

EXCELLENT WORKERS BUT WRONG COLOUR OF SKIN
CANADA'S RELUCTANCE TO ADMIT CARIBBEAN PEOPLE AS DOMESTIC
WORKERS AND FARM LABOURERS.

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ABSTRACT

In 1955 and 1966 Canada opened its doors to a limited number of Caribbean domestic workers and seasonal agricultural workers. Canadian government officials remarked that the programmes were part of Ottawa's aid package to the Caribbean and that they would enhance trading relationships between Canada and the Caribbean, a view which had been echoed by other writers on the topic. This thesis argues that both programmes were instituted after Canada had exhausted all attempts to recruit adequate European labourers. The thesis also argues that both programmes were deliberately designed and executed to ensure that Canada got maximum benefits at low cost. Canada also attached unprecedented conditions to both schemes in an effort to significantly reduce the number of workers recruited. The thesis provides a thorough examination of the proposals by Caribbean governments, together with interest groups from Canada, to persuade Canada to establish these migrant programmes and the excuses and refusals by Canada to those proposals. The thesis documents the increasing recruitment of Mexican agricultural workers at the expense of Caribbean workers which further dispels the view that the migrant programmes were part of an aid package to the Caribbean. The thesis notes that unlike the domestic programme the agricultural programme was not a route towards landed immigrant status.

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GLOSSARY

Throughout the thesis, the terms, “Anglophone Caribbean”, “Commonwealth Caribbean” “English speaking Caribbean” and “British West Indies” will be used interchangeably to mean the same set of island territories together with British Guiana (Guyana after independence) and British Honduras (Belize) in South and Central America, respectively.

The term “black/s” will be used to refer to persons of West African ancestry. Correspondences from the Canadian government tend to use the term “coloured” while other authors cited in the thesis use the term “Negro.”

The terms “women” and “girls” will be used to refer to the domestic workers from the Caribbean. Most of the Canadian government correspondence refers to the domestic workers as girls rather than women, hence the usage in the thesis.

The term “liaison officer” refers to the agents of the participating governments in the seasonal agricultural workers programme. The islands of Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados had individual liaison officers while one officer looked after the interest of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. Among other things the liaison officer investigated and in some cases settled conflicts between workers and employers, inspected accommodations for workers and provided worker orientation. An effective liaison officer is one who would be able to make himself/herself available in a timely manner when requested by a worker or employer. Some islands depended on the liaison officers to secure an increase in the number of places allocated to their territories in the programme.

Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS) according to their official website is non-profit, federally incorporated in 1987 to facilitate and coordinate the processing requests for foreign seasonal agricultural workers. Authorized by Human Resources Skills Development Canada, F.A.R.M.S. performs an administrative role to the Caribbean and Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. F.A.R.M.S. is a private sector run organization, governed by a Board of Directors, appointed from those commodity groups participating in the program. (<http://www.farmsontario.ca/>)

Introduction

At a cabinet meeting on June 8, 1955, the decision was taken to admit 100 domestic workers into Canada from the British West Indies on an experimental basis. Seventy-five were to be selected from Jamaica and twenty-five from Barbados. This cabinet decision marked the commencement of the Caribbean domestic scheme whereby an annual quota, determined by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, was selected from the participating territories of the British West Indies (BWI). This scheme was significant in that it took place during a period when Blacks and East Indians, the two dominant groups in the Caribbean, were not welcome in Canada. The scheme, as designed in 1955, lasted until 1968 with only minor changes being made. However, in that year the special quota arrangement was abolished to the detriment of the smaller participating territories.

On March 31, 1966, the cabinet made another historic decision by approving the admission of seasonal workers from Jamaica to assist in the harvest on Ontario fruit and vegetable farms. The first batch of 264 workers arrived in Ontario a few months later, marking the commencement of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme (SAWP).¹ Unlike the domestic workers scheme of 1955, SAWP was established after Canada had officially adopted a new immigration policy in 1962, which placed the greatest emphasis upon education, training and skills as the main consideration of admissibility into Canada, rather than the country of origin of the applicant.

This thesis argues that both the domestic workers scheme and the SAWP were last resorts implemented to partially manage a labour shortage in Canadian homes and on fruit and vegetable

¹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government Achieves Division, Record Group (RG) 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, Confidential memorandum to cabinet captioned Seasonal Workers for Ontario Farms, April 12, 1966.

farms in Ontario. It further argues that both programmes were carefully, skillfully and deliberately designed and implemented to ensure that Canada got maximum benefits. The thesis explores this topic largely using primary sources, particularly archival materials held by Library and Archives Canada: cabinet conclusions, correspondences between government ministries and between Canadian government officials and Caribbean governments. The archival materials were records from the following departments during the years 1941 to 1977: Citizenship and Immigration, Labour, Immigration Branch and Employment and Immigration. Among the archival materials consulted were secret and confidential documents which contradicted Canadian government claims that the migrant programmes were established as a means of aid to the Caribbean governments. The confidential documents were also useful in providing another perspective for the establishment of a seasonal agricultural workers programme with Mexico in 1974, rather than the one provided by the Canadian government.

The other primary source materials consulted were newspaper articles, parliamentary debates, and reports from groups, organizations and other stakeholders. The newspaper articles were taken mainly from local newspapers in Ontario and Jamaica. These articles provided an avenue for the employers and employees to make public certain aspects of the workers programme, such as their dissatisfaction with certain terms and conditions of the contract. The newspapers also provide a medium through which the audience heard comments from migrant workers. The Debates in the House of Commons revealed that a high level of interest in the migrant workers programmes was shown continually by politicians on both sides of the House, by virtue of the vigorous debates in parliament. Reports from organisations and individuals included the report by Ernest Bezaire on behalf of the Essex County Associated Growers in 1965. It showed the Government and the farmers were sometimes at loggerheads with each

other; the efficient and reliable labour force required by producers was not available locally and the government continued to resist the importation of a labour force from the Caribbean. My sympathy lies with the Caribbean workers.

The thesis comprises two chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. The introduction will place the movement of Caribbean people in search of employment as domestic workers and farm labourers within a historical perspective. While the jobseekers were successful in exploiting labour markets within the Americas and in the United Kingdom, they found that the Canadian labour market was virtually impossible to penetrate up to the middle of the twentieth century, despite the demand in Canada for the services which Caribbean people offered. The introduction will also discuss some of the factors that limited access to the Canadian labour market for Caribbean people. Quite interestingly, the Canadian government representatives in the Caribbean did not always agree with the decisions of their counterparts in Ottawa, especially the denial of immigrant status to almost everyone of African and Asian ancestry. To the credit of the commissioners, they argued that the selective immigration practices marginalized Caribbean people and contradicted the beneficial trade relationship between Canadian investors and the Caribbean.

Chapter One will take a critical approach to the domestic workers scheme of 1955. In justifying the argument that it was a last resort, the chapter will begin by examining the failure of various waves of European migration to adequately meet the demand for domestic workers in Canada. The thesis will then examine the struggles by individuals and organizations to persuade the Canadian government to allow the admission of Caribbean domestic servants into Canada, leading up to 1955 when cabinet decided to admit 100 domestics on an experimental basis. The majority of the chapter will examine the domestic scheme during the period 1955 to 1967,

focusing on the regulations governing the programme and a critical assessment of the operation of the programme. Comparisons will be made with various European schemes to prove that the Caribbean scheme was designed and operated to ensure that Canada received maximum benefits at the expense of the Caribbean governments. The discussion will also show that the Caribbean domestics tried to benefit from the unfair system by taking advantage of some of the loopholes. For example, some declared themselves to be single to get selected and then, after one or two years, sponsored their children for immigration to Canada.

The Second Chapter will focus on the seasonal agricultural workers programme (SAWP) and will follow a similar pattern as the domestic programme. In examining the struggle to get Canada to admit Caribbean agricultural workers, the chapter will note that besides the pre-1966 struggle, there was a second struggle from 1966 to 1976 by the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean to be admitted in the SAWP, which is not explained in the literature on the topic. The chapter will rely on correspondence between Ottawa and the Caribbean as well as correspondence between government departments, reports from farmers and farm organizations, newspapers articles and parliamentary debates. The chapter will argue that the SAWP was also a last resort and it was arranged to ensure that Caribbean workers were not employed at the expense of Canadian workers. Unlike the domestic workers who had to pay the cost of airfare to Canada plus ground transportation to the place of employment, employers of agricultural workers were required to pay return airfares. While the imposition of a return air fare condition ensured that workers returned home at the end of the contract, the intent of such a provision was to increase the cost of Caribbean agricultural workers and was a reflection of the Department of Labour ambivalence to the scheme. The Department of Labour always argued

that if the farmers paid competitive wages and provided reasonable working conditions, they would be able to attract Canadian labour and would have no need for foreign labour.

The Second Chapter will also briefly examine Canada's arrangement with Mexico under a seasonal agricultural programme with similar terms to that of the British West Indies.

Although Mexico is not a part of the Anglophone Caribbean, this paper considers it necessary to examine the participation of Mexico in SAWP because Canada had originally promised that if it ever established a seasonal agricultural programme, the Caribbean would have first preference rather than Mexico or Hong Kong. To the astonishment of Caribbean Governments, Canada announced in 1974 that it had reached an agreement with Mexico to form a seasonal agricultural workers programme.

It took almost three decades after the programme began before academics began doing substantial research into the SAWP with most of the work done after 2000. It was therefore not surprising that there had not been much work done on the topic. The majority of the works were in the form of scholarly articles and theses and confined to a specialised region, either the Caribbean or Mexico. Authors who concentrated on the Caribbean included Vic Satzewich and Irving Andre, while Tanya Basok, Leigh Binford, and Catherine Colby focused on Mexico. There were journal articles by Preibisch and Binford, and researchers on behalf of the North South Institute which gave substantial coverage to both Mexico and the Caribbean.²

² Vic Satzewich, *Racism and the Incorporation of Foreign Labour Farm Labour Migration to Canada since 1945* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991); Irving Andre, "The Genesis and Persistence of the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural workers Program in Canada," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 28, no. 2 (1990):243-301; Tanya Basok, "Free to Be Unfree: Mexican Guest Workers in Canada," *Labour, Capital and Society* 32 (1999): 192-222; Tanya Basok, "He Came, He Saw, He Stayed. Guest Worker Programmes and the Issue of Non-Return," *International Migration* 38, no. 2 (2000): 215-238. Tanya Basok, *Tortillas and Tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican Harvesters in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) ; Tanya Basok, "Migration of Mexican Seasonal Farm Workers to Canada and Development: Obstacles to Productive Investment," *International Migration Review* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 79-97; Leigh Binford, "Social and Economic Contradictions of Rural Migrant Contract Labour Between Tlaxcala, Mexico and Canada," *Culture & Agriculture* 24, No. 2 (Fall 2002): 1-19; Catherine Colby, "From Oaxaca to Ontario: Mexican Contract Labor in Canada and the Impact at Home," A report prepared for the California Institute for Rural Studies (July 1997): www.cirsinc.org (accessed June 4, 2013); Kerry

Scholarship on migrant workers focused on several areas. Viv Satzewich concentrated on the incorporation of racism in both the agricultural and domestic workers schemes. Tanya Basok, Leigh Binford, and Catherine Colby looked at the impact of the SAWP on the local migrant communities, and the social and economic relationship between the migrant workers and the host communities. The conclusions were generally the same in that the impact was felt mostly by the immediate families of the participants rather than the community as the returns were spent on consumer goods, children's education and home repairs. Hence participants depended on their annual participation in the programme to be able to sustain their lifestyles. Tanya Bosock was critical of the working and living conditions of Mexicans referring to their inability to circulate through the labour market as being in a state of bondage. She argued that the economic conditions of the Mexican workers prompted them to be willing partners in the state of 'unfreedom.' A similar claim was made about the Caribbean workers by Irwin Andre. An emerging trend reflected in the literature was the interest being shown by legal experts and the focus on legal aspects of the SAWP.

More recent work has been done by the North-South Institute, a not-for-profit corporation established in 1976. The Institute provided professional, policy-relevant research on relations between industrialized and developing countries. In 2003 the Institute did a major study of the SAWP focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and suggesting ways to improve living and working conditions for the migrant workers. Researchers doing work on behalf of the Institute included Dr. Kerry Preibisch of the University of Guelph, Veena Verma LLB of the law firm Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntye & Cornish in Toronto, and Professor

Preibisch and Leigh Binford, "Interrogating Racialized Global Labour Supply: An Exploration of the Racial/National Replacement of Foreign Agricultural Workers in Canada," *The Canadian Review of sociology and Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (Feb 2000): 5-34.

Andrew Downes and Cyrilene Odle-Worrel of the University of the West Indies.³ This thesis has depended on research from the Institute to provide statistics from the 1980s onwards where such information was not released by Library and Archives Canada.

Although the female domestic workers programme began in 1955, it was not until the 1990s that substantial scholarship began to emerge on the Caribbean domestic movement to Canada. A common focus of authors such as Ian Mackenzie, Vic Satzewich, Rina Cohen, Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis and Patricia Daenzer, had been the discrimination evident in the scheme as Canada shifted its source of domestic workers from Europe to the Caribbean and later the Philippines. The discrimination was evident in the immigration requirements, changes in citizenship procedures and compulsory living in requirements among others.⁴ Another perspective highlighted was coping, resistance and empowerment methods used by domestics to survive and function in their work environments as well as the role of activist groups like INTERCEDE in their struggle for citizenship and other rights for domestic workers of colour.⁵

³ Heather Gibb, "Farmworkers From Afar: Results from an International Study of Seasonal Farmworkers From Mexico and the Caribbean Working on Ontario Farms," Ottawa: The North South Institute, 2006.

⁴ Ian B. Mackenzie, "Early Movements of Domestics From the Caribbean and Canadian Immigration Policy: A Research Note," *Alternate Routes A Journal of Critical Social Research* 8 (1988): 124-143; Rina Cohen, "A brief History of Racism in Immigration Policies for Recruiting Domestics," *Caribbean Women Studies* 14, no. 2 (1994): 83-86; Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, "Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social boundaries of Modern Citizenship," in *Not One in the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Patricia Daenzer, "An affair between Nations: International Relations and the Movement of Household Service Workers," in *Not One in the Family: Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997)

⁵ Judith Ramirez, "Domestic Workers Organize," *Canadian Women Studies* 4, No. 2 (winter 1982): 89-92; Rina Cohen, "Women of Color in White Households: Coping Strategies of Live-in Domestic Workers," *Qualitative Sociology* 14, no. 2 (1991): 197-215.

Missing in the literature is a critical analysis of the efforts by Caribbean leaders to persuade Canada to admit its citizens as domestic workers and farm labourers. The periods prior to 1955 and 1966 saw the untiring and determined efforts of Caribbean governments, particularly Jamaica and Barbados, in the face of equally determined resistance by Canada. One exception is Satzewich, who looked at the struggle of Caribbean governments to get Canada to agree to a seasonal agricultural programme. The early struggle of Caribbean governments prior to 1955 is virtually absent in the literature. As this thesis examined the events leading up to the domestic movement in 1955, it challenged the statement by the Canadian Government and echoed by Calliste, Bakan and Stasiulis, and Daenzer that Canada agreed to the domestic scheme as a means of maintaining the vital trade and investments in the Caribbean. While this thesis highlights the vital trade between Canada and the Caribbean, it argues that if Europe had been able to supply domestics in sufficient quantity, there would not have been a Caribbean domestic scheme in 1955. The thesis cites correspondences between Ottawa and its foreign missions in Europe to show the desperate effort made by Canada to revive the movement of domestic workers from Europe prior to 1955.

The Caribbean islands in the twentieth century were characterised by severe poverty brought about in part by overpopulation, unemployment and underemployment. One of the ways governments sought to deal with the issue of high unemployment and a rising population was by encouraging migration of its citizens. So acute was the problem that even though Britain was accepting about fifty thousand West Indians annually during the 1950s the problem of high unemployment continued. In 1961, Sir Grantley Adams, Prime Minister of the Federation of the West Indies, in a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker and Immigration Minister Ellen Fairclough, begged for Canada's assistance in easing the problem of over-

population in the West Indies. He reminded them that the largest employer were sugar cane plantations and the season lasted from January to April, after which the majority of people were unemployed. In an interview with Robert Nielsen of the *Toronto Daily Star*, Adams remarked: “I don’t think people here know what it’s like – real poverty with empty bellies – but we face it with 1,400 people to the square mile.”⁶ In 1966, at the Canada-West Indies Conference, the leaders again pleaded with Canada for assistance in addressing the overpopulation and unemployment problems in the islands. They noted that unless the pressures were eased, social unrest would result. They particularly called for a sponsored migration scheme similar to the 1955 domestic scheme under which Canada would accept selected workers for permanent or temporary employment. One of the recommendations was for the commencement of a seasonal farm workers programme.⁷

According to the 1951 census, the black population of Canada totalled 18,080 which represented 0.15 percent of the population of Canada.⁸ Blacks comprised a small group in Canada, partly because slavery was not an important institution there as in the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Some of the early blacks in Canada were actually brought in from the British West Indies as slaves, and in 1796 about 500 Jamaican maroons were exiled in Nova Scotia. The term “maroon” was the name given to runaway slaves who were successful in setting up independent settlements in the mountains of Jamaica. Another group of early settlers in Canada were Barbadians who were brought to work in the coal mines of Sydney, Nova Scotia towards the end of the nineteenth century. During the First World War several hundred more Caribbean workers were recruited as labourers for the mines. However, there was a drastic

⁶ Robert Nielsen, “Canada May Open Door To West Indians—Adams,” *Toronto Daily Star*, December 5, 1961.

⁷ LAC, RG 26, vol.125, file 3-33-6, Canada-West Indies Conference of Officials – Kingston, Jamaica, January 27 and 28, 1966.

⁸ LAC, RG 26, vol.124, file 3-33-6, Immigration to Canada from 1945 to 1954, Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

decrease in the number of Caribbean migrants from the 1920s. In fact the West Indian population in Canada was smaller in 1941 than it was in 1921.⁹

In 1911 there was a short-lived movement of domestic workers from the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. This domestic scheme was a one-time movement of 100 domestics to Montreal in a scheme organized by Dr. Arthur Lemieux and supported by a few French Canadian employers. Based on the documents available, it appeared that the employers were satisfied with the performance of the women and were in favour of the continuation of the scheme. The Superintendent of Immigration, however, decided that the scheme should not be continued.¹⁰ The Caribbean would have to wait for another forty-four years for another movement of domestics into Canada.

Even though Canada was admitting thousands of immigrants annually during the twentieth century, it had adopted a selective immigration policy that severely limited the number of black people admitted. In 1942 the director of Immigration admitted that the black population had increased very little in the past fifty years. "There is no regulation in existence which debars people on the ground of colour but the regulations debar people on other grounds which have pretty much the same effect."¹¹ The director did not list the "other grounds" on which coloured people were rejected. In 1943, Prime Minister McKenzie King stated in the House of Commons:

With regard to the selection of immigrants, much has been said about discrimination. I wish to make it clear that Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. ... There will, I am sure, be general agreement with the view that the people of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population.¹²

⁹ James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984),9.

¹⁰ Ian B. Mackenzie, "Early Movements of Domestics From the Caribbean and Canadian Immigration Policy: A Research Note," *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research* 8 (1988): 127.

¹¹ LAC, RG 76 vol.838 file 553-36-644 pt.1 Director of Immigration to A. C. Hardy April 27, 1942.

¹² G. A. Rawlyk, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1945-1962," *The Dalhousie Review* 42, no. 3 (Autumn 1962):289.

Furthermore, the Immigration Act of 1953 gave the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the power to limit or prohibit the entry of immigrants, based on nationality, citizenship, ethnic group, occupation, class or geographical area of origin.¹³

The categories of British subjects admissible in Canada under Order-in-Council 2856 of July 1950 were: “British subjects by means of birth or naturalization in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand or the Union of South Africa or a citizen of Ireland who had become a citizen of the United Kingdom by registration under the British Nationality Act of 1948.”¹⁴ This Order-in-Council prompted an article in the November 1951 edition of *Canadian Labour Reports* captioned, “Canada Abridges Commonwealth.” It argued, “For purposes of immigration, Canada shortens the size of the Commonwealth to far less proportions than for any other purposes including defence.” The report was specifically referring to the exclusion of Her Majesty’s Subjects born or naturalized in the British West Indies. The article further stated that Canada was practicing discrimination on a rather large and heartless scale against the Negroes of the British West Indies. “This unfairness and discrimination against the Negro is out of line with the basic Canadian Character. Ottawa might reconsider.”¹⁵

Canada could have correctly argued that British West Indian nationals were never totally debarred entry into Canada. Arrangement were made for the admittance of BWI persons under paragraph four of Order-in-Council P.C. 2856 of the Immigration Act which permitted the sponsorship of a close relative by a Canadian citizen who could receive and care for that relative. The close relative had to be within one of the following categories: husband or wife, son or daughter, brother or sister, step-brother or step-sister, half brother or half sister, father or mother,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁴ *LAC*, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt. 1, Acting Director of Immigration to Jack Nathan, April 8, 1950.

