

ALIENATION AND FETISHIZATION:  
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF “‘RADICALISM AND INNOVATION’ IN THE NEW  
WORLD GROUP’S APPROACH TO AND REJECTION OF METROPOLITAN  
INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL HEGEMONY”<sup>1</sup>

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I. INTRODUCTION

Part One

The New World Group (NWG)<sup>2</sup> comprised mainly male academics, writers, professionals and other intellectuals. Norman Girvan described NWG as a “loosely knit group of Caribbean intellectuals whose aim is to develop an indigenous view of the region” (Girvan 1971: 27). NWG did not converge around a coherent body of philosophical ideas and theories of historical change: ideologically and politically, the range of outlook ran from conservative and radical black nationalist ideas to social democratic and neo-Marxist tendencies. NWG, whose impact extended beyond the University of the West Indies (UWI) academic community, emerged in a cultural environment where political parties and other political and social movements and progressive organizations lacked deeply rooted traditions in revolutionary theory and practice. The BWI working class was rather small, at best semi-industrial and heavily mired in religious obscurantism and naturalistic materialism at best. The progressive social and political movements led by the middle strata intelligentsia and rank and file workers stressed mainly anti-colonial and anti-imperialist reformism that was not anti-British in sentiment or orientation. NWG did not become an integral part of the struggles of the working classes in any systematic way, though its ideas might have had impacts that helped to condition social and popular movements around the struggle of the working classes.

Largely, W. Arthur Lewis and most of his NWG critics rejected rational historicist methodology in favor of a linear approach that fixes the mode of production in Nature “for every state of society” in keeping with naturalistic materialism and philosophical idealism. This framework, which reflects a linear view of history that empties history or renders it emptiable, allowed philosophical idealists like Lewis and NWG thinkers to fill history

with pragmatic problem-solving techniques for addressing issues of poverty, growth, education, industrialization, human behavior, economic development and capital accumulation problems, so-called unlimited supplies of labor, and various other combinations of social phenomena (see Nugent 2005). I will explore some of the ways NWG intellectuals approached history, nature, culture, theory, the state, sovereignty, self-determination, and nationalism with reference to Caribbean political economy within post-war international capitalism. Broadly, NWG thinkers saw the world as a highly fragmented and differentiated assemblage of territorial entities called colonies and sovereign states. They scarcely grasped postwar world order as the spatial organization of capitalist relations; hence their tendency to view domestic and international reality as two separate and distinct spheres that interacted on largely technical terms. The notion that NWG brought a radical and innovative approach to the study of the world and the Caribbean is an empirical question that has to meet the test of empirical verification. Substantively, neither W. Arthur Lewis nor his NWG critics met the criteria for innovation when measured against an approach that takes off from modern scientific conceptions of world reality. I will emphasize NWG social science (mainly economics) contributions. Broadly, NWG adopted an anti-authoritarian stance toward the BWI and CARICOM political leadership.

## **II. NATURALISTIC MATERIALISM, MARXIST PHILOSOPHICAL MATERIALISM AND THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF FETISHIZATION AND ALIENATION**

Naturalistic materialism looks at the world in mechanical ways that stress the primacy of physical factors and forces in relative isolation from ideas and other subjective factors. In relation to international relations and international political economy, philosophical individualism and methodological nationalism separate national from international phenomena and banish social relations from all levels of social reality or at best treats them as epiphenomena. Yet it is impossible to theorize the national-international reality outside of a framework of social relations. In terms of intellectual and ideological questions, alienation refers to thought and consciousness that rupture and externalize the integral relationship between theory and knowledge to social existence (ontology/praxis) by treating their dialectical relationship in dichotomous ways. Alienation is discernible in the liberal idealist notion according to which there exists objective knowledge of an objective reality, with each said to exist independent of human determination. This misconception leads liberal thought to objectify the so-called agency-structure problem in social theory (rational choice logic). Humans produce theory and knowledge of the

world for particular purposes, and theory and knowledge are internal to the problem of reality we study, in order to change the world. There is no objective knowledge available from nowhere that theorists can draw on to establish any form of objectivity. Alienation is discernible in philosophical approaches that fragment and externalize reality and engender fetishization. Fetishization is evident in the objectification of the world in relation to how liberalism understands and treats time and space, nature and culture, history and consciousness, and social relations as a whole. Fetishization, which resonates in objective idealist thought (philosophical idealism), is reflected in the tendency to conflate subjectivity with identity, with the effect of displacing subjectivity and rendering consciousness independent of matter, and privileging philosophical idealism: this liberal approach necessarily rejects historical and dialectical materialism.

Alternatively, historical materialism is “a critique of the indeterminate abstractions of the economists, in which historically specific forms of production and property are volatilized into concepts of production in general and property in general” (Therborn 1976: 43). In the following passage from *The Grundrisse*, Karl Marx rejects the volatilization that alienation and fetishization express. Marx says, “It seems to be correct to begin with the real and concrete, with real precondition, thus to begin with economics, with e.g. the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production. However, on closer examination this proves false. The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed.” Marx continued, “These classes ... are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest, e.g. wage labour, capital, etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices.... For example, capital is nothing without wage labour, without value, money, prices, etc. Thus, if we were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception [...] of the whole, and I would then by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simple concepts [...], from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations.” The path back to the concept of population would yield “not ... the chaotic conception of a whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations” where the “concrete is ... the unity of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking ... as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [...] and conception....” (Marx 1973: 100-101).

Marx's scientific method also defetishizes liberalism's house of fragmentation, and shows that the objectification of reality is a product of "our own self-alienated subjectivity." Marx connects theory with the social reality of the class struggle, an approach that liberal intellectuals must reject because they subordinate social subjectivity to identity in the process of attacking and banishing the subject. This leads liberals to treat the so-called agency-structure problem as a technical problem in relation to the production of knowledge.

Marxist materialism understands humans to share an internal dialectical relationship with nature and treats the knowing subject as internal to the movement of nature, society, and knowledge. Dialectical materialism does not presume that humans possess an objective knowledge of an objective social world that operates through objective laws of history and society that are autonomous of social determination. For dialectical materialists all knowledge is created intersubjectively as the product of human activity and human history and is constrained by human interests. From this angle, if humans are capable of producing objective knowledge of an objective (social) world then human subjectivity and the production of knowledge would have to occur independently of human determination, and class struggles would be autonomous of social-historical processes, which would render the class struggle merely instrumental, science would approximate positivism, and history would be a purely mechanical and alienated process. The notion of objective knowledge existing separate from social reality resonates with liberal idealism, which invents the irreducible, antecedent, unencumbered (alienated) individual and imbues him/her with free will and individual autonomy. The liberal subject is not a real historical agent rather it is an abstraction (deontological entity) that makes history and culture problems for nature to resolve.

### **Naturalistic Materialism and Marxist Philosophical Materialism**

Pre-Marxian naturalistic materialism has long dominated the international working class and labor movements, including Marxist ones. Across the political and ideological spectrum, pre-Marxian naturalistic materialism, which also dominated the radical academic and intellectual tendencies in the BWI and CARICOM countries, was evident in most NWG conceptions of history that equate history to a series of accidental occurrences. Naturalistic materialism stands in contrast with Marxist philosophical materialism (historical and dialectical materialism). Naturalistic materialism separates manual labor from mental labor, ruptures the dialectical relationship between these two interdependent forms of labor, and superimposes subjective notions of culture, identity, and

belonging on material and social processes, as though there were a dichotomous relationship between the subjective and objective dimensions of social reality. It is impossible to arrive at a productive synthesis between manual and mental labor without knowledge of the dialectical unity that exists between the two forms of human labor.

