

ABSTRACT

Statement of what the writer is seeking to establish

This dissertation seeks to locate Jamaica as part of broader global constitutional/democratic changes and to establish that an ideal constitution for this country must be constructed out of an appropriate theoretical base and an in-depth understanding of its political culture and socio-economic situation.

In pursuit of this objective the study identifies and discusses the forces behind the movement for change in the 1930s and the resultant politico-constitutional changes toward democratic consolidation. It then traces the subsequent development of political culture from the 1940s to the 1990s and throughout delineates the ongoing relationship between political culture and institutions. An analysis of the forces behind the movement for change in the 1990s and the tendencies in the debate is undertaken with a view to make proposals toward a constitutional ideal.

Why the Subject was chosen

This subject was chosen in order to contribute to the debate on alternative government/constitutional framework. Constitutional issues are firmly back on the Jamaican agenda, particularly concerning the model of government and human rights. In depth research and understanding of the Jamaican situation is essential to arrive at the best option.

Thus, the methodology consisted of extensive examination of relevant literature, archival research, supplemented by interviews with important persons in the constitutional reform process.

What it adds

This thesis provides a fresh analysis of the 1930s, the period which framed Jamaica's modern political system. It argues that the struggle for democracy has been part of working-class struggle. Even though Marxist theory is used as a tool of analysis, emphasis is placed on multiple causation and a balanced view of the role of all the social classes involved in the process of change. This is used later in the work to compare and contrast with current constitutional developments. Interesting differences and similarities emerge.

The study locates and ascertains broad tendencies and trends in the ongoing relationship between institutional structures and political culture. What has emerged is that this is a dynamic relationship. During certain periods political culture may be the driving force while at others institutional structures are in the lead.

This work gives a comprehensive account of the politico-economic and socio-cultural dissolution in Jamaica and finds that this brings the country under severe stress. The analysis of the constitutional reform process of the 1990s reveals that there are three main tendencies. These are classified as conservative, middling and radical. It is argued that none of these three options by themselves is sufficient to stimulate the kind of systemic renewal required.

The constitutional framework proposed comes out of a deep understanding of Jamaica's present socio-economic conditions and political culture and is grounded in foundational elements of a "just constitution." A multi-faceted developmental approach premised on consensus-building constitutional mechanisms, rooted in decentralization and the encouragement and facilitation of civic societal formations, is suggested as urgent in order to transform negative elements of the political culture, deepen democracy and to stimulate economic development.