class for political struggle and to struggle with the workers or any section of them for such political objectives as are immediately realisable and for the ultimate political objective of working class power;

(b) To establish an economic system, a social order and a government consistent with the interests of the working classes and the people in general.." (United Labour Front 1976b: 1)

The political programme of the ULF included proposals for national ownership and control of oil, natural gas, fertiliser plants, sugar, foreign trade, industrial monopolies such as motor vehicles, cement and rum, large distribution monopolies and financial systems. It also proposed a mixed economy of state and private capital for small and medium sized firms. Social legislation would

include a minimum wage, the end of wage discrimination against women and a full social security system (United Labour Front 1976c: 14, 19).

There were some doubts expressed that the ULF should participate in 'bourgeois' elections (there had been a widespread boycott of the 1971 elections in protest at a government imposed state of emergency) on the grounds that it may become an electoralist party, solely concerned with winning general elections at the expense of extra-parliamentary activity. ULF leaders eventually decided that it was necessary to participate in the election on the principle that this was a means to an end, rather than an end in itself; the General Secretary argued that "the ULF has to contest the forthcoming elections...not because the ULF is an election machine, but because that is the role which the ULF is called upon, at this stage, to play." (Millette 1976: 2) However, the party never adopted a clear political attitude towards parliament, as I argue below.

The party went into the general election in September 1976 without a clear leader and instead decided to uphold the principle of collective leadership. Allan Alexander, a radical lawyer of African descent, was nominated as the person who would become Prime Minister, possibly on the basis that the party did not believe that the country as a whole would accept an Indian leader. The electorate was however unconvinced by Alexander and regarded Panday as the real leader. The question of race quickly emerged as the

major factor in the election campaign. ULF Central Committee member, Richard Jacobs later claimed that "it would be fair to say that we were actually blind to race...This mood, this tendency to ignore the racial factor, prevailed at all levels of the ULF." (Ryan and Jacobs c.1979: 271) Jacobs' claim has however, been strongly rejected by Panday at least (Interview 16.3.1990), and the decision to appoint Alexander as 'Prime Minister in waiting' suggests that 'race' was always an important consideration for the party. What is true is that the party over-estimated the extent to which the industrial action ('class struggle') of 1971-5 had eroded historical 'racial' divisions, and as a result, it failed to offer a challenge to the political hegemony of the black petty bourgeoisie. I will elaborate on this argument in section three.

During the election campaign, members of the ('white') bourgeoisie presented the ULF as an Indian party and used racist arguments to appeal to the PNM's traditional African constituency. For instance, Jimmy Bain, director of numerous private companies and Chairperson of the state owned National Broadcasting Company, stated that "(s)hould this time come when the East Indian section owns most of the property, business and wealth of the country as well as control of the Government, an imbalance could develop in our society that would cause undesirable stresses and strains that would not be good for the nation. It is an urgent necessity therefore, that all of us give serious thought to these matters, and like sensible people make a conscious

effort to counter any undesirable consequences that could develop from such a possible situation." (Guardian 25.4.1976)

The ULF was not successful in uniting the working classes across racial lines. Black members of the OWTU and the Labour Congress unions largely remained faithful to the PNM. In the last two weeks of the campaign, the party attempted to increase its profile in the north, along the East-West corridor, and it organised motorcades through the area. The effect of this strategy was counter-productive, because the strong presence of Indians on these motorcades convinced black proletarians and petty commodity traders and producers that the ULF was simply a new Indian party, a replacement for the DLP.

The result of the election demonstrated the problem for the party. The PNM won 24 seats, the Democratic Action Congress two seats (both in Tobago), while the ULF won the other 10. These seats were almost exclusively confined to the sugar producing areas, where the majority of the population was of Indian descent. Allan Alexander actually failed to win his seat, and so Panday became Leader of the Opposition. Lloyd Best rightly argued, "(t)he ULF won the traditional DLP seats and the PNM won the traditional PNM seats with some slight changes." (Guardian 19.9.1976) The problem that the ULF faced was how to break out of this situation.

Section Three: The Demise of the United Labour Front.

(i). The Factions and the Split

In August 1977, within one year of the general election, Panday was removed as Leader of the Opposition and the party had effectively been divided in two. On the one side, supported by a majority of parliamentarians but only by a small section of supporters outside of the House of Representatives, was the 'Shah faction'. On the other side was Panday, who had the social base of ULF support but was strongly distrusted by his colleagues in Parliament and the leadership of the party.

The split occurred against a background of increasing differences over organisation and politics. The Shah faction was led by Pierre, Education and Research Officer and NAMOTI supporter 'Teddy' Belgrave, Alexander, and Shah himself. This faction was opposed to the Soviet Marxism espoused by Millette and Jacobs, and the ULF became a breeding ground for left wing sectarianism. For instance, there was a lot of discussion about Cuba's role in Angola and the 'correct' response to the death of Mao (Millette Interview 2.3.1990). There were also differences over the most appropriate socialist strategy for Trinidad and Tobago. Millette accused

NAMOTI of having its own agenda and of advocating a Maoist 'people's war' strategy, based on armed conflict, rather than the ULF policy of consolidating a mass base through electoral means (Millette n.d.: 16).

Panday was aware of the divisions but was only interested in them insofar as they constituted a threat to his own perception of the ULF. This differed from both factions, because Panday was an essentially electoralist politician opposed to all ideologies, except his own. He basically advocated unity between the two races and some degree of workers' participation (Interview 16.3.1990), but his concrete proposals to achieve these were vague and he was a populist who had established a strong social base in the sugar areas during the industrial unrest of 1973-5.

It was Panday's populism that was so objectionable to the Shah faction and, together with the ULF's commitment to working class unity across race lines, these factors above all others explain why the party split in two. The election result had reproduced the very pattern of race-based two party politics that the ULF had set out to destroy. After the election, Shah in particular came to believe that there should be a concerted strategy of campaigning in the north, and in particular in the all important East-West Corridor, even if this was at the expense of existing support in the sugar areas. The Shah faction quickly came to believe that Panday's politics reinforced the status quo at the expense of principled, class based, socialist politics. They

believed that Panday, like Bhadase Maraj before him, had come to represent a political demagogue who was basically happy to represent one section of the community. As the Shah faction's political organ Classline stated, "(w)as the ULF to practise the maximum in democracy or were we to sink into political opportunism and one-manism." (Classline 16.9.1977) The faction then went on to make some specific allegations: each of the unions that made up the ULF had more than one union leader on the Central Committee except for the sugar workers' union which had only Panday, who had instead insisted that his friend John Humphrey be a CC member; he had chosen former members of the PNM (Sonny Khayadat) and DLP (Mulchan Seuchan) and close political colleagues (Faizal Mohammed) for the 1977 local government elections instead of members of his union (such as radical shop steward, Omar Khan). For Shah and his colleagues, these men "represented the old - opportunism, racism and contempt for the poor people of our country." (Classline 16.9.1977) Panday was also accused of deviating from party policy on issues such as self-government for Tobago, and of introducing a motion of no confidence in the government without consulting any colleagues. Perhaps most seriously, Panday was accused of racism because he publicly condoned to his constituents in Couva a statement that he was letting the Africans in the ULF ride his back and that he should get rid of them (ibid.). As a result of these divisions, on August 9 1977, the Party Central Committee removed Panday as parliamentary leader of the ULF (Express 11.8.1977). Shah had the support of six of the ten ULF MPs and, after some constitutional

questions were resolved, he replaced Panday as Leader of the Opposition on August 19 (Express 15.8.1977 and 20.8.1977).

Panday's reponse was to appeal to the social base that he had, and Shah did not have. Within three days of his expulsion, all four of the ULF controlled councils had given their support to Panday and "No Panday! No ULF!" banners were common in the sugar producing areas (Express 13.9.1977). The cane farmers' union gave their support to Panday, despite the fact that it was led by Shah (Express 16.8.1977). Panday held public meetings to put forward his own version of why he was removed as leader. Before his removal, he had talked of a "bunch of traitors and stooges" that were out to destroy the party (Express 1.8.1977). Panday's appeal to his social base became increasingly nationalist as well as populist: he complained that NAMOTI "wanted to destroy the foundations of the working class ideology (sic.) (and) to impose a foreign radical view which had no relevance to our situation." (Express 17.8.1977) He also claimed that he was not particularly interested in leadership but went on to say (in a classically populist manner) that "if the people call on me to lead I will not flinch one hair's breadth from this sacred trust." (Express 19.8.1977)

In November Panday called a 'Party Congress' of the ULF which demonstrated that there was by now effectively two parties claiming the party banner. On the one side was Shah and his supporters which was the official Opposition but had

little support outside of Parliament, and on the other was Panday and his supporters in the sugar belt. By the end of March 1978, Shah resigned as Opposition Leader because he was disillusioned with the processes of parliamentary politics and after a quite blatant piece of (PNM sponsored) state-judicial victimisation of the ULF (Shah faction) MP Boodram Jattan (See Ryan and Jacobs c.1979: 312). In his Farewell Address as Opposition Leader, Shah spoke of a "plot to plunge the country back into racial politics." (Guardian 1.4.1978)

Panday's initial removal was followed by the resignation of James Millette as General Secretary. He blamed the ultra-left (NAMOTI and the Shah faction) for splitting the party, and using it as "a battleground on which rival factions and jejune ideas could joust for the triumph of their own version of purity in the working class movement." He argued that the task of the ULF was to "consolidate the Party as a united national movement of working people and to equip it with the resources necessary for the accomplishment of the task of taking power and using it in the interests of all the people.." (ULF Crisis Bulletin no.19)

So, by September 1977 the party had divided into two factions led by Panday and Shah, plus a 'semi-faction' led by Millette. Shah's faction saw Panday as a threat to the 'new politics' proposed by the ULF, while Panday and his supporters argued that Shah was simply a figurehead for a NAMOTI 'coup' within the party. Millette was critical of

aspects of Panday's behaviour but basically took the view that Panday was removed because "the others wanted to take the leadership." (Millette Interview 2.3.1990) While the two main factions regarded the split as in many ways a good thing, Millette saw it as a disaster.