¹⁵ *LAC*, RG 26, vol. 124, file 3-33-6, Jean Boucher to Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, January 8, 1952.

grandparents, fiancé(e)s. In addition, cases involving personal hardship were given special consideration on humanitarian grounds. Likewise persons with exceptional ability who would be an asset to Canada's economy and society were afforded special consideration. While paragraph four may have sounded reasonable in theory, it did not cause any dramatic increase in the number of blacks admitted into Canada. For example, in October 1951, the Canadian Trade Commissioner in Jamaica reported that he had received three thousand applications for immigration to Canada, mostly from Jamaicans.¹⁶ Yet for the fiscal year 1950-51, only sixty-nine blacks were admitted into Canada from the BWI. During the next fiscal year, 1951-1952, sixty-five blacks were admitted and in 1952-1953 eighty were admitted.¹⁷ In 1954 out of a total of 174,154 immigrants admitted by Canada, 112 or less than three percent came from the West Indies.¹⁸ This low success rate among blacks did not happen by chance or because most of the applicants did not meet the requirements under the category in which they applied. It was designed by the immigration officials. A memorandum from the Director of Immigration to the Chief, Admissions Division stated: "It is significant to note that the total number of coloured persons in all categories outside of paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of P.C 2856 who may be admitted to Canada for permanent residence during the calendar year is not to exceed 100. It is to be understood of course, that this is not to be given any publicity."¹⁹

Several reasons or excuses had been advanced by Canadian authorities to account for the low immigration rate among blacks, the most popular being that of climate. The theory was that persons who spend all their time in a tropical climate could not adapt to Canada's harsh

¹⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt. 1, Canadian Trade Commissioner (Jamaica) to the Director of Immigration, October 10, 1951.

¹⁷ LAC, RG 26, vol. 124, file 3-33-6, Director of Immigration to Deputy Minister of Citizenship, June 23, 1954.

¹⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt.1, Time October 17, 1955.

¹⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt. 1, Director of Immigration to Chief, Admissions Division, January 2, 1952.

winters.²⁰ This excuse was mentioned in 1942 by the Director of Immigration and for the next decade by subsequent immigration officials. The proponents of the theory never produced evidence in support of their claim. Neither had they shown that the few blacks in Canada from tropical climates were having a tough time adjusting to Canada's extreme climate. On April 27, 1958, in a document to the Prime Minister and ministers of government, the Negro Citizenship Association described the theory as completely erroneous. The government was reminded that during the Second World War, blacks from tropical and subtropical areas served with distinction in Her Majesty's armed forces in various countries and climates around the world "from Greenland's icy mountains from India's coral strand."²¹

Another excuse was coined in 1949 by A. L. Jolliffe, Director of Immigration and repeated in 1955 in a memorandum to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: "It is that experience has taught us that, generally speaking, coloured people in the present state of the white man's thinking are not a tangible community asset, and as a result are more or less ostracized. They do not assimilate readily and pretty much vegetate at a low standard of living." The Director went on to state: "To enter into an agreement which would have the effect of increasing coloured immigration to this country would be an act of misguided generosity since it would not have the effect of bringing about a worthwhile solution to the problem of coloured people and would quite likely intensify our own social and economic problem."²² The Negro Citizenship Association responded by stating that blacks had become an integral part of the political, social and religious groups in their communities. They were also found in skilled and unskilled labour, working harmoniously with workers of other races. The association spoke of

²⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt.1, Director of Immigration to G. W. Birks, April 8, 1942.

²¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt.1, Brief presented to the Government of Canada by the Negro Citizenship Association April 27, 1954.

²² LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt.2, Director of Immigration to the Private Secretary to the Minister of Mines and Resources, October 12, 1949.

the various regulations that had been passed by municipalities and provinces to eliminate discriminatory practices. Some examples were the Ontario Racial Discrimination Act and the Manitoba Fair Employment Practices Act.²³

Another reason seemed to have been the perception that blacks were sexually immoral by nature. This perception was evident in the 1911 movement of domestic workers from Guadeloupe. After the group of domestics landed in Montreal, a story emerged in *Colliers* magazine which stated that on arrival at the train station, all the women were met by brothel keepers who took them away to serve as prostitutes in exchange for warm coats. The women had arrived in April clothed in summer dresses. Even though all the women were placed in the homes of their employers, the immigration officers ordered a police investigation into the allegation, no doubt because of their distrust of the black women. The investigation found that the story was completely fabricated.²⁴ Based on comments that were made about that scheme decades later, it seemed that Canadians continued to believe that blacks were sexually promiscuous by nature. For example, paragraph three of a confidential letter from the director of immigration dated April 8, 1942, responding to a request for a movement of domestic workers to Canada from Col. Gerald W. Birke, stated: “ A good many years ago there was a movement of skilled domestics from Guadeloupe and it was very popular at first, but within a relatively short time it became very unpopular and in the end we had to bring about the return of most of them to their native country and not a few with illegitimate children born here.”²⁵

This impression of black women did not change with the domestic scheme of 1955. Soon after the first batch of women arrived in Canada in 1955, immigration officials were quick to

²³LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt.1, Brief presented to the Government of Canada by the Negro Citizenship Association April 27, 1954.

²⁴Ian B. Mackenzie, 126.

²⁵LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt.1, Director of Immigration to G.W.Birks, April 8, 1942.

discover that girls who had declared themselves as single actually had illegitimate children and were in a common-law relationships. The author of a document giving an overview of the scheme from 1955 to 1974 described it as follows: “Another interesting thing about many ‘single’ domestics who are mothers, and even those who are not, is that many have a common-law husband, fiancée, boyfriend or even legitimate husband stashed away somewhere...”²⁶

Earlier in 1961, the Commissioner for Canada based in Trinidad was very emphatic in informing the director of Immigration, Mr. Baskerville, that it was virtually impossible to find a domestic worker without a child. “It is almost certain that any so-called professional domestic servant from this area is bound to have had at least one child attached to her in some way or another.”²⁷

Blacks and their interest groups were not the only ones who were inconvenienced by Canada’s colour bar. Canadian Government Trade Commissioners in the Caribbean in the 1950s complained of the inconvenience and embarrassment they faced in the application of the colour bar. In a letter to the Acting Director of Immigration in 1950, the Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in Port of Spain warned about being very careful not to offend local susceptibilities. He noted that the Caribbean people bought approximately “\$40. per head per annum of Canadian goods” which worked out to about forty-three million dollars per annum. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining the good will between Canada and the Caribbean. He emphasised: “Sooner or later immigration from the British Caribbean will have to be dealt with in accordance with a yet to be determined policy rather than on an ad hoc basis.”²⁸

²⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1265, file 5850-6-4-533 pt. 6, Report on the Domestic Workers Programme June 14, 1974.

²⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt.7, R. G. C. Smith to Mr. Baskerville October 17, 1961.

²⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt.1, Canadian Trade Commissioner (Trinidad) to the Acting Director of Immigration May 17, 1950.

During the next few years more letters were forwarded to Ottawa from Canada's representatives in the islands explaining their concerns about negative effects the colour bar might have on future relations with the Caribbean. In an effort to maintain cordial relationships, T. G. Major, Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in Trinidad, encouraged Ottawa to consider "a tolerant immigration policy which would permit the entry of a restricted number of persons of British Caribbean birth irrespective of their racial origin." He further advised that the qualifications for admission should be based on personal qualities and training and the actual needs of the Canadian economy. The Trade Commissioner, in that document, was enforcing the importance to Canada of its commercial relationship with the Caribbean. He mentioned that Caribbean leaders had been making public statements about Canada's racial colour bar which he was afraid could have a negative impact on the goodwill towards Canada in the region. He cautioned that as the territories were moving towards self government, a new British nation would emerge with the leaders being persons of colour. "It is with such persons and not with white British colonial officials and white West Indians that Canadian officials and business men increasingly will have to deal."²⁹

Major also expressed concern about the refusal by Ottawa to grant visas to Caribbean nationals in the business and professional classes, who occupied influential positions in the islands. "In a number of instances these have been persons, or relatives or close acquaintances of persons, having either business, professional or other ties with Canada who have expressed strong resentment over their non-acceptance." Again citing the importance of Canada's trade

²⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt.1, Report by the Canadian Trade Commissioner in Trinidad on Immigration From the British Caribbean.

with the Caribbean, he warned “I feel strongly that there are a sufficient number of danger signals flying to warrant a re-examination of the existing policy and its likely effects.”³⁰

Trade Commissioner T. J. Major was almost correct in his reminder to Ottawa that Canadian business had a big stake in the British Caribbean that had built up over many decades. Actually, the relationship was built up over a few centuries. Since the days of sugar and slavery, vessels filled with timber, estate supplies and dried cod sailed from Newfoundland bound for the Caribbean, where they were traded for molasses and strong rum. The dried cod from Canada was the main form of protein for the slaves. Even today the national dishes of some of the Islands include dry codfish (oildown in Grenada and ackee and saltfish in Jamaica.) That trade continued to blossom and by the twentieth century the Caribbean was one of Canada’s most valuable trading partners. The Trade Commissioner estimated that in 1951 over 1,500 Canadian firms and companies had commercial relationships with the Caribbean and that even during the Second World War and the immediate post-war period the volume of exports ranged between thirty and eighty million dollars. In addition there were transportation investments by Canadian National Steamships and Trans Canada Airlines as well as private investments in bauxite in Jamaica and British Guiana.³¹ The trade in cod fish was most important to the Atlantic Provinces as the Caribbean was the largest buyer of salted cod fish. In 1963, Nova Scotia’s exports to the Caribbean were estimated at \$14,246,000 or 10.8 percent of the province’s total exports for that year.³²

Canada also had significant investments in banking and insurance in the Caribbean. In fact, in some of the islands Canadian banks monopolized the banking businesses. In Grenada for

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Agnes Calliste, “Canada’s Immigration Policy and Domestic from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme” in *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers*, ed. Jesse Vorst et al (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), 140.

example, up to the late 1970s the major banks were Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the Royal Bank of Canada and the Bank of Nova Scotia. The only additional major bank on that island was Barclays Bank. There was only one home-grown bank, the Grenada Cooperative Bank, locally known as the “Penny Bank” which correctly suggested that it was no match for the foreign banks. While the banks were intended to serve the Canadian traders, they also became an indispensable service for the locals. This service assisted the development of Canada and the underdevelopment of the West Indies because whereas the locals could make deposits in the banks, loans were generally restricted to Canadian traders.³³

Canadian government trade commissioners also complained about the embarrassment and awkwardness they faced in enforcing the ban on Asiatic Immigrants. Most of the islands in the 1950s had a sprinkling of citizens from Asiatic parentage, particularly from India. In Trinidad and British Guyana, East Indians comprised approximately fifty percent of the total population. Likewise there were a sizeable number of persons of Chinese origin in both territories. While the immigration regulations allowed for the immigration of a small amount of blacks, there seemed to have been a total or almost total ban on Asians. Trade Commissioner E. M. Gosse, assigned to Jamaica, correctly observed in a letter dated October 9, 1951, that the Chinese controlled almost the entire food stuff trade and were the retailers of Canadian products such as dried, pickled and canned fish, flour and meat products. He lamented, “The thought of the possible results of antagonism to Canada developing amongst those Chinese causes me some misgivings.”³⁴ In 1953, Trade Commissioner R. R. Parlour expressed similar sentiments.

From time to time we are called on to explain to citizens of Chinese or Indian origin that they are prohibited entry due to their racial origin. In this colony some of the leading merchants and governments are of Asiatic descent. It is difficult for a Trade

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt. 1, Canadian Trade Commissioner (Jamaica) to the Director of Immigration on the Ban on Asiatic Immigrants, October 9, 1951.

Commissioner to entertain and cultivate the friendship of the people in order to sell Canadian merchandise, and then to have to inform them or their close relatives they are prohibited immigrants because of their racial origin.³⁵

Three years later, in 1956, when British Guiana was added to the list of territories participating in the domestic workers scheme, it was stipulated that girls of East Indian racial origin could not be included in the quota. This denial of Indo-Caribbean women as domestic workers caused some embarrassment for Trade Commissioner C. E. S. Smith as his counterpart in British Guiana, Labour Commissioner J. F. Ramphal, was of East Indian origin. “I had a little embarrassment when discussing our programme with him as he is of East Indian origin and asked whether girls of his racial origin would be accepted in our group of 30.”³⁶ Fortunately, the ban did not last much longer. By June of the same year, Mr. Ramphal was informed that the Minister of Immigration had confirmed that the ban on recruiting domestic workers from Asian racial origin had been eliminated.³⁷

It must have been a relief for Canadian Trade Commissioners based in the Caribbean when Canada decided to make an exception to its immigration policy and admit 100 domestic workers from Jamaica and Barbados on an experimental basis. Chapter One will focus only on the ‘first wave’ of the domestic scheme from 1955 to 1967 when the domestic scheme was based on a special quota arrangement where each participating territory was granted a particular quota of girls for migration into Canada. This special quota arrangement was terminated on January 1, 1968, but the domestic scheme continued with applicants applying directly to a Canadian immigration officer.³⁸

³⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt. 1, R.R. Parlour to P.V. McLane, May 6, 1953.

³⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt. 3, C.E.S. Smith to Laval Fortier, May 15, 1956.

³⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt. 2, C.E.S. Smith to Commissioner of Labour (British Guiana) June 4, 1956.

³⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1265, file 5850-6-4-533 pt. 6, Report on the Domestic Workers Programme, June 14, 1974.

Chapter One

The domestic scheme

In 1955 Canada took the historic decision to admit 100 workers from the Caribbean islands of Jamaica and Barbados. While this move suggested that there was a significant change in immigration policy, Canada actually adopted a different attitude towards the domestic servants from the Caribbean than those from Europe. This chapter argues that while the Caribbean governments hailed this move as a major breakthrough in their relationships with Canada, the programme was carefully designed to ensure that Canada reaped huge benefits while assuming limited liability. Rather than challenging the liabilities, the Caribbean leaders were more interested in competing against each other for a share in the scheme.

The domestic scheme came about neither as a measure of good will towards the Caribbean nor as a means of boosting the trading relationship between Canada and the Caribbean. Rather, this chapter argues that the Caribbean was a last resort for Canada as a recruitment region for domestic workers and was selected because of the dwindling supply of European domestics and the growing demand for domestic help in Canada. The chapter will also demonstrate that on the eve of the commencement of the Caribbean domestic scheme, Canada made a final desperate attempt to revive the European domestic scheme but met with limited success. The chapter will also highlight the individuals, groups and organizations who continued to press the Canadian government for the commencement of a scheme with the Caribbean, particularly the many Canadians who had winter homes in the islands. The Canadian tourists, who utilized local domestic help, wrote letters to the Canadian government encouraging them to tap into the abundant source of cheap effective domestic workers in the Caribbean, especially since what was available in Canada was expensive and ineffective.

The chapter will begin with some background discussion relating to the increasing demand for domestic workers and the attempt to source those workers from the preferred European countries. It will then proceed to focus on the Caribbean domestic scheme tracing the struggle of individuals, groups and organizations to convince Ottawa to open its doors to domestics from the Caribbean. The bulk of the chapter will focus on the period 1955 to 1967 when the quota system was in operation, designed to admit a limited number of domestic workers from the British West Indies (BWI) into Canada. The chapter will critically examine the regulations governing the quota system as well as the praise and criticism coming from Canada. While the focus will be on the British West Indies, comparisons will be made from time to time with domestics from Europe.

The demand for external domestic help in Canada can be traced from the middle to late nineteenth century with the development of capitalism, industrialization, and urbanization, which opened up new employment options for women in factories, hospitals, offices, retail outlets and schools. The period also coincided with the growth of a rising urban middle class who demanded higher standards of housekeeping at a time when housework was extremely laborious partly due to the underdevelopment of household technology.¹

The period around the Second World War saw an explosion in the demand for domestic workers as employment opportunities for both working and middle-class women rose, resulting in a steady exodus of women from domestic work into the growing industries and services. Daiva K. Stasiulis and Abigail B. Bakan argued: “A situation of chronic labour shortage came to characterize domestic service under conditions of modern capitalism. The so-called servant problem emerged as the number of women willing to work as the private servants of other

¹ Sedef Arat-Koc, “From Mothers of the Nation to Migrant Workers,” in *Not One of the Family Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 59.

women declined.”² This period also saw the increasing development and use of household appliances as a means of automating housework and technologically ‘solving’ the servant problem. There was one activity in the household that was resistant to automation which was the caring of young children. This, therefore, meant that despite automation, there would still be the need for domestic help. The irony about domestic work was that despite the demand, wages remained low in relationship to what could be earned elsewhere. Usually a chronic labour shortage in a particular area should lead to increased wages and improved working conditions as a means of attracting and retaining labourers but this was not the case with domestic work. Domestic labour proved to be remarkably “immune to the regulatory infection” of the market.³ The only answer was the importation of workers who would be willing to accept the present wages and function under the existing working conditions.

England was understandably the traditional and preferred source of domestic workers for Canada, especially since Canadian citizenship laws defined Canadian citizens as British subjects rather than Canadian citizens up to 1947. Canada therefore sought to keep its population as close to the ideals of its mother country. To meet the demand for domestic workers between the 1890s and the 1920s, heavy recruitment was done among English and Scottish girls. They were granted landed immigrant status upon arrival with the stipulation that they should provide six months of domestic service. According to Bakan and Stasiulis, “such immigration was seen to play an explicit nation-building role: white British domestics were chosen with an eye towards their future role as wives and mothers.”⁴

² Daiva K. Stasiulis and Abigail B. Bakan, *Negotiating Citizenship Migrant women in Canada and the Global System* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 45.

³ Daiva K. Stasiulis and Abigail B. Bakan, 46.

⁴ Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva K. Stasiulis, “Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship,” in *Not One of the Family Foreign Domestic Workers in Canada*, ed. Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 33.

By the late nineteenth century it became clear that Canada had to look to other sources as exclusive British immigration was unable to meet labour needs. The Scandinavian countries, particularly Finland, then became the second favourite. The experience of the Finnish domestics seemed to have been relatively positive. As the majority of Finnish women who came to Canada were employed in domestic service, class division was absent among them. They were therefore able to bond together into organizations dedicated to improving conditions and opportunities for themselves. Similar to the British immigrants who operated hostels for new British arrivals, the Finnish built immigrant homes in several cities and started employment services for domestic workers. The camaraderie that existed among the Finnish domestics worked to their advantage. “In this climate of class, gender, and ethnic solidarity, Finnish domestics were able to share information, and refuse low wages and bad working conditions.”⁵

Domestic workers from Eastern and Central Europe were next on the list of desirables for Canadian households. Prior to the Second World War, the most preferred were the daughters of Russian Mennonites who came to Canada as refugees experienced in domestic work. As with the previous two groups they were able to establish women’s shelters to offer accommodation to new arrivals. The Russian Mennonites protected new domestic workers from unscrupulous employers: “They would accompany the domestic to her place of employment, inspect the house with her, remove domestics from unfavourable working environments, and keep a black list of employers to whom they would refuse to send domestic workers.”⁶

After the Second World War, Canada admitted domestic workers from displaced persons camps in Europe. The preference was for those from the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as these women were closest to the Scandinavians who were the preferred domestics

⁵ Sedef Arat-Koc, 68.

⁶Ibid.

among continental Europeans. An important development from that point was the increasing tightening up of the recruitment criteria for domestic servants. It was stipulated that the women had to be single or widowed, between eighteen and forty years of age, and of good average intelligence and emotional stability. They had to pass a medical examination, which included x-rays and tests for pregnancy and venereal diseases.⁷ The Canadian authorities also began to insist that new recruits honour the one-year agreement to remain in domestic service. This insistence had been described as moving from a friendly gentle person's agreement to a mandatory imposition. However, there were no serious penalties for breaking the contract and the domestic workers could still change employers with relative ease.⁸

In the 1950s, Canada turned to the least preferred part of Europe for domestic workers, namely Southern Europe. Canada also found itself in competition with other countries for domestic workers. Women from the displaced camps were few in numbers and with the entrenchment of the Cold War, it was no longer possible to obtain workers from Eastern Europe. With a growing demand for domestic workers, Canada was forced to begin recruiting in Italy. A total of 357 Italian women were recruited from 1951 to 1952 before the programme was abruptly ended. The termination seemed to have been a direct consequence of the enforcement of the rules governing domestic workers. While it is true that some Italian women broke their contract and left domestic work to take up employment in factories or to join family members in other cities, the same could be said about British and Scandinavian domestics. The difference with the Italian domestics was that they were the least preferred among the Europeans. Therefore "such demonstrations of freedom were not to be tolerated among an immigrant group of women who were not desired as 'mothers of the race' or carriers of culture. Italians domestics

⁷Ibid., 70.

