

The moyne
commission was a
waste of time



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In this essay one would seek to critically discuss the view that the Moyne commission was a waste of time. The Moyne Commission started August 3rd 1938 and ended on February 20th 1939 which was appointed by the British Government to investigate social and economic conditions in Barbados, the Leeward Islands, Jamaica, British Honduras, British Guiana, Trinidad and Tobago and the Windward Islands. This Commission sought to bring about change to the real cause of the two local populations that had caused the events of the 1930s.

This commission came under great pressure from the region's middle class representatives for the type of constitutional reform that would satisfy their class designs for social and political mobility. The Royal Commission didn't ask for or recommended responsible government for the countries who are still under the control of their mother country. Nevertheless, while the Royal Commission recommended the extension of the franchise based on adult suffrage, this didn't fail to decrease the power of the local governors who were over the executive in the colonies and trusteeship was therefore the prevailing British attitude (Cynthia Barrow-Giles, p. 79).

The adult suffrage was extremely significant because even for the first time the underclass was now included in the decision making process. And seeing that it was successful this therefore represented a means of accommodating the demands of a segment of the population for greater representation. Back in the late 1930s up to the 1950s, the number of political parties in the country had grown fast, putting into motion more working and middle-class West Indians into the political arena which is the central part of an ancient Roman amphitheater for gladiatorial contests. However, though any

impression of an overwhelming victory for the national and imperial bourgeoisie which is a social order dominated by bourgeois.

Even though the Commission completed its report in 1940, the British Government did not release it to the public until July 1945 after World War II ended. Despite this, some of its recommendations were acted upon immediately after the report was submitted to the British Government. It was felt that because of the Commission's sharp criticisms of colonial policy in the Caribbean, the British Government thought that if the report was released, the German Government would have used it for war propaganda. The Moyne Commission exposed the horrible conditions under which people of the British Caribbean lived. It pointed to the deficiencies in the education system, and economic and social problems of unemployment and juvenile delinquency in the society. It also sharply criticized the poor health conditions and expressed concern over the high infant mortality rate.

In agreement with Susan Craig the proposed social reforms brought few benefits to the workers but they still suffered from low wages and poor standard of living. While the 1930s was helping to shape the period of the modern West Indies, Susan Craig is viewing that with an understanding of what should have been done, the changes were pure shadow rather than substance.

The social structure of most West Indian Colonies is put forward by the fact that the agriculture which is mostly their mainstay was discovered and long continued on a comparatively small number of black people who does labour. The possibility of the freed slaves choose to buy land of their own by

sometimes joining together and purchasing abandoned estates just in time and divide it into smaller parts amounce themselves. In many colonies, the movement towards a member of the class of farm labourers and small farmers made balance progress and was closely involved, both as cause and effect, with the introduction of new crops.

This Commission of Walter Edwards, Baron Moyne, as chairman and nine others including Sir Walter Citrine, Secretary if the British Trade Union Congress and Professor Frank Engledow who had only recently undertaken a study of agriculture in the British West Indies. For a period of nine months, the Commission took formal evidence, oral and written, from individuals and groups including many large delegations in Britain and the West Indies. In addition to the formal evidence, the Commission created on the spot investigation of conditions in housing, agriculture, hospitals, schools, prisons, factories, clocks, lunatic and leper asylums, orphanages and land settlements. This Royal Commission as we see touched all aspects of British West Indian society.

The Commission realized that the problems of the West Indies were essentially economic with harsh depression in industry showing itself in widespread unemployment in the county and countryside and in weak public finances which created government unable to take remedial action to better the conditions. The Commission attached great importance to the subject of health and begged the unification of the medical service of the colonies in order to promote efficiency and to attract able professionals.

According to the economic aspects of the commission, the early settlement of the West Indies was undertaken with the object of suing them as sources of valuable tropical products, such as spices, sugar and logwood. The production of sugarcane eventually will become of predominant importance, and as the consumption of sugar in the European countries it grew rapidly and the industry became extremely profitable. In order to bring about long-term health policies, it recommended that medical schemes should be planned in consultation with other departments.

This Commission suggested pertaining to education that there should be the increase of more teachers and they should have better training, the increasing of schools, the improvement of school equipment and the overhauling of school curricula to actually make them more related to what is being said to the West Indies. The Commission spotted out the predominance of the sugar industry despite the diversification of the economy which had take place and recommended that an increase in British preferential treatment of West Indian sugar. Nevertheless, this concession was very dependant upon the creation of Wages Board in the colonies to fix wages. According to the Royal Commission to improve conditions they suggest that the promotion of trade unions and the audit of their funds should be free of charge by governments.

In Barbados, a nutrition scheme was implemented in the elementary schools in 1939 where children would receive milk and a biscuit daily on their break time. There was also the appointment of a Social Welfare Committee in 1940 and a social welfare officer and assistant in 1943. Then the pupil teacher system that employed untrained, inexperience individuals was said to be he

abolished. In 1938 an Act provided expenditure for the erection of additional classrooms in a number of elementary schools in order to alleviate the overcrowding conditions that existed in the predisturbance years. There was work beginning at the Erdiston Teacher's College through the use of funds voted by the Colonial Development Funds. There was the completion of maternity hospital in 1946, and by the 1940s there were two housing projects at the Pine and Deacons being constructed.

An Act in 1938 allowed for improvement of slum conditioning requiring owners of boarded and shingled houses standing on less than 1,600 sq. ft. of land in the city to remove them. Even so, an agreement between the sugar producer federation and the Barbados Workers Union introduced the principle of profit sharing in the sugar industry, and there was the introduction of holidays with pay and also the creation of a Wages Board which I mentioned earlier to regulate the wages of shop assistants and significant amendments to the Trade Union Act. Last but not least there was the building of roads, expanding water facilities, the building of secondary schools which I also mentioned awhile to and the granting of old pension.

Over in the country of Trinidad during 1941, eight secondary schools and five primary schools were constructed. Dr. Eric Williams stated that agricultural diversification that took place was to reduce the dependence on monoculture and agrarian reform programs to supply the masses with some form of land. Conclusively, as argued by G. K. Lewis in his text *The Growth of the Modern West Indies*, the decade of the 1930's can be regarded as the watershed in the history of the British West Indies, and not only did the events of the 1930s and their aftermath accelerate the pace of constitutional and socio-

economic development but they also signaled to the attack on the entire structure of colonial administration and society. The 1930s therefore saw the emergency of the modern West Indies.

As I conclude the Moyne Commission which is also known as the Royal Commission was not a waste of time because it showed how it benefitted many caribbean countries. It includes the improvement of the trade unions, it allows the Caribbean countries to access foreign investors and it improves the political decision-making process.