



## REFLECTION

### **An Interview with Vaughan Lewis**

**Conducted by W. Andy Knight**

Vaughan Lewis is Professor Emeritus of the University of the West Indies and former Prime Minister of St Lucia. In a distinguished career as a Caribbean intellectual and policymaker, he served as the first Director General of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (1982-1995), and in various positions within government in St Lucia. As an academic, he published many monographs and articles on a wide range of issues related to Caribbean politics and international relations, small states, regionalism and regional integration, and he made a number of key contributions to the development of IR more broadly.

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*Vaughan, when did you first become politically conscious?*

Well, I was born at the beginning of the Second World War in 1940 and as you know, that world war came into the Caribbean. Sometime before the war ended in 1945, one of the German warships entered into the deep water harbour of St Lucia and bombed one of the Canadian boats. That of course made me, even as a young boy of five years of age or so, aware that something tremendous was going on. I was born into a household where the radio was an important instrument, and in those days, radio meant going to the BBC. So, even then as small as I was, I knew that the world was impressing itself on us, so to speak. Then, in the second part of the first ten years of my life, my father went into politics. You didn't have one man one vote in those days. He went into what was called the Castries Town Board, equivalent to Port of Spain City Council, and became the chairman. Just before the first

elections under universal suffrage in 1951, the St Lucia Labour Party (SLP) was founded, under the influence of the British Labour Party, as with many other labour parties in the Caribbean, and my father became the chairman. So I was highly conscious already at that time, as there was a lot of activity going on, all of which had to do with the political life of the country. My political consciousness emerged out of these two things: a sense that there was a huge thing going on, a war outside the boundaries of the country; and then these domestic developments in which my family was actively participating.

*What made you become an academic?*

Well, given the background that I briefly described to you, I developed an interest in ideas. There was a generation of my schoolboy associates who took a very active interest in debating politics and political ideas, and by 1956, of course, Dr Eric Williams had appeared on the scene in Trinidad. In those years, we could hear the Trinidad radio stations; we did not have radio stations of our own, but you could hear the Trinidad stations and we took a very active interest in listening to the debates in parliament. We were very conscious at this time that the debates in parliament were led by a man of great intellectual significance, Dr Eric Williams.

In addition to that, in those years British West Indies Airways (BWIA) – today's Caribbean Airlines, or CAL - was the only real airline that travelled between the islands, and they brought in the Trinidad Guardian. So every week – or perhaps every day, I don't remember - we had access to news through reading the Trinidad Guardian. I also knew, of course, that my uncle, W. Arthur Lewis, who was a Professor in those years at the University of Manchester, had an association with Eric Williams in the realm of economics. As time went on, we came to understand that he was actually an intellectual associate of Eric Williams. Now I had two other brothers, as school boys, and, along with other boys, we always continued to have discussions and debates about what was going on in Trinidad, in particular. This was partly because, of course, nothing much was going on in St Lucia in quite that sense! But we were able to listen to what was happening in Trinidad, and read about it. So that awakened us to the idea that there existed the combination of Arthur Lewis and Eric Williams, and this in turn

awakened us to the idea of prominent West Indians, who had become, as it were, world-renowned academic intellectuals.

*And that led you then to think about going into academia?*

Well, not really. Remember that we didn't have a university at home and we didn't think in quite those terms. I had a sister who had gone to the University of the West Indies in Jamaica to study, which at that time was the only campus. I wanted to study something to do with what we call today 'social sciences'. At the time, though, I didn't really know the concept of social science in a formal sense, even though I was an eighteen year old fellow; we were in the 'backrooms' of the West Indies, so to speak! But I knew that my uncle was a social scientist, and he was an economist; so I went to the University of Manchester to do a BA in Economics in those years. So that took me in that direction; certainly as a young boy I was always interested in the social arrangements of the country, partly because of my father's influence. He sat in the legislative council, and, as I said earlier, he was Chairman of the City Council and also Chairman of the Labour Party. These things, therefore, certainly impinge on you. Even though I have brothers - one of whom is a geneticist, and the other is a medical man - we all have an intense interest in politics.

*I guess that sort of gave me an idea of who inspired you as a young man, because, obviously it was Eric Williams, your own uncle, and your father who was involved in politics. Are there any other people who inspired you as a young person growing up?*

Not really in those days, in terms of academic life at least. The country was very constricted, you know, in the availability of intellectual activities. When I was a teenager, we began to see certain people emerging in the society in the arts. For example, a young lawyer who articulated in my father's chambers called Hunter Francois, who subsequently became a Minister of the Government, had a great interest in writing poetry, and he in fact was joined by Derek Walcott and Derek Walcott's brother, so there was a little group of them, including an artist Dunstan St Omer [now Sir Dunstan St Omer. There was a little group of them who had begun to write poetry and do plays in the country. So a sort of intellectual and artistic life developed. From a very young age, I became interested in music and I was sent to learn the piano. So there was

an atmosphere of artistic life, music and drama, in which my parents were very interested, that had an influence on boys in my generation. This was led by Derek Walcott, of course, and in particular Dunstan St Omer, Derek's brother Roddy Walcott, and so on.