⁸Ibid.

were seen as ignorant, primitive villagers whose backward cultural background had failed to prepare them for the high standards and sophisticated technology of Canadian housekeeping.”⁹

By 1954 it was becoming evident that Canada had to find a source other than Europe to meet the growing demand for domestic servants but the authorities continued to resist. Instead the Department of Citizenship made a desperate effort in 1954 to resuscitate the dwindling importation of domestics from Europe. On August 6, 1954 the department contacted the diplomatic offices in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Berne, Brussels, Karlsruhe and Linz, seeking information regarding “the various factors which tend to diminish the movement of suitable domestics to Canada.”¹⁰ A second memo was sent to all district superintendents for their views on the adequacy of wages paid to domestics in their areas and the effects these wages may have had on the movement of immigrant domestics. Both memos requested a response by September 1, 1954.¹¹

The responses from the various regions were almost unanimous. The European countries themselves were facing an internal shortage of domestic workers and in some cases, were recruiting from outside. The wages paid in European countries were as high and in some cases higher than those paid in Canada. Even in the countries where wages were lower than in Canada, the domestic workers enjoyed certain benefits. In Austria, for example, where wages ranged from \$25.00 to \$30.00 per month plus room and board, domestics were entitled to one afternoon off per week plus every second Sunday. In addition, they accumulated annual leave at the rate of one day for each month of service and after five years, were entitled to three weeks leave per year. After only six months they were entitled to four weeks sick leave on full pay.

⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government Archives Division, Record Group (RG) 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Chief, Operations Division to the diplomatic offices in Europe, August 6, 1954.

¹¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Chief, Operations Division to all district superintendents, August 6, 1954.

Their National Social Insurance coverage provided them with free hospitalization and an old-age pension at the age of sixty. The Officer-in-Charge at Linz, Austria, summed up his response to the August 6 directive as follows: “The wages paid to domestics in Canada are not favourable as compared to the wages and benefits of domestics in Austria. I feel that the starting wage of \$40 per month for domestics in Canada is too low to entice domestics from Austria.”¹²

The reports also revealed that other European countries, besides providing higher wages, also offered more attractive fringe benefits to domestics. These countries included England, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and Belgium. In Denmark for example, domestics enjoyed an eight-hour working day with a half day free every week plus every second Sunday. They accumulated vacation with pay at a rate of one-and-a-half days for each month employed, plus the equivalent in cash for meals taken away from the residence. In addition, union membership was compulsory for all domestics. The law compelled employers to give one month’s notice or the equivalent wages before a domestic servant who had been employed for three months, could be dismissed. If employed for up to three years, then six months notice or the equivalent in salary had to be given. The report from the officer in charge at Copenhagen concluded as follows: “Domestics in Denmark are very well qualified, but difficult to obtain although wages, working conditions and benefits are good.”¹³

The summary of the conclusions from the various offices in Canada and overseas, prepared by Mr. G. McIntyre and dated October 1, 1954, did not offer any hope for a resuscitation of the European domestic scheme. The summary highlighted the issue of wages which were found to be as high and in some cases higher than the wages paid in Canada. It also

¹² LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt2, Officer-in-charge, Linz, Austria to Chief, Operations Division August 27, 1954.

¹³ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt2, Officer –in-charge, Copenhagen to Director of Immigration, Ottawa, August 26, 1954.

highlighted “the protection provided by government legislation governing working hours, unemployment and medical and Social Security.” The summary also made a rather forceful statement which laid the foundation for a geographical change in the recruiting of domestics. “In view of the foregoing it would appear the persons proceeding to Canada as domestics are not in this work by inclination but only as a means of obtaining entry to Canada. They therefore leave to obtain positions in the business world at the first opportunity.”¹⁴

The reports from the various European divisions had produced sufficient evidence to confirm that Europe could no longer be considered a major source of domestic servants. Yet, Citizenship and Immigration refused to commence a domestic scheme with the Caribbean. Instead, they lowered the standards in a last desperate effort to lure European domestics into Canada. The proposal from the Immigration Branch was to increase the age limit from forty-five to fifty years. The qualifications and experience required for selection were to be relaxed to the extent that applicants could be chosen even if they never did domestic work outside their home. The granting of the Assisted Passage loan was to continue. It was also proposed that the employers needed to be more aware of the needs of immigrants: “Canadian employers might be educated to the fact that immigrants come to Canada to improve their conditions and they must expect a big turnover with domestics as long as working and living conditions in domestic employment are inferior to those in commercial or industrial occupations.”¹⁵

This last sentence of the above paragraph was precisely the reason why the demand for domestic help in Canada continued to grow at an alarming rate despite the importation of thousands of domestic workers from Europe after the Second World War. Most of the European domestic workers used the scheme as a stepping stone to more lucrative employment. Canada

¹⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt2, Summary of the replies received from the various offices in Canada and overseas in reply to operational memorandum of August 6, 1954 on the employment of domestics.

¹⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, A. Morrison to Chief, Operations Division, October 14, 1954.

was therefore in serious need of a new source for domestic workers, the majority of whom would remain in the service even after the one-year compulsory period. In addition the source needed to be able to provide quality workers who would also meet the other criterion of age, health and character. It was therefore the inability of Europe to meet the demand for domestic servants which forced Canada in 1955 to make an exception to its decades-old immigration policy of excluding black people.

For decades, there had been individuals, groups and organizations lobbying for the admittance of domestic servants from the Caribbean into Canada. In a letter dated April 27, 1942, Director of Immigration F. C. Blair, confirmed that the admission of black domestics had been raised several times during his forty-year career.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the requests did not only come from the Caribbean but also from within Canada. Several Canadians who had winter homes in the Caribbean informed Immigration authorities in Canada that there was a “plentiful supply of efficient and inexpensive domestic help” which contrasted with the “insufficient supply of inexperienced workers at higher wages,” which was available in Canada.¹⁷ On April 22, 1942, George L. Patterson of Toronto made a passionate appeal for permission to allow a domestic worker from British Honduras into Canada. The response from the Director of Immigration was quite interesting. “Your situation as described in your letter of the 22nd is enough to move a heart of stone and I hope I have not that. If the regulations permitted me to grant your request you certainly would not have had to repeat it several times.” The director went on to explain that even if he secured a special order-in-council to grant the request, there were other persons who would demand the same treatment. “The matter of policy in a case of this sort is far reaching as I have good reason to know and while I do not for a

¹⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Director of Immigration to A. C Hardy, April 27, 1942.

¹⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Director of Immigration to G. W. Birks, April 27, 1942.

moment blame you for pressing the case, I simply cannot grant your request as the regulations exist.”¹⁸

In another piece of correspondence, a confidential letter to Col. Gerald W. Birks dated April 8, 1942, in response to another request for the admission of domestic workers from the West Indies into Canada, the director was quite frank: “I know that employers in Canada are finding difficulty in obtaining domestic help and I have not overlooked the fact that these are British subjects. I did not make the regulations that I have to administer and yet I recognize that these were framed with the purpose of encouraging certain types of immigrants and discouraging others and among the latter is immigration of the Negro race.”¹⁹

Correspondences from firms and organizations also confirmed the difficulty that Canadians were experiencing in finding household help and their desire to acquire help from the Caribbean. One such letter came from the law firm McCarthy and McCarthy dated December 6, 1945 and addressed to C. E. S. Smith, Commissioner of Immigration: “In view of the shortage of domestic help at the present time we have received general enquires from several sources as to the possibility of bringing coloured female servants into Canada from Jamaica.” The letter went on to inquire about the regulations and requirements involved to make the request possible.²⁰ Another letter dated March 15, 1948, from the Canadian-West Indian League indicated that Canadian winter residents in Barbados wanted to know the steps to be taken to obtain permission to bring to Canada coloured domestics from the West Indies. It was stated that the domestics would be employed in the homes of the applicants.²¹

¹⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Director of Immigration to George L. Patterson, April 27, 1942.

¹⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Director of Immigration to G.W. Birks, April 8, 1942.

²⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Beverley Matthews to C.E.S Smith, December 6, 1945.

²¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, Canadian-West Indian League to the Commissioner of Immigration , March 15, 1948.

A passionate plea for the consideration of a Caribbean domestic scheme came from the Reverend Constantine Perry, pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Toronto, and Commissioner for the County of York. In addition to writing letters to government ministers, he made visits to Ottawa to present his case to both government and opposition members in 1947 and 1948. In a letter to the Honorable Jean Francis Pouliot, he mentioned that the Opposition members he spoke with agreed to support a movement of women into Canada from the West Indies as domestic servants.²² In another letter he wrote to the Honorable J. A. Glen he stated that several Toronto women had asked him to get domestic servants for them and that their preference was for West Indians.²³

There was also correspondence from governments of the British West Indies exploring the possibilities of having some of their citizens employed in Canada as domestic servants. One such letter, dated July 22, 1947, and directed to the Commissioner of Immigration, was written by the Trade Commissioner for the British West Indies on behalf of the Acting Commissioner of Montserrat.²⁴ Another letter dated May 2, 1953, came from the office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ottawa, on behalf of the Government of the Bahamas. The letter mentioned the case of a Canadian winter resident in the Bahamas who applied unsuccessfully to have her maid accompany her back to Canada for six months on a \$500.00 bond and with a guarantee to return her to the Bahamas.²⁵

On August 9, 1954 a high level delegation from Barbados comprising the Minister of Labour Honourable R. G. Mapp and Labour Commissioner A. Pickwood, met with a high level team from Ottawa comprising the Deputy Minister of Labour A. H. Brown and the Director of

²² LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, W. C Perry to Jean Francois Pouliot, March 20, 1948.

²³ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, W. C Perry to J. A Glen, March 16, 1948.

²⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, C. R. Stollmeyer to C.E.S Smith, July 22, 1947.

²⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 1, K. East to P. T. Baldwin, May 2, 1953.

Immigration Services, C. E. S. Smith. The main subject for discussion was the movement of persons from Barbados to Canada for employment in the domestic service. In a memorandum dated August 10, 1954, A. H. Brown reported that Mr. Mapp gave the assurance that if such a movement could be arranged, the Barbados government would be prepared to assist in selection work to ensure “that the very best class of persons from the point of view of personal qualifications and experience would be sent forward for placement in Canada.” Mapp further stated that “if a movement on a regular basis could be developed, his government would be prepared to establish a training school in which training in domestic service would be given with special emphasis on Canadian requirements.” Mr. Brown reported that he was unable to give any positive encouragement to the Barbados delegation in light of the government’s policy in reference to the West Indies. “If there was a disposition on the part of the government to move towards a more ‘open-door’ policy in relation to West Indian immigration, we would of course send someone down to Barbados to make a first-hand investigation in the matter of movement of persons for domestic employment, but no further action is indicated for the present.”²⁶

According to information from a meeting of cabinet held on May 6, 1955, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration met with the Trade and Industry Minister of Jamaica, Honourable W. O. Isaacs in Ottawa earlier in the year. Isaacs inquired “whether the Canadian Government would be prepared to agree to an arrangement under which a certain number of Jamaicans would be admitted to Canada, not as immigrants but on a temporary basis to serve as domestics for a period of one or two years, at the conclusion of which time they would return to Jamaica.” Isaacs

²⁶ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1pt1, Meeting with Deputy Minister of Labour and Minister of Trade & Labour & Commissioner of Labour, Barbados, August 9, 1954.

promised that his government would be prepared to establish an agency in Canada to ensure that the domestics honoured their commitment and returned to Jamaica at the end of their contract.²⁷

The cabinet conclusion of May 6, 1955 authorised the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Labour to “investigate the possibility and desirability of working out an arrangement along the lines suggested by Mr. Isaacs for a trial period of one or two years.” Cabinet also agreed that further consideration be given to “the desirability of establishing an immigration quota for the British West Indies, perhaps at the time the British West Indies Federation came into being.”²⁸

On June 8, 1955, Canada agreed to admit 100 workers from the Caribbean islands of Jamaica and Barbados.²⁹ The move by Canada to open its doors to a limited number of female domestic workers on an annual quota basis was received with jubilation by the Caribbean governments. *The Daily Gleaner* newspaper in Jamaica in the issue dated September 22, 1955 wrote: “It is understood that the opportunities in this field of employment in Canada are very great, and it is hoped that the experiment will prove highly successful, and will further enhance the reputation overseas of Jamaican Workers.”³⁰ The first page of a document prepared by the government of Barbados captioned *Advice To West Indian Women Recruited for Work in Canada as Household Helps*, read as follows: “You have a wonderful opportunity ahead, but you also have the responsibility to make good, so that in future years other West Indian women can look forward to similar opportunities. This is a comparatively new venture and you should regard yourself as missionaries who are resolved to succeed...”³¹ The final line of the document

²⁷ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2, Extract from copy no.11 of the cabinet conclusions for the meeting held on Friday, May 6, 1955.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ LAC, RG 27, vol.292, file 1-26-69-2, Record of Cabinet decision June 8, 1955.

³⁰ “Recruitment to Canada: Plan Outlined,” *The Daily Gleaner*, September 22, 1955, Kingston Jamaica.

³¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 5, “Advice to West Indian Women Recruited for Work in Canada as Household Helps” Barbados: government printing office.

read: “Remember the West Indies relies on you to do your part towards the success of this scheme.”³² In defending the decision, Canada claimed that it had made an exception to its racial immigration policy in 1955 “as a gesture of good will and in the interest of Canada’s important trade relations with Jamaica.”³³

As soon as the inauguration of a domestic workers scheme with Jamaica and Barbados became known, the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean began clamouring for a chance to participate. As early as July 1955, even before the first batch of domestic workers left for Canada, the Trinidad press demanded answers from the Canadian Government Trade Commissioner in Port of Spain as to why it was not included in the scheme.³⁴ By September 14, 1955, John Dabreu, Acting Labour Commissioner in Grenada forwarded a letter to the Canadian Trade Commissioner pleading that Grenada be considered in future domestic schemes.³⁵ On November 23, 1956, a high level delegation from St. Lucia arrived in Ottawa to plead for the island to be allocated a quota under the domestic workers scheme. The team met with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. They spoke about the unemployment problem in St. Lucia, particularly among the female population, and indicated that they were looking to Canada for some relief. The team left quite hopeful as the Minister assured them that they would be considered in the 1957 quota.³⁶

By January 15, 1957, another high level team, this time from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, visited Ottawa seeking the inclusion of the island in the domestic scheme. Out of a

³² Ibid.

³³ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2 pt.1, Top secret extract from copy no. 11 of the Cabinet conclusions for the meeting held on Friday, May 6, 1955.

³⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration July 8, 1955.

³⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, Acting Labour Commissioner, Grenada to Canadian Trade Commissioner September 14, 1955.

³⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Report of the meeting with the delegation from the island of St. Lucia BWI, November 29, 1956.

total workforce of about 31,000 in St. Vincent, there were 10,500 underemployed with 8,500 unemployed. The delegation reported that they had facilities for the training of domestics and in three months time could produce girls suitable for domestic service.³⁷

The visits by St. Lucia and St. Vincent must have made an impression as in 1957 both islands were included in the domestic scheme. Grenada, which did not send a delegation but only a letter, was not granted a quota. The British West Indian Trade Commissioner in Montreal who represented Grenada's interest in Canada, explained that the other territories had sent a delegation directly to Ottawa and obtained a quota by personal application. He further explained that it was difficult to obtain a quota without this personal approach. In August 1957, Grenada's Administrator J. M. Lloyd complained to the Canadian Trade Commissioner in Trinidad, Roy W. Blake, about Grenada's exclusion from the scheme.³⁸ After consulting with Ottawa, the Trade Commissioner advised the Administrator that Grenada and the rest of the islands would receive quotas after the formation of the Federation of the West Indies. Grenada was eventually granted a quota in 1959.³⁹

Neither the trade between the Canada and the Caribbean, nor any "gesture of good will" played any significant role in getting the government to agree to a Caribbean domestic scheme. The trading relationship between Canada and the British West Indian Colonies can be traced as far back as the period of sugar and slavery. The importance of the trade between the Caribbean and Canada cannot be ignored, and the Canadian Trade Commissioners in the Caribbean understood this better than those in Ottawa. One can therefore understand why in a letter to the Acting Director of Immigration in 1950, the Canadian Trade Commissioner warned about being

³⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, Director Immigration Branch to Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, January 15, 1957.

³⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, Canadian Trade Commissioner to C. E. S. Smith, August 29, 1957.

³⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt1, C.E.S. Smith to Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, September 6, 1957.

careful not to offend local susceptibilities. He further mentioned that “sooner or later immigration from the British Caribbean will have to be dealt with in accordance with a yet to be determined policy rather than on an ad hoc basis.”⁴⁰ It took another five years before Canada began what it termed an “experiment” with 100 women from the Caribbean. It was clearly stated that if the experiment was not successful, the Caribbean domestic scheme would be terminated. Canada made it clear that if any of the women had to be deported it would be done at the expense of the particular Caribbean territory.⁴¹

The Caribbean domestic scheme was established at a great cost to the participating territories, particularly the smaller islands of the Windward and Leeward chain. In an effort to ensure that the women selected for the programme were trained according to Canadian standards, thus ensuring the continuation of the programme, governments invested heavily in setting up training institutions, hiring staff and training eligible applicants. The syllabus was similar in all the territories and included such topics as meal planning, preparation and nutrition, home management, laundry, child care and babysitting, etiquette at home and abroad, first aid, personal hygiene, citizenship, sewing, and marketing.⁴² It was also stipulated that the Caribbean domestics have a minimum of five years formal education which meant they should have attained Sixth Standard in elementary school. Preference was to be given to those with higher qualifications and extra credit for special courses in home-craft, domestic science and experience with modern household appliances.⁴³ Governments took from their meager resources to ensure that the

⁴⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, File 552-1-644, Canadian Trade Commissioner to the Acting Director of Immigration, May 17, 1950.

⁴¹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2, W. W. Dawson to A.H. Brown, May 10, 1955 and Laval Fortier to A. H. Brown, August 5, 1955.

⁴² LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 2, Housecraft Training Centre, detailed scheme.

⁴³ LAC, RG 26, vol. 124, file 3-33-6, Confidential memorandum to cabinet on the admission of domestics from the B.W.I.

training schools were equipped with such modern appliances as gas stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines.

Some of these training institutes were visited while in session by representatives from Canada and reports were forwarded to the relevant government department in Ottawa. One such inspection was carried out at the training school on the island of Grenada in 1961, two years after the island began participating in the domestic scheme. The inspection was carried out by the Canadian commissioner based in Trinidad, R. G. C. Smith and his wife. They were quite impressed with what they termed the general atmosphere of the school, the high caliber of education, and the general appearance and attitude of the girls in training. The trainees attended classes three-and-a-half hours per day, four days per week for nine weeks. Mr. and Mrs. Smith were quite satisfied with the team of instructors, the different areas of training and the fact that the school was equipped with all modern appliances and equipments. They commented in particular about the fact that the school stressed the need for a proper mental approach to the job. They noted that Grenada had only been in the scheme for a short time and that the government must be credited in having the foresight to do the job properly.⁴⁴

There were some persons in Ottawa who believed that Canada was taking advantage of the Caribbean in having them bear the cost of training domestics for the Canadian market. One such person was James E. Walker, chief government whip in the federal parliament. He suggested that Canada should permit the entry of unskilled labour from the West Indies and have them trained in Canada. His argument was that an immigration policy based on skills was not helpful to the West Indies. He believed that Canada's immigration policy should be a source of aid to the islands. Mr. Walker's sentiments were expressed openly in Trinidad where he made a

⁴⁴ LAC, RG 76 vol. 836, file 553-36-644 pt7, Report from the Office of the Commissioner for Canada in Trinidad to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, on the domestic servant training schools in Grenada and St. Lucia.

brief stop on route to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's conference in Jamaica.⁴⁵

Canada also adopted more stringent measures with the Caribbean domestics than it did with those from Europe. It was stipulated that the women must be between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-five. This condition was never attached to the contracts of European domestic workers. This age range ensured that Canada would get women who were strong and healthy and who would be capable of providing many years of service. Such women would less likely be a burden on the health system. It was important that they be single so that they could work without the interruption of having a family. Being single would also save money in social provisions such as housing, schools, hospitals, transportation and other infrastructural facilities.⁴⁶

Applicants had to be in good physical and mental health and undergo complete medical pre-screening in accordance with the standards laid down by the Department of National Health and Welfare in Canada. What was kept a secret from both the participants of the 1955 group and the governments of Jamaica and Barbados, was that on arrival in Canada, the women would be met by a team of doctors who would proceed to take a sample Wasserman test. According to a letter dated October 25, 1955, from Director of Immigration to the Chief, Administration Division:

It, therefore, would be appreciated if you would advise Dr. Frost in advance of the arrival of these people at Dorval in order that he may arrange for his doctors to do the sampling. He seemed very pleased that they will be given an opportunity of making a sample of so large a number as seventy-five. You are not to advise the West Indies authorities of the test which is being conducted on arrival.

