WAGE SLAVERY UNDER KING CANE:
STATUS AND POWER
ON A JAMAICAN SUGAR WORKERS' COOPERATIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

Jamaica, like many other developing nations, has recently re-emphasized the cooperative production strategy in an attempt to increase its rate of agricultural development. The establishment of sugar workers' cooperatives was conceived by Prime Minister Michael Manley in 1972. By 1975, three pilot cooperatives were established and administered by democratically elected management committees composed of workers. Following implementation of the pilot cooperatives several operational problems developed. Most of these were directly related to low levels of member participation and motivation.

The author, as part of a consulting team, was assigned to study worker attitudes at the Barham Cooperative located on the Frome estate. A thematic analysis of the participant observation and interview data is presented. In addition, a socio-historical analysis, drawn from the literature, is provided to enable the reader to conceptualize the various dimensions of the society which enveloped Barham, to understand why it lacked conditions for success; and to appreciate the impact of Jamaica's legacy of sugar and slavery on the Barham workers' struggle to extricate themselves from a position of dependence and submission and move into a position of relative independence and freedom.

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CHAPTER I  INTRODUCTION

The Cooperative Process

In a cooperative enterprise, all members are equally workers, managers and owners. Exploitation and private accumulation of profit are eliminated and instead, profits are passed on to cooperators on some equitable basis, or reinvested in the cooperative to provide improved services. (Nash and Hopkins 1976:9, Worsley 1971:9.) Cooperatives can take many forms: consumers', services, merchandising, credit, producers' and others. In an agricultural production cooperative, the type referred to here, the land and major capital items are held in joint ownership by the farm workers themselves. The land is cultivated collectively and in principle, every member participates in the decision-making process concerning all aspects of production, distribution and investment. (Reed 1975:360.)

Social as well as economic factors shape the outcome of any cooperative venture. Conditions for social "success" include the following:

1. Uniformity of Status

Cooperative principles maintain that all members are equal and to a certain extent, interchangeable. But formal equality is sometimes contradicted by the division of labor which frequently emphasizes individuality and status differentiation; resulting in the subordination of
some members and domination by others. Such divisions are inimical to the development of a cooperative spirit because they tend to reinforce a local elite power base, (Carrol 1969:73, Nash and Hopkins 1976:15, 25, Hopkins 1976:101-102.)

2. Local Initiative and Democratic Control

Local initiative and democratic control are essential elements of cooperation. In government-sponsored cooperatives a paternalistic type of relationship often develops in which continued dependence and control by outsiders undermines and inhibits self-management. Ambiguities arise in the roles of managers who are supposed to supervise workers and at the same time be answerable to them; and in the roles of members who are supposed to be both workers and participants in policy-making. This in turn establishes a "we-they" relationship between members and managers, fostering mutual resentment and distrust. So it is critical to achieve a good working relationship between outside agencies, management and general membership, (Carrol 1969:88, Hopkins 1976:102, Dorner and Kamel 1975:8-9.)

3. Maximum Flow of Information

All members of a cooperative must be equipped with the proper skills and have access to information necessary for their participation in self-governance in order to avoid the concentration of power in the hands of a small, exclusive group. (Nash and Hopkins 1976:12, Engelmann 1968:17.)
4. **Ideological Commitment and Solidarity**

Many cooperatives fold because their members do not perceive their own interests to be those of the group, or do not possess sufficient commitment to cooperative ideals. Without group consciousness or ideological fervor; such as that based on rebelliousness against economic monopoly and exploitation, a cooperative's success will be short-lived. (Carrol 1969:79, Eckstein and Carrol 1972:247.)

5. **A Positive Attitude Towards Work and the Cooperative**

Members should have a sense of pride and recognition of the value of their work, optimism that cooperation will improve their standards of living and self-confidence in management operations. In addition, members must share the belief that the co-op has a real chance of surviving. This engenders a positive commitment to anticipate and withstand difficulties, especially those that arise in the beginning of any new venture. (Reed 1972:361.)

Cooperatives may be either spontaneous or induced. Generally, landholders who spontaneously set up production cooperatives are "better off" farmers who are already integrated in the market economy. Typically, their farms have reached a stage of development that requires capital improvements, (tractors, irrigation, fertilizer, etc.) but are still too small to afford them. "Self-help" cooperative organization of small farms enables them to
create units large enough to take advantage of economies of scale. (Galjart 1976:333.)

But in developing nations, particularly in agrarian areas which are still comparatively underdeveloped, cooperatives rarely emerge spontaneously. (Galjart 1976:56-57.) Pessimists attribute the lack of formal voluntary cooperation to Foster's (1965) "image of the limited good":

"According to this view, individual success in societies in which the consequences of an expanded economy are understood and accepted need not be perceived by neighbors as threat against the community. Under such conditions, voluntary cooperations can function as an effective mechanism for promoting social and economic progress for the group. However, in a society where members believe that the economic system is static and non-expandable, (resources are held to be strictly limited, thus if some get more others have to get less), voluntary cooperation can be expected to function only under exceptional circumstances."
(Carrol 1969:66)

Pessimism notwithstanding, central governments often encourage or induce the establishment of agricultural cooperatives for a variety of strategic reasons ranging from the desire to extend an "arm of government" to rural
parts in order to mobilize political support and administra-
tive control; to the desire to solve certain fundamental
problems that are perceived to be the results of interna-
tional capitalist development. (Nash and Hopkins 1976:12-
14.) For governments whose reasoning falls in the latter
category, the cooperative structure is often chosen to re-
place foreign corporations with the objective of offering a
more equitable distribution of wealth, power and self-
determination; fulfilling the promise of liberation from
foreign multi-national exploitation and demonstrating con-
fidence in the people's ability to actively participate in

The Jamaican Experience

Jamaica, like many other developing nations, has recent-
ly re-emphasized the cooperative production strategy in an
attempt to increase its rate of agricultural development.
The cooperative technique of agricultural reform is not new
to the island, but past efforts have been less than success-
ful. A combination of factors have accounted for earlier
failures: poor planning and implementation, ineffective
administration and lack of skilled practitioners, and
limited resources of land and capital. However, the major
reason for previous failures has been the lukewarm reaction
of the country's farming population to such schemes.
The establishment of sugar workers' cooperatives was conceived by Prime Minister Michael Manley in 1972. By 1973, following months of exhaustive groundwork and research, final plans were made to begin the operation of the cooperatives. The Frome Monymusk Land Company, in conjunction with other financial and agricultural institutions, began intensive training programs in order to prepare workers for the changes to be made. In December 1974, The Frome Monymusk Land Company established three pilot cooperatives which were administered by democratically elected management committees composed of workers. Lease documents were signed and in 1975, the cooperatives began operating as private entities. Soon afterward, the Prime Minister announced that as part of Government policy, all farms would in the long term become cooperative. On a phased basis, almost all of the former estate lands were, by 1976, transferred to the hands of the workers in the form of cooperatives; the ultimate goal being to finally end the dependency relationship between Jamaica and multi-national firms.

Following implementation of the pilot cooperatives, the Frome Monymusk Land Company became aware that several problems were developing in their program. Most of these were directly related to the low levels of member participation and motivation. The author, as part of a consulting team supervised by Professor Orlando Patterson, a Harvard
sociologist, was assigned to investigate some of the operatio-
tional problems that surfaced at the Barham Pilot Coopera-
tive located on the Frome estate.

The following is a more specific itemization of our research objectives:

1. **What motivated workers to join the cooperative?**
   
   Were they enticed by the purely monetary fact that membership ensured receipt of a substantial severance settlement, or were the other reasons such as pride of ownership, hope of better long-term rewards, a sense of community pride etc.?

2. **What accounted for the low level of member participation?**
   
   We learned that during the early months of Barham's history as a cooperative, the participation rate of members in running a co-op affair was very disappointing: an average rate of less than 30% attendance at meetings to be exact.

3. **What was the extent of members' knowledge of the nature and goals of their Cooperative?**
   
   An effort was made by the organizers of the co-ops to promote cooperative principles and to inform members about the nature of the enterprise with which they were involved, but the extent of their knowledge was unknown.

4. **What are the expectations of Co-op members?**
   
   Closely related to objective 3 was our attempt to assess the aspirations of Co-op members with respect to their program.
5. **Organizational Issues**

Finally we investigated the present organizational and social structure of the Barham Cooperative, its viability and its influence on relationships between members.

We interviewed a small, randomly selected sample of the Barham membership to gain a clear picture of the state of affairs from a worker perspective. However, most of the information was gathered in our daily interaction with the workers during their work and social activities. We accompanied them to the fields, assisted them in some of their tasks, ate lunch with the work gangs in the huts and engaged in informal discussions with Co-op members loitering around the main office.

