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SEMI-FEUDALISM, MIGRATION

AND THE STATE IN GUYANA

by

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Preface

This is one of a series of analyses of population mobility and the impact of state policies. A slightly revised version will form a chapter of a forthcoming book which contains separate studies on related issues in South American countries - Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico and Peru. The majority of the papers which constitute the chapters of that volume were discussed in a four day seminar in December 1979 along with a "background" introductory paper. The latter attempted to identify the type of policy changes that could be expected in the context of transitions of specific social formations.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis was on the changes that have typically accompanied a transition from quasi-feudal relations of production to capitalist relations, in the more general context of industrialisation. And within those general terms of reference most, though not all of the studies have focussed on the impact of land reform on migration and on the functions and efficacy of colonisation and land settlement schemes. However, the studies adopt a variety of analytical approaches and no one paper should be regarded as typical of the collection.

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<sup>1</sup> An abbreviated version of that paper was published. P. Peek and G. Standing: "Rural-urban migration and government policies in low-income countries", International Labour Review, Vol. 118, No. 6, Nov-Dec. 1979, pp. 747-62.

## I. Introduction\*

In Guyana, as in other countries, the pattern of population mobility has reflected the changing social relations of production and the effect of state policies associated with the changing nature of the social formation. Less abstractly, in Guyana's case migration has to be explained in terms of the changing needs and power of the plantations, the colonial authorities, and the mining companies that until recently dominated Guyanese society.

For much of the country's history the predominant relations of production could be aptly described as semi-feudal. This term is controversial, but the essential characteristic is that the producers face a combination of forms of exploitation, the transfer of surplus being effected by wage labour and by other mechanisms such as feudal rent, usury, and extra-economic coercion. With semi-feudal relations workers are not fully divorced from the means of production, but rather are expected to provide part of their subsistence needs from work on plots of land they own or rent from landlord-employers. This typically implies the wage is less than the cost of reproducing labour power.

Under semi-feudalism, as under feudalism, landlords, capitalist farmers, or a plantocracy normally seek to inhibit rural-urban migration and bind peasants and estate workers to the rural areas under their control.<sup>1</sup> Two conditions favour the establishment of semi-feudal relations of production. The first is a low population density in rural areas. In those circumstances reliance on "free" wage labour would be costly, given the labour scarcity and the high opportunity cost of wage labour for peasants who had the alternative of cultivating land for themselves. In such circumstances landlords or commercial plantations would attempt to secure control over the land to force the peasants to provide wage labour at a low wage rate. But where the land available is substantial relative to the population, that process is likely to be protracted and hard to achieve. The second condition favouring semi-feudal relations of production is a low level of development of productive forces on the land. Because coordinating production would not raise the total product substantially, the landlords or estates would be relatively disinterested in cultivating the maximum amount of land in their possession. Rather they would attempt to get the peasants to produce at least part of their subsistence requirements on small plots with primitive techniques of production. Land, in other words, would be used to entice workers into estate employment as well as to drive them into it.

To the extent semi-feudal relations of production entail policies binding workers to specific rural areas and systematically restricting their purchasing power or subsistence income, there is an inherent conflict between the estates and nascent industrial and commercial capital. The latter relies on the creation of an expanding domestic market for means of production and consumption; it also relies on the existence of a low-cost and mobile labour force. Thus alongside the conflict

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<sup>1</sup> The rationale for this practice is discussed in a previous paper. G. Standing: "Migration and modes of exploitation: The social origins of immobility and mobility", Population and Employment Working Paper No. 72, (Geneva, ILO, June 1979).

\* Thanks to Angela Lavender for considerable assistance and to Ajit Ghose, Peter Peek, Gerry Rodgers and René Wéry for their comments.

between peasants and landlords, including plantations, is a conflict between landlords and industrial and commercial capitalist interests. These conflicts have to be resolved in the political sphere, for just as the feudal interests use the state apparatus to secure a subordinated peasantry and require a set of policies that restrict population mobility, so the commercial and industrial classes need a contrary set of policies.

In much of the following the focus is on the actions and objectives of the planter-class, or the plantocracy. Within that category we must include not only the plantation owners and later the management of the multi-national sugar-based companies but the colonial and other administrative officials who were concerned primarily with ensuring the continued flow of surplus to shareholders in London and elsewhere, as well as the various groups whose profits depended directly on the prosperity of the sugar industry. It was this composite class which was dominant politically for most of Guyana's history, at least up to 1966.

The theme of the following analysis is that the plantocracy and latterly the mining companies relied on a combination of economic mechanisms and government policies to secure a pliant labour force. In effect, the economic and political tactics were based on two objectives: the need for a rural proletariat and the need for a peasantry providing an adequate supply of means of subsistence to allow very low money wages. Given the emphasis put on sugar as an export crop, these twin needs involved an inherent conflict, for they required a delicate balance of a labour-supplying and a food-producing peasantry. To have squeezed the peasantry excessively would have entailed a rising cost of food and thus a rising cost of reproducing labour power, which would have reduced the rate of exploitation. To have allowed the unchecked growth of petty commodity production would have meant a rapid loss of labour as the opportunity cost of wage employment rose, and would have produced a sector competing with the estates for scarce labour power.

Essentially, to maintain profit levels the estates needed to partially dissolve the petty commodity producers' economic base. It was in their interest to only partially restrict the so-called "peasantry" because they needed to tie workers to the estate-dominated areas and reduce the necessary efficiency wage.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the estates needed to allow the partial reproduction of the petty commodity economic formation (the pre-capitalistic mode of production) and in doing so needed to ensure that it remained what Althusser has called a subordinated mode in the economic structure, facilitating the over-all process of accumulation. What the estates could not allow was the emergence of alternative forms of production in competition with them for labour, purchasing power, and ultimately political control. The consequence was what will be characterised as "contrived stagnation".

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<sup>1</sup> The actual wage reflects the level of bargaining power (the state of class struggle etc.) as well as the cost of reproducing labour power. The greater the non-wage economic support available to wage-workers the greater their bargaining power.

This fundamental dilemma, which dominated the development and underdevelopment of productive forces in Guyana from 1838 to at least 1966, and which continued to influence the pattern of development after Independence, is similar to that identified by Lenin in his analysis of Russian agrarian change in the nineteenth century. As he noted,

"Whole categories of agricultural wage-workers own or have the use of land. When small production is eliminated too greatly the big landowners try to strengthen or revive it by the sale or lease of land."<sup>1</sup>

The retention of a rural workforce was as essential in Russia as in Guyana, and if the peasantry was squeezed excessively their ties to the soil would have been loosened and their propensity to leave estate-dominated rural areas increased. But to the extent productive forces developed outside the estate and mining sectors, there was likely to be a process of class differentiation, primary capital accumulation, and land consolidation. All those are normally associated with the creation of a landless population liable to migrate out of the rural areas.

Given the complexity of maintaining the necessary balance, and the growing political conflict associated with the socio-economic changes taking place, it was scarcely surprising that rural out-migration was always a major obstacle to estate production. Hopefully, this will become clear in the course of the following analysis. But what is particularly fascinating is the range of economic and political mechanisms adopted to control migration and the long-term impact of those policies on the underdevelopment of the Guyanese economy.

Although relations of production on the plantations and in the mining enterprises became increasingly capitalistic (despite always retaining semi-feudal elements), the dependent nature of the economy blocked capitalist industrialisation. Since the development of productive forces was for long controlled by absentee planters and subsequently by a small group of non-competing multi-nationals, there was no substantial accumulation in the rural areas despite the "super-exploitation" of the rural labour force through low wages and complementary mechanisms for depriving the workers of surplus.<sup>2</sup> In the long run that accumulation may have raised the living standards of the working class by stimulating a demand for labour in an industrially diversifying economy. But that only occurred to a small extent. Even accumulation in urban-industrial areas, which in most countries has accompanied the growth of agrarian capital, was checked by the external domination, basically because the surplus was taken out of the country in the form of repatriated profits. Thus the impoverishment of the peasantry was matched by a stagnant urban economy, which grew as the surplus population drifted out of rural areas and became part of a growing body of urban unemployed.

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<sup>1</sup> V.I. Lenin: "Capitalism in agriculture" in Collected Works (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1960), Vol. IV, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of exploitation was discussed in the earlier paper. If exploitation through wage labour is defined as the rate of surplus value in the classic sense, then super-exploitation arises if the wage falls below the cost of reproducing labour power. It would be foolish to pretend there are no difficulties in the notion of exploitation, since there are subjective as well as objective elements involved. Nevertheless where one class appropriates the surplus product of the direct producers one would be much more foolish not to make exploitation the fulcrum of analysis.



II. Guyana in Historical Perspective: Emancipation and the Aftermath (1800-1864)

For most of its history, Guyana was an agricultural colony known as British Guiana geared to the production of sugar on plantations located in the narrow, flat coastal region of the country.<sup>1</sup> Consisting of some 83,000 square miles, the country has always had an extremely low population density. But with an interior savannah region separated from the coast by a thick belt of tropical forest and connected to it by vast rivers and a web of navigable streams, it is the coastal region which has always been the main area of inhabitation and cultivation. Reflecting a situation which had changed little in the previous hundred and fifty years, the census of 1970 indicated that more than nine out of every ten people lived in that coastal region, where the population density was some thirty times as great as in the remainder of the country (Table I).

Table I  
Population Density of Guyana: 1960 and 1970

Regions	% of Country's Total Area	Density (per sq. m.)		Rate of Increase (p.a.)	Population Distribution	
		1960	1970		1960	1970
Coastal	31.5	20.2	25.2	2.3	93.8	93.8
Interior	28.5	0.6	0.8	2.1	6.2	2.6
Guyana		6.8	8.5	2.2		

Source: Population Census Reports

Ecologically, the peculiarity of the coastal region is that it is not only flat but to a large extent below sea level, which has meant that over many generations a great amount of expenditure and human energy has been required to maintain effective systems of drainage and irrigation. As such, much of the most fertile land has relied on empoldering to be cultivable; this has involved a system of dams, canals, and irrigation, which if maintained could make the land potentially very fertile.

It was in the coastal region that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries cotton, coffee, and sugar plantations were first established. The European settlers found the indigenous Indians an inadequate source of labour and, as elsewhere, relied on slave-labour imported from Africa. As such the early estates had a captive if not entirely reliable labour supply. But in Guyana the slave mode of production possessed particularly pronounced deficiencies which hastened its demise. Slavery always involved considerable costs for the planters; the mortality of slaves was high, productivity was low, and with escape into the vast interior always possible costs of supervision were high.<sup>2</sup> The costs of reproducing labour power were borne by the estates and to ensure a surplus required

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text the name Guyana will be used, although between 1831 and 1966 the country was known as British Guiana. The territory was captured from the Dutch in 1803 and formally ceded to Britain in 1814.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts estimated that in the period immediately before Emancipation the life expectancy of slaves was only 22.8 years. G.W. Roberts: "A life table for a West Indian slave population", Population Studies, Vol. V., No. 3, 1952.

keeping slaves at a low level of subsistence, a fact which only intensified the problem of mortality. Moreover in the interests of internal reproduction of the labour force, it was necessary to maintain workers who were not themselves productive labour, which meant that the over-all rate of exploitation was low. As a result any decline in the price of sugar left the estates little leeway to extract more surplus from the labour force. After the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807 production costs rose sharply, for once the estates had to reproduce all their labour force internally, they had to raise the level of subsistence to reduce mortality. They attempted to make the slaves bear part of the cost of reproducing labour power by providing them with small plots of land on which to produce "ground provisions". But the surplus the estates were able to extract continued to be small, partly because low incomes due to a low world price for sugar and an unhealthy ecological environment meant they continued to suffer a loss of slaves through high mortality and escape. Thus with the various costs that included costs of coercion and the corresponding risks of relaxation, the slave mode gave way without much struggle, either in the economic, political, or ideological spheres.

In 1838 slave labour was abolished after a four-year transition period known as Apprenticeship. What happened then is remarkable. The planters' main objection to the abolition of slavery was the fear that the freed slaves would promptly migrate into the interior of the country and be capable of attaining a level of subsistence that would enable them to avoid having to work on the estates. As the plantations were on the relatively fertile coastal strip, this meant that the potential labour force would move away from the estates and be unavailable even on a part-time or seasonal basis.

Given the scarcity of labour power, the existence of vast stretches of cultivable land, and the sensitivity of marginal plantations to declines in profitability, the plantocracy began a concerted campaign to retain some form of direct control over the labour force. This was done in almost open conflict with the Colonial Office in London which advocated a rapid move to a "free" labour market consistent with the capitalist laissez-faire doctrines then in vogue in Britain. Between 1834 and the early 1860s this divergence of view persisted and was only resolved, in the planters' favour, after a protracted period of stagnation within the plantation economy.

In the years immediately following 1838 the planters' worst fears were realised, though not in the way they had anticipated. There was indeed a massive expansion of the peasantry as the ex-slaves acquired land. But this took place in or near the coastal area, for several reasons. First, that was where the land was most fertile and accessible; second, there was land available there; and third, that was where the population could have access to (imported) consumer goods. These circumstances arose because in the period preceding and during the abolition of slavery - partly in anticipation of subsequent labour shortages and partly as a result of them - many of the marginal and relatively inefficient plantations collapsed and were abandoned. Moreover, in the quarter of a century after 1838, when the move to free trade in the British Empire was at its height and when imperial protection was reduced, the sugar industry suffered one of its periodic slumps due to low sugar prices in the United Kingdom. Consequently much land was cheaply available, so that many ex-slaves were able to acquire small plots with a few months' saving from

wage labour. Others merely resorted to squatting, while in many cases groups combined to purchase large tracts of land, which were then parcelled out or worked on rudimentary co-operative principles. Important as this was for the subsequent pattern of rural development, and the ideological direction it encouraged Guyanese governments to take more than a century later, this came to be called "the village movement". It is remarkable for its rapidity, the extent of its expansion, and its initial success.

Yet neither the plantocracy nor an increasingly alarmed Colonial Office could allow it to flourish unchecked, for it threatened the very foundation of the colonial economy in Guyana. Indeed it was the effect of the movement on the plantations' profitability which forced the Colonial Office to make concessions to the plantocracy, gradually inducing it to support attempts to check the migration from the estates in the interest of securing an adequate supply of wage labour power. With that convergence of views the ambivalence of state policies, which characterised the period between 1834 and about 1860, declined. That period of transition can be portrayed as reflecting a struggle over the most appropriate form of the capitalist mode of production, a struggle which concluded with the acceptance of semi-feudal-controls. With images of a flourishing yeomanry, the Colonial authorities initially insisted on a more complete transition to a capitalist economy based on a "free" wage-labour market, whereas the planters realised that with such vast stretches of available land and with the odium associated with plantation labour, a free labour market meant a steep rise in wages which few estates could afford. In their turn the Colonial authorities realised that colonial income was based on the profitability of the plantations, so that in the wake of intense lobbying by the West Indian merchants in the UK, the advent of a free labour market was postponed.

To increase the supply of labour to the estates the plantocracy pursued a double-edged strategy. They set out to severely restrict access to the land while securing an additional source of "unfree" labour through indentured immigration.

#### Access to the Land

At the time of Emancipation most of the country, including all the vast interior, was designated Crown Land. The large group of plantations of various sizes, including a number that had recently been abandoned, were concentrated in the coastal areas. In addition there was a relatively small amount of land, mostly attached to the estates, which had been set aside as small plots for the peasant farming of ground provisions. On Emancipation, the first objective of the plantocracy was the retention of control of the land. As early as 1838 Governor Light stated that he was determined to restrict land settlement by the labourers, asserting ominously, "If persons without capital will consider themselves entitled to demand land, let them not possess it without such restrictions as shall induce them to pause before they quit the more densely peopled regions for the interior".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Farley: "The rise of the peasantry in British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies Vol. 2, No. 4, 1953-54, p. 97.

With the subsequent growth of the peasantry in the 1840s the planters' immediate objective was the disruption of the village movement, and in particular the "communal" villages. As far as the estates were concerned, there was less cause for alarm with what has been called the "proprietary" villages, those that were virtually attached to the estates and which were a convenient means of tying workers to those estates.<sup>1</sup> It was the communal villages which were the greater threat, since they contained the germs of economically and socially viable independent communities.<sup>2</sup> They were formed by groups of ex-slaves who collectively bought tracts of land, often whole abandoned estates. It was these initiatives that the estates and the colonial officials set out to destroy.

At first they were singularly unsuccessful and by 1852 most of the population owned or had settled on land. However by that time the plantocracy's offensive was gathering momentum, and in fact the village movement peaked in 1848. The onslaught included both legal and extra-legal measures. To deter settlement in the interior, the authorities initially stipulated that crown land - i.e., most land not owned by estates - could only be purchased in minimum parcels of 100 acres. Later this was raised to 500 acres. And although much of the crown-land was located in the relatively undeveloped and only partially accessible interior, the price of crown-land was fixed well above that of other land, much of which was clearly more fertile. Indeed, consistent with the official reluctance to see the ex-slaves acquire crown-land, according to the calculations of one planter, the peasants on average had to pay about 25 times as much as the planters for land purchased in the 1840s.<sup>3</sup> By the 1860s the official price of crown-land was set at about five times that of land being sold elsewhere in Guyana.

