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Gordon Baker (editor). No Island Is An Island: the Impact of Globalization on the Commonwealth Caribbean London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2007.

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No Island is an Island is a collection of well-written and thought-provoking articles on the Caribbean Commonwealth. The contributors include distinguished academics, policymakers, and lawyers from Britain, the United States, and the Caribbean. It is written in a reader-friendly manner, appealing to both students and academics.

David Jessop, in “Globalization and the Caribbean: An Overview,” provides insight into the challenges facing the West Indies. He explains that the region has recently been in negotiation for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Europe and has been exploring arrangements with the free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the World Trade Organization. Jessop warns, however, that there are certain to be repercussions of any measures taken toward the economic liberalization of the Caribbean region. Specifically, he questions the extent to which free trade agreements, imposed on developing economies, would increase regional integration. He argues, “The piecemeal negotiation of free trade agreements is likely to disadvantage the smallest and weakest in the Caribbean and challenge fragile regionalism” (p.9). While Jessop’s concerns are legitimate, he fails to realize that even if the Anglophone Caribbean were united, there would still be an unequal relationship at the negotiating table. In order to achieve true economic liberation, there would need to be a negotiating Caribbean that incorporated French and Spanish speaking West Indian countries.

Elizabeth Thomas-Hope and Adonna Jardine-Comrie’s “Caribbean Agriculture in the New Global Environment” explores the daily life of West Indians. Their essay closely examines the current agricultural crisis in the Caribbean as it relates to decreasing world food prices and the competition of agricultural foodstuffs. The authors’ findings accurately reveal a lack of foresight of Caribbean farmers, who were unprepared for the loss of preferential markets and the influx of cheap agricultural products into their countries. Their analysis, however, contains some shortcomings. Firstly, some of the statistics they present do not indicate recent trends. For instance, Table 2.1, ‘Contribution of agriculture sector to GDP, 1985-2002 (5),’ and Table 2.4, ‘Agriculture per capita production index (base year 1989/1991) for selected countries (%)’ do not provide information for the years 2003 to 2006. Secondly, the regular crop failure in Trinidad and Tobago could have been used as an illustration of one of the agricultural crises facing Caribbean farmers. In that country, every year, farmers endure heavy losses due to flooding. In addition, prime agricultural lands are being used for housing settlements. Nevertheless, the authors must be credited for revealing a salient link between agriculture and tourism, saying, “Although tourism has the potential to stimulate agriculture, it has frequently competed with agriculture for land and water resources and labour” (p.36). The importance of tourism to the Caribbean is further highlighted in the subsequent chapter.

The economic potential of Caribbean tourism is best illustrated in Chapter three, “Sustainable Caribbean Tourism: Challenges and Growth to 2020.” In this chapter, Anthony Bryan correctly contends that “...tourism in the Caribbean has emerged as an economic lifeline as the preferential export markets for traditional agricultural commodities have declined” (p.45). He points out that despite its earnings potential,

however, particular challenges continue to face the billion dollar Caribbean tourism sector, such as violent and petty crimes against tourists, the elimination of which would be particularly valuable for ministers of tourism. Bryan must be commended for also including the sub-sections 'Sex Tourism' and 'HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean,' both of which deal with critical issues often overlooked in studies on Caribbean tourism.

Trevor Michael's "International Business: Opportunities for the Commonwealth Caribbean" and Winston Dookeran's "Foreign Direct Investment: Policy Issues and Recommendations for Caribbean Development" emphasize the need for the input of foreign capital in the Caribbean for the region's economic sustainability. Michael explores the U.S. off-shore banking industry. He divides the banking jurisdiction into three areas: the old planned approach, the new planned approach, and the evolved approach. He uses these categories to distinguish banking practices in Bermuda, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, St. Vincent and Dominica. One notable distinction Michael notes between the islands is the financial independence Bermuda is able to maintain compared to some other Caribbean countries with respect to off-shore banking, "Bermuda has not, [for instance], allowed carefully cultivated external business relationships to compromise its own internal fiscal and judicial integrity" (p.81). Michael also mentions the efforts among all islands to reduce their role in off-shore money-laundering, which tends to flourish in the absence of banking regulations. As a result of intense scrutiny by international security agencies, for instance, some U.S. and other Caribbean criminals have begun to avoid or curtail their Caribbean-based, off-shore banking activities.

Dookeran, in the book's final chapter, further discusses the need for foreign capital in the Caribbean. He convincingly argues that if there is to be Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the Caribbean, there must also exist in the region reliable utilities, proper legal systems, macroeconomic stability, and a political environment conducive to development and growth. The author uses Trinidad and Tobago as a case study to demonstrate that oil and gas industries have attracted considerable investment from abroad, a model which could be adopted by other Caribbean countries. Dookeran accurately asserts, however, that increasing crime in Trinidad and Tobago and unequal distribution of wealth within the Caribbean are current obstacles to FDI inflows.

Undoubtedly, *No Island Is an Island* should be the blueprint in guiding the Caribbean in the 21st century. The collection is particularly useful as the region recovers from the global recession. The admonitions of some authors should not be viewed as unpatriotic or dismissed as pessimism. Rather, their advice provides a dose of reality for Caribbean leaders, who often mismanage scarce financial and natural resources. The scholars must be commended for tactfully addressing problems and offering solutions as they seek to guide the Caribbean to the position of major stakeholder in the world market.

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