(ii). Economism, Vanguardism and the Split in the ULF

Most of the assessments of the ULF, particularly those written by socialists, argue that the split was a consequence of two related factors: the party's trade union roots, and the resultant failure to organise the party as a vanguard of the working class. Phillips has written that the factors that led to the formation of the party were "based in 'mere economism'" and that the "ideological monolithic direction which is characteristic of a vanguard did not exist in the ULF." (Phillips 1984: 367, 409) She goes on to argue that the ULF "may have been useful in the context of the subjective social circumstances within Trinidad...(b)ut (it) was not a mass party that was properly constructed." (Ibid.: 410) History has shown that "(m)ass organisations of a pro-socialist nature have existed as a forerunner to a Vanguard Party, but always with a core vanguard among the leadership of the mass organisation." (ibid.: 409-10) She argues that a specific analysis of Trinidad and Tobago (rather than an inflexible line) was needed, but also that "(a) vanguard party would be selective and monolithic, (if

only at the leadership core of the mass party), and would guide the working class struggle to the realisation of change in its interests. The ULF was not this kind of party." (ibid.: 411) For Phillips then, the basic problem of the party was organisational - the ULF was not a vanguard of the working class, and it instead represented a conflict between two strands of Marxism (reactionary Maoism and the far more preferable 'Marxist-Leninism) (ibid.: 392).

The supporters of Millette's 'semi-faction' (which became known as the February 18 Movement) took a more flexible approach but similarly rejected trade union 'economism' and advocated vanguardism. Millette's journal, 'Workers Tribune', established after the split, was very hostile to NAMOTI and its influence in the progressive trade union movement. It argued that "even within the ranks of the 'progressive' trade union movement economism is rampant. It is disguised only in the fact that the 'progressive' trade unionists talk all the time of working class politics and the need for working class parties." (Workers Tribune 2[2]: 1) Instead of trade union economism, "(w)hat the Revolution needs are (sic.) revolutionaries. What the Revolution needs is a truly revolutionary party. What the Revolution does not need is another trade union party." (Workers Tribune 1[1]) In other words, according to Millette, NAMOTI's 'Maoism' (in actual fact this part of NAMOTI's politics was closer to the thought of CLR James rather than Mao Zedong) led it to advocate loose organisational principles based around

communities and workplaces rather than the centralised vanguard that was required.

The problem with this approach is two-fold: firstly, it is based on a one-sided approach to both the limitations of trade unionism and the virtues of vanguardism (and in fact has more in common with Clark Kerr than Lenin); and secondly, it ignores the very real obstacles that the ULF faced in winning support among a highly divided labour force, problems which would not have 'magically disappeared' had the party's organisational structure been different. These problems were never adequately dealt with by Shah and NAMOTI, as well, and I discuss them (and the 'problem' of Panday) below. First I will discuss the question of trade unions and political vanguardism.

The 'Marxist' view that trade unions are economistic is derived from a (mis)reading of Lenin, as I discussed in chapter one. Trade unions are not an obstacle to socialist revolution; rather, they should be seen as "a limited form of class consciousness representing the very social forces and interest upon which a revolution can be built." (Wood 1986: 192) Ultra-left views that trade unions are purely economic actually converge with right wing 'labourist' theories of trade unionism. For instance, Phillips is very supportive of the approach of the Bank and General Workers' Union, whose leader (Michael Als) formed the Stalinist People's Popular Movement, which consciously separated 'bread and butter' union issues from 'politics' (and has

consistently failed, as a supposed 'vanguard' party, to win any support among the working class). Phillips writes that "(i)t is evident that Mr. Als and other members of the union executive engage their union in strictly 'trade union issues' and not overtly in political issues. They have been able to separate the two." She later states that "(t)he mature realisation by the leadership of BGWU of the dichotomy between the role of a trade union and the role of a political party in a capitalist dominated social formation is instructive, and is in fact reflective of a level of consciousness not found among the leaders of any other union." (Phillips 1984: 281, 497) This approach is contrasted with the leaders of TIWU where "some of its promising leaders have reverted to handling issues which are mainly of an outright 'trade union' nature." (ibid.: 497) But, according to the logic of Phillips' argument, this is precisely what the Bank and General Workers' Union does (at the trade union level at least). What Phillips appears to be saying is that TIWU (and by implication, the Shah faction in the ULF) concentrated too much on 'strictly union' issues, at the expense of political party organisation; she therefore sets up a false dichotomy between trade unions and politics. It may be true that TIWU and the ULF neglected the limitations of trade unions as agencies for social change, but the dichotomy is her's and not the union's. A trade union can never simply be 'economistic' in a capitalist social formation for the simple reason that the power of capital is by its nature political. Ownership of private property is a relationship of power and trade unions, for

all their weaknesses, represent a restraint (and therefore a partial challenge) to this power. All attempts to depoliticise trade unions are therefore political 'projects' which have more in common with F.W. Dalley (see chapter three) and Clark Kerr (chapter one), than they do with socialist politics.

It is true that the ULF failed to win the widespread support of trade unionists in the Labour Congress or the OWTU, but this has more to do with the wider problems that the party faced, rather than the limitations of trade unionism per se. These problems would include the question of the divisions of the working classes, and the problem of attracting the support of higher paid workers (especially oil workers) who benefited most from the economic boom. Again it should be stressed that this had nothing to do with the OWTU leadership's commitment to 'purely trade union issues' (a ludicrous claim) and everything to do with the state of class consciousness of the oil workers at this time.

The false dichotomy of trade unions and politics is carried over into the belief that a vanguard was necessary for the ULF to become a party of the working class. Phillips' claim that mass organisations of the working class have always had a monolithic vanguard at their core is simply untrue. The Bolsheviks were divided over the 'small matter' of whether to seize the Winter Palace in 'October' 1917. And, despite Phillips' claims to the contrary (1984: 410), the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua (which won power in

the 1979 revolution) was not a monolithic organisation but in fact was made up of three factions, each with its own 'line' on revolutionary strategy (see among others Weber 1981: 38-60; Black 1981: 75-178).

The commitment to vanguardism and 'Marxist purity' was shared by both the Stalinists (Millette) and the Maoists (Shah, Belgrave et.al.) in the ULF. NAMOTI may not have advocated 'democratic centralism' (with the emphasis on the latter) as an organising principle but it still placed as much emphasis on 'the right line' as its Stalinist adversaries. For instance, while the Stalinists accused the Maoists of 'left economism' (Sebastien 1981: 59), the Maoists argued that "(t)he problem of the mass movement has been the problem of leadership. Just when it seems that the mass movement is poised to fulfil its mission, some leader sells it out or causes it to split. The most recent example was the ULF experience with people like Panday and Millette." (NAMOTI Special Labour Day Bulletin) In other words, the problem of the ULF was simply a question of leadership; once the 'correct line' (often on obscure international issues over which any Trinidad government would have no say) was obtained, the issue of 'the masses' would take care of itself.

The vanguardist approach was also carried over to the party's attitude to Parliament. Shah and Panday's differences were often characterised as an irreconcilable conflict between revolutionary and electoral politics, but

this perspective is based on too rigid a contrast between the two types of politics. As Millette recognised, parliamentary politics could be used as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. However, ULF MPs quickly became frustrated with parliamentary procedure, and this came to a head in November 1976 during the debate on the 1977 budget, when they walked out of Parliament and later staged a motion of no confidence in the Speaker. While there was undoubtedly collaboration between the PNM and the media, which led to discrimination against the ULF, but the response of the party was often counter-productive. At one point, Shah summoned a meeting of the Central Executive to determine whether MPs should continue attending Parliament (Ryan 1989: 169). This attitude was indicative of the party's black and white, vanguardist approach to politics.

The issue of factions in the ULF is therefore an important one, but not for the reasons given by Phillips. What was needed in the ULF was not a monolithic ideological direction but an organisational structure that allowed for divergence of views and 'lines'. It was precisely the commitment to dogmatic, vanguardist politics (something Phillips advocates) which provided the organisational basis for the split which occurred. The split should therefore be seen as a response by competing factions to break out of the party's narrow social base. Contrary to Phillips' claims, factionalism and vanguardism compounded rather than alleviated this problem.

The consequence of this elite vanguardism was that the Marxists were tied up in their own sectarian debates and so they never seriously tackled the problem of winning widespread support among the working classes. The historical divisions of the labour force in terms of class fractions (proletariat, peasantry, informal sector and so on), race, gender and politics were never properly addressed. The Shah faction's attitude to Panday is particularly instructive. Panday may have been an opportunist politician who used race to guarantee his own political base, but the implication of this (and indeed the same applies to the PNM's appeal to the African population) is that the question of race cannot be ignored. Panday at least addressed the race factor, even if his motives in doing so were at best confused, and at worst dishonourable. (This question continues to be at the forefront of Trinidadian politics and I will address it again in the context of the 1980s recession in chapter six.) This faction also failed to tackle the question of PNM and liberal democratic hegemony. Liberal democracy may have been limited by the wider economic system and PNM corruption and repression, but Shah and his comrades failed to see that the political system still guaranteed certain rights (won by working class struggle) which made 'adventurist' politics inappropriate.

What was therefore needed was a greater awareness by the party of the concrete conditions in Trinidad and Tobago. Of all the socialists in the ULF, James Millette showed the greatest sensitivity to the immediate task of consolidation

in the party, but this awareness was hindered by his own (Stalinist) vanguardism and his ultra-left view of trade unions (see above). Furthermore, he underestimated the race problem and may have therefore been too charitable towards Panday's opportunism. A long term 'counter hegemonic' strategy was necessary to challenge the domination of the PNM and racially based politics, rather than sterile debates (which were often full of half truths and inaccuracies) about Maoism and Stalinism. Of all the people who have written about the ULF, it is the non-Marxist Selwyn Ryan who has most accurately described what the ULF did not do and should have done - "What was missing was a willingness on the part of the actors involved to learn from the history of working class politics in Trinidad and Tobago. What was clearly needed was for Indian and African workers to get used to the idea of working together politically to help overcome the suspicions and prejudices inherited from the past." (Ryan 1989: 176-7) This may be an unremarkable conclusion, but it is a far more realistic one than those proposed by the socialists in the ULF.

