

Partyism and Polarisation:  
A History of Antiguan Political Culture,  
1967-1976

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## Abstract

This study offers a cultural history of Antiguan politics between 1967 and 1976. It demonstrates the emergence of Antiguan party politics and explores its early impact on society and culture. The dissertation does this by focussing on four key events in Antigua's recent past: the 1967 schism in the labour movement, civil unrest and political convulsion in 1968, and the General Elections of 1971 and 1976. Each of these events testifies to the development of a culture of 'partyism' - a political ideology that prioritises the survival and empowerment of one's political party over any other principle or objective. In line with partyism, party membership became a defining feature of one's identity within the Antiguan community, eclipsing other sources of identity such as class. This precipitated a process of societal polarisation whereby Antiguan society became sharply divided along party lines. This division was characterised by distrust between members of the opposing parties, hostility, and extreme political rhetoric. This in turn contributed to a process of pernicious polarisation whereby partyism reached such extremes that it resulted in a breakdown in good governance and long-term dislocation in Antiguan society. Many of the features and consequences of pernicious polarisation are apparent in Antigua today, making this study of importance to any with an interest in Antiguan politics and society. This project draws upon and contributes to scholarship on political polarisation and the social cost of politics. In particular, this case study of Antigua provides insight into how theories of politics and society apply, or do not apply, to very small states and postcolonial societies. Both smallness and postcolonialism loom large in this dissertation, and the project touches on substantial historical debates such as the appropriateness of the Westminster System in postcolonial states and the functioning of democracy in very small polities.

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

# Maps and Illustrations

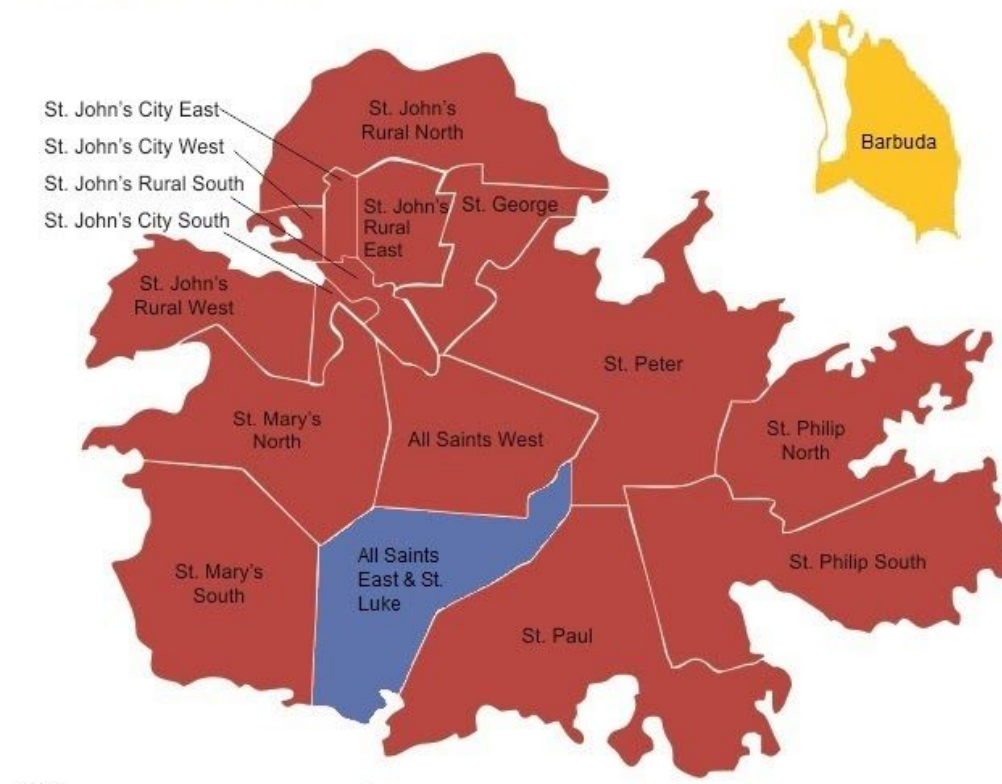
**Figure One: Map of Antigua within the Caribbean**



Source: Google Maps, Map Data: Google, 2020.

## Figure Two: Constituency map of Antigua

Showing the results of the 2018 election, with the same constituencies as 1971 and 1976.



Source: "Constituencies in Antigua and Barbuda," KnowledgeWalk Institute, 2020, accessed Aug 23, 2020. <http://www.caribbeanelections.com/ag/constituencies/default.asp>

## Introduction

I first visited Antigua and Barbuda six years ago, one month after the 2014 General Election. Even after a month, the signs and symbols of polling day were everywhere: bunting and banners in bright blue and lurish red were strung the entire length of even the most rural streets; vast posters of candidates' faces adorned every other tree trunk and lamp-post; and fliers and emblems were emblazoned across front porches, shop windows, car windshields, and children's rucksacks. Even as someone deeply interested in politics and elections, I had never seen such an expression of political identity and party-political pride. In the intervening six years what began as surprised amusement has developed into a deep fascination with Antiguan politics. In particular, I have been struck by the extent to which politics permeates daily life in Antigua, and the degree to which political party membership constitutes a powerful source of Antiguan identity. Party loyalty is tantamount to a religion for many Antiguan; it is one of the most important ways in which people define themselves and each other, it constitutes a powerful community which is instilled from birth and rarely changed, and it is characterised by enthusiastic deployment of symbols and a largely unquestioning obedience of charismatic leaders. Party support in Antigua is divided between two parties - the Progressives and Labour. This dissection of the Antiguan population has resulted in polarisation of Antiguan political culture and wider society. Through the process of societal polarisation, party politics has come to invade non-political areas of daily life from youth groups to employment opportunities. Over time, political polarisation has become pernicious to the extent that society is deeply divided along party lines with significant negative impact on civil society and democratic government.