Historical materialism could not have overcome the separation between manual and mental labor so long as the struggle against capitalism reflected a separation between idealism as pure intellectual and philosophical contemplation and naturalistic materialism, which derives ideas and social forces from the pure “physical forces” of matter. Bourgeois idealism derives all reality from “purely mental forces (spirit)” and separates contemplative intellectual functions from any shared social experience. Nationalist ideology relies on naturalistic materialism and bourgeois idealism and works against the integration of manual and mental labor with the effect of undermining the growth of consciousness that goes with the deepening of the international socialization of labor and production. The international socialization of production undermines national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness and strengthens society’s capacity to rise to the point where its “creative capacity to shape its own destiny” begins to approximate social reality as part of the larger human universality (van der Pijl 2002: 129).

The historical preconditions for the development of labor’s capacity to emancipate itself from capital by ceasing to produce surplus labor, which is capital, depended on the transformation of “contemplative philosophy” into “experimental natural science,” and on the convergence of physical labour and practical philosophy in science and industry. Along the way, this complex process engendered the growth of naturalistic materialism over and beyond bourgeois thought, which idealizes “purely mental forces (spirit)” and ruptures the integral relationship of contemplative intellectual functions to shared social experience. The existence of the collective social worker does not thrive on naturalistic materialism, nor can subjective notions of identity encompass social subjectivity because a “social synthesis” of manual and mental labour depends on the deepening of the international socialization of production on foundations of scientific, technological and cultural advancement (van der Pijl 2002: 130).

The development of the “social setting for the assimilation of historical materialism” requires a high level of material culture, yet naturalistic materialism inserts a “dualistic opposition” between mental and manual labor that makes it hard to achieve “a mutual dependence” between “knowledge and labour.” Kees van der Pijl argues that metaphysics subordinates science to religion and produces forms of objective idealism

that typified the outlook of Enlightenment and Romanticist thinkers from Immanuel Kant to G. W. Hegel and Max Weber (van der Pijl 2002: 131, 132). Naturalistic materialism expresses the metaphysical notion of “God and the soul” existing beyond the reach of “scientific inquiry,” endorses agnosticism, stifles the development of materialism, and imposes a false dichotomy between politics and religion and between science and religion. Marxist materialism opposes all such mystifications of social reality and interprets the idea of God as the objectification of alienation and the subordination of the material world to a mystical conception (van der Pijl 2002: 134).

Social existence in capitalist society assumes highly fragmented, individuated, and alienated forms. Marx traced individuation and fragmentation in bourgeois society to the “making of abstract labor” which he understood as “the transformation of property-possessing, economically independent, but politically dependent labor into disowned, legally and politically free, but economically dependent wage labor.” Max Weber examined the existential features of life in bourgeois society and equated the social reality to “streams of chaos” and the “modern incoherence of experience,” (Teschke and Heine 2002: 172), with the consequence of overwhelming the contradictory capitalist process with naturalistic materialism. Largely, neither W. Arthur Lewis nor NWG managed to transcend the eclectic mix of liberal idealism and naturalistic materialism that informed their outlook. The very notion that NWG was innovative and challenged metropolitan hegemony is itself consistent with the philosophical assumptions of naturalistic materialism and bourgeois idealism.

### **III. FETISHIZATION AND ALIENATION:**

#### **SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT OF NEW WORLD THOUGHT**

The starting point for all Western social and political theory is the fictive state of nature where the Christian story of origins and the Social Contract theory converge in an alienated unitary identity (see Jahn 2000; Watson 2001a, 2004a). Liberal concepts and beliefs about nature and the origin of the world, human nature and humanity, history, culture and society, and time-space and consciousness derive from natural law notions that posit antecedently given objective laws of human nature. Liberal thought naturalizes the social process we associate with the production of culture, deriving our human culture from our allegedly predetermined (alienated) nature. Broadly, western social and political theory treats time and space as naturally linear rendering them empty or emptiable,

naturalizes culture and historicizes nature, and imposes ahistorical limits to intellectual diversity. Western social and political theory invents humans as antecedently given unencumbered, self-interested, irreducible individuals (see Ramsay 1997) that are preprogrammed to be the competition market subjects of an eternalizable rational capitalism. According to this view, states, nations, and culture possess organic roots; historical periodization is suspect; labor and work become natural practice as opposed to creative human activity; workers naturally alienate themselves and their labor in production in strict Hegelian fashion; and nature dictates the motion of culture, intervening to solve the problems that culture creates. The naturalization of history and culture fosters cynical and pessimistic views of social progress.

Liberalism, which is “modernity’s definitive doctrine of self and society, of morality and politics” has encompassed a range of ideological, political, economic and other values and commitments from classical *laissez-faire* to “contemporary conservatism in the form of neoliberalism.” Liberalism’s core values as reflected in “modernity’s common moral, sociopolitical, and jurisprudential sense” (Goldberg 2002: 4-5) of self have consistently accommodated certain conservative, authoritarian and reactionary traditions that it preserved from the European pre-capitalist era and integrated them with more open norms that extend to radical democratic interests. Liberal idealists habitually objectify values and institutions about justice, freedom, and equality and routinely invoke them when it becomes impossible to reconcile their self-images with the contradictions in quotidian practices in bourgeois society. Maureen Ramsay reminds us that individuals “... cannot be investigated in abstraction from the social, historical and material circumstances that give rise to human needs and desires, beliefs and interests...” (1997: 22).

In the Caribbean context, Nigel Bolland connects colonial and postcolonial norms to the “pervasiveness of authoritarianism” and traces them to “conquest, genocide, slavery, the creation of specific institutions of social control ... and profound social cleavages, inequalities and hierarchies...” Bolland says, “Authoritarianism ... became the habit of those who were in control, and so, whether in its legal, or racist, or paternal guise, it became the central and traditional feature of the dominant political culture” (2001: 11; see Gilroy 2000: 329-56 *passim*).

Technology encompasses forms of social control that operate through numerous artifacts and inanimate objects that are part of the production of social relations. Langdon Winner draws attention to the political and social aspects of technology and emphasizes the ways inanimate objects such as bridges and buildings, and larger social spaces such as cities and

communities are constructed and where they are located, within the larger spatial organization of social life. Winner argues that engineers, developers, architects, builders, financiers and other parties factor class, race, gender, religion and other dynamics into the production of artifacts in ways that reflect the dialectic of the class struggle which conditions how some groups and social strata are included and others excluded (Winner 1986: 19-39; see Jasanoff 2005: 205-06; Weintraub 2002: 273, note 1). All academic disciplines contribute to the production of “political settlements”, considering that all knowledge and theories are part of the problem of social reality we seek to understand and change.

Most NWG social scientists did not have access to the largesse of influential funding institutions and lucrative consultancies to add to their intellectual weightiness. Integration with postwar international capitalism found BWI and CARICOM political leaders and their leading technocrats turning to the multilateral institutions and agencies in the core capitalist countries for policy advice and development aid, to the consternation of leading NWG economists. The NWG preference for less capital-intensive and more labor-intensive technology to deal with unemployment problems in the face of large-scale migration to Britain and North America equated to an ideological preference within a political settlement, given the political need for social control of the masses of rural and urban workers. The social reproduction requirements of the BWI capitalists did not require them to revolutionize the productive forces, given their relationship to preferential trading arrangements. The postwar experience with economic modernization of large countries like India, Turkey, Mexico, Brazil, and South Korea does not show any commitment of their leading capitalist strata to any “national” capitalist development strategy based on labor-intensive or capital-intensive techniques of production. The evidence shows capitalist strata taking advantage of state subsidies and other incentives without submitting themselves to the forms of state regulation that are assumed to engender national capitalist development (Chibber 2003).