The communal villages were curbed more directly when an Ordinance was made in 1853 prohibiting the joint purchase of land by groups of more than 20 persons; this was reduced to ten in 1856. Another ordinance was passed to convert communal villages into individually-owned plots. The law stipulated that if a group of more than ten persons owned land it had to be partitioned and levied for maintenance rates. This led to a pattern of land fragmentation that had a lasting effect on the underdevelopment of productive forces in non-estate agriculture, for the administered partition of the co-operative villages allocated individual peasants small strips of "good", "fair", and "poor" land, according to their share in the co-operative village; often the parts of the composite plot were at different ends of the village.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Young: Approaches to Local Self-Government in British Guiana (London, Longmans, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> A major reason for this was that the land in the coastal region required systematic drainage and irrigation schemes which relied on communal organisation, and which were relatively unlikely in villages that consisted of individualistic small-scale farmers.

<sup>3</sup> A.H. Adamson: Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904 (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972), p. 164.

Other measures taken by the plantocracy included a concerted effort to stop the peasants purchasing land near estates, the intention being to force them to work as wage labourers on the estates. Yet that had the effect of forcing many to move into the interior.<sup>1</sup> The plantations even organised the systematic destruction of fruit trees, provision grounds, and fishing areas, as part of the general strategy of making peasants reliant on wage-labour earnings for their subsistence. For their part, the colonial authorities, pressed to do so by the planters, forcibly evicted squatters from abandoned estates or unsettled crown-land, and when peasants tried to establish settlements away from the estates in what has been called "the creek-and-river movement" the authorities pilloried them by sending raiding parties to burn stores and ruin crops.<sup>2</sup> These heavy-handed methods helped to achieve the planters' objective. The interior was not extensively settled, and the great majority of the peasants were forced to stay in villages near the estates on fragmented landholdings that were insufficient to provide more than the very barest of subsistence incomes. Faced with additional demands, such as rent and taxes, and a continuing inability to develop the infrastructure essential for productive land utilisation in the ecological conditions of Guyana, the peasants faced a stagnation that was truly contrived and became dependent on wage employment to realise something approaching an adequate subsistence income.

Having disrupted the communal village economy and created the basis of a dependent peasantry, the plantocracy proceeded to increase their control of the land. The purpose was partly to allow estate production to increase, but this was scarcely the main reason, for as their ownership and control of land expanded the proportion devoted to sugar production or other estate crops declined. The increased control had two other major objectives: to ensure an adequate supply of labour power, and to increase the rate of exploitation through squeezing the peasants on to a smaller amount of land and thereby facilitating higher rents, which increased the surplus accruing to the estates, and lowering wages. However, the means by which the peasants were denied access to land and prevented from developing the forces of production on it have to be seen as one part of a two-sided strategy adopted by the plantocracy to obtain a low-cost labour supply. The other tactic involved increasing the supply through indentured labour.

#### Indentured Labour

In the immediate aftermath of Emancipation the Guyanese planters were prevented by Imperial rule from enacting vagrancy and "located labourers" laws binding ex-slaves to the estates. At the time bourgeois freedoms were being actively created in Britain - the Poor Law of 1834 had just replaced the Speenhamland System - and the Colonial Office was, for a short time and never wholly consistently, more concerned "with the establishment of personal and political freedom for the emancipated

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1 Ibid., p. 35.

2 Farley, 1953-4, op. cit.

class than with the preservation of economic prosperity" in Guyana.<sup>1</sup> It took extensive lobbying by the West Indian merchants in England and the slump in the sugar industry to induce changes and a reassertion of quasi-feudal controls.

The principles and practice of indentured labour were established between 1840 and 1854 as pressure on the Colonial Office gradually prevailed. By the early 1860s it had become the mainstay of the plantation economy.<sup>2</sup> Although Chinese, Portuguese, and other nationalities were also imported as part of a calculated policy to create a racially diverse and therefore divided labour force, most of the indentured workers came from the Indian sub-continent. The adoption of an indentured labour system can be seen as having been the most effective mode of appropriating surplus. At the time use of "free" wage labour was incompatible with a high rate of profit because of the scarcity of labour power and the relative availability of land, despite the ongoing attempts by the plantations to restrict access to the land. Reverting to some form of feudal mode of production based on peasant production and a transfer of surplus primarily through feudal rent was impracticable because of the relatively high level of efficiency and profitability that could be attained through large-scale estate production based on a concentration of workers and a fairly developed division of labour. Indentured labour represented an appropriate compromise.<sup>3</sup>

The costs of importing indentured workers were partly borne by those planters hiring the workers and partly by the government, which subsidised the costs through the fiscal system, thereby placing part of the costs on the non-estate population. The indentured workers were obliged to work 12 hours a day; they were entitled to some welfare protection, and by statutory regulation were paid a wage that was determined by the wage paid to non-indentured workers doing similar work. But of course the very existence of indentured workers lowered the wage necessary to secure "free" wage labour. One consequence was that "creoles", the ex-slaves, were not hired for many estate jobs, because their virtual exclusion meant that the wages of indentured workers could be kept at low levels.

During the period the immigrants had to serve as indentured labour (usually five years) the estates attempted to ensure (usually successfully) that they had to remain as estate workers at the end of the period. This was because of the initial cost of acquiring indentured workers and because the regulations governing indentured labour specified that the estates had to pay for the return passage to India or whatever the country of origin. To avoid this obligation the estates manipulated the conditions of indenture to prolong the period of obliged employment or offered inducements to reindenture or, later, to settle as peasant farmers.

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<sup>1</sup> W.A. Green: "The apprenticeship in British Guiana, 1834-1838", Caribbean Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2, July 1969, p. 65. On the significance of the Speenhamland system, see Standing, 1979, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> K.O. Lawrence: "The evolution of long-term labour contracts in Trinidad and British Guiana, 1834-1863", The Jamaican Historical Review, Vol. V, May 1965, pp. 9-27.

<sup>3</sup> Between the 1860s and 1891 immigrants accounted for the whole increase in the labour force. During that period there was probably a natural decrease in population. G.W. Roberts and M.A. Johnson: "Factors involved in immigration and movements in the working force of British Guiana in the 19th century", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 1974, p. 74.

The manipulations were diverse, sometimes ingenious, and often callous. Most frequently the indentured workers were forced into chronic indebtedness. Thus as they were paid on a task-work basis, variations in sugar prices or the cost of acquiring fresh labour power led to a tightening of work conditions and a lowering of net income, which forced the workers to take advances to cover costs of subsistence. Workers were penalised for allegedly unsatisfactory work or for being unable to meet output requirements set at unrealistically high levels. Fines were imposed in such cases and the estates were able to extend the indenture period if work input was not deemed satisfactory. And despite the token protection provided by the colonial authorities there was little check to the estates' power. As the Attorney-General himself admitted in 1877, the government was "quite in the dark" as to how justice was administered outside the major urban areas of Georgetown and New Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> In such circumstances, indentured workers were systematically abused and demoralised, and were compelled by debt to remain as reindentured workers, a tendency further encouraged by the payment of a bonus to those reindenturing themselves, a bonus just large enough to enable them to buy a cow or hold out the hope of acquiring sufficient savings to buy their independence as a peasant farmer later.

### III. The Transition to "Free" Labour: 1864-1917

By about 1864 the plantocracy had reasserted effective political and economic control, helped by rising sugar prices. The following period was one of consolidation characterised by a steady process of monopolisation. In 1838 there were 308 sugar estates; fifteen years later, after the long crisis in the sugar industry and during the transition to the new mode of production, there were 173; by 1884, by when a new crisis had struck the industry, there were 105; and by 1904 there were only 46. In 1900 Booker McConnell came into existence, subsequently to become so hegemonic that many Guyanese would refer to their country as "Booker's Guyana".<sup>2</sup>

The amalgamation of adjoining estates in the late nineteenth century largely reflected a process by which the larger plantations absorbed the smaller, the demise of the marginal estates being reflected in the fact that between 1852 and 1884 the average size of estate grew from 256 to 757 acres.<sup>3</sup> The consolidation reflected a development of productive forces on the estates, for the introduction of machinery, especially after 1880, and the erection of large central factories

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<sup>1</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 145. A typical feature of feudalism identified by Dobb in his classic study of the transition of feudalism to capitalism was "the possession by a lord of judicial or quasi-judicial functions in relation to the dependent population". M.H. Dobb: Studies in the Development of Capitalism (London, 1963), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Links between Booker Brothers and McConnell (a plantation owner) started in the 1840s. When the company was formally established in 1900 it operated one-quarter of the colony's sugar estates. Booker McConnell Ltd: Booker's Sugar (London, Thomas and Newman Ltd., 1955).

<sup>3</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 202.

involved economies of scale that undermined the ability of smaller estates to compete. In 1849 there were 180 factories scattered across the coastal region; by 1896 there were 64.<sup>1</sup>

This process was facilitated by the plantocracy's relative success in securing a source of unfree labour and control over the use of land. And as that monopolistic control increased, so did the underutilisation of the land controlled by the plantations. By 1884, it was estimated that about 43% of empoldered land belonging to the sugar estates was kept idle.<sup>2</sup>

Yet in this period the needs of the estates changed. Most particularly, from the 1870s onwards the necessity of indentured labour was increasingly questioned, in part because land monopolisation, population growth and contrived stagnation had resulted in a growing relative surplus population and in part because technological innovations had made employment in the sugar industry mostly seasonal. Instead of a fairly steady requirement for labour throughout the year, labour was mostly required for reaping and grinding. In those circumstances the maintenance of indentured labour throughout the year became unnecessarily costly, the use of casual labour relatively less so. But the abolition of indentured labour could only be countenanced by the plantocracy if they could be sure of obtaining the necessary "free" labour at the appropriate time at an appropriately low wage to allow high rates of profit.

If the 1870s was a period of technological innovation in the sugar industry, following a period of rising sugar prices and costs, the innovations themselves contributed to a reduction in employment and wages. Their fall was greatly accelerated by the slump in sugar prices in the mid-1880s. And because free workers were then resigned to accept less than the minimum statutory wage set for indentured labour, the latter were often underemployed. Thus, just as the relative inefficiency of the slave mode of production had accelerated its collapse half a century earlier, it was the relative inefficiency of the indentured labour system which led to its replacement by a free wage-labour system. Partly because of resentment by some estates, the practice of "reindenture" came to an end in the 1870s.<sup>3</sup> Thereafter the growth of the rural surplus population reduced the relative costs of free wage labour so that by 1917 the abolition of indentured labour was scarcely resisted.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Annual Reports of the Government of British Guiana (Georgetown).

2 Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 259.

3 Its prohibition represented an oligopsonistic recognition of a competitive tendency for reindenture "bonus" payments to rise. Resentment was due to a few estates being able to entice workers from others through higher bonuses.

4 Indentured labour formally ended in 1921, when the last group of workers concluded their term of contract.



At the same time efforts to reduce labour costs led to a shift in land policy from outright restriction to controlled and strictly limited release of land. Initially reflecting their desire to retain an adequate supply of labour, the plantocracy encouraged the immigrant workers to settle in Guyana once their period of indentured labour had been completed. This was made more attractive in that the planters were committed to paying the return passage of indentured immigrants, most of whom were from the Indian sub-continent. But the most important reasons were the desire to reduce the cost of workers' subsistence and the need to absorb the growing surplus population. Thus efforts to encourage the settlement of immigrants led to an expansion of a peasantry growing ground provisions for sale to estate workers who would otherwise have had to spend time working on provision grounds rather than devoting their labour to sugar production. As the leading planter of the day, William Russell, commented, "In reality, what has resulted from the discontinuance of reindenture is rather a division of labour than an actual withdrawal of labour from the estates".<sup>1</sup> In other words, it resulted in an expansion of food production and thus lower prices, which lowered the cost of reproducing labour power, and at the same time increased the available labour input of those working in estate employment.

The most significant expression of this change in policy was the release of Crown land for the purpose of establishing "Indian villages" to absorb the growing number of immigrants off estates (Table 2). These set the precedent of land settlements that became a preoccupation of the authorities throughout the twentieth century. The initial schemes were unsuccessful, partly because the plots were too small and the conditions of membership too restrictive.<sup>2</sup> However, the impetus to village settlements was boosted in the 1880s when the estates became increasingly cost-conscious as their competitive position in the world market was further threatened and as growing seasonality of estate labour and mechanisation greatly reduced the potential labour input of marginal workers, notably women and children. With the need to reduce wages as a result of a slump in the sugar industry, the estates were keen to make the workers produce a larger proportion of their subsistence needs.

So, from the 1880s, really starting with an Ordinance passed in 1882 which permitted greater acquisition of Crown land, land previously locked-up was slowly released to a growing peasant population. But given the small parcels of land granted to the Indian immigrants and the fact that the villages were located close to the estates, it was clear the authorities were preoccupied with maintaining a situation of contrived stagnation, obliging the peasantry to rely on the wage income from estate employment, almost regardless of the level of wages. The objective was to maintain and expand the rural population, binding semi-proletarianised workers to estate areas.

Apart from the village settlements, some Crown land was released by a Crown Lands Ordinance of 1887, but the price and conditions of purchase were put beyond

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> The first attempt was made as early as 1871; the first Indian village to be settled was in 1880, when East Indian families were granted small cultivation plots for which they paid a small annual tax. It proved unsuccessful.

Table 2  
Distribution of Asian Immigrant Population  
in Guyana, 1861-81

Year	Estates	Villages and Settlements	Urban	Total	Percentage Non-estate
1861	23,401	533	770	24,704	5.2
1871	50,420	3,215	1,466	55,101	8.4
1881	64,326	17,441	3,396	85,163	24.4

Source: Census of British Guiana, 1861, 1871, 1881

the reach of peasants, significantly except for land within ten miles of the public road connecting the estates along the coast. A more liberal land policy was introduced in 1894, largely reflecting the growing political strength of the merchant interests and despite the fierce opposition of the planters. Finally in 1903, a Crown Lands Ordinance formalised the system of land tenure of Crown lands. It was to remain the basis of land law in the country, with lasting consequences on rural stagnation and thus patterns of migration.<sup>1</sup>

The changing land policy coincided with a shift in official attitudes on agricultural production. It was at this time that rice first became an important "peasant crop". When the British acquired Guyana it produced more cotton than anywhere else in the world and was the largest grower of coffee in the British Empire. Yet thereafter sugar began to displace other export crops, and during the nineteenth century agricultural specialisation increased until cotton, coffee, and cocoa, all once major crops, were unimportant. Off the estates the peasants might have diversified production to encompass a wide range of cash crops. Had they been able to do so, primitive accumulation almost certainly would have led to some form of agricultural capitalism, with class differentiation and the growth of a sector in competition with the estates for labour power. This the estates successfully prevented. It was in their interest to force peasants to produce subsistence crops on a small scale, crops that would reduce the cost of reproducing labour power while forcing them to rely on estate employment.

In the mid-nineteenth century the peasants were induced to concentrate on the farming of "ground provisions" and sugar cane by a combination of official restrictions on the production of certain cash crops, a lack of markets, the presence of cheap imported food, the land tenure system, and fragmentation of peasant landholdings.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, rice, which was to be farmed more extensively than any

<sup>1</sup> As its effects were mainly in the following periods the details are discussed in the next section.

<sup>2</sup> The market was small partly because plantation labourers had their own gardens, and the towns were small, and there were no export market opportunities. R.T. Smith: "Ethnic difference and peasant economy in British Guiana", in R. Firth and B.S. Yamey (eds.) Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies (London, Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 308.

other in the mid-twentieth century, was banned, even though it was imported from India and Burma.<sup>1</sup> However, in the late nineteenth century it was realised that rice production would serve the interests of the plantocracy, who saw peasant rice cultivation as an ideal means of reducing the cost of subsistence and thereby the necessary wage on the estates, while producing a source of income and employment that was not competitive with the estates. There were several reasons for the plantocracy to favour rice. First, rice was suited to the flat, low-lying land in the peasant villages and to peasant farming; the income from rice-farming was low, and crops other than rice needed considerable social investment in village infrastructure, notably communal drainage facilities. Second, rice was both a primary subsistence crop and required labour inputs that were seasonally complementary with those of the sugar estates. It was thus a highly appropriate crop for the estates to encourage as a means of lowering wages and maintaining the supply of rural labour power. As an official report in 1949 noted,

"The provision plot and the rice plot are closely connected in the economy of the estate worker ... the demands of sugar and rice conflict only in the autumn reaping season, when the estates, faced with a labour shortage spread over three weeks, plan their cutting and grinding accordingly."(2)

The petty cultivation of rice expanded dramatically at the end of the nineteenth century. The area under rice jumped from about 2,500 acres in 1888 to 15,020 in 1903, and 61,200 by 1919.<sup>3</sup> Stimulated by the emerging merchant class, it was first exported in 1903. As a means of retaining a peasant population, it proved initially successful but the expansion of rice production was to have a lasting effect on the rural economy which was to exacerbate rural emigration and labour underutilisation.