### **The Question**

The objective of this project is to chart the rise of partyism and political polarisation in Antigua between the 1967 schism in the labour movement and the return of the Antigua Labour Party in the 1976 General Election. In this dissertation, partyism is defined as an ideology which prioritises the survival and empowerment of one's political party over all other principles, often creating a highly emotional and sometimes toxic political climate. This is my own definition which brings together a range of scholarship on politics, social identity, and political polarisation. With regard to partyism as an overriding ideology, I have drawn on current work by Jennifer McCoy who, with others, has shown that party membership has the potential to become the main driving force behind group activity, eclipsing other motivations such as ideology, and replacing them with a policy of party success at any cost.<sup>1</sup> Where partyism is apt to create emotive and hostile political culture, I have drawn on the work of Cass Sunstein who has described partyism as a category of social differentiation that often leads to hostility and negative judgement between members of opposing parties.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer McCoy, Tahmina Rahman, and Murat Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities," *American Behavioral Scientist* 62, no. 1 (2018): 22.

<sup>2</sup> Cass Sunstein, "Partyism," (lecture, *Legal Forum Symposium*, University of Chicago, Chicago, November 7, 2014).



The Anglophone Caribbean is particularly susceptible to the influence of partyism. This is due to a lack of ideological diversity in Caribbean politics and a high degree of personalisation of political culture. Paul Sutton has shown that lack of ideological disagreement between parties is common in the Anglophone Caribbean, concluding that voters' choice is less about ideology or policy and more about 'personality, political leader, and political elite.'<sup>3</sup> This is particularly noticeable in small states such as those of the Eastern Caribbean where parties are 'basically personalistic' and often decline after the removal or death of the leader.<sup>4</sup> Small states are also vulnerable to what Seibert has called a 'small-town mentality', whereby ties between individuals encourage personalised discussion and close association between rulers and ruled facilitates personalistic political discourse (as well as the extreme personalisation of political power.)<sup>5</sup>

Personalistic politics and small town mentality mean that small Anglophone Caribbean countries are more vulnerable to extreme cases of partyism than larger more diverse democracies. In such settings, partyism can result in political and social polarisation because it generates an exceptionally strong 'us versus them' attitude whereby competing parties are seen not just as political rivals but as threats to group survival.<sup>6</sup> This type of opposition encourages hostile and alarmist rhetoric, deepening the divide between members of competing parties. At its most extreme, the polarisation wrought by partyism inhibits cooperation, impedes good governance, and creates social discord. This dissertation asks therefore the following questions: How did partyism emerge in Antigua? And when and how did it become pernicious polarisation?

## Literature Review

While the primary motivation for this project emanates from my own enthusiasm for Antigua, a secondary incentive is to address a problematic neglect of Antigua in existing historical literature. Antigua, along with its Eastern Caribbean neighbours, has been widely ignored by Caribbean historians and other researchers in the humanities, probably because of its small size and relative political stability. This is troubling because Antigua and nations like it have valuable contributions to make to multiple areas of study.

Firstly, focussing on Antigua can contribute to work on Caribbean decolonisation by providing a case study to complement or contradict theories and narratives developed in relation to larger more well-studied countries like Jamaica or Trinidad. This is important because it helps avoid generalisations whereby broad theories are applied to unique and peculiar societies. For example, it is commonly asserted that the Anglophone Caribbean witnessed 'two waves' of political party formation - during decolonisation and after independence - and that Anglophone Caribbean politics is characterised by 'the same two parties contesting and winning elections over and over again.'<sup>7</sup> Neither of these tropes apply to Antigua where a second party only emerged two decades after the first and

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Sutton, "Politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean: The Post-Colonial Experience," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 51 (1991): 56.

<sup>4</sup> Wouter Pieter Veenendaal, "Politics and democracy in microstates: a comparative analysis of the effects of size on contestation and inclusiveness," (PhD Thesis, 2013), 53.

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Seibert, *Comrades, Clients and Cousins: Colonialism, Socialism and Democratization in Sao Tome and Principe*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006), 541.

<sup>6</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 22.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Bishop, Jack Corbett, and Wouter Veenendaal, "Labor Movements and Party System Development: Why Does the Caribbean Have Stable Two-party Systems, but the Pacific Does Not?" *World Development* 126 (2020): 1.

where only one party has ever been re-elected following time in opposition. The history of Antigua thus has a role in combating generalisations that tend to lump ‘the Caribbean’ or even ‘the Anglophone Caribbean’ together as a single social and political entity.

Relatedly, Antigua's example contributes to postcolonial studies. In particular, recent scholarship has reassessed the suitability of the Westminster System in postcolonial states. In 2015, Kate Quinn summarised potential negative features of the Westminster System in the Caribbean as including: 'unchecked executive power and the emasculation of the legislature, a lack of separation between the executive and legislative branches of government, an adversarial ‘winner takes all’ political culture, corruption, clientelism, and political tribalism.’<sup>8</sup> Each of these possible challenges appear in this dissertation, with adversarial 'winner takes all' politics being a significant recurring theme in the development of Antiguan polarisation. Antigua contributes to this scholarship by demonstrating the universality of these challenges, even in a polity differentiated from many of its Caribbean neighbours. For example, even though multi-party politics emerged very late in Antigua (1968) it still led very rapidly to the development of a strong 'winner takes all', hostile form of oppositional politics. A reappraisal of Antigua's postcolonial political settlement could be a beneficial consequence of this project.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, with a population of 60,000 in the 1960s and 1970s, Antigua provides a case study for politics in small places.<sup>10</sup> This is a topic which has only recently received the special attention it deserves, with scholars like Jack Corbett and Wouter Veenendaal emphasising the profound influence smallness can have on the colonial experience, decolonisation, and political practice.<sup>11</sup> Antigua's small size has had a direct impact on its political culture, determining the relationship between voters, politicians, and other state actors such as business leaders. In Antigua, smallness has accentuated various problems inherent in the Westminster System, particularly the lack of separation of powers resulting from such a small government with significant overlap of personnel between legislative and executive branches. This absence of scrutiny enables the passage of legislation which in other circumstances would be regarded as extreme. Moreover, the narrowness of MPs’ majorities, close relationships across all sectors of the economy, and high accessibility of ministers contribute to corruption, further impeding good and fair governance and fuelling hostile politics and polarisation.