⁴⁵ George Harvey, "Canada Should Train WI Workers-WHIP," *Trinidad Guardian*, October 30, 1964.

⁴⁶ Agnes Calliste, "Canada's Immigration Policy and Domestics from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme," in *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers*, ed. Jesse Vorst et al (Toronto: Between the Lines 1989), 137.

Dr. Frost ordered the test because of the high percentage of syphilis in the West Indies. When asked why the test could not be done in the islands he stated that their condition could change prior to their arrival. He further stated that a test may show positive for syphilis when the individual may only be suffering from yaws which also creates a positive reaction but is not syphilis.⁴⁷ While Dr. Frost may have been genuine in his intention, this move further supported the notion about blacks being sexually promiscuous.

Another significant stipulation was that the women had to be unmarried. It was the thinking of the immigration officials that the spouse of a domestic worker would likely be unskilled. Canada was trying to protect itself from an influx of unskilled coloured dependents who could enter through the sponsorship route as it was legal for a Caribbean domestic worker with Canadian Citizenship to sponsor her spouse, fiancé (e), parents, grandparents, children and siblings.⁴⁸ Canadian officials were concerned, if not alarmed, that Caribbean domestics had started sponsoring relatives soon after they had been in Canada for one year. Their main concern was the swelling of the unskilled labour force in Canada. They reasoned that since domestic workers were unskilled in their home country, then their fiancés and relatives who they would later sponsor would be from the same, or possibly lower, economic background.⁴⁹

The main area of commonality between the domestic workers from the Caribbean and those from Europe was that both were allowed landed immigrant status upon arrival in Canada. It was not the original intention of Ottawa to grant immigrant status to black domestic workers. Actually, the governments of the two participating countries in 1955, Jamaica and Barbados,

⁴⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644, Letter from C.E.S. Smith to Chief, Administrative Division October 5, 1955.

⁴⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt.8, Deputy Minister to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, November 20, 1963.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

made a commitment that they would ensure that the women returned to the Caribbean at the end of their contract. The idea of a term contract was quite attractive to the Canadian government as it would “appear to afford a measure of control to ensure compliance with the undertaking to remain at domestic work.” The term contract proposal was eventually rejected in favour of landed immigrant status. It was not because Ottawa wanted European and Caribbean domestic workers to be treated equally, but because they found themselves with no justifiable reason for a term contract. They were aware that they would be opening up themselves to severe criticism if they proceeded with such a plan. “To deprive those coming forward under this plan of the status of landed immigrants would be interpreted by many as an attempt at forced labour and charges of discrimination would inevitably result.”⁵⁰

The case for landed status was helped by the fact that domestic work was not seasonal but permanent and over time it was natural that social and emotional bonds would develop between a domestic worker and the members of the household. It was therefore determined that if a worker had provided excellent service to an employer to the extent that the employer wanted to continue employing that worker, then it would be difficult or unrealistic to convince the employer that the worker must be sent to her homeland to be replaced by another woman of unknown quality. In that case, the employer would apply for an extension of stay for the worker which would have been difficult to refuse. The Canadian authorities were aware that in such a case they would eventually have to consider granting permanent immigrant status to the employee. “It would be contrary to Canadian views on equality to allow the girls in this category to remain in Canada for an indefinite period without the benefit of permanent status.”⁵¹ It was also believed that in the course of at least two years residence in Canada, these women would have become accustomed

⁵⁰ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2 pt 1, Draft memorandum to Cabinet May 1955.

⁵¹ Ibid.

to a standard of living superior to that of their own country of origin and it would be regarded by many as an injustice to insist that they return home. It was further felt that there would be little danger of these women, once admitted, leaving domestic employment to seek higher wages in industry as there were very limited opportunities for women in Canada other than domestic work. "Furthermore, the Immigration Act and Regulations together with such controls as may be exercised administratively would provide sufficient sanctions to prevent abuse of the scheme."⁵²

There were conditions attached to the landed immigrant status. The Canadian government made it clear that the admission of one hundred girls to Canada as domestic servants in 1955 was for experimental purposes only and if it proved unsuccessful, the programme would be terminated. It was stipulated that the women were to be returned to their country of origin at the expense of the sending government if found to be unsuitable for domestic work. This clause in the agreement was applicable only to black women and not German, Italian and Greeks domestic workers.⁵³ It was also stated that if the experimental group proved satisfactory, then there was the potential of increasing the quota to 400 girls annually.⁵⁴

The 1955 experimental group of domestic workers seemed to have created a positive impression. In a memorandum to A. H. Brown dated November 7, 1955, W. W. Dawson expressed his delight with the first batch of sixteen girls who arrived from Barbados to Montreal.

I had an excellent opportunity to meet these girls on Friday and I must admit that I was greatly impressed. There is no doubt that this was a hand-picked group. We indeed have no hesitation in placing girls of this type in Canadian homes. All of the girls speak good English, their deportment was exceptionally good and they seemed to have good background of experience and training, including six weeks in a government-operated school just prior to departure for Canada.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Patricia Daenzer, *Regulating Class Privilege: Immigrant Servants in Canada, 1940s-1990s* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc. 1993), 53.

⁵⁴ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2 pt 1, W. W. Dawson to A.H Brown May 10, 1955.

Mr. Dawson praised the Government of Barbados which he said had gone through considerable trouble in selecting and coaching these girls.⁵⁵

The Department of Labour also spoke highly about the 1955 experimental group stating that the domestics from the British West Indies were among the best received from any country since the Second World War.

Considering this movement of workers from the point of view of satisfactory placements, continuity of employment, general health, and the complete absence of reports of immorality, it can be stated, without question, that this has been the most satisfactory group of domestics that have been handled under the various immigration programs since the end of the war.⁵⁶

One year later, in 1956, it was found that all of the 100 girls in the 1955 experimental group were still in domestic employment and they indicated that they were quite content in this type of employment. The Deputy Minister of Labour concluded that they were correct in their assumption that girls from the British West Indies would be more inclined to remain in domestic employment than girls from other areas. Only four of them indicated that they intended to seek other types of employment on completion of their compulsory term of employment. It was noted that the general health of the girls was good and there was not one case of serious illness or inability to carry out the work for any reason. The majority of the employers (about eighty-five percent) also expressed general satisfaction with the performance of the girls.⁵⁷

The Toronto local office of the Ministry of Labour, which placed thirty-two domestics in various homes within the city, reported that many of the employers called the office reporting how pleased they were with the girls and how well they were establishing themselves in the homes. The local office in Ottawa had a similar report: "Twenty-two girls have been allocated to

⁵⁵ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2 pt 1, W. W. Dawson to A.H. Brown November 7, 1955.

⁵⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 p 3, Deputy Minister of Labour to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration March 13, 1956.

⁵⁷ LAC, RG 26, vol. 124, file 3-33-6, Memorandum to Cabinet on the Admission of Coloured Domestics, March 23, 1956.

this city, the present employers of whom are more than satisfied with their services.” The Montreal Regional Office reported that they had received not a single complaint relating to the domestics allocated to that city. What seemed to have been most interesting to Brown was that all the offices reported that the women were particularly good in homes where there were children, which had not been the case with immigrant domestics from Europe.⁵⁸

With such an unprecedented report from the experimental batch of domestics, demand for Caribbean domestics soared. The Toronto Labour office reported that they had approximately 800 requests for Caribbean women. The Ottawa office also reported that they had a long waiting list of employers who wanted to obtain the services of a BWI domestic.⁵⁹ The Department of Labour reported that they had received excellent offers of employment for Caribbean women from various parts of Canada, as far west as Vancouver. In addition, a total of fifteen women were named by employers who had personal knowledge of them and wanted them in their homes. No doubt these were persons who wintered in the Caribbean and employed the women in their winter homes.⁶⁰

It was to the credit of the domestic workers that high-ranking government officials tried to use their “inside connections” to obtain a BWI domestic for themselves and their friends or families. One such person was Senator J. S. Bradette who insisted that two women be sent from the 1957 quota to one Mrs. Edgar Vaillancourt of Timmins, Ontario. The Director of Immigration explained to him that applications for BWI domestics were oversubscribed and that the quota system would be compromised if an exception was made for him as it would also have to be made for the hundreds on the waiting list. Mr. Dawson from the Department of Labour then suggested that a German domestic worker be assigned, but according to the Director of

⁵⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 3, A. H. Brown to C. E. S. Smith, January 25, 1956.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 3, A. H. Brown to C. E. S. Smith, April 26, 1956.

Immigration “Senator Bradette did not seem too enthusiastic over obtaining the services of a German rather than a trained West Indies girl.”⁶¹

On May 5, 1959, the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Laval Fortier, instructed the Director of Immigration to advise the Labour Department to earmark three BWI domestics for Mont Laurier as requested by the Honourable Henri Courtemanche, Secretary of State. On May 20, 1959, Honourable Henri Courtemanche forwarded a letter to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Honourable Ellen Fairclough, requesting four domestic servants from the West Indies. Of the four, one was for himself, one for the home of the Honourable Senator Gustave Monette and the other two for Mr. J. M. Masse, director of the Catholic School Commission in Montreal and the father of twelve children.⁶² No doubt the report that the West Indian girls performed well in homes where there were lots of children and that they were amenable, pleasant, and fit well into the household, encouraged Mr. Masse to use the high office of his nephew, the Honourable Henri Courtemanche, to increase the chances of getting two BWI domestic servants.

In light of the overwhelming demand for BWI domestics, one wondered why the numbers of recruits from the West Indies never came close to matching the demand in Canada. The problem certainly was not due to the supply as most of the participating territories were training more girls than Canada required. In 1955 the quota was 100 and in 1956 it was doubled. In 1957 the quota was increased to 230, and in 1959 it was further increased to 280. In 1965 there was a slight drop in the quota to 250.⁶³ There might have been two main reasons for these limited quotas. As the programme was started during a period of selective immigration, Canada

⁶¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 5, Director of immigration to the Chief, Admissions Divisions, October 17, 1957.

⁶² LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 5, Secretary of State to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, May 20, 1959.

⁶³ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1265, file 5850-6-4-533 pt 6, statistics on household service workers from the West Indies prepared by Program Data Division of Immigration Canada.

was careful not to flood the country with too many unskilled blacks. Even though the domestic workers were admitted under a special quota arrangement by an order-in-council, once they had completed their one-year compulsory stay, and had the means necessary, they were free to sponsor certain close relatives as permitted in the Immigration regulations. The thinking of the Immigration authorities was that the relatives of the girls would be unskilled. Therefore if too many black domestic servants were admitted, then they would have to brace themselves for thousands of unskilled blacks into Canada.⁶⁴

The other possibility was that Canada was more concerned about maintaining quality rather than quantity. While the girls in the 1955 experimental group were highly praised, the Canadian authorities were careful to state that they needed to ensure that the source countries did not reduce the standards.⁶⁵ The Deputy Minister of Labour shared his opinion:

It should be noted that the limited number of girls brought in under this program has made it possible for the supply countries to make a careful selection and it should be further noted that placements in Canada were made in better class homes. A movement of workers of this type in volume might produce less satisfactory results.⁶⁶

While it is not the intention of this paper to compare the Caribbean domestic scheme with the European scheme, it is important to mention that the scrutiny applied the Caribbean scheme was never applied to the European scheme. Even though European domestics had to sign a one-year contract to remain in domestic service, a great number of them did not complete the one-year contract. No evidence had been found of any action taken against any domestic for breaking the contract. The National Employment Service Toronto office confirmed that during the period October 31 to December 31, 1954, there were ninety-three domestics from Austria and

⁶⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 8, Deputy Minister to the Minister of Citizenship and immigration November 20, 1963.

⁶⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 3, A. H. Brown to C. E. S Smith January 25, 1956.

⁶⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 3, Deputy Minister of Labour to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, March 13, 1956.

Germany directed to Toronto for placement. Only seventy-three of the ninety-three actually reported to the office and thirty-six out of the seventy-three refused to accept domestic employment. Out of the thirty-seven who took up domestic work, about thirty to forty percent had intentions of seeking a visa to the United States.⁶⁷

While Canada was imposing stringent regulations on Caribbean domestics, European domestics continued to have an easy gateway into Canada. As Canada was unable to provide the wages and benefits and working conditions to attract experienced European domestics, they proceeded to recruit untrained, inexperienced girls. Quite a number of those girls had no knowledge of the French or English languages yet they refused to accept starting rates commensurate with their experience.⁶⁸ One particular employer, a member of the diplomatic corps, lamented the fact that he had five domestic servants, three of them from Germany, and not one who cooked. He stated that they were out a good deal every night returning after midnight, sometimes as late as four in the morning. In the end they all left without proper notice. One gave a month's notice, another a fortnight and the other three gave only one or two days' notice. The employer further stated that he was told by the Employment Service that it had no power to keep the girls in domestic service.⁶⁹ In a letter dated October 30, 1957, Director of Employment, W. Thompson confirmed to C. E. S. Smith, Director of Immigration, the problems his office faced in persuading European immigrant domestic to remain for one year in that occupation.⁷⁰

This situation contrasted sharply with the case of a British West Indian woman who in 1959 came to Canada under the domestic scheme and was assigned to the home of Senator

⁶⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Central District Superintendent to the Chief, Operations Division, Ottawa March 8, 1955.

⁶⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Chief, Operations Division, Ottawa to District Superintendents –Atlantic, Eastern, Central, Western and Pacific, March 24, 1959.

⁶⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, W. R. Crockert to the Chief of Protocol, Department of External Affairs November 20, 1957.

⁷⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Director of Employment to Director of Immigration October 30, 1957.

Gustave Monette in Montreal. The woman, upon arrival, informed the Senator that her term of employment was only one year. According to the contract the woman had not done anything wrong nor violated the terms of her contract. However, the Senator was rather upset and refused to employ the young lady. The Senator reported the matter to his friend and colleague, the Honourable Henri Courtemanche, Secretary of State, who in turn wrote a letter to the Honourable Ellen Fairclough seeking some answers. In the final paragraph he wrote: “Would you be good enough to let me know what the law or regulation is in cases of this kind and whether it is likely that any of these immigrants can be expected to enter domestic service with the intention of continuing in that capacity.”⁷¹

Citizenship and Immigration also expressed some dissatisfaction with the BWI women. One concern was that all the women, with few exceptions, wanted to be placed in the larger cities of Toronto and Montreal, and to a lesser extent, Ottawa. Some of them, particularly those from the Windward and Leeward Islands, wanted to be placed in the same city, and later arrivals wanted to be placed in the city where their country folks were placed.⁷² It was reported that in 1959, for example, nine women from St. Kitts, with one exception, refused to be separated. Eventually, one who had friends in Montreal was placed there, while the remaining eight were placed in Toronto.⁷³ The problem, as admitted by the Immigration authorities, was not finding vacancies in the big cities but that “householders throughout Canada are aware of the movement of domestic workers from the West Indies and it is difficult to make them understand that the National Employment Service has no power to compel a girl to accept employment in any city in which an employer may reside.” The authorities further stated that if the demand in Toronto and

⁷¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 835, file 553-30 pt 2, Secretary of State to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration October 30, 1959.

⁷² LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 6, Laval Fortier to A. H. Brown June 8, 1960.

⁷³ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 6, Director of Employment Services to the Acting Director of the Immigration Branch. December 15, 1959.

Montreal were not so heavy and the wages not the highest in the country, it might have been possible to encourage some of the women to settle in other cities, “but as long as there are hundreds of vacancies for domestics in big cities it makes it almost impossible to do so.”⁷⁴

One cannot blame the women from wanting to be placed in a city where there was already a Caribbean presence. The women already had to deal with the problem of being strangers in a strange land among strange people. The problem was compounded by the quota system whereby only females were recruited which soon caused an unbalanced sex ratio among the Caribbean people. In all the islands, particularly in the Windward and Leeward Islands, villages were like extended families. Most Caribbean women were coming from a society where they were always surrounded by familiar faces, and moving to a Canadian household could be lonely and isolating. Therefore, the least they could do for themselves was to stick together so that on their days off they could be a support system for each other. Employers had mentioned that one of their greatest concerns was that the women did not have a social life.

If someone had to accept blame for the women refusing to accept placement in provinces other than Ontario and Quebec, then it must be the Canadian government. They created the policies which severely limited the number of black people in Canada so that in the 1950s one could hardly find a sprinkling of black people in cities other than the major cities like Toronto and Montreal. Likewise, they were the ones who refused to recruit sufficient domestic workers from the West Indies to match the demand in Canada. In a letter dated November 19, 1957, C. E. S. Smith expressed his fears about the Caribbean domestic workers wanting to be placed in a city where there was a black community. “We are concerned at the possibility that racial

⁷⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 6, Laval Fortier to A. H. Brown June 8, 1960.

pockets will be set up in which these immigrants would isolate themselves from the Canadian community. We would prefer to see the domestics sent at least to the larger centres in Canada.”⁷⁵

The Negro Citizenship Association extended its services to the Caribbean domestics. Government authorities, however, were not keen on encouraging the BWI girls to associate themselves with Negro organizations. In a letter dated March 26, 1956, the director of the organization Donald Moore, advised the Director of Immigration that the Negro Association had made arrangements to greet the second batch of Caribbean girls on arrival. The Association also planned to assist the girls in their social life by encouraging group activities and establishing a Y.W.C.A type of centre for them. The response from the Director of Immigration was far from encouraging. “We do not want to encourage voluntary segregation in any shape or form.... It is precisely the fear of such segregation that causes many Canadians to hesitate in giving approval to immigration from the West Indies.”⁷⁶

The director of the Negro Association had also written to the Minister of Labour in British Guiana in 1956, advising him of the services that the association could offer in Canada to the domestic workers from the BWI. “Our main objective is to help the newcomer to become integrated into the Canadian way of life as smoothly as possible and by doing so maintain a better citizenship so that others may find it easier to come to Canada if they so desire.”⁷⁷ The Ministry of Labour sent a copy of the letter to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in Canada for advice and a response came from the Director of Immigration, C. E. S. Smith. While Mr. Smith did admit that the Negro Association could be helpful to the women in the Toronto area, he did not stop there. “...I thought the most successful immigrants in our country were the

⁷⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 3, C. E. S. Smith to Director of Employment Service, November 19, 1957.

⁷⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt3, J. W. Pickersgill to Negro Citizenship Association, April 11, 1956.

⁷⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 2, Director of the Negro Citizenship Association to the Minister of Labour in British Guiana May 16, 1956.

ones who did not depend too much on the guidance and association of their former citizens but those who sought guidance and friendship amongst their fellow Canadians.” Mr. Smith went on to advise that the women should decide for themselves what organizations they should join.⁷⁸

Another inconsistency the immigration officials quickly realized was that women who had declared themselves as single actually had illegitimate children back home in the care of grandparents or other relatives. Immigration officers went as far as to suggest that the medical examination should also determine whether the applicants had ever given birth but it was never implemented. Instead the particular requirement was reworded to read single and without children and later, “single, widowed, divorced, without minor children or the encumbrance of common law relationships and the issue thereof.” Caribbean women still found a way around the requirement by having grandparents legally adopt the children and then declared themselves as childless.⁷⁹

Likewise, Immigration officers realised that the majority of the women were not career domestics but professionals such as nurses, teachers, and secretaries. As Canada had a closed door policy towards coloured immigrants, the domestic scheme was virtually the only means by which a limited number of women could be admitted into Canada. Certain professionals therefore succeeded in using the domestic scheme as a gateway to Canada. They came with the intention of completing the one-year compulsory service after which they would seek to upgrade themselves and find employment in their particular profession. Some were successful in establishing themselves in careers such as nursing and teaching, while others found that they had to remain in domestic employment for much longer than they anticipated. A memorandum dated

⁷⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 2, C. E. S. Smith to the Commissioner of Labour in British Guiana, June 4, 1956.

⁷⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 7, Director of Immigration to Canadian Commissioner in Trinidad, June 1, 1961.