Section Four: The Factions after the Split.

After the split in the party, Panday's faction, after successfully winning the right to the party's name,

continued its shift to the right and supported the government over the constitutional question of parliamentary representation in cases where MPs had left their original party and 'crossed the floor' (See Classline 2/1). In a local government by-election within Shah's constituency, the pro-Panday candidate easily beat the Shah supporter. Panday's party did badly in the 1980 local government elections and so the decision was taken to enter into an alliance with the Democratic Action Congress and the Tapia House Movement for the 1981 elections. Panday's opportunism extended to an alliance with the Organisation for National Reconstruction (a party with politics considerably to the right of the PNM) in the 1986 general election. This alliance will be examined in more detail in chapter six.

Shah's faction refused Panday's offer of a renewed alliance and did not participate in the 1981 election (Panday Interview 16.3.1990; Shah Interview 20.4.1990). Although Shah advocated armed struggle as late as 1981, the faction began to take a far more realistic approach from this period. NAMOTI was dissolved and the faction's doctrinaire Maoism was gradually abandoned. The Committee for Labour Solidarity was formed in 1981 and its leaders described it as a 'preparatory political party'. It began to concentrate on building support at the grassroots level, especially through the trade union movement. In other words, as well as rejecting Panday's opportunism, it also consciously tried to avoid the excessive vanguardism of the Marxist factions in the ULF. By the late 1980s, the CLS had converted itself

into a political party called the Movement for Social Transformation (see chapter six for more details).

Finally, Millette's 'faction' became the February 18 Movement. This tiny organisation regretted the split in the ULF and argued that Panday's faction had degenerated into a new DLP, and that the CLS repeated the old economism of NAMOTI (see for instance Millette 1981: 11; Workers Tribune 2[2]). This movement has had little impact on working class politics and, given its dogmatic allegiance to Stalinist politics and organisational principles, this situation is unlikely to change.

Conclusion: A Lost Opportunity.

Electoral contests in Third World societies are relatively infrequent events, but the Caribbean region provides some examples of changes in the ruling party through parliamentary contests (for instance in Jamaica). In the case of Trinidad it was always going to be difficult to challenge the hegemony of the PNM because of its success in leading the country to independence, the racial nature of politics and voting behaviour, and its control of patronage. Given that the ULF was largely a race-based party and was divided by ideology, it was unlikely to form a government.

The ULF split because it was divided on the questions of race and factionalism. Race became a major issue as soon as

one Marxist faction (around Raffique Shah) attempted to break out of the party's existing social base. The disputes over political strategy were not successfully contained, not because the ULF lacked a vanguard approach to politics, but because the factions themselves were 'over-committed' to vanguardism. As a result, important questions such as winning the support of trade unionists in Labour Congress unions, the support of the 'informal sector', and the question of race itself, were all trivialised. Therefore, while the attempt by Shah's faction to extend the ULF's social base was itself correct, the manner in which it was done was problematic. The left in the Caribbean saw the disastrous consequences of vanguardism six years later in Grenada when one faction murdered the leaders of a rival faction (see Marable 1987: 265-7).

Despite its undeveloped politics, factional infighting and short political life, the United Labour Front represented the most serious attempt to form a popular working class, socialist political party. It can be said with hindsight that its disintegration was disastrous for the working classes (of both ethnic groups), because it left them ill-prepared for the recession in the 1980s. The recession, and the response of the labour movement to it, will be the subject of chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

Uneven Development Revisited: Labour and the Recession of the 1980s

The contradictions of Trinidad's peripheral capitalist development discussed in chapter one have been readily visible since the country entered an economic downturn in 1982. The responses to the recession have sharpened the tensions between capital and organised labour as the former has called for cutbacks in the state sector and a return to a leading role in the economy for the private sector. George Chambers' PNM government initiated a move in this direction, but it was with the election of the 'multi racial' National Alliance for Reconstruction government (in December 1986) that the twin processes of state sector cutbacks and privatisation really accelerated. As a result the labour movement has been forced to face the worst crisis in its history. Unemployment and union membership have sharply declined and workers in the public sector have faced wage cuts and freezes. Other sections of the working classes have similarly suffered as unemployment, poverty and serious crime have all dramatically increased. The social crisis has also become a political one as divisions in the NAR government led to a racial split in 1988 and an increase in ethnic tensions at the end of the decade, and in 1990 there was a vain attempt to overthrow the liberal democratic system itself by means of an Islamic coup.

In this chapter, I examine the impact of the recession on the working classes and how they have resisted the demands of employers and government. I try to show that the factors that have traditionally divided labour (race, gender, uneven class formation and politics/trade union disunity) are still pervasive, and in some respects more acute, but that there is some tentative movement towards a recognition (at leadership level) that labour unity is vital to represent the interests of the working classes. This can be seen most clearly by the increased awareness that there is a need for one trade union federation and a move away (by at least some Labour Congress unions) from purely collective bargaining mechanisms to 'social movement unionism'. I examine these questions by dividing the chapter into two sections. Firstly I look at the causes of the recession and its impact on the working classes. Section two explores the changing nature of politics and trade unionism in this period and in particular looks at renewed attempts to introduce trade union unity, the development of a conception of social movement unionism, and the renewed quest for a mass labour party.

Section One: The Recession and its Impact on the Working Classes.

(a) The Crisis in the Economy

The economic crisis of the 1980s had its origins in Trinidad's continued dependence on oil and the state revenues that are derived from taxation in this industry. By 1980, oil production and refining constituted 42 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, directly provided 65 per cent of government revenues, and accounted for TT \$9.17 billion of the country's total export earnings of TT \$9.72 billion (Yelvington 1987: 12). After the oil 'shocks' of 1973-4 and 1979-80, the price of oil on the world market began to decline and in December 1985, the Organisation for Petroleum Exporting Countries announced that it would abandon efforts to maintain a high price for oil. OPEC instead embarked on a new strategy which would concentrate on recapturing its dominance of world oil production.

This changing strategy had its roots in the competition between OPEC and non-OPEC oil producing countries (Farrell 1985a: 390-2), a conflict which had a particular impact on Trinidad's 'open petroleum economy' (Seers 1964). Although Trinidad had benefited greatly from the rise in world oil prices, the foundations of the recession could be found in the boom period. From 1978 onwards, national oil production

steadily declined and the refineries were operating at well below full capacity. After the first oil shock, the United States - Trinidad's major oil market - reduced its dependence on imported oil, and in particular residual fuel oil, which is Trinidad's main oil export. US refineries also began to refine more residual fuel oil than they had done before 1973, and the Trinidad refineries began to outlive their usefulness to North American transnational corporations (Farrell 1985b).

By the early 1980s the Trinidad economy had to face a decline in the market, and a decline in the price per barrel for its principal export. Nevertheless, the boom had provided the government and the private sector with an opportunity to diversify so that the country was no longer so dependent on the fluctuations of the world oil market. The 1973 oil price rise had, for instance, led to a windfall oil revenue of TT \$24 billion (Farrell 1986: 8). However, this opportunity was wasted for at least three reasons: the government undertook over-ambitious and expensive development projects; the private sector continued to show little interest in substantial domestic investment (see chapter one, which refers to the export of capital in this period); and money was wasted on corruption.

The result of this particular conjuncture of international and domestic forces has been devastating for the economy. From 1982-89, the country experienced negative growth rates in every single year, and by 1987 real Gross Domestic

Product was about 28 per cent lower than it had been in 1982 (Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 1984; 1985; 1986; 1989; Yelvington forthcoming: 16). Gross domestic product fell from US \$6 229 million in 1984 to US \$5 610 million in 1987, and the external debt stood at US \$1.41 billion in 1987 (Latin American Regional Report 8.12.1988). The external debt service ratio rose from two per cent in 1982, to 24.3 per cent in 1987 (Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 1986: 46; Farrell 1989: 9).

Both the PNM and the NAR governments introduced strong measures in trying to halt the decline. In December 1985, the Chambers government announced a 50 per cent devaluation in the Trinidad and Tobago dollar and a new 10 per cent tax on some consumer goods (Express 18.12.1985). In August 1988, a further devaluation was announced by ANR Robinson's NAR government (Latin American Regional Report 29.9.1988). Further measures have also been carried out which have had a direct impact on industrial relations, and these are examined below.

Perhaps the most visible feature of the crisis has been the rise in unemployment and the consequent increase in poverty, vagrancy and the size of the informal sector. Unemployment increased from 10 per cent in 1981 to 18 per cent by 1986, and an estimated 23 per cent by the late 1980s (Hunte 1988: 10, 13). The problem was most serious among young people: in the first quarter of 1987, the unemployment rate was 42 per cent for males and 54 per cent for females in the 15-19 year

age group; among 20-24 year olds, the figures were 39 per cent for males and 38 per cent for females (ibid.: 11).

(b) The Impact on the Labour Movement and the Working Classes.

Cecil Paul, the General Secretary of the Council of Progressive Trade Unions, has claimed that the economic situation, and the response of successive governments to it, have laid the framework for 'the collapse of collective bargaining' in the country (Paul c.1986: 1; Cecil Paul Interview 28.3.1990). He identifies a number of symptoms: employers no longer honouring terms of collective agreements and introducing conditions without consulting trade unions; the continued (one is tempted to say, after 25 years, eternal) backlog of cases at the Industrial Court; employers failing to honour Industrial Court agreements; employers' use of lockouts to subvert collective agreements and their subsequent offering of individual contracts (or strike-breaking labour) to workers. Paul argues that "(a)t present in Trinidad and Tobago, we are witnessing..a development of weak and immobilized Trade Unions, the underselling of labour, the subversion of the trade unions, the surplus of labour (unemployment) and as a result, the pauperization of large sections of..society." (Paul c.1986: 1)

The trade union movement has suffered accordingly. The last

survey of the whole trade union movement conducted at national level (in 1985) suggested that between 1982 and 1985, over 70 000 workers (16 per cent of the total labour force) had been retrenched. In the period from 1981 to 1985, trade union membership had declined from approximately 142 000 workers to 100 000 (Council of Progressive Trade Unions 1985). From 1985 to 1990, there are no published figures on the size of the national trade union movement, but estimates (below) by leaders of the two federations, and individual unions, suggest that the size of the trade union movement continues to contract.