Finally, this work engages with a growing awareness of and interest in countries most at risk from the main challenges of the modern era: globalisation and climate change. The severity of these issues is heightened in developing, tropical, and small countries such as Antigua. Economically, Antigua is overwhelmingly dependent on tourism and thus is vulnerable to shocks to the global market beyond its control. For instance, the 2008-09 financial crash caused a 8.9 percent contraction of Antigua’s economy and the recovering island now suffers from the collapse of tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>12</sup> Environmentally, as a low-lying tropical island dependent on tourism for

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<sup>8</sup> Kate Quinn, "Introduction: Revisiting Westminster in the Caribbean," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 53, no.1 (2015): 3.

<sup>9</sup> In the course of this dissertation I shall use a definition of ‘Westminster System’ as outlined by Matthew Bishop in Matthew Bishop, “Slaying the ‘Westminster’ in the Caribbean? Constitutional reform in St Vincent and the Grenadines.” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13, no.3 (2010): 422.

<sup>10</sup> “Population, total - Antigua and Barbuda”, The World Bank, accessed Jan 14, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2018&locations=AG&start=1960&view=chart>.

<sup>11</sup> Jack Corbett and Wouter Veenendaal, “Westminster in small states: Comparing the Caribbean and Pacific experience,” *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 4 (2016): 434.

<sup>12</sup> Auguste Kouame and Maria Reyes, “The Caribbean Region Beyond the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis. Options for the Caribbean After the Global Financial Crisis: Conference on economic growth, development, and macroeconomic policy”, 2011, accessed Jan 4, 2020, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/seminars/eng/2010/carib/pdf/kourey.pdf>, p.35.

income and groundwater for water, Antigua is acutely susceptible to the effects of global warming and rising sea levels. For example, in 2017 Hurricane Irma destroyed or damaged 96 percent of Barbudan housing and caused US\$220 million in damage.<sup>13</sup> Partyism and polarisation severely hinder Antigua's ability to deal with these challenges of globalisation and climate change. Greater appreciation for the causes of partyism and a discussion about ameliorating the effects of polarisation will better equip Antigua to deal with the long term problems it faces.

## Methodology

This study adopts a cultural approach to political history. Traditionally, political history has focused on the role of political leaders, social elites, election cycles, and administrative structures.<sup>14</sup> Such emphasis overlooks the agency of ordinary people, accentuates the role of individuals, and postulates politics as a top-down event. The Caribbean region has especially been blighted by a reductive 'great man theory' of political history which focuses too much attention on the agency and unique capabilities of individual leaders. Many historians, such as Antigua's Paget Henry, conflate political history with biography and produce narratives of national development focussed entirely on the actions of politicians, in Henry's case V C Bird. In contrast, the cultural approach presents politics as a continually renegotiated social process rather than a defined and static system or structure. One of the most notable movements in recent decades has been the reintroduction of the concept of 'the political' as opposed to 'politics'. Pierre Rosanavallon defined 'the political' as 'everything that constitutes political life beyond the immediate field of partisan competition for political power, everyday governmental action, and the ordinary function of institutions.'<sup>15</sup> This represents a multidisciplinary approach to political history which has been widely adopted in recent years. When the term politics is used in this dissertation, it refers to a 'synthetic and integrative' process in line with Rosanavallon's definition.<sup>16</sup>

A cultural approach to Antiguan political history requires an attention to sources which best demonstrate how party politics was discussed in the public sphere and how political polarisation developed over time. My starting point has been interviews with Antiguan from a range of backgrounds, conducted in November and December 2019.<sup>17</sup> I have been well placed to carry out this research as my long-standing familiarity with Antigua puts me in contact with many enthusiastic participants. I purposefully interviewed a range of Antiguan, taking into account class, gender, locality, and party affiliation, in order to fully appreciate how the full spectrum of Antiguan society experienced the events discussed in this dissertation. As the long-term effects of polarisation are still

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<sup>13</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda", Union of Concerned Scientists, accessed Jan 15, 2020, <https://www.climatehotmap.org/global-warming-locations/antigua-and-barbuda.html>

<sup>14</sup> Steven Pincus and William Novak, "Political History after the Cultural Turn" *Perspectives on History* 49, no. 5 (2011) accessed Jan 27, 2020, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2011/political-history-after-the-cultural-turn>, np.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Rosanavallon and Samuel Moyné, *Democracy: Past and Future*. (New York: Columbia University Press 2006): 36.

<sup>16</sup> Pincus and Novak, "Political History after the Cultural Turn," np.

<sup>17</sup> I gained permission from the Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee to conduct these interviews and have consent forms asserting each interviewee's understanding of their rights as study participants and granting their consent to store and use their information.

being felt, I have also spoken to several young people, both boys and girls, to capture their perspective on the consequences of past events.

This oral research was not without its challenges. As Antigua is a very small community and politics is a highly emotional topic I had to follow strict rules on confidentiality to obtain ethics approval, granting anonymity to all interviewees. Collecting oral histories is of particular importance because Antigua's oral tradition means many people only pass on their life experiences through stories told to friends and children, rather than writing or recording them. This is especially the case among older working-class people, who lack the literacy skills and the resources necessary to make a permanent record.

Using Antiguan's testimony as my starting point I turned to other primary sources which demonstrate how partyism entered public debate. The most valuable sources in this regard were newspapers published by political parties and workers' unions. The daily *Workers' Voice* was strongly supportive of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (ATLU) and the Antigua Labour Party (ALP). The *Antigua Star* meanwhile was the paper of the opposition groups - the Antigua Workers Union (AWU) and the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM). These sources demonstrate how political rhetoric changed over time and help to emphasise the notion of 'the political' as an ever changing social activity rather than a top-down event. Appreciating the role of daily papers in disseminating and reflecting on political opinion allows us to acknowledge how political debate was processed and interpreted by working people. Importantly, these highly-partisan periodicals served to reaffirm the political rhetoric of party leaders and acted to entrench party membership as an identity. By doing so these papers contributed to the emotionally-charged hostility between the two parties, exacerbating polarisation. I accessed most of these papers in the Antigua National Archive (ANA) while some have been shared with me from private collections.

