

# Immigration blues in CARICOM

By Lindsay Holder

Immigration policies and the status of immigrants in their host countries are today, as they have been at other times in the past, current issues that provoke discussion all over the world. Barbados is no exception to the controversy surrounding immigration. It is important, however, to recognise from the outset that even though one government may adopt more liberal immigration policies and another government less liberal policies, the optimal approach is one that is based primarily on economic realities as well as on some social considerations.

The potential of countries to derive significant benefits from immigration depends on the economic fundamentals of those countries. If we accept that the upper limit to the number of immigrants that a country can sustain depends on the geographical size of the country, its resources, and the use that is made of those resources, then, given the culture and expectations of its citizens, the country can realize significant long-term benefits through the use of immigration policies that are well formulated and implemented.

Typically, immigration benefits countries that are under-populated, have aging populations, or that have labour shortages in some economic sectors. For those countries, use of immigrant labour helps to sustain the engine of economic growth which, in turn, results in several indirect benefits. Of particular importance is that with economic growth, the countries are better placed to maintain their physical infrastructure, e.g. schools and roads, as well as to provide for new infrastructure.

For countries that have to resort to the use of immigrant labour at different times, social considerations may be taken into account in determining the composition of that labour. If homogeneity or sameness is highly prized, then countries would opt for immigrants with the same racial, ethnic, or cultural traits of their existing populations. On the other hand, if multiculturalism or diversity is highly valued, less importance would be attached to the racial, ethnic, or cultural composi-

tion of the immigrants.

Where the immigration programmes are designed and implemented well, the countries do not have to bear any economic burden as a result of the immigrants. This would be the case since the tax revenues accruing to the governments as a result of the economic growth together with the taxes the immigrants themselves are required to pay should be more than sufficient to offset the costs of public goods and services provided to the immigrants and their immediate dependents.

## Immigration and Barbados

Where does Barbados fit into the picture? Barbados is a very small water scarce country, 166 square miles in area, that has experienced remarkable economic growth and improvement in the quality of life of its citizens since the end of the second world war. Within Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries it ranks the highest on the United Nations Human Development Index, and out of a world wide total of 179 countries



Lindsay Holder

it was ranked 37th in 2008. Within the Americas for that year it was ranked third behind Canada and the United States, which

were ranked first and second, respectively.

The progress of the country can be attributed to two primary factors. Firstly,

there was and continues to be the visionary leadership of our premiers and prime ministers who have sought to make optimal use of our resources for the benefit of all citizens. Secondly, there has been the desire, matched by commitment, of Barbadians to succeed and to improve their standard of living. Because of those two factors, a partnership, though rocky at times, was forged between the two main population groups; blacks, that made up the vast majority of the population, and whites, who were and continue to be a small minority but who for the better part of the post world war two period either owned or controlled the bulk of the island's wealth.

In the last 10 to 15 years, Barbados was forced to rely increasingly on immigrants, mainly from Guyana, to satisfy the demand for labour in two important sectors; construction and agriculture. The labour shortages in the construction sector were a result of three factors; aging population, insufficient vocational training

places for all the individuals who were desirous of becoming artisans, and an excess demand for labour that was so great that even if training opportunities were available for all those individuals desirous of becoming artisans the demand still would not have been fully satisfied. In the agricultural sector the labour shortages were also a result of the aging population, but an additional factor also played an important role; the reluctance of most unskilled Barbadians to work in the sector because of the perceived back-breaking nature of the work and low wages.

As the number of legal or documented immigrant workers from Guyana increased over the years, the pattern of linkages associated with those labour flows changed. In the early years in the mid 1990's, the tendency of Guyanese immigrant workers was to relocate alone to Barbados, seemingly content to remit money to their homeland for the support of their dependents. Over the years the pattern changed, as many of the documented workers sought, either legally or illegally, to have their spouses and children settle in Barbados. In the early years the vast majority of the immigrants were of African-Guyanese ancestry, but recent years have witnessed an increasing proportion of Indo-Guyanese.