#### IV. Contrived Stagnation and State Policy in the Twentieth Century (1917-1977)

By 1917 the economic contours of Guyana had been established. Sugar and rice were the main crops, there was a chronic underutilisation of land, a surplus population existed, and relations of production maintained a state of contrived stagnation off the estates, supported by legislative and administrative machinery. The population was concentrated in the coastal region, from which there was insignificant migration into the remainder of the country. Only Georgetown and New Amsterdam, both on the coast, received a substantial flow of migrants, drawn from among the growing surplus population.

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<sup>1</sup> G.B. Masefield: A Short History of Agriculture in the British Colonies (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>2</sup> Commission of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry of British Guiana: Report (London, HMSO, 1949), p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> R.T. Smith: "Economic aspects of rice production in an East Indian community in British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 6, No. 4, Dec. 1957, p. 502.

However, the proportion of the population living in all urban areas had not significantly changed in the past half century, and the most notable change in the distribution of the population was the shift from the estates to villages and land settlements, which by the turn of the twentieth century accounted for more than half the total population (Table 3). The sharp drop in the estate population reflected the shrinking labour requirements and the associated growth of a rural surplus population.

Table 3  
The Distribution of Population by  
Place of Residence, Guyana, 1851-1970<sup>a</sup>

Year	Urban and Sub-urban	Estates	Villages, Farms, Settlements
1851	23.6%	30.8%	45.6
1861	22.8	37.2	40.0
1871	21.7	35.1	43.2
1881	21.0	34.5	44.6
1891	22.9	33.2	43.9
1911	22.4	24.0	53.7
1921	22.8	22.2	54.9
1931	25.0	21.7 <sup>b</sup>	50.5
1970	26.0	- <sup>c</sup>	- <sup>c</sup>

Source: Census Reports 1851-1970. S.D. Singh: The Demography of Social Change in Guyana (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1977), p. 50.

- Notes:
- a Rounding accounts for deviations from 100.0%
  - b This refers to sugar estates; a further 2.9% not included elsewhere were the rice and coconut estate population.
  - c The proportion on estates and Special Areas including land settlements and all incorporated local authorities was 34.9%. The remaining 39.2% were the remainder of the rural population.

Even so, in the subsequent decades the monopolisation and underutilisation of land continued to increase. The plantations were consolidated into two multi-nationals (Booker McConnell, which by the 1950s controlled about 90% of the country's sugar production, and Jessels). Between them they owned vast expanses of the country and rented large areas from the state at tiny "peppercorn" rentals. Correspondingly, the number of factories shrunk steadily, until by the 1970s, there were only eleven in operation. Meanwhile land utilisation declined. By the 1930s, according to one estimate, about half the plantations' land was idle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G.Y. Thomas: Plantations, Peasantry and the State (Georgetown, IDS-ILO, 1977, mimeo).

In 1949 an official estimate suggested that of the 155,000 acres owned by the 21 sugar estates only about 60,000 acres were under cane.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, the figure rose somewhat, but it continued to represent only a modest proportion of the total land under the estates' control.

Moreover, in the twentieth century the plantations were no longer the only large landlords. The major new factor was the emergence of huge mining conglomerates, which had acquired rights to large areas of the country towards the end of the nineteenth century. After 1917 vast stretches of land were acquired by multinational bauxite companies. The two North American companies concerned obtained rights to land which gave them exclusive permission for exploration. But the area they acquired was always out of all proportion to the companies' production. Indeed, in 1969 it was estimated that it would take one company at least 30 years to mine its existing reserves.<sup>2</sup> In the same year it was estimated that various companies held about 2.6 million acres for possible exploration, mostly held by the bauxite companies but some for exploration for diamonds and other minerals; a further 21,700 square miles were held for oil prospecting and 10,585 square miles for radioactive minerals.<sup>3</sup> Those figures have to be seen in the context of an estimate made in the same report that about 900 square miles were devoted to cultivation, and that although much of the land owned by the multinational companies that was idle was not suitable for cultivation, especially near the bauxite town of MacKenzie, large areas were classified as suitable for a wide range of crops.

A second and, in terms of the quantity of land involved, more important means by which the peasants were denied access to land was the state regulations which restricted access to Crown land and hindered the development of that land. The Ordinances of the 1850s had severely impeded the peasants' ability to settle on Crown land, as was the planters' intention. The Ordinances introduced in the late nineteenth century had released some land but it was the 1903 Crown Lands Ordinance which helped perpetuate the rural stagnation of the estates and thereby contributed to the drift into urban areas in the twentieth century.

The details of the 1903 Ordinance need not detain us, but the salient points are that it delineated five types of tenure - absolute grants, provisional grants, leases, licences, and permissions - and that the state retained control over crown land in a way that contributed to its continuing underdevelopment. Very few absolute grants were ever made, and these were the only ones which placed no restrictions on the purchaser. With provisional grants the grantees had to occupy

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry of British Guiana: Report (London, HMSO, 1949), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Senate of Canada: Proceedings of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Respecting the Caribbean Area, Second Session, 28th Parliament, November 25, 1969, No. 3 (Ottawa), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Co-operative Republic of Guyana: Land Use Study (Georgetown, Government Printers, 1971), p. 8.

the land "beneficially" during the period in which the purchase price was being paid off; in other words, the land had to be worked immediately and it was left to government discretion whether or not the land was forfeited. That meant that the purchasers faced a prolonged period of uncertainty during which they could lose the land. With leases too, there was uncertainty from the inception, especially as before 1917 leasehold rights were not recognised by the Roman-Dutch law in operation, thus meaning that lessees could not enforce personal rights against the Crown. A clause in all Crown land leases stressed the necessity of beneficial occupation, but investment in land improvements was also discouraged by the shortness of many leases. Even so such leases were still considerably superior to licences, which were merely issued "subject to the pleasure of the licensor", and to permissions, which were of short and restricted duration.

The law as it related to Crown land was thus thoroughly unsatisfactory from the peasants' point of view. But that raises a more general malaise, which is that throughout the history of Guyana peasant development has been hindered by the fact that titles to most land have been unclear due to the absence of effective machinery for land registration. For a long period this conveniently served the interests of the plantations. For the absence of secure titles discouraged land settlement and, perhaps more importantly, discouraged investments that would have raised the productivity of the land, discouraged the planting of long-term or permanent crops having high yields, and made it difficult for small farmers to obtain investment loans because of the lack of effective collateral.

At the end of the nineteenth century one estimate suggested that about 400,000 acres of privately owned land could not be properly settled because of uncertainty of title.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the growing pressure of commercial groups, in 1897 a Tax Ordinance was passed designed to tax "ruinate" land so as to stimulate cultivation and terminate claims to land by those without title. However, no effective machinery for collection was set up, and it was repealed in 1900. In 1897 the Chairman of the West Indian Royal Commission was told by the Head of the Crown Lands Department

"Private land is not so easy to obtain on account of much of it being locked up, and also on account of the titles of land on the river banks are not being satisfactorily settled. Titles are not defined".

The Committee appointed by the government to survey the pattern of land use in 1970, in recalling that view, commented, "Over 70 years have passed and much private lands still remain locked up for various reasons."<sup>2</sup> The situation in 1971, when the government-sponsored land use study completed its review, was that possibly

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<sup>1</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Co-operative Republic of Guyana: Land Use Study (Georgetown, November 1970), Vol. I, p. 1.

60 per cent of all private land lacked a registered title, or was subject to squatting, wrongful occupation, or more than one claim.<sup>1</sup> The report concluded that the situation constituted a major obstacle to more intensive farming.

With uncertain titles, and an inability to gain access to vast stretches of the fertile land in the coastal region, the peasants were faced with a continued shortage of land. In the nineteenth century many smallholdings were split up into sub-plots after the break-up of the village movement, with individual farmers being provided with narrow strips of 'good', 'medium', and 'poor' land often located at widely dispersed points of the village. As those villages had little room for expansion, subsequent population growth merely accentuated the process of fragmentation. This was further accentuated by the establishment of the immigrant villages, with their small parcels of land and restrictions on land transfer. It was even further accentuated by subsequent resettlement schemes, which will be considered later and which merely transferred some of the surplus population onto small plots of land, thereby institutionalising the process of fragmentation.

Unfortunately, as in most countries, official statistics have provided little or no clue of the extent of fragmentation, let alone of the trend. Data on the actual size of landholdings are also sparse, but several surveys conducted towards the end of the period, in 1970 and 1971, indicated that most farmers had plots of less than five acres, and that since the 1953 agricultural census, when 55% of farms had less than five acres, the situation had deteriorated.<sup>2</sup> In 1971 a national survey suggested that in several regions of the country over 70% of farmers had fewer than five acres, and tiny proportions had more than 20 acres (Table 4).

Table 4: Size Distribution of Farms by Districts,  
Guyana 1971

	Size of Holdings in Acres (Proportion of Total)				
	Less than 1	1<5	5<10	10<20	20+
West Coast Demerara	18.4	35.5	17.1	23.7	5.3
West Bank Demerara	38.7	53.2	0.0	4.8	3.2
North West District	4.8	57.1	19.0	14.3	4.8
East Bank Demerara	33.3	33.3	27.8	5.6	0.0
Essequibo Coast	11.5	35.4	26.0	24.0	3.1
Essequibo Islands	0.0	68.0	20.0	12.0	0.0
East Coast Demerara	42.3	31.7	10.6	8.9	6.5
East Berbice	18.4	35.5	17.1	23.7	5.3

Source: Lewars, 1977, op. cit., p. 13

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 2-3

<sup>2</sup> G. Lewars: Small Farm Financing in Guyana 1968-1970 (Mona, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1977), p. 13.

It was not stated whether or not estates were encompassed by the survey, but it must be presumed that they were excluded.

The Government's Land Use Survey estimated that in the same year a somewhat larger proportion of all landholders in the country had fewer than 5 acres, the figure being some 75-80% depending on the district surveyed; this category of farmer possessed between 3.5 and about 9% of the total area under cultivation.<sup>1</sup> Further evidence was provided by a 1971 National Food and Nutrition Survey, for which some data on land ownership were collected. These suggested that at that time over 80% of farms were of ten acres or less and a further 16 per cent were of between 11 and 25 acres.<sup>2</sup> The data from these various sources differ, but not to the extent of challenging the basic picture of a rural land structure consisting predominantly of peasant smallholders on very small parcels of land. At the same time, it appeared that about 96% of the total land area was still underdeveloped; that about 90% of total gross and net production was obtained from less than 2% of the land, and that almost all that production took place within a hundred miles or so of Georgetown.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen from the accompanying map, which is based on information for 1976, there was considerable land that could have been used. Indeed, the miniscule amount of land cultivated by smallholders is eloquent testimony to the success of the estates' strategies in preceding generations.

This picture of land fragmentation and underutilisation was in part the legacy of the nineteenth century tactics of the plantocracy. But it also clearly reflected the struggle of the multinationals and the colonial authorities to retain control of the process as the "contradictions" became increasingly acute. This has to be considered from several angles. The first is the structure of production which the authorities encouraged and the adaptive responses of the working population; the second is the contrived stagnation which was preserved by State policies at least until Independence; the third is the prevailing labour relations and most particularly the paternalistic nature of the bauxite communities. Each has a direct bearing on the pattern of population mobility, and rural out-migration in particular.

#### The Structure of Rural Production

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as estate employment began to decline, the Indian immigrants settled in large numbers in villages near the estates. By 1921 less than half the working population of adult males were classified as agricultural labourers.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, in contrast to the negligible and, in

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<sup>1</sup> Land Use Study, 1971, op. cit., Vol. III.

<sup>2</sup> National Food and Nutrition Survey of Guyana (Washington, Pan American Health Organisation, WHO, 1976), p. 49. There is some inconsistency between these figures and those given on the previous page of the Report which suggested a somewhat smaller proportion of farms under ten acres in size.

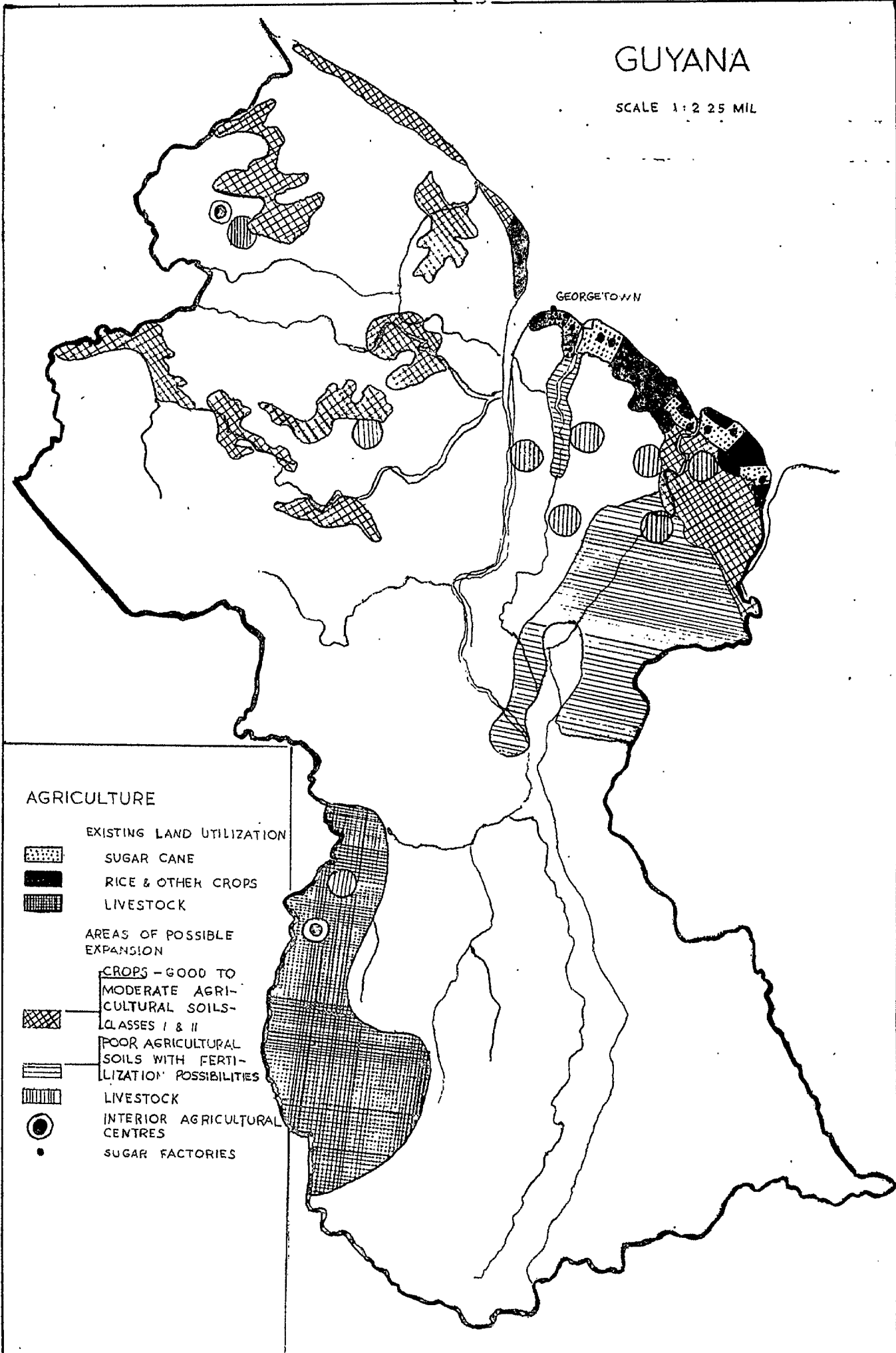
<sup>3</sup> National Transport Plan (Georgetown, Ministry of Economic Development, 1975), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> British Guiana Census Commissioner's Office, Report of the Results of the Census of Population, 1921 (Georgetown, Argosy Co., 1922)






# GUYANA

SCALE 1 : 2 25 MIL








## AGRICULTURE

### EXISTING LAND UTILIZATION

-  SUGAR CANE
-  RICE & OTHER CROPS
-  LIVESTOCK

### AREAS OF POSSIBLE EXPANSION

-  CROPS - GOOD TO MODERATE AGRICULTURAL SOILS - CLASSES I & II
-  POOR AGRICULTURAL SOILS WITH FERTILIZATION POSSIBILITIES
-  LIVESTOCK
-  INTERIOR AGRICULTURAL CENTRES
-  SUGAR FACTORIES

many years, negative rates of natural increase in the nineteenth century, at least by 1921 (and possibly before that census year) the natural rate of population growth was positive and had begun to accelerate. The very high levels of mortality observed in the nineteenth century had fallen, and the low levels of fertility had begun to increase.<sup>1</sup> But the settlement of large numbers of Indians in villages was done as a means of regulating the seasonal supply of labour to the estates. Efforts by the authorities to stimulate and diversify production were, at least in the early years of the twentieth century, negligible. Only rice and sugar cane were effectively stimulated.