April 1, 1969, from the officer in charge in Port of Spain, Trinidad revealed that the majority of the women selected prior to 1966 were not career domestic women yet ninety percent of them remained in domestic work for at least one year and some even longer. The memorandum further revealed that it was only after Canadian officials began screening applicants under the quota system that they realised that most of the women were office clerks, school teachers and other professions.⁸⁰

While it may seem that the island governments were disregarding the instructions from Ottawa, the fact was that they were trying to select a certain calibre of women to send to Canada. In Grenada, for example, most women who would be career domestic servants in the 1950s and 1960s would not have met the minimum academic and other qualifications required by Canada. Most women who had attained a standard six level of education would most likely go on to become public servants. The same was true in the other small islands of the Commonwealth Caribbean. In St. Lucia, for instance, it was discovered in 1959 that out of a total of twenty-six women who received domestic training so that the quota of sixteen could be selected, nine were clerks, six teachers, one telephone operator, five seamstresses, one housekeeper, two shop assistants and two nurses.⁸¹

In a report to the director of Immigration, the Canadian Commissioner based in Trinidad, C. G. Smith, was very outspoken about the recruitment of professionals as domestic servants. “I would say that if any time you are thinking of defining your objective as one whereby we should look upon this scheme as a means of obtaining permanent domestic servants for Canada, you would be trying to accomplish the impossible.” Smith went on to state that the majority of

⁸⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1264, file 5850-6-4 pt 2, Officer-in-charge, Port of Spain, Trinidad to Regional Director “A” Ottawa, April 1, 1969.

⁸¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 838, file 553-36-644 pt 5, Office of the Commissioner for Canada in Trinidad on the training of domestic workers July 4, 1959.

women in the islands who were domestic servants were “illiterate and would not have the mental agility to adjust themselves to living in Canada or to accept the extraordinary difference in standard of living between a domestic servant here and a domestic servant there.” Smith was not as concerned as his counterparts in Ottawa that most of the women recruited were not career domestic servants. His argument was that the scheme was fulfilling its objectives especially as at least eighty percent of the women remained in domestic service for the full year. He further noted that as the majority of women who remained in domestic service for the full year continued to remain in the service, one had to admit that “the scheme has done a good job and that on the whole, the West Indians have been discharging their obligations in sending us suitable types.”⁸²

There were different schools of thought on the issue of professionals being recruited under the domestic workers scheme. In a memorandum dated August 29, 1961, to the Assistant Director of Immigration, the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration implied that it actually benefitted Canada that professionals from the Caribbean were recruited as domestics. He further implied that Citizenship and Immigration Canada aided and abetted in using the domestic scheme as a disguise to bring in a higher quality of girls whose skills would benefit Canada.

Are we trying to pick domestics whose attitude to household service is good and who will be content to remain in household service and be good domestics on a career basis? Or are we using the domestic movement as a means of selecting a higher class of girls who will not stay in domestic service any longer than necessary, but will move out after a year into the occupation for which she is best suited, and be in the long run a greater credit to herself, her race, and to Canada?⁸³

⁸² LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 7, Commissioner for Canada in Trinidad to the Director of Immigration October 17, 1961.

⁸³ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt 3, Extract on household service workers from the West Indies and British Guiana, October 6, 1961.

The director of Employment Services in a letter to the Director of Immigration dated July 5, 1961, commenting on the performances of West Indian domestics mentioned: “those who leave household service and become self-sustaining in another occupation are usually good citizens and may be better citizens than those with less initiative.”⁸⁴

The other school of thought was that an office woman who was using the domestic scheme as a stepping stone tended to be unsatisfactory on the job because of her attitude to a job for which she considered herself superior. “Canadian householders employ these girls as domestics and when a girl intimates that she is demeaning herself by doing the work for which she was engaged, it does not make for very cordial employer-employee relations.” On the other hand, the Unemployment Insurance Commission found that the most valuable and satisfactory workers were those whose only background and experience had been in domestic employment. Even though the women were slow in their duties, their commitment and willingness to learn and accept direction had enabled them to adapt to Canadian housekeeping practices and methods.⁸⁵

On January 19, 1962 Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, tabled new immigration regulations in the House of Commons. The core of this new immigration policy was section 31 which placed the greatest emphasis upon education, training and skills as the main consideration of admissibility into Canada, rather than the country of origin of the applicant or the colour of skin. While this change of policy was welcome news for prospective immigrants who were previously affected by Canada’s selective immigration policy, it also marked the beginning of the end of the special quota privileges enjoyed by Commonwealth Caribbean islands, particularly the smaller islands. The argument of the Ministry of Citizenship and

⁸⁴ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 7, Director of Employment service to the Director of Immigration, July 5, 1961.

⁸⁵ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 6, Laval Fortier to Deputy Minister of Labour June 8, 1960.

Immigration was that there was no longer a need for a quota arrangement as future domestic servants, as other applicants would be considered based on their education, training, skills and other qualifications in accordance with the regulation.⁸⁶

The abolition of the special quota caused some uneasiness among Caribbean leaders, particularly those of the smaller territories. The Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration understood their plight and sought to soften the effects of the new immigration regulation. He noted that the smaller islands had fewer trained and qualified domestics suitable for North American standards and as a result Ottawa might have to consider keeping the special quota arrangement to ensure that they were not seriously affected.⁸⁷ This special arrangement for domestic servants from the West Indies continued for a few more years. Eventually it was eliminated by the Immigration Regulations of October 1, 1967, bringing an end to the Caribbean domestic scheme on January 1, 1968.⁸⁸

While this decision did not seem to have any immediate negative effect on Jamaica, it was a huge blow to the smaller islands, particularly Grenada which was recently admitted into the scheme in 1959 and had invested so heavily in establishing, equipping and operating the Domestic Arts Institute to train girls for domestic work in Canada. The annual quota of nine placements could not even justify the operation of the institute but the government absorbed the cost, training eighteen girls annually with the hope that additional opportunities would emerge for the remainder. In 1967, on the eve of the abolition of the quota system, Premier Herbert Blaize begged the Canadian High Commissioner in Port of Spain to ask Ottawa for an increase in

⁸⁶ LAC, RG 76, vol. 830, file 552-1-644 pt 4, Confidential memorandum to cabinet.

⁸⁷ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt 7, George F. Davidson to W. R. Baskerville, January 22, 1962.

⁸⁸ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1265, file 5850-6-4-533 pt 6, Programs and Procedures, assessment of the domestic scheme 1955-1974, June 14, 1974.

the quota for Grenada. Premier Blaize noted that Grenada had the largest population in the Windward Islands and yet was allocated the least amount of participants.⁸⁹

Canadian officials understood the plight of some of the islands with the termination of the special quota privileges. In a memorandum to the Regional Director in Ottawa dated April 1, 1969, one of the officers in the Commissioner's office based in Trinidad, commenting on the canceling of the Caribbean domestic workers quotas, captured the facts correctly. "The island governments are only now realizing that they have lost out. Aside from the fact that fewer persons are emigrating, their investment in facilities to train these girls for export has been largely wasted."⁹⁰ The Canadian authorities probably knew that the governments were spending more on the domestic scheme than what they could ever get back. In a confidential memorandum to the Minister of Immigration dated November 20, 1963, the Deputy Minister stated: "Privately, we feel the island governments might be better advised to divert the efforts they are putting into training these domestics into assisting other of their people in acquiring the skills needed in the islands."⁹¹

⁸⁹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 992, file 5850-6-4-533 pt 1, H. A. Blaize of Grenada to the High Commissioner for Canada in Trinidad, April, 30 1967.

⁹⁰ LAC, RG 76, vol. 1264, file 5850-6-4-533 pt 2, Officer-in-Charge in Port of Spain Trinidad to Regional Manager "A" Ottawa, April 1, 1969.

⁹¹ LAC, RG 76, vol. 839, file 553-36-644 pt8, Deputy Minister to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, November 23, 1963.

Chapter Two

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme

In March 1966, after decades of negotiation, Canada agreed to admit seasonal workers from Jamaica to work on Ontario farms and agricultural industries. This decision formally established the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme (SAWP). One year later, in 1967, the programme was extended to include the island of Barbados and the twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago. The rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean did not become participants in the programme until 1976, after ten more years of begging and negotiating with the Canadian government to have them included. Those islands were the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) comprising the Leeward Islands of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, and the Windward Islands of St. Lucia and St. Vincent, Dominica and Grenada.

One of the justifications provided by the Honourable Jean Marchand, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, for the establishment of the SAWP with Jamaica in 1966 was that it fit in with Canada's general program of aid and co-operation with the West Indies.¹ This statement was ironic, if not hypocritical. It was only after decades of stiff resistance to a seasonal workers programme with the West Indies that consent was finally granted to establish the scheme as a final resort. The government had exhausted its excuses in the face of growing pressure from the farmers in Southern Ontario, with the support of some influential politicians, for a cheaper, reliable and readily accessible labour force. The only evidence of a 'favour' to the West Indies was the fact that they were given preference over Mexico. Even that decision was made for a particular reason. According to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the governmental agencies in the West Indies had long experience with controlled seasonal

¹ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government Achieves Division, Record Group (RG) 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 7, Jean Marchand (Honourable) confidential memorandum to cabinet March 30, 1966.

movements which was due to the West Indies participation in a seasonal agricultural workers programme in the United States of America for several decades. In Mexico, on the other hand, the Minister noted that though the labour was cheaper, the necessary organisation and control would be much harder to assure.² This preference for West Indian labour over Mexican labour, however, did not last very long and Mexico was admitted into the SAWP even before the islands of the OECS.

This chapter examines the reluctance of the Canadian government to admit Caribbean labourers even though there was a labour shortage which the Caribbean could have adequately met. The paper will further argue that after Canada agreed to the establishment of SAWP it was careful to ensure that the conditions governing the agreement were so stringent that it would in effect discourage farmers from recruiting labourers from the West Indies. After changes were made, which made it less expensive for farmers to import foreign labour, there was an explosion in the number of temporary foreign workers. The Caribbean may have scored a victory with increased numbers, but Canada ensured that the programme was organised to allow it to reap profits while giving away nothing more than minimum wages. The most glaring evidence for this assertion is the refusal to grant landed immigrant status to the seasonal workers. The chapter will also show how Caribbean leaders aided and abetted Canada's desire to gain maximum benefits from the SAWP.

The attempt to get Caribbean agricultural workers on farms in Canada was a long struggle which was equally fought by Ontario farmers and Caribbean governments with assistance from the British Government. Ontario farmers claimed that they needed a cheaper and more reliable labour force to realise better profits and be able to compete with their neighbours in the United States of America. The Labour Department responded that there were sufficient

²Ibid.

labourers available and what was needed was creative ways of managing the workers so that farmers could get their services when in need. They further claimed that once farmers paid reasonable wages and provided favourable working conditions they would be able to attract local labourers. Caribbean governments, on the other hand, solicited Canada's assistance in easing the burden of overpopulation and unemployment by admitting unskilled workers to work on Canadian farms on a seasonal basis.

Tanya Basok, in her book *Tortillas and Tomatoes*, attributed the increasing need for paid labourers on Canadian farms from the 1940s to farm commercialization and consolidation. Prior to that, it was the general practice that the farmer and his family would perform much of the work on the farm. The farm consolidation occurred due to the rising cost of farm machinery required to produce the agricultural commodities and the lower price farmers got for those products, which resulted in some farmers abandoning their farms and seeking employment in the growing industry sector. Other farmers went into debt to expand their farms and purchase machinery. The increase in the size of the holdings resulted in an increased need for hired labour because not all crops could be harvested mechanically. The harvesting of crops such as apples, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers was still resistant to mechanisation.³

Various means were used to recruit labourers for Canadian farms. Prior to the First World War, private railways recruited seasonal workers from Eastern Canada to the prairies. During the First and Second World Wars, government agencies got involved in the recruitment of young men from urban centres. During the Second World War, the Farm Service Force was formed in Ontario in 1941 and it attempted to recruit farm labour among children, youths and adults. In 1943 the Dominion Provincial Farm Programme was established to recruit Canadian

³ Tanya Basok, *Tortillas and Tomatoes: Transmigrant Mexican Harvesters in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 26.

workers from all over the country. During the Second World War, the Canadian government also supplied German prisoners of war, Japanese-Canadian internees, and conscientious objectors, such as Doukhobors and Mennonites, to farmers. After the war the government formed the Farm Labour Pool System with the intention of regulating the supply of farm labour. Under the system, workers were recruited from Quebec and the Maritime provinces, provided with free transportation, room and board, and sent to work in the fields in southwestern Ontario. Another domestic programme was Agriculture for Young Canadians through which young Canadians, eighteen years and under, were encouraged to work on farms during the summer vacation and consider careers in agriculture.⁴

The Canadian government also attempted to recruit agricultural workers from international sources. In 1947 the federal government embarked on a project called the Netherlands Farm Families Movement, aimed at enticing Dutch farmers to come to Canada. This programme resulted in thousands of Dutch being admitted into Canada, making them the third largest group of post-Second World War immigrants.⁵ After the Second World War, Canada also sought to recruit agricultural workers from displaced persons. Among the first group of displaced persons to arrive in 1946 were 4000 former members of the Polish Armed Forces who had served with the Allied forces during the war. During the period 1950 to 1954, about 93,487 farm workers were recruited from Europe, with over 25,000 migrating in 1952 alone. The majority came from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium. From 1955 to 1961 there was a decrease in the number of Europeans migrating: in 1962 only 1,923 migrated to Canada. According to a memorandum dated September 24, 1964, from the Chief, Settlement Division to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Immigration, the decrease was due in part to a farm

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵ The Applied History Research Group, *The Peopling of Canada, 1946-1976* (Calgary: The University of Calgary 1997) http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/canada1946/index.html (accessed April 5, 2013).

labour shortage in the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Great Britain and France. He further noted that Canada could expect to see fewer immigrants from those countries for the next few years with the farm labourers moving through the countries of the European Common Market rather than migrating to Canada.⁶

Two other foreign labour initiatives were the Youth Employment Exchange Programme which involved supplying foreign students each year to work on tobacco farms during the summer vacation. The other was the annual recruitment of workers from the southern United States to work on tobacco farms. Canadian immigration officials also continued to select immigrants from European applicants who were willing to work on farms.⁷

Despite the massive post-Second World War migration of farm workers into Canada, farmers still complained about insufficient or inadequate labour. Ironically, there were complaints during the peak of mass European migration in the 1950s. One such complaint was made in a letter dated October 6, 1952, from the Department of Agriculture of the province of Saskatchewan, signed by L. J. Hutchinson and addressed to W. W. Dawson, Director of the Special Services Branch of the Department of Labour in Ottawa. Mr. Hutchison expressed disappointment in the performances of the Polish veterans, Italian workers and German farm workers who were brought under the assisted passage plan as permanent agricultural workers. He stated that the majority of them remained in agricultural work for only a few months before being absorbed into industrial occupations. "The result is that our Department of Agriculture or more specifically our Division of Labour in its attempt to bring in agricultural workers is actually financing the introduction of immigrants to man the industrial plant rather than agricultural

⁶ LAC, RG 26, vol.145, file 3-41-15, Chief, Settlement Division to Assistant Deputy Minister Immigration, September 24, 1964.

⁷ Tanya Basok, 28.

work.”⁸ Mr. Dawson admitted that the Department of Labour was dissatisfied with the immigrants brought from Europe for farm work. He further admitted that a high percentage of them had been lost to industrial occupations. He suggested, however, “We are making some gains all the time as a small percentage of each group that come forward remain in agriculture, either as workers or operators.”⁹

In 1957 the newly formed South-Western Ontario Field Crops Association (SWOFCA) and the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company Limited expressed similar sentiments as the Province of Saskatchewan. In a letter to W. W. Dawson, the administrative secretary of the company questioned the suitability of 300 Portuguese agricultural workers. “Frankly, we are concerned that we will have difficulty in keeping new Canadians at our agricultural work. We understand many Portuguese have gravitated to Kitimat, and they may be subject to enticing pressures from their fellow nationals if more lucrative work is available in B.C.”¹⁰

There was not much satisfaction with the performance of the domestic farm workers. A 1965 document titled “Agricultural Labour in Southwestern Ontario,” prepared by Ernest Bezaire on behalf of the Essex County Associated Growers, Leamington, Ontario, gave a detailed report on the farmers’ views of the domestic labourers. The report contained few positive comments from the farmers concerning the workers recruited by the National Employment Service. The report stated that some of the workers recruited had never been on a farm before and that they were unable to perform tasks requiring stoop labour. When given piece-work, these city workers managed to pick half the amount of tomatoes that an average farm worker picked. Some of the workers who came from Ottawa gave up the job before completing one day’s work; others barely lasted more than three days. The Native Indians, the

⁸ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1. L. J. Hutchison to W. W. Dawson, October 6, 1952.

⁹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, W. W. Dawson to L. J. Hutchinson, October 11, 1952.

¹⁰ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, M. W. Davidson to W. W. Dawson, February 11, 1957.

report stated, were steady workers when they were working but were not too dependable after pay day. Some of the Natives left in the middle of the season to plant trees or to work as guides during the hunting season. Overall, the report stated that little of the urban labour was productive. It further stated that among those urban workers “there is a high preponderance of drunks, half drunks, and winos who only work enough to get the price of a couple bottles of wine.” Bezaire cited one farmer who decided to put up his equipment for sale saying “I’ve had a guy pull a knife, I’ve had to stop men beating up women....I’ve come to the conclusion that I can spare myself such experiences.”¹¹

Soon after the Second World War Caribbean governments and Canadian organisations began the struggle to get Ottawa to agree to the admission of Caribbean farm labourers. One of the earlier requests was recorded in a letter dated March 29, 1947, from A. L. Jolliffe, Director, Department of Mines and Resources, to A. MacNamara, Deputy Minister in the Department of Labour. The letter revealed that a request was made by the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Canada, seeking the admission of agricultural workers from Jamaica into Canada on a temporary basis. Reference was made by the High Commissioner to the fact that during the war thousands of Caribbean labourers were recruited for agricultural and industrial work in the United States with good success. Mr. Jolliffe did not think too highly about the request: “The admission to Canada of natives of the West Indies has always been a problem with this Service and we are continually being asked to make provisions for the admission of these people. They are, of course, not assimilable and, generally speaking, the climatic conditions of Canada are not favourable to them.”¹²

¹¹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt2, Agricultural labour in Southwestern Ontario by Ernest Bezaire for Essex County Associated Growers, Leamington, Ontario, March 10, 1965.

¹² LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, A.L Jolliffe to. A. MacNamara, March 29, 1947.

Another request in 1947 came from the Labour Commissioner of Barbados, Mr. Guy Perrin. In a letter dated March 13 addressed to Minister of Labour Humphrey Mitchell, he stated that within the last three years Barbados had sent 11,075 agricultural workers to the United States and that their efforts were greatly appreciated by the then War Manpower Commission. He further stated that he was exploring the possibility of entering into a similar arrangement with Canada where Barbadians could work on Canadian farms on a seasonal basis.¹³

Among themselves, officials from the Department of Labour in Ottawa admitted that southern Ontario could have utilized extra help during harvesting; their preference, however, was Spanish-speaking workers from the southern United States. At a meeting in Chicago, Mr. George V. Maythorne of the Department of Labour discussed with his USA counterparts, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hollis, the possibility of getting a few hundred Spanish workers to help in the sugar beet industry in Ontario. When Mr. Maythorne was told that the USA would need the services of all their workers, Maythorne presented a suggestion where by the USA could supply Canada with a few hundred Spanish-speaking workers and then import workers from the West Indies to offset the shortfall that the movement to Canada would have caused. Mr Maythorne related the rest of the conversation as follows:

In replying, they asked why we didn't bring some of these West Indian workers into Canada ourselves. This I suggested, we had in fact once considered, but that it would seem to me much simpler, when they had the machinery all established, to bring in a few more West Indians themselves than for us to have to set up the machinery ourselves.¹⁴

It seemed that Mr. Maytorne was trying to be more diplomatic than truthful in his reason for not wanting to import Caribbean Labour. Several government officials had previously admitted that blacks were not welcome in Canada. Hence, the issue was really not one about setting up the machinery for seasonal employment but that West Indians were not welcome in

¹³ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, Guy Perrin to. Hon H. Mitchell, March 5, 1947.

¹⁴ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, George V. Maythorne, to Mr. A. MacNamara March 13, 1947.