Broadly, postwar decolonization in the BWI followed a period of revolt against colonial excess. The working classes made certain compromises with the middle strata decolonizing elite around representative government, political participation, and social change, based on the promotion of social democratic norms. Decolonization and independence came to be associated with mass support for modernization and nation building. The working class expected jobs, the provision of a range of social goods and services like education, health clinics, sports facilities, community development programs, participation in electoral politics, and a rising standard of living, in return for supporting populist



political parties and their leaders, depending on the character of the class struggle. Parliamentary democracy became an effective means to contain the class struggle in British colonies. The NWG support for labor-intensive technology was suggestive of political ways to regulate the reserve army of labor. The region's leading businesses lacked a tradition in research and development and modern science and technology. The absence of the lure of lucrative consultancies and/or the prospect of involvement in the policy establishment afforded most NWG intellectuals little chance of providing advice "for the prince."<sup>3</sup>

Lloyd Best's assertion that "thought for us is action" (see Best 1967) repeated the secular telos from liberal objective idealism that comes from objectifying consciousness and knowledge and rupturing the dialectical relationship between manual and mental labor and between subjects and their subjectivity. Best's notion implies that there is or can be an objective knowledge that human agents can summon to account for social action, a clear sign of alienation. NWG theorists did not appreciate that their notion of labor-intensive technology could not offer the working class any reliable way of transforming the material and social conditions of its existence. Labor-intensive technology does not advance the integration of manual and mental labor with the production process in the direction of raising the political and social consciousness of the working class. In order to understand the scientific basis of the spatial organization of capitalist production and social life it is necessary to arrive at an intellectually grounded appreciation of science as "a genuine historical process shaped by and shaping social and political agendas" (de Chadarevian 1997: 61; quoted in Weintraub 2002: 265).

Sheila Jasanoff draws on Winner's notion of "political settlements" to discuss "ways in which a device such as a patent helps to create and naturalize the very objects and rights that they claim to protect." She says, "things are not intrinsically political or apolitical by their very nature, but only as a result of conscious human decisions" and she explains how objectification and alienation banish social phenomena from "the company of the social and political." She argues that when we become aware that technological objects are repositories of "human values, beliefs, imagination, power", we may realize that no matter how technological objects "may seem to stand outside the flows of politics ... how they achieve this appearance and with what consequences are not outside the realm of political inquiry" (2005: 205). The preference NWG expressed for so-called innovative labor-intensive production represented a political settlement.

Other “political settlements” like political and romantic cultural nationalism normalize class exploitation and oppression. Nationalism’s conceptual architecture is laden with political agendas that constrain the development of the political consciousness of the working class and limit the prospect of freeing the working class from bourgeois domination. The structural unevenness of the capitalist process leaves ample room for forms of labor-intensive technology in production; however, such technology does not build sustainable capitalist or post-capitalist alternatives in a global economy. Nationalists seem unaware that it is not labor’s creative capacity that interests capital and the state rather it is labor’s productive capacity—its ability to produce exchange value and surplus labor to reproduce the capitalist class—that interests capital and the state.

Perry Mars says “... the most impressive intellectual Leftist venture to come out of the English-speaking Caribbean was the establishment of the New World group ... during the 1960s” that included mainly “intellectuals from the University of the West Indies and professionals from Guyana and elsewhere in the Caribbean.... Their ultimate objective was the transformation of thought and lifestyles of Caribbean masses. The New World group and operations did not survive the 1970s as a result of declining popular support and lack of adequate financial resources” (1998: 49-50). The issues Mars stresses are symptomatic of the much deeper impact on the Caribbean of the crisis of neo-Keynesianism that also reflected the collapse of the post-war international strategy of capitalist accumulation and the “political settlements” that derailed West Indian expectations about nation building and “development.”

No doubt, certain individuals, groups, organizations, and political and social movements and political parties that gravitated toward the NWG tendency might have articulated revolutionary sentiments, among them Walter Rodney (see Lewis 1998) and Clive Thomas of Guyana, and Trevor Munroe of Jamaica. Largely, the ideas and vision that emanated from NWG were reformist rather than revolutionary. Mars says, the “rise of the New World group during the 1960s, which concentrated on the development of radical scholarship and encouraged direct intellectual participation in the formulation of public policy, was a remarkable case in point” of the role of intellectuals in initiating and influencing “the development of radical and revolutionary trends in the English-speaking Caribbean” (1998: 150). Denis Benn says appropriate criticisms of NWG notwithstanding, “New World succeeded in elaborating a systematic intellectual critique of the economic system prevailing during the 1960s and 1970s” (2004: 145). Mars’ notion of a “systematic intellectual critique” overstates the case for NWG: NWG thinkers criticized prevailing public

policies of Caribbean governments; however, criticism does not equate to critique, which involves posing a viable alternative to the status quo that derives from a scientific understanding of the reality one mobilizes people to change.

In his interpretation of the role of British imperialism in the BWI, George Lamming highlights the ideological and political significance of the Christian doctrine of humanity's fall from grace and the banishment of "fallen angels" from the metaphorical garden. Lamming explains how the moral epistemology of imperialism worked to exploit certain religious precepts to reproduce social and political control. He connected Britain (the garden) and her colonial subjects (the fallen ones) in a relationship through which the colonial subjects conflated the idea of God with the British Empire to the point of equating Britain with the epitome of civilization and moral freedom (God on earth). Lamming says, "They couldn't get the garden out of their minds.... The empire and the garden....both belong to God. The garden is God's own garden and the empire is God's only empire...." <sup>4</sup> (1953: 67, 68; see Clarke 2003: 93, 179, 72). In 1952, Dr. Massiah, a member of the Barbados House of Assembly, expressed the following sentiment from the floor of the House of Assembly following the announcement of the death of King George the Sixth: "Sir, We have met to-day under the shadow of a great calamity.... King George the Sixth was endowed with all the virtues that we have been brought up to recognize as the attributes of an English gentleman.... Those of us who have some knowledge of history will remember that the English people, and the British people, came to the highest pitch of excellence and prosperity in culture, politics and in every form of life and human activity ...." <sup>5</sup>

Like Lamming and Clarke, Eduard Glissant challenges the oppressed to develop forms of consciousness necessary for rejecting the "myth of origin, a Genesis" (Glissant 1989: 141; see also Clarke 2003: 170-72). Christianity also contains its mystical "political settlements" that typically defend tradition, absolutism, pessimism, obscurantism and submissiveness to oppression and exploitation. Throughout the BWI, religion remained a potent force in the service of imperialism (see Lamming 1953, van der Pijl 2002: 134). Broadly, in the Christian imaginary, Christianity became the original natural truth; the British Empire epitomized reason, freedom and liberty: colonial subjects might find redemption provided they receive guidance from the Anglo-Saxons, the original self-appointed creators of liberty and perfection (see Horsman 1981, chapters 1-2 and 9).

Before and after World War II forms of predominantly social democratic consciousness emerged in the fledgling trade union struggles among the largely semi-industrial BWI working classes. After World War

II, social democratic radicalism intensified in the class struggle around social and political movements and organizations such as labor unions and political parties. Anti-colonial and anti-imperialist but not necessarily anti-British tendencies began to assert themselves under the watchful gaze of the Whitehall's colonial authorities, the local agro-commercial capitalist bourgeoisie and the petite bourgeois leadership of the unions and political parties. In 1945, the Caribbean Labor Congress (CLC) emerged as a heterogeneous trade union tendency that coalesced around a low-intensity social democratic and largely authoritarian outlook that advocated the formation of a vaguely conceived "Socialist Caribbean Commonwealth" as the most appropriate framework to address the pressing economic, social and political problems of the region (see Watson 2004b; Bolland 2001).

