

ABSTRACT

St. Vincent (which also includes the Grenadines) is a very small ex-British colony comprising a land area of only 150 square miles. Perhaps because of this, its very interesting political history has been largely unnoticed by Caribbean political scientists. Yet, in a miniature form, it probably represents most of the striking features of the politics of the Commonwealth Caribbean states. Thus, our attempt here has been to subject an important sector of the Society - "labour" to academic scrutiny in an effort to learn more about the way in which a small island society operates.

With "labour" as our central concern, we have examined its relationships with other important layers in the society, principally the Government, political parties and employers. By analysing these several relationships, we have isolated the concept of political unionism which has been of very great significance to St. Vincent over the years 1935-1970. Political unionism has shown itself as a crucial permanent organisational form of the labour force in the country.

In academic terms, this study claims to have made two modest contributions. Firstly, it is the first attempt to analyse "labour" systematically in one of the smaller ex-British colonies in the West Indies. Secondly, it has brought to light some hitherto unknown data about St. Vincent because of the author's access to unpublished sources such as the files of Mr. Ebenezer Joshua - the dominant political labour leader for the past twenty years.

The thesis itself is divided into six chapters through which the subject matter is arranged in a chronological order which conveniently fits the development of the central themes. Chapter I deals with definitions, conceptual formulations of labour's ecology and a brief historical introduction. Chapter II surveys the period of the turbulent mid-thirties and summarises the political consequences of the 1935 riots. Chapter III analyses the emergence of political unionism in the 1940's and early 1950's. Chapter IV shows the advent of the first labour union - political party government, and Chapter V comments on the challenges which faced the government - union nexus in the 1960's. The concluding section, Chapter VI, evaluates the empirical data and attitudes of the workers. In addition, it offers a final overview and prospect of Vincentian unionism.