*When did you return to the Caribbean after you finished your PhD? And did you ever consider staying abroad? I think that many of us Caribbean folks who go abroad to study struggle with the decision between staying away and the love of the region...*

When I did my BA and my Masters at the university, I then shifted towards International Politics. That became a big interest of mine, and after I did my masters degree, in which I did my thesis on the political experiences of Nkrumah and Sékou Touré, I got a job as a temporary assistant lecturer in the University College of Swansea in Wales. When that was over, I got a job as a temporary assistant lecturer at the University of Liverpool. I wanted to continue to do a PhD, of course, and the proximity of Liverpool to Manchester facilitated that.

My thesis supervisor was actually a specialist in Soviet Union Affairs, and so I spent two years at the University of Liverpool and then I went back to the University of Manchester as a research fellow, because I was trying to finish this doctorate. The doctorate I was doing was entitled *Small States in International Politics*, and I suppose you can understand why! Although I was living in England in the years 1959-1963 as a student, the world environment became much more important and significant to someone like myself who had come from a small island.

What came to interest me, then, was the role played by small states in international politics. And I set out to pursue my doctoral degree. In those years, you remember, there were problems in places like Cyprus, and other small countries. It induced you to think more widely about these countries. Remember also that, up to 1963 when I went back to the University of Manchester, my own country was not independent as yet. That didn't happen to us until long after 1979. But the notion interested me, and I had begun to read about it as a student. This was driven largely by the question of the fate of small states between the wars. The First and Second World Wars thus became an interest of mine, and, in particular, the small entities in Eastern Europe that eventually constituted Yugoslavia. Of course, over a long period of time into the present

day, we also saw Yugoslavia collapse and become a series of states! But at that time, in the post-war period, I developed a range of interests. I was taught Middle Eastern studies by a gentleman, a professor from Sudan, and he gave me an interest in the Middle East that I hadn't had before. And of course in that period you had the evolution of independent countries in Africa, so the question of small states became alive again and I consequently thought it was a very appropriate subject to study. It would give me some understanding of how our own countries would operate, but within the wider context of small states in the world.

*So which intellectuals then did you most admire, and whose writings still interest you today?*

I was actually trying to think of an answer to that question recently, and it was difficult to do so! I really had developed a specific interest in the small state issue, as it was a composite of the behaviour of great powers, and the consequences of this for small countries or small powers. In those years, in the 1960s, a book came out by David Vital called *The Inequality of States*, which dealt with that subject. Vital was really an Israeli academic, and of course the book was written from the perspective of Israel as a small state; although Israel was hardly mentioned in the book, we understood what was implied. I think that book had an influence on me personally, and also how we could begin to think a little about the behaviour of small states. It was placed in the context of strategy/strategic relations, but still it gave you a sense of definitions of things which are important in terms of how one might perceive small state relations. So that book had a significant influence on me. Some of my students even used to call me 'Morgenthau', because it was one of the texts I also used to use a lot as a young academic! Part of the reason was, of course, that coming from a small country, you had a strong sense of the significance of great powers, or big countries, for the existence of small countries, and that book had a certain influence on me.

*So they were the two major influences: Vital's book, and Hans Morgenthau? Do you still admire those writers today, or have you moved away from them?*

Well, I did a thesis on the structure of small state behaviour in International Politics, so, for one thing that allowed me to widen

my reading sphere. It allowed me to think of the varieties of small states that were emerging in the world at the time, because I was doing the thesis almost contemporaneously with the real-world explosion of small states in international affairs. So, I had the opportunity to do a study of contemporary international relations, as it was related to the evolution of small states.

The other aspect of this was, of course, that before I had left St Lucia we had entered into the Federation of the West Indies. Sir Arthur Lewis was a very great advocate of Federation, of what today we call political integration, and I read at the time the arguments that he used for the process of agglomeration of the Caribbean islands into a single entity. The disintegration of the Federation had an enormous effect on people of my generation. We had shaped our minds to operating in a wider sphere than simply the island sphere. When the Federation disintegrated you had to revert back to the concept of your island as your world. And that began to make you think about the question that became increasingly prevalent in the West Indies: that of regional integration.