In 1948, under the Anglo-American Cold War project, Britain and the US insisted that the trade unions and political parties in the colonies and neo-colonies should integrate with the cold war international order. Britain, via the British Trade Union Congress (BTUC), and the US created the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) as the alternative to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). The British Guiana Trade Union Council (BGTUC) the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Union Council (TTTUC) and the Trade Union Congress of Jamaica (TUC) were the main targets of the British TUC in the BWI because of their affiliation with the WFTU and the allegation that some of them were "believed to be Communist controlled" (Hart 2004: 103).

The Cold War project exploited nationalism and anti-communism to contain the fledgling working class movement in the BWI and yoke the class struggle to a U.S.-dominated form of hegemony that was replacing imperialism. The European colonial empires had ceased to be viable, and Britain and other European ruling classes were adjusting to a rapidly unfolding post-imperial reality, a process that US was managing with the support of the European ruling classes.<sup>6</sup> In Jamaica, the Colonial Office, the Governor, and the Gleaner newspaper led a frontal attack on the working class to silence and/or banish socialist elements from the TUC and the People's National Party (PNP), with high-level cooperation from within the PNP. Along the way, nationalism and anti-communism helped to split the fledgling working class movement ostensibly in the name of national salvation socialism. Norman Manley and certain other PNP leaders resorted to calculated authoritarian measures to force PNP and TUC "communist" suspects to confirm publicly their nationalist-socialist-labor credentials, ostensibly to appease the Gleaner, which had become the leading mouthpiece for the Anglo-American Cold War project in Jamaica (Hart 2004: 104-120; 84-101 passim; Monroe 1978; Bolland 2001).

In Barbados, Grantley Adams and other social democrats<sup>7</sup> around the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) supported cold war internationalism. In 1948, Adams, who headed the CLC, attended a meeting of the United Nations Trusteeship Committee in Paris as a member of the British Delegation. Britain had objected to the transfer of the colonies from the Trusteeship Committee to the United Nations Committee on Decolonization. At the Paris meeting Adams defended Britain's position and launched a vitriolic attack against the Soviet Union and Communism, the class struggle, and the working class anti-imperialist movements in the European colonies (see Hart 2004: 98-100). Adams seemed unmindful that the British Empire was in shambles from the impact of World War II, the rise of the US to the position of hegemonic power, the consolidation of Soviet power in Eastern Europe, and the measures the US was taking under the Marshall Plan to hasten the deconstruction of what was left of British imperial power. Anti-communism became an essential factor in managing the transition from imperialism toward U.S.-led multilateralism and hegemony.

The US did not stop at weakening the WFTU, it also called on the European colonial powers to grant their colonies independence. The UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNUDHR) in 1948 as part of a broader strategy to help the crumbling imperialist world order manage the restructuring of the post-war world and make more predictable the integration of the decolonizing world with post-war international capitalism. Adams failed to consult with the CLC leadership and with the leadership of the trade unions and political organizations that represented the oppressed and exploited "masses" across the British Empire and in the other imperial zones. Manley and Adams' support for the Anglo-American Cold War project helped to cement anti-communist trade unionism and colonial nationalism in the BWI working class movement on the question of the class struggle, in opposition to the WFTU, and in support of the creation of the ICFTU. Their action was decisive in splintering the working class movement along political party and trade union lines, and proved effective in subordinating the working class to representative government, which harnessed and constrained the class struggle in the BWI. The Cold War complicated the role the Cuban Revolution would play in the Caribbean: it drew the entire Caribbean into its orbit and intensified the anti-communist tendencies among the BWI capitalist forces, the decolonizing political elite, the trade union leadership and religious and social institutions in ways that weakened the influence of social democratic and revolutionary forces.

Cheddi Jagan and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) were doomed as far as garnering popular (mass working class) or institutional (trade union, political party, or parliamentary) support from the BWI colonial elite when the political crisis erupted in Guiana in the 1950s. British Guiana and Guatemala became strategic test cases for the Cold War project in the region during the 1950s (Watson 2004b; Rabe 2005; Persram 2004). The British consulted the BWI colonial elite for their opinion on the Anglo-American plan to keep Guiana in the firm grip of the Cold War and they endorsed the Cold War strategy against Jagan and the PPP, while also opposing proportional representation for British Guiana (Rabe 2005: 133). The BWI colonial elite were very hostile to Jagan and they drew on racial nationalism in making Jagan's ethnicity <sup>8</sup> a factor in their calculations. Their hostility, distrust, and antipathy toward the BWI working class were stronger toward especially the East Indian workers that sided with Jagan in Guiana. Without a doubt, their anti-communist pro-cold war outlook played an important role in the socialization of the BWI working class.

In 1954, Jagan expressed his disappointment at the eagerness of the BWI leadership to assist the British in splitting the BWI working class and trade union movement. He said Guiana was "not Barbados, where Grantley Adams ... can split the unity of the West Indian United Movement, destroy the Caribbean Labour Congress and get away with it. Nor Jamaica, where Norman Manley weakened the nationalist anti-imperialist movement by expelling the so-called reds. Expulsion of so-called reds ... has now split the formerly unified anti-Bustamante anti-imperialist camp into three political and trade union fronts" (quoted in Furedi 1994: 262, see also pp. 14, 184, 232). The politico-ideological split in Guiana was not the result of any natural "racial" cleavages rather the Cold War strategy racialized and exploited the economic and political contradictions capitalism imposed on the semi-industrial Guianese working class (Rodney 1981). Of course, Jagan's reading of the situation in Guiana and the world led him to express exuberance over the prospect of an anti-imperialist world socialist revolution miraculously embracing and protecting Guiana (Watson 2004b).

Nalini Persram discerns Jagan's romantic cultural nationalist side. She points out that in *The West on Trial* he confessed embarrassment at his "inability to speak Hindi or Urdu", his lack of knowledge about his ancestors, and his preference for the "simple pleasures of country life" over the "middle class snobbery" of urban life in Georgetown (Jagan 1972: 20-23 passim, quoted in Persram 2004). However, "Jagan's nationalism did not attempt to legitimize the nation of British Guiana through appeals to cultural identity and its Herderian corollary of the diversity and value of individual cultures with respect to human history. Instead, legitimacy was

pursued through political subjectivity—through sophisticated politicking, mobilization of a racially dual peasantry and working class, electoral victory, posing as a threat to British power and prestige, and achieving positive recognition around the world” (Persram 2004: 104-05). Substantively, the nationalist projects in the BWI emerged as a mechanistic synthesis of romantic (cultural) and political (civic) nationalism that contrasted with what Perry Anderson (2001) calls “undifferentiated universalism.”

There was however symbolic support among certain BWI working class fractions for Jagan, the PPP and the anti-imperialist struggle in British Guiana. Barbados provides an example of such support. In *The Political Report for the Month of February, 1954*, the Governor of Barbados reported to Whitehall on the activities of the socialist movement in Barbados. He said, “The inaugural outdoor meeting of the Caribbean Christian Socialist Party ... was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> and attracted about 300 persons.” The Caribbean Christian Socialist Party (CCSP) often received copies of the “W.F.T.U. Movement.” The Governor reported that Ashton Chase of Guiana wrote advising “the officials of the Caribbean Christian Socialist Party” to continue their “progressive movement, and stating that the P.P.P. in British Guiana would not stop its campaign.” Janet Jagan sent the CCSP copies of ‘Thunder’, the organ of the P.P.P. The CCSP also received “... petition forms from the Caribbean Labour Congress (London Branch) relating to the imprisonment of members of the P.P.P” in British Guiana.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Political Report for the Month of May 1955*, the Governor of Barbados stated that the Premier (Adams) compared the methods of Errol Barrow and the members of the newly formed Democratic Labour Party (DLP) “with those of the Jaganites in British Guiana.” Mr. Adams accused the left-wing elements in the political and trade union movement in Barbados of “insidious attempts to infiltrate the ranks of the workers and destroy them.” The working class in Barbados and the BWI faced relentless pressure from Whitehall and from a variety of British civil society interests including the British Labour Party, and organized labor in the US, and from the media, religious denominations, businesses and politicians, all mobilized around the Cold War project. Specifically, the British Labor Party promised to help the CCSP if the party “freed itself of any tinge of Communism.”<sup>10</sup>

Racial Anglo-Saxonism, which is the dominant ideological tendency within British racial nationalism, worked like a subterranean force in nurturing the ideological roots of BWI nationalism. The growth of British racial nationalism in the consciousness of BWI colonial subjects owes

much to the export of British political institutions and values via parliamentary institutions, bureaucratic and administrative systems, constabularies and military apparatuses, the highly racialized and segregated Anglican Church, the widespread use of British textbooks in primary and secondary educational institutions, the BBC, and other means that reinforced the British self-image and equated British values and norms to the pinnacle of human civilization. Racial Anglo-Saxonism was indispensable to the production of “political settlements” in the BWI.