<u>Trade Union/Federation</u>	<u>Membership (1990)</u>	<u>Peak Membership</u>
Council of Progressive		
Trade Unions (Federation)	30 000	38 000 (1980-2)
Labour Congress		
(Federation)	80 000	120 000 (1982)
National Union of		
Government and		
Federated Workers	44 000	76 000 (1983-4)

All Trinidad Sugar and

General Workers Trade

Union	10 000	18 000 (1980-2)
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Oilfield Workers Trade

Union	11 000	16 000 (1980-2)
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(Sources: Interviews with Cecil Paul 28.3.1990; Carl Tull 1.5.1990; Selwyn John 30.4.1990; Sam Maharaj 12.4.1990; Errol McLeod 30.3.1990)

The precise accuracy of these figures is questionable, not least because the claims made for the size of the two federations conflict with the more precise survey carried out by the CPTU in 1985. However, while these figures may be over-estimates made by hopeful, rather than accurate, trade union leaders, they are useful because they show an almost universal trend towards declining trade union membership since the end of the boom in the early 1980s. Each interviewee also stated that a major reason for the decline in union membership was retrenchment of the workforce. There are two exceptions to this trend - the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association and the Public Services' Association - but in both cases the increase in membership is explained by changes in the internal structure of the union rather than a favourable bargaining position with employers (which in both cases is the state) (Frank Ramnanan

Interview 10.5.1990; Kenrick Rennie Interview 7.5.1990).

Since the election of the NAR government in late 1986, it has been the public sector unions that have suffered most. The new government has been committed to a leading role for the private sector and 'rolling back' the economic functions of the state. In its 1987 budget, the government suspended the Cost of Living Allowance, which had effectively acted (since the Second World War) as an automatic wage increase tied to inflation. The following year a five per cent 'mobilisation for economic independence' tax was introduced, the top rate of income tax was reduced from 70 per cent to 50 per cent, and there were price increases for basic goods. Prime Minister Robinson also announced his intention to ask the International Monetary Fund for finance to compensate for falling export earnings. After ignoring an Industrial Court decision of July 1988 to increase wages and restore COLA, the government introduced its most austere budget in 1989, which included a 10 per cent cut in public sector wages, which was ratified by the Public Sector Emolument Act (Latin American Regional Report 30.3.1989; Express 17.2.1989). Finally in 1990, the indirect and therefore regressive Value Added Tax was introduced for many basic but 'non essential' goods at the standard rate of 15 per cent.

The situation in the publicly owned sugar industry (Caroni) is equally desperate for the workforce. In early 1987, the Caroni board of directors, which included five workers' and farmers' representatives, submitted a Directional Plan for

the industry to the Minister of Planning, Winston Dookeran, who had close ties with the sugar union. The plan made provisions for those affected by rationalisation of the industry and it was envisaged that all workers laid off would be offered land and/or cash as compensation. All workers who opted for land would be assisted in forming agricultural co-operatives and would supply cane to the main company, but they would also be free to grow other crops (and thereby help to reduce the nation's food import bill). However, the government rejected the Directional Plan and introduced its own which would reduce sugar production, close the sugar factory at Brechin Castle, and, according to the union, retrench 7 000 workers without any compensation in land or cash (All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union n.d.: 4; Sam Maharaj Interview 12.4.1990).

The public sector (and so - significantly - the Labour Congress unions) has therefore suffered most amongst the organised working class since 1986. There has been widespread retrenchment, particularly among daily rated and public work scheme workers (the public works system, DEWD, was closed in 1987, leaving 8 000 jobless), attrition (non-replacement of workers that have emigrated or retired), and wage cuts and loss of benefits (Selwyn John Interview 30.4.1990; Kenrick Rennie Interview 7.5.1990). However, there have also been many job losses in the private sector (which itself challenges the economic philosophy of the NAR government) and from 1982 to 1986, total employment in this sector contracted by 20 per cent (Hunte 1988: 9). The

collapse of Kirpalani's in 1986, one of the 'Big Four' national conglomerates, was the most dramatic of all the bankruptcies of private enterprise (Express 6.8.1986).

The most visible result of retrenchment has been an increase in unemployment and in the size of the petty commodity sector. The number of vendors in the towns, and in particular in Port of Spain and San Fernando, has soared, and this has in turn led to new conflicts with the government - for instance, over the area that street vendors are allowed to sell their goods (Express 10.4.90). It is likely that poor women have suffered most from the recession due to a sharp fall in real wages, a reduction in public spending for services on which women rely (Safa forthcoming: 3), and an intensification of their dual role as wage earners and unpaid domestic workers. Moreover, the government's economic strategy also includes the promotion of export processing zones, which often rely on the employment of low paid female labourers working in very poor conditions.

Section Two: Labour Unity in the 1980s?

The unfavourable situation facing the organised working class has led to major changes in the labour movement. On

the one hand, fear of unemployment has led to low morale and a general unwillingness on the part of the workforce to strike. Between 1984 and 1987, there were very few officially recorded major strikes (these involve strikes which result in the loss of at least 2 000 workdays): in 1984, there were 10; in 1985, there were five; in 1986, there were four; and in 1987, only two (Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 1989: 89). There have been a number of stoppages since then (see below for details), but these have rarely been long term and in this respect conform with the pattern of labour resistance from 1984 to 1987. On the other hand, the economic and social difficulties faced by the trade union movement (and the working classes more generally) have led to significant changes among the attitudes of the leaders of organised labour. In this section, I look firstly at the gradual (but still limited) movement towards trade union unity. Secondly, I examine new moves to unify the working classes as a whole through a community and trade union based organisation (the Summit of People's Organisations) and through labour-based political parties (the United National Congress and the Movement for Social Transformation). Thirdly, I show how this has been linked to an explicitly political critique of government (and International Monetary Fund and World Bank) policy.

(a) Trade Union Unity

The movement toward trade union unity has been tentative, and the creation of one, united trade union federation remains a long term prospect. The two federations continue to be divided over ideological issues which are reflected in their respective international affiliations; the Labour Congress is aligned to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, while (since 1980) the Council of Progressive Trade Unions is aligned to the World Federation of Trade Unions (Carl Tull Interview 1.5.1990; Cecil Paul Interview 28.3.1990). The extent to which these ideological issues (and other 'local problems' - not least, the question of personality differences among trade union leaders) have been overcome is discussed below.

Political differences notwithstanding, the majority of trade unions recognise that the crisis in the trade union movement can only be challenged by closer ties between both the federations, and the non-aligned (the teachers' and sugar workers') unions. Before the 1986 general election, trade union unity was of a basically informal nature but met with little success. Since the NAR entered office, most trade unions have moved closer to each other, albeit on specific issues rather than on the question of one trade union centre.

At the formal level, the first joint Labour Day celebrations

were held in 1982 and some labour unity resolutions were held. On this basis, the CPTU in particular tried to initiate talks about one trade union centre, but these actions were not welcomed by a Labour Congress leadership suspicious of the CPTU's 'communist' sympathies (Oilfields Workers' Trade Union 1986b: 20). A Labour Congress team prepared a draft discussion document on labour unity in 1986, but this went no further in either of the two federations (Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress 1986).

More informally, the Joint Trade Union Grouping was set up in December 1983 by unions from both federations and the non-aligned (Oilfields Workers' Trade Union 1986b: 21). Conferences of shop stewards were held and the Grouping mobilised a picket outside Parliament on the day that the 1984 budget was presented to the House of Representatives. An alternative economic programme was presented which demanded an immediate moratorium on retrenchment and a small wage increase "that recognises that workers, no less than management, have the right to maintain their standard of living." (Guardian 24.5.1984) This argument - that the working classes were being forced to pay a disproportionate share of the economic pain in the recession - became a common conviction of the trade union movement, especially after the NAR was elected (see below).

The Joint Trade Union Grouping (later re-named the Concerned Group of Trade Unions) remained a purely informal grouping which united on concrete issues, which in practice meant

that it organised annually around the time of the Budget. Its 1986 programme outlined as its main objective the development of "unity in action of all Trade Unions around concrete issues...through activities that are acceptable to Unions and agreed upon in an 'informal' body that can best achieve consensus, thereby laying the foundation for Formal Unity." (Concerned Trade Unions 1986b: 1) The problem however, was that the Group failed to deal with the long standing divisions in the trade union movement and never enjoyed the full support of those Labour Congress union leaders that had close ties with the PNM. The result was that in practice the trade union movement often remained as divided as ever (at leadership level, at least) on concrete issues. The Transport and Industrial Workers' Union dispute with Neal and Massy in 1986 is a case in point. This particular conglomerate, the largest in Trinidad, had led the offensive against organised labour since 1983. The parent company had unilaterally declared a wage freeze, withdrawn COLA, reduced the working week and contracted out work at some of its subsidiary companies (Socialist Worker April/May 1986). When these actions were followed by lock outs at further subsidiaries (Polymer Caribbean, Neal and Massy Motors, Edgar Borde, Electrical Industries and Automotive Components), TIWU called for a boycott of two food and drink subsidiaries (Cannings food and drink and Hi-Lo supermarkets) in April 1986. This call was supported by thirteen trade unions, but it was strongly criticised by the most important Labour Congress union, the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (Express 7.8.1986).