A thematic analysis of the participant-observation and interview data is presented in addition to some household and income data collected on a housing survey questionnaire. But the author extends her inquiry beyond the boundaries of the original study. Since the planners at the Frome Monymusk Land Company were not given a "clean slate" upon which to design such a program, a socio-historical analysis, drawn from the literature, is provided to enable the reader to conceptualize the various dimensions of the society which enveloped Barham, to understand why it lacked the aforementioned conditions for success; and to appreciate the impact of Jamaica's legacy of sugar and slavery on the
Barham workers' struggle to extricate themselves from a position of dependence and submission and move into a position of relative independence and freedom.
CHAPTER II  THE SOCIAL REALITY OF THE CANE WORKER

The Plantation as a Social Institution

Most characterizations of the modern plantation limit themselves to descriptions of its performance as an institution of economic production. From a strictly economic viewpoint, plantations typically involve employment of vast areas of land and large numbers of unskilled workers under a single, centralized corporate control, to produce an agricultural export commodity. The raw material is usually processed in a heavily capitalized factory under the same control, and exported to be sold on an international market subject to external demand and price fluctuations. Equal in importance is recognition of the plantation as a social institution which molds human relationships and attitudes into a structure which conforms to its economic purpose. It did so in the past, and does so today.

Under the scepter of slavery, the Jamaican sugar plantation had an all-embracing and brutal control over the lives of Black laborers. More than 140 years have elapsed since Emancipation yet, in the wake of progress and modernization, fundamental features of the old slavery system still remain intact. It is useful to briefly examine this historical continuity, with particular regard to plantation social structure as it relates to the plight of agricultural field workers. This will set the stage for the later discussion of Jamaican sugar workers' cooperatives.
The Birth of King Cane

Jamaican society was conceived to accomplish one clearly defined objective: to generate profit from the production of sugar. It necessarily follows that the sugar plantation was not just one of several institutional components, but the cornerstone of the entire socio-economic structure. (Patterson 1967:9.) Its beginnings can be traced back to the 17th century, when the British Government unsuccessfully tried to encourage colonial settlement of Jamaica, to facilitate military maneuvers against the Spanish. (Hall 1959:7.) Accompanying the policy of promoting colonization through small-scale diversified farming, were the efforts of some of the more prosperous settlers to occupy the best land. (Patterson 1967:16.) Following the example set by the Dutch in other parts of the Caribbean, wealthy British settlers staked out large, fertile tracts and developed suitable infrastructure for large-scale sugar production. Access to financial backing and manipulation of the local legislature gave the planters the economic and political leverage necessary to transform Jamaica into a highly profitable sugar enclave. However, the planters' recipe for greed and opulence lacked one essential ingredient: an abundant supply of cheap labor. An apparent disinclination to soil their hands with manual labor led the planters to seek outside assistance.
The Arawaks, indigenous inhabitants of Jamaica, were unavailable, having been ruthlessly annihilated by the Spanish prior to the British occupation. Poor Whites were low in number and difficult to recruit and retain. Most had been sent to Jamaica as indentured servants and owned only a specific term of service. Since the laws concerning them were very harsh, the idea of remaining, after their time was served, must have been less than appetizing. (Patterson: 1967:46.)

But the British planters persisted, undaunted by these inconveniences, and adopting the diabolic solution chosen by their peers throughout the New World, turned to the African Slave Trade. Wholesale subjugation of African peoples to bondage and forced importation of their labor power produced the desired input. By the end of the 17th century, Jamaica's society and economy rested on a group of large plantations manned by enslaved Black people. (Patterson 1967:24.)

**Social Relations of Production on the Old Plantation**

Small farmers, unable to compete with the large estates and plagued by disease, crop failure and natural disasters, eventually decamped. Consequently, most of the land and slaves came to be oligopolized by a handful of rich proprietors who, having made their fortunes, left for England. Absentee ownership became dominant. (Patterson 1967:16.)
White personnel recruited from Britain and former bond-servants became the new managerial staff and ranked highest in the structure of local authority and status on the plantation. The overseer was the manager of the estate and in absence of the owner, was the highest immediate authority. He answered only to the owner's attorney who made production decisions. Lower staff members and their assistants alternated between supervision of labor and allocation of supplies. (Patterson 1967:56, Craton 1978:11.) Slaves, by definition, occupied the lowest position.

Full appreciation of the heinous atrocities committed against slaves remains compromised by a dearth of written accounts by the victims themselves. Several salient features of slavery are nevertheless clear. Under its reign Jamaica became, in Patterson's view, (1967:9) "...a monstrous distortion of human society. It was not just the physical cruelty of the system that made it so perverse... What marks it out is the astonishing neglect and distortion of almost every one of the basic prerequisites of normal human living". In addition to the catastrophic displacement from their homeland, Blacks suffered from instability in personal, sexual and family relations. Legal rights, marriage, practice of religion and education were forbidden, as well as any other social and cultural expressions that might have undermined White authority. (Patterson 1967:274.) To justify their inhumanity, Whites deemed blackness to be
a symbol of inferiority. It is an understatement, at best, to say that colonial racism has had far-reaching, devastating repercussions that extend to the present, both on the plantation and in the society at large. (Cumper 1954:157.)

Slaves were powerless in determining status classifications within their group. Social rank and occupational divisions among them were those decided upon by the White masters. (Patterson 1967:65.) And so, a class/color hierarchy based on the percentage of White blood and visible Caucasian features was established; those of fairer hue being accorded greater prestige. These social categories, defined by gradations in skin tone, spawned antagonisms between people of varying degrees of African descent, (Hall 1959:137) and can reasonably be understood as subtle mechanisms of social control (i.e. "divide and conquer").

Domestic slaves were considered to be in a more "honorable" position than other slaves. Most of them were the lighter-skinned offspring born to Black women who were victims of rampant sexual exploitation and abuse--either outright rape or compulsory concubinage--by White plantation management. Since manual labor was considered unbecoming, mulatto and quadroon women were brought into the master's greathouse to perform household and sexual chores, while their darker sisters worked in the fields. (Higman 1976:2.)

The prestige position of domestics was closely followed by a class of skilled craftsmen and artisans such as boil-
erman, coopers, smiths, carpenters etc.; and then by a small group of foremen, called "headmen" and "drivers" who, given the incentive of preferential treatment, were the owner's practical instruments for effective command and management of the field slaves. Given the nature of the job, it was not uncommon for sadistic, power-hungry types to occupy these supervisory positions. (Patterson 1967:62-63.)

Field slaves, the rock bottom, were regarded as beasts of burden. Although priced highly because of their directly productive activities, the nature of their work cast them to the bottommost rung of the ladder. Opportunities for upward mobility were only available to a select few and, changing jobs most often meant making a lateral move from one form of brutal labor to another. (Craton 1978:140.)

These slaves were divided into three gangs according to age, strength and function. The first gang contained the strongest adults who were pushed hardest. The second consisted of children over twelve, older adults, the handicapped and infirm. The third, called the "hogmeat gang", contained young children, ranging in age from four to eleven. (Patterson 1967:59.) The slaves were awakened from their huts several hours before dawn, and driven relentlessly under the whip until after sundown. Work dragged on for 18 hours a day and 7 days a week during the 5 to 7-month harvest season, and 16½ hours a day, 6 days a week after the harvest. ⁴ (Patterson 1967:67, Craton 1978:67.)
Sugar cropping was then and still remains an intensely systematized, grueling operation, aptly described as "military agriculture". (Thompson 1959.) The heavy, cumbersome sugar canes had to be ground as soon as they were cut or the yield of juice would shrink, ferment and spoil. It was therefore necessary for the conversion of each stalk into sugar to be completed within a few hours. Cutting, hauling, grinding, boiling, clarification, filtration, evaporation and crystallization had to be carried out in an uninterrupted, synchronized fashion at high levels of speed and precision. Round-the-clock shifts were an absolute necessity at harvest time. (Hall 1959:13.) Manpower was not spared, however, even after the crop had been reaped. Ploughing and planting of new canes was equally as arduous and greatly detested by the slaves. After planting the cane, corn was cultivated to feed slaves and farm animals, followed by weeding, repair tasks, maintenance and transporting sugar to the wharves for export. (Patterson 1967:65-66.)

Discipline, accountability and routine, lifeblood of the system, were enforced in all areas and phases of work. Delegation of tasks was designed to maximize prolonged exertion and slaves were allowed to rest only when it suited the supervisions. (Aufhauser 1972:44.) They were regularly ordered to perform specific jobs, and if the work was not completed in the expected fashion, they were punished with extra work or physical abuse. Owners preferred to keep
slaves busy, even with purposeless, unnecessary chores rather than allow them to engage in other activities. (Aufhauser 1972:41.) Overseers, paid by commission, worked slaves beyond their physical capacity in order to obtain high returns. (Patterson 1967:43) One account reports:

"It was more the subject of the overseers to work the slaves out, and trust for supplies from Africa, because I have heard many of the overseers say, 'I have made my employer 20, 30 or more hogsheads per year than any of my predecessors ever did, and though I have killed 30 or 40 Negroes per year more, yet the produce has been more than adequate to that loss'" (Patterson 1967:44 from "...Minutes of Evidence", 1790-91).