According to Reginald Horsman, the English strongly resisted embracing a racial doctrine of “an all-pervasive Germanic-Norse mystique,” because the English, who defined themselves in opposition to Scots, Welsh and Irish and other British, had adopted a grand myth of themselves as antecedently free “Anglo-Saxons resisting a Norman yoke.” The English who “were never content to accept a theory which submerged the Saxons into a greater European mass, used the new ideas to give the Saxons a still more distant and glorious past; they also continued to elevate the Saxons above all other groups that supposedly shared a common German and Indo-European heritage. The Saxons became the ‘elite of an elite,’ or a ‘separate,’ superior people within a larger Germanic race ...” (Horsman 1981: 38).

In the following passage, Grantley Adams, at the time leader of the Barbados Labour Party, revealed the extent of his internalization of racial Anglo-Saxonism in his explanation of why Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II knighted him. Adams said,

“I feel sure that whether a man chooses the political course rather than the legal course, any honour that comes to him comes to him, not as an appreciation of his personal service but because he is a member of an organization and a member of a Parliament which has done or tried to do some good for its country.... I know these things because I have been told them and I say them at first hand—I know the ... unique position which Barbados holds among the Caribbean colonies in the eyes of the Colonial Office and the British Government of whatever political complexion.... The average Barbadian is always conscious of his superiority to other people of the world; but it is a fact that 300 years of representative institutions have created for us a responsibility and a desire objectively to approach political problems that are lacking, and inevitably lacking in communities which have not had the advantage of three centuries of unbroken representative government.... I know that this honour or any other honour which may be bestowed on me by the British Government at any time, or by any international organization, has been due in the political field to the fact that Barbados is absolutely unique among the non-self-governing territories in its unbroken parliamentary traditions and in the way we have made use of them.... I say that if anything has happened to me on the Trade Union side, it is due to the fact that there is a similar recognition in the outside world that Barbados shows



as great a success in economic matters as in political matters, and a greater success than in other colonies.”<sup>11</sup>

Adams implied that other British colonial subjects receiving knighthoods must have received the honor for lesser accomplishments, given the supposedly “unique” position of Barbados and Barbadians among British colonial subjects. He collapses all Barbadians into the “average Barbadian” that seemed “always conscious of his superiority to other people of the world.” Frankly, the British were unwilling to see themselves submerged within a general Caucasian mass and they did not intend for the notion of superiority to encompass the mass of black Barbadians. Adams equated colonial loyalty with superiority.

Consistent with the English/British way of asserting their racial and cultural superiority in Europe and the wider world, Grantley Adams invented a myth of Barbadian superiority and Barbadian exceptionalism as a subset within British racial and cultural uniqueness. Adams identified Barbados’ unbroken colonial ties to Britain and the “representative government” of unfreedom to register a notion of a unique Barbadian form of Britishness. The English do not see themselves as Europeans and Barbadians internalized the myth about themselves as a separate species standing above other West Indians. Adams traced his myth of Barbadian exceptionalism and superiority from the bequeathal of 300 years of unbroken “representative government” that the British uneventfully implanted in its pristine form in Barbados. Errol Barrow, who also lectured the House of Assembly on Barbados’ autochthonous culture, built the case for Barbados’ independence on an unbroken tradition of British representative government, the institutionalization of British traditions and parliamentary institutions in Barbados, and what Barbadian political leaders across the political spectrum saw as the unparalleled political stability Barbados achieved as a result (Watson 2001b). Adams was silent about how those British parliamentary (“container”) institutions imposed certain political settlements on the British working class and on the colonial subjects. Adams does not address how slavery, the oppression of women, class exploitation, high-handed liberal authoritarianism, the alienation of power, the destructive consequences of racism, and capitalist patriarchy affected the development of the majority of the population of Barbados under the oppressive “representative system” that the working class questioned during the 1930s.

### **Naturalistic Materialism and NWG Outlook on Nationalism**

The NWG did not necessarily view nationalism as a problem, considering that the development of national consciousness was viewed as

healthy in relation to progress toward sovereign autonomy (see Nettleford 2003) which they conflated with self-determination. Not surprisingly, NWG thinkers labored under the misconception that political independence could sustain “autonomous” national economies under international capitalism. They demonstrated little awareness of the fact that sovereignty does not produce self-determination under international capitalism. In fact, they tended to accept the seemingly plausible notion that the Caribbean was an artificial creation of Europe “based on European capital and African labour ... to produce sugar” and that Caribbean economies lacked “any dynamics of their own, but must be seen as subsystems of the capitalist world economy” (Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 98). Thus, NWG anticipated the arrival of a point when the Caribbean economies could establish their autonomy within postwar international capitalism. New World, having failed to grasp the global political economy as a historically delimited form of spatial organization that constitutes the real unit of theoretical analysis, did not manage to advance beyond nationalist conceptions of place to an appreciation of the spatial organization of international capitalism. Not surprisingly, the disconcerting impact of capitalist globalization finds nationalist defenders of the romantic notion of “cultural sovereignty” inveighing against cultural imperialism<sup>12</sup>, seemingly unmindful that imperialism also rested on domestic material bases, norms, institutions, and national class interests, and is not reducible to an external force. George Beckford assumed that a cultural revolution based on the “politics of dread” was taking place in Jamaica ahead of “the political revolution.” He saw the phenomenon “in terms of not just cultural rejection of capitalism but the embryonic advances towards an indigenous social living” (quoted in Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 107), a romantic notion that resonates with Girvan’s idea of “an indigenous view of the region.”

Liberal democratic theory fares poorly in accounting for the growing contradictions between self-determination and sovereignty and capital accumulation in the age of globalization. When we look at class, nation, and state beyond territorial borders, it becomes clear that globalization demands the rolling back of the economic and social borders of state power especially in those areas that “largely remain the preserve of national states in formal terms.... As states begin to enforce the new standards, state sovereignty appears increasingly as a barrier more than as a stimulus to the deepening of democracy. Rather than being the instrument for an infrastructural power that states alone can provide to bounded territories, sovereignty in a deterritorializing world becomes the instrument for a hollowing out of states to the benefit of those businesses, social groups, and markets that are best able to exploit the new technologies, financial and

production arrangements and security agreements” (Agnew 2005: 221), regardless of nationality.

From the outset the nationalists did not seem to appreciate that postcolonial national states would not necessarily guarantee effective governance, which they anticipated from their idealized understanding of reality in the core capitalist societies. Substantively, while the ideas represented by NWG thought might have contributed to a broad populist appeal, those ideas did not represent a coherent body of rigorous theoretical ideas that could inform social and political practice among the working class. Mars discerns the problem when he says, “Nothing dramatizes the theory-praxis gap more than the dilemma which faced the New World movement in the 1960s, and twenty years later the Tapia House movement in Trinidad and Tobago. The issue was how a professional intellectual class can become relevant to the practical problems of underdeveloped ... and often oppressive societies such as those in the Caribbean.” Mars adds, “New World’s response to this dilemma was to choose to remain solely as educators, rather than become embroiled in practical political activism. Lloyd Best, one of the founders of New World, was concerned that involvement in agitational activism would not only debase the profession but more importantly prevent intellectuals from fulfilling their specific mission which is to disseminate ideas” (1998: 121).