The Federation was ultimately a disappointment to people of my generation. We had looked up to Eric Williams, but Eric Williams famously said that 'one from ten equals zero'. We had looked up to Norman Manley, but Norman Manley had felt sufficiently constrained in Jamaica to gamble with the status of the Federation, so to speak. This allowed me now to begin to think - and this was another reason for studying the behaviour of small states - about how these very small entities could operate, could function in a viable way. So, in a way, the negative of the Federation enhanced my thinking about the behaviour of small states, and it put on the table the question of the many varieties of small states that would come into existence in the world.

*So the Independence movement sort of affected the way you thought about the effect on small states?*

Yes, that the disintegration of states was now becoming common in Africa and other places. Then the Pacific states were coming into existence, so you began to think...

But to revert to where we were: when I was completing my PhD, I went back to Manchester University for a year, somewhere in 1966/67, perhaps. I didn't go back and stay there, but I was moving back and forth from Liverpool, which was only half an hour

by train, or something like that. I then came into contact with a gentleman called Archie Singham, a professor at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica who was on a fellowship at Manchester: he wrote *The Hero and the Crowd*, a study of Grenadian politics in the era of Eric Gairy. He was a Sri Lankan, who had an interest in my own work, because he had come from a small country as well, and he interested me as he began to speak about the University of the West Indies (UWI). My youngest brother had gone to UWI as a medical student, but I had more or less lost touch with what was going on in the Caribbean specifically. My interest in England was leading me to become increasingly interested in English politics, and this was becoming more predominant in my intellectual interests in general.

I'll give you a story. Archie came and asked me what I was doing here. I said very proudly that I was a lecturer at the University of Liverpool. He said: 'I don't mean that, I said what are you doing here as distinct from there?' And he said that if I wished to get a sense of what is happening in West Indian academic life, I should pay attention to something called the West Indian Scholar's Conference of academics. The first of these events – which became at the time a regular feature – was taking place, and it brought together academics from the University of the West Indies, the University of Puerto Rico, along with budding universities in the Netherlands Antilles and French West Indies.

The development of this was firmly in the minds of younger persons now like Norman Girvan and so on. And, in a way led by Philip Sherlock: the Principal of the University of the West Indies. Sherlock had demonstrated himself to be, what we came to call in those days 'a Caribbean man'. We composed the notion of a Caribbean man in those days in Jamaica to mean a person whom we deemed not to be politically isolationist, in the sense of supporting single island independence as against some form of regional integration or cooperation; and one who identified with having an intense interest in artistic developments in the wider Caribbean. He strongly encouraged budding developments in these areas, emanating from the Faculty of Social Sciences in Jamaica, and a little bit in Trinidad at that time. This interest was not only in the English-speaking Caribbean, but was taking root as a general inheritance of the Caribbean as a whole, something we thought we should try to relate to through intercourse with the academics in Puerto Rico, or in Martinique and Guadeloupe, and so on in the Netherlands Antilles. There was, then, this thing initiated called the

West Indies Scholar's conference, which Sherlock as Principal gave support to.

So Singham, when he met me in Britain, said if I wanted to get a sense of what was going on in the West Indies, the West Indies Scholar's Conference was going to occur in Guyana, and if we could write a paper, then I could go. So I wrote the paper, essentially, and I went to Guyana for that conference, and there I met a group of scholars who had what I call social consciousness, and who were beginning to consider liaising across the campuses, Trinidad and Jamaica. Most of them were working in Jamaica, and this had a great influence on what I did next. Those people were: Lloyd Best, Havelock Brewster, Norman Girvan, George Beckford and the group of scholars around them at the time. When I went to that conference, it had a great influence on me, serving as it were to narrow my focus somewhat to consider more deeply the evolution of the West Indies, as a set of states.

That group of individuals was interested essentially in two things: the study of regional integration and studying the influence of what was referred to as 'plantation society' on the contemporary societies of the Caribbean. That was the generation that was disappointed by the demise of the Federation and had started to do the necessary work to rebuild the region under the intellectual tutelage of persons like Alister McIntyre and William Demas. So, that was a framework, and out of that came what was called the New World Group.

So, after Guyana, I went back to Manchester and Liverpool, and I remember saying to Singham that I've come to conclude my business in England in order to go back to the West Indies. He actually dealt with the people in the Faculty of Social Sciences, in the Department of Government. I went there in 1967 to test it out, so to speak. I spent a semester there, and then, when I returned to England once more, I said I was definitely going back and I did so in 1968. I left the University of Liverpool; well I had actually already left because I had taken a year as a research fellow in Manchester.

I went back in 1968 into quite a degree of intellectual ferment, in Jamaica, at the University of the West Indies. I then engaged in two lines of activity: one was the strict academic teaching; the second was joining this wider group, the New World Group of Caribbean Intellectuals. Consequently the writings of Beckford and Demas had a great influence on my subsequent thinking on a variety of things.