The growing peasant population were discouraged from growing other cash crops by a combination of State policies and structural impediments to diversification which will be considered later and which shaped the pattern of population mobility. However, from the earliest years the estates had taken care to encourage peasants to grow sugar cane. From the inception of the village movement crops for plantation production had a higher market return than others, and the official authorities encouraged the peasant production of sugar cane. Thus Governor Light in 1840 urged local magistrates to advise villagers to secure contracts for supplying cane to the estate farmers.<sup>2</sup> Many small farmers did grow cane as their principal cash crop and this placed them in a position of dependence on the estates and allowed the latter to appropriate economic surplus. Once induced to grow cane, the peasants had to sell it to the plantations in the absence of any alternative, and therefore had to take the price offered. By the same token, they were more tied to wage employment on the estates than if they had been producing subsistence crops or other cash crops both in the sense that the estates could refuse to purchase their small amount of cane unless they accepted wage employment and because they were forced to depend on the wage income even if the price of cane and the estate wage rates were low. Gradually these small cane-producing peasants were more intensely exploited by being forced to depend on the estates for credit and by being obliged to purchase fertilizers from them.

As the estates and colonial authorities perceived the need to induce semi-proletarianised rural workers to grow cane for the estates, government policy was geared to maintain that state of affairs. Various schemes were introduced in the 1950s including a so-called co-operative and settlement project known as Belle Vue, which forced farmers to produce cane under the direction of the estates, to whom they were required to sell the cane. These schemes merely rationalised the structure of production into which the plantocracy had managed to lock the rural economy. The political state of mind which that induced was reflected in the continued espousal of cane-oriented settlement schemes and is aptly summarised by a statement made in

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<sup>1</sup> The causes of the mortality decline have received considerable attention. See, inter alia, J. Mandle: "The decline in mortality in British Guiana, 1911-1960" Demography, Vol. 7, August 1970, pp. 301-15; P. Newman: Malaria Eradication and Population Growth (School of Public Health, University of Michigan, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> R.T. Smith: British Guiana (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 79.

1963 by the Chief Agricultural Officer who said, with reference to one land settlement scheme (ironically named the Garden of Eden):

"By putting this area into suga cane the income of the settlers will be improved greatly. Every ton of cane a settler produces he can sell. At present he is planting citrus, and there is no organised market for his crop."(1)

Such statements highlight the constraints, dependence and contrived stagnation under which peasant farmers traditionally had to operate.

The expansion of rice production was very actively encouraged by the State until 1964, first as a means of absorbing the surplus rural population and reducing the necessary subsistence wage while being a seasonally complementary crop for cane, and latterly because the rice farmers became a dominant group in the population and the principal source of support for the dominant political party in the 1950s, the People's Progressive Party.

Although the export of rice was banned for a time in 1917 its production expanded rapidly in the 1920s, and from 1931 onwards more acres were devoted to rice than to sugar production. The biggest expansion occurred during the Second World War, at a time when sugar production declined due to labour shortages, inadequate fertilizers, and shipping difficulties, and when the import of rice was not possible. A central government-sponsored Rice Marketing Board was set up in 1939 to regulate prices and exports during the war, and this then became the sole authorised exporter of rice. Subsequently all rice except that used for family consumption had to be sold to that authority. And through the 1950s huge investments by the government and its agencies were made in the rice industry despite the relatively low yield to investment in rice production. Thus it was estimated that in 1957, for example, some 81,000 acres were devoted to sugar cane, producing a crop with a market value of \$58 million, while some 22,000 rice farmers with about 137,000 acres of paddy produced a crop worth only \$17 million.<sup>2</sup> After 1957 the acreage under rice further accelerated, reaching a peak of 394,000 acres in 1964, declining somewhat thereafter but remaining easily the largest user of land.<sup>3</sup> Rice farming also received the bulk of loans by commercial banks to agriculture (Table 5). Yet despite further mechanisation - or perhaps partly because of it - yields continued to decline. Remarkably, the average yield per acre declined from 17.2 bags (140 pounds) in 1899 to 13.4 bags in 1964.<sup>4</sup> In 1969 it fell to a mere 9.8 bags per acre, and though

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<sup>1</sup> B.H. Benn: Extracts from Seminar on Land Development, held under the auspices of the Hon. B.H. Benn, Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Lands (Georgetown, Government Printers, December 1963), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, 1962, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports (Georgetown, various dates).

<sup>4</sup> L. Ramgopal: Our Rice Industry (Georgetown, Rice Producers' Association, 1964), p. 16.

Table 5  
Sectoral Distribution of Loans to  
Agriculture by Commercial Banks, (G\$ '000)

	1967		1970	
	G\$	%	G\$	%
Sugar cane	50	1.3	559	8.7
Paddy	3,072	78.7	2,908	45.5
Livestock	166	4.3	670	10.5
Forestry	145	3.7	128	2.0
Shrimp and Fisheries	294	7.5	1,737	27.2
Other agriculture	174	4.5	390	6.1
<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>3,901</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,392</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Bank of Guyana Annual Report 1971

that yield was lower than in subsequent years, productivity scarcely improved despite the planting of improved varieties and the more intensive use of fertilisers and technological inputs. The low yields can be explained in part by the inadequate drainage and irrigation. In 1964 it was estimated that less than 40% of the land under rice cultivation was drained and irrigated.<sup>1</sup> Another reason has been the persistence of poor farming practices, shown by inadequate land preparation, infrequent weeding, and the lack of crop rotation. According to at least one analysis, those practices worsened in the post-1945 era, and certainly, given changed technologies and seed varieties, their adverse effect on productivity increased.<sup>2</sup>

Given that rice was never likely to be a crop that provided the peasants with a high standard of living, the emphasis placed on its expansion must be seen as reflecting the continuing influence and needs of sugar estates. While rice provided a base for the subsistence of the rural workforce, much of the rice was exported, and in many years, export sales accounted for about three-quarters of total sales.<sup>3</sup> It was therefore an important source of foreign exchange that helped pay for the import of consumer and capital goods. However, it is significant that the rapid mechanisation that took place in rice farming in the 1950s and 1960s was carried out with equipment and spares imported through agencies owned by the two multinational sugar companies.<sup>4</sup> In other words the expansion of rice production also directly benefited the estates.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 17. See also H.R. Caffey and J.N. Effenson: An Appraisal of Rice Production and Marketing Problems in British Guiana (Georgetown, Government Printery, 1965), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> H. Madramootoo: Declining Paddy Yields, or the Rice Farmer and His Machine (Georgetown, Guyana Rice Corporation, October 1970).

<sup>3</sup> C. O'Loughlin: "The rice sector in the economy of British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2, June 1958, p. 116.

<sup>4</sup> E.R. Hanley: "Rice, politics and development in Guyana", in I. Oxaal, T. Barnett, and D. Booth (eds): Beyond the Sociology of Development: Economy and Society in Latin America and Africa (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p.134.

Table 6  
Cultivated Area of Principal Crops,  
Guyana, 1972

Crop	Acres	Square Miles
Sugar Cane*	130,421	204
Rice and Maize	199,919	312
Other Crops	54,615	85
T O T A L	384,955	601

Source: Ministry of Economic Development

Note: \*This does not include the 15-20% of  
sugar estate land left fallow.

In sum, the emergence of rice as the prime "peasant" crop was the outcome of the encouragement of merchants, the estates, and a government eager to see the absorption of a growing surplus population as well as the continued profitability of the plantation economy. Rice production was a means of lowering the cost of reproducing labour power - both in terms of reducing the cost of subsistence and the necessary wage - while retaining a large labour force in rural areas. Rice fitted into an economic structure based on semi-feudal relations of exploitation, facilitating a higher rate of exploitation and the appropriation of economic surplus. As such, rice was certainly not the crop to provide the basis for a structural transformation of the rural economy.

#### Impediments to Crop Diversification and Rural Accumulation

The specialisation on rice and sugar cane to the neglect of other crops was the dominant feature of the contrived rural stagnation in twentieth century Guyana. Other crops were neglected or their development discouraged. And among the resources that were chronically underdeveloped for generations were the forests with their vast array of woods. Indeed the 1953 World Bank Report on Guyana noted that soft-woods were imported and could be replaced by domestic woods.<sup>1</sup> The reason for the underdevelopment of the lumber industry can be simply explained - it would have allowed an outlet for labour power away from the estates near the coast. However, it was the land tenure system and the nature of land fragmentation which were the most pervasive barriers to agricultural development.

As most of the villages suffered from periodic flooding, and as the small and fragmented plots were generally contiguous the productivity of any plot depended crucially on the drainage provisions of surrounding plots as well as on the landholder's own efforts. This was the first and major impediment to efficient, innovative farming. The second was that from the beginning the size of the plots was such that the workers were inclined to treat them as a supplementary and not primary source of income. Both these factors discouraged investment in developing the

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<sup>1</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development: The Economic Development of British Guiana (Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 14.

productivity of the land or the planting of long-term crops, which of course restricted the range of crops cultivated.

A third impediment to agricultural expansion was what has been called "praedial larceny" of crops. This was encouraged by a negligible administrative structure in most villages and, crucially, by the fragmented system of landholding by which the farmer's dwelling was often a long way from the cultivated land. This discouraged citrus growing in particular and was cited by the Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources as a major reason for the long-term decline in the cultivation of coconuts.<sup>1</sup>

Another impediment to cash-crop farming was the continuing lack of a marketing network, except around Georgetown. Moreover domestic food crops had to compete with imported food items. Somewhat paradoxically, because the transport (road-and-railway) network has been geared to the needs of the plantations, distribution of imports was probably easier and cheaper. On some food items there were import duties, but for many there were none, and as a consequence the growth of food imports long outstripped the growth of domestic food production.<sup>2</sup>

The development of domestic markets was hindered by the isolation of most villages due to poor roads and an inadequate transport system, which the authorities made little attempt to alter. But a further and crucial barrier to effective land utilisation, and thus to the development of commercial, capitalist farming, was the widespread lack of registered land titles. As noted earlier, the authorities did not take action to change that situation. For smallholders, the associated uncertainty discouraged investment in long-term or permanent crops. It also contributed to soil erosion, in that farmers could be expected to have taken less care of the land than if they had been sure of ownership or right of possession. Furthermore, the lack of satisfactory title meant that many farmers were unable to obtain credit or loans, simply because they had no security in the form of land title to offer.

Lack of credit is usually a severe impediment to the growth of a sub-class of capitalist farmers, and in that context two further reasons existed for the restricted distribution of the type of credit that would have facilitated capital accumulation. The first was that for much of Guyana's history savings that might have been channelled through financial intermediaries back into agriculture were mainly invested abroad, largely because of the dominance of commercial banking by two foreign banks.<sup>3</sup> These generally lent money locally only for short-term purposes and, consistent with a conservative risk-averting policy, were disinclined to

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources: Annual Report of Agricultural and Land Development Departments (Georgetown, 1967), p. II.26. From being an exporter of coconuts, Guyana became an importer.

<sup>2</sup> Even towards the end of the period under review this was true. For instance, between 1960 and 1970 imports grew at an annual average of 5% while domestic food production grew by only 1% annually. Ministry of Agriculture; Annual Reports (Georgetown, various dates).

<sup>3</sup> IBRD, 1953, op. cit., p. 14.

make loans for relatively high-risk agricultural projects.<sup>1</sup> The World Bank report of 1953, for instance, noted that there had never been any credit institution granting medium or long-term credit, except mortgages, and discussed the role of agricultural cooperative banks as being small and oriented to "mortgage rather than productive credits".<sup>2</sup>

In 1954, as part of a general strategy to defuse unrest following the suppression in 1953 of the popularly elected PPP Government of Cheddi Jagan, the Guyana Credit Corporation was established to provide medium and long-term credit. However, this concentrated on providing small short-term loans, and surprisingly mostly for non-agricultural uses. Indeed the proportion going to agriculture declined, and in 1969 agricultural loans accounted for under 13% of the total value of loans granted and 26% of the total number of loans supplied.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of lending was related to the second major reason discouraging the institutional provision of credit for small-scale agriculture, the dislocation of the village economy. With insecure land titles making it hard for credit institutions to have effective collateral, agricultural loans were made even more risky by the land fragmentation, generally bad irrigation and drainage of land, and related factors. Reflecting the long-standing situation, the Land Use Study concluded in 1970:

"In Guyana it is nearly impossible to obtain credit because the recognised finance institutions associate too high a degree of risk with agriculture. Such operations as land levelling, the development of long-term maturing crops and livestock require credit which must be extended over many years. There is at present no institution private or government which caters primarily for these long and short-term demands for credit."

Informal credit mechanisms and rural credit unions developed, but high rates of interest and the precarious nature of agricultural production meant that smallholders generally resorted to loans only out of dire necessity rather than as a means to expand production.

#### The Role of Rent and Usury

Another impediment to agricultural development was the dependent nature of many smallholdings. Rent can be capitalist ground rent or feudal rent, and in Guyana it more closely resembled the latter. Theoretically, the importance of the distinction lies in its impact on the development of forces of production and thus the general process of accumulation. Given the plantocracy's need for contrived stagnation, rent was one means of mopping up surplus; it was also a convenient mechanism for controlling labour supply and population mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, 1962, op. cit., p. 79. In 1966, to take a fairly typical year, only 6% of the commercial banks' loans and advances to the "private sector" went to non-plantation agriculture. C. Bourne: "The political economy of indigenous commercial banking in Guyana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 1974, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> I.B.R.D., 1953, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Lewars, 1977, op. cit., p. 43.

Even before indentured labour was established, the estates attempted to bind workers by renting out plots to those prepared to be wage labourers. But during a strike of sugar estate workers in the early 1840s, the planters overplayed their hand by trying to force workers back to work by threatening to stop tenants from reaping and retaining ground provisions raised on the rented land. Although the planters capitulated in 1842, granting the strikers higher wages than intended, many labourers deserted the rented plots once the insecurity of their tenure had been shown. They were demonstrably mere tenants-at-will, while the law had been shown to be on the planters' side.<sup>1</sup> Even so, this early conflict had a long-term significance, for it demonstrated the moral limit of the feudal relationship, for the consequent desertion demoralised planters, who were forced to recognise their precarious control. If the level of rent was pushed too high, workers would desert the estates.

Subsequently, indentured labourers were required to produce part of their subsistence on small rented plots. And even after 1917 that remained an institutional feature of the rural labour market around the estates. As an official report in 1949 noted, "Generally speaking, workers are given half an acre or more of estate land, just enough to keep them and their families in rice".<sup>2</sup> This had two principal effects. First, it induced workers to work on the estates, since they required the cash to pay the rent and could be evicted if they did not supply labour to the estates.<sup>3</sup> Second, it made wage cuts easier because of the tie to the land and the reliance on it for at least part of the family subsistence.

The planters, the State, merchants and the multinational companies all acquired land to rent out. But although such "semi-proletarianised" workers were not completely divorced from means of production, and were thus motivated to develop the forces of production on the land they possessed, there was an inherent restriction on accumulation, as any surplus was likely to go in higher rents.

Land rent was by no means the only mechanism for mopping up non-estate surplus. Indeed, the estates became "patrons-in-capital" as well as being "patrons-in-land". As machinery and fertilisers were introduced into the rural economy - in itself encouraged by the development of productive forces on the estates and by the growth of a merchant class - the smallholder farmers were obliged to rent equipment, so that any surplus generated by any increase in productivity largely went to renters, who were often the estates.

In the twentieth century the estates were no longer the only major group impeding rural development. The land tenure structure had in the main maintained a basically peasant population, in the sense that reproduction rather than accumulation dictated the behaviour of the great majority of smallholders. But some class differentiation was apparent, though it was basically associated with the prevalence of usury. As a mode of exploitation usury restricted the development

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<sup>1</sup> Young, 1958, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Report, 1949, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>3</sup> E.P. Reubens and G.B. Reubens: Labour Displacement in a Labour Surplus Economy: The Sugar Industry of British Guiana (Mona, ISER, University of the West Indies, 1962).



of productive forces on the land in so far as the profits of moneylending and informal credit went to professional moneylenders, merchants, and others not directly involved in agricultural production.

Theoretically, there is no clear effect of usury on the development of forces and social relations of production. Some, such as Dobb, have seen it as essentially progressive in the sense that it reflects and accentuates economic differentiation, accelerates the formation of a capitalist class, and by contributing to primary accumulation tends to produce a proletariat dispossessed of the means of production.<sup>1</sup> However, there would be no justification for assuming that usury leads to a transition to capitalism. As Marx noted,

Usury has a revolutionary effect in all pre-capitalist modes of production only in so far as it destroys and dissolves those forms of property on whose solid foundations and continual reproduction in the same form the political organisation is based .... usury can continue a long time, without producing anything more than economic decay and political corruption. Only where and when the other prerequisites of capitalist production are present does usury become one of the means assisting in establishment of the new mode of production by ruining the feudal lord and small-scale producer, on the one hand, and centralising the conditions of labour into capital, on the other. (2)

In Guyana usury did continue for a long time without having a strong positive impact on the development of productive forces. It was both a mode of exploitation and a mode of control. As used by the estates it helped appropriate the remnants of "peasant" surplus not taken by rent and helped tie indentured workers to the estates, preventing them from migrating elsewhere. As used by merchants and money-lenders it merely dissipated the surplus without contributing much to the transformation of the rural economy. This was primarily because the contrived stagnation encouraged the use of surplus revenue in consumption and display, often involving the import of items of conspicuous consumption.