Clearly, Best implied that the academic profession was by definition non-political if not apolitical, a clever form of political and ideological deception. Of course, his tactic did not impress academics and scholars who understand the embeddedness of intellectual culture and knowledge in social relations of production, as shown by the roles that Walter Rodney and Clive Thomas played in the Working People’s Alliance in Guyana (WPA), and Trevor Munroe and several UWI (Mona) academics in the Workers party of Jamaica (WPJ). James Millette says, “Lloyd Best essentially denies the existence of classes.... Best abhors class so fervently that he wouldn’t recognize it whatever the guise in which it appears.” Millette quotes Best saying,

“The most important thing about the actors in the Caribbean is that they are of two types. One is that you have the proletarians – the multitude of the people, and you have the proprietors. I have argued for 40 years (and the Marxists are going to kill me – those of you who are still here) that the important thing about Caribbean society is that it is classless.... I am not talking about stratification; I am not talking about rank; I am not talking about hierarchy or status – you have that. You have differences in occupation in wealth and so on. But class requires a concept of responsibility. You have to have different responsibilities in the place. The thing about the Caribbean is that everybody has the same responsibility, which is no responsibility at all” (quoted in Millette 2005: 30).

It is difficult to take Best seriously on the notion that Caribbean classes and class relations depend on a sense of “different responsibilities”, considering that there is no Caribbean society without its social division of labor. The fact most people tend to be misinformed about their real interests does not pertain to a lack of “responsibility”, as no class society could function without responsibility around the social division of labor. Surely, “responsibility” does not equate to class consciousness!

Best equates the “proletarians” to “the multitude of the people” in contrast with the “proprietors.” The more advanced the development of the productive forces, the greater the tendency for capitalist society objectively to divide between capitalists and proletarians. This signals a point at which most of the independent white collar professions, for example, medicine, law, engineering, management, and other scientific fields undergo intensive proletarianization, consistent with the process that is in motion in the contemporary US. Hidden in Best’s idealist and dissembling notion of class is the ahistorical idea of an eternalizable capitalism, a fanciful derivative from neo-Weberian sociological theory that takes the fictive state of nature for its starting point, derives capitalism and markets from natural forces, renders humanity capitalist by nature, and banishes class relations and class analysis. Millette describes Best as the “Trojan Horse” in the Caribbean nationalist movement. Best failed to make any careful distinction between the moral bankruptcy and cold war political opportunism of the majority of the of the leadership within the trade union movement, the political elite, and the intelligentsia and the working class of whom he was deeply suspicious and from whom he has remained deeply alienated (see Millette 2005 *passim*).

The critical issue turns on how NWG went about preparing the new generation of young people that came of age in the moment of decolonization and nation building that anticipated sovereign autonomy. Substantively, NWG early decline witnessed the growth of several organizations that professed variants of radicalism and revolutionary vision. To the extent that there was any materialist understanding of history and social development within NWG, it ranged from largely pre-Marxian naturalistic materialism to social democratic consciousness and other progressive conceptions that reflected the diverse and often contradictory political commitments.<sup>13</sup>

The “Rodney Crisis” in Jamaica in 1968 was a subset within the crisis of Jamaica’s political economy, which mirrored the collapse of neo-Keynesianism and the crisis of the Bretton Woods arrangements that had guided the postwar international economy and cold war geopolitical arrangements. The rise of James Millette’s United National Independence

Party, the National Joint Action Committee, and Lloyd Best's Tapia House and other political tendencies that surfaced in Trinidad were responses to the larger structural crisis within international capitalism that gripped Trinidad and the Caribbean region. In Guyana Clive Thomas was instrumental in the creation of Ratoon, which contributed to the rise of the Working People's Alliance (WPA). The Workers Liberation League (WLL) emerged in Jamaica and morphed into the Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ). *Abeng*, which was published as a weekly in Jamaica, combined neo-Marxist and Black Power ideas with NWG associates among its contributors. If NWG ideas found resonance with any political party it might have been through the version of dependency discourse that it promoted and which appealed to Michael Manley and certain forces within the PNP from 1972 (see Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 109-111). The late Tim Hector's Antigua Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM) emerged with a strong populist and eclectic anti-imperialist orientation. JEWEL emerged in Grenada and morphed into the core organization in the New JEWEL Movement (NJM), which overthrew the government of Eric Gairy and formed the short-lived People's Revolutionary Government (PRG). The ideological influence of the late C.L.R James and the international impact of the ideologically heterogeneous Black Power Movement in the USA also influenced the trajectory of the left-wing organizations mainly in Caricom countries.

Ideologically, the political and ideological heterogeneity within NWG was reflected in the involvement of James Millette, Clive Thomas, Walter Rodney, and Lloyd Best among its founding members, and their influence was decisive in the emergence of the new organizations with which they were associated (Mars 1998: 50-51). While their influence carried over into other social and political organizations in the Caricom area beyond the academy, NWG was less effective in mobilizing and training the first generation of youths during the independence period. Of course, NWG drew attention to certain contradictions around the political character of the postcolonial ruling bloc, questioned their authoritarian political style, and put the question of democracy at the center of their concerns. Rodney offered a racialized class interpretation of underdevelopment that generated a populist resonance that melded with Beckford's cultural romanticization of the "peasantry." Rodney's assertion that "white ... capitalist imperialist society is profoundly and unmistakably racist" (quoted in Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 108) requires closer scrutiny to reveal the limits of racial analyses of the contradictions of capitalist imperialism.

Kenan Malik reminds us that for “all practical social purposes race is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of race has created an enormous amount of human damage” (1996: 15) partly through the naturalization of political, economic, social, cultural, ideological, and coercive mechanisms and their use via the racial rule that racial states reproduce (see Goldberg 2002: 76-80). Goldberg says, “racial governance was moved to treat societies considered racially inferior either as free space for the (profit) taking—as space needing to be cleared of the supposedly inferior inhabitants, as sources simply of wealth” (2002: 83-84). One of the main consequences has been the division of the working class through the routinization of racial nationalism via the naturalization of history and culture, the historicization of nature and the separation of culture from nature.

Historically, across the Caribbean the core of the colonial and postcolonial ruling class forces comprised largely white agro-commercial interests. As such, it was impossible to talk about class exploitation without confronting the contradictions that unfolded as part of the racialization of social life. Rodney appreciated the social and cultural impact from the racialization of class relations in Caribbean life (Mars 1998: 50-51; Benn 2004: 251). From the colonial era on the “racial state” worked to normalize racial rule. As David Goldberg observes the racial state extends its rule beyond “... labor regulation by insisting on managing most if not all forms of exchange, commerce, intercourse, raw materials, production, trade, markets, labor circulation, distribution, and redistribution.” Racial rule under racial naturalism vents its antipathy openly, while racial rule under racial historicism manages its antipathy in paternalistic, “ambiguous, ambivalent, indeed, hypocritical” ways, exposing white supremacist modernist variations of segregation by degree rather than kind (Goldberg 2002: 111, 79; see Rabe 2005: 123-126 and *passim*). Black Power ideology in the Caribbean emerged around liberal idealism and naturalistic materialism that superimpose biological conceptions of race and culture on class and gender relations. The discourse of sovereign autonomy that NWG and the post-NWG formations like the WPJ, NJM, ACLM, Tapia House, the WPA and others embraced did not transcend the naturalistic materialism that informs state-centric anti-imperialist notions of sovereignty. It is impossible to understand the forms of agency and resistance that emerged in the postwar Caribbean outside of the context of international capitalism of which the Caribbean has been an integral part.