As well as newspapers, other material published for public consumption include pamphlets written by the fringe groups such as the Antigua and Barbuda Democratic Movement (ABDM) and the Antigua Freedom Fighters (AFF.) Much of this material only exists in private collections to which I have had access through friends and acquaintances in Antigua.

The National Archives (TNA) and other depositories in the UK also held materials which shed light on the events in question. Most useful were reports and letters by the British Government Representative (BGR) to the West Indies Associated States. Headquartered in Castries, St Lucia, the BGR had no political power but provided advice to the six associated West Indian states and kept the UK government updated on internal political developments. Charles Roberts was BGR from 1967 to 1970 and his deputy Desmond Kerr had an important role in mediating an Antiguan political crisis. The BGR had an interest in reporting the facts as objectively as possible so that the British government could respond appropriately. They also provide a perspective somewhat removed from the internal political intrigue of Antigua and its party-politics. As such, the BGR reports give valuable insight into how the Antiguan situation developed over time. Other official documents have helped to place the political environment into its regional and economic context. For example, industrial and economic reports contextualise political developments and deepen understanding of people's behaviour and reactions.

Overall, I have tried to draw on as diverse a range of primary material as possible. On the one hand I have drawn inferences from the lyrics of soca and calypso music which shed light on popular cultural opinion. On the other hand I have analysed electoral data and statistics which I have collated into a database from 1946 to the present. This latter type of quantitative analysis gives solid grounding to the more qualitative assessment of other more conventional sources such as newspapers and reports.

Collecting these varied published and unpublished sources was not without its challenges. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely restricted my access to primary sources held by public institutions. Even as lockdowns are being eased, most repositories in the UK and Antigua are operating a reduced service. Nonetheless, lack of access to these documents has not excessively impeded the satisfactory completion of this project. A more significant challenge has been the less than ideal preservation of physical material. Many Antiguan sources created in the 1960s and 70s were of poor quality - for instance, pamphlets printed on thin, low-quality paper. A lot of this has not survived, not least because of damage done by the tropical climate. Material that has survived has been further damaged by poor preservation and handling techniques. Relatedly, the cataloguing of most relevant primary resources is confusing as Antigua's piecemeal decolonisation process meant different materials were sent to different institutions in the UK and Antigua. Moreover, source-identification procedures in all institutions are poor, likely due to erstwhile lack of academic interest in these documents. For example, until recently many items in the ANA had no catalogue numbers while in TNA many items lack accurate names or descriptions. Identifying and locating these scattered and poorly organised sources had been a time consuming task and I am grateful for the help in this matter provided by the ANA's archivist, Joseph Prosper.

A further challenge was the restricted pool of primary resources of relevance to the lives of working Antiguan. For example, low rates of literacy in the period under study means that primary resources generated by ordinary people are scarce. Working people's memoirs such as Samuel Smith's *To Shoot Hard Labour* are as notable for their rarity as their insight. This means that in some cases we simply do not have the data (such as extensive diaries, opinion polls, or contemporary ethnographic research) necessary to make explicit conclusions about people's opinions and thoughts at the time. We are however able to combine all existing sources and conclude that all the available evidence implies people felt and thought a specific way. Moreover, I have been able to focus on specific, evidence-rich areas of everyday life, such as the workplace, and make inferences about the effects of politics on wider society.

These diverse sources will be analysed using methods typical of cultural history. For instance, linguistic analysis of political rhetoric across a range of documents and over time gives insight into how political culture changed over time and how the same events were processed and presented differently according to party political affiliation. For example, rhetoric concerning treachery and nationalistic tropes increased as common themes in the language of political actors and commentators between 1967 and 1976.

This rich source base will be complemented by the latest scholarship on a range of interrelated topics. In particular, recent work on political polarisation lends this dissertation its broad thematic structure. The study of political polarisation has well-established roots in the work of Hampton Davey (1972) and Giovanni Sartori (1976). These theories conceived of polarisation in the traditional sense as a measure of ideological or policy separation between two or more political groups.<sup>18</sup> However recent events such as Brexit in the UK and the Trump Presidency in the US have revived interest in a more complex approach to polarisation. In 2016 James Campbell defined polarisation as 'the condition of substantial and intense conflict over political perspectives arrayed along a single dimension.'<sup>19</sup> This is a useful definition because it acknowledges a wide scope of political perspective beyond traditional areas of political policy, such as the economy, and takes into account less clear-cut perspectives that have been pushed to the fore by Brexit and Trump such as

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<sup>18</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 20

<sup>19</sup> James Campbell, *Polarized: making sense of a divided america*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 16.

nationalism, populism, modernism, and so on. More recently Javier Garcia-Arenas (MIT, LSE) defined polarisation as ‘a key variable that quantifies the extent to which public opinion is split into two opposing extremes.’<sup>20</sup> This is an even better definition for it appreciates that all public opinion, not just political perspectives, have the capacity to fall into the trap of polarisation and contribute in some way to a division of society into opposing partisan groups.

In most democracies Campbell’s ‘single dimension’ or Garcia-Arenas’s ‘opposing extremes’ take the form of a left-right or liberal-conservative socio-economic spectrum, as epitomised by the UK Conservative and Labour parties or the US Republican and Democratic parties.<sup>21</sup> However, the idea of polarisation along a left-right socio-economic spectrum does not apply to many developing postcolonial states. In 2019 Tahmina Rahman applied the theory of pernicious polarisation to Bangladesh, showing polarisation there to be based on two competing definitions of national identity rather than a left-right socio-economic divide.<sup>22</sup> With relation to Latin America, Levitsky et al (2016) have shown that the most successful young parties there remain ‘programmatically ambiguous’ and have emerged from conflicts not predicated on the left-right spectrum but are borne of ‘socio-cultural and even personalistic appeals’.<sup>23</sup> This is where partyism comes into play in the Anglophone Caribbean; rather than being along a left-right spectrum, polarisation in Antigua is based on a party-political axis with two parties, with a similar ideology, competing for power.