Overwork, inadequate rest and poor diet took their toll on the Black population. During the 18th century, the annual natural population decrease ranged from 1.5% to 3.7%, (Patterson 1967:97.) Approximately one-third of all new slaves died within 3 years of arriving on the plantation. (Craton 1978:19.) Natural reproduction was considered an economically impractical method of replenishing the workforce, because the management viewed pregnancies and Black babies as costly nuisances. High mortality and low reproduction rates, did not trouble the colonial authorities as long as the African Slave Trade continued to replace the dead at a fair price. (Hall 1959:23.)
When sugar production reached its zenith in Jamaica, there were just enough Whites to fill supervisory positions. Ratios of Blacks to Whites were extremely high and averaged over ten to one. (Patterson 1967:274.) As a result there was a supervision problem and slaves could often outwit their taskmasters. Weary of Sisyphean toil with no hope of material or spiritual reward, Blacks thwarted White domination in various ways. Forms of resistance ranged from relatively indirect tactics, such as manipulative role-playing of submissive stereotypes, deliberate inefficiency, refusal to work and running away; to more direct measures such as murder and violence. (Patterson 1967:260-63.) The rulers, conscious of their small numbers, strictly enforced repressive slave laws. Insurrection, a common occurrence in Jamaica, was punishable by being nailed to the ground and slowly burned to death from the feet up. For lesser "crimes", males were castrated or had their limbs amputated. These were codified punishments; England playing a major role in formulating the slave laws in an attempt to protect her financial interests. After all, West Indian cane fields bore some of the fruits that nurtured the Industrial Revolution and other forms of wealth accumulation. (Hall 1959:81, Williams 1964.)
Transformation of Plantations: From Proprietor to Corporation

The decline of the old plantocracy was attributable to several factors. Slave uprisings, soil exhaustion, an unprecedented series of natural disasters and mismanagement due to owner absenteeism were chronic sources of domestic trouble; but, external market forces proved to be the most formidable foe. (Beckford 1972:103.)

Currency used by Jamaican planters during slavery era was drawn from trade with the Spanish but there was little of it in circulation. Increasing demand for payments in cash instead of sugar in business transactions, especially with slave traders and the newly independent United States, weakened terms of trade considerably and left the planters in an impotent bargaining position. In addition, supplies of capital goods and food from the ex-colonies were cut off after the American Revolution. Supply shortages spurred a rise in production costs and the cost of living. Patterson 1967:27.)

Entry of sugar-reproducing competitors in the world market induced a downward trend in prices, while at the same time, the planters' adherence to technically obsolete methods kept production costs high. Profits declined since sugar could be obtained elsewhere at far more reasonable prices. Britain rescinded its protective sugar trade agreements with Jamaica and simultaneously increased duties on all imports in order to sustain its war effort. 6
Shipping prices soared in response to the war and increased international demand. By the early 1800's, the price for Jamaican sugar had slumped well below its production, transportation and taxation costs. Financial intermediaries and creditors of the plantation proprietors began to foreclose on the weaker estates and assumed ownership in a last-ditch effort to salvage their Jamaican assets. (Patterson 1967: 27.) Finally, abolition of the Slave Trade curtailed the labor supply and planters could no longer produce enough sugar to pay off their debts. At Emancipation, in 1838, two-thirds of the labor force left the plantations. Lack of liquidity to pay wages to those remaining forced many more estates to close. (Cumper 1954:138.)

In panic, the remaining planters made frantic attempts to keep Blacks in the canefields. Abortive efforts to secure ex-slave labor on an apprenticeship basis were superseded by enactment of legislation and taxation schemes, devised to make it difficult for Blacks to secure land and pursue social and economic independence. Payment of taxes required in cash, which could only be secured by wage labor. (Beckford 1972:90-91.) Exorbitant rents, also payable in cash only, were charged for occupancy of former slave huts, with constant increases for those families who did not work full-time on the estate. Furthermore, the colonial legislature passed a small debt act which ordered that tenants in arrears could be evicted and desig-
nated legal vagrants. Simultaneous passage of the Vagrant Act was passed dictated that all those found without a dwelling place or steady employment could be seized to work in chains for 60 days on plantations. In general, blacks were actively discriminated against in land sales and prices were prohibitively raised beyond their means. Afhauser 1972: 55-56.) These obstinate endeavors to reinstate a slavery-oriented system were, indeed, exercises in futility. In Patterson's (1969) words, asking a Black to remain on a plantation was tantamount to "asking a Jew to remain in a German concentration camp". They fled and sought sanctuary in the surrounding hills, on old ruined estates, marginal lands, or undeveloped tracts. (Cumper 1954:138.) The more fortunate were able to acquire arable land in sufficient quantity to become successful peasant farmers and separate themselves entirely from the plantation. Tragically, not all Black Jamaicans could find sufficient resources to become independent and many continued to reside on the estate itself or in its immediate environs. Some tended smaller plots but remained partially dependent on plantation wage labor during those months when they were not occupied with sowing and harvesting their own land. Others were doomed to remain part of the plantation's full-time workforce, supplemented by indentured East-Indian and Chinese immigrants. (Cumper 1954:138.)

Meanwhile, estate owners continued to be tormented by financial encumbrances and declining production rates.
Use of outdated production techniques escalated costs, while market prices dropped, and severely diminished the marketability of Jamaican sugar. Lack of liquidity limited access to new cost-reducing technology. Moreover, owners simply did not have the "human capital" needed to modernize the production system; advanced business management techniques and larger, more complex organizational structures were prerequisites for handling highly capital-intensive operations, not to mention the challenge of bartering on the international market. (Beckford 1972:85.)

In the late 19th century, having completed the process of estate foreclosure, former creditors became new owners and established British-based, limited liability companies to manage the plantations. Corporate sovereignty marked the ascendancy of the multinationals, in the 1920's and 1930's, which presently account for the bulk of West Indian sugar production and trade. (Beckford 1972:85.) Although sugar never regained its preeminence in the Jamaican economy, corporate ownership revived the moribund industry by promoting centralization and expansion of capital, technological advancement and efficient reorganization. But just as corporate enterprise demanded elimination of inefficiencies, it preserved those features which served the firm's profit-making ends. Above all, profitable sugar production still required an easily available, controllable, large, cheap labor supply. This largely ex-
plains why remnants from the old estate system are most strikingly visible in the rigid plantation structure today; particularly with respect to the socio-economic rut it relegates to agricultural field workers.

Wage Slavery on the Modern Plantation

As in earlier centuries, the basic class structure of the modern plantation is determined by production roles. Starting at the top, the modern corporate plantation is governed by a Board of Directors who are responsible to a parent company in the United Kingdom. The Resident Manager implements the decisions of the Board, and similar to his colonial forerunner, commands a great deal of local authority. (Cumper 1954:141.) Specialized daily decision-making is delegated to estate division managers and department heads who direct lower staff members, assistants and overseers. These in turn supervise foremen and headmen. The laborers are the last link in the chain of command. Status distinctions within this group are similar to those created during slavery. The skilled are differentiated from the unskilled, hence factory workers are viewed as being better off than unskilled field workers. Ironically, Emancipation failed to change the relationship between power and prestige and color of skin. Even though Jamaica is an overwhelmingly Black nation (over 90%), top management slots on the new plantations were given to new White
immigrants. Many middle management positions were filled by the rising Jamaican "colored" middle class and some of the more prosperous East Indians. Racial barriers relaxed somewhat, but the new "Brown" recruits assumed and retained nearly all the socio-economic traits, and many of the attitudes, of their White predecessors. All of this left the largely European upper ranks and predominantly light-skinned middle management socially and economically far removed from the largely Black and East Indian laboring class. (Cumper 1954:153.)

The iron-fisted authority of the ruling class still reveals itself through interpersonal relations in the plantation community. As Beckford (1972:206) points out: "It is evident that in every aspect of life, a strong authoritarian tradition can be observed. Anyone with the slightest degree of power over others exercises this power in a characteristic, exploitative authoritarian manner and attitudes toward work clearly reflect the plantation influence. Overseer types never do manual labor and laborers consistently devise ways to beat the system".

Agricultural workers make up approximately 80% of the plantation labor force. (Beckford 1972:263-65.) The number of unskilled workers concentrated under a single authority may now have reached an historical maximum since the traditional estate was much smaller in size. 8 (Cumper 1954: 153.) Although legally "free", the average worker has few
options for improving his situation within the inflexible plantation structure. Given the current Jamaican economic unemployment crisis (25% to 30%), abandonment of one job in search of another is a perilous risk that most cannot afford to take. Victimized by such limitations, the agricultural laborers form what Mintz calls the "rural proletariat"; a landless, propertyless (in the sense of productive property), class which depends primarily upon the sale its labor to the plantation, and whose existence is "...predicated on the existence of other classes who own the instruments of production, provide the work opportunities, pay the wages and sell the commodities to be bought". (Mintz 1953:139-141.)

Fieldwork is still largely labor-intensive and the work process itself bears a close resemblance to the slave regimen described earlier. In fact, many sugar workers refer to working in the cane as "wage slavery". Technological advances have made no breakthroughs in discovering ways to subdue the broiling heat of the Jamaican sun, to ward off irritating insects and plants, to soothe blistered hands and aching backs, and to erase scars permanently etched by unwieldy machetes.

Canefield burning, an innovation introduced by the sugar companies, eliminated troublesome undergrowth and enabled cane workers to double their cutting speed. But instead of a commensurate raise in pay in return for increased production, canecutters were rewarded with an
increased risk of lung disease from burnt cane soot inhalation. (Phillips 1976:438.)