The estates traditionally provided workers with loans or advances for building or improving their housing, even though the workers only benefited from the improvements as long as they remained in estate employment. They also rented out equipment and provided consumption loans that were often necessary to meet a shortfall in income due to inadequate wages or work opportunities on the estates themselves or because a crop failure forced them to purchase additional food. The estates also had company shops from which workers were forced to buy items of common consumption, giving the estates monopolist profits while contributing to the endemic indebtedness of the workers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dobb, 1963, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> K. Marx: Capital (New York, International Publishers, 1967), Vol. III, p. 597.

<sup>3</sup> Note that in general company stores are also a convenient means of limiting the workers' consumption aspirations. If items on sale are limited, workers are less likely to perceive the depth of their deprivation, and are less likely to be drawn into the "money economy" and migration.

Indebtedness to groups other than the estates was partly a consequence of the peasants' meagre incomes and insecurity, which forced them to apply for loans at the slightest misfortune and to borrow at exorbitant rates of interest. Indebtedness inflicted most village communities and led to widespread alienation of land to speculators, shopkeepers, mill-owners and others living outside the village, who then rented out the land to its previous owners. For rice-farmers mill-owners were a major source of loans, and as there were only a small number of millers they had a lucrative business as commercial capitalists, purchasing padi from farmers and processing their grain, charging fees for transporting the padi and for milling it into rice. Often millers were also rice farmers, owned land which they operated, rented out other land, owned transport facilities, operated a store, rented out farm equipment and, from the proceeds and as a mechanism for securing greater leverage for exploitation, indulged in money lending.<sup>1</sup> They thus represented a growing commercial class, extracting surplus from the peasantry and contributing to rural class differentiation.<sup>2</sup> But their numbers always remained small and the scope for accumulation was long limited by the low level of productive forces, the contrived stagnation, the various social obligations attendant on relative wealth, and by the appeal of conspicuous consumption.

#### The Functions of Paternalism

Paternalism is a somewhat loose term that encompasses a wide range of practices the essence of which is that it involves employers or landlords looking after the interests of their workers in the interest of raising the rate of exploitation. It involves the establishment of ostensibly personal bonds which tend to create "structured reciprocity", a network of informal rights and obligations and, to some extent, a set of constraints to the behaviour of both the dominant and subservient groups, the exploiters and the exploited. Paternalism may conceal exploitation or indeed reduce it in the interest of creating a dependable labour force. But clearly it is a mechanism for maintaining existing modes of exploitation.

Paternalism was always a feature of the sugar industry. Slave-owners provided slaves with a modicum of welfare to cajol them to work, and the employers of indentured labour introduced a wide variety of non-wage fringe benefits. In both cases - and also for non-indentured wage labourers - the provision of part of the wage in non-monetary form was both a means of preventing the workers from saving to become independent farmers and a way of ensuring that the labour payment went to reproducing labour power. Above all, supplementing money wages by non-wage benefits was designed to ensure that the labour force was reasonably efficient.

The paternalism extended from the provision of poor housing and small plots of land to assurances of minimal medical care and basic schooling, all of which were conditional on reliable employment. As early as 1853 every estate was required

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<sup>1</sup> O'Laughlin, 1958, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> One feature hard to investigate was that the very absence of reliable titles to much of the land made it hard for moneylenders to turn the peasant off the land by selling to recover the debt. Understandably, potential purchasers would have been reluctant to buy land in such circumstances, which would have given the land a lower market value than if title had been secure.

by official ordinance to have an estate "hospital", staffed by a qualified medical practitioner.<sup>1</sup> At various times additional items were added. Thus by the 1950's welfare expenditure for sugar workers also included the provision of community centres, clinics, crèches, housing loans, co-operative shops, and courses in "home economics".<sup>2</sup> The estates also provided institutional means for settling disputes, for long resisting the formation and recognition of unions by the convenient device of making the Colonial Office in London and the Governor in Georgetown responsible for the protection of workers.

These tactics did not fundamentally alter the real relations. While ostensibly protecting them, the colonial authorities prohibited indentured workers from striking.<sup>3</sup> While they were allowed to make improvements to their rented dwellings - many of which were justly described as "barracks" - with loans provided by their employers, the workers were left in no doubt about their insecure livelihood. This was vividly brought to light by a Commission which reported in 1949 that many men worked all their working lives on the estates to retire still classified as temporary workers.<sup>4</sup>

Paternalistic labour relations were used to deter workers from leaving the estates while keeping down the cost of reproducing labour power. A third objective, which became increasingly important after the Second World War, was the need to placate political pressure for nationalisation by a potentially revolutionary working-class movement. In those circumstances Bookers greatly expanded its welfare paternalism, resettling workers in extra-nuclear housing areas and even drafting a programme for local government.

One outcome of paying part of the wage in non-monetary form was that the correspondingly low money wages prevented workers from acquiring savings to purchase land or means of production, and made it much more likely that the workers would be pushed into debt, which of course could be used to restrict their movement away from the estates. In sum, paternalism was designed to preserve a semi-proletarianised workforce, keeping money wages below the cost of reproducing labour power and tying workers to estate employment.

The dependent insecurity associated with paternalism intensified the odium associated with estate labour, because workers recognised that the strictly limited benefits were merely a means of locking them into the estate areas. Moreover it was recognised that these benefits could be used as a stick as well as a carrot.

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<sup>1</sup> Young, 1958, op. cit., p. 75. K.O. Lawrence: "The development of medical services in British Guiana and Trinidad 1841-1873", The Jamaican Historical Review, Vol. IV, 1964 pp. 59-67.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, 1962, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>4</sup> Report, 1949, op. cit.

In the mid-nineteenth century many planters reacted to the reluctance to work on the estates by evicting workers, in the hope that deprivation of lodgings and plots of land would force them back to estate employment. The widespread resentment this caused and the subsequent labour shortage made planters reluctant to repeat this practice, but although more subtle tactics prevailed subsequently, eviction remained a threat to recalcitrant workers.<sup>1</sup>

Paternalism was also used to restrict the growth of organisations to defend or improve the earnings and living conditions of the rural workforce. Thus partly as a result of paternalistic labour laws designed to provide an institutional means of settling grievances, it was not until long after the abolition of the indenture system that trade unions started to represent the Indian immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

In the twentieth century paternalistic relations of production were also fostered by the State, particularly on land settlement schemes. In the 1950's and 1960's several of these were set up with the objective of encouraging peasant cane-farming under the direction of the estates, which provided housing, drainage, and irrigation, specified the acreage to be planted, and supplied fertilisers and machines for ploughing, at a fee.<sup>3</sup>

The paternalism exercised by the bauxite companies was equally pervasive. The two multinationals created semi-feudal "company towns" in which they extracted surplus in one way or another from almost the whole resident population as well as from many living outside them. This was so even though only a small proportion were directly employed by the firms - never more than about 6,000 people, or about 4 per cent of the country's workforce. According to an estimate made in 1968, in the bauxite community of Christianburg-Wismar-Mackenzie only about 15 per cent of the resident population were employed by Demba (the name of Alcan's Guyanese subsidiary).<sup>4</sup> The Company owned the land on which workers and other residents rented housing and it prohibited the construction of private accommodation, thus extracting surplus through rent as well as securing a dependent labour force.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W.E. Riviere: "Labour shortage in the British West Indies after emancipation", Journal of Caribbean History, Vol. 4, May 1972, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> A. Chase: A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana, 1900-1961 (Demerara, Guyana, New Guyana Company Ltd., 1964); Nath, 1950, op. cit., Chapter V. The principal means of ameliorating the grievances of indentured immigrant workers was the Migration Agent-General, an official appointed by the colonial authorities as protector of labourers' rights. One occupant of the post, James Crosby, became a revered figure in Guyanese folklore. The first union set up to represent the estate workers was the Manpower Citizens Association, established in 1937 and formally recognised in 1939. It became identified as little more than a company union and was superseded by the unrecognised Guiana Industrial Workers Union, formed in 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, 1977, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Grant: "Company towns in the Caribbean: A preliminary analysis of Christianburg-Wismar-Mackenzie", Caribbean Studies, Vol. II, No. 1, April 1971, p.52. The community is now known as Linden (or Linden-Mackenzie).

<sup>5</sup> Tenants of company-owned accommodation were made highly insecure by the leases they were required to sign: "That I will vacate the house on request of the Company without any notice and in the event of any failing to leave, the Company shall have the right to take possession and eject me without recourse to law". Cited in M. St. Pierre: "Race, the political factor and the nationalisation of the Demerara Bauxite Company, Guyana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 24, No. 4, Dec. 1975, p. 487.

Established in 1920, Linden became an area of migrants, and, after a number of ugly racial conflicts, essentially an area of migrants of African origin. In 1960 in the Upper Demerara district, which encompasses the bauxite mining community, only 38% of the population were born in the area, according to the 1960 Census. A survey in the mid-1960s suggested that only 11.4% of the adult population in Mackenzie were born in the Mackenzie-Wismar area, and only 7.7% of the Mackenzie-Wismar adult population had been born there.<sup>1</sup> According to the 1970 Census no less than 46.5% of Linden's population were migrants, nearly two-thirds of whom had arrived in the 1961-70 decade. One factor in the migration was the relatively high wages earned by manual workers in the bauxite industry, even for unskilled workers.<sup>2</sup> But the company's paternalism, used primarily to secure a dependable, efficient labour force, also made the area attractive to many holding out little or no hope of employment in the bauxite industry. This was because the company developed a social infrastructure which, however rudimentary, contrasted favourably with the contrived stagnation in most rural areas. Until the 1960's Demba provided all the rudimentary social services available, which included public sanitation, health services, schools, roads, and of course housing. In doing so it attracted a rapidly growing population, which initially served the company's purposes in that it gave it a sizeable labour reserve. But as this surplus population grew the costs of supporting the community escalated. In particular, despite company attempts to control in-migration by a pass system and restrictions on entry to South Mackenzie, a large "squatters" population emerged, whose poverty represented a potential health hazard to the authorities. Thus the company provided not only fringe benefits and various forms of credit for its workers, but had to ensure a sufficient development of social services to prevent a dangerous deterioration in public health.

As this obligation intensified Demba attempted to reduce its paternalistic role in the area. In 1964 it set up a Trust to operate as a development bank with responsibility to develop housing, improve community facilities, and attract new industrial enterprises. Then in 1965 tentative steps were taken to phase in local government. But the community remained an extension of the bauxite industry; it was not until 1968 that a road was built to connect the isolated community to the coastal area, and its position scarcely encouraged industrial diversification. Demba continued to direct community affairs through its financial and technical contribution to the fledgling village council. In 1968 the company revealed that community expenditure accounted for 30 per cent of its industrial payroll.<sup>3</sup> By that time unions and a new nationalist government, whose political power was based

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<sup>1</sup> J. Roback: Bases of Social Differentiation in a Guyanese Mining Community Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Department of Sociology, McGill University, 1969.

<sup>2</sup> A survey of wages prevailing at the end of 1973 reported that unskilled male wage rates in the bauxite firms were two-and-a-third times those paid to adult male field workers in the sugar industry and two-and-three-quarter times those paid to adult male labourers in the rice industry. Fringe benefits were also much greater. Ministry of Labour and Social Security: Annual Report for the Year 1973 (Georgetown, Government Printery, 1977), Appendix I, Table V.

<sup>3</sup> Grant, 1971, op. cit., p. 65.

on the solid support of the Linden workforce, made it impractical for Demba to shed its paternalistic role or avoid a vicious circle into which that role had placed it. The more people who migrated to the township the greater the company's social service costs, and the more it spent on the community to safeguard public health and pacify local and national discontent, the more people were likely to migrate from the rural areas where even such basic amenities as found in Linden were absent. But the effect this situation had on rural underdevelopment cannot be estimated, for Linden sucked many of the relatively skilled workers out of the rural areas. Considering that this occurred at a time of increasing mechanisation in all forms of agriculture, particularly in the rice sector, the loss of mechanics may have contributed substantially to the declining productivity that accompanied rural mechanisation.<sup>1</sup> Whatever the exact effect, there can scarcely be any doubt that the lure of Linden, and indeed the relative availability of social amenities in the more "developed" sugar estates, contributed to the stagnation in other rural areas.

#### The Role of the State

As long as the estates were politically and economically dominant it was to be expected that the full machinery of government would be geared to facilitate their profitability. In the main, until Independence in 1966 that was true. But between 1838 and 1966 the power of the plantocracy had greatly fluctuated and in some respects at least had waned. Very briefly, the plantocracy had suffered reverses in the 1840s, until indentured labour was established, but from then until the 1870s the estates were dominant. Electoral reforms in 1891 extended the franchise and were a reflection of the emergence of a merchant class, whose role was both reactionary - restricting accumulation in the industrial sphere (the merchants in Georgetown dealt mainly with import/export trade, helping the accumulation process abroad) - and progressive in that the merchants were opposed to the dominance of the estates.<sup>2</sup>

The merchants were implicitly opposed to the estates because the latter relied on the restriction of the purchasing power of the working population and their retention in rural areas. To increase that purchasing power was the *sine qua non* of the merchants. As such they acted as the vanguard of the class opposition to the essentially semi-feudal form of production. But the merchants had only limited potential for political action because the class base for effective opposition was too narrow and weak, given the underdevelopment of industrial capital which was an outcome of the contrived stagnation.

Nevertheless, the 1891 reforms gave the vital political class struggle the necessary impetus. Further constitutional reforms followed in 1909 and 1927 and although the latter were followed swiftly by a period of retrenchment by the estates with the introduction of Crown Colony status in 1928, whereby much of the political control was transferred to the colonial authorities, the plantocracy were by then firmly on the defensive. Their major difficulty was that the economic stagnation they had contrived had produced widespread impoverishment and, with population growth and shrinking labour requirements on the estates, a rapid growth of a surplus population. The poverty and unemployment precipitated social unrest, and after a

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<sup>1</sup> Madramootoo, 1970, op. cit. See the earlier discussion.

<sup>2</sup> The Constitutional Reform of 1891 extended the vote to those with property other than land and slightly lowered the income qualifications for voting rights.

protracted period of unrest in the 1930s, set in abeyance by the Second World War, and reiterated in the general strike at Mackenzie in 1947 and in the Ehmores riots of 1948, a national general election based on universal adult suffrage was held in 1953. The elected, avowedly Marxist government of Cheddi Jagan and the PPP was quickly crushed by the British and Americans, partly as a result of the PPP's political inexperience and maladroitness but largely because Jagan was vehemently opposed to multinational capital in the country. But just as the riots of the unemployed in Jamaica in 1938 set in train a series of liberal reformist economic policies for the whole of the British West Indies (epitomised by the Moyne Commission) so the riots of the late 1940s and the events of 1953 accelerated the process in Guyana.

After 1953 state policy, restored to colonial control, was concerned with rapidly ameliorating the worst consequences of the extended stagnation in rural areas; by this means the authorities hoped to defuse the discontent which had given the PPP such an overwhelming mandate.<sup>1</sup> Rural stagnation was exacerbated by the continual decline in agricultural employment, the "decasualisation" of estate labour forces which occurred in the 1950s, increasing seasonality of employment, and a reduction in family income due to a reduction of "secondary" jobs and in particular to a long-term displacement of women workers on the estates (Tables 7 and 8). Open unemployment by the 1950s had been an endemic feature of the economy, and it was to remain so (Tables 9 and 10).

After 1953 the authorities attempted to stimulate "peasant" production, hoping to retain the rural population in the villages and draw some of the surplus population away from urban and semi-urban areas where they had concentrated and where they were regarded as politically explosive. But whereas the World Bank Mission in early 1953 recommended a five-year programme (1954-58) heavily concentrated on "directly productive" investment, the government continued to emphasise social welfare expenditure as a means of directly raising real living standards. This meant in effect that the underlying economic structure was not radically affected.

In 1957 new elections were allowed and again won by the PPP. With limited powers the PPP was heavily committed to productive agricultural investment and in particular to the interests of the basically Indian rice farmers, who comprised the PPP's principal constituency. This highlights the historical legacy of the plantocracy's strategy, for the existence of a large rice farming population pressurised the nationalistic government to safeguard their incomes and expand production, despite the low economic return to rice and the unbalanced nature of rural production.

Finally, whereas the PPP had a "rural bias" or an essentially "peasant bias", the People's National Congress party which came to power in 1964 was based on the support of the urban working and middle class, and in particular on the African segment of the population. This was a crucial development, for not only did the urban population find their interests better represented but the rice farmers experienced declining incomes and investment in their industry, which was associated

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<sup>1</sup> C.H. Grant: "The politics of community development in British Guiana 1954-1957", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, June 1965, p. 181.

Table 7  
Agricultural Employment and Female Employment  
in Agriculture, Guyana 1911-1970

Year	Total Agricultural Employment	% of Working Population in Agriculture*	Female Agricultural Employment	Female as % of total
1911	106,514	56%	43,421	41%
1921	84,970	47	32,751	39
1931	74,603	51	24,442	33
1946	61,125	46	15,898	26
1960	59,790	37	9,456	16
1970	46,201	29	3,868	8

Note: \* These figures are only approximately comparable, since labour force definitions varied from one census to another.