#### IV. NEW WORLD NEO-KEYNESIANISM: VARIANT OF NEOCLASSICAL ECONOMICS

In 1945, the Caribbean Labour Congress (CLC) approved a statement on “Economic Development and Federation” in which it declared, “Unrestricted encouragement of capital from outside the area is not a wise policy to pursue for ... reasons” that included the repatriation of profits and foreign economic and political control. The CLC saw a contradiction between goals of national development and capital accumulation, so it advocated local ownership of the means of production with the state intervening and playing the major role in mobilizing investment capital. The CLC insisted that “in cases where capital must be raised externally” the Government should borrow from foreign governments and institutions like the World Bank and reallocate the loans for preferred projects rather than encourage “direct investment by the foreign capitalist” (Hart 2004: 137-38, 139)<sup>14</sup> to bring capital accumulation in line with the imperatives of “national” economic development. The CLC idea was compatible with the neo-Keynesian norms that encompassed the “indicative planning” the World Bank and UN encouraged at the time (Watson 1975).

E. Roy Weintraub says there are “alternative programs, partially overlapping in some ways with the neoclassical research program.” He includes the “Keynesian program as a particularly interesting one that developed in the 1930s and was successful and progressive through the 1970s when its predictive failures and theoretical difficulties, brought about by its confrontation with simultaneous unemployment and inflation, led to its relative degeneration with respect to the alternative neoclassical program in its New Classical form” (2002: 262-63). Weintraub’s notion of Keynesianism’s “predictive failures and theoretical difficulties” hints at the systemic crisis that unfolded around the exhaustion of the postwar strategy of international capitalist accumulation. The microelectronics revolution with its emphasis on computer-assisted engineering (CAE), computer-assisted design (CAD), and computer-assisted manufacturing (CAM) to increase the rate of exploitation of labor is at the heart of the strategy to restructure international capitalism in the direction of globalization. Given that international capital organizes the bulk of productive export activity in the Caribbean, it is hard to see how international investors could afford to invest in the “innovative” labor-intensive strategies NWG imagined as a way to achieve international (export) competitiveness. Hitherto the Caribbean region has not been successful at realizing price and wage competitiveness with “Low Wage Asia.”

Largely, NWG social scientists embraced neo-Keynesian prescriptions for full employment and national economic development.

Their call for innovative labor-intensive production in an international capitalist economy also implied that the neo-Smithian state (see Agnew 2005: 48-49) could determine the strategies and priorities of capitalist accumulation. Labor-intensive production was/is typically associated with low skill, low-productivity, and low-wage activities. NWG economists did not seem to understand postwar capitalism as international capitalism; they had difficulty grasping the capitalist character of the state, and they failed to see the relationship between the state and capitalism as an internal relation. They seemed overwhelmed by the pervasiveness of neo-Weberian historical sociological theory that framed their theoretical constructs, wittingly or unwittingly. Benn explains that as a group NWG economists shared ideas about size, openness, dependence, underdevelopment, the need for nationalization, and full employment, regardless of the specific emphasis found in the ideas of any one of the economists whose arguments he analyzes (Benn 2004: 122-145).

Among NWG economists, Girvan seemed aware of the relentless process of techno-industrial restructuring that took place in the US from the 1950s; however, he tended to view high-technology production as inimical to the needs of Caribbean countries (Girvan 1971). In the decades following World War II, the industrial sector in the US economy experienced acute technological displacement of labor due to the impact of R&D on technological innovation. Millions of mass production jobs were destroyed in industries like steel, automobiles, electrical, and other manufacturing industries (see Rifkin 1995) about the time that NWG social scientists were lamenting the introduction of capital intensive techniques in branch plant operations (oil and bauxite), light manufacturing, and hotel construction in the West Indies (see Benn 2004: 130).

In 1947, Ford Motor Company opened its automation department to improve the “use of existing technologies—hydraulic, electromechanical, and pneumatic—to speed up operations and enhance productivity on the assembly line.” Capitalists and their technocrats and engineers were exuberant about the anticipated contributions from the fledgling computer revolution and they imagined unlimited economic and political benefits of the future “workerless factories.” They spoke contemptuously about “human labor as at best a ‘makeshift’, a sort of necessary evil in relation to the “new control technologies” they saw in the offing. The American state and leading capitalists moved deliberately to counter the ability of organized labor to use the strike weapon to wage class struggle, considering that American capitalism experienced 43,000 strikes “between 1945 and 1955 ... in the most concentrated wave of labor/management confrontation in industrial history.” After World War II, capital made



automation technology its fulcrum for waging class struggle in order to reverse “organized labor’s invasion of their traditional terrain.” In the period of 1956-1962, “more than 1,500,000 lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector in the United States” with steel, automobiles, and electrical among the hardest hit industries (Rifkin 1995: 66, 67).

The U.S. government and organized labor understood that labor-intensive techniques of production did not offer a viable alternative to capital-intensive techniques to address rising unemployment and/or increase labor productivity. By the middle of the 1950s, the United Auto Workers Union (UAWU) and organized labor embraced technological automation. The Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) perceived “automated machines and electronic computers” as technology that would “result in lay-offs and in the upgrading of the level of skills required in the workforce.... The prospect of labor displacement can be eased ... by joint consultation between companies and unions, and by management planning to schedule the introduction of automation in periods of high employment, to permit attrition, reduce the size of the labor force and to allow time for the retraining of employees” (CIO 1955: 21-22, quoted in Rifkin 1995: 85). Capital revolutionizes the productive forces by replacing living labor with dead labor (machines and other technology) wherever feasible to reduce labor costs, increase control over workers in the production process, and intensify the rate of exploitation. The intensification of the rate of exploitation under capitalism is the basis on which labor becomes more skilled, increases its productivity and struggles to raise its standard of living, and builds the conditions that make it possible to cease producing surplus labor, which is capital.

The globalization of high technology production also disciplines labor partly by deconstructing national one-sidedness and by forcing workers to compete for jobs and the means of subsistence on an uneven global playing field. The accumulation requirements of capital are such that it will seek to attract smaller quantities of more highly skilled and productive labor as it repels larger quantities of less skilled labor. Clearly, labor-intensive technology is not a viable or sustainable solution to the contradictions capitalism creates for workers. The NWG rhetoric that foreign investors showed a bias for capital-intensive technology in Caribbean production revealed a tendency to conflate production for profit with subsistence production, consistent with conflating mental labor and manual labor. In large measure NWG economists embraced dependency theory as an ideological defense of economic nationalism that failed to advance a rigorous theory of Caribbean political economy (see Girvan 1973). The majority of NWG social scientists paid scant attention to the

postwar political economy of the US which amounted to ignoring important evidence: a “theory that ignores evidence is an oxymoron” (Newman 1998: 5).

Studies on the so-called plantation model (Best 1968), the integration of export agriculture with international capital (Beckford 1972), regional economic integration (Brewster and Thomas 1967),<sup>15</sup> and the role of foreign capital in extractive industry (Girvan 1971) tended to view the economy from a neo-mercantilist state-centric perspective. The authors tended to view the economy in terms of technical relations, with the economy conceived much like a thing existing in a more or less passive repose at the disposal of the state for politicians and technocrats to manipulate at will. Across the spectrum, naturalistic materialism is discernible in notions of technological determinism (Girvan), the static dual world of hinterland and metropole (Best), the romanticization of the peasantry (Beckford), and the notion of a classless Caribbean society (Best).