Canada. In a memorandum dated March 13, 1947, to Mr. MacNamara, Deputy Minister of Labour, Mr. Maythorne stated: “I am still inclined to think that if we were to bring in special seasonal workers to south-western Ontario we would be better advised to first explore further the possibility of bringing in Spanish workers from the southern states rather than workers from the West Indies.”¹⁵

During the 1950s several requests were made by Government officials of the British West Indies for the admission of their citizens to work on Canadian farms. At the meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Representatives in 1952, D. E. Sangster, the representative for Jamaica, mentioned to A. H. Brown of the Department of Labour, that Jamaica was interested in supplying contract seasonal labour for forestry or agriculture.¹⁶ The request was forwarded to S. H. McLaren, Executive Director of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. In a memorandum dated September 25, 1952, to the Deputy Minister of Labour, McLaren advised, “In Canadian agriculture the peak season of labour demand is of short duration and up to the present time an adequate supply has been available within the country. Recently we harvested the largest crop in the history of Western Canada and experienced no labour difficulties.” As for forestry, McLaren stated that there was a sufficient movement of agricultural labour for the winter work to take care of the needs of that industry. He further stated that he was doubtful that labourers from warm climates could withstand the climatic and forests conditions in Canada.¹⁷

On June 1, 1954, the Barbados House of Assembly passed a resolution authorizing their Governor to head a delegation to Canada to discuss the temporary migration of Barbadians to work on Canadian farms during the summer and autumn months. The resolution noted that

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, A. H. Brown to Mr. A. MacNamara and W. W. Dawson, September 15, 1952.

¹⁷ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, S. H. McLaren to A. MacNamara, September 25, 1952.

Ontario farmers in the Niagara belt in southern Ontario were facing tremendous problems in attracting labour to harvest their crops in a timely manner and that the farmers would welcome migrant labour during harvest time.¹⁸

The resolution was eventually forwarded to the Honorable Paul Martin, Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Honorable M. F. Gregg, Minister of Labour and eventually to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In a letter dated July 13, 1954, addressed to the Minister of Labour, the Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration gave his views on the Barbados resolution. “From an immigration standpoint, of course, and unless it is necessary, we are not at all anxious to have movement of this kind where temporary entry is sought for employment purposes, thereby reducing the possibilities of establishment for bona fide immigrants.” The letter further stated that although the movement would be only transient in nature, difficulties and misunderstandings could develop if it came to the point where the Barbados workers did not wish to return home at the expiration of their temporary stay.¹⁹

In August 1954 a small delegation from Barbados, comprising the Minister of Labour and the Labour Commissioner, paid a visit to the Canadian Embassy in Washington D. C. and spoke with Labour Attaché Pat Conroy. The Barbadian officials explained that the island was facing a problem with a growing surplus of agricultural and domestic labour and that they were looking towards Canada for assistance in admitting some of those workers. Mr. Conroy stated up front that there was no such thing as a general shortage of agricultural labour in Canada. He also stated that through a process of interprovincial transfer at different times of the year they were

¹⁸ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, The House of Assembly (Barbados) to His Excellency the Governor, June 1, 1954.

¹⁹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to the Honourable M. F. Gregg July 13, 1954.

able to take care of the seasonal labour needs of the farmers. He further informed the men that due to mechanization the labour needs of farmers were declining.²⁰

One is not certain why the Canadian government ministers and other officials continued to mislead the Caribbean governments, causing them to waste valuable time and scarce resources in pursuing a cause, the outcome of which had already been decided. While the Canadian officials were making excuses to the Caribbean officials as to the reasons why they could not agree to a farm labour programme, they were having a different conversation among themselves. In a letter to the Labour Attaché in Washington D. C dated August 10, 1954, A. H. Brown emphasised the reason Canada could not agree to the request of the Barbados delegation. “...Canadian immigration policy does not lend encouragement nor provide any opportunity for the entry of West Indians.”²¹

In October 1952, a request for the admission of Caribbean farm workers on a seasonal basis was made to the Department of Labour. Interestingly, the request did not come from a Caribbean government official, but from the Department of Agriculture of the province of Saskatchewan in Regina. The request, signed by L. J. Hutchison, Director of the Farm Labour Division, was addressed to W.W. Dawson, Director of the Special Services Branch of the Department of Labour. Mr. Hutchinson stated that the needs of Saskatchewan farmers for seasonal labourers could be best filled by Caribbean labourers, as they were strictly agricultural labourers and as a result less likely to be absorbed by the industrial sector as was the case with the Polish, Italian and German farm workers. “The seasonal worker who is not interested in other occupations (other than farming) would I believe meet our farm labour requirements on most farms in Saskatchewan.” He further emphasised that as the Caribbean workers would be

²⁰ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, Pat Conroy to A. H. Brown, August 5, 1954.

²¹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, A. H. Brown to Pat Conroy, August 10, 1954.

coming under a short term visa for three or six months it was further assurance that they would be employed exclusively in agriculture.²²

In 1957 a request for Caribbean labourers was made by another Canadian organisation. This time, it was the newly formed South-Western Ontario Field Crops Association (SWOFCA) and the Canada and Dominion Sugar Company Limited. In a letter to W. W. Dawson, Director of the Special Services Branch of the Canadian Department of Labour, the administrative secretary of the company expressed the company's wish to have a source of labour which would be available from year to year over the long term. It was in this regard that the company was interested in trying at least one batch of British West Indians for the following reasons: "We foresee the supply from this source would be always available and, through liaison with the British West Indies Central Labour Organisation, selection and control of these workers would be better than over any other national groups." He therefore impressed upon the authorities to set up the machinery for the recruitment of workers from the British West Indies.²³

Requests for the admission of agricultural workers from the West Indies continued to pour into Canada during the 1960s. One request came from the Department of Labour of St. Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla in a letter dated March 18, 1960, addressed to Minister of Immigration E. H. Fairclough. The letter made a request for West Indians to be admitted into Canada as agricultural and industrial workers. The letter further made reference to the fact that European workers who were not even Her Majesty's Subjects had been allowed to enter Canada in the past.²⁴ Another request in 1960 was made by the government of the Federation of the West Indies that consideration be given by Canada for an experimental movement of seasonal workers into southwestern Ontario. The federal government made a specific proposal that a select group

²² LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, L. J Hutchison to W. W. Dawson October 6, 1952.

²³ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, .M. W Davidson to W. W. Dawson, February 11, 1957.

²⁴ LAC, RG 26, vol. 124, file 3-33-6, .John F. Vanier to E. M. Fairclough, March 18, 1960.

of fifty seasonal workers in the United States be allowed into Ontario for a few weeks after which they would return to the United States.²⁵

The idea of Canada recruiting West Indian agricultural workers from the United States sparked some discussion between the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr. Davidson and the Assistant to the Deputy Minister, C. E. S. Smith. Smith's position was that such an experiment should not even be considered because great pressure could be brought upon Canada to permit them to remain, as they were British subjects. He further stated that there was not sufficient work to keep them employed throughout the year. He also stated that such a scheme would upset the reciprocal arrangements between the United States and Canada where seasonal workers were exchanged between both countries and from which Canada benefitted enormously. He also noted that if the scheme was adopted it would interfere with the movement of workers inter-provincially and also with the Indian placement programme.²⁶

Deputy Minister Davidson stated that he was in agreement that workers should not be brought from the West Indies directly into Canada. He had a different view, however, concerning West Indians who were working on farms in the United States on a seasonal basis and who were desirous of accepting seasonal employment in Canada during the slow period in the USA.

When officials from the Department of Labour in Ottawa...go to North and South Carolina ... to seek seasonal workers, do we continue to insist that while they are free to recruit 2,000 to 3,000 seasonal tobacco workers (including, I presume, US Negroes), they are not free to include in this temporary crew of workers any West Indians, working in the US?

Davidson also responded to Mr. Smith's fear or excuse that it might be a problem to get the West Indian workers to leave Canada at the end of their contract. He noted that since there had not been any problems in the past with the US workers returning back to the US, then one should

²⁵ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, L. M. Hunter to F.M. Hereford, October 11, 1960.

²⁶ LAC, RG 126, vol. 124, file 3-33-6 pt 2, C. E. S. Smith to the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, September 13, 1960.

not assume that the seasonal workers from the West Indies would not return to the US along with their US colleagues. He further noted that since the West Indian workers had employment lined up in the USA before and after their seasonal period in Canada, then it was not likely that they would stay in Canada without any prospect of employment when they had a job in the USA to which they could return.²⁷

Davidson recommended that when the workers from the USA came to Canada for the 1961 harvest that an experimental group of fifty workers from the West Indies be included, providing that the US gave the assurance that they would be granted re-entry to the USA at the end of their contract in Canada. He gave his commitment that he would be ready to terminate the experiment forthwith if the workers were causing trouble by refusing to leave. He also stated that if the experiment proved a success, then it could be repeated and expanded. He reiterated that he could not justify a policy which admitted thousands of US seasonal workers into Canada including US Negroes, “while refusing to allow any Commonwealth fellow-citizens from the West Indies to be included in that movement...”²⁸

Davidson’s recommendation that an experimental group of fifty West Indian farm workers in the USA be admitted in Canada for the 1961 harvest season was discussed with Mr. Hereford, Director of the Special Services Branch of the Department of Labour. In response, in a memorandum to A. H. Brown dated October 14, 1960, Mr. Hereford stated that there was sufficient domestic labour available to meet the labour needs of the agricultural sector. He noted that there was no need to recruit workers from outside the province for the 1960 sugar beet crop due to a fifty percent reduction in the acreage. He noted that immigrants who were selected for sugar beet work had to be sent elsewhere and that indications suggested that there would not be a

²⁷ LAC, RG 126, vol. 124, file 3-33-6 part 2, Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to C.E.S Smith, October 5, 1960.

²⁸ Ibid.

substantial increase in sugar beet acreage for 1961. He further indicated that for 1960 only 1,500 tobacco workers were recruited from the United States compared to 2,680 in 1959 and 4,000 in 1956. He therefore felt that including West Indians would interfere with the reciprocal farm labour arrangement between Canada and the United States.²⁹

As the 1960s progressed, the struggle to get the Ministry of Labour to agree to the importation of seasonal workers from Jamaica intensified, with more influential persons and organisations making statements in support. They included Members of Parliament Eugene Whelan and H. E. Gray, Essex County Associated Growers, and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association. Their position was that inadequate labour had resulted in growers suffering serious financial losses and their continued operations being jeopardized. They also claimed that the growers from the USA, who competed with the local growers for the Canadian market, imported labourers from Jamaica. Because of the cheap labour used in their operations, they were able to compete unfairly against local growers. They further claimed that the refusal of the Ministry of Labour to admit seasonal agricultural workers from Jamaica was based on racial discrimination. They argued that the farmers were unable to pay the wages demanded by the local workers and that the government had a responsibility to act to relieve the situation. MP Whelan stated that his personal loss in 1963 was \$4000. He contended that the National Employment Service had not come close to providing sufficient labour to farmers.³⁰

One of the tools used by the Essex County Associated Growers to convince the government that domestic farm workers alone were inadequate to effectively address the labour shortage was a copy of a report prepared by Mr. Ernest Bezaire. The report described the problems faced by farmers who produced horticultural crops in finding seasonal workers. The

²⁹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, F .M. Hereford to A. H. Brown, October 14, 1960.

³⁰ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, Rene Tremblay to Allan J. MacEachen, November 17, 1964.

report stated that during the planting season of 1964 there was insufficient labour and as a result the planting of crops had to be extended later than normal. The situation was no different during the harvest period. “Some asparagus fields got out of hand and had to be chopped up with disk harrows because growers couldn’t find harvesting help.” The report also stated that the summer help from high schools students was inadequate, especially as students had to return to school before the completion of the harvest. “Farmers have come to the conclusion that the vast pools of unemployed in Metropolitan regions are not the sole answer to their help problem.” The report further stated that mechanization did not lessen labour requirements, it only enabled the horticultural farmers to utilize labour effectively.³¹

In 1964 J. M. Sandham, a member of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and chairperson of the Farm Labour Committee of the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, made a trip to Southern Florida to observe Jamaican workers in the sugar cane harvest. He reported how impressed he was with the quality of work produced by the Jamaicans and how their employers were quite vocal in their praise of them. He further reported that he was impressed with their morale and general attitude. “They seem to have one objective, that is to go back home with as much loot as possible. Hours of work appear to be no object if the pay is there. As a result, social problems are negligible as they are too busy earning money to get into trouble.” Mr. Sandham also confirmed that the 400 Jamaican seasonal workers all had farming backgrounds and were not just the unemployed off the city streets. The Jamaicans were quite enthusiastic when they learned that Mr. Sandham was from Canada: “As soon as they heard I was Canadian they were coming from all directions and would have climbed in the car and come with me right then.” Commenting on the accommodations provided, Mr.

³¹ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1, pt 2, *Agricultural labour in Southwestern Ontario* by Ernest Bezaire for Essex County Associated Growers, Leamington, Ontario, March 10, 1965.

Sandham remarked that they were “no better than what we could offer.” Overall he stated that he was quite satisfied that the Jamaicans were highly suitable for the harvest needs of Canadian farmers.³²

The Jamaican High Commissioner worked tirelessly in trying to get the Canadian Government to admit temporary agricultural workers from his country. Officials at the office personally interviewed farmers in southern Ontario who confirmed that they would be happy to employ experienced Jamaican workers on a seasonal basis. The High Commissioner’s office further proposed that the Jamaican workers in the United States, who were close to the border with Canada, cross over into Canada at the end of their contract in the north-eastern United States. The Canadian farmers could therefore have their services without having to pay for their return passage to Jamaica.³³

The response from the new Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, C. M. Isbister, was not encouraging. In a letter dated March 25, 1964, to Ivo De Souza, Deputy High Commissioner for Jamaica, he mentioned that although he looked at the proposal as carefully and sympathetically as possible, he could not respond in the affirmative. He stated that if the farmers would provide accommodation and terms of employment of a sufficiently attractive basis, they would be able to obtain Canadian workers. He further stated: “In view of the unemployment that exists here among the unskilled, we must give priority to channelling these opportunities for temporary employment in the direction of Canadian residents.”³⁴

By November 1964, Deputy Minister Isbister, in a memorandum to the Assistant Deputy Minister, revealed that he no longer felt that the position he articulated in his response to the Deputy High Commissioner for Jamaica was justifiable. He stated that while he had no problem

³² LAC, RG 26, vol.124, file 3-33-6, J. M. Sandham to J. Brown, March 5, 1964.

³³ LAC, RG 27, vol.292, file 1-26-69-1, Rene Tremblay to A. J. MacEachen, November 17, 1964.

³⁴ LAC, RG 26, vol.124, file 3-33-6, C. M. Isbister to Ivo de Souza, March 25, 1964.

refusing permanent immigrant status to unskilled labourers who might work for only one season in an industry such as agriculture and then move permanently to the city, he had a different view about seasonal workers. “I feel less confident that we are right, however, when we are rejecting a proposal for the temporary admission of migratory Jamaican labourers and justifying our rejection on the ground that the National Employment Services says they can find a substitute in Canada, whereas Whelan says they have failed.”³⁵ In another letter dated November 19, 1964, Deputy Minister C. M. Isbister informed Col. Laval Fortier, Chief Commissioner of the National Employment Service, that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Rene Tremblay, was under tremendous pressure to allow agricultural workers from Jamaica into Canada.³⁶

As late as 1965, one year prior to the commencement of the SAWP, the Minister of Labour was still resisting the admission of Jamaican workers into Canada. He specifically stated in a letter dated April 12 1965, addressed to the President of the Essex County Associated Growers, Mr. John Peterson, that if the growers would offer the same wages and working conditions as they were willing to offer the Jamaican workers, they would be able to attract sufficient labour within Canada. In that letter, he further stated that it had not been established that sufficient workers could not be recruited from within Canada. He said that the government proposed to move workers in need of employment to designated areas at public expense.³⁷

In May of that same year, in a memorandum to cabinet, the Minister of Labour continued to insist that the labour shortage could be addressed locally. He reported on an agreement reached at a meeting with the federal and provincial ministers and deputy ministers of Agriculture on December 18, 1964. The agreement was that through the cooperative efforts of

³⁵ LAC, RG 26, vol.145, file 3-41-15, C. M. Isbister to Assistant Deputy Minister (Immigration), November 2, 1964.

³⁶ LAC, RG 26, vol. 145, file 3-41-15, C.M Isbister to Col. Laval Fortier, September 19, 1964.

³⁷ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, Allan J. MacEachen to John Paterson, April 12, 1965.

the provincial governments, the National Employment Service and the farmers, they would attempt to meet the labour needs by attracting local labour, utilising the services of day-haul operations and utilizing the resources of Native workers. The Minister noted that Native workers had been used successfully in Alberta and Manitoba in the sugar beet industry for a number of years and in 1964 a total of 4,000 Natives were employed by both provinces. The Minister further stated that growers would have to be prepared to improve working and living conditions. He mentioned the possibility of accessing assistance under the Federal-Provincial Agriculture Manpower Agreement for 1965-66, where the provincial and federal governments would contribute towards the provision of housing for agricultural workers.³⁸

Interestingly, in the minister's closing statement in his 1965 memorandum to cabinet, he did not shut the door completely to the importation of foreign labour. "It is recommended that the importation of seasonal workers for agriculture should not be authorised at least until it has been determined that domestic workers are not available on the basis of offers of employment to Canadian workers comparable to those being offered to workers from the British West Indies."³⁹

Minister Allan J. MacEachen was prophetic in his recommendation. The reports from the 1965 harvest period showed that it was a challenging year to find an adequate supply of competent farm labour. Although there was no reported loss of crops due to labour shortage, the credit was given to favourable weather during the latter part of the season rather than the availability of adequate labour. In a memorandum to cabinet dated March 30, 1966, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration admitted that after consultation with the growers and with the Federal-Provincial Agricultural Manpower Committee, the forecast for 1966 did not look better than 1965. The Minister summed it up as follows: "Seasonal labour will be harder

³⁸ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-1 pt 1, Allan J. MacEachen memorandum to cabinet, May 6, 1965.

³⁹ Ibid.

than ever to find...The realistic estimate is that there is this year a substantial risk of labour shortages in fruit and vegetable harvesting in Southwestern Ontario, even when all practicable efforts have been made to intensify the supply of labour from domestic sources.” The Minister further announced in the memorandum that he was ready to concede to the request of the growers that they be allowed to bring in workers from the West Indies. “I believe that, in the situation this year, it would be very unwise to maintain a blanket refusal to such requests.” He therefore went on to make the announcement that took decades of struggle to accomplish. “I therefore propose that permission be given for the entry of workers from the West Indies.”⁴⁰ Cabinet gave its approval on March 31, 1966.⁴¹

The decision by cabinet to approve the admission of seasonal workers from the West Indies for Ontario fruit and vegetable farmers came with some conditions that almost caused the scheme to fail before it started. Whereas with the domestic scheme the government had placed all the initial expenses on the island governments and the domestic workers, the opposite happened with the farm labour scheme where the initial expenses were placed on the employers. The reason was not to decrease the expenses of the farm workers, but to make the scheme as expensive as possible, thus severely reducing the number of foreign workers that would be recruited. Wages without board or lodging were to be paid at a rate of \$1.50 per hour. Workers were to be guaranteed a weekly minimum of fifty dollars, which represented payment for thirty-three hours per week whether or not work was available. Employers were to provide satisfactory meals and lodging at cost not to exceed twenty dollars per week. The duration of employment should not be less than eight weeks or more than twelve weeks. The most controversial of all was the stipulation that the employer must pay transportation both ways. The Minister admitted

⁴⁰ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, Jean Marchand to cabinet, March 20, 1966.