New machinery stepped up efficiency, but it also made it possible for complex tasks to be broken down into simpler ones. As the operations became more finely divided, each task required less training and the individual worker became more easily replaceable. Smooth substitutability of unskilled workers plus the fact that the demand for labor was always less than manpower available left workers at the mercy of corporate management. (Aufhauser 1972:121.)

In addition, it should be mentioned that the demand for labor by the sugar industry has traditionally been greater in the harvest season than in the remaining months of the year. Increased mechanization of cultivation further increased the seasonal variation in labor demand (Cumper 1954:154) to the point that in some cases five times as many workers are needed to cut cane than to cultivate it. (Craton 1978:293.) Labor demand also varies widely over longer periods depending upon the state of the sugar market, which suffers from cyclical instability due to drastic unpredictable price fluctuations. Clearly, for most sugar workers, reliance on wage employment for income is tenuous at best and reinforces management power over the workforce. Even the skilled factory worker, laid off for the out-of-crop season, is compelled to conform to the estate's idea of the "good" employee, by his pressing need to be rehired
next crop. (Cumper 1954:154.) In essence, the slave's fear of losing life or limb as punishment for noncompliance with management directives and expectations has been replaced by the worker's fear of losing his sole source of income.

A whole body of Caribbean research portrays plantation communities as being loose-knot, weak and unstable; with values and attitudes that enable people to "cope" with their circumstances but impede continuous mutual cooperation and interdependence. In Mintz' view, the culture of the laborers bends to the productive goals of the estate. (Mintz 1959:46.) Corporate control over employment and fierce competition of jobs engenders a divisive undercurrent within the plantation community and irregular labor demand is declared the leading culprit. Seasonal changes in plantation labor requirements encourage considerable short-term labor migration between the estate and surrounding areas. The influx and outflow of transients "...creates, as it were, a recurrent social revolution, transforming the ordinary routine and rhythm of life". (Clarke 1957:24.) As the housing shortage intensifies, newcomers move in and impose changes in the constitution of existing of households and temporary relationships and living arrangements are frequently set up by men and women workers. Naturally, migrants remain very much attached to communities outside of the plantation community in which they work. (Phillips 1976:312.)
Following the harvest, after a 5 to 7 month separation from their families, migrants return to their hometowns, leaving their temporary households behind. This creates a situation in which family members, usually male household heads, are absent for long periods during the year. Seeking the comforts of home, they begin new families in the estate areas, to which they bid farewell when harvest ends. Given these conditions, it is evident that plantation hiring patterns contribute to familial instability. Many workers are forced to endure disjunction in personal, sexual and familial relations, akin to that imposed during slavery, though admittedly less disastrous. (Clarke 1957, Patterson 1967, Thompson 1959.)

Earnings tend to fluctuate from a relatively high level in the crop season to bare subsistence level or below it in "dead" season, adding a cyclical boom or bust effect to community lifestyles. (Clarke 1957:24.) Pressures, arising from the uncertainty of regularly making enough money for even bare human maintenance, breed strong individualism and interpersonal rivalry. People are forced to compete with one another for jobs and to attempt to win favor with plantation management, (Beckford 1972:203-206) just as slaves might have appealed to the paternalistic indulgence of the master.

"Busha", as the overseer is still called, holds a great deal of discretionary power. Work is assigned on a
piece-rate basis and overseers personally hand pick the gangs. Since estate labor, on the average, exceeds effective labor demand by 25% to 30%, "Busha" is able to maintain a patronage system whereby cooperative workers are rewarded with jobs and subversive workers are punished with joblessness. (Stone 1978:2.)

Issues of land and labor are shared primary concerns among workers, who are well aware of their predicament. As one author observed:

"...indeed when one lives in a plantation community it quickly becomes apparent that the land and its exploitation, the ways of working on the land, relationships which arise from this work and from the dominant ownership of the land by a single owner, the pain of the workers at being landless, the strong desire for land and such related themes together constitute a major thread in the lives of the people in such a community". (Phillips 1976:49.)

But as Jayawardena (1963) witnessed in Guyana, class consciousness among sugar workers is double-edged. On one hand, most workers are cognizant of the fact that other workers face equally dire straits and share common concerns. Such class awareness led to the rise of militance and unionism among Jamaican sugar workers in the 1930's.
On the other hand, acquaintance with the plight of fellow workers also allows greater appreciation of the desperate acts that others commit and are likely to commit in order to survive in the system, and consequently sows seeds of suspicion and distrust. Underlying tensions, aroused by this particular kind of cautiousness, make it difficult to mobilize cooperative action, and if anything brings forth a clash of interests. Perhaps this partially explains why trade unionism has restricted its activities to piecemeal remedies, such as wage negotiation and grievance settlement, and has not achieved structural change in the industry. (Phillips 1976:434, 226-27.)

Conclusion

The rigid authoritarian plantation structure, a continuity from the old system to the new one, offers very limited opportunities for agricultural workers to improve their socio-economic circumstances and perpetuates the image of fieldwork as "wage slavery". Beckford (1972:206) neatly sums up the main points:

"...On the whole the plantation has a demoralizing influence on the community. It destroys or discourages the institution of the family and so undermines the entire social fabric. It engenders an ethos of dependence and patronage and so deprives people of dignity,
security and self-respect. And it impedes the material, social and spiritual advance of the majority of people. In these circumstances we could hardly expect to find a highly motivated population displaying the kinds of characteristics that development demands. The energies of most people are spent trying to beat the system. Traditions, values, beliefs and attitudes which have become established as a result of long periods of plantation influence are, for the most part, inimical to development”.

The sugar workers cooperative program set out to revamp the traditional estate power structure and to rectify some of these problems in at least one fundamental way: control of estate lands, previously the exclusive right of corporate management, was to be given to the workers. The next chapter will discuss how this transition was more difficult to achieve in practice than to imagine in theory.
NOTES TO CHAPTER II


2. The average plantation consisted of approximately 1500 acres, (extrapolated from Patterson (1967:53) and was served by an average of 223 slaves. (Higman 1976:23)

3. In Jamaica, there is no equivalent to the treasury of first-hand recollection compiled in the 1930's from survivors of the last throes of American slavery. (Craton 1978:viii-ix) Current information regarding working and living conditions under slavery is largely drawn from primary sources written 17th and 18th century colonialists. Though graphically descriptive in content and undeniably invaluable, the authenticity of the primary material is limited by social boundaries between writers and subjects. Most of the recent works explore more theoretical issues, such as comparative analyses of slave systems, studies of surviving African cultural elements and assessments of slavery's profitability. While these types of investigations are all important contributions to the field, they invite the reader to become immersed in academic abstraction and thereby evade the harsher realities of human suffering. Patterson (1967) is one of the few to offer a more sensitive perspective, without sacrificing rigorous scholarship.

4. Except during harvest time, slaves on some plantations were spared from the canefields 1 to 1½ days each weekend to cultivate the "Negro Grounds" which yielded their food. (Craton 1978:50.) Out of an entire year's labor, the slave consumed goods which only took a few weeks to produce. It has been estimated that a slave and his family could live comfortable year-round on the produce yielded from only 35 days labor on the grounds. Most of the surplus was consumed by residents of the Great House, but some fruits and vegetable were sold and exchanged among the slaves themselves. (Aufhauser 1972:37.)

5. High mortality rates and low reproduction rates were characteristic of all sugar colonies. Between 1680 and 1786, 2,130,000 Blacks were brought from the African continent to the British West Indies. By the early 19th century, only about 700,000 remained. (Hall 1959:13.)
6. In 1806, sugar duties comprised 61.7% of its wholesale price. (Patterson 1967:27.)

7. In 1805, Jamaican sugar production reached a high of 99,000 tons and by 1913, a low of 4,891 tons. (Deerr 1950) Sugar prices fell rapidly in 1895 and amounted to only one half of the price prevailing in the eighties. The quantity of sugar exported fell by 50% between 1830 and 1840 and remained at the lower level for over 70 years. The combined effect of the decline in quantity and price was the gradual fall of the value of sugar exports from J$2.6 million in 1832 to J$418.4 thousand in 1910. (Jefferson 1972:91.)

8. In a sense, the growth of the estate has even extended its field of operation, both by the concentration of diversely owned areas under one control and by the need to provide certain quasi-public services (water, electricity, roads) on a scale approaching that of a local government authority. (Cumper 1954:141.) Frome, one of the largest estates occupies some 30,000 acres. (Cumper 1954:119.)

9. Ownership of land has always been cherished by Jamaicans as it represents independence, security, dignity and is something of great value to be passed on to one's children. (Clarke 1957)

10. Basis of payment for canecutting is not standardized and varies according to the Company's dictates and the going price for sugar on the world market. There is a limitation of how much can be packed and shipped to the refinery for processing, and since cane spoils rapidly, canecutting is stopped when a surplus piles up. In sum, no benefits are derived from increased effort, since higher productivity does not necessarily bring higher wages.