Source: Population Censuses

Table 8  
Weekly Employees in Sugar Industry  
(Field and Factory Workers) 1950-1970

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Field</u>	<u>Factory</u>
1950	28,235	21,641	6,594
1960	20,479	16,001	4,478
1970	17,380	14,212	3,168

Note: These figures exclude administration and miscellaneous staff and are based on annual returns submitted by the Guyana Sugar Producer's Association to various tribunals of enquiry. The figures represent an estimate of the average number working in the industry each week and are based on weekly records averaged over the whole year. Given that few workers were employed for anything like a full year the number of workers employed in the sugar industry was very much greater than implied by these figures. Seasonality has been such that, for example, the number of man days worked in the seasonally peak month was between 2 and 3 times the number of workers in slack months. Even in the 1970s an estimate of 150,000 persons (i.e. sugar workers and their dependents) relied on earnings in the sugar industry as their principal means of livelihood. (C.Y. Thomas, Plantations, Peasants and State (IDS-ILO, 1977, mimeo), p. 51).



Table 9

Unemployment Rates by Sex, Guyana, 1956  
1960, 1965, 1970 (%)

Unemployment	July 1956	April 1960	March 1965*	March 1965+	April 1970
Male	13.8	9.8	7.7	18.4	15.0
Female	25.1	13.7	27.0	27.8	19.6
Total	18.0	10.9	14.1	20.9	15.9

Sources: Population Census, 1960, 1970; Labour Force Surveys,  
1956, 1965

Notes: In 1960 the age limits were ten years old and over; in the other years the range was 14 years and over. In the 1965 Survey two unemployment rates were estimated: \* refers to the rate based on the past 12 months; + gives the rate based on the survey week in April 1965, which corresponds to the 1956 figures. The 1970 figures are based on main activity in the past 12 months; the unemployed were those seeking their first job, others seeking work, and those who wanted work and were available for work. All figures refer only to those not attending primary or secondary school.

Table 10

Unemployment Rates by Area and Sex, 1977

	Both Sexes		Male		Female	
	U <sub>1</sub>	U <sub>2</sub>	U <sub>1</sub>	U <sub>2</sub>	U <sub>1</sub>	U <sub>2</sub>
Guyana	6.6	17.5	5.6	12.0	9.3	30.2
Urban	7.8	19.0	7.1	13.3	9.0	19.4
Rural	6.0	16.9	5.1	11.6	9.4	32.4

Source: N. Caesar and G. Standing, The Labour Force in Guyana: A Preliminary Report, Population and Employment Working Paper (Geneva, ILO, December 1978, mimeo), p. 18. Two definitions of unemployment were used: U<sub>1</sub> is a highly restrictive definition, based on job-seekers in past week; U<sub>2</sub> is a more realistic measure based on availabilities and need for work. See the source for fuller discussion of the concepts.

with a fall in production, as noted earlier. Increasingly the central government was alienated from the rural, mainly Indian population and this placed considerable constraints on rural development, which the government of Forbes Burnham has been unable to overcome. The country became formally a Cooperative Republic in February 1970, and during the next decade the PNC placed much rhetorical emphasis on "cooperativism" as the means to overcome rural underdevelopment.

Clearly the desired objectives of the State changed dramatically in the course of the twentieth century. But it is worth focussing on four crucial areas of State action which influenced migration patterns or the geographical distribution of the population - the structure and function of local government, government fiscal policy, land settlement schemes, and "cooperativism".

(a) The structure of local government

Population mobility is clearly affected by the organisation of community development and local government, since that determines the unevenness of regional and sub-regional development, the distribution of social amenities, and to some extent the geographical pattern of economic opportunities and relative incomes. This has been particularly true in Guyana, with its peculiar terrain and a coastal region largely below sea level.

The roots of the local government system began with the village movement in the 1840s. The liquidation of the commercial village movement and the Crown Land regulations concentrated the population on the narrow stretch of coastal land. That meant that to flourish the village economy required comprehensive investments in sea defences, drainage, irrigation, transport and related infrastructure. That required community organisation and local government machinery empowered to collect and organise the use of funds, to allocate tasks to various groups, and to administer infrastructural investments. The system that was encouraged by the plantocracy and the colonial authorities was highly decentralised in that local government was based on the village unit and on the local mobilisation of community labour.

However, the village councils never had much power and, most particularly before reforms introduced in 1970, were too small to mobilise sufficient resources to be effective or to avoid control from the Central government, where effective fiscal, technical, and administrative power always presided. Epitomising this tendency was the existence of government-appointed District Commissioners, who emerged in the wake of the 1928 change to Crown Colony status and who were seen by the Governor at that time as "the iron hand in the velvet glove". These officials, being government-appointed, tended to represent the interests of the plantocracy and have been described by one analyst as "stifling local initiative".<sup>1</sup>

To make matters worse, many villages were never incorporated in the local government network and the sugar estates were conspicuously excluded from its jurisdiction. Indeed the Marshall Report on Local Government estimated that only 54.3% of the rural coastal population came within the ambit of local government.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.H. Grant: "Rural local government in Guyana and British Honduras", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1967, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> A.H. Marshall: Report on Local Government in British Guiana (Georgetown, Argosy Co. Ltd., May 1955).

This was largely rectified only in 1970, but by then the inter-party rivalries of the PPP and PNC ruled out effective local government elections, from which the PPP withdrew. The dislocated system of local government, initially fostered by the plantocracy and a check on rural development, persisted.

From its inception, local government raised its revenue primarily from local rates levied on all landholding villagers. This placed the tax burden on the villagers rather than on the estates, which were the only bodies that could have contributed sufficient resources to make local infrastructural development possible. The estates of course were automatically excluded from rate paying by being outside the local government network.

Moreover, as local authorities had little financial power and severely limited statutory functions they tended to avoid tax increases. According to one analyst they "failed to pay loan charges, curtailed services, neglected essential maintenance, and deprived employees of overdue increase in salaries or even of a decent rate of remuneration", primarily due to the lack of popular participation and of effective power.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in rural areas the proportion of rates actually collected declined from a low 70.8% in 1962 to 60% in 1965 and 55.8% in 1968.<sup>2</sup> This merely exacerbated an already severe shortage of funds and it is scarcely surprising that local government revenue usually accounted for less than 2% of GNP.<sup>3</sup>

Not only was the revenue always small and inadequate for village needs, but paradoxically the chief beneficiaries of public expenditure were the estates rather than the villages. Moreover, to the extent the villages did benefit from local government, those that benefitted most were those nearest the estates.

The first means by which the estates benefitted was through the receipt of substantial subsidies to meet the "costs" of indentured labour. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, by when there was a recognised labour surplus, the Colonial Office rationalised the continuation of public subsidies on the grounds that further immigration would keep down wage rates and maintain a plentiful supply of labour.<sup>4</sup> Those subsidies were phased out in the early twentieth century, but other subsidies were boosted. For instance, although they were initially responsible for the construction and maintenance of estate roads and for part of the costs of the medical service provided to estate workers, from the end of the nineteenth century financial and administrative responsibilities for both were transferred to the central government, which acquired the financial resources mainly from villagers through taxation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Singh: "The politics of local government reform, 1930-1970", in H. Lutchman, P. Mars, and H. Addo (eds): Selected Issues in Guyanese Politics (Georgetown, University of Guyana, 1976), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> M. Odle: The Evolution of Public Expenditure: The Case of a Structurally Dependent Economy: Guyana (Mona, ISER, 1976), Table 4.8, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., pp. 148-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 196, 199.

Thus local government not only lacked the political independence to mobilise village initiatives to stimulate rural development but proved unequipped to raise and allocate funds. All efforts to reform the system were virtually stillborn and after the bitter political experience following the 1970 reforms little improvement can be anticipated in the near future.

(b) Government fiscal-monetary policy

The financial policies of central governments have also had a pronounced impact on the geographical, sectoral and class distribution of income, wealth and production, and as such have greatly influenced the pattern of population mobility.

Perhaps the major feature has been that the agricultural population have generally been unable to obtain access to government loans and credit facilities. After Independence that was less true than beforehand, but the basic pattern scarcely changed. Historically the large estates had access to extensive credit facilities and were provided with medium and long-term loans, whereas those outside the ambit of the estates received little in either credit or loans and were often faced with censure of land or other assets if they did not pay off debts rapidly. One consequence was that most small cultivators gave up attempting to get government loans, fearing that either they would not be able to pay promptly or some arbitrary government or judicial action would result in loss of land or equipment. From the late nineteenth century onwards the insecurity of tenure was such that villagers refused government drainage loans, even when their land was lying under water, fearing their property would be sold at execution if the loans could not be repaid.<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, the World Bank concluded in 1953 that there were no financial institutions to provide long-term loans for relatively risky agricultural development, and this was true of government as well as private institutions. Even the British Guiana Credit Corporation, set up in 1954 to fulfil that role, failed to do so.<sup>2</sup> The Guyana Credit Corporation (formerly the BGCC) channelled most of its loans to non-agricultural uses and seems to have been even less "liberal" in extending credit to farmers than commercial banks.<sup>3</sup>

Also, like commercial banks, at least up to the era of Independence, government financial institutions traditionally deprived the rural population of investible surplus by channelling their savings abroad rather than back into the rural economy. For instance, the Post Office Savings Bank, established in 1899 and designed to accommodate small savers, sent most of its deposits abroad. As the World Bank Report of 1953 concluded:

"Although existing regulations provide that up to one third of the total deposits may be invested locally, the funds of thy Bank are invested, except for very small holdings of British Guiana securities, in issues of the Dominions and of other colonies." (4)

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> For a critique of the BGCC, see C.Y. Thomas: Monetary and Financial Arrangements in a Dependent Monetary Economy (Mona, ISER, 1965), pp. 156-66.

<sup>3</sup> Lewars, 1977, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> IBRD, 1953, op. cit., p. 45.

Similarly, the government's Sugar Price Stabilisation Fund was mostly invested abroad, so one way or another rural areas and the small-scale agricultural sector in particular were deprived of investible funds. The performance of the Guyana National Cooperative Bank, set up in 1970 partly to rectify that situation, will be examined later.

Historically, the impact of taxation was also generally deleterious to rural development, not only channelling surplus from the village population to the estates but increasing labour supply to the estates. Thus the estates received subsidies derived from general taxation, most of which came from indirect taxes but also from rates as well as income taxes.<sup>1</sup> The rationale for using taxes to stimulate labour supply was that the need for cash to pay the taxes implied a need for income, which reduced the discretionary nature of wage labour force participation. This issue preoccupied many colonial administrators. At various times attempts were made to stimulate "tastes" for imported consumer goods. But this was not really satisfactory for the estates' purposes, for it implied commercial growth and was difficult because many estate villages were cut off from contact with urban areas where living standards were more dominated by such items of consumption. The introduction of non-basic consumer goods increased dissatisfaction with estate life and the associated low level of subsistence.

Taxes, however, not only stimulated wage labour force participation but helped increase crop specialisation. Thus from the nineteenth century onwards the plantocracy used fiscal policy to compel peasant farmers to concentrate on sugar cane.<sup>2</sup> Cane had sales potential and cash was required to pay for heavily taxed basic commodities.

Government public expenditure policies also had an impact on the geographical and sectoral distribution of income and thus on the pattern of population mobility. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the provision of subsidies to the estates and the emphasis on social welfare spending rather than directly productive investment meant that public expenditure was geared to the needs of the plantocracy and subsequently with ameliorating the consequences for living standards of the contrived stagnation. After the events of 1953 the emphasis began to change but, particularly between 1957 and 1964, most of the directly productive investment went to bolster rice production. Public investment became heavily based in favour of housing and the provision of overheads for rice production.<sup>3</sup> The public expenditure on rice has to be seen in a context of an estimated capital-output ratio of 6:1 in rice production, much higher than that prevailing in other industrial and agricultural sectors.<sup>4</sup> Indeed the impact of public expenditure on rural development and rural employment is overstated, as part of that expenditure went to sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Traditionally well over half of central government revenue came from indirect taxation. Odle, 1976, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Adamson, 1972, op. cit., p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, 1965, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> P. Newman: "The economic future of British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 9, No. 3, Sept, 1960, p. 275.

sidise labour-displacing mechanisation in rice production.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the greatest boost to rice mechanisation was the Mahaicony-Abary Rice Development Scheme launched by the government in 1942 as a large-scale mechanised rice estate. The scheme was expanded in the 1950s even though yields were less than in other rice-growing areas and even though it was recognised that "the alternative of using the land and credits for small-scale farming would bring greater soil productivity and increased employment".<sup>2</sup> Rice continued to be heavily subsidised by government expenditure, through the provision of marketing depots, extension services and price guarantee schemes.

With the acquisition of power by the PNC government resources were shifted away from rice, and government controlled padi prices were allowed to decline. But the adverse effect on rural areas was not compensated by investment in other forms of agriculture. The Guyana Development Plan 1966-1970 effectively shifted public investment to urban areas, where most of the PNC supporters happened to be living; and this was maintained in the 1972-1976 Plan.<sup>3</sup> In effect, successive governments had found themselves struggling to overcome the legacy of the contrived stagnation and both the PPP's and PNC's policies could be seen as reflecting political expediency. But the most immediate consequence was that income levels stagnated, while unemployment grew as the artificially structured rice-growing rural population suffered from declining yields, incomes, employment and prospects.

(c) Land settlement schemes

Land settlement schemes in Guyana have not been marginal experiments in attempting to alter population distribution and the structure of production, but for different reasons integral parts of the over-all strategy of successive governments. They had their roots in the communal village movement of the 1840s but really started with the Indian villages set up at the end of the nineteenth century.

The main objective of the early schemes, starting with the Huist Dieven scheme in 1880, was to absorb the emerging surplus population. In effect the schemes were an attempt to alter the social division of labour, encouraging part of the peasantry to produce the means of subsistence for themselves and for estate workers, though many of those settled also did seasonal labour on the estates. By getting the settlers to produce their subsistence needs, estate wage rates could be subsidised and reduced. But as can be seen from their location, illustrated in Map 2, it is striking that all the early settlements were set up near the estates, which were therefore able to rely on seasonal labour from the settled peasantry.

The early schemes were little more than palliatives to absorb the surplus rural population. Taking the period 1880 to 1930, every one was situated in areas in which the natural vegetation could be characterised as mangrove-marsh-swamp. And though some of those schemes lingered for years all but one has ceased to function. Fundamentally, the cause of their failure lay in the implicit objective of the

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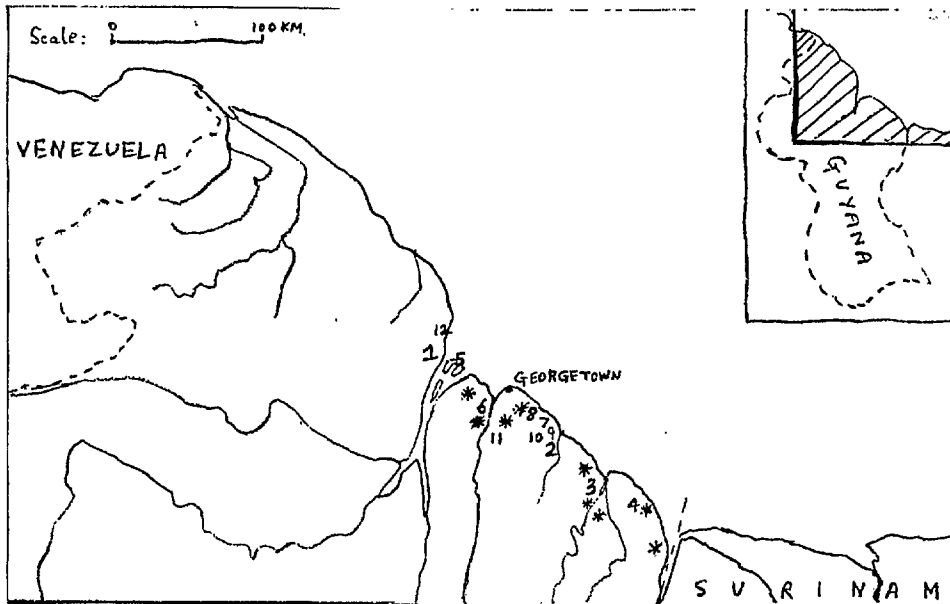
<sup>1</sup> Madramootoo, 1970, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> IBRD, 1953, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the shift in the pattern of public expenditure, see G. Standing: "Socialism and basic needs in Guyana", in G. Standing and R. Szal, Poverty and Basic Needs (Geneva, ILO, 1979).