The election victory of the NAR paved the way for a new period of attempts to unify the trade union movement. The momentum of the struggle for trade union unity has increased for two reasons. Firstly, the defeat of the PNM meant that there were no longer the close ties of patronage between government and conservative trade union leaders that had existed since the early 1960s. Secondly, there was the question of government policy itself. The government's commitment to cutting back the economic role of the state and promoting private enterprise meant that Labour Congress unions (especially the NUGFW and the Public Services' Association) suffered most from government policy.

The new government created institutional structures in which (so it was claimed) the trade union movement would enjoy genuine representation and a chance to promote its own particular demands as representatives of labour. The most important of these was the Joint Consultative Council. Both the trade union centres and the non-aligned unions were dismayed when COLA was withdrawn from public sector workers in the 1987 budget. The Council of Progressive Trade Unions responded by presenting a paper to the Joint Consultative Council which criticised the government's policies of promoting 'free enterprise'. The paper argues that "the Private Sector was only called upon to make minimal sacrifices through the national recovery impost...And in spite of this, their contribution to the national reconstruction effort so far has been minimal." (Council of Progressive Trade Unions 1987: 2) The CPTU called for a

reduction in the salaries of company directors, a price freeze, increased taxation on capital exports and the establishment of funds for the provision of social services (ibid.: 3-4). This paper was subsequently adopted by the Labour Congress, which also proposed a similar revenue raising alternative budget (Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress 1987). The Congress also argued that labour had taken more than its share of the required sacrifice, claiming that while, between 1983 to 1986 real income for the country as a whole had fallen by almost 30 per cent, labour income in the public sector had fallen by 44 per cent (Guardian 29.11.1987). In 1965 and 1970, conservative trade union leaders had blamed the 'political' trade unions for the country's economic problems. By 1987, the Congress was arguing that the "fundamental structural problem...lies with the business community, and with the manner in which our businessmen have elected to provision the economy. The determination of the business community to earn their livelihood through imports, the reluctance of these citizens to reinvest their profits in this country, and the reluctance of these entrepreneurs to take any major investment initiative except (if) it is in some way underwritten by the government, have all added up to what exists today; an economy that remains heavily dependent upon foreign investment, an economy whose fortunes remain very sensitive to the conditions of the government's budget." (ibid.)

Despite the Labour Congress' (implicit) 'conversion' to the

notion of uneven capitalist development, there were still some differences between the two centres on the question of the economy. The major issue was whether the government should ask the International Monetary Fund for a loan and accept conditionalities in order to retain the confidence of external creditors (it had become obvious that the government would). The CPTU was against any such policy, while (in 1987) the Labour Congress was concerned about the social effects of IMF conditionalities, but not yet completely opposed to the government's expected course of action (Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress 1987: 6-7). However, this potential area of disagreement rapidly disappeared, as by early 1988 the Congress was describing the government's courting of the IMF as "dangerous and extremely serious" and it stated that it was "vehemently opposed to the outdated conditions of the Fund." (Express 23.1.1988)

The government's decision to approach the IMF was first officially announced at the presentation of the budget in early 1988, and this was followed by the submission of a Letter of Intent to the IMF the following November (Farrell 1989: 15), despite accusations by a former IMF official that the organisation had been deliberately inaccurate in its assessment of the Trinidad economy (see Ryan 1990: 321). In late 1988 and early 1989, two IMF loans (plus one from the World Bank) were secured, and, more importantly, the IMF 'seal of approval' was given to bankers to continue to lend money to the country. The usual conditionalities applied,

especially to the second loan: these included a reduction in the budget deficit, a periodic review of the exchange rate, and a reduction in import and price controls.

It was against this background that the first IMF-influenced budget was introduced in early 1989, in which the aforementioned salary cuts were made. In anticipation of a harsh budget, the trade union movement planned a national day of resistance for March. By this time the informal alliance of trade unions had evolved into the Joint Trade Union Movement, which, given the context in which it operated, was far more unified than its predecessors. Before the Day of Resistance, the Labour Congress demanded the recall of the 1989 budget, arguing that its fiscal measures "will have the effect of damaging the economic system of the country, while at the same time instituting a level of poverty and suffering such as the society will not be able to bear. This is a Budget which has attacked workers by cutting their pay, by reducing their jobs (sic.) security... In our view the Government of this country has every reason to reopen negotiations with the IMF and to seek to get better terms for the people of this country." (Express 15.1.1989)

The Day of Resistance was held on March 6, 1989. The intention was that the whole of the country's workforce would stay away from work for one day. The response to this call by the Joint Trade Union Movement was strong in the public sector, especially among teachers, public transport

workers and public servants, but workers employed by private enterprise were far less supportive (Guardian 6.3.1989; 7.3.1989).

The immediate response of the government to the protest action was negative. NAR General Secretary Bhoe Tewarie, criticised the trade union movement that "is now being led astray by a callous clique whose actions are prompted by political ambitions. Indeed, the trade union movement itself may well be in jeopardy because of the callous and irresponsible attitude of these political players in the trade union movement." (Express 4.3.1989) This attack, reminiscent of Eric Williams in his prime, was ill-advised because the trade union leadership of the late 1980s was very different from what it had been in the mid-1960s. Prime Minister Robinson therefore took a more conciliatory line and set up a technical team which would make proposals for a medium term economic programme.

This technical team met in May 1989 and had representation from both union federations. Through the Joint Trade Union Movement, demands were made for a moratorium on some of the 1989 budget measures, on retrenchment and on the Cabinet plan for the sugar industry (see above) (Express 2.5.1989). However, a split developed between the two federations over the talks. According to Labour Congress representative Selwyn John, progress was made on the issues of retrenchment, but not on the issue of a 10 per cent cut in public salaries. However, CPTU leaders claimed that "we

accomplished nothing." (Express 3.5.1989) This division became serious as the CPTU withdrew from the technical team, which effectively destroyed the unity of the Joint Trade Union Movement. In a media announcement, the Congress stated that it regrets "the move by its sister Federation, the CPTU, to resist all attempts to arrive at a united position in relation to further talks with the Government." (Express 15.6.1989) Although it encouraged the CPTU to re-enter dialogue with Congress and the government, the old political divisions were resurrected. Congress stated that it was not a political football "to be used and misused when it suits the interests of those who are bent on carving out some space in an increasingly difficult political environment. We therefore have no intention of letting our guard down." (ibid.) The CPTU was also accused of having an agenda and finance organised by 'foreign forces' (Cecil Paul Interview 28.3.1990; Selwyn John Interview 30.4.1990).

The technical team continued without CPTU representation and so unity was once again undermined. However, by the end of 1989, two factors helped to restore a limited degree of unity. Firstly, there was industrial action at the oil refineries, the Water and Sewerage Authority and the Public Service Transport Corporation. The strike involving the oilworkers was successful in winning a (realistically small) wage increase along with better pension schemes and medical benefits for workers (Express 17.10.1989). In a public statement, the OWTU argued that the strike was of wider significance because it "re-established without a doubt the

respect and regard by employers (private and state) managers and Government for the Trade Union Movement in general and the OWTU in particular." (Express 22.10.1989) There were also sit-ins and work stoppages at WASA and the PTSC in response to retrenchment orders (later partially withdrawn) (Express 30.12.1989; Guardian 5.1.1990). The WASA stoppage was particularly important because it involved workers in the largest Labour Congress affiliated union (the NUGFW). Secondly, and related to the WASA stoppage, the Labour Congress became disorientated with the government's attitude to the technical team and in particular to the role of the trade union movement in it. The leadership claimed that in meetings with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the government had ignored the Labour Congress (Guardian 9.12.1989).

This breakdown of negotiations was reflected in the 1990 budget. The introduction of 15 per cent Value Added Tax was strongly criticised by both federations and it provided the basis for renewed impetus in the Joint Trade Union Movement and the creation of a wider, community based organisation, the Summit of Peoples Organisations (SOPo) (Kenrick Rennie Interview 7.5.1990; Cecil Paul Interview 28.3.1990). Demonstrations were organised against the budget and the June 1990 labour day celebrations were re-united under one banner at Fyzabad (Express 22.6.1990).

The prospects for trade union unity in the 1990s are greater than they have been since the last major split in 1965. At

the same time however, the scale of the problems facing the movement have never been greater and the moves towards unity have not kept pace with these difficulties. While some Labour Congress unions regularly attend JTUM meetings, the federation itself is not affiliated to it (Carl Tull Interview 1.5.1990). Moreover, those unions affiliated to Congress that do attend are not as fully committed to the JTUM as the CPTU unions. There are basically two levels of criticism made by Labour Congress affiliated unions against the Joint Trade Union Movement. On the one hand is the well-worn criticism (see chapters one and three) made by older leaders that the progressive trade unions are too political. According to NUGFW President Selwyn John, "(the) difficulty that has come up in the trade unions within the last year, maybe two years, is that the left wing forces have attempted to take most, if not all the trade unions, and in doing so they undermine these bodies...It is our view that this was an international left wing cause - that in order to gain power they must have not only trade union power but political power." (Selwyn John Interview 30.4.1990) On the other hand, some younger leaders, who are far less critical of the CPTU and not so closely associated with the Labour Congress' 'old guard', reject this false separation of trade unions and politics, but criticise the JTUM on the more realistic basis that there has been a long term separation of leaders from workers. According to the Bank Employees' Union General Secretary (and Labour Congress Deputy General Secretary) Patrick Rabathly, while the JTUM is a worthwhile endeavour (in that it at least recognises the need for trade

union unity), "we have not been communicating well with workers" and so the JTUM "will only really get the credibility it deserves if people can see that the labour movement is united." He regards the JTUM as too much of a 'top down', leadership-oriented initiative (Interview 3.5.1990). The two non-aligned unions are active in the JTUM, but are sceptical about the prospects for unity, especially the sugar workers' union leadership, which regards the major obstacle to be one of personality conflicts (Frank Ramnanan Interview 10.5.1990; Sam Maharaj Interview 12.4.1990).