⁴¹ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to cabinet, April 12, 1966.

that the wages and conditions were better than what was offered by most farmers to most labourers and that it was done on purpose so as to ensure that there would be no “undercutting of Canadian labour.” He stated that the growers were bound to complain that those conditions were too stiff. “If this reaction is very strong, we would be prepared in negotiation to come down to requiring the grower to pay transportation one way only.”⁴²

The Minister was correct in his prediction. The conditions were met with fierce resistance from the growers who claimed that no workers would be hired under those conditions. They were opposed to paying return transportation for the workers as well as the proposed fifty dollars weekly minimum earnings. They also demanded a reduction in the minimum hourly rate from \$1.50 to \$1.25 which they calculated would eventually amount to \$1.40 per hour inclusive of the provision of lodging for the workers. The growers estimated that if these changes were met they might be able to hire approximately 750 West Indian workers. The Department of Citizenship and Immigration agreed to meet the growers half way. The hourly rate was reduced to \$1.25 with lodging provided and instead of the minimum earnings of fifty dollars in any week, it was amended to fifty dollars multiplied by the number of weeks of employment. However, on the question of the payment of return airfare, after considering a change to the payment of one way, the Minister decided to stick with the original proposal. The Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made it clear:

In view of Cabinet’s emphasis on the importance of making every effort to use domestic rather than foreign sources, I now propose that we retain the requirement that the grower pay two-way transportation for West Indian workers. Since Canadian workers can be moved at government expense under the farm labour agreements, this transportation factor is a powerful protection.⁴³

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

The insistence by the government that employers pay return air fare of the overseas workers did not go down well with the Ontario growers and their sentiments were expressed in the local newspapers. The June 19, 1966 edition of the *Toronto Daily Star* carried a column captioned “Fine Print too costly, Farmers may bar Jamaican Labour.” The paper quoted John Sandham, secretary of the Ontario Fresh Fruit Marketing Board, as saying that Ontario farmers were ready to reject the federal government’s proposal despite the fact that they were faced with the most acute labour shortage since the Second World War. Sandham said that crop losses would be substantial unless they could find between 12,000 to 15,000 seasonal workers. He listed the Niagara Peninsula, Essex County and the Georgian Bay as the most affected areas. The conditions attached to the importation of Jamaicans were too severe. He stated: “When farmers read the fine print of the required contract they just threw up their hands in despair...”⁴⁴ The June 9, 1966 edition of the *Windsor Star*, also quoted Mr. Sandham as saying, “A grower who needed 10 men would have to pay out \$2550 before he even sees the men...it would be like buying a pig in a poke.”⁴⁵

Ernie Bezaire, a reporter for the *Windsor Star* newspaper, began one of his columns as follows. “Many farmers in Essex County would like to spend a few weeks in Jamaica. They never felt they could afford the luxury of a winter vacation in the West Indies.” These same farmers, he continued, would have to pay airfares both ways for Jamaican help to harvest their crop. Bezaire noted that most farmers understood that someone had to pay the return fare for the Jamaicans and it was only logical that those who benefit directly from those workers should be asked to pay. The farmers objected to the fact that nothing was said about recovering the fare if the workers had exceeded the minimum earnings as stipulated. In 1965, when farmers in Ontario

⁴⁴ “Fine Print too costly, Farmers may bar Jamaican Labour,” *Toronto Daily Star*, June 9, 1966.

⁴⁵ “Jamaicans too Costly Farm Import Plan Knocked by Official,” *Windsor Star*, June 9, 1966.

held discussions with the Jamaican Labour officials, the arrangement was that the farmers would pay the fare to Canada and after the worker had earned the guaranteed minimum wage, the employer could make weekly deductions from the rest of the pay to recover the return air fare.⁴⁶

Citizenship and Immigration certainly achieved its objective of discouraging heavy recruitment of foreign agricultural workers. Under the 1966 agreement they had hoped that no more than 1000 workers would be recruited. However, the actual amount recruited in 1966 was only 264, of which 133 were required by a single company.⁴⁷ The 1966 experimental movement of Jamaican agricultural workers was so small in number that it was difficult to measure their impact on the agricultural industry. There was no widespread distribution of the workers. Of the 264 workers recruited, a little more than fifty percent were employed by the Canada Cannery Limited and the remaining 131 were employed by various growers. The estimated cost of employing the Jamaicans who worked on farms, when taking into account air passage, worked out to be thirty-five cents more per hour than for a transient worker or forty-four cents more per hour than for a local worker. Those who worked with the Canadian Cannery Limited received nineteen cents more per hour than transient domestic labour and twenty-five cents more per hour than for local labour.⁴⁸

The report on the 1966 movement was encouraging. The vast majority of the employers expressed satisfaction with the Jamaican labourers. They particularly appreciated their dependability, a quality reportedly generally lacking in transient and local labour. In a letter to the Deputy Minister on November 11, 1966, the Canadian Cannery Limited wrote, "These people have performed a valuable service to our company at a time when the shortage of seasonal

⁴⁶ Ernie Bezaire, "Only 100 Jamaicans Applied for: Crop Prospects Discourage Area Farmers," *Winsor Star*, May 14, 1966.

⁴⁷ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt2, Report on the 1966 movement.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

workers has reached the critical stage.”⁴⁹The Company’s personnel supervisor W. R. Hetherington, stated, “We are more than pleased with the work they have performed for us and would like to see them come back to work for us next year.”⁵⁰ Similar sentiments were echoed by the area manager K. M. Pajet, who added, “We are sorry to see the Jamaicans go, they were well behaved, reliable and took pride in their work”⁵¹ The company confirmed that not only would it rehire the Jamaican workers but that it would increase the number of offshore workers in 1967. Likewise, half of the other employers stated that they would increase the numbers. All of the employers interviewed, except one, stated that they would like to have the Jamaicans again the next season. Most of the growers interviewed revealed that while the Jamaicans were more productive than many of the Canadians they employed, it was their reliability that especially won their favour. They also agreed that the Jamaicans were generally polite, clean, neat, honest and well behaved.⁵²

Further proof of the appreciation of the services of that first batch of workers was the effort by influential persons to persuade the government to grant permanent resident status to some of the 1966 batch of Jamaican workers. On October 13, 1966, a request for permanent residence for fifty Jamaican workers, employed by Canada Cannery Ltd was made in the House of Commons by Harold Danforth, MP (PC Kent). The petition was sent to Mr. Danforth from the Campbell African Methodist Episcopal Church in Chatham under the name of Mr. and Mrs. George Crosby. In the House of Commons, Mr. Danforth said that he had found no fault with the caliber of the workers and their conduct had been beyond repute. Further, they had done their jobs to the satisfaction of their employers. The MP further articulated:

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bob Boughner, “Like Canada but Must go Home Jamaicans Admit,” *Chatham Daily News*, October 15, 1966.

⁵¹ Dave Reddick, “Jamaicans go Home Silent Sadness Veils Goodbye to Dresden,” *Chatham Daily News*, November 14, 1966.

⁵² LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt2, Report on the 1966 movement.

I have received many representations from people who are interested in procuring their further services here. Representations have been made in an effort to see that these young men are allowed to stay in this country, particularly those who possess skills which can be employed to the advantage of the areas to which they gave service this summer.⁵³

In responding to the petition from Mr. Danforth, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, John Monroe, told the House that when the government approved the special experiment it was to relieve a shortage of seasonal harvest labour in Ontario. He stated that it was made clear to the government of Jamaica that the workers must return at the end of their contract and they could not use this means to gain immigrant status. He further stated that if the workers wanted to become immigrants and they possessed the required qualifications they would be admissible in the ordinary way but they could not be allowed special treatment because they came to Canada for seasonal work.⁵⁴

There were no major problems reported concerning the 1966 experimental movement. Some of the workers had concerns over accommodation and working conditions but according to the government report on the 1966 movement, these concerns were addressed and quickly settled by Jamaican and Canadian liaison officers in the field. Another problem reported was that both employers and employees resented compulsory payments to the Canadian Pension Plan as it was hardly likely that the workers would benefit from that plan. The employers also continued to resent the payment of air passage in both directions for the workers without the opportunity of recovering that expense. It was also reported that five workers disappeared and another five refused to work on Saturdays because they were Seventh-Day Adventists.⁵⁵

Although the 1966 experimental movement of agricultural workers from Jamaica was generally a resounding success, workers from the West Indies were again a last resort for

⁵³ "Immigration Officer Denies Privileges For Jamaicans", *Chatham Daily News*, October 21, 1966.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *LAC*, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 2, Report on the 1966 movement.

selection as labourers on Canadian farms in 1967. Deputy Minister of Manpower and Immigration, Tom Kent, in a memorandum to the Minister, dated March 13, 1967, estimated that for the 1967 crop, the Ontario region would need 5000 workers in addition to those available within the province. He remarked, "Taking into account the traditional out-of-the-area sources of supply which include our own Indians, workers from Quebec and the Atlantic Region and workers from the United States, we believe that there will be a requirement of another 1000 workers." The Deputy Minister further stated that if the additional workers were brought from the Caribbean it should not undermine the labour market once they imposed the same safeguards as in 1966.⁵⁶

On March 16, 1967, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration announced to the House of Commons that after exhausting the supply from the traditional sources, that additional labour would be recruited from the West Indies once more. He also announced that in addition to Jamaica, the programme was being extended to Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago. His statement also mentioned Canada's willingness to extend the programme to the other Commonwealth Caribbean countries. "We are anxious to assist Caribbean countries which have an oversupply of labour; therefore we will be prepared to cooperate with employers or their associations who through their own arrangements hire individual seasonal workers in other Commonwealth Caribbean countries."⁵⁷

The conditions of the 1967 movement were similar to those of 1966. Again, the government ensured that measures were in place to guarantee that West Indian workers could not be hired cheaper than domestic workers. The hourly wage was increased from \$1.25 to \$1.30 and there was the provision of a minimum average weekly salary of fifty dollars during the

⁵⁶ LAC, RG 26, vol.86, file 8-18-7 Deputy Minister to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, March 13, 1967.

⁵⁷ LAC, RG 26 Vol.86 File 8-18-7, Minister of Manpower and Immigration to the House of Commons, March 16, 1967.

employment period. The minimum period of employment was reduced from eight weeks to six weeks to accommodate the apple growers, and there was a slight adjustment in the maximum period from sixteen weeks to four calendar months.⁵⁸ The tobacco growers had requested that the maximum period of employment be increased to twenty-six weeks so that they could employ some workers for the entire season. This proposal did not receive the support of the Deputy Minister Tom Kent, who stated: “The purpose of this movement is to provide workers when none are available from other sources and it is not to provide farm labour for the entire season.” On the issue of air transportation, the Canadian government again insisted that the growers be required to pay airfare both ways. However, with the extension of the programme to include Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, it was decided that growers should not be required to pay transportation in excess of the cost of a return airfare from Jamaica. Therefore in cases where transportation costs for the other participating territories were more expensive than the fare from Jamaica, the extra cost had to be absorbed by either the workers or the home government.⁵⁹

A total of 1,077 Caribbean workers participated in the 1967 seasonal agricultural workers programme which was a handsome increase of 813 over the previous year. The 1,077 workers comprised 637 from Jamaica, 222 from Barbados and 218 from Trinidad and Tobago. Forty-four workers from Jamaica had participated in the 1966 experimental group of which all but one returned to the previous employer. These 1,077 workers worked for an average of ten to twelve weeks on farms harvesting principally mixed vegetables, tobacco, tomatoes, peaches and apples. About forty percent of the time was spent in cannery employment. The Caribbean workers cost

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ LAC, RG 26, vol.86, file 8-18-7, Deputy Minister to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration, March 13, 1967.

the employers approximately one million dollars in gross wages, transportation and Canada pension contributions. The average cost per worker excluding accommodation was \$907.⁶⁰

A field survey comprising a sampling of 246 Caribbean and 192 Canadian workers from fifty-one farms was conducted in August/September 1967 to compare the costs and productivity of Caribbean with alternative Canadian labour. The survey made a rather interesting conclusion that the larger farm operators were apparently ready to pay higher total costs for Caribbean than for alternative Canadian labour. The study found that if foreign labour was not available, the larger farm operators would probably still offer higher wages than smaller operators in order to attract a sufficient supply of domestic labour. The higher wages offered by the larger farm operators would then cause the smaller farm operators to boost wages in order to compete for labour. The study was quick to mention that this adjustment may have been hindered by the fact that smaller employers enjoyed a somewhat preferred position in respect to the requirements for seasonal labour as they could often recruit friends and relatives and most farm workers liked the more democratic environment of the smaller farms. "This difference between large and smaller employers does not, however, provide sufficient argument for the importation of seasonal labour each year to meet the demands of some larger employers, and thereby prevent this collective demand from reaching the Canadian labour market."⁶¹

The study also found that Canadian men had a better rate of productivity than the Caribbean men and averaged a nine percent faster work pace. There were mixed opinions, however, among the employers concerning the advantages of Caribbean versus Canadian labour. The differences in opinions were to a large extent based on the types of crops and the size of the operation. The larger operators were generally in favour of Caribbean labour as they required a

⁶⁰ D. R Buchanan, *Evaluation of the 1967 Caribbean Farm Labour Program* (Ottawa: Research Branch, Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1968), 1-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 4-6.

large labour force, had almost no labour turnover problem, and were generally assured of getting their crops harvested. It was therefore not surprising that a high proportion of the Caribbean workers were employed by larger operators in harvesting peaches and apples. Thirty-seven operators for example employed 312 Jamaican apple pickers, an average of over eight workers per operator. Using local labour, the larger operators reported a labour turnover ranging from 300 to 700 percent which meant that instead of fifty regular workers, 150 to 350 casual Canadian workers had to be used to get the crops harvested. Another observation was that by the time the apple crops were ready for harvesting in September and October, the high schools students and other seasonal summer domestic labour were no longer available; as a result there was a heavier demand for Caribbean labour. The small operators, on the other hand, said that they could not afford to pay the transportation costs for Caribbean workers. Some tobacco farmers seemed to have had a preference for Canadian workers while others stated that they had no problem with the Caribbean workers. A common remark from operators about the Caribbean workers was that they were obedient and carried out instructions well.⁶²

As in the previous year, there were no major problems reported in 1967. Only five percent or fifty workers failed to complete their entire contract. Twenty-two workers left their employment without giving notice and failed to return. Sixteen were repatriated for breach of their employment contract and, unfortunately, two workers died: one in an auto accident and the other by natural causes. A small number of workers were transferred from one employer to another but they were able to complete the period of seasonal employment in Canada.⁶³

The issue of extending the maximum time period during which the foreign workers could remain in Canada surfaced again in the 1968 movement. One of the persons making that

⁶² Ibid., 7-33.

⁶³ Ibid., 50

recommendation was Abe Epp Jr., owner/manager of a fruit farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In the opening paragraph of his request, he established the fact that his operation was not a large firm lobbying for grants or concessions. Rather, he was “an average fruit farm operator appealing to what seems to make sense and is a realistic approach to our main problem.” From the inception of the SAWP, Mr. Epp had been employing four Jamaicans whom he claimed worked very well. After having the same workers for two consecutive years they had developed the skills required and became very valuable workers. “I found that the Jamaican workers were of much more value to us in the second year than in the first. It cannot be emphasised too much that we need a high calibre and highly trained person for our type of work. I believe we have this type of person in the Caribbean, whereas they are not available in this country. ”The main problem as cited by Mr. Epp was that four months was not long enough to fill their labour needs as the busy season extended for six months, from April 15 to October 15. He further stated that it was always a problem to find workers with the required skills for the remaining two months.⁶⁴

For the rest of the 1960s, there were few changes in the operation of the SAWP, but the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s saw some major adjustments. Chief among them was the introduction of Mexico, a non-Commonwealth, non-English/French participant in the programme. The other major developments were: the extension of the programme to include the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States comprising the islands of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent; the extension of the maximum period of employment for foreign workers to eight months; and the authorization for employers to recover funds spent on airfare and work visas for the foreign workers.

⁶⁴ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, letter from Abe Epp Jr. January 20, 1968.

Canada had promised that if the 1966 SAWP experiment with Jamaica was successful, it would consider expanding the programme to include the other Commonwealth Caribbean territories. This commitment was reiterated at the Commonwealth Caribbean-Canadian conference in Ottawa, July 6-8 1966: "...In future years, consideration would be given to broadening the programme to include other Caribbean countries."⁶⁵ Although the experiment in 1966 with Jamaica was a success, only Trinidad and Barbados were admitted into the programme in 1967. It took ten years (1966-1976) for the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean territories to be admitted into the programme. During those ten years of waiting, the non-participating islands had to carry out a struggle similar to the pre-1966 era to beg Canada to expand the programme to include their citizens.

The island of St. Lucia made a formal request to be allowed to participate in the programme as early as April 1967. Canada responded in April of the same year advising St. Lucia that the scheme, if successful, might be further expanded, assuming that the demand for such seasonal workers in Canada continued to be maintained at the same or higher level. In 1969, a letter was again sent to Canada from the office of the premier through the office of the Canadian High Commissioner in Trinidad. The letter made reference to the promise made by Canada in the April 1967 letter and reiterated the anxiety of the government and people of St. Lucia to be admitted into the programme.⁶⁶

The letter from St Lucia was reviewed by the Department of External Affairs before being forwarded to the Department of Manpower and Immigration with a restricted note. The note cited the substantial increase of almost 200 Caribbean workers in the 1968 movement when compared to 1967. It further stated that if the figures represented an increasing demand for farm

⁶⁵ LAC, RG118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt. 8, J. .B. Bissett to R. Martineau, September 20, 1974.

⁶⁶ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 3, Premier of St. Lucia to the Commissioner for the Associated States, May 14, 1969.

workers then consideration could be given to expanding the programme to St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, Grenada and St. Kitts.⁶⁷ The response from Manpower and Immigration was not as enthusiastic. In a restricted letter dated June 11, 1969, it was noted that while the programme was successful so far there were two major developments which made it unlikely that the program would be expanded beyond its present scope. The first was the increase in the numbers of students available for seasonal harvesting and processing, and the second was the technological improvements in crop harvesting.⁶⁸

Between 1970 and 1974 requests for inclusion into the programme were received from Antigua, Montserrat, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Kitts and Nevis, Dominica and Grenada.⁶⁹ The Canadian response to St. Vincent stated that the demand for Caribbean workers had decreased in the last three years of the programme's operation. It noted that the decrease was due to automation in the industry, the increased interest from Canadian students in agricultural employment, the high level of unemployment in Canada and the expense involved in importing foreign workers. The response further stated that further declines in the size of the programme might be expected, that St. Vincent was the seventh country to make a similar request, and that all of those previous requests had been refused.⁷⁰

The report of a meeting held on September 23, 1974, to discuss the expansion of the SAWP revealed that some of the government departments were not in favour of extending the SAWP to the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean. The Manpower Division felt that Canada should not become too dependent on foreign labour. The Immigration Department expressed

⁶⁷ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 3, Department of External Affairs to the Department of Manpower and Immigration, May 14, 1969.

⁶⁸ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 3, Department of Manpower and Immigration to the Department of External Affairs, June 11, 1969.

⁶⁹ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 1, W. E. Bell to M. G. Clark, May 21, 1974.

⁷⁰ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 1, E. M. Hutchinson to N. K. Crowder, August 10, 1972.

concern over the increased administrative burden and the possible adverse public reaction. External Affairs Department gave sympathetic support on the grounds that it would stimulate the fostering of bilateral relations with the governments of the individual islands. External Affairs also took a principled approach on the grounds that the Canadian government had already committed itself to the expansion of the programme.⁷¹ Eventually the SAWP was extended in 1976 to include the islands of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

While the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States was waiting for Canada to fulfill its earlier promise of including its members in the SAWP, Canada had reached an agreement with a non-Commonwealth and non-English-speaking country to supply seasonal agricultural workers to Canadian farmers. According to E. M. Hutchinson, Acting Chief, Federal Liaison and Coordination Division, Manpower Employer Services Branch, “On June 17, 1974, an understanding was reached with the Mexican Government to regulate and organize the movement of temporary agricultural workers from Mexico to Canada. ... This program was modeled on the Caribbean program.”⁷² This agreement marked a change in the original recommendation from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Jean Marchand, who in his submission to cabinet on March 30 1966, proposed that workers be admitted from the West Indies, “but not from Mexico or other sources which have been suggested; the labour there is cheaper and the necessary organization and control would be much harder to assure.”⁷³ The cabinet submission was a confirmation of an earlier statement made at the Canada-West Indies Conference held in Jamaica on January 27-28 1966. “Seasonal farm workers could only be accepted if there were inadequate labour supplies in Canada, but Canada

⁷¹ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 8, R. Martineau to J. B. Bissett, September 20, 1974.

⁷² LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 8, E. M. Hutchinson to H. S. Johnson, October 31, 1974.

⁷³ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 7, Jean Marchand to cabinet, March 30, 1966.

would turn to the West Indies before Hong Kong and Mexico which also sought entry.”⁷⁴ Eight years later, these concerns seemed to have been forgotten.

The language used by Mr. Hutchinson in the above paragraph suggested that there was already a movement of Mexican labourers to Canada but it was unregulated and undocumented. Actually, during the early 1970s private contractors were used to recruit Mexican and Portuguese farm workers. There was an annual movement of about 10,000 Mexicans of whom 4000 were expatriate Canadian Mennonites traveling on Canadian passports. Some of the Mexicans, especially those in Canada illegally, were exploited in terms of transportation, living conditions and wages.⁷⁵ A Special Task Force created by the Department of Manpower and Immigration investigated the scheme and reported on the deplorable conditions under which the Mexicans lived and worked.