11. See Beckford (1972), Clarke (1957), Cumper (1954), Mintz (1953), and Patterson (1967).

12. Recent studies of sugar workers in Jamaica (Jamaica Daily News 1973:47) and elsewhere indicate that a great majority of them are habitually undernourished. Eating is not only a means of satisfying hunger, but a necessity if one is to continue to work and earn income. Although many sugar workers survive on very meager diets and manage to work hard, they pay the price of sickness and early death. The average diet of many canecutters in 1974 was as follows:
Before work (6 or 7A.M.), tea and bread.
Late morning break (11A.M.), water and biscuits.
Lunch break and rest (1-3P.M.), water rum or beer.
After work, bread or rice, canned sardines or herring, tea or water. (Phillips 1976)
CHAPTER III "...ME NO LIKE THIS CO-OPS BUSINESS"

The Sugar Workers' Cooperative Movement

Before proceeding with an assessment of the Barham pilot Co-op project, it is important to trace the origins and development of the cooperative program. The 1960's, with Independence, launched an upsurge in Jamaican nationalism. A vocal cadre of politicians, academicians, planners and other activists opposed Jamaica's economic relationship with foreign-owned multinational firms, who in their view, drained her resources and sent profits abroad. The sugar industry, in particular, became a target of harsh criticism; (Phillips 1976:242-45.) Sugar plantations being regarded as inequitably large concentrations of wealth, power and land, which stifled productive opportunities for small-holders. Furthermore, an increasing amount of concern was being directed at estate working conditions.

Shortly thereafter, sugar revenues entered a downswing, which was aggravated by mounting production costs that continued to rise despite mechanization and reduction of the labor force. Alarmed at the industry's dismal profit picture, the West Indies Sugar Company (WISCO), a Tate and Lyle subsidiary, took advantage of the Jamaican political climate to divest itself of its field operations; since processing, manufacturing and shipping, rather than cane cultivation, have always been the most lucrative
concerns of sugar production. In the late sixties, negotiations opened for transferral of estate lands from corporate to government ownership; entailing some 40,000 acres of land on the first, second and fourth largest estates and approximately 30% of total sugar production. There were, of course, some strings attached. Terms for the sale of WISCO's holdings specified continuation of cane cultivation by whoever controlled the lands for ten years after the purchase date and also required processing of all sugarcane grown on that land in WISCO's factories. (Phillips 1976:530.)

Following the acquisition of estate lands, the Jamaican Government designed a plan to subdivide and sell 300 to 500 acre parcels to medium-sized commercial farmers. Estate staff members also lobbied for a share of the spoils and devised elaborate schemes for use of the lands. (Stone 1978: 5.) Fieldworkers, in the meantime, began to harbor serious misgivings about the future of their jobs. Their non-participation in the decision-making process coupled with a lack of information regarding policy matters heightened the workers' fears and uncertainty. (Phillips 1976:247.)

In 1969-70, small sugar belt citizens' associations, active in housing scheme planning, expanded their agenda to resolution of the estate land reallocation issue. Mobilized by Jesuit priests originally assigned to help with housing, an embryonic corp of organizers advocating worker control began to discuss the Government land purchase
issue. (Phillips 1976:527-28.) Most of the organizers' early efforts to call forth the fieldworkers were greeted with skepticism and apprehension. Concern for job security and personal advancement left many workers ambivalent about the strategic utility of membership in SWCC, when weighed against the benefits of management patronage. Others simply found it hard to believe that such a revolutionary reform would ever take place. Consequently, the most vocal proponents of the incipient co-op movement remained a peripheral minority that consisted primarily of better educated, articulate and more financially secure headmen and foremen; well-versed by the Jesuits in cooperative principles and theory. (Phillips 1976:554-55, Stone 1978: 5-6.)

In 1972, under the democratic socialist leadership of Prime Minister Michael Manley, original Government plans for the use of the estate lands changed. Manley endorsed the co-op movement, that had at that point, developed a more formal structure and named itself the Sugar Workers' Cooperative Council (SWCC). (Phillips 1976:530, Stone 1978: 5.) But ideological consonance did not necessarily render agreement on the basic structure or type of cooperatives to be formed. The Government envisioned collectivist-modelled farms managed and operated by workers; sharing equipment, labor and profits. (Phillips 1976:532.) On the other hand, most SWCC members preferred a land lease
program that would provide individual workers with 25 or 30 acre parcels, supported by common infrastructure and services. SWCC's suggestion excluded 70% of the workers who would have, most likely, been left jobless and landless, or forced to work under former co-workers; perhaps with some negative feelings. (Stone 1978:6.) This was an early warning that SWCC, the self-proclaimed champion of the masses, was losing touch with grass root interests. (Stone 1978:6.)

In 1974, the Frome Monymusk Land Company (FMLCO), an agency created to administer the estates, set up three 2,000 acre pilot cooperatives on the Frome, Monymusk and Salt Pond estates. The farms were organized under collectivist guidelines, in spite of resistance from SWCC and its Jesuit mentors. (Stone 1978:6.) The rest of the farms were to remain under the traditional structure until they were all finally transformed, on a phased basis, into a cluster of cane-producing cooperatives. (Phillips 1976:533.) Manley's endorsement gave the co-op movement more momentum by rallying greater mass support. (Stone 1976:6.) But while some workers saw the creation of the program as a monumental achievement, others still wanted no part of it for various reasons. As Phillips perceived:

"...many workers did not begin to accept the land issue...as a means to attaining a more desirable change in identity and self-image."
It was above all, the idea of growing sugar canes which disturbed some workers trying to decide about joining SWCC. While their fellow workers might see the attainment of control over the estate lands as a major step forward, they themselves wanted nothing further to do with sugar cane. Here again, the traditional identification of sugar cane with dependence and slavery emerged. Indeed, here the more general and vague identification of plantation work with slavery and dependence and all things undesirable in personal image and identity was refined and focused on the growing of the plant itself. For such workers, after years of toil in the canefields, sugar held no good whatever, and had meant nothing but poverty and hard work. Sugar remained the 'sweet malefactor' and they could not break away from that overwhelming experiential realization. (Phillips 1976: 554.)

Phillips goes on to explain the distrust of some of the workers:

"...the very idea of themselves becoming active agents and promoters of sugar culti-
vation was tantamount to selling one's soul to the devil; and courting a very dangerous and tricky enterprise as well. (One man said, suspiciously after hearing of the sale of other sugar estates in Jamaica to the Government, 'If the White Man a comin' outa sugar, then somethin' goin' wrong with the sugar!') Indeed, growing sugar for oneself represented to at least a few estate workers not only a contract with evil itself, but a dangerous business which might be a trap set by the White managers and businessmen (and others) to pawn off a losing business on the Black Man". (Phillips 1976:555.)

Phillips adds that careful examination and analysis of estate returns in the early 1970's lend factual credence to such a suspicion. (Phillips 1976:555.) But even for those who were receptive to the cooperative program, acceptance of the very notion that ordinary cane workers like themselves could now spurn the yoke and own the same lands which for generations had bound them in subservience, demanded a radical reversal in orientation. (Phillips 1976: 551.)
Profile of the Barham Area

Barham farm is located on the Frome estate in the parish of Westmoreland. After Emancipation, the exodus of Black people from the plantations was less pronounced here than in most other parishes. (Cumper 1954:122.) Planters in Westmoreland protested early Black independent settlement, and so random occupation of abandoned backlands and outlying areas became the dominant settlement pattern rather than the founding of organized peasant-type communities with legal title to land. (Cumper 1954:123.) Today, the majority of residents in the Frome vicinity are dependent solely on plantation wage income. (Cumper 1954:143.) Furthermore, the decline of sugar's dominance in Westmoreland was much less significant than elsewhere and the From estate remains the dominant industry (Cumper 1954:122), the greatest single source of employment and occupies some 30,000 acres or one-seventh of the parish. (Cumper 1954:119.)

The people of Barham lived in Frome or its immediate outskirts. A total of 131 of the 163 members responded to a questionnaire which yielded data on housing conditions, tenureship, income, employment and household composition. The mean age of the membership was 45.6 years, with little deviation around the mean, so most members had worked under the WISCO regime for 20 to 25 years before joining the co-op. Men made up 76% of the membership and earned substantially more than women members. Men averaged
J$42.91 per week compared with J$25.85 for women. This undoubtedly posed hardships in a society where women are often chief breadwinners and are obliged to assume the major financial burden of childrearing. Mean household size was 6.0 persons, with 2.7 children 15 years of age and under for all households. Mean household income was J$56.95, therefore co-op workers provided a substantial chunk of family income; most being employed for a total of 43.7 weeks out of the year.

The majority of the cooperators' homes were described by them as being in poor condition (55%), 40% were judged either good or fair and only 4% were considered in excellent shape. 95% of dwellings were constructed from wood frames with corrugated iron roofs or wattle (interlaced branches and weeds), and only 5% from concrete. Only 7% had electricity, 80% had no water and only 4.7% had toilet facilities. Most homes were overcrowded with an average of 6.0 people living in 2.2 rooms. While 88% of the sample were homeowners, only 24.6% owned the land on which they lived. Those who did live on their own land claimed that they had, on average 1.9 acres. Other lived on family land, leased land, rent-free land, estate land or co-op land.