*Now, how would you assess your family's broader legacy on Caribbean Political Economy and development?*

Of course, as you know, Arthur Lewis had an influence. Arthur Lewis was an associate of Eric Williams, Manley and so on, and it is in part on that basis that he became Principal of the University of the West Indies. He wanted to do certain things here, but with the demise of the Federation after he had returned, he left and went back to Princeton University. Therefore his influence in that sense was not as strong as it might have been if he had stayed in the Caribbean.

*What was your family's broader legacy on the Caribbean and its political development?*

Well, my family has spread out. We are St Lucians, but my father's parents came from Antigua and my mother's parents came from St Vincent. So my mother and father were first generation St Lucians. I am second generation St Lucian. So we cannot boast that we are from the depths of the system in the island, so to speak.

My father, along with what became his wife's family, were fairly academic people. My father's father had been a teacher in Antigua. One of my mother's brothers - she only had one sister and a number of brothers - was an island scholar, as we used to call it in those days. He became an engineer at McGill actually. So we came out of that kind of academic tradition. We came out of a tradition that says you must involve yourself in the social affairs of the country.

My father was sort of a part-time politician in those days. He became, in fact, the president of the Senate of the Federation, and before the end of the Federation he also became a judge of the Federal Supreme Court. After the Federation, he went to Jamaica.

*What did you enjoy the most/least at the time you were in the University of the West Indies?*

I don't know if there was anything that I least enjoyed! What happened is that, when I went to Jamaica in 1968, I went in October, and a few weeks later there occurred what were called the Rodney riots. These were the events around the expulsion of Walter Rodney, Lecturer in History, from the country, and so on. And that had a great effect on me, in the sense that I had not

understood the different strands in the political life of Jamaica. One of these was a strand which had retained a certain antagonism to the whole idea of federalism, and during those events that sentiment came out very strongly.

The positive thing about it, though, is that this notion was well contested by the other side of the political fence: the People's National Party (PNP) side of the fence, that is, and, in general, the Jamaican academics on the UWI campus.

All of this had an influence: it seemed to put constraints on how you could function as a non-national in Jamaica. Up to then, the West Indians who had come from other islands felt free to engage. But the nationalism that emerged at the time meant that I had a greater sensitivity to the fact that, in a sense, I was really a foreigner in the country.

Nonetheless, Jamaica had another side to it, which was more notable when the PNP was in power than when the JLP was in power. This was that Jamaicans had no reservations about asking intellectuals on the campus who were from other countries to assist in the process of the development of the country, and that became stronger, certainly, once Michael Manley won the elections in 1972.

*So this was a second strand? The first strand was the nationalistic movement?*

Yes. When Michael Manley won the elections in 1972, he re-opened the strand of West Indian cooperation and integration, and that gave foreign intellectuals greater opportunity to participate, or to be less hesitant about engaging, in Jamaica.

*So, you found yourself in a position where you were called upon?*

Yes, I did my little bit, at times.

*So there really were no negatives, except the fact that the strand of anti-federalist antagonism which existed was inhibiting the West Indian Scholars from outside of Jamaica from participating in Jamaican political life?*

Yes. The other side of that, of course, was that Jamaica is a large country, and a country of great variety. There are many different strands of thinking - both social and religious thinking - and so it

was an atmosphere in which one could function intellectually. In some atmospheres it is too small to function intellectually in the same way. You don't have enough of your own kind of intellectuals. So when Jamaica had developed that, it was a reasonable intellectual environment in which to operate.

*How has the University of the West Indies changed for the better or worse over the years, since you first came back to the Caribbean?*

Well, I don't like to talk too much about that. But I think that, in the mid-1970s, you remember that Jamaica began to get into difficulty and that just presaged, as it were, what could happen in other parts of the Caribbean. By 1981, Trinidad was in a shaky situation too, and so on. This put a series of constraints on the ability of the government to give the same emphasis - and certainly economic emphasis - to the University that had been the case in the past.

The University itself also became more disparate in its organisation. The campuses developed more separate lives. I think there was less intellectual interchange for a while, and certainly in social sciences among the staff of the various campuses. But I suppose that was an evolution that would have occurred in various parts of the world, but which we didn't comprehend to that extent.

I lectured in the Faculty of Social Sciences in the department of Government, teaching International Relations and political thought for a while. Then I went to what was then the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER - which later became SALISES). I went by deviation, because Alister McIntyre, who was director of the Institute for a few years, asked me to go to Barbados. They were expanding the Institute there as well, and he asked me to take charge of it for a while. I did that for two years. We had intended that I would do more, but McIntyre was a man who had a great intellect, and a general character for which I had great respect. McIntyre was called to CARICOM, and so he asked me to come back to Mona, in 1974 or so, which I did as Director of the Institute.