So, while the JTUM is "the most developed form of unity that we have had in the labour movement...since 1965" (Cecil Paul Interview 28.3.1990), there are still a number of problems to be resolved. Firstly, there is the resistance of some old but highly influential trade union leaders (Carl Tull and Selwyn John) opposed to one trade union centre and 'political unionism'. Secondly, there is the related problem of ideology and international trade union affiliation. Thirdly, and in the long term most importantly, the wide gap that exists between trade union leaders and rank and file members must be narrowed. This is all the more important in the current period because the recession has lowered the morale and the confidence of organised labour. Perhaps the most promising development in this regard has taken place in some of the Labour Congress unions (the PSA and the Bank Employees Union, among others) where old, often corrupt, leaders have been replaced by a younger leadership which

rejects so-called 'responsible unionism' and is broadly sympathetic to the aims (if not the methods) of the CPTU. I examine this in more detail below, in the context of 'social movement unionism', the Summit of People's Organisations and new labour parties.

(b) Labour Parties and Social Movement Unionism

There are currently two political parties claiming to represent the cause of labour, and these essentially reflect the split in the ULF in 1977. On the one hand is Basdeo Panday's United National Congress, which established itself as the official Opposition after the attempted Islamic coup in July 1990 (Latin American Regional Report 4.10.1990), while on the other is the Movement for Social Transformation, which has its origins in the old Shah faction of the ULF.

After the split in the ULF, Panday's party entered various alliances (see chapter five), culminating in the National Alliance for Reconstruction. The problem with this coalition was that it contained such a diversity of political views that it never really constituted a positive alliance - its only unifying feature was a desire to end twenty five years of PNM government. Once the party entered office, divisions quickly arose. Panday and some of his followers felt that the government was not sufficiently challenging the

entrenched state bureaucracy, especially on the issue of public works schemes (Ryan 1988: 69-76). They felt that this was indicative of a wider government failure to challenge anti-Indian racism in society. Within a year of the NAR's election victory, the party was in open conflict. By February 1988, Prime Minister Robinson was talking of forces "bent on destruction within the party - some of them functioning at the highest levels." (Express 7.2.1988) He argued that the 'splitters' were using race, and in particular the government's refusal to allow the Indian government to build an Indian cultural centre, to divide the party (Ryan 1990: 160-2). Panday, who was by now holding open meetings of NAR dissidents, argued that the divisive factors were a combination of class and race: "Sugar workers are owed \$125 million in backpay and they cannot get a word on that, and they are now saying that the centre is the issue? The fact that the centre was mentioned as an issue demonstrates the road which they wish to travel and that is to divide us again...They are trying to do exactly what the PNM used to...(T)hose who seek to divide the country will feel the wrath of the people. Only our people will never go back to the racial syndrome. That is a mistake they making (sic.)." (Express 8.2.1988) On February 8, Robinson dismissed Panday, Kelvin Ramnath and Trevor Sudama from the Cabinet (Express 9.2.1988), and in April 1989, the United National Congress was founded (Express 1.5.1989).

The new party has probably attracted a social base similar to the old ULF (although some old ULF members stayed loyal

to the government). To become a mass party it faces the basic problem of attracting black working class support. The party has placed much emphasis on the persistence of racial discrimination in society, which has led to renewed accusations that Panday is a racist (see for instance Express 15.11.1988 and Guardian 25.3.1990). However, raising the question of race where racism exists is not itself racist, and the political left in Trinidad have continued to ignore race as a mere epiphenomenon of capitalism. What is questionable about Panday and his followers is the zeal with which he condemns anti-Indian racism but the comparative reluctance to condemn racist comments made by some Indian leaders (see Guardian 18.3.1990). So, while Panday quite rightly emphasises the continued significance of the race factor, the manner in which he raises it is questionable and not dis-similar to the old Democratic Labour Party.

The second party claiming to represent the working classes is MOTION, which was formed in September 1989 out of the Committee for Labour Solidarity. It is an independent socialist party committed to a mixed economy (Movement for Social Transformation 1989b: 8) and is critical of the record of the 'socialist' countries (David Abdullah Interview 25.4.1990). The decision was taken in 1988 to transform the CLS into a full political party because of the changing political climate - in particular, the rise of the NAR and the associated demise of racially based voting. After the subsequent problems of the government, CLS activists believed that there was a sufficient change in the political

atmosphere to justify the formation of a new labour based party. In the words of its interim political leader, David Abdulah, "the mood had changed...The people were ready for a new kind of politics, not just a new kind of party."

(Interview 25.4.1990)

The problem with this perspective is that it underestimates the resilience of ideologies like racism. The divisions that existed between African and Indian workers were not created by the PNM and are therefore unlikely to simply disappear now that a different party is in office. Moreover, recessions are a fertile breeding ground for scapegoating, and there has been a marked increase in racial tensions in the last two years. For instance, government plans for a national service have led to a moral panic that the races will become 'mixed' (Guardian 18.3.1990). While MOTION undoubtedly recognises the persistence of racism (David Abdulah Interview 25.4.1990), the party still tends to regard as an epiphenomenon of capitalism or a capitalist conspiracy. For instance, its political programme contains relatively progressive sections on women's rights, education, and young and old people but there is no section on race or ethnicity. A section on sport and culture does not mention the historical divide between Indian and African (Movement for Social Transformation 1989b: 30-7).

The second major problem that MOTION faces is that it may come to be regarded as yet another isolated socialist party which involves a few CPTU leaders but few rank and file trade

unionists or unorganised workers. A more credible alternative may have been the creation of a progressive labour party out of those unions in both federations, which would have shown to workers (organised and unorganised) that the trade union movement is capable of achieving some unity. In the long term, the creation of such a party would lead to a conflict in the Labour Congress between the new, younger leaders and the 'old guard', but this would eventually aid unity as the latter group remains the biggest obstacle to one trade union centre.

The final important organisational development among the working classes is the creation of the Summit of People's Organisations (SOPO). This was formed in February 1990 in response to the burden of IMF and World Bank-influenced government policy. The organisation was set up on the initiative of trade unions from both federations (but again, with less support from some Labour Congress affiliated unions) but is a wider body than a 'pure' (or 'responsible') trade union. It includes religious and cultural organisations (among these, before July 1990, was the Jamaat-Al-Muslimeen, the organisation behind the coup attempt), feminist groups (the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action) and various political parties (including the PNM and MOTION) (Summit of People's Organisations 1990: 1).

The basic inspiration for SOPO is the success of 'social movement unionism' in countries like Brazil and South

Africa. This phenomenon is based on an alliance of organised labour with other social movements, and its motivation is the belief that "there is a growing confluence of interests and a gradual overcoming of previous social and political barriers." (Munck 1988: 117) This conception rejects the distinction between economic and political unionism, and the crude Marxist notion (discussed in the opening chapter) that the class struggle is the major (or only) source of conflict in society. As Waterman states, in this conception "worker struggles are neither condemned as 'economic/reformist', nor glorified as 'political/revolutionary', but recognised as representing one front or site of political struggle that must be articulated intimately with others if the 'present state of things' is to be abolished...In our increasingly diverse, complex but interdependent economies, politics and cultures...it is not unity but diversity that is strength. It is, in other words, not so much a matter of trying to reduce all the increasing variety to one 'primary', 'fundamental' contradiction (class, nationality or - for that matter - gender). It is rather one of recognising within the many movements (which thus include the labour one) the common democratic thread." (Waterman 1990: 8, 11)

The immediate demands of SOPO included a halt to retrenchment at Caroni and PTSC, the reinstatement of COLA and the 10 per cent of salaries that were cut from teachers and public servants, a halt to cutbacks in social services, the withdrawal of VAT and an immediate programme of job creation (Summit of People's Organisations 1990: 1-2). While some of these demands are of more immediate concern to the

trade union movement, others (such as stopping the cuts in social services and abolishing VAT) are of relevance to all sections of the working classes and therefore represent a move towards social movement unionism. However, this move remains tentative and at the time of writing is largely confined to trade union leaders and activists.

Summary and Conclusion: Uneven Development Revisited and the Rise of Social Movement Unionism.

The nature of government economic policy, especially since 1986, has forced the trade union movement, and in particular the Labour Congress unions, to rethink the relationship between trade unionism and politics. This in turn has led to a protracted debate over economic policy, which echoes my discussion of uneven development presented in the opening chapter.

The trade union movement's criticisms of the government have addressed economic policy per se, and the social consequences of these policies on the organised working class and the poorest sections of the population. The basic philosophy behind government, International Monetary Fund and World Bank policy is the neo-classical theory which I challenged in chapter one. In order to revive the economy, the IMF typically proposes cutbacks in the state sector, privatisation and the liberalisation of imports. This

equilibrium model also expounds the view that foreign investment will be attracted to a country if the government provides the right incentives. These views are undoubtedly shared by the NAR government's Minister of Finance, Selby Wilson (see Express 18.3.1990), and in 1990, the country's first export processing zone was established at Point Lisas (Guardian 19.3.1990). However, as I argued in chapter one, this equilibrium model is seriously flawed, as it fails to examine the agglomeration tendencies of international capitalism, and the weakness of the private sector in developing countries (and its related tendency to export capital). Furthermore, Export Processing Zones do not provide a great deal of employment or linkages with the rest of the economy, and they generally rely on the super-exploitation of cheap, usually female labour (Jenkins 1987: 123-43; Elson and Pearson 1979). The union movement has therefore correctly predicted that government policy (at least in the absence of a massive oil price rise) will lead to a worsening of the recession and a redistribution of wealth away from the poor towards the rich. Such a process is common in many Third World countries, in which austerity protests occur where debt and IMF pressure are most pronounced (Walton and Ragin 1990: 883).

Government economic policy has laid the framework for a substantial revision of trade union practice and most of the movement's leaders have recognised the necessity for greater unity. Moreover, there is now a widespread belief that trade unions should link up with other organisations, so that non-

unionised sectors of the working classes can be represented. The success of social movement unionism and mass labour party politics will depend on the extent to which the trade union movement can bridge the gap between leaders and members (or non-members), and the divisions of race, gender and class fractions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The history of Trinidad and Tobago is incomprehensible without an examination of the history of labour. The inhabitants of the country are the descendants of people who were brought to the islands as labourers. The economic development of the islands' over the last five centuries must be understood as the simultaneous evolution of different modes of labour control. Existing mainstream theories of development and underdevelopment lack such a labour-based approach.