NWG drew on dependency economics to study the international economy with emphasis on dualistic notions of center (metropole) and periphery (hinterland), and imagined the Caribbean region to be overwhelmed by smallness, openness, dependence, and underdevelopment (see Benn 2004; Watson 1989). The static notion of a dependent, open, underdeveloped economy inverts Eurocentric thinking and equates the West to the authentic ideal model of the pure rational economic realm. This view, which approximates a form of anti-historicist historicism that comports with naturalistic materialism, harps back to the discourses of discredited nineteenth-century physical anthropology, which asserted the primacy, uniqueness, and equivalence of each culture and romanticized separateness and hierarchy at the expense of commensurability.

On the surface, the juridical features of postwar decolonization and sovereign autonomy seemed to validate the notion of a territorially delimited world, an impression that the United Nations (UN) “model” of sovereign statehood and World Bank approval of national indicative planning seemed to foster. The UN “model” stressed deontological notions of “racial equality, national sovereignty and self-determination” (Malik 1996: 15), without the means to guarantee any one of these principles in substantive terms under international capitalism. Substantively, the U.S. ruling class implemented the strategy of using the Bretton Woods institutions to intensify the integration of the international economy in the direction of multilateralism (Kiely 2005), with the support of the ruling classes in the other core capitalist countries. This strategy represented a break with imperialism in the direction of asymmetric hegemony. Most

NWG accounts of development did not seem to appreciate that what they called economic development is a byproduct the spatially configured process of capital accumulation on a world scale. In their preoccupation with sovereign autonomy, they arbitrarily subordinated the economy to the state as an external (intervening) agent, which they imbued with the power to tether capital to national political imperatives: this romantic notion is reminiscent of how liberalism reduces social relations between classes and groups to technical relations between things.

Denis Benn says the NWG economists emphasized notions of foreign ownership, economic extraversion, export dependence, price indeterminacy, systemic incalculability, and other factors they viewed as inimical to “autonomous” development of Caribbean economies. Substantively, their views differed from those of the political elite and government leaders by degree rather than kind. They saw autonomy and dependence as opposites as opposed to mutually constitutive aspects of a heterogeneous capitalist totality. Such functionalist notions that conflate symptoms with structural problems have characterized the work by Alister McIntyre, Lloyd Best, George Beckford, Norman Girvan, Owen Jefferson, and other West Indian economists (see Benn 2004). The seemingly plausible notion of the plantation as a totalizing institution hardly withstands close theoretical or empirical scrutiny. In their description of the technical aspects of the world capitalist process along lines of vertically integrated production within the international division of labor where plantation production is already subsumed, NWG economists fetishized the plantation and placed the concrete spatiality of international capitalism under geographically determined static foreign-domestic dichotomies,<sup>16</sup> a method that makes it difficult to grasp capitalism as a globally constituted form of social relations.

George Cumper challenged Norman Girvan and NWG to substantiate the assertion that their “dependency economics” was a homegrown autonomous product. (see Girvan 1973: 1-33; Cumper 1974: 466-68; Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 98, 118-119). Cumper’s discussion of the NWG intellectual trajectory did not address the making of the NWG’s “ideological community” or the fetishization of the market in the intellectual culture of neoclassical economics. Nonetheless, Cumper showed that NWG dependency economics did not break with “Anglo-Saxon economics,” including marginalism and he insisted that New World “did not embrace continental European structuralism or Marxist political economy in any systematic way.” NWG never rose above a certain intellectual and ideological eclecticism, for example, in relation to “conceptual, methodological, and epistemological questions” around the

claims of dependency theory (Watson 2004c). Gabriel Palma argues that dependency analysis satisfies the criteria for "a methodology for the analysis of concrete situations of underdevelopment" but fails to qualify as a theory of underdevelopment (Palma 1978: 881-924). Palma's insight and Cumper's critique of NWG dependency economics help to illuminate the conceptual problems that have plagued the larger corpus of scholarship about structural dependency and the notion of underdevelopment. The dependency-underdevelopment discourse has been rather inattentive to the fact that capitalist accumulation, which is a global process, is not about the business of producing so-called autonomous national development (see also Watson 1989).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the Call for Papers for "The Thought of New World: The Quest for Decolonization" Conference, announced by Center for Caribbean Thought, University of West Indies, (UWI), Mona, Jamaica, February 5, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See James Millette (2005) for an historical overview of the origin, development, and disintegration of the New World Group; see also Blomstrom and Hettne (1984).

<sup>3</sup> Millette (2005) discusses Best's involvement in British Guiana; Girvan worked with the PNP during the 1970s. Brewster and Thomas (1967) was intended to be advice for the "prince." Blomstrom and Hettne say in reference to certain NW economists the "influence exercised by the dependency theorists reached new heights, and culminated when some of them were absorbed in the new power structure as economic experts." Michael Manley's writings during the 1970s also emphasized themes of dependency, anti-imperialism, underdevelopment and self-reliance (Blomstrom and Hettne 1984: 110, 112-114).

<sup>4</sup> The passage is from the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. 1953 edition with an introduction by Richard Wright.

<sup>5</sup> CO 32/126. Supplement to The Official Gazette, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 28, 7th April, 1952, pp. 34, 35. Public Record Office.

<sup>6</sup> CO 1042/45 West Indies. West Indian Conference. Terms of Reference.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Hart informed the author in July 2003 in Bristol, England at the Annual British Society for Caribbean Studies (BSCS) Conference that the idea of socialism in the BWI was vaguely grasped and appropriated and individuals the likes of Grantley Adams and Norman Manley, who often identified as socialists, had a very superficial grasp of socialism.

<sup>8</sup> See CO 32/126 Official Gazette, Vol. LXXXVI, No. 4, July 5, 1951, p. 419. Mr. Garner, a member of the Barbados House of Assembly was hostile to Indian and other itinerant merchant peddlers for the ways they took advantage of gullible rural residents across Barbados by selling them inferior goods at inflated prices and at exorbitant terms.

<sup>9</sup> Public Record Office (PRO) CO 1031/1810. File Number WIS185/236/01. Political Report of the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies for February 1954, March 1954, and July 1954.

- <sup>10</sup> Public Record Office: CO 1031/1810. File Number WIS185/236/01. Political Report of the Governor for the Month of July 1954.
- <sup>11</sup> Public Record Office: CO 32/126. Supplement to The Official Gazette, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 10, 4th February 1952, p. 14.
- <sup>12</sup> The discourse of cultural imperialism as globalization is also common in radical right-wing political parties and movements across Europe (see Betz 2003: 200-01).
- <sup>13</sup> Lloyd Best says Walter Rodney was among the individuals in the “West Indian Society for the Study of Social Issues” that became the “first incarnation of what came to be called the New World Group after the quarterly journal issued by kindred spirits in Georgetown in March 1963 ...” (Best 1990: 13). Walter Rodney and George Beckford were among a limited number of individuals with NWG affiliation that the Jamaican authorities penalized for having visited Cuba and/or the Soviet Union (see Lewis 1998: 112).
- <sup>14</sup> Richard Hart, who was a member of the PNP Executive and the TUC at the time, argues that with respect to the PNP during “the first ten years of its existence most, if not all, of the party’s leading members had viewed the direct investment of foreign capital with distrust and disapproval. Foreign investments in the sugar industry and some banana plantations and in insurance and banking had often been described as imperialist exploitation. It had been argued that the profits exported by these enterprises would have served local economic development better if they had been earned by locally owned enterprises” (Hart 2004: 136).
- <sup>15</sup> James Millette says, “I have always been curious about Clive Thomas’s connection with New World on which he has been consistently reticent.... Clive Thomas has never to my knowledge clarified his position on New World. But I can imagine it” (Millette 2005: 17). C.Y. Thomas book, *Dependence and Transformation: The Economics of Transition to Socialism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974, sets him apart from the mainstream NWG theoretical currents.
- <sup>16</sup> See Benn 2004: 137 for an analysis and critique of Best’ static and circular argument about the plantation economy model.

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