The authors of this report, and those who accompanied them, were shocked, alarmed and sickened at some of the arrangements made for accommodation in Canada for Mexican families, at their wages and working conditions, at the fact that the entire family works in the fields for the season, at the lack of schooling, at the evidence of malnutrition which exists among them, and at numerous other factors such as non-existent health facilities.⁷⁶

The Task Force recommended that if the Department of Manpower and Immigration continued to facilitate the admission of foreign workers other than those under the SAWP, then there must be negotiations with the original countries, particularly Mexico and Portugal. The negotiations, the recommendations stated, should include agreements “which guarantee basic and humane treatment of the workers involved, including wage guarantees, transportation assistance,

⁷⁴ LAC, RG 26, vol. 125, file 3-33-6, Report of the Canadian delegation to the preparatory meeting of officials, Kingston, Jamaica, January 27-28, 1966.

⁷⁵ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 part 7, Department of External Affairs to the Canadian High Commissions in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad, May 21, 1974.

⁷⁶ Veena Verma, The Mexican and Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program: Regulatory and Policy Framework, Farm Industry Level Employment Practices, and the Future of the Program Under Unionization.(Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 2003),10, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/> (accessed April 26, 2011).

health standards and accommodation criteria, among others.” The report further stated that under government regulated and controlled programmes such as the SAWP, there were fewer breaches of the employment visa regulations.⁷⁷

In 1974, 208 workers from Mexico arrived, marking the commencement of its official participation in the programme. At first, there was little cause for alarm from the Caribbean Governments, for the numbers from Mexico were small. It took thirteen years of Mexico’s participation in the programme before their numbers exceeded 1000 participants, representing twenty percent of all participants. Three years later, in 1990, they accounted for thirty-seven percent of all participants and by 2001 Mexico overtook the Commonwealth Caribbean accounting for fifty-one percent of the recruits in SAWP.⁷⁸ In 2004, 10,777 workers came from Mexico, while 8,110 came from the Commonwealth Caribbean.⁷⁹

In a telegram from the Department of External Affairs, dated May 21, 1974, the Canadian High Commissions in Port of Spain, Bridgetown and Kingston were given the task of updating the island governments about the agreement reached between Canada and Mexico. The message stated that the admission of Mexican workers to Canada on terms similar to the Caribbean seasonal programme would actually benefit the Caribbean, as it would end the unfair competition with undocumented Mexicans who were exploited in wages and accommodations. As planters would be required to pay the same wages to Mexicans and provide similar accommodations and transportation arrangements, it would ensure that the Caribbean labour was not made financially less desirable to the employer. The message gave this assurance: “We shall be vigilant in

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Kerry Preibisch and Leigh Binford, “Interrogating Racialized Global Labour Supply: An Exploration of the Racial/National Replacement of Foreign Agricultural Workers in Canada,” *The Canadian Review of sociology and Anthropology* 44, no. 1 (Feb 2000): 13.

⁷⁹ Maxwell Brem, *Migrant Workers in Canada: A Review of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program* (Ottawa: The North South Institute, 2006), 2, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/> (accessed March 10, 2010).

attempting to ensure that understanding does not lead to reduction in the flow of Caribbean labour but that Caribbean shares in any increases in numbers of seasonal workers brought to Canada.” The message also requested of the various High Commissioners: “Please attempt to ensure that local authorities appreciate that our understanding with Mexico will be in the interests of [the] Caribbean and represents attempt to rectify existing unsatisfactory situation.”⁸⁰

Among themselves, Canadian government officials were expressing satisfaction for an excuse to break the monopoly of the Caribbean in supplying offshore farm labourers to farmers. A memorandum dated September 17, 1974, from D. W. Findlay, Director, Manpower Employer Service Branch addressed to W. K. Bell, Director, Programs and Procedures Branch provided the evidence.

...The signing of the Mexican agreement not only gives us alternative source of supply of agricultural workers but it also acts as a balancing force to the Caribbean supply. The latter is especially important, for we have noted in the last two years, at least, a ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ attitude with the Caribbean Liaison Officers almost in direct proportion to the increased use of the Caribbean program. But taken together the present Caribbean and Mexican arrangements assure us of a virtually unlimited supply of workers.⁸¹

In a memorandum dated July 17, 1974, D. W. Findlay expressed to J. L. Manion, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Manpower, the advantages of the Mexican workers over the Caribbean workers. “The position taken by the Mexicans contrasts with the stand of the Caribbean Liaison Officers who to date, have insisted that they and their workers want to be at home during the Christmas-New Year Period.” The Mexicans, on the other hand, according to Findlay, had no problems staying on for eight consecutive months even though those eight months included the Christmas/ New Year season. “From our point of view the availability of Mexicans during those periods when Caribbean are unavailable, enables us to provide a source

⁸⁰ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 7, External Affairs to Canadian High Commissions in Kingston, Bridgetown and Port-of Spain, May 21, 1974.

⁸¹ LAC, R.G.118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt. 8, Acting Director, Manpower and Employer Services Branch to the Director, Programs and Procedures Branch, September 17, 1974.

of offshore labour for the calendar year. The latter is most important in the case of the mushroom industry where workers are in constant demand throughout the year.”⁸²

Additional evidence that it was the desire of Canadian officials to deliberately erode the dominance of the Caribbean in the SAWP was contained in a confidential letter from R. Martineau Chief, Western Hemisphere to Mr. J. B. Bissett, Director General, Foreign Services, dated September 20, 1974, “There is little doubt that the volume of the Mexican movement is going to increase substantially starting next year, subject of course to the impact of the Canadian programs. But in any case it will eat into the Caribbean movement...” The letter quoted one J. D. Boyd, Regional Director General, Ontario, as saying privately to a government official that producers were pleased with the 1974 batch of Mexican workers and that he anticipated a movement next year of 3000 to 4000 (compared to some 200 this year and some 4500 Caribbean workers). The letter also stated: “Manpower has indicated they see this as a useful development in the sense that the competition aids Canadian producers in bargaining for conditions with the Caribbean authorities.”⁸³ HRDC openly expressed its support for competition between Mexico and the Caribbean. “Competition helps. Yes, it is there between the Caribbean countries and between the Caribbean countries and Mexico... A healthy level of competition is a good thing for the program. The countries are anxious to supply labour to us and be responsive to suggestions that we make. The employer community is well served by that.”⁸⁴

The competition for places in the SAWP did not begin with the addition of Mexico as a participating country, it only intensified. As early as 1968, in just the third year of the SAWP and the second year since the expansion of the programme to include Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, evidence of inter-island rivalry began to surface. In 1968 the Department of

⁸² LAC, RG 118, vol. 82, file 3315-5-3 pt 2, D. W. Findlay to J. L. Manion, July 17, 1974.

⁸³ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 8, R. Martineau to J. B. Bissett, September 20, 1974.

⁸⁴ Veena Verma, 50, 51.

Manpower and Immigration received a complaint lodged by the government of Trinidad and Tobago through the office of the Canadian High Commissioner based in Port of Spain. Trinidad was protesting the fact that Barbados was sending more workers than Trinidad on the seasonal workers program. The complaint stated that thirty-one workers from Trinidad and 102 from Barbados traveled on an Air Canada charter on August 4, 1968 and on August 9, twenty- eight workers from Trinidad and about seventy from Barbados traveled on a British West Indian Airways charter. The office of the High Commissioner further reported, “Trinidad and Tobago government is concerned about this trend since they feel that based on population they should send twice as many workers on the program as Barbados. Please advise present method of selection and whether this trend in favour of Barbados will continue.”⁸⁵

Another example of rivalry was recorded in the confidential section of the report on the operation of the SAWP in 1970. “An unnecessary ‘competition’ for vacancies has developed to the point where the Jamaican Liaison Officer is pushing Trinidadian seasonal workers, already in the country, out of their jobs and replacing them with Jamaican workers. We suspect this was achieved by ‘advising’ an employer how to force early repatriation of Trinidad workers.” The report further stated that such tactics as employed by Jamaica were unnecessary as each of the participating islands were allocated a specific share of the total vacancies which was strictly and successfully controlled. Instead, those tactics created unnecessary difficulty for the programme in that it caused unjustified dissatisfaction amongst the employers with the type of workers supplied. The report further stated that the Liaison Officer for Jamaica had been around since

⁸⁵ LAC, RG118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1 pt 3, High Commissioner in Port of Spain Trinidad to Ottawa, August 3, 1968.

the inception of the SAWP, and had learned ways in which he could manipulate the system in favour of Jamaica.⁸⁶

In 1974 after eight years of dominance by Jamaica and seven years by Trinidad and Barbados, Canada indicated its willingness to extend the SAWP to include the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean who had expressed interest in joining the programme. Instead of the three islands expressing joy for their sister territories, they were concerned that the extension might reduce the number of workers selected from their respective islands. The High Commissioners for all three territories wrote an identical letter addressed to Mr. D. W. Findlay, AG. Director General, Manpower Employer Services Branch, dated July 25, 1974. The letter asked for early negotiations of the 1975 contract for the seasonal farm workers programme. According to the letter, the sense of urgency was not only due to the inclusion of Mexican workers in the scheme, but also “the possible involvement of other Caribbean Countries would have on the present Caribbean programme. My Government’s concern is that such extensions do not adversely affect workers from Jamaica (Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago).”⁸⁷

One can conclude that the denial of Caribbean males from entering Canada was more important to Canada than the provision of an adequate, reliable, qualified labour force for the agricultural needs Ontario farmers. This chapter examined the efforts by the Government of Jamaica and Barbados, together with interest groups in Ontario, to persuade Canada to agree to the importation of farm labourers from the Caribbean. The chapter also examined the decades of resistance by Canada to the importation of Caribbean workers. In 1966 when Ottawa conceded to the requests of the Ontario farmers, resulting in the launching of the Seasonal Agricultural

⁸⁶ LAC, RG 118, vol. 82, file 3315-5-3, Confidential report and recommendations for improvements in the operation of the Caribbean Seasonal Workers Program, November 22, 1970.

⁸⁷ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, Jamaican High Commissioner to the Department of Manpower and Immigration July 25, 1974

Workers Programme, it ensured that conditions were attached to the scheme making it as expensive as possible, thus limiting the number of workers recruited. After admitting labourers from Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados in 1966 and 1967, the chapter noted another decade of resistance by Canada to extend the programme to include the islands of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. When the SAWP was finally extended to the islands of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States in 1976, the chapter noted that Canada had entered into a seasonal agricultural programme with Mexico two years earlier.

Conclusion

Although Canada has been a country of immigrants, up to the first half of the 1900s it targeted specific groups of immigrants in keeping with its ethnic and racial preferences. A change to this policy of exclusion came in 1955 when it could no longer resist the demands for cheaper, qualified, reliable female domestic workers. This resulted in the Caribbean domestic workers programme through which domestic workers were recruited from the Commonwealth Caribbean. Unlike similar European programmes, workers were not recruited based on the demand rather, there was a quota system with a particular limit assigned to each participating territory. Caribbean governments were elated at the commencement of the programme and invested heavily in the scheme through the establishment of training schools to prepare women for the Canadian domestic market

In 1966 Canada made another exception to its immigration policy with the inauguration of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme (SAWP). This programme allowed for the recruitment of males, initially from Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and then the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean, to work on Canadian farms and industries on a seasonal basis. Although the SAWP was a major breakthrough in the Canadian labour market for Caribbean governments, unlike its sister domestic programme, the SAWP was not a route towards landed immigrant status. Rather, it became the foundation of a new trend in addressing Canada's labour needs with the use of temporary workers. The SAWP could be regarded as the first temporary workers programme which for the first few decades was used in agricultural and canning operation. Today, the programme is used in several industries including tourism, mining, manufacturing, transportation, and construction. In the June 27, 2013 edition of the *Current* on CBC radio, host Anna Maria Tremonti reported that since 2011 Canada admitted more

temporary foreign workers than immigrants. The latest figure from Statistics Canada showed that there were more than 330,000 temporary foreign workers in Canada¹

The thesis argued that not only was the Caribbean a last resort but that there would not have been a Caribbean scheme in 1955 and 1966 if Canada had been able to get sufficient domestic and agricultural labourers from Europe. Evidence was produced which showed that on the eve of the Caribbean domestic scheme, Ottawa made a desperate attempt to revive the recruitment of domestic workers from Europe. The thesis examined the struggle by the governments of Jamaica and Barbados to persuade Canada to consider the importation of labourers from the Caribbean. The struggle by the Caribbean governments was complemented by consistent pressure from individuals, organisations and other stakeholders to force Ottawa to agree to the importation of domestic and agricultural workers from Jamaica and Barbados. When Ottawa finally yielded to the pressure and agreed to a domestic workers scheme in 1955, it attached some unprecedented conditions to the programme including the deportation of any domestic worker who performed unsatisfactorily, at the expense of the home government. When the agricultural programme commenced in 1966, Ottawa ensured that measures were put in place to make the scheme as expensive as possible for the employers in order to limit the number of Caribbean workers imported.

The thesis also noted Ottawa's reluctance in extending participation in the SAWP to the islands of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States. The governments of those islands went through another period of pleading with Ottawa to include their citizens in the SAWP. It was not until 1976, ten years after the commencement of the programme that the islands of the Eastern Caribbean were included in the scheme. Interestingly however, in 1974, Canada reached an

¹ Anna Maria Tremonti "Juma's Journey: The Plight of Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada, CBC Radio, June 27, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/episode/2013/06/27/jumas-journey-the-plight-of-temporary-foreign-workers-in-canada/> (accessed July 1, 2013).

arrangement with Mexico to commence a seasonal agricultural workers programme modeled after the one that existed with Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados.

Despite Canada's increasing dependence on foreign labour for its fruit and vegetable farms and despite the fact that some of the workers spent as much as eight months per year in Canada, the SAWP could not be used as a vehicle towards landed immigrant status. As a result, Beresford Crumbie of Jamaica who had been participating in SAWP since its inception in 1966 and who in 2000 had worked for thirty-four unbroken years on the same apple and tobacco farm could not use his years of service as a means of obtaining landed immigrant status in Canada.² The same can be said of Clarence Roulston and Noel Lewis, both from Jamaica, who in 2009 had been had been coming to Canada for thirty-one and twenty-eight years respectively.³

By insisting that participants in the SAWP maintain only temporary immigrant status, Canada ensured that it got maximum benefits from the programme while spending only minimum wages of which the greater part would be reinvested in the Canadian economy anyway. This meant that Canada did not have the burden of supporting the workers in their old age despite the fact that they spent all their useful years in Canada. It meant that these workers were not a burden on the Canadian health care system despite the fact that all workers paid income tax, employment insurance and Canadian Pension Plan and some paid into those plans for over three decades. It also meant that Canada did not have the problem of the foreign workers swelling the ranks of the unemployed during the slow period in agriculture. It also meant that these workers could not collect unemployment insurance or welfare assistance despite having paid into those plans. The foreign workers therefore played a part in increasing the revenue base for the Canadian government without having the opportunity to enjoy the benefits.

² "72 year old Farmer Still Going Strong in Canada," *The Jamaica Gleaner*, September 6, 2000.

³ Ellwood Shreve, "Farmers give Thanks for Dedication," *Chatham Daily News*, August 13, 2009.

This unfairness in the system was eloquently articulated in the House of Commons on March 15, 1977 by the Member of Parliament for Davenport, Honourable C. L. Caccia:

People who work here for a few months during the summer have to contribute to our unemployment insurance, old age security and other social security systems. They may do this year after year throughout their lives. However, when the need arises either at the time of retirement or unemployment they do not benefit from our social security programs as we know them and as they protect landed immigrant and resident Canadians.⁴

In 2001, the Canadian government collected \$12.2 million in income tax and work visas, \$3.4 million in EI deductions, and \$6.0 million in CPP deductions from migrant agricultural workers. In addition, it was estimated that \$82 million was spent in the rural communities on goods and services for their daily needs in Canada and also on purchases that they took to their home countries.⁵ Some of the major beneficiaries of the migrant workers spending were local shopkeepers, restaurants, providers of long distance telephone cards, banks and wire (money) transfer companies. Dr. K. Preibisch of the University of Guelph who conducted research on behalf of the North-South Institute noted the contribution of the migrant workers to the business community: “Their importance as a clientele is visibly illustrated in the inventory of grocery stores and convenience shops that stock Caribbean and Mexican ethnic food products and/or items geared to the migrant agricultural worker population.”⁶

One cannot dispute the fact that the Canadian economy was better served by the temporary status of the SAWP. One wondered, however, why the Canadian government was willing to grant permanent residence status to participants in the sister programme, the domestic workers scheme. The Canadian government’s explanation was that because the domestic

⁴ House of Commons Debates, March 15, 1977.

⁵ Presentation to the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Seasonal Work, November, 15 (2004), 5.

⁶ K. Preibisch, “Social Relations Practices between Seasonal Agricultural Workers, their Employers, and the Residents of Rural Ontario,” Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program as a Model in Best practices in Migrant Worker Participation in the Benefits of Economic Globalization Project (Ottawa: The North –South Institute), 8, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/> (accessed March 10, 2010).

workers received low wages, by allowing them to obtain landed immigrant status after two years of participation in the program, it would serve as an additional incentive for recruiting purposes. The other argument was that domestic workers take care of people, build bonds and human relationships, and engage in year-round activities. Therefore, it was unreasonable to consider that after a domestic worker became acclimatized to a particular home environment, and her services were still required in that home, she would have to be replaced by another domestic worker. The agricultural workers, on the other hand, they explained, were a seasonal, temporary form of work based on market assessment needs.⁷

Veena Verma who conducted research on behalf of the North South Institute was not convinced by this argument. She stated that agricultural workers also built close social relations over the years by returning to the same farms and communities in Canada. Under the SAWP, there is a naming system where a farmer can request a particular worker to return to his farm year after year.⁸ Of course, the workers who came under the naming system were those who were valuable to the farmer. Workers, who came to the same farm for over twenty years and spent the maximum eight months per year on the farm, working approximately seventy hours per week, must have developed bonds over the years. To quote the words of a particular employer in 2000, "As an employer, I am spoilt, because my workers are from Jamaica and some of them have been with me for 23 years. When you get men who are with you for as long as 23 years, they have given up part of their lives to help you build a dream and they eventually become a part of your extended family." That employer was Gary Cooper, president of the Foreign Agricultural Resources Management Services (FARMS) and owner of Appletyme Orchard, who

⁷ LAC, RG 27, vol. 292, file 1-26-69-2, Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to cabinet, May, 1955.

⁸ Veena Verma, *The Mexican and Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program: Regulatory and Policy Framework, Farm Industry Level Employment Practices, and the Future of the Program Under Unionization*. (Ottawa: The North-South Institute, 2003), 40-41, (<http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/> (accessed April 26, 2011)).

had twenty-eight Jamaican workers on his tobacco, strawberry and apple farm. Cooper further stated that he was pleased with the quality of workers coming out of Jamaica.⁹

Although the migrant programmes worked more in the interest of Canada, the participating territories and the workers benefitted from the programmes also. The governments of the participating territories depended on the remittances from the SAWP as part of their country's GDP. For example, in 2001, OECS reported that approximately \$2 million per year was sent back in remittances while Jamaica reported approximately \$7.6 million.¹⁰ In 2003 remittances from Jamaica's farm workers topped 800 million Jamaican dollars, just over 19 million Canadian dollars.¹¹ In a survey conducted in 2002 by Professor Andrew Downes and Cyrilene Odle-Worrell of the Institute of Social and Economic Research of University of the West Indies, it was revealed that the monies earned by the migrant workers were used to provide food for the family, pay off debts, build or repair houses and educate children. They admitted that the programme was instrumental in improving the standard of living.¹²

In a letter dated February 26, 1968, addressed to the Honourable Jean Marchand, the minister of Agriculture, Labour and National Insurance of Barbados expressed his country's appreciation to Canada for the success Barbados enjoyed in its first year of participation in the SAWP. The Barbados Minister stated that the 222 Barbadian workers earned a total of \$266,755 in wages. He further mentioned that of that total, \$36,760 was remitted to Barbados as compulsory savings as well as an unknown amount to the families of the workers. The minister highlighted the importance of the SAWP to the Barbadian economy. "These figures may not appear very impressive to you but you may rest assured that the continuance of the programme

⁹ "72 year old Farmer Still Going Strong in Canada." *The Jamaica Gleaner*, September 6, 2000.

¹⁰ Veena Verma, viii.

¹¹ Petre Williams, "Five Farm Workers Caught with Drugs," *Jamaica Observer*, February 4, 2004.

¹² Andrew Downes and Cyrilene Odle-Worrell "Canadian Migrant Agricultural Workers' Program Research Project – The Caribbean Component," (Ottawa: The North-South Institute April, 2002).

will be of considerable assistance to us in this area of high unemployment and a one-crop economy.”¹³

¹³ LAC, RG 118, vol. 81, file 3315-5-1, Minister of Agriculture, Labour and National Insurance of Barbados to the Canadian Minister of Manpower and Immigration, February 26, 1968.

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