In the 20 century, the working classes have played a crucial role in the history of the twin-island state - for example, the rebellion of 1937 paved the way for organised trade unionism and gradual decolonisation; independence in 1962 was led by a black petty bourgeois organisation, but it was with the active involvement of the trade union movement; and in 1970, unorganised fractions of the working classes rebelled against the government.

Nevertheless, my case study showed that there is no homogenous working class and little commitment to socialist politics. Crude Marxist two-class models, based on notions of 'true' and 'false' consciousness are therefore inappropriate. Instead, I explored the divisions among the working classes and examined the extent to which these were

overcome during certain periods of struggle (such as in 1970), or by socialist political parties (such as the ULF). The four major divisions that I examined were gender, race and ethnicity, class, and politics.

The sexual division of labour confines women to domestic duties and certain low paid occupations in the 'formal sector'. Although there is no discernible discrimination against women in the informal sector per se, they are still disadvantaged because they are expected to bear the burden of unpaid domestic labour. The origins of the sexual division of labour are complex (and under-researched), but it appears that both male and female slaves and indentured labourers worked equally (at least, vis-a-vis each other) on the plantations. With the intensification of proletarianisation in the late 19 century, there was a process of 'housewifeisation' which forced many women out of the labour market and into the domestic sphere. The precise mechanisms of this process are ambiguous however, and in particular, in the absence of a pre-existing sexual division of labour, the precise reasons why men became proletarians and women housewives is not clear. Capitalists may benefit from the unpaid domestic labour performed by women because it reproduces an exploitable labour force, but this does not explain why it was women who were generally assigned this task. One tentative (and, on its own, inadequate) explanation used in chapter two referred to male violence (and the threat of violence) against women.

Nevertheless, the twin processes of proletarianisation and housewifeisation did undoubtedly occur, and this has left women oppressed both in society and vis-a-vis working class men. Despite their subordinate role, women have been actively involved in the labour movement (their role in the 1937 rebellion was especially pronounced), but the patriarchal nature of society has ensured that they remain under-represented in the trade union movement (both at leadership and membership level) and in labour-oriented political parties. The promotion of export processing zones in the 1990s may increase the number of proletarian women (although the experience of other Third World countries suggests that this will only be confined to a small minority of the labour force), but it will be at the cost of their 'super-exploitation'.

The racial division of the labour force was established in the period of indentured labour. A basic rural-urban divide was established in which Indians lived in the countryside and Africans in the towns. Mutual distrust was fuelled as the importation of Indian labour undermined the bargaining position of the former African slaves, and racial stereotyping on both sides developed. Economic development - in particular in the oil industry, in manufacturing, and in the state bureaucracy - has undermined this demographic segregation but there are still substantial political and cultural divisions. Party politics, at least until 1986, has been based on one party largely representing the Africans, and another largely representing the Indian population,

which has in turn militated against efforts to create a popular socialist party. The Workers and Farmers Party and the United Labour Front both failed to constructively come to terms with the question of race (see below for a discussion of this point) and, in the case of the latter, this was a major reason for its split in 1977. The election of the multi-racial NAR government in 1986 undermined two party, racially based politics, but the split in the government and wider racial tensions suggests that the two latest parties that aspire to represent labour (the UNC and MOTION) face a great obstacle if they are to achieve political unity among the Indian and African working classes.

The class structure is too complex and diffuse for there to be a single 'working class', and so the plural 'working classes' has been employed throughout this study. There are at least three fractions of the working classes - the working class, the peasantry and the informal sector - and each of these can be further subdivided. Firstly, the working class are those workers (proletarians) who sell their labour power in order to live. This group can be further sub-divided into casual, temporary workers at one extreme (this would include, for instance, sugar workers up to the 1970s, low paid female domestic employees, and many workers at the present time in the public sector), and those that are comparatively well-paid, in relatively secure jobs, and politically 'integrated' at the other. This latter group includes oil workers and some public sector workers during

the boom period of the 1970s. Some writers have referred to such a group as a 'labour aristocracy' who, because of their relative privileges (such as job security and high wages), are unlikely to have radical politics (for a summary of the general debate see Munck 1988: 53-5). The OWTU has had a radical leadership since 1962 but its members have been relatively conservative - for instance, while they supported George Weekes as their trade union leader, they never supported the labour parties (WFP and ULF) in which he was a leading figure. However, the problem with the concept of the labour aristocracy is that it is too static - it over-estimates 'privileges' such as job security and high wages and under-estimates the dynamics of political change. Oil workers and public sector workers were highly paid and enjoyed job security during the economic boom, but this is no longer the case and there has been widespread retrenchment and erosion of real wages in the 1980s. Moreover, oil workers have always been better paid than the rest of the organised working class, but have not always been conservative - in the 1930s and 40s, it was this sector that led anti-colonial unrest. The subsequent conservatism of this group of workers is better explained by the rise of a racially based, two party political system.

The peasantry has been a declining fraction of the working classes this century, but there are still substantial numbers of small farmers in central Trinidad and in Tobago. Some of these, especially around the sugar estates, are

semi-proletarianised in that they work for an employer for a wage, and supplement their income by growing their own food.

The informal sector comprises those people that have been 'marginalised' by peripheral capitalism (though not in an absolute sense - see chapter one), and so have to sell goods on the streets of the main towns in order to survive. Some of the more successful petty traders enjoy high incomes, but most have modest or low 'life chances'.

The relatively isolated and individualised work experience of these two groups (with the exception of the 'semi-proletariat') makes it harder for them to organise amongst themselves. Nevertheless, the black urban poor was at the forefront of the protests in 1970, and the increasing numerical significance of the informal sector has made it imperative that the organised labour movement begins to take account of this sector (see below).

The organised labour movement has historically been divided by politics, and this is reflected in the large number of labour parties that have attempted to represent the working classes, and the long term division of the trade union movement into 'responsible' and 'political' trade unions. Furthermore, there is a wide gulf between the trade union leadership on the one hand, and the membership on the other. 'Responsible' trade unions have often been undemocratic, and some of their leaders have enjoyed the patronage of successive PNM governments. However, this situation began to

alter in the 1970s and 1980s and new, younger (and politically minded), trade union leaders were democratically elected to Labour Congress unions. 'Political' trade union leaders have often enjoyed widespread support from their members as trade union leaders, but the latter have generally not shared the former's wider political aspirations.

Left wing parties have often concerned themselves with 'Marxist purity', rather than setting about the long term task of winning popular support. For example, the United Labour Front of the 1970s failed to confront the problem of racial politics and simply tried to replace it with a class-based political agenda. It did not have a conception of transitional demands which attempted to bridge the gap in the existing political consciousness of the working classes on the one hand, and the socialism to which the ULF aspired, on the other.

The rise of social movement unionism in the 1980s may prepare the way for a new stage in the history of labour politics in Trinidad. However, one should recognise the context in which this has taken place - the biggest crisis in the labour movement's history - and the fact that the initiatives to start a popular labour-social movement alliance are very tentative. Nevertheless, the Summit of Peoples' Organisations is a potentially significant organisation for three reasons. Firstly, because it is an alliance-based organisation it can more easily come to terms

with the diversity of the working classes and recognise (unlike the ULF or WFP) that political unity can only be achieved through a recognition of social and cultural diversity. In this way, social movement unionism attempts to come to terms with, rather than ignore, the divisions within the working classes. The autonomy of the different social movements must therefore be recognised, as well as the common democratic interests that they share. Secondly, and related to this first point, social movements tend to be 'bottom up' initiatives and so should represent, and be part of, the working classes in a way that 'vanguard' organisations never did or could. Whilst the labour movement remains too much of a 'top down' organisation, there is at least now a recognition amongst its leaders that this is a major problem that must be faced, and most unions now have structures that are more democratic than they were thirty years ago. Thirdly, because social movement unionism is based on initiatives from below, it can represent (albeit in a limited way and through a long term process) alternative sources of power and co-operation in society. In this way, it is part of a 'counter hegemonic strategy' for change that represents a challenge to a liberal democracy in a peripheral capitalist society. This point is important because, although there is widespread cynicism about parliamentary rule (in that it is weak and corrupt), it has not been challenged by alternative systems of popular power. The 1970 rebellion never confronted the issue of power (except for - briefly - the military), and the power base of socialist parties has rested with central committees rather

than popular organisations. This was the case with the ULF, despite the intentions of the Shah faction.

Labour in Trinidad and Tobago is therefore beginning (again I would stress, slowly and tentatively) to recognise the realities of its history. The working classes have been, and will continue to be, a major force in the twin island state's history.

On the other hand, the working classes, and their various fractions, have played different political roles at different times and situations. Capitalist development is especially uneven in peripheral capitalist societies, and so too is the development of class consciousness. This is the case in all societies, but it is especially true where the class structure is particularly fluid and diffuse.

Vanguardism has been ineffective because it is based on a productionist Marxism which assumes the existence of a homogenous working class and is therefore an inappropriate model for Third World (and other) societies.

In this thesis, I have challenged existing theories of development and underdevelopment and in doing so, have attempted to show that there is a close link between labour and development. The 'underdevelopment' of Trinidad and Tobago should be explained by referring to the 'archaic' methods of labour control in the 18 and 19 centuries, and the unevenness of class formation in the 20 century.

I have then further used the concept of uneven development to move beyond traditional conceptions of production and the working class, to explain the real divisions within the labour force, and how the labour movement has constructively engaged with these problems. While I have outlined these issues in relation to a small Caribbean twin island state, my approach is also more generally significant. Both labour movements, and intellectuals in many countries have begun to recognise the limitations of productionist Marxism and traditional Marxist-Leninism, and have looked instead at issues like the relationship between different fractions of the working classes, non-class divisions such as those based on gender and ethnicity, and the emergence, given this context, of social movement unionism (for commentaries see Cohen 1983; Munck 1988). It is hoped that my thesis is a modest contribution to this 'new' approach to labour studies.