Social Relations of "Cooperation"

Organizational structure did not change significantly under the cooperative system. Just as before, WISCO dictated when cane was to be burned, cut and sent to the
factory and set the price to be paid for Barham's output. So in these respects, WISCO still held the trump card. The Frome Monymusk Land Company, established to implement and coordinate the cooperative program in a consultant capacity, occupied elite status. The Land Company staff took charge of technical and economic planning. This involved important decision-making at the staff level which hindered the early development of a strong local level co-op management. But matters could not have been handled otherwise during the first few years because the Land Company wanted to minimize economic risks which might have led to an irreversible failure of the project. The eleven member Managing Committee was democratically elected by the general membership to run co-op affairs. Committee members were, on the whole, the most educated, literate and articulate cooperators, and many had also been "headmen" and "drivers" under WISCO. Their amenability and knowledge of cooperative principles was most likely due to SWCC influence. The Land Company assumed that the necessary information and awareness would be spontaneously channelled through the Managing Committee to the general members.

Considering these circumstances, it is interesting to compare the Land Company's ideas concerning the new cooperative enterprise with those of the general worker-members. The Land Company's concept of the worker as owner was based on certain characteristics considered typical of
most agricultural proprietors; such as responsibility and care of business matters, complete personal involvement not limited to a work schedule and willingness to face difficulties, particularly those which occur at the beginning of a venture. On the other hand, for the worker-members, being an "owner" in the sugar industry meant the following: not to engage in strenuous manual labor, to profit from the work of others, to deny the worker an improvement in working conditions, to be authoritarian, and to have unlimited enjoyment of all of one's rights.

The contradiction in the conception of ownership in each group manifested itself in the attitudes of the members, expressed in these terms:

1. How could workers still cut cane if they were now "owners"?

2. From the perspective of the general members, as "owners", everyone had a right to give orders. But in practice, this right was restricted to the Managing Committee and even more so to the Land Company. This, along with point 1, created disillusionment because members imagined roles for themselves which reality did not permit.

3. Now that they were "owners" the workers, in principle, no longer needed a trade union to settle grievances. But without a trade union, the general members' felt powerless in their dealings with the Land Company, who were regarded as the "real" owners since they gave the orders and held the pursestrings.
For these reasons, general members overwhelmingly felt that the co-op had done little to improve their low status position. As a result, co-op members related to the Land Company staff in much the same terms as they did WISCO management; referring to them as the "Big Men". In fact, some people preferred the Company worker-owner relationship to the co-op. As one women said, shaking her head in apparent disgust:

"...Me no like this co-ops business. Me prefer work for the Big Men them. Working in the co-ops it plenty hard and rough. Me must work harder than in WISCO days".

When asked if she would be willing to return to Company employment if given the chance, this woman insisted that she would. At least the Company made no pretenses about who was boss.

It was still common to hear members address the Project Manager assigned to Barham as "Busha", (who was a kind, well-liked Black man, but who was also their former overseer under WISCO), and the work gang supervisors as "Driver" and "Headman"; all terms left over from slavery. Their skepticism was confirmed daily when they used farm equipment still bearing the WISCO insignia, and when each week they received paychecks printed and signed by the Frome Monymusk Land Company. As one Managing Committee member pointed out:
"Workers still think everything is in the hands of the Land Company. They don't believe that the co-op is for them. I always try to put it to them that it is for them but them still don't involve."

Another added:

"Most people don't realize that the co-op is for them. Most people don't realize that they are now working for themselves. Rather than taking some initiative, they want to receive orders and directions all the time. They think things are the same as before."

When asked to account for the low level of interest and involvement in co-op affairs and poor meeting attendance, another Management Committee member replied:

"The workers don't participate because some of them don't believe that they are on their own. They think they are just working for their money and there is nothing in back of it. Most of the members, they don't have any mind in the co-op. Them only just come fe work for a few shillings and go. Them don't show any interest."
It was obvious to most cooperators that there had simply been a transfer of authority from WISCO to the Land Company, so the Managing Committee, viewed as an instrument of control, had a very fragile relationship with general membership. Most felt that their elected leaders, supposedly answerable to their constituents, had become despotically intoxicated with power. In the words of one general member:

"...I don't have no control over what happen in the co-op. I look and hear what them say only. I don't have no control over it. We don't have any deciding to make. It's only the men them on the Committee. What the Headman say, me don't have any control over what the Headman say...we have to go by it. The Headman, he tells us what to do. They make the decisions. They make many promises but you can't see any yet and them say they are going to make a housing scheme for members, but it not come true yet so we are still looking out".

Another commented:

"Sometimes the general meetings go right, sometimes they go contrary. Sometimes the Managing Committee just try to impress more than anything else. The meetings can be improved by more better teachment in the agricultural business so we
know how to handle our membership and they should talk to we in a more decent way and try to get everybody to come together".

A wide communication gap, as well as a credibility gap expanded the animosity between leaders and members. The general members' poor access to information concerning business matters was a perpetual source of anxiety. Low levels of literacy which ranged between 40% and 50% made it even more difficult for members to familiarize themselves with the workings of cooperatives in general as well as the operation of their own enterprise. (Stone 1978:2.) There were daily complaints that no one explained policies, procedures and important decisions. As one woman loudly exclaimed into the tape recorder:

"The Management Committee, what they hear from the bigger staff they don't told us. I want to know about this co-op! How my vacation is going; how the profit is going. I want to know something about this co-op. I want to understand about it"!

Other members expressed similar views:

"The biggest problem is lack of knowledge and understanding. The workers are not being given enough knowledge. People who know and understand must mix with the ones that don't
so that they can give them knowledge. The purpose of the meeting should be like when you went to school, to teach each one you know"

"We need a school. We need to be taught...
organize classes. I don't know if the others will take it, but we should give it a try".

"...Like this office building, no member know how much it cost and no members know when it going up. No one knows if it is the co-ops who building it or the Land Company or what"!

Members grumbled about the office building quite often, but a more pressing concern was the issue of severance, sick leave and vacation pay. With the changeover to the cooperative system, the people of Barham, as participants in the pilot project, were told that their checks would soon be forthcoming. Everyone at Barham was excited at the thought of getting money, particularly since the Independence holiday weekend was drawing near. Big celebration plans and promises were made to family and friends. At the last minute, members were told that the money would not come until much later, due to a bureaucratic Land Company error. Hostility and tension brewed for many days after this incident:
"...But we are not getting the amount of money as before. Me usually gets vacation pay and we get an increase."

"According to us it is not running how it should go on like before. We usually get sick leave benefits and we are not getting it again. If you meet any accident, nothing at all and before if we meet accident we get something for it and now none of that. We should have some idea of what's going on but we don't have it, we don't know. Them who do know don't tell me, me can't tell you what's going on, we really don't know, we really not satisfied a bit, no, no!"

Another confusing situation came up following the receipt of an unexpected bill sent by the Land Company to Barham. The bill, which amounted to approximately one-quarter of a million dollars, was casually handed to the Managing Committee and to the accounting clerk by a representative from the Kingston office. No one bothered to explain the charges to co-op members and it was obvious to all that the Managing Committee members felt nervous, insecure and out of control because they were unacquainted with accounting jargon and mathematics. So, no cooperator was in a position to verify or dispute the figures on the
bill, yet the money was handed over to the Land Company representative without informing the general membership.

Distrust and resentment reached a peak every payday; an incredibly hectic occasion at Barham. Members crowded around the office to collect their checks, and if there was even the slightest error (a common occurrence), the accounting clerks were verbally abused and the Land Company and the Managing Committee accused of trying to "tief" the members. Actually, many workers spent quite a great deal of time and energy in making sure that they were not being cheated by what was, at least theoretically, their own business establishment. Similarly, some spent a lot of time trying to "beat the system". Once, a member was brought before the Management Committee to be reprimanded for shirking some of his duties. Evidently, he was caught lying to his "driver" about having completed some task. This man's case is a classic example of Patterson's (1967) "Quashee" resistance; one of several types that appeared among plantation slaves and typically involved trick-playing or commission of small acts of cunning against "Busha". Ironically, the man was almost fired for his misdemeanor by the Managing Committee in the true WISCO tradition, but was saved by Land Company intervention.

Thus, it was inescapably discernible to all concerned that the authority to make far-reaching decisions affecting all aspects of the life of the group was still vested in
persons and institutions outside the community. Moreover, such decisions were still not locally palpable, but continued to define the critical context in which the people of Barham had to live.

One of the main concerns of the Barham study was to explore factors that motivated cane workers to participate in the cooperative scheme at Barham. Most of their motivations centered around an understandably hedonistic preoccupation with earning a few more dollars:

"I joined the co-op because I better could buy a house...its very important to get more money".

"Mr. Levy explain it to I and I saw progress in it. That's why I joined. I get more money, I foresaw plenty benefit in the co-op".

"I joined because the co-op has a purpose to get me some more money. Things are better. I buy more things. I'd like them to help me get more money".

Other mentioned that workers were told that if they joined the co-op they would receive WISCO severance pay amounting to substantial cash payments ranging from J$1,000 to J$2,000. Although members were asked to invest half of this sum in the co-op, for cane workers who are characteristically low-income, this was a tremendous incentive to
participate.\textsuperscript{6} (Stone 1978:7.)