Jennifer McCoy has expanded the definition of polarisation still further. Recent political trends like the Morsi Government and coup in Egypt, the continuing populism of Orban in Hungary, and Brexit in the UK, have guided McCoy to forego traditional definitions of polarisation and their focus on a left-right spectrum all together.<sup>24</sup> McCoy et al’s expanded approach to polarisation has advanced theories of societal and pernicious polarisation. These terms have been adopted and further developed by the likes of Murat Somer and Tahmina Rahman.<sup>25</sup>

Societal polarisation is when political polarisation ‘spills over’ from the political sphere into wider society, affecting everyday non-political experiences such as work, education, social activity, and relationships.<sup>26</sup> This largely results from ‘political identities becoming social identities’ as a result of the establishment of party-based institutions such as clubs, youth organisations, newspapers, and symbols.<sup>27</sup> Through creating social identities, societal polarisation becomes self-sustaining and the polarising effect can even outlast the initial polarising agent.<sup>28</sup> In a 2001 study on ethnic polarisation in Yugoslavia, Murat Somer expounded the notion of polarisation as a ‘cascade’ or a snow-balling

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<sup>20</sup> Javier Garcia-Arenas, “Political polarisation: the phenomenon that should be on everyone’s lips,” *Caixa Bank research*, May 14, 2019, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.caixabankresearch.com/en/economics-markets/public-sector/political-polarisation-phenomenon-should-be-everyones-lips>. np.

<sup>21</sup> “Political Polarisation,” *Pew Research Center*, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/political-polarization/>.

<sup>22</sup> Tahmina Rahman, “Party System Institutionalisation and Pernicious Polarisation in Bangladesh,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, no.1, (2019): 173.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, and Brandon Van Dyke, *Challenges of Party Building in Latin America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 11.

<sup>24</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy,” 20

<sup>25</sup> Rahman, “Party System Institutionalisation and Pernicious Polarisation in Bangladesh,” 173.

<sup>26</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy,” 20.

<sup>27</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy,” 22.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Carothers and Andrew O’Donohue, *Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarisation*, (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2019), 8 and 2.

phenomenon whereby it self-replicates and strengthens as more members of a group come to share similar and stronger perceptions of the ‘other’ group.<sup>29</sup>

Self-sustaining societal polarisation has the capacity to generate pernicious polarisation. This is when polarisation has a detrimental impact on the social fabric of society and impedes good governance.<sup>30</sup> Tajfel and Turner established as early as 1986 that social identity categories, such as party membership, are ‘essentially competitive’ and generate social rivalry, even when there is no significant disagreement on group objectives.<sup>31</sup> Recently Cass Sunstein has gone further in stating that mere identification with a political party can create hostility towards members of an opposing party.<sup>32</sup> Both these assertions are of relevance to Antigua where party rivalry emerged despite little to no ideological disagreement between the two parties. Antiguan political competition was about partyism and the dogged pursuit of power at any cost and almost exclusively took the form of negative campaigning. At its extremes this hostile competition generates an ‘us versus them’ attitude which ‘exacerbates intolerance and discrimination, diminishes societal trust, and increases violence’.<sup>33</sup> Politics exposed to such conditions find it impossible to ‘achieve the ideological, political, and social consensus needed for democratic governability.’<sup>34</sup> The negative impact of such polarisation of society and politics is what gives it the name pernicious.

It is important to stress at this point that political, societal, and pernicious polarisation are all independent processes, rather than exclusive categories or events.<sup>35</sup> However, at least as I conceive of them, they do have a semi-dependent relationship whereby political polarisation is a necessary prerequisite of societal polarisation which in turn is required to lay the groundwork for pernicious polarisation. Moreover, theories of polarisation are purposefully dynamic so as to accommodate the constantly developing nature of public opinion and political activity. Therefore, it is inaccurate to think of McCoy's three types of polarisation as progressive stages through which a society moves in sequence. Rather, it is more helpful to think of a society as being politically polarised whilst having certain features of societal polarisation. Similarly, a society may be societally polarised and experience certain flash-points of pernicious polarisation without being fully perniciously polarised. We should therefore think in terms of ‘markers’ of polarisation. When a significant number of particular markers are present we may speak of a society being politically, societally, or perniciously polarised. It should be emphasised also that polarisation is a dynamic process and a society may experience intense periods with many markers of pernicious polarisation before these decline; depolarisation is indeed possible, though it is difficult.<sup>36</sup>

Other theoretical grounding for this dissertation has come from a variety of sources and reflects the multidisciplinary approach necessary for a cultural history of politics. In understanding how polarisation contributed to the concentration of political power, I have drawn on Paget Henry's theory of political accumulation and authoritarianism in the Caribbean which itself draws on

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<sup>29</sup> Murat Somer, “Cascades of Ethnic Polarization: Lessons from Yugoslavia,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 573, no.1 (2001): 129.

<sup>30</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 19.

<sup>31</sup> Henri Tajfel and John C Turner, “The Social Identity Theory of Behaviour,” *Political psychology: Key readings*, ed. John T Jost and Jim Sidanius, 276-293, (Hove: Psychology Press, 2004): 283.

<sup>32</sup> Sunstein, “Partyism,” lecture.

<sup>33</sup> Murat Somer and Jennifer McCoy, "Transformations through Polarizations and Global Threats to Democracy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, no. 1, (2019): 2.

<sup>34</sup> Maria Pilar García-Guadilla and Ana Mallen, "Polarization, Participatory Democracy, and Democratic Erosion in Venezuela's Twenty-First Century Socialism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, no.1 (2019): 63.

<sup>35</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 21.