This was good, in a way, as we were able to pursue more studies in regional integration and more studies in economic development. Norman Girvan worked with us on a project. Adlith Brown, who was in charge of monetary studies - she's passed away now - was also important. She was another McGill person, and we sought all kinds of connections in those days with Canada, and they were much firmer. I was a member of the board at the International Centre for Ocean Development for a few years, and the Canadians

sponsored quite a bit of the work we were doing. So, we were able to push through projects to try to reintegrate the social sciences academic arena of the university as a whole.

We also tried to involve the University of Guyana (UG). We were therefore able to undertake projects that engaged the whole of the social science fraternity across the region, something which I think was beneficial in keeping the academic fraternity alive in the face of what was an increasing sense of sovereign independence in the countries themselves. So, we were able to do that and keep it going for some time.

After I left, Eddie Greene came on as Director. We were also able, in those days, to develop good relationships with the Commonwealth Secretariat as well, attempting to give a stronger policy import to our work. I had decided to take on as something of a mission the internationalisation of our operations. I thought that, at a certain point, you know, the pressures caused by the difficulties of economic organisation which were evident in, first, Jamaica, and then Trinidad, would force academics towards activities which solely concentrated on what was going on in the individual island itself. So, I took it on as part of my mission to try to consciously re-internationalize, in a much broader sense, the scope of interest of our intellectuals in the various realms of academia.

*What made you decide to enter electoral politics?*

I don't even talk of those things anymore! In 1982, I was asked to head the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) which had just been established. I had always sort of had an interest in doing things of greater relevance to the Eastern Caribbean. When you live in Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago, the activities of these larger countries predominate and shape the intellectual world in which you live and work. But I naturally had an interest in St Lucia, and in 1982 the governments formed the OECS and asked me to come on board as Director General.

I welcomed that opportunity, because up to then I had for some time more or less disconnected myself from what was going on in the country. Certainly in St Lucia we had political changes, and that gave me an opportunity to really put into practice some of the notions I had developed as an academic, working in the sphere of regional integration. In fact, I rather grabbed the opportunity to be able to do that. And we set about giving these smaller islands a

stronger voice *vis-à-vis* the English-speaking Caribbean and the wider Caribbean as a whole, underpinned by a greater degree of autonomy in our thinking about where the Caribbean should go. We also had a greater degree of freedom in our thinking regarding how we should face the international sphere more broadly.

Many of these countries were becoming independent. St Lucia had become so in 1979, Grenada and Dominica a little before that, St Kitts in 1983, Antigua somewhere in the 1980s too. So it was a beginning, and it gave me an opportunity to concentrate more on the fate of the place where I was born, as well as to put into practice - as I said - some notions about regional integration that I had. So, I grabbed the opportunity and stayed there from 1982 until 1995, in fact 13 years, in which I think we gave the Eastern Caribbean countries a more prominent place in decision-making in the wider Caribbean.

*So that was your entrée into politics?*

Well, that was my *entrée*, or my return, to St Lucia. The fact of the matter is that when I went back to St Lucia it was within the framework of being a diplomat, of course. I was head of a *regional* organisation, so I didn't take any visible place or visible interest in the political life of the country itself. I took a sort of 'hands-off' position. I thought it was important for us to show that if you embody or have a certain status in relation to the regional integration movement, you should not be partisan in any way.

But of course, working in St Lucia meant that I was called upon more often than not by the leadership of the country and the Prime Minister John Compton who, in all of those years from 1982 to when I left the OECS in 1995, was Prime Minister. During this time, I was called upon to assist in various kinds of ways. I did become more drawn into the life of the country. We were setting up a new Community College, of which I was Chairman in the early years. Because I had always had an interest in music, a group of us started what is now the St Lucia School of Music, those sorts of things. So I became more and more, as it were, drawn into the life of the country. I travelled a fair amount with the Prime Minister in those years and my family had always been sympathetic to him and his party in a way. My father had been made Governor General of the country. So that familiarity meant, of course, many discussions on where the country was going, where it might go, and where it should not go, and so on.

In 1995, I had decided to retire from the OECS; I had done 13 years. At the time, I was beginning to think about going back to the university in some capacity, but Compton intervened in that process and told me that he was thinking of retiring himself, and he wondered if I would want to come into his organisation, his party. The Government had come under a tremendous amount of pressure, as had he personally. There was a series of strikes continuing in the banana industry, which was the fulcrum of the economy in those years. The banana industry was really Compton's own creation, and so I think he began to get very despondent, because he could not end the strikes.

That was really the first intervention that I made, because he asked me to come and chair a meeting between the strikers and the plantation owners. It was in that atmosphere that he decided that he would retire. So he asked me to do it. Fortunately my father was no longer alive by that time, because I don't think that he would have approved of that at all. I was a grown man, of course, but still you have to take cognizance. So I told him [Compton] that I would do it.