A number of people explained that farmers who formerly worked on Company-owned lands were left with no other options. Their age, lack of skills and rural location would have made it extremely difficult for them to find employment on the already sparse Jamaican job market:

"...Why I joined the co-op is because they have no more industry and we have to stay here and work in sugar. I have nowhere else to go for there is no more industry in Westmoreland and I have to stay here and look after my children and I don't have no place to go so I stay here and joined the co-op".

"I joined the co-op because I am not in the position to leave and go on to what I want. I joined because the majority had to join".

Managing Committee members were more enthusiastic and displayed a good command of Marxist-oriented cooperative rhetoric:

"Well, the reason why I join the co-op is we usually work for the capitalists and it come to the time now that we can understand that and we work now for ourselves. We is suppose to be better off. When we work for the capitalists them, we only build them up for you work a
certain amount and what you get out of it is very small and them have the majority for themselves".

"...All of us can unite together, pull together. That's the only way we and our families can prosper. We must unite together and have fellowship together...we must combine to organize our work together...We now be responsible, we can care better than when we worked for the Company, and we have the benefit of what's remaining when it is completed".

"I joined the co-op for a better living and to build the country. I would like to see the co-ops come forward, not backward, and to build the country and to make Jamaica better instead of money going out, to make it stay in and build the country. That's why we join the co-op, to let the money circulate in the country...to build our country".

"...Well, as far as I understand it, we will be able to get the profit instead of the White Man getting it and we will get to share. The co-op is for the benefit of us all...we come
first. The co-op will make things better, not just for myself but for all of us involved. We have more privileges, we are self-employed persons...all the profit will be for us and we will be able to honor ourselves more".

I found these statements to be encouraging, but wondered if perhaps the Managing Committee's enthusiasm arose from the realization that within Barham's limited confines, their status was elevated by their new leadership roles.

When asked what the aims and goals of the co-op should be, one general member answered:
"...To get some more money to buy more things. The aim is to help me get some more money".

Similarly, another responded:

"The co-ops will be better in the future. They will get on more better and get us money money".

Although these types of aspirations were typical, others were secondarily concerned with long-term, yet still materialistic benefits:
"I would like the co-op to help us with holding land such as our own to put the house on".
"I want some help to build up a house and to school my children, whether they lend us money or open up some school that will help the children. One thing I think the co-op should do is help us with our children to educate them, that's number one".

"...Well most of us we want a better home and longer ahead we might even have a shopping center for our own self. We might have homes, shopping center and a place or play games I hope, so when you come home from working you have something refreshing around you and your friends are there. Sit down and have a red stripe and all that, and laugh and talk and then go home to get a good rest".

Excitement was voiced about the prospect of implementing housing scheme for those in need of new homes and the possibility of establishing a home improvement loan program. Some expressed the necessity of opening a store for purchasing food and supplies bought in bulk and sold at cost to help members offset the high costs of living. Other recommendations included the provision of insurance and pension plans and the purchase of burial spots for members of the co-op. In general, monetary incentives and the
satisfaction of basic needs were viewed as attractions and goals rather than the less tangible gains such as pride of ownership, solidarity, etc. or collective concerns such as crop production methods or harvest yield. Pragmatism, a hedge against poverty, went hand-in-hand with an individual concern for self-survival.

Ideologically, the co-op emphasized the primacy of the group, but the work system tended to atomize this group consciousness through individual assignment of work and individual contracts of payment. Each gang worked in isolation on a set of tasks; knowing little of what was occurring on other parts of the farm. Members were paid according to the number of cane rows personally completed each day; a remnant of the WISCO piecework system; and therefore strength and skill were determinants of income rather than conscientiousness. So working relationships were often based on self-centered, instrumental exchanges ("I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine") and the recurrent theme of estate worker individualism and competition was preserved in the new system. The lack of interdependence became subtly visible during our conversations when constant usage of the pronouns "me", "I" and "they" predominated when "we" could have easily been substituted. Probes for group reasoning, group concerns and group sentiment usually evoked statements such as: "How can I say what they think"?, "Everyone is different, I can only speak
for myself", or "I don't know about them...I can't say".

But friendships still thrived. At noon, the work gangs crowded into thatched lean-tos in the canefields to eat lunch and escape the midday sun. Lunchtimes were always enjoyable social events and very communal affairs. Those who brought their green bananas, dumplings, coco yams, salt fish and tea would share with those without food and no one every went hungry. But the sense of "we-ness" exemplified here stemmed from a reactionary awareness of class membership; most often expressed as we the powerless "little men" against them the monolithic "big men"; rather than class consciousness in Marxist terms, which would actively threaten the existence of the established order. (Mintz 1974:314-15.)

When Barham co-op members were asked what they wanted their children to do when they became adults, most chose professions like mechanic, teacher, doctor, nurse, barrister, engineer, typist etc. Some answered that they wanted to see their children do what ever kind work they wished, and others said that they didn't know. Interestingly enough, most members claimed that they wouldn't mind seeing their children join the co-op if work became available in the future, but specified that their children should fill higher status positions such as typist, accounting clerk, project manager, education officer... No one preferred to have their children work in the canefields:
"No!...me rather dead than fe see me pickney dem work inna de cane for it too hard and rough! Me can't let them work as I do!"

As members of the wider society, the people of Barham are motivated towards achieving success, acquiring culturally valued goods and aiming at the upward mobility of their children. To this extent, social reality does not correspond to the cooperative ideology. This has serious implications for the program Jamaica is now pursuing. If such a program seeks the support of rural dwellers and seeks to improve their social and economic condition it is useful to know what the beneficiaries' orientations really are. Programs which presume that the cane worker wishes to stay in the cane and typically wishes his children to do the same, when he really wants to escape the plantation and enter the "modern" sector, are doomed to failure unless there is a radical change in the social and economic milieu. (Foner 1972:151.) New progressive roles and attitudes prescribed by cooperative ideals have not diminished long-established, slanderous stereotypes depicting Black unskilled cane-cutters as the most destitute, backward and unmotivated people in Jamaica; a by-product of the historical developments discussed earlier. (Phillips 1976:556-57.) To this day, virtually no one in Jamaica would voluntarily chose unskilled farm labor, canecutting in particular, as a desired career path.
In the Cooperative program, the Jamaican Government has attempted to attach a more positive image to sugar work. As one cooperator pointed out: "In WISCO times no one really know us. But now the Gleaner write us up, the Prime Minister visit our farm and everybody hear about us on the news".

But even so, at the present rate, effacement of the imprint left by centuries of oppression from the national psyche may take decades to complete.

Conclusion

One could easily assume that the transfer of ownership from WISCO to the Frome Monymusk Land Company to the Barham workers and the concurrent movement away from the traditional colonial system to cooperative ownership, would have instilled a collective morale. But the Barham study suggests that the transfer demanded much more than receipt of a land lease and an infusion of rhetoric. The critical problem existed in the class divisions between the worker-members, the Managing Committee, and the Frome Monymusk Land Company; which were disappointingly reminiscent of the old colonial plantation structure. Consequently group interaction, attitudes towards work, aims and expectations, the internal role/rule structure and the wider organizational setting, as perceived by the members of the coopera-
tive, constitute behavior that would have been just as appropriate under the WISCO regime.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. See the New World Quarterly issue on sugar (1967).

2. The present distribution of farm acreage among the various size groups of farms reflects a fundamentally unequal pattern. A relatively small number of very large holdings not only account for a very high proportion of the arable land area, but by and large, contain the best agricultural land. In 1968, farms over 500 acres comprised on 16% of all farms but occupied 44.87% of the agricultural land. On the other hand, farms less than 5 acres, the average size sold to smallholders, comprised 77.96% of all farms but occupied only 14% of the land. (Jefferson 1972:81.) In addition, 83% of the farmers accounted for less than 25% of the total income for agriculture. (Jefferson 1972:82.) It is true that throughout Jamaica the existing areas of small settlement appear to have reached the limit of their carrying capacity with present techniques and organization. (Cumper 1954:125.) Given the population pressure and the poor quality of the land, farmers can hardly make a living on these small holdings. (Beckford 1972:24.) Thus it appears that opportunities for peasant production have become increasingly restricted with the expansion of plantations (Beckford 1972:25.)


4. One Jamaican dollar is presently equivalent to US$1.21. In 1975, one Jamaican dollar was worth US$.88.

5. In the 1973 to 1975 period, sugar earnings rose from $35 million to $74 million in 1974 and $139 million in 1975, although output remained constant. Due to the large increases in foreign exchange earned by the industry, wage rates increased by about 100%. According to Stone's survey (1978), the upward adjustment in wage rates for the first time brought the sugar worker close to national wage levels and raised workers take home pay from $600 to $800 per annum to $1,200 to $1,600.

6. This idea of comparing conceptions of "ownership" is borrowed directly from Vessuri and Bilbao's study on Argentine sugar co-ops in Nash 1976.
7. Carl Stone's more recent survey of all three pilot farms revealed that 80% were motivated by the promise of instant cash, while only 20% expressed an interest in cooperative values.