<sup>36</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 21.

well-established work by Robert Michels.<sup>37</sup> Henry states that Caribbean political leaders pursued four strategies of expanding and entrenching their political power: conversion of political to social capital, self entrenchment, withdrawal from base control, and factional competition.<sup>38</sup> The latter two of these strategies were of particular importance in the 1967-76 period. Meanwhile, the work of George Danns has provided the main theoretical guidance in relation to charismatic leadership in the context of Antigua's political culture. Discussing authoritarianism in Guyana, Danns proposes a new form of Weberian charismatic leadership which he calls 'new charismatic' or 'mesmeric' leadership.<sup>39</sup> The mesmeric leader gains support within an existing political system through a combination of rational achievements and personal magnetism. He creates a highly personalised politics in which he himself is regarded as necessary for political stability and advancement. In return, the Antiguan case study is of benefit to these theories as it demonstrates how they do and do not apply to the particular context Antigua provides, especially postcolonial and small states.

## Structure

The dissertation adopts a chronological structure as this enables explicit demonstration of the rise of partyism and Antigua's progression through McCoy's three types of polarisation. The study is divided into four chapters, each focussing on a key milestone on the road to pernicious polarisation: the 1967 schism in the labour movement, the formation of a new union and party in 1968, and the General Elections in 1971 and 1976. I shall analyse the evolution of rhetoric used by politicians and commentators in campaign literature, speeches, and newsprint. I shall then evaluate how the public responded to this rhetoric, paying attention to quantitative data such as voting patterns and levels of participation in public demonstrations.

Chapter One analyses the 1967 split of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (ATLU) and the expulsion of its leaders George Walter and Donald Halstead. These men had amassed huge popular support among the Union's membership, particularly with younger Antiguan and the dock workers vital to the export of sugar.<sup>40</sup> Fearing their popularity posed a threat to his leadership, Union President V.C. Bird expelled them from the Union. Unlike previous purges, Walter's dismissal precipitated a full-scale schism of the labour movement, with workers split between support for Walter and loyalty to Bird. This division was the foundation from which partyism developed in subsequent months and years. To understand how this dismissal led to a polarised political climate, I will explore in detail the evolving context in which the dismissal took place - especially focussing on the role played by Associated Statehood in 1967 and the so-called 'Two Hats Problem' which will be explained in Chapter One. To understand why this division was so powerful and long-lasting I will analyse the language used by political leaders, newspapers, and working people when discussing Walter's dismissal and subsequent events. The dominant theme in this respect is a rhetoric of betrayal and treachery which drew on religious and moral language as well as ideas of politics and economics.

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<sup>37</sup> Paget Henry, "Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean: The Case Study of Antigua." *Social and Economic Studies* 40, no.1 (1991): 1-38; Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, (New York: New York Free Press, 1968).

<sup>38</sup> Henry, "Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean," 8 & 9

<sup>39</sup> George Danns, "Politics, Corruption and the Police," in *Caribbean Political Thought: Theories of the Post-Colonial State*, ed. Aaron Kamugisha (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2013), 121

<sup>40</sup> Robert J. Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour in the English Speaking West Indies* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 161.



Through the use of such emotionally-charged and oppositional language, 1967 heralds the arrival of an 'us versus them' approach to politics.

Chapter Two analyses the 1968 fallout of Walter's dismissal. Drawing on his popular support, Walter established a rival union in 1968 able to challenge the previously unquestioned hegemony of Bird's ATLU. The new Antigua Workers Union (AWU) was immediately successful with around 70 percent of ATLU members defecting to it.<sup>41</sup> Walter then helped establish a new political party - the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM.) This brought together members of what I call a 'coalition of discontent' - a diverse group of politically active but previously disjointed Antiguan united through their opposition to Bird and building on the momentum of Walter's new union. These new groups were opposed by Bird's government and by big business, both of whom had an interest in maintaining the status quo. The tension between these forces culminated in a period of civil unrest in the spring of 1968. Resultant negotiations led to a new political settlement which entrenched oppositional politics as a permanent feature of Antiguan political culture - symbolised by four by-elections in 1968.<sup>42</sup> The experience of civil unrest and the government's efforts to curtail the rise of a new union institutionalised the polarisation of Antigua's working class. The rise and success of the PLM ensured that this rupture would not remain an industrial matter but would be expressed in party political terms. By the end of 1968, party politics was established in Antigua and party membership had become a powerful marker of Antiguan identity, serving to maintain and perpetuate polarisation.

Chapter Three shows that between 1968 and 1971, Antigua began to experience societal polarisation. As Jennifer McCoy and Tahmina Rahman, among others, have theorised this is the condition when political polarisation spills over into other areas of everyday life. Though McCoy et al have mainly focussed on larger democracies in South America and Europe, their theories on polarisation are of great relevance to Antigua. Chapter Three shows that by 1971 party politics had a pervasive influence on all areas of Antiguan life, from community activity to workplace discrimination. Societal polarisation escalated a tense political environment and heightened the emotional nature of party politics. It did this by entrenching oppositional hostility and minimising space for political cooperation. This will be demonstrated by an analysis of the 1971 General Election. This election shows that by 1971 party politics was the axis around which Antiguan socio-political life revolved. The election and the campaigns leading up to it also reveal that there was little to no ideological difference between the two parties and that their conflict was predicated not on policy but on personality.

Chapter Four engages with the concept of pernicious polarisation and explores it in relation to the 1976 general election. Pernicious polarisation, also pioneered by McCoy, is when extreme societal polarisation begins to have a damaging effect on society and government.<sup>43</sup> The most explicit example of this is the high degree of hostility between supporters of the opposing parties, often leading to violence, intimidation, and even terrorism. This in turn hinders good government by impeding cooperation and compromise.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the culture of distrust undermines confidence in the legitimacy of the governing party, encouraging civil disobedience and anti-government action. At the same time, the emotionally-charged atmosphere and an 'all or nothing' attitude to politics drives the governing party to pursue actions and legislation which would otherwise be deemed extreme and unconstitutional. This breakdown in democratic norms is the most dangerous consequence of

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<sup>41</sup> Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 600; P-Kiven Tungteng, "Reflections on Labour and Governing in Antigua", *Caribbean Studies* 15, no. 2 (1975): 53.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour in the English Speaking West Indies*, 167.