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Albert Aberdeen - President of the Transport and Industrial Workers Union. 26.4.1990

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Sam Maharaj - General Secretary of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union. 12.4.1990

Errol McLeod - President of the Oilfield Workers Trade Union. 30.3.1990

James Millette - General Secretary of the United Labour Front. 2.3.1990

Basdeo Panday - Parliamentary leader of the United Labour Front and the United National Congress. 16.3.1990

Cecil Paul - General Secretary of the Council of Progressive Trade Unions. 28.3.1990

Lennox Pierre - United Labour Front Central Committee member. 31.3.1990

Patrick Rabathly - General Secretary of the Bank Employees Union. 3.5.1990

Frank Ramnanan - General Secretary of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association. 10.5.1990

Kenrick Rennie - President of the Public Services Association. 7.5.1990

Raffique Shah - Parliamentary leader of the United Labour Front. 20.4.1990

Gajraj Singh - Senior Labour Relations Officer, Ministry of Labour. 8.5.1990

Carl Tull - General Secretary of the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress. 1.5.1990

APPENDIX: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The purpose of this appendix is to provide some detail about my experience of the research process. It outlines my primary research strategies, and how these changed (and were forced to change) over time. I also conclude by describing my experience of the process of writing up a thesis.

As I said in my introduction, documentary materials were always going to be my major source of data because they provide the researcher with the opportunity to utilise a long term perspective. Surveys or interviews usually cover a small period of time and apply to subjects which are far more specific than a history of labour which covers a period of 200 years. My concern was to explore the general tendencies of labour politics, and so documentary research was considered the most appropriate strategy.

Nevertheless, I initially thought that I could supplement my documentary sources with a large number of interviews in Trinidad. Before visiting the country, my research timetable was broadly divided into two sections. Firstly, I would concentrate on the period up to 1970 and use documents and newspapers from the colonial and immediate post-colonial period. Secondly, in Trinidad, I planned to examine documentary sources for the period from 1970-90, but I also intended to undertake case studies of two trade unions (the

OWTU and the NUGFW) in the contemporary period. I hoped to interview rank and file trade unionists in order to get a 'view from below'. While the first half of my research plan ran relatively smoothly, my plans concerning the second part in Trinidad were continually altered.

My first problem was that I had serious doubts about my intention to 'target' two trade unions at branch level. In my planned interviews I hoped to examine what rank and file members saw as the relationships between trade unionism and politics, and between organised and unorganised labour. The two unions were chosen because each was in one of the two federations, the OWTU had a long history of organisation, and the NUGFW was the largest union in the country. While these interviews would undoubtedly provide me with a wealth of primary and highly specific data, I thought that there was a danger of the material becoming too specific. For instance, there was no guarantee that my discoveries in the two case studies could be generalised to those unions at a national level, or to the labour movement as a whole. I therefore felt that I was in danger of losing a macro-perspective.

I arrived in Trinidad in January 1990, and almost immediately these doubts were increased. Two research students at the University of West Indies had carried out interviews with workers in the oil and sugar industries (see D. Ramsaran 1989). They told me that they had aroused great

suspicion from interviewees, and that it was widely believed that they were spies from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund, who were planning to 'rationalise' the workforce. At times they had been verbally abused and threatened with physical violence. Both researchers were from Trinidad, and they warned me that a British researcher might fare worse than they had done.

My doubts were obviously increased by these stories, but I still decided at this point to make contact with trade union leaders at national level as a first step to getting access to trade union branches (and documentary materials). After the General Secretary of the Council of Progressive Trade Unions confirmed that I would face suspicion or even open hostility from rank and file trade unionists, I decided to formulate a different strategy for interviews. My interviews would now focus on trade union leaders and concentrate on the question of how the economic recession had led to new strategies within the leadership of the trade union movement, based around social movement unionism, and whether this would provide the renewed basis for one united trade union federation. The findings of these interviews would therefore not constitute a whole chapter, but would instead form the section of chapter six which looks at trade union unity. In order to maintain a wider analysis, such as data on the economy, government-labour relations and strikes, I was drawn back to a reliance on documentary materials (see below for more details).

The choice of which trade union leaders to interview changed over time, and was strongly influenced by informal consultations with leaders. For instance, I initially intended to interview two leaders from each of the federations, but the Labour Congress General Secretary Carl Tull recommended that I talk with his deputy, Patrick Rabathly, who was also General Secretary of the Bank Employees' Union. Rabathly was a major source of information, particularly concerning the division in the Labour Congress unions between the 'old guard' and the younger leaders. I therefore decided to formalise at least some of what he told me in an interview.

All of the interviews with labour leaders (except one - see below) were taped and then transcribed, and each (again with one - the same - exception) lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. The interviews were semi-structured, and were divided into three broad sections: the first section looked at each particular union and how it had been affected in the 1980s; section two examined the relationship between the trade union and wider social struggles, and section three looked at the progress towards trade union unity. The interviewees gave information on certain details on the condition that I would not quote them directly. Much of this sensitive information was concerned with dominant, yet publicly low-key figures in the trade union movement, and dealt with the issues of corruption and government patronage, and political affiliations and finance. Although

I quote various leaders in chapter six, much of the data presented is based on the 'feelings' conveyed to me by interviewees, and this again led me back to a search for more public data, where for example the differences between the two federations were openly expressed in newspaper advertisements.

The disadvantage of this approach was that I lost some of my focus on the 'rank and file' and there was a danger that I would concentrate too much on the trade union leadership. However, I recovered my macro-based approach, and decided that in my return to documentary sources I would bear in mind the historical division between trade union leaders and rank and file members. In addition I specifically asked trade union leaders questions about this division and all of them were prepared to admit that there was a wide discrepancy between the attitudes of leaders and members.

For the period of the 1980s, I was given accesss to a wide variety of documents. The General Secretary of the Council of Progressive Trade Unions allowed me to search through his files, and agreed to photocopy (free of charge) any material that I found useful. I spent three separate days sorting through the files, and a secretary photocopied hundreds of pages of documents. The documents included material on correspondence between the two trade union federations, on alternatives to government economic policy, and minutes of meetings of the Joint Trade Union Movement and the Summit of

Peoples' Organisations. After the photocopying was completed, the General Secretary checked through to see which documents I had taken. He agreed to release all of the material I requested, but did so on the condition that I would not quote directly any of the minutes of meetings. I agreed to this request.

After taking the documents home, I divided them both chronologically and into four subject categories, and, as a result, I read them twice. The first time, I read them as historical documents, and tried to trace important shifts of emphasis in union policy over time. The subject categories emerged out of my historical reading, and they formed the basis for the structure of chapter six. The four categories were economic policy, industrial relations, trade union unity and labour parties. Once these categories were established they were again sub-divided chronologically.

Reading and re-reading the documents was at times a tedious affair, and much of my time was spent discarding material which was repetitive (in that certain points were constantly made in documents). The documents were important because they told me how the CPTU federations perceived the crisis in the economy and the labour movement, and how the leaders hoped to deal with these problems. The most serious weakness in this approach was again that it relied too much on the views of the leadership and not enough on those of the rank and file. This common problem is more serious in Trinidad

because the progressive trade unions have a history of exaggerating the radicalism of workers. I kept this in mind when reading through the documents, and looked at strike statistics and newspapers in order to get a clearer picture of rank and file feeling in the 1980s. Moreover, documentary confirmation of a leader-member divide became a source of data in itself, and as I have already said, this is something I explored further in my interviews with trade union leaders. To my surprise, most of them (including those in the CPTU) accepted that there was a wide gap between the views of leaders and members, and discussions in interviews often centred around how this gap could be narrowed, and how this question related to trade union unity.

The other major problem I faced in researching documentary material was getting access to the files of the Labour Congress. Its General Secretary did not provide me with any material and was very evasive in granting an interview. In the end, he allowed me to ask him a number of questions, but he made sure that the interview was not taped and that it only lasted for a short period of time (approximately 15 minutes). Most of my information on the Labour Congress was obtained from public statements and paid advertisements in newspapers, and the CPTU provided me with some of the Labour Congress internal documents. The problem with this approach was that I was too reliant on the CPTU for information and there was a consequent danger of my favouring its contentions at the expense of the Labour

Congress. I therefore attempted to redress the balance through informal (and formal) consultations with one prominent figure in the Labour Congress. I also attempted to constructively utilise my problems of gaining access to Labour Congress, and questioned the secretive approach of some of its leaders. My key informant provided me with information (not all of which I could confirm) about the history of the Congress, and some of its more questionable activities, and told me about the personality conflicts within the leadership of the trade union movement as a whole. Once again, the 'flavour' of some of this information is contained in chapter six, but direct quotations have not been used. I agreed to my informant's request that, for the sake of peace in the Labour Congress, he should remain anonymous.

On my return to England in July 1990 I started writing up the thesis. I had already begun writing drafts of the early chapters, but these were amended in the light of further investigation of documentary material in Trinidad. Nevertheless, these early drafts were very important because they substantially reduced the time spent on writing the thesis. This was all the more important because I found that writing was by far the most tedious part of the research project. In my final year I went through a couple of periods where I simply found it impossible to write, and I wondered if I would ever complete the thesis. Given the isolated nature of research, these feelings are to some degree

inevitable. However, in my experience (and I would not be so bold as to generalise) these feelings are also controllable, so long as one keeps a sense of perspective. I have heard former Ph.D. students give talks about how their project became their 'life', and how they spent countless nights interpreting their data and writing and re-writing draft chapters. In my case the Ph.D. was never my life, and in the last year I do not recall working on it after 7 o'clock in the evening, or at any time over weekends. I basically treated it as a 9 to 5 job, and then completely switched off from it. Finally, I managed to retain a sense of proportion by remembering that no matter how bad things got, they were infinitely better for me than they were for those who were the subjects of my research.