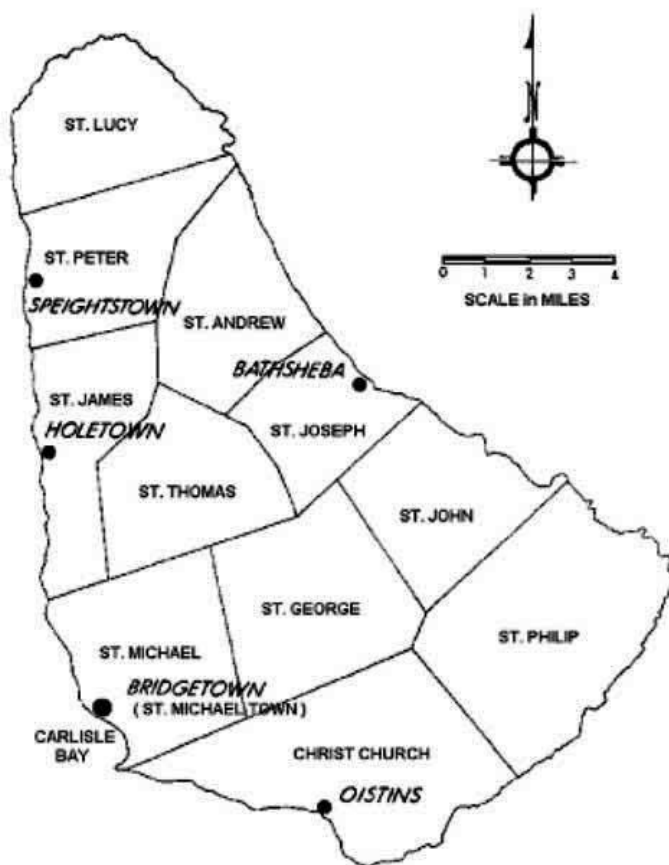
As the number of documented Guyanese immigrant workers increased, so too did the number of undocumented immigrants. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that as the number of documented workers gradually increased over the years, other Guyanese believed that there were employment opportunities to be had and they acted on that belief by relocating to Barbados in search of work even if they remained in the island illegally.

On 5th May 2009 the Government of Barbados announced its new immigration policies with the focus being on managed migration, in contrast to the perceived notion that the immigration policy of the previous administration was an open door one. According to the Government, the major aim of the managed migration approach is to address the unacceptably

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## BARBADOS

West Indies



# The three major benefits of managed migration

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high number of illegal CARICOM immigrants living in the island. Although no definitive statistics on the level of undocumented immigration are available or have been made available, casual observation would tend to support the Government's position that the level of undocumented immigration is unacceptably high.

Across the length and breadth of Barbados CARICOM immigrants, primarily Guyanese, have taken up residence. When compared to the official data on the number of work permits granted annually, including renewals, it is inconceivable that all of the immigrants living in communities across the island could have been granted legal status. Rather, the evidence tends to support the statement that the bulk of CARICOM immigrants living in Barbados are undocumented.

The basic goal of managed migration is to ensure that those immigrants who stay in the country for extended periods are those who have been granted the legal right to do so. In the first instance, managed migration seeks to restrict the medium-term flow of immigrants to those who have been granted work permits or who satisfy other criteria. On occasions permission to reside in the island is also granted to the immediate dependents of those with legal status. In the second instance, managed migration allows some individuals who were initially granted work permits, along with their immediate dependents, to stay in the island indefinitely after their work permits have expired.

Managed migration has three major benefits. Firstly, it allows the host country to control the medium to long-term flow of immigrants to those that can be absorbed without undue difficulty while

at the same time addressing its labour shortages. Secondly, if implemented and policed well, it ensures that the terms and conditions of work for immigrants are no worse than those for nationals. Thirdly, managed migration better facilitates the integration of immigrants into the host country.