The interesting thing about it was that, in the years that I was Director General of the OECS - those 13 years - I had made a point of never attending a political meeting. So, I really had no part in the politics of the country at all. I went in, in a sense, as a stranger.

*So how did you find that transition, from intellectual to Prime Minister of the country?*

Well it wasn't an easy transition because, as I say - and I use the word deliberately - I went in as a stranger to the political life of the country. I was known because of my name and my family's name, but I had, as I said, scrupulously avoided any intervention in the play between the political parties. So, my entry into it was not an easy thing. What made it a little less difficult, though, was that there were quite a few people of my type - intellectuals and so on - who welcomed it. But by the time I entered politics, our party, the United Worker's Party (UWP) was under a lot of pressure from the SLP and that pressure did not diminish.

The SLP at that time was effectively being led - in, I don't want to say, a bombastic sense - rather assertively by George Odlum. When Compton asked me to come in, I did a poll, which to me was the sensible thing to do, and the poll actually showed that the opposition party was ahead of the United Worker's Party. But I told

him, 'I'll give you a commitment', but it wasn't easy. No matter how intently I followed the politics, there was a difference between the political campaign and the reality on the ground. It was not an easy campaign, because the opposition knew that they were leading in the polls. They had by then recruited Kenny Anthony, who, like myself, had been at the University and in the integration system, and to cut a long story short, we got wiped out after a year.

*So, what are your proudest moments and biggest regrets as a politician?*

Well, the first commitment that I undertook was to end the strikes, because this was crippling the main foundation of the economy, which I did. There were never any more strikes in the industry, so I take that as something of an achievement, because it was something that John Compton was unable to achieve. I was able to do it through some of the people in the movement who were contemporaries of mine; contemporaries in age, if you know what I mean.

Fortuitously, we also did it in a certain way such that the then leader of the opposition, although they were leading in the polls, was overthrown, and as I indicated, was succeeded by Anthony. But that former leader had had a very close relationship with the banana people, and he offered to join with me in ending the strikes. So, we brought a cross party solution to the process, which did not please the opposition, but we did it. We also began to implement a process of public service reform which we thought was overdue, in those years.

Since I had been in the OECS, of course, it was obvious to me that the OECS was reaching a certain point of evolution in what we had set for it and we had to begin to think of new directions. The world was already changing in 1995. And so, I also began rethinking that. But by that time my year as Prime Minister was up, and that was that.

*So, do you have any regrets as a politician?*

No, not really. I think we did what we had to do. We gave the country tranquillity; we began to indicate certain new directions, and then the SLP Government came in under Kenny Anthony.

So, I wouldn't say I had regrets: by that time I was fifty-five and I had begun to contemplate what I would do in the future in any

case. That future had only two directions: the one Compton pulled me into, or leaving the country again as an academic. When one door closed, the one which remained open became more obvious, so I went and spent some time at Florida International University in Gainesville, in the Department of Political Science there, and then I came to the Institute of International Relations at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine.

When you are in bureaucratic life, say in the OECS and the general integration movement, your thinking does not derive too much from present reading. Your thinking depends on past reading, particularly in the sphere of regional integration and international politics. So, when I came back I realised that in those thirteen years, I had missed a lot of the literature in the discipline. So, the first thing to do upon coming back again was to read, and to see how much I had missed. Fortunately, I was sitting right here [in the Institute of International Relations] and it gave me an opportunity to begin to write again.

*Which politician do you most admire today, and from the past?*

Well, as a young boy of course you admired Eric Williams, but he disappointed us. I had a certain admiration for the logical way of doing things, and, in an almost non-ideological way, for the mode of thinking of Errol Barrow: meaning the putting together of a degree of rationality with the practical aspect of politics while recognizing the character of politics itself. That requires all sorts of deviations in the sphere of politics.

I had seen a lot of Michael Manley, but his tenure was not really successful in that way. He made a great impact on the social relations of the country, Jamaica. In the years that I lived there, before he came in, Jamaica had retained a very rigid social structure, and he broke that mould to some extent. He made the middle class think more about relationships between classes, why people are in certain classes and so on. So, from that ideational point of view, he had an impression on the wider Caribbean as well.

The countries could not stay moulded in the old framework. One of the things that interested me most of all was in 1972 when they [the leaders of the then independent Anglophone Caribbean countries] recognised Cuba. When they did the joint recognition of Cuba, it was not the thing that you would necessarily have expected Errol Barrow, for example, to do. But the four of them [Barrow, Burnham, Manley and Williams] did it, and it showed you the

strength of cohesion among these countries, in the face of countries that didn't want them to do certain things.