<sup>43</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 19.

<sup>44</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 19.

pernicious polarisation. In many ways, Antigua's 1976 election represented a moment of 'peak polarisation' in Antigua, evidenced by an almost full voter turnout and a near-perfect split of the electorate between two parties.

The dissertation closes with a consideration of so-called 'missed opportunities' in Antigua's political development between 1967 and 1976. This dissertation argues that there were and still are multiple flaws built-in to Antigua's political system, such as the vulnerability to corruption of the Westminster System in such a small country. However, it was not inevitable that aggressive party politics became the dominant feature of Antiguan political culture or that Antigua underwent an experience of pernicious polarisation. Rather, these things came about due to consecutive decisions made by individual politicians and the wide-scale responses to those decisions by ordinary working people. There are, therefore, a number of missed opportunities whereby polarisation could have been avoided. Alongside these opportunities, the conclusion also points to the long-term effects of polarisation in Antigua and sets out scope for further study.

## Background

This introduction will close with a brief overview of Antiguan history up to 1967. Antigua is a small island in the Eastern Caribbean [see figures one and two.] Europeans first came across Antigua in 1497 when Christopher Columbus named it after the chapel of Santa Maria la Antigua in Seville Cathedral, Spain.<sup>45</sup> In 1632 the island was colonised by English settlers who grew tobacco and then sugar. This work was done by enslaved Africans of whom there were 25,000 working on 300 plantations in 1764.<sup>46</sup> Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, ex-slaves were forced to continue working on plantations by a Contract Act, the scarcity of land for agriculture or construction, and the absence of any other form of employment.<sup>47</sup> This perpetuated a binary racial polarisation whereby the island's black population made up the workforce while the land and the means of production were owned entirely by white Europeans.

From the 1930s onwards, constitutional reform brought greater levels of democracy to Antigua, though property qualifications barred most black Antiguan from participating in politics.<sup>48</sup> However, through pooling resources some middle-class Antiguan were elected to the Legislative Assembly - beginning with Luther George in 1943. In 1939, Sir Walter Citrine, in Antigua as a member of the Moyne Commission, recommended that Antiguan organise themselves into a workers' union in order to negotiate with employers for better conditions and wages. On 16 January 1939 the Antigua Trades and Labour Union (ATLU) was officially formed, with jewelry store owner Reginald Stevens as its leader.<sup>49</sup> Other founding members included Norris Allen, Berkley Richards, and Vere Cornwall (VC) Bird. In September 1943 Bird replaced Stevens as Union President. The ATLU was a general union with membership open to "all manual and clerical workers above the age of 16...regardless of race and sex."<sup>50</sup> Its constitution provided for a democratic structure with power

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<sup>45</sup> 'Antigua and Barbuda,' Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed Jan 11, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Antigua-and-Barbuda>.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour in the English Speaking West Indies*, 148.

<sup>47</sup> Richards, "Decolonisation in Antigua: its impact on Agriculture and Tourism," 16.

<sup>48</sup> For a dated but still useful summary of constitutional changes up to 1960 in the Leeward Islands see Cecil Kelsick, "Constitutional History of the Leewards", *Caribbean Quarterly* 6, no. 2/3, (1960): 177-209.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour in the English Speaking West Indies*, 152.

<sup>50</sup> Rule 3.a, "The Rules of the ATLU", printed September 1961, St Johns, Antigua, TU.AQ.ATLU.4, SHL.

vested in an Executive Committee elected annually at the ATLU Conference.<sup>51</sup> In practice many executive-level elections were uncontested and figures like Bird as Union President were returned yearly without challenge.

As the first general union, the ATLU gained a default hegemony over organised labour. This was mirrored in Antigua's emerging democracy, with the ATLU Executive Committee fielding candidates in elections as Antigua Labour Party (ALP) representatives. The introduction of Universal Suffrage in 1951 ensured the ALP a monopoly on all elected positions in Antiguan politics - a dominance it retained until 1968.<sup>52</sup> Also in 1951 the number of elected seats in the Legislative Assembly increased from five to eight, heightening the role and responsibility of the democratically elected members. In 1956, further reform implemented Ministerial Government and Bird was made minister for trade and production [see appendix ii.]

During this time the elected representatives introduced and campaigned for social reforms to improve the lives of working Antiguan. Such measures included land redistribution, economic diversification, and nationalisation of some key utilities such as the water supply.<sup>53</sup> The predominance of Labour as an organisation cannot be overemphasised. Between 1939 and 1967 the ATLU, though first and foremost a trades union, functioned as an all-inclusive civil society organisation playing a role in matters as diverse as education and family relations. In at least one instance, Bird himself mediated in an argument between a married couple and provided counselling.<sup>54</sup> The ATLU thus consumed areas of social life which in a larger, more complex country would give rise to a range of civil society organisations. Notably independent of ATLU were the established churches, though on a parish level even these eventually became aligned with opposing union and political groups.<sup>55</sup> The other exception to the ATLU's umbrella-nature was big business which maintained its own independent pressure group in the form of the Antigua Employers Federation.<sup>56</sup>

In 1967, Antigua, along with five other Eastern Caribbean colonies, became a self-governing state 'in free association' with Great Britain. This represented a halfway-house between colony status and independence whereby a new constitution granted Antigua internal self-governance whilst Britain retained control over defence and foreign policy. Under the 1967 Constitution, Antigua became a constitutional monarchy in accordance with the Westminster System. Adults over the age of 21 elected a House of Representatives every 5 years which, along with an appointed Senate, formed a bicameral legislature. The Representative commanding the confidence of the House was made Chief Minister and tasked with forming a Cabinet from members of the Senate and House. This constituted the Government which acted on behalf of the Governor, who in turn represented the Queen of Antigua (Elizabeth II) as Head of State [see appendix iii]. As the only popular party, Labour had complete control of the House, Senate, and Government until 1968. As ATLU President, leader of the ALP, and Chief Minister, Bird had supreme political power in Antigua at the time of Associated Statehood in February 1967.