In contrast, large numbers of undocumented immigrants can pose problems for a country. These include competition with nationals for jobs and housing, resort by such individuals to illegal meth-

is so simply because the undocumented workers willingly enter into such arrangements with employers. For sure, the behaviour of the employers is unethical, but they stand to benefit from employing undocumented immigrants who are desperate for work and are therefore prepared to accept wages and terms and conditions of employment that are inferior to local norms. On the other hand, the undocumented workers see themselves as benefitting from the arrangements because they would be worse

that have been found to be woefully inadequate. Those doctrines essentially argue that government intervention, if needed, should be kept to a bare minimum, and that the invisible hand of market forces should be allowed to directly determine economic outcomes and indirectly social outcomes.

## Responses to Barbados' Proposed Managed Immigration Policy

In response to the announcement of the Barbados Government's proposed managed migra-

Jamaicans, Vincentians, St. Lucians, and Grenadians. This must be stopped if not CARICOM would shortly be rent asunder." (Nation Newspaper of Friday, 15th May 2009.)

Based on comments attributed to Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of Guyana, it would seem that the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has identified Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago as the chief offenders. (Nation Newspaper of Monday, 25th May 2009.) If that is

terests of Guyanese in Barbados. He is reported to have stated that the latest action by the Barbados Government could undermine the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) that encouraged the free movement of skills, goods, and labour across the region. Furthermore, Mr. Corbin suggested that a team (comprising former ambassadors from CARICOM countries) should visit Barbados on a fact-finding mission and report back to CARICOM. (Voice of Barbados Broadcast of Friday, 22nd May 2009 and Nation Newspaper of Saturday, 23rd May 2009.)

The PNC/R's comments were followed by a response from the President of Guyana that charged that West Indians were continuously treated in a despicable manner by the Barbados Government. He stated that, "... those actions are done unilaterally by the Barbados Government and unless we can change their position on the issue, then I expect the nationals of many countries would continue to be subject to this unCARICOM-like treatment that doesn't reflect the spirit of what we are trying to build in the region." (Nation Newspaper of Sunday, 24th May 2009.)

Locally, Nation Newspaper columnist Albert Branford stated that, "The illegal immigrants may be viewed as convenient pawns in a political arena that has reached a position of stalemate at the regional level and one of checkmate domestically." (Nation Newspaper of Sunday, 10th May 2009.) Mr. Rickey Singh, another Nation Newspaper columnist, in his comments on the Barbados Government's proposed immigration policy, stated, "Let there be some data to back the rhetoric of despair." (Nation Newspaper of Friday, 8th May 2009.)

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**Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves,**



**President of Guyana, Bharrat Jagdeo**

ods and all types of shenanigans to obtain social services to which they are not entitled, increasing levels of crime, trafficking and exploitation of individuals for unlawful activities, increased opportunities for bribery and corruption of public officers, and the social antagonisms that can occur when some nationals feel threatened.

We have not cited exploitation and use of discriminatory practices by employers in their treatment of undocumented workers as a problem. This

off in their home countries.

On balance, therefore, managed migration is the best approach for dealing with migrant labour. Managed migration is consistent with the generally accepted economic doctrine that governments must intervene to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are conferred, either directly or indirectly, on all citizens. Unmanaged migration or an open door policy is consistent with the trickle down or laissez-faire economic doctrines, theories

tion policy, various responses were heard locally and across the region.

The Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, charged, without naming Barbados, that, "It is sad to note that in the 21st Century, some responsible persons, including political leaders, are stoking chauvinistic fires which are latent in Caribbean societies. This has led here and there to an outpouring of a malignant xenophobia particularly against Guyanese,

the case, then Barbadians should also recall that at sometime in the recent past the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines also charged that Barbadians had a false sense of being a cut above the rest of the Caribbean (my paraphrase).

Mr. Robert Corbin, leader of the People's National Congress Reform (PNC/R), the main opposition party in Guyana, accused the Guyanese government of not doing enough to protect the in-



## Today's Weather

### FORECAST

Fair to partly cloudy with a few brief showers.

### International Temperature

Miami: 29.4°C  
New York: 19.4°C  
Toronto: 22°C  
London: 16°C  
Beijing: 19°C

### Tides

High: 7:32 a.m.  
and 8:37 p.m.  
  
