

ABSTRACT

This study undertakes an analysis of the emergence, development and change of social classes in Trinidad from the period of British slavery to the Black Power confrontation in 1970. It uses this analysis as a basis for examining the neo-colonial state and the various fractions of classes which exist in the 1970-1980 period. It assesses whether the working class has been assisted by its leaders to develop a specific working class political consciousness deemed necessary to effect meaningful change in the society for betterment, social justice, genuine independence and development.

The study commences with an identification of the nature of the social structure under slavery, and traces the modifications to that structure due to changes in the mode of production dictated, in the main, by imperialism. Out of this analysis evolves the interplay between the role of classes in the process of production and the development of class ideologies which are reflected in the social institutions created. In Trinidad, the existence of different ethnic groups at the point of production and the presence of two major ethnic sections of the working class, are seen as being used by the capitalist class to enhance its control of the society.

The methodology used throughout the study is based in the Marxist tradition which affords greater latitude and depth of examination of the major concern of the study: that is, the polar debate as to whether class formation and crystallization have taken



place sufficiently in colonial and neo-colonial societies to influence social action, or whether this action is more determined by ethnic and religious variables. Utilization of this methodology identifies the primacy of class-based actions as determined by the roles people play in the process of production. It also points to the ruling class as generating ethnic hostility to sustain its dominance over the society.

Part A consists of three chapters. The first outlines the approach to the work and attempts an explanation of, and justification for, the methodological assumptions and techniques. The second explains the theoretical underpinnings which inform the analysis. Chapter three provides an overview of class formation in Trinidad up to 1970. Part B contains five chapters. This part outlines the development of the state and local capitalist class, but it is primarily concerned with an analysis of the manner in which the leaders of selected trade unions, political parties and Black Nationalist groups acted, and directed their members to act, in response to the control of the state for securing capitalist interests in the 1970-1980 period.

The findings hold some value for an appreciation of the strategies and tactics used by classes in securing their dominance. They also point to the need for conscious and committed leadership capable of creating a more progressive and just society.