Labour was not the only political movement in Antiguan politics however. In almost all elections a handful of candidates represented a range of small, transitory parties. Most of these were middle-class groups established to represent professional and business interests, such as the Antigua National Party (ANP). Many only campaigned for a single election before collapsing - the ANP only

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<sup>51</sup> Rule 10.a, "The Rules of the ATLU".

<sup>52</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past election results, 1951-2014", *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>53</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 139.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Urlings villager, number 2.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Antiguan politician, number 12.

<sup>56</sup> "Antigua Labour Report, 1971, by John Dreghorn", Labour Affairs in Antigua, FCO.63/694, TNA.

campaigns in 1956 and stood candidates in only four of the eight constituencies.<sup>57</sup> The most important and longest lasting minority party in the pre-1967 era was Robert Hall's Antigua and Barbuda Democratic Movement (ABDM). The ABDM is often overlooked and Paget Henry has called it a party led by 'landed interests.'<sup>58</sup> While technically true, this does disservice to Robert Hall whose primary objective in establishing the ABDM was to scrutinise the government and challenge the notion of an elected one-party dictatorship.<sup>59</sup> To do this, Hall published a series of ABDM pamphlets, colloquially referred to as the White Papers which scrutinised the work of the Bird Government. The ABDM also had some electoral successes, managing to achieve a peak of 1,859 votes across all constituencies in 1965.<sup>60</sup> While far outmatched by Labour's 7,275 votes, the ABDM's performance does show that there was a latent non-Labour aligned and even anti-Labour sentiment among some in the Antiguan electorate. The ABDM was never able to capitalise on this and never won a seat, largely because of widespread distrust of a Hall as a white Antiguan and a belief that the ABDM only represented landed or middle-class interests. However, Hall's expertise, the ABDM's infrastructure, and the proven existence of at least some anti-Bird support would be crucial factors in the formation of a political Opposition in 1967. When a successful Opposition did emerge it was through combining the political resources of the ABDM with the popular appeal of a new and rival labour movement.

The political background to 1967 was thus one of complexity and change. The economic context of 1967 was no less chaotic. The dominant theme of Antigua's twentieth-century economy was a transition from sugar-based agriculture to tourism. This is demonstrated through employment statistics which show a shift away from agricultural dominance in 1960 (30 percent of workers) and towards tourism and hotel construction in 1968 (60 percent of workers.)<sup>61</sup> This transition was largely welcomed by Antiguan workers, most of whom preferred work in hospitality to sugar production as it was less backbreaking, better paid, and offered more opportunity for rapid advancement.<sup>62</sup> However, the tourism industry was owned primarily by non-Antiguans - usually white British or American investors with the capital to build and maintain the infrastructure and supply chains necessary for a successful tourism industry. In 1968, only 200 of the 1,780 hotel bedrooms in Antigua were owned by Antiguans, and most of these were lower-quality guest-houses.<sup>63</sup> The Caribbean was and is a highly competitive tourism market. To attract foreign investors, the Antiguan government offered tax breaks and rebates which minimised government revenue drawn from tourism whilst maximising profits for the foreign investors.<sup>64</sup> The predominance of white ownership and the profit-stripping it facilitated have been ongoing problems for Antigua and is of importance to this dissertation.

As well as the economic and political, one must appreciate the social context. Throughout the period under study, Antigua's population can be described as black, working class, rural, and Christian. 92 percent of Antiguans were recorded as black during the period under consideration, with

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<sup>57</sup> "General Elections in Antigua," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>58</sup> Henry, "Political accumulation and authoritarianism in the Caribbean," 21.

<sup>59</sup> This was told to me by Hall's son, Vernon Hall, November 2019.

<sup>60</sup> "General Elections in Antigua," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>61</sup> Gibbons, "Economic and Demographic Factors in Improving Living Standards in the Caribbean Region," 78.

<sup>62</sup> "State of Antigua W.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report of the Labour Department for the year 1969", Government Printing Office, Antigua, 1971, Labour Affairs in Antigua, FCO 63/694, TNA.

<sup>63</sup> Vincent A Richards, "Decolonization in Antigua: Its impact on Agriculture and Tourism," in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, Democracy, and Development*, ed. Paget Henry & Carl Stone (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), 31.

<sup>64</sup> Howard W Hulford (Managing Director, Curtain Bluff) in "The Outlook for International Travel", *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly* 7, no. 4, (1967): 34.

1.3 percent white and the remainder of mixed-heritage.<sup>65</sup> This made Antigua among the most ethnically non-diverse societies in the Caribbean. Most Antiguan households operated a small profit, with income outmatching expenditure by an average of EC\$1,700 per annum.<sup>66</sup> 60 percent of Antiguans lived in rural communities, with the remainder living in the only city, St John's.<sup>67</sup> Religiously Antigua was Christian though no denomination held dominance; the largest religious groupings were the 'established' churches of Anglican, Moravian, and Methodist, established in Antigua in 1634, 1756, and 1760 respectively.<sup>68</sup> By 1967 a range of evangelical churches were also active and began attracting large congregations, particularly the Pentecostal, Pilgrim Holiness, and Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>69</sup> The religious context was therefore also characterised by change and diversity.

The background to 1967 is therefore one of change in all areas of Antiguan life. In many ways, Antigua at the beginning of 1967 was at a crossroads: newly endowed with the rights of self-government, gripped by a rapidly changing economy at home and across the world, and watching the march of civil rights and political extremism throughout the Americas. The actions and reactions of Antiguans at this crossroads decided the future of this island nation and take the focus of this dissertation.

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<sup>65</sup> Gibbons, "Economic and Demographic Factors in Improving Living Standards in the Caribbean Region," 75.

<sup>66</sup> Carleen O'Loughlin, "Problems in the economic development of Antigua," *Social and Economic Studies* 10 (1961): 268.

<sup>67</sup> Gibbons, "Economic and Demographic Factors in Improving Living Standards in the Caribbean Region," 75.