I think that period of re-calibration - or the beginning of re-calibration - of West Indian international politics rested in my mind as a significant one. This was because the combination of the individuals, Williams, Manley, Barrow and Burnham, together retained a strength of unity that indicated to the outside world that certain things are now available for discussion. Remember that we were still in a Cold War atmosphere, and I think collectively that group of people impressed me at the time, regardless of what they did otherwise. I mean, Burnham ruined the country [Guyana]. But regardless of that, they expanded the wider sphere of thinking of the Caribbean people, in terms of what is feasible, what location you should provide yourself within the international politics of the time. So, I think that if you asked who impressed me, it was this collective at that time.

*And today, if you had to look at the leadership today in the Caribbean, which ones would you admire?*

I'll think about it!

*How do you feel about the ongoing travails of the regional integration process?*

I think, firstly, that we are in a period of recession, and of course that is affecting all countries, and the preoccupation of the leadership of our countries is focused on the national sphere. Now that is in the face of the fact that what is affecting us is an international phenomenon: globalisation.

Secondly, we are experiencing an international rearrangement of the world that does not give us the natural allies that we used to have: for example, the United Kingdom, United States and so on. I still don't know that we have collectively thought that through. You see, I also don't know if we have come to terms collectively with the notion of the BRICS [the rising powers of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] and how we relate to them as a Caribbean collectivity. Individual countries relate, but largely you'll notice on the basis of asking for something, which is not international politics as far as I'm concerned. So, I don't think that we have come to terms with how, as a small collectivity, we should reposition

ourselves in the context of these tremendous changes, both in the hemisphere and the world at large.

You see, Manley and Burnham and the others did that to some extent as a first round. I don't think in this period that we have come to terms with that, to that same extent. So, I think there is a lot of work in thinking, writing and acting to streamline the positioning of our countries in a period of international change, which is characterised fundamentally by the economic and political change that has been bombarding us in a period of recession. In such a period, it is difficult to avoid what I call 'opportunistic manoeuvres' for economic assistance. I use the word opportunist in a normal way, not in a negative way, for assistance that may not necessarily coincide with what others are doing in the region itself.

Regional integration in that context seems unable to come to terms with the change in the nature of what we can do regionally, which in turn is a consequence of the process of liberalisation. I don't think we have come to grips with that; I don't think we have come to grips with how we relate to our international partners. The US has signed an agreement with Mexico, the effects of which upon us we now know. The US had gone on to sign a free trade agreement with the Central Americans. The Canadians are now anxious to sign with the Central Americans. Those two countries have been speaking to us about relationships - free trade relationships - for a large number of years now. But we, for some reason, are unable to come to terms with how we can deal with this.

The best example of the kind of uncertainty about how we should relate to these changes comes from all the debates we had about the EPA with the EU and the discord which accompanied them. And I notice now that we tend to think that Central Americans are subordinate to the major powers in the same way that we think we are. I also notice that there's an easier coalescing of the Central Americans in response to these big powers than we find it possible to achieve here. So, I think that in our diplomacy - within our hemisphere, especially - there's a need to concentrate on how we facilitate a quicker movement towards solutions to issues than we do today.

We are left, of course, in the context of the EPA and our relations with Europe. We are left in a situation where the ACP is broken; we now have separate EPAs, some of which seem to be very hard to settle, on the African Continent. And the African continent is more and more feeling its own strength.

When we signed onto the ACP, and Ramphal, McIntyre and others were in organisational work relating to that, the assumption was that we were creating a diplomatic platform for ourselves that could facilitate our relationships with the African continent and the Pacific islands, without setting up embassies all over the world, something which we cannot do. But with the breaking of the ACP into different EPAs, in my mind at any rate, that platform does not have the cohesiveness that it would have had in the past.

It seems to me that, in our present diplomacy, we are not seeking to arrange alternatives. So, I think there is a kind of stasis in our relations based on an indecisiveness about the next phase in regional integration, and our inability to collectively undertake an international negotiation diplomatically in the context of the rearrangement of international relations, whether in the hemisphere, whether in the African continent, or with Europe. I think that this is holding us up.

*How would you assess the region's future in light of that, both immediately and in the long term?*

We are operating in a period of recession, where each country feels a responsibility to negotiate its own way out of the problem. That's how I see it. There is a diversity of movements in the OECS, which is under serious pressure itself. The good fortune is that we have as a measure of stability, a mechanism, a collective central bank. If these countries were operating individually, their national currencies would not have survived at the rate of exchange we have today.

But the recession itself in the OECS appears to me to be inducing a greater degree of cooperation. The question being, therefore, how do you consolidate the cooperative mechanisms in an informal way? It is structured, but structured in the regime of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and the central bank's connection with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The ECCB is therefore a facilitator, and a buffer for these small islands against the bigger international institutions.