8. M.G. Smith's (1960) study of occupational choice in Jamaica showed that few children or adults willingly choose any type of agricultural work, especially unskilled, as desired employment. Although Smith's study is somewhat dated, in the author's opinion, the findings still hold true.
CHAPTER IV  CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the Government's good intentions, replacement of foreign multinational plantation ownership with workers' cooperatives reinforced, rather than removed, class stratification and the tradition of elite domination. Sugar workers at Barham, rightfully suspecting that cooperative tenure was merely a cosmetic reform, clung to a worldview that had helped them to endure the WISCO regime; subverting the development of a cooperative spirit. For them, the issue of who controlled the means of production remained secondary to more immediate concerns such as earning enough income to feed, clothe and house their families.

Stone's article (1973) provides an epilogue to the Jamaican experiment in cooperation. The introduction of the co-ops in 1974 and 1975 witnessed a boom period in the sugar industry generating revenues which were partially used as an investment in the new program. The financial successes of the pilot projects in their first year were used as evidence to support the argument that the co-op system would work. By the end of the first crop year, SWCC led agitation for full co-op conversion of all the remaining farms on the three estates. Mass demonstrations were used to pressure the Government to place an additional 17 farms under co-op management before a thorough assessment of their economic viability was conducted.
By 1976, the export earnings by the Government to support its cost structure. The co-op program had, therefore, to contend with the disillusioning effect of downturns in the industry and it became evident that the co-ops had inherited many of the inefficiencies of large scale estate production. In the third year of co-op production (1976-77) budget projections showed that the production costs were higher than the guaranteed price paid for cane by the sugar factories; deficits being highest at Frome and Monymusk, the two largest estates. Drought exacerbated these problems and reduced output by 25% to 35%; causing a decrease in wage income and an increase in operating deficits. An unremitting depression of the sugar market coupled with ill-effects of the current Jamaican economic crisis of inflation and foreign debt threaten to destroy the last shreds of cooperative commitment. Willingness to withstand this difficult period will depend on the degree to which co-op members feel that they have a real stake in the program's success or failure. Although this study is critical of some aspects of the cooperative program, the author is in agreement with the Jamaican Government's efforts to achieve economic development without a highly unequal distribution of wealth, social status and political power. The problems discussed here are common to all societies trying to build socialism on a similar base.
In Jamaica, there was no equivalent to the 1959 revolution in Cuba, where the colonial plantation structure was destroyed and the industry completely nationalized. In Cuba, it is reported that much has been achieved in reforming the plantation system, where class is now of lesser importance and where sugar workers, nationally viewed as the vanguard of the revolution, are highly motivated to participate in national development. (Beckford 1972:219.)

But it is still uncertain that the right conditions can be created through political, organizational and educational means. The current situation is likely to remain unchanged unless there is a radical transformation in the existing economic arrangement. Exploration of new possibilities for redirecting emphasis from sugar to the production of diversified food crops to satisfy domestic needs would be more economically beneficial to Jamaica and more palatable to the farming population. In the meantime, the bureaucratic management system could be restructured to minimize authoritarianism, open communication channels to keep cooperators in touch with developments which affect them and to facilitate the transfer of skills so that the cooperatives can eventually wean themselves from technical and administrative dependency.

The original study of the Barham Sugar Workers' Cooperative included a feasible, short-term plan of action to make Barham a more workable organization. In con-
structing this list of recommendations we tried to come up with ideas which we felt would meet the members' approval, based on a synthesis of their own suggestions for improving the co-op:

1. There were 163 members in the Barham Cooperative and approximately 25% of the membership was composed of women. However, there were no women representatives on the Managing Committee. This was a great loss since, as anyone visiting the co-op would have agreed, the women members were among the most militant and vocal people on the farm. Furthermore, there were several women who possessed a great deal of leadership potential. We recommended that a special allotment be made so that each time a new Committee was elected at least three of the members would be women.

2. It was noted that most of the members of the Cooperative had a very low level of knowledge of business affairs. To a great extent, this was due to schism between the Managing Committee and the general members. Several factors accounted for the credibility gap; the primary factor being the secretive nature of the workings of the Managing Committee whose meetings were closed to general members. In fact, whenever other members were caught loitering around the office when Managing Committee meetings were held, they were promptly shooed away. Since there was no rule in the Cooperative Charter prohibiting open meetings, we suggested that in the future, all general
members should be allowed to attend and that the minutes of each meeting be made public. In this way members would help to lessen alienation and allow members to reflect upon all issues facing the Committee.

3. Democratic procedures were not enforced at Barham and the general membership should have played a more active role in decision-making processes. The Managing Committee should not finalize any proposals without the knowledge of the general membership. For example, a straw vote could be taken in order to decide the final outcome of all decisions, followed by a discussion of the minority view which could then be followed by a real and final vote. This would give all members some measure of control and give the Committee an advisory role rather than an authority role.

4. The Managing Committee should be rotated more often than every 6 months. Everyone would then have an opportunity to assume leadership and to become more involved in policy-making. Participation in management affairs need not be contingent upon literacy. Although many members could not read or write they were definitely not lacking in their verbal ability to express views and could have had significant influence in co-op administration.

5. A series of seminars and lectures should be organized for the members of the co-op, geared toward instilling some enthusiasm, with both technical and
ideological content. Guest speakers from the University, the School of Agriculture and from the Land Company itself could be invited to give presentations and to show films depicting the success of co-ops in other parts of the world. Most important, a series of "rap sessions" should be organized so that everyone will be encouraged to air their views.

In August, 25 people from Barham were invited to attend a retreat at the Jamaica School of Agriculture. During their one-week stay, members of the three Pilot Cooperatives attended seminars and lectures similar to those we have described and participants were given time off from work with pay. Similar retreats should be held on a rotational basis so that eventually, all members would get a change to attend.

6. The use of slavery-time terms such as "Busha" and "driver" should be strongly discouraged. These terms are not only degrading, but have no place in the new order. As long as sugar workers continue to use such vocabulary to describe the position of other workers on the farm in relation to themselves, they are verbally reinforcing their low status image in the eyes of their peers as well as in the eyes of outsiders. Instead, the term "Busha" could be replaced by either Project Manager or simply Ms. or Mr. X. A "driver" could just as easily be called Supervisor or Mr. or Ms. X.
7. All efforts to convince co-op members that they were working for themselves were futile when week after week they received paychecks printed and signed by the Frome Monymusk Land Company, and used farm equipment and vehicles bearing the WISCO insignia. We recommended that new payroll forms, checks and letterhead be printed with Barham Sugar Workers' Cooperative Ltd. printed boldly at the top and the same be stencilled on all farm equipment. (Ironically, "Barham" was the last name of one of the early colonial British proprietors.)

8. The members of the Barham co-op had no facility where they could all meet together at one time, and desperately needed a hall large enough to serve a dual function as both meeting place and recreation center.

9. When an institution or a movement is founded from the desire to achieve a particular end, it is developmentally necessary to define new issues and goals to pursue after the original end has been achieved. If not, the movement loses continuity, momentum and in effect becomes "stalemated". Land acquisition and cooperative ownership were achieved at Barham as original ends, but will lose strength as rallying agents over the course of time. It was therefore necessary for Barham to seek new challenges which would be personally relevant to its members and motivate group action on an ongoing basis. (Phillips 1976: 522.) For instance, co-ops in other parts of the world
have been used to provide a variety of services ranging from the usual marketing and provision of credit to the promotion of welfare objectives such as health, housing, education and general community improvement. Barham should begin long range plans for pension, retirement, etc. It might also be worthwhile to organize a credit union, and a shop to provide food and supplies. The housing survey indicated that most people are interested in either repairing or adding to their homes. It would be useful to institute a loan program and to consider building a housing scheme for those in need of new homes.

10. There were several people working on the farm who were not members, such as the Project Manager, the Assistant Project Manager, the accounting clerks and some temporary workers hired to help harvest the crop. Incorporating these "outsiders", many of whom hold prestigious positions, would promote greater equality of status and increase their commitment to the co-op.

11. All general meetings should be held during working hours and be made mandatory with the Secretary present to take attendance. If the meetings were held during the day, members could not complain that they have other responsibilities preventing them from attending. They would also not be deterred by fatigue after a long day's work in the fields. In fact, a paid one-hour break during the working day would probably be a very welcome change.
12. Barham should consider putting the vacant houses located on the farm into immediate use. These houses were all co-op property and were going to waste, when they could have been rented out or used by the co-op members themselves for social activities.

13. The method of payment at Barham was contrary to cooperative principles. Land owners make their living from selling produce, not from the number of cane rows they chop in a given day. The piece work system is a remnant of WISCO days and a more equitable form of profit sharing is advisable.

14. There was a great deal of mystery surrounding the payment of sick leave and vacation money. Workers felt that they were being cheated and that they received fewer benefits than when they worked for the estate. Perhaps it would be more agreeable to retain the old payment schedule so that members would not have to reorganize their household budgets.

15. Ownership of individual plots for food production has traditionally been cherished by rural Jamaicans, as it represents security, dignity and freedom. It would therefore be highly beneficial to set aside small parcels of cooperative land for subsistence crop cultivation.
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