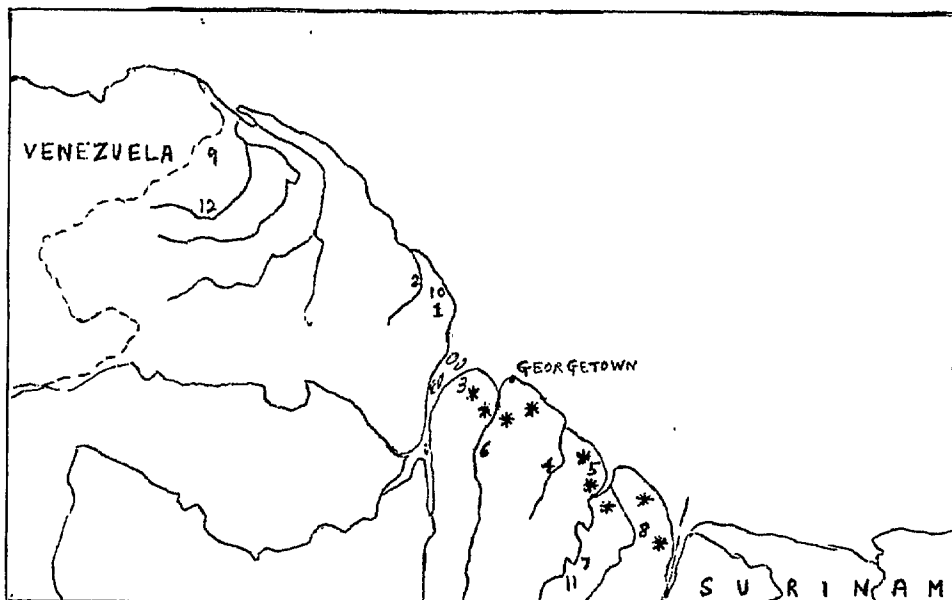
Map 2

Early Land Settlement Schemes 1880-1930



Map 3

Later Land Settlement Schemes 1940-1968



Note: Numbers indicate land settlement schemes in order of establishment. For code see Table 10.

\* Indicates main sugar estates in 1970.

State policy makers, who were not really concerned with generating rural development, rising income levels, or agricultural diversification.

Despite the lack of success of the early schemes two new schemes were set up after the Second World War and then after 1953, as part of an effort to defuse the social unrest following the political upheavals, there was a spate of settlements. A Department of Land Settlements was established in 1954, and redesigned as a Land Development Department in 1959. In 1960 the largest settlement of all was created, the Black Bush Polder scheme.

It is notable that the second group of settlements, beginning with Anna Regina, were slightly more dispersed. The rationale for settlements after 1953 was to absorb the surplus population and stimulate rural production, but still most of the new settlements were located near the sugar estates. It was not until the 1960s that settlements were established away from that small area. This was the first time settlement schemes were used to open up other areas of potential agricultural production, a tendency which was subsequently extended with the siting of three National Service Camps as quasi-military land clearing settlements in the interior savannah region. As can be seen from Table 11 the later settlement schemes were far more varied in the type of natural vegetation found on the selected sites.

The reasons for the failure of most of the early schemes, and for the very limited success of the later schemes, can be split into two types. The first was the general objective of the schemes which did not place primary emphasis on the productive aspects but concentrated rather on the social and political needs of the government and plantocracy. The second type were the more technical reasons, though they were merely a reflection of the first. Thus there was very little formal planning of schemes, sites were often poorly selected, and in none of the 17 schemes established before 1956 did the government organise or even subsidise any land clearing, that being left to the settlers equipped with primitive implements.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the one surviving scheme, all the early settlements suffered from an absence of water control, which the government would have had to organise. Similarly, in some schemes settlers had to travel miles for well water, while the roads were left in a state of disrepair, and no government assistance was available for house-building. It was scarcely surprising that settlers drifted away from the schemes.

Other factors that afflicted the schemes were the size of plots, and the conditions attached to membership, and the settlers' apparent reluctance to respond as expected. In many ways the problems encountered in the largest scheme of all were typical. Though other schemes involved variants of the arrangements at Black Bush Polder, the main features were similar. Each settler family was provided with a 2½ acre homestead area and a 15 acre plot on which rice had to be grown (or in a few cases 7 acre plot for permanent crops). Initially, some attempt was made to encourage cooperative production, but this token gesture was soon abandoned. Ostensibly, no land transfers or consolidation were permitted, and responsibility for infrastructure and assistance rested with the government authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> J.W. Vining: "Site development and settlement scheme failure in Guyana", *Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 42, June 1976, pp. 86-97.



Table 11  
Land Settlement Schemes, Guyana 1880-1968<sup>+</sup>

Map Number	Scheme	Date Opened	Natural Vegetation	Vegetation at Start of Scheme	Water Control
1	Huist Dieven*	1880	MSM	PC	Poor
2	Helena*	1897	MSM	UM	Poor
3	Bush Lot (W. Berbice)*	1897	MSM	UM	Poor
4	Whim*	1899	MSM	UM	Poor
5	Maria's Pleasure*	1902	MSM	UM	Poor
6	Government Estates	1910-13	MSM	PC	Very good
7	Clonbrook*	1913	MSM	UM	Poor
8	Triumph*	1913	MSM	UM	Poor
9	Unity*	1914	MSM	PC	Unknown
10	Lancaster*	1914	MSM	PC	Unknown
11	Craig*	1915	MSM	UM	Unknown
12	Bush Lot (Essequibo)	1930	MSM	SL	Poor
1	Anna Regina	1940s	MSM	SL	Poor; good after 1964
2	Charity Amazon	1944	MS	UH	Fair
3	Vergenoegen	1946	MSM	UL	Good
4	Cane Grove	1947	MSM	UL	Poor
5	Onverwagt	1955	MSM	PC	Poor
6	Garden of Eden	1956	MS	DS	Good
7	Mara	1957	EF	DS	Poor
8	Black Bush Polder	1960	HS	HS	Good
9	Wauna-Yarakita	1964	TR	TR	Good
10	Tapakuma	1964	MSM	DS	Good
11	Brandwagt-Sari	1964	EF	EF	Fair
12	Matthew's Ridge - Arakaka-Kaituma	1968	TR	TR	Good

Note: The classification of initial vegetation and subsequent state of water control are based on data from the National Archives of Guyana and field work carried out by James Vining.

- <sup>+</sup> Notation: MSM : Mangrove-swamp-marsh  
 MS : Marsh-swamp  
 EF : Evergreen forest  
 TR : Tropical rainforest  
 PC : Predominantly cleared  
 UM : Unknown, but probably light to moderate undergrowth  
 UH : Unknown, but probably heavy undergrowth  
 UL : Unknown, but probably light undergrowth  
 SL : Scattered light secondary growth  
 DS : Dense secondary growth  
 HS : Herbaceous swamp

\* Indicates that scheme is defunct.

The size of the plots in Black Bush and in other settlements was loosely based on the expected subsistence needs and work capacity of the typical peasant family. But the schemes rarely succeeded in reducing malnutrition or rural poverty, for most schemes failed to live up to even modest official expectations. In the Black Bush Polder scheme ambitious drainage, irrigation and other infrastructural projects were launched, but the settlement was never a success, either in generating agricultural development or in retaining the settler population. Reasons for the failure, there as elsewhere, included inefficient administration, the criteria used for homestead allocation, the settling of non-farmers on farmland with limited incentives for farming, lack of access to credit, and a persistent lack of supporting services. One of the major reasons for the abandonment of holdings was that the roads were so bad that they were often impassable in the rainy seasons and impeded communications and the transport of crops and other traffic.

One factor in the repeated failure of schemes was that many if not most of the settlers had little or no experience or commitment to independent small-scale farming. This reflected the fact that the settlements were primarily designed to defuse unrest and lower unemployment, and as a consequence many of those settled were previously unemployed or displaced wage labourers. In allocating holdings preference was given to those who (a) had large families, (b) were unemployed or in low-paid jobs, and (c) had little or no property. Consequently, settlers tended to be relatively uneducated, to lack work experience or skills, and to have little or no funds for investment. These were scarcely the required ingredients for a successful settler. It was scarcely surprising that absentee farming became widespread, or that despite the rich soil in the area yields in Black Bush Polder, for instance, were below the national average and, far from picking up as the settlement became more established, actually declined. However, it would be a mistake to overemphasise the selection procedures, for that could be misconstrued as suggesting that if only the right individuals had been chosen, the schemes would have flourished. There were more fundamental problems.

One feature of the land settlement schemes is that, until Independence at least, they tended to reproduce the narrow crop specialisation of the rural economy. This can be seen from the cropping patterns of schemes started after 1953, as shown in Table 12. Most schemes were virtually rice settlements and indeed following an official policy decision in 1957 rice schemes were the only type on which the government helped clear land for settlers.<sup>1</sup> The authorities also subsidised mechanisation and mills and related facilities, besides giving price supports to rice.

It was clear that the size of plots on settlements was inadequate to provide satisfactory incomes and full-time employment, especially in the wake of the subsidised mechanisation which occurred from the 1950s onwards. In 1963, at a fairly early stage of mechanisation of rice farming, it was estimated that a 15 acre plot devoted to padi required about 38 man days of work per year.<sup>2</sup> For the great majority

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<sup>1</sup> Vining, 1976, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> R. Dumont: Report to the Government of Guyana of Planning Agricultural Development (Rome, FAO, 1963).

Table 12  
Establishment of Land Development Schemes,  
1950-1971

Name	Date Started	Acreage	Sizes of Holdings	Main Crops (Initially)
Onverwagt	1955	5,401	5 or 10 acres	Rice
Garden of Eden <sup>1</sup>	1956	1,000	7 (mostly) acres	Citrus, Dairy cattle
Mara <sup>2</sup>	1957	3,870	25 acres	Rice and food crops
Black Bush Polder	1960	31,000	17½ acres, 10 acres	Rice mainly. Permanent crops
Tapakuma	1961-2	3,100 1,000	5 or 10 acres Communal	Rice mainly Dairy cattle
Brandwagt/Sari	1963	11,800	Cooperative <sup>3</sup>	Vegetables, permanent crops & dairy cattle
Wauna/Yarakita	1964	1,500	15, 25 or 50 acres <sup>4</sup>	Food, mostly permanent crops
Kurukururu	1970	5,867	10 acres	Permanent crops

Sources: British Guiana Annual Reports of the Director of Agriculture 1960, 1961, 1965; Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources Guyana Annual Report, 1969, 1970.

- Notes:
- 1 Garden of Eden became an essentially cane farming area
  - 2 Mara was a total failure, neither attracting many settlers nor retaining many of those who did take plots.
  - 3 The cooperative failed.
  - 4 The large landholdings were for dairy farming.

of settlers rice farming held out the prospect of a low and static income, and this contributed to the widely observed absentee farming, which in turn contributed to the declining rice yields and was reflected in seasonal and longer-term migration out of the settlement areas.

Several features of the country's chaotic land tenure system were reproduced rather than ameliorated by the land settlements. First, as the World Bank recognised, settlements were not "real settlements, but rather a form of organised settlements. The farmers are tenants of the government".<sup>1</sup> Second, the disarray surrounding land titles and possession was intensified by the almost clandestine transfer of property that such schemes encouraged. In theory, holdings were only leased to selected occupiers who had no right to transfer their occupancy. But

<sup>1</sup> IBRD, 1953, op. cit., p. 208.

these regulations were widely abused, due in part to the indebtedness which was always likely given the narrow margin on which the farmers operated. Many farmers ceased to operate though formally retained their land, while others expanded not only by acquiring land from outside the schemes (often from adjacent unoccupied government-owned land) but from other, disaffected settlers, making land transfers fairly common. As one observer of the field work concluded about one scheme centred on an ex-estate, Windsor Forest:

"In theory each occupier ... should hold a 99 year lease issued by the government. In practice, there has been a good deal of buying and selling of rights, "exchanging" of pieces of land, inheritance and gifts of rights without proper notification and transfer of leases". (1)

Such expediency contributed to the disorganisation and stagnation on the settlements. A third factor was that the rigid institutionalisation of land parcelling accentuated the fragmentation of landholdings. In some instances fragmentation was *deliberately* built in the schemes, typically in the interests of "equity". For instance, in Cane Grove, a settlement formed in the late 1940s following the closure of a sugar estate, ex-estate workers were allocated several strips of land of different quality. Inheritance practices also led to subdivision of land.

Fragmentation became almost as common on land settlements as elsewhere, and as in villages, was not necessarily restricted by the relationship between plot size and output. It has been argued that fragmentation would be checked at "a certain minimum size beyond which a farm cannot provide a worthwhile return".<sup>2</sup> However, that presumption neglects the behavioural responses open to smallholders. The returns to farming were always low, for reasons ranging from poor husbandry, to lack of credit, insecurity, lack of crop rotation leading to soil erosion, and the mis-utilisation of heavily subsidised mechanised methods, which relied on *more intensive* labour inputs to raise yields than traditional methods of cultivation.<sup>3</sup> With the rising production costs and the potential economies of scale that mechanisation offered, and as the relative price of rice fell in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rise in the size of farm needed to ensure a reasonable standard of living ("worthwhile return"). A small plot on a land settlement that provided a family with an adequate income in 1960 was less likely to do so in the 1970s. That was one factor behind the apparent increase in part-time farming and absentee landholding, as settlers sought work in urban areas or were forced to return to seasonal estate labour.

So, land settlements failed to overcome the structural inadequacies of the rural economy, perpetuating inefficient husbandry, underutilisation of cultivable land, seasonality of employment, and rural unemployment. They scarcely helped retain the population in rural areas or cause a substantial shift of population away from the sub-urban and urban centres, as was one of their objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> R.T. Smith: "Rice production in an East Indian community in British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 6, No. 4, Dec. 1957, p. 506.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Madramootoo, 1970, op. cit.,

(d) Cooperativism

Guyana became the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in February 1970. Institutional reform is often regarded as the mean of overcoming rural underdevelopment, and many have argued that it is essential if rural-urban migration is to be reduced without resort to repressive controls.<sup>1</sup> In Guyana its advocates have always seen "cooperativism" as a social vehicle for doing both, by transforming the material base and social relations of production, stimulating agricultural and industrial diversification and a more balanced distribution of the population.

The PNC regime has stumbled from crisis to crisis preaching the virtues of cooperativism, or "cooperative socialism". According to the rolled-over 1972-1976 Development Plan:

"The attraction of Cooperativism lies in its propensity to promote egalitarianism, in its ability to create self-reliance and, as a result, greater self-employment opportunities, and its capacity to promote national unity since various groups can live and work together in the Cooperative Unit".

The appeal of Cooperativism stemmed from the post-1838 village movement, the belief being that similar forms of cooperatives would flourish in rural Guyana if the incentives and political encouragement were provided. The post-Independence government emphasised the voluntary nature of cooperatives and made no attempt to impose a specific set of rules and procedures for the evolution of partial into full cooperatives. This is important, for the basic "voluntaristic" principles of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana were not set in 1970 let alone in the mid-nineteenth century, but in the Cooperative Societies Act of 1948, when the country was still a colony and when the authorities were certainly not intent on securing a transition to socialism. It is more likely that they saw cooperatives as a means of alleviating the worst forms of poverty and inequality and thereby placating an increasingly rebellious population. Therefore, it seems strange for post-Independence planners to hope that such defensive mechanisms would transform themselves into a vehicle of a socialist transformation.

A lack of useful data makes it difficult to assess the impact of cooperativism on rural production. However, there are at least four reasons for believing they have tended to increase inequality and class differentiation.<sup>2</sup> First, because of the emphasis on voluntary participation and acceptance of partially cooperative enterprises, there has been a powerful tendency for cooperatives to be little more than loose alliances of farmers or other groups, alliances which have at most enabled the more efficient or active members to secure credit or other resources or a market for their products, while often enabling them to exploit the remainder. Worker recognition of this tendency has led to widespread alienation from cooperatives. On land settlement schemes, to give the most dramatic example, attempts to foster

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<sup>1</sup> Significantly, the only country in Latin America in which the urban population has grown slower than the total in recent years is Cuba. See B. Landstreet and A.I. Mundigo: "Development Policies and Demographic Change in Socialist Cuba", paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Atlanta, April 13-15, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> For a more extended discussion of the issues mentioned in this section, see Standing and Szal, 1979, op. cit., pp. 70-76.

a cooperative organisation of production have been abandoned, as in Black Bush Polder and Brandwagt/Sari (See Table 12). It is significant that nowhere in the world have "peasant" communities voluntarily transformed themselves into quasi-socialist organisations.<sup>1</sup>

The second reason for believing cooperatives have increased rather than reduced inequalities and class differentiation is that the main form of cooperatives has been the so-called savings-and-thrift society. Many such societies have been formed, including a large number in primary and secondary schools, so that children have contributed to the generation and mobilisation of small surpluses for investment. However, beneficiaries have generally been those with the means of production to make use of credit, so that in practice the societies have been a vehicle by which relatively affluent and powerful members of communities have acquired the small savings of the poor and have thereby strengthened their relative income, wealth and status. Moreover, though it is not possible to estimate the sectoral distribution, it is likely that much of the savings have been channelled into urban and semi-urban enterprises and away from the relatively backward villages, for the same reasons that commercial banks and other financial intermediaries have traditionally done so.