You need only compare this with what is happening in Jamaica, because the situation in Jamaica is actually no worse than in St Kitts or Antigua etc. The OECS has a buffer. But we in the wider Caribbean beyond the OECS don't seem to want a buffer. If you think purely politically sometimes, the reality of formal independence of some of the countries still has a strong sway, so

we find a situation in which nothing is produced to advance the structuring of the broader CARICOM integration systems as nothing can go past the Heads of Government meeting.

*Everything starts top-down in terms of the approach?*

Yes, so you cannot have an agreement. Well, you know that this can have as a consequence a degree of frustration among the technocrats. I can't remember if you were here when they got together: Norman Girvan, Havelock Brewster and others were invited by Tillman Thomas who was then the Prime Minister of Grenada to put together a position for what is called a special meeting of CARICOM, to try and find a way to begin consolidating the decision-making and implementing of CARICOM agreements and more.

It was just dispatched: that was the occasion on which the Heads of Government said that they had decided that there should be a pause in the CSME. That alone was an indication that the governments themselves were the problem. CARICOM isn't an abstract thing. When I look at developments in Central America, which our countries tend to look down upon, I see a more positive effort to find new arrangements with the metropolitan powers than I see in the Caribbean region. I am not fully familiar with the negotiations with Canada, but I ask myself why it is that it's taking so long to complete. So I see what we might call a kind of stasis in regional integration relations.

*So, the future does not look that bright in terms of looking forward towards regional integration for the Caribbean?*

It doesn't seem so, because the preoccupation of governments is on unilaterally combatting the effects of the international recession - although this does not apply so much to the OECS - and the changes in the international system.

You notice that in the midst of all that is going on, what we have is a quarrel in Jamaica about whether they should leave CARICOM or not, as if leaving CARICOM would help the situation that has been going on in Jamaica for all these years. So, how do we and other countries come to terms with that? Of course, there is a natural instability in the governance of these countries that derives from the uncertainties of the international environment, and that forces countries to hesitate about the directions in which they can

go; except, of course, those directions in the present era which are presented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as a price for economic assistance. The decision-making, therefore, is not autonomous. To the extent that we can be autonomous, it's heavily dependent. In the OECS, that dependence is being mediated by the Central Bank in a positive sense - so it appears.

*One final question: how do you now occupy yourself in retirement?*

Well I'm only partially in retirement! Since the return of the (SLP) government in St Lucia, I have taken on a function for another year and a half or so, as special advisor to the Ministry of External Affairs. This allows me to have some degree of - I wouldn't say influence - but play, in the evolution of foreign relations in the country. The Government has decided that, first of all, we should undertake a complete review of the external relations of the country, which we have done, and Mark Kirton [of IIR] was a part of that. It is good because it forces rethinking.

So, I think about the evolution of these things. I think that IIR needs to emphasize that IIR people are doing these things. It allows one to re-think, in this difficult period, the trajectory of these small islands. St Lucia is a little better off than the others. I don't want to sound arrogant, but there is certain temperateness about St Lucia's leadership. Whichever party it has come from, it does not allow the country to slip away. In the present time, the government had to put in a very severe budget, but it is really to keep the arithmetic stable.

*Which politicians do you admire in the present? We need to have a look at our leaders today!*

One of the good things about my being in the OECS at a certain point in time, at the founding period, was that I realised that, for anything you want to do, there are two sets of ideas. There are your own ideas or the Secretariat's ideas, and then there are the politicians' ideas. In anything you want to do, you have to have a majority, so in those years in the OECS, once I held John Compton, Eugenia Charles, Mitchell and probably leaders in St Kitts, I was able to proceed with implementing my ideas. I would leave Eugenia Charles, for example, to deal with Antigua, which was sometimes a bit recalcitrant.

Maybe I am a bit far from what is happening in CARICOM today, but I'm not seeing the same kind of effort to find a reasonable coalition that can influence the rest in the system. It is, of course, harder to some extent because of the larger number of players.

*I think it requires a stronger leadership that will push forward.*

Yes, but the question is how? They [the leaders] know who they appoint. In the period before I went into this, you had an informal academic leadership. Demas was really an intellectual, but also a practical man of operations, understanding the politics of these islands, and understanding the idiosyncrasies of the political leadership and so on. Between himself and McIntyre basically, and Ramphal – Ramphal was significant, and really had a key location in London for a lot of the time - they could plot out the direction intellectually, and then you would have a second stage of plotting out how you are going to influence the leadership.

The point is that, although you are essentially an intellectual functioning practically as a technocrat, and you have a certain amount of leverage in particular circumstances, you still have to have political allies within the system. This is something which is not so easy, because you are not a politician. But then you also have, when dealing in the regional arena, to have intellectual allies who have some strength in the various countries, and to know a little bit about manoeuvring amongst the politicians.