Low: 1:42 a.m.  
and 2:00 p.m.

### Rainfall

Yesterday:  
Month:  
Year:

### Yesterday's Temperatures

Max: 31.6°C  
Min: 26.5°C

**SUNRISE - 5:32 a.m.**

**SUNSET - 6:25 p.m.**



# Various responses to Barbados' announcement

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## Comments on the Responses

The responses to the Barbados Government's announcement could be said to have ranged from the ludicrous to simply emotional outbursts.

For our part, we consider the response of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as nothing else but an emotional outburst that ignores the

problems posed by illegal immigration for Barbadian society. He cited a case where the five and 18-year-old nieces of a Vincentian woman married to a Barbadian man had to leave Barbados within a seven-day period on the instructions of the Barbados Immigration Department. (Nation Newspaper of Friday, 15th May 2009.) Clearly, if they did not have legal status in Barbados why should they be allowed to stay? The fact that

their aunt is married to a Barbadian man does not automatically confer legal status on them. That would be a dangerous precedent for the Barbadian Immigration authorities to set.

In contrast to that example that seeks to paint Barbados as a country that is intolerant and uncaring in its dealings with other CARICOM nationals, I can cite an example, one that I am personally familiar with, that paints a com-

pletely different picture. A young Vincentian woman was diagnosed in St. Vincent with heart problems that required surgery. Through the initiatives of Barbadians, arrangements were made for her to see a local cardiologist. The cardiologist referred her to the local cardiac surgeon, and he and his cardiac team agreed to waive their fees for the operation. The balance of the overall cost of the operation was paid for by her then Barbadian fi-

ancé. At best, the assistance provided to the young lady by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines could only be described as meagre.

The comments of Mr. Corbin and Mr. Jagdeo are both ludicrous and remarkable for various reasons. Many Afro-Guyanese, when asked why they leave Guyana and are willing to work as undocumented immigrants in Barbados state that, in addition to low wages, the policies of the government and the hiring practices of most businesses tend to favour Indo-Guyanese. A 2009 Report on Minority Issues in Guyana prepared by an independent expert, Ms. Gay McDougall, for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, corroborated the views expressed by some Afro-Guyanese immigrants in Barbados, and it also indicated that Guyana was an ethnically polarized country. The response of the Guyanese government was to describe the findings of the Report as being grossly inaccurate and extremely offensive.

Thus, we have a situation where Mr. Corbin, fully aware of the claims by Afro-Guyanese that they are being discriminated against in their home country, has not seen it fit to recommend that a CARICOM fact-finding

mission should visit Guyana to investigate the claims. Yet, he has seen it fit to recommend that such a mission should visit Barbados to investigate claims of discrimination against undocumented Guyanese immigrants. With regard to the Government of Guyana, just as it has accused the Barbados Government of treating West Indians in a despicable manner, similar language was used to describe the McDougall Report.

One would have thought that rather than hastening to make all sorts of allegations against the Government of Barbados and Barbadians, the leaders of the two main political parties in Guyana would have adhered to the Biblical injunction "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (St. Matthew Chapter 7, Verses 3 to 5, Holy Bible, King James Version.)

Mr. Branford's quoted comments are baffling **CONTINUED on Page 15**

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**Leader of the People's National Congress Reform (PNC/R), Robert Corbin.**

# Disconnect between comments and other issues

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since, to me, there is a disconnect between those comments and other issues raised in the rest of Mr. Branford's column. Elsewhere in his column he stated "There is understandable concern about the demands that illegal Caribbean immigrants would put on the country's (Barbados) social infrastructure." It is important, however, to recognize that the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, mentioned

in Mr. Branford's column, does not provide for the free movement of CARICOM nationals across member states (more on that later). Thus, why should the current Barbadian Government postpone action on the issue of undocumented immigrants when that would only serve as an incentive for more individuals to take up illegal residence in the island. If we accept that action was necessary and had to be taken at some time, then it is difficult to agree with Mr. Branford's

comments with regard to illegal immigrants being viewed as convenient political pawns.

The derisive statement quoted from Mr. Singh's article is perplexing since it is both consistent and inconsistent with other statements he has made in the past. In earlier Nation Newspaper columns he has railed against what he perceived to be the unfair and unjust treatment meted out by the Barbados Government and

Barbadians to other CARICOM nationals, particularly Guyanese. Yet, in the Nation Newspaper of Sunday, 28th September 2008 the following comments were attributed to him. "Managed migration is quite acceptable particularly for small economies like Barbados. Freedom of movement (as in visitors) should not be confused with the freedom to live and work (immigration)." Then again in his weekly column of Friday, 21st

December 2008 he stated, "I made it clear that while it remains the respected right of any CARICOM state to pursue a policy of managed migration, this should not be confused with a failure to honour the spirit and letter of relevant provisions of the Community's treaty, and care should be taken to avoid hostility and human rights violations of affected individuals."

If Mr. Singh is sincere about his comments on

managed migration, why then the vitriolic, sarcastic, innuendo laden article in the Nation Newspaper of Friday, 8th May 2009 in response to the Barbados Government's announcement of its managed migration policy? To date, as far as I am aware, he has not commented publicly on the findings of the McDougall Report.

*(Th 'Analysis' will appear in tomorrow's Edition.)*



Rickey Singh, Nation Newspaper columnist



Ms. Gay McDougall, who prepared A 2009 Report on Minority Issues in Guyana for the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

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# History of the integration movement

*(Immigration Blues in CARICOM by Lindsay Holder continues from The Sunday Advocate)*

## Analysis

Both the President of Guyana and Mr. Singh have alluded to the 'spirit' of what CARICOM and CSME are supposed to be all about. However, this spirit, one that should promote harmony and co-operation among CARICOM nationals, does not just emerge out of nowhere. To get a feel for this spirit, it is useful to take a look at the history of the integration movement as it relates specifically to the freedom of movement issue.

The West Indies Federation lasted from 1958 to 1962, and one of the divisive issues that had to be addressed was the freedom of movement issue. At the 1955 conference convened specifically to deal with the issue, it was agreed that the matter should be left in abeyance for a five-year period. That decision was further compromised by the later decision of the 1961 Inter-Governmental Conference to permit only a gradually phased application of the principle, which would then not be fully implemented until 1973.

According to Gordon K. Lewis (*Growth of the Modern West Indies*, 1968, Monthly Review Press), "That meant a victory for the Trinidadian view that the Trinidadian economy, being a person-importing economy and not, like Barbados, a person-exporting economy, could not permit an immediate influx of 'small island' immigrants to threaten existing wage standards and place fresh strains upon its embryonic social services. The fear of being swamped by the 'small island' unemployed, clearly enough, was strong enough to overwhelm a principle absolutely essential to any viable federation, and could perhaps only be solved in the long run, as Mr. Barrow argued at the time, as the problem of freedom of movement was seen as a problem of organizing regional full employment."

Caswell Franklyn, in an article in the *Nation Newspaper* of Sunday, 18th January 2009, referred to the 1965 proposal by the Premiers of Barbados and British Guiana, (both countries

had not yet become independent), to form a free trade pact which would have provided for freedom of movement. According to Mr. Franklyn, the Barbados Advocate of 12th July 1965 reported that Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the Leader of the Opposition in British Guiana, argued against the pact, and the Advocate quoted him as saying, "British Guiana would be-

across the region.

In the post CARICOM era mass migration within and out of the region began in the late 1970's. It was occasioned by the collapse of the Guyanese and Jamaican economies when the then governments of those two countries, influenced by the political ideology of socialism, implemented economic policies that turned out to be disas-

1973, but it was the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas signed on 5th July 2001 that officially put the issue of freedom of movement once again on the table. The latter Treaty provided for the establishment of the CSME, and the latter came into effect on 1st January 2006 with Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago as the

wards globalization, and some regional progress, the similarities between the English-speaking CARICOM countries now and around the time when the federation was formed are somewhat similar, with the exception that the roles of some of the major players have been reversed as well as the emergence, in some cases, of vast economic disparities. At the time of the

and roundly criticised about its immigration policies with respect to some CARICOM nationals.

One would have thought that the establishment of the Federation back in 1958 would have been the most appropriate time to introduce unlimited freedom of movement since the differences in the levels of economic development of the then member states were not vast. Insularism, however, prevailed, and the Federation broke up with Jamaican nationalism playing a great part in that break-up. Following the withdrawal of Jamaica in 1961, Trinidad and Tobago followed suit, accompanied by the famous statement by the then Premier, Eric Williams, that, 'one from ten leaves night.'

Now, almost 50 years later, when chasms exist in the levels of development among some CARICOM countries, Barbados is being painted as the main villain impeding the implementation of freedom of movement for CARICOM nationals. For us, the main indicator of the chasms that currently exist is the Human Poverty Index (HPI) compiled by the United Nations. For example, for the four major CARICOM countries the values of the HPI published in the United Nations 2007/2008 Human Development Report were as follows; Jamaica 14.3%, Guyana 14.0%, Trinidad and Tobago 12.0%, and Barbados 3.0%

The fact is that the spirit that is so essential for the promotion of harmony and cooperation among CARICOM nationals was never allowed to take root. Neither top-down approaches nor the awareness programmes that have been undertaken across the region to promote the CSME agenda can engender that spirit. With regard to the latter, the words of Gordon K. Lewis, writing in 1968, are still relevant. "It is even more idle to believe that the unity, the shared sense of being West Indians, could be accomplished by things like popular educational campaigns. For such unity, as all federal experience shows, matures out of a long experience of shared effort on the part of the individual territories combining to meet particular problems in which all possess a felt concrete

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**Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the Leader of the Opposition in British Guiana in 1965.**

come the dumping ground for the unemployed, restless, and poverty-stricken in Barbados." With the granting of independence in 1966 to both Barbados and British Guiana, the latter being renamed Guyana, the proposed free trade pact with freedom of movement for nationals of the two countries was never implemented.

Following the formation of Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) on 15th December 1965 and of CARICOM on 1st August 1973, where Barbados was a founding member of both regional institutions, the freedom of movement issue, although still important, attracted less official attention. Despite that lack of attention, freedom of movement, although limited, was a reality as professionals, e.g. doctors, lawyers, teachers, priests, and nurses, together with some skilled and unskilled individuals relocated

trous. Many Jamaicans migrated to the United States and Canada and quite a few relocated in the Bahamas. Guyanese also migrated to the United States and Canada, but many settled within the region, and currently the greatest numbers can be found in Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados. It is important to note that the first wave of mass migration that occurred within the region as a result of the collapse of the Guyanese and Jamaican economies was not in any way associated with any official regional policy on freedom of movement. Thus, many of the immigrants who resettled in the other territories were at first illegal, but several of them have been successful in having their status regularised.

CARICOM was established with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on 4th July



**Premier of Barbados in 1965, Mr. Errol Walton Barrow.**

first full members. On 3rd July 2006, the six member states of the OECS signed on to the CSME Treaty.

The CSME Treaty provided for limited freedom of movement among member states, and the categories of nationals that benefitted from the freedom of movement provisions were graduates of the Universities of the West Indies and of Guyana, entertainment artists, sports persons, and journalists. Implicit in the agreement was that work permits would be granted to CARICOM nationals by member countries experiencing labour shortages. Barbados has fully complied with the existing freedom of movement provisions of the CSME Treaty. Contrary to statements made by some individuals, that Treaty does not provide for unrestricted freedom of movement across national borders.

Despite advances in technology, the trend to-

Federation Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad were the most prosperous countries. However, the relative differences in terms of economic development were not vast. Currently, Trinidad and Tobago continues to be prosperous and is the wealthiest country in the region and Barbados has done exceptionally well. The members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have also made substantial progress. Both Guyana and Jamaica are struggling.

Given those facts, it is alarming to witness the hue and cry being heard across the region simply because Barbados has chosen to implement a policy of managed migration that is consistent with its obligations under the Revised Treaty. Even before the recent announcement made by the Government on its proposed managed approach, Barbados was being demonised, bullied,



# 'Barbadians should protect the gains they have made'

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interest."

Nor can it now take root by demanding that Barbadians accept the burdens associated with unacceptably high numbers of undocumented immigrants within its borders. There is the notion, expressed by Mr. Singh, that because Barbados benefits significantly from the trade arrangements and services under the single market component of the CSME, it has "obligations to honour disadvantaged economies, including avoiding the path of hostility towards nationals of other CARICOM jurisdictions." (Nation Newspaper of Sunday, 20th July 2008.) If we infer from Mr. Singh's writings that hostility is consistent with deportation of undocumented immigrants, then we need to recognise that there is no economic doctrine that says that a country is obligated to turn a blind eye to undocumented immigrants living within its borders because it has a visible or merchandise trade balance surplus with the countries of origin of those undocumented immigrants.

Until such time as there is an acceptable levelling of the playing fields in the various countries, Barbadians owe a duty to themselves to protect the gains that they have made over the years, and they should therefore support any governmental policies that seek to promote managed migration. At the same time, it is also their duty to be civil, fair, just, and respectful to those immigrants who respect our valued traditions.

## Comparisons with the European Union

In his weekly column of Friday, 6th February 2009 titled 'Of Migration, Freedom, and Abuse', Mr Rickey Singh made the following statement, "CARICOM administrations would also be aware that while some pay lip service to the creation of a seamless regional economy, and talk correctly about borrowing or adapting lessons from the European Union in the functioning of its administrative arm, the European Commission, they expediently avoid recognising that freedom of movement within the EU is 'a fundamental right'



**Former Immigration Minister of the United Kingdom, Phil Woolas.**

covered by regulations."

Mr. Singh's statement with regard to freedom of movement within the EU is true in principle, but grossly misleading with regard to its implementation. The facts are as follows.

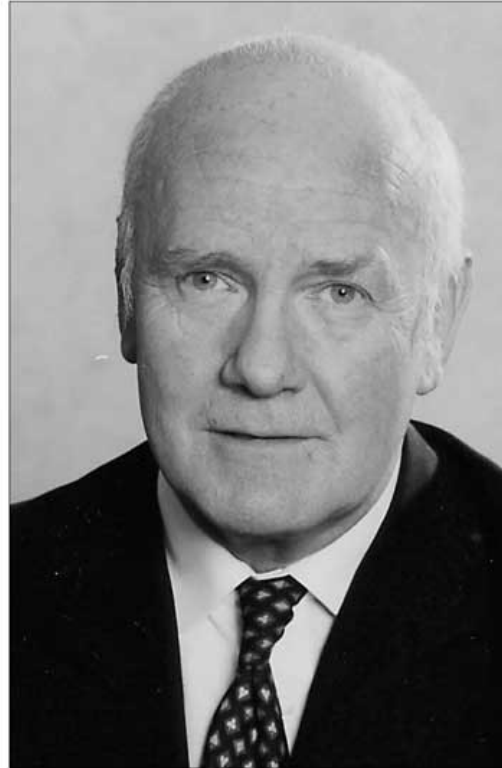
Under European Community law, all citizens of EU member states plus those of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland, with all combined being known as the European Economic Area (EEA), have the freedom to move within the EEA to work, study, or establish businesses. The right of freedom of movement is one of the four pillars of the EU. The only exception is that member states can opt to place transitional restrictions on nationals of member countries joining the EU through the accession process.

As at the 30th April 2004 the EU was comprised of fifteen member states, and there were no restrictions on freedom of movement across the member states for citizens of those fifteen countries. On 1st May 2004 the member states comprising the EU were increased to twenty-five with the accession to membership of what are now known as the A8 countries; the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,

Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia; plus Malta and Cyprus. On 1st January 2007 the membership was further increased to twenty-seven countries when Romania and Bulgaria (A2 countries) joined.