Third, even those "cooperatives" formed to purchase land have had little impact on rural development. In some cases these have been formed as investment schemes for urban-based speculators - including many civil servants - with the purpose of purchasing land to be farmed on an absentee basis or left idle as a speculative holding. In other cases, where land cooperatives have been formed to enable groups of farmers to purchase a reasonably large tract of land, the extent of joint farming was limited, often lasting only as long as it took to establish rudimentary drainage and irrigation facilities or for individual farmers to acquire sufficient savings to risk farming independently. According to the government's own Chief Cooperative Officer, in such cases the less successful or active have drifted away or remained only if they could get the land divided into separate freehold plots.<sup>2</sup> Recognising such tendencies, officials resorted to the argument that this sort of reaction would decline as the commitment to cooperatives evolved. But there is no evidence or reason to believe either the commitment or reaction has changed.

Fourth, certain key cooperative institutions failed to help transform the economic structure or substantially reduce various inequalities, because they existed

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the world the immediate aspirations of peasants and petty commodity producers have been individualistic by virtue of their class experience. Conditioned to struggling to retain some tiny plot of land or minimal quantity of some other means of production, they have identified their immediate objectives as marginal improvements in those terms, their daily and life-time struggle defining their subjective and objective horizons. Conceiving of a new social structure has only rarely and momentarily inspired the collective consciousness of the poor.

<sup>2</sup> G. Hoyte: Cooperatives: The Guyana Experience (Georgetown, Ministry of Cooperatives and Community Development, 1977, mimeo), p. 7.

in competition with non-cooperative enterprises, and adopted the principles of those organisations in an attempt to match their efficiency. The most notable example is the Guyana National Cooperative Bank, set up in 1970. The GNGB should have helped reduce an inherent tendency for surplus to flow out of rural areas. Commercial banks had retarded over-all deposit growth in Guyana as they had been urban-based and thus geographically inaccessible to the rural majority of the population; it was hardly economical for the banks to set up branches in villages where there were only a few income earners.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, anybody could make a deposit with the GNGB through the Post Office Savings Bank, which did have a widely dispersed branch network.

Ostensibly, the GNGB was established to aid cooperatives, notably in agriculture. In practice, to the extent it mobilised any extra savings for investment it tended to be a vehicle by which funds flowed from small-scale, mainly rural savers to business and commercial enterprises. Indeed, in 1971, for example, only 5.2% of its loans went to agriculture (compared with 8.9% in the case of the foreign-owned commercial banks).<sup>2</sup> The inability of the GNGB to change the pattern of lending was largely because it was in competition with the private banks and, in adopting traditional banking principles, lent mostly to the most creditworthy, requiring collateral and preferring larger, established enterprises to supposedly more risky smaller enterprises.<sup>3</sup> Even though it made concessions to cooperatives in terms of lower interest rates and less collateral, the traditional banking practices (enunciated most forthrightly in the GNGB's Annual Reports by the chairman) meant that the GNGB often lent to private firms more readily than to cooperatives. It was scarcely encouraged to change its practices by the Government's failure in the late 1970s to reimburse the GNGB for bad debts reasonably promptly or to cover risky investments. In short, it seems the GNGB did not reduce inequalities or contribute substantially to the efforts of rural producers to overcome low incomes and stagnation. There is no reason to think that cooperatives have been very well conceived or developed in Guyana, or that they have induced a more balanced distribution of the population.

## V. Conclusions

Until very nearly the end of the nineteenth century the plantocracy and colonial authorities were intent on restricting migration. Thenceforth governments have tried to redirect the migration that was occurring, and their efforts offset to some extent the underlying pattern of rural emigration. Indeed because of those policies it is extremely difficult to estimate the extent or changing levels of migration, for the limited data available only indicate the net movements. However, certain features emerge quite clearly.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Bourne: "The political economy of indigenous commercial banking in Guyana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 23, No. 1, March 1974, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> In discussions with GNGB officials in 1978 this tendency was candidly admitted.

The most striking is, of course, the racial or ethnic pattern. It is tempting to analyse most social phenomena in Guyana in racial terms, and it is implicit in this paper that that would be a mistake. Nevertheless, the geographical and sectoral distributions of the various races in Guyana are such that it is clear that there is a racial division of labour. The explanation is straightforward. After emancipation the ex-slaves moved away from the estates to form "African villages" and in some cases to become artisans in urban areas. From the mid-nineteenth century Portuguese and Chinese immigrant labourers were displaced on the estates by indentured East Indian "coolie" labour; they then became the nucleus of a merchant class, many becoming small-shopkeepers.<sup>1</sup> Able to charge high prices because of their monopolistic control of local marketing, Portuguese shopkeepers were attacked as early as 1856, in the "Gabriel riots". Racially identifiable, their role in the village economy was long resented, especially as they were often important local moneylenders. It is significant to note the authorities' reaction to the exploitation, by which mark-ups on basic foodstuffs such as saltfish, flour, and rice were as high as 60%, and sometimes up to 300%. Numerous official reports show they knew of the exploitation involved, but no restrictive policy was formulated.<sup>2</sup> Almost certainly, this can be attributed to the desire of the planters to weaken and control the African population, who had to work more to acquire money to pay the inflated prices.

The East Indians came to predominate in the sugar estate areas and then in the "Indian villages" near the estates. By 1891 over three-quarters of all those occupied in agriculture were East Indians, at a time when they accounted for only 38% of the total population in Guyana. Subsequently, in the 1950s and early 1960s a large proportion of the plots on the land settlements were allocated to East Indians, the land being given overwhelmingly to landless workers.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the bauxite community of Linden became a predominantly Afro-Guyanese area, especially after the racial violence in the early 1960s, during which many Indians fled the area. And Georgetown and New Amsterdam have always had a disproportionately large number of Afro-Guyanese. In sum, the racial distribution of the population has continued to display the social division of labour created by the plantocracy.

The distribution of the population in Guyana and the pattern of migration has been due essentially to the policies and practices adopted by the plantations and mining companies to secure a pliant and low-cost labour supply. Given the low population density and the concern of the plantations, colonial authorities and

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<sup>1</sup> K.O. Lawrence: "The establishment of the Portuguese community in British Guiana", The Jamaican Historical Review, Vol. V, No. 2, Nov. 1965, pp. 50-74. The Chinese were never very numerous but soon settled in urban areas despite efforts to establish "Chinese villages" at the end of the nineteenth century. Young, 1958, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> C. Bourne: "Review article: The plantation economy of Guyana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 24, No. 4, Dec. 1975, p. 519.

<sup>3</sup> Despres documented that tendency for Black Bush Polder. L. Despres: Cultural Pluralism and National Politics in British Guiana (Chicago, Rand McNally and Co., 1967), p. 248.



multinational capital to limit accumulation in the country, state policies helped concentrate the population around the major estates. But the more successful those policies the more their inherent contradictions induced social instability, in the wake of population growth, labour-displacing mechanisation, rising urban unemployment, and worsening poverty. It was then that the State resorted to such palliatives as land settlement schemes and subsidised rice cultivation.

The legacy of the contrived stagnation was pervasive, for despite the slight possibility of a revolutionary transformation in 1953, the inertia built into the social formation proved remarkably resilient. For instance, paternalistic labour relations induced a sense of dependent insecurity among the direct producers. The lack of any tradition of commercial farming and independent enterprise partly explain the failure of settlement schemes and the more recent apparent failure of costly National Service agricultural ventures. Once rural producers are even semi-proletarianised it seems extremely hard to reverse the process.

Similarly, while a chaotic land tenure situation was being allowed to develop, a bourgeois legal system was being moulded in Georgetown, so that it became extremely difficult to untangle the land laws, with individual rights and claims being likely to be the subject of almost interminable litigation. Likewise, once the complex political superstructure had been established in a way that impeded rural development, attempts at local government reform, as in the widely-approved Marshall Plan of 1955, proved practically stillborn. The political superstructure had been created as a highly centralised system whereby economic surplus could be reduced or appropriated from the village population and redistributed to the estates and urban elite. This was facilitated by the ineffectual and highly fragmented system of local government that prevented villages from achieving the coordination and resource mobilisation essential to arrest the rural stagnation. Correspondingly, government fiscal, monetary and expenditure policies tended to channel funds from the labouring population to the estates and to some extent to urban areas. For many years sanitation, health and educational facilities were concentrated in urban, sub-urban and estate areas, so that, for example, malaria control was neglected in other, rural areas.

Clearly the plantocracy did ensure the underdevelopment of productive forces off the estates and by repatriating profits impeded internal accumulation and industrialisation. This persisted even after the emergence of a surplus labour population, which would have been able to migrate to areas of urban-industrial growth to provide a low-cost proletariat. Even in the 1950s attempts to set up an Industrial Development Department were effectively resisted, while efforts to extend hydro-electrification to rural areas were prevented by the bauxite companies, which had the capacity to extend it.<sup>1</sup> Without substantial accumulation rural poverty, insecurity and unemployment became endemic, and contributed to high levels of urban unemployment.

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<sup>1</sup> For revealing anecdotes from a former government official, see A.P. Thorne: "Some reflections on British Guiana", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1963, pp. 210-218.

The resort to land settlements was designed to defuse social unrest, absorb the surplus population, and alter the pattern of migration which had concentrated the population in and around Georgetown. However because of the basic conflict between the social welfare role of such schemes and the need to increase production, they were mostly ineffectual on both grounds. The schemes did have some impact on population movements to the extent that there were settlers, but many of those came to spend much of their time away from the schemes, while others have left altogether - often leaving their land virtually idle. In general the schemes have had only a small impact on the concentration of the population in the coastal region, and if the settlement model as used in the 1950s and 1960s is used to try to open up the interior, the prospects of doing so are bleak indeed.

Selected Publications of the Population and Labour Policies

Research Programme<sup>1</sup>

1. General Material on the Research Programme

ILO: World Employment Programme: Population and Development - A progress report on ILO research with special reference to labour, employment and income distribution (Geneva, February 1979), 2nd edition, Reference WEP 2-21/PR.5. (\*)

This report includes a full bibliography. It is available in French and Spanish as well as English.

2. Books and Monographs

R. Anker: Research on Women's Roles and Demographic Change: Survey Questionnaires for Households, Women, Men and Communities with Background Explanations (Geneva, ILO, 1980). (\*)

S. Braganca et al: The Simulation of Economic and Demographic Development in Brazil (Geneva, ILO, 1980). (\*)

M.G. Castro, L.M. Fraenkel et al: Migration in Brazil: Approaches to Analysis and Policy Design (Brussels, Ordina, 1979). (\*\*\*)

W.J. House and H. Rempel: The Kenya Employment Problem (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1978). (\*\*\*)

A.S. Oberai: Changes in the Structure of Employment with Economic Development (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (\*\*)

G. Pyatt and A. Roe: Social Accounting for Development Planning, with special reference to Sri Lanka (Cambridge University Press, 1977). (\*\*\*)

M. Rasevic, T. Mulina, Milos Macura: The Determinants of Labour Force Participation in Yugoslavia (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (\*\*)

G.B. Rodgers, M.J.D. Hopkins, R. Wéry: Population, Employment and Inequality: BACHUE-Philippines (Farnborough, Saxon House, 1978). (\*\*\*)

G. Standing: Labour Force Participation and Development (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (\*\*)

G. Standing and G. Sheehan (eds.): Labour Force Participation in Low-Income Countries (Geneva, ILO, 1978). (\*\*)

M. Todaro: Internal Migration in Developing Countries (Geneva, ILO, 1976). (\*\*)

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<sup>1</sup> Availability code: \* available on request from ILO, Population and Labour Policies Branch; \*\* available for sale from ILO Publications; \*\*\* available for sale from a commercial publisher.

3. Articles

- I. Adelman, M.J.D. Hopkins, S. Robinson, G.B. Rodgers and R. Wéry: "A comparison of two models for income distribution planning", Journal of Policy Modeling, Vol. 1, No.1, 1979.
- R. Anker: "The effects of group level variables on fertility in a rural Indian sample", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 14, No.1, October 1977.
- : "An analysis of fertility differentials in developing countries", Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol. lx, No.4, February 1978.
- R. Anker and G. Farooq: "Population and socio-economic development: The new perspective", International Labour Review, Vol. 117, No.2 (Geneva, ILO, 1978).
- W.J. House and H. Rempel: "Labour market pressures and wage determination in less developed economies", Economic Development and Cultural Change, 1978.
- A.S. Oberai: "Migration, unemployment and the urban labour market", International Labour Review, Vol. 115, No.2 (Geneva, ILO, March-April 1978).
- A.S. Oberai and H.K. Manmohan Singh: "Migration, remittances and rural development: Findings of a case study in the Indian Punjab", International Labour Review, Vol. 115, No.2 (Geneva, ILO, March-April 1980).
- : "Migration flows in Punjab's Green Revolution Belt", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XV, No.13, March 1980.
- C. Oppong: "Household economic demographic decision-making: Introductory statement", IUSSP Proceedings of 1978 Helsinki Conference, 11 pp.
- C. Oppong and E. Haavio-Mannila: "Women, population and development", in P. Hauser (ed.): World Population and Development: Challenge and Prospects (New York, Syracuse University Press, 1979).
- P. Peek and G. Standing: "Rural-urban migration and government policies in low-income countries", International Labour Review, Vol. 118, No.6 (Geneva, ILO, November-December 1979).
- G.B. Rodgers: "Demographic determinants of the distribution of income", World Development, Vol. 6, No.3, March 1978.
- : "Income and inequality as determinants of mortality: An international cross-section analysis", Population Studies, Vol. 33, No.2, 1979.
- G. Standing: "Aspiration wages, migration and urban unemployment", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 14, No.2, January 1978.
- G. Standing and F. Sukdeo: "Labour migration and development in Guyana", International Labour Review, Vol. 116, No.3 (Geneva, ILO, November-December 1977).
- R. Wéry: "Manpower forecasting and the labour market", International Labour Review, Vol. 117, No.3 (Geneva, ILO, May-June 1978).
- R. Wéry, G.B. Rodgers and M.J.D. Hopkins: "Population, employment and poverty in the Philippines", World Development, Vol. 6, 1978.

#### 4. Recent Working Papers in print<sup>1</sup>

WEP Working Papers are preliminary documents circulated informally in a limited number of copies solely to stimulate discussion and critical comment. They are restricted and should not be cited without permission. A set of selected WEP Research Working Papers, completed by annual supplements, is available in microfiche form for sale to the public; orders should be sent to ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Many, but not all, of the papers in this series exist or may be issued in microfiche form.

- WEP 2-21/WP.46 The impact of population growth on land, labour and productivity in rural Korea  
- by Yunshik Chang, Kap Hwan Oh and Hae Young Lee, February 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.48 Population, employment and poverty in the Philippines<sup>2</sup>  
- by R. Wéry, G.B. Rodgers and M.J.D. Hopkins, February 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.49 Demography and distribution  
- by G.B. Rodgers, February 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.51 Demand for education in the Philippines  
- by René Wéry, March 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.52 Population, economic growth and rural-urban income distribution: An empirical analysis  
- by R. Scott Moreland, March 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.53 The effects of economic policy on fertility  
- by G.B. Rodgers and R. Wéry, April 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.55 BACHUE-Yugoslavia: Regionalised policy simulation economic-demographic model of Yugoslavia - conceptual basis  
- by Miroslav Macura, Bojan Popovic and Miroslav Rasevic, July 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.56 The determinants of internal migration in Kenya: A district level analysis  
- by James C. Knowles and Richard Anker, October 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.57 Fécondité et attitudes en Sierra Leone  
- by René Wéry, November 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.58 Migrations internes aux Philippines dans les années soixante  
- by René Wéry, November 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.59 An analysis of income transfers in a developing country: The case of Kenya  
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- WEP 2-21/WP.60 An empirical analysis of mortality differentials in Kenya at the micro and macro levels  
- by Richard Anker and James C. Knowles, November 1977.
- WEP 2-21/WP.63 Urban employment in the 1980's: The cases of Kenya and the Philippines  
- by Gerry B. Rodgers and Richard Anker, May 1978.

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<sup>1</sup> These working papers are available free, while stocks last, from ILO, Population and Labour Policies Branch, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.

<sup>2</sup> Also available in French and Spanish.

- WEP 2-21/WP.66 Population, progrès technique et social, développement, économique et emploi - Modèle démographique et socio-économique  
- by G. Blardone, M.Ch. Leroy et G. Parisot, avec la collaboration de P. Collin, E. Fauvet, Ch. Harzo, J.A. Sanchez, R. Vallette, D. Vernay, June 1978.
- WEP 2-21/WP.68 Migration, labour force absorption and mobility: Women in Kingston, Jamaica  
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- by J.P. Perez-Sainz, September 1979.
- WEP 2-21/WP.75A Household fertility decision-making in Nigeria  
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- by Maria Helena de Cunha Rato, August 1979.
- WEP 2-21/WP.78 Interpretation of relations among mortality, economics of the household, and the health environment  
- by T. Paul Schultz, September 1979.
- WEP 2-21/WP.79 Family structure and women's reproductive and productive roles: Some conceptual and methodological issues  
- by Christine Oppong, September 1979.
- WEP 2-21/WP.80 The participation of Arab women in the labour force: Development factors and policies  
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- by Warren C. Robinson and Stanley P. Stephenson Jr., January 1980.
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