When the A8 countries joined, Britain, Ireland, and Sweden were the only three of the original 15 members that did not impose restrictions on citizens of the A8 with regard to freedom of movement specifically in relation to taking up employment. For example, Germany imposed the maximum seven-year transitional ban on nationals of the A8 countries with regard to the freedom to work and France imposed a five-year ban. In 2008, an additional eight of the old EU-15 member states allowed A8 nationals freedom of movement to seek jobs, but Germany, Austria, Belgium, and Denmark did not. In order to keep their labour markets closed to Poles and other A8 nationals between 2009 and 2011, these four countries declared to the EU that they expect "serious labour market disturbances, or serious threats for the labour market balance" from allowing freedom of movement.

From 1st May 2009 EU A8 citizens should have



**Former British Home Secretary of the UK, John Reid.**

gained equal rights to employment and state support across the EU, but it was anticipated that Germany, Denmark, Belgium, and Austria will retain their right to place restrictions on the freedom of movement rights of citizens of the A8 countries.

With the accession of the A2 countries of Bulgaria and Romania on 1st January 2007, the then EU-25 nations could restrict the migration of Bulgarian and Romanian workers. All of the old EU-15 except Finland and Sweden restricted the freedom of movement of A2 workers, but most of the A8 nations in central Europe allowed them to enter and seek jobs. In the second half of 2008, most of the old EU-15 nations announced that they would prolong restrictions on Bulgarians and Romanians for another three years, but Greece, Spain, and Denmark joined Finland and Sweden in removing barriers to these A2 nationals.

With regard to the accession of the A2 countries, the debate that occurred in Britain and the subsequent decisions that were taken are instructive. As indicated earlier, Britain was one of the three countries that did not place restrictions on the working rights of citizens of the A8

countries when those countries joined the EU on 1st May 2004. The government had projected that approximately 13 000 A8 citizens would migrate annually to Britain. However, by the end of July 2006 the official data indicated that approximately 600 000 A8 immigrants had resettled in Britain. The total number was felt to be significantly higher due to a large number of unregistered and undocumented migrants.

Thus, leading up to the membership of the A2 countries, there was considerable debate in Britain as to whether a similar situation should be allowed to occur. It was for that reason that Britain decided to place restrictions on the working rights of citizens of the A2 countries.

In 2008 a Migration Advisory Committee was established to make recommendations on whether the restrictions on A2 citizens should be removed or maintained. The Committee recommended that the restrictions should be maintained, and the British Government accepted in full the recommendations. Professor Metcalf, the Chairman of the Committee, said, "In this time of economic downturn it was sensible to make recommendations which would avoid any

negative impacts on the current UK workforce. That is why we chose to advise that the current restrictions should stay in place, with only a modest increase in the number of temporary workers in agriculture."

The then Immigration Minister, Phil Woolas said, "It is essential that only those we need can come here to work and that is why we have decided to continue restricting the work that Bulgarian and Romanians can do here. This is a prudent decision that will ensure the UK continues to benefit from the positive economic contribution Bulgarian and Romanian workers make, while protecting British workers and making sure the numbers coming here are managed in the national interest."

Two important points can now be made. Firstly, the CSME Treaty does not provide for full freedom of movement with attendant work rights for CARICOM nationals in member states other than their own. Secondly, even if agreement is reached on freedom of movement with accompanying work rights, Barbados, or any other CARICOM member state, can reserve the right to place restrictions or temporary bans on citizens of other member states with regard to the right to work provisions.

## Summary

Generally, managed migration is the best approach that can be adopted by a small country with regard to immigrant labour flows. It provides a high degree of certainty for the host country, and it is also best suited for protecting the rights of the immigrants. In the week of 8th August 2006, the then British Home Secretary, Mr. John Reid, in a keynote speech on immigration, stated that he wanted to end "the daft, politically-correct notion that anybody who talks about immigration is somehow a racist." We wish to end by modifying that statement to read as follows, "Allegations that every Barbadian who raises the issue of illegal or undocumented immigration in the island is somehow a racist, anti-CSME, chauvinistic, or xenophobic could be attributed to irrationality, self-interest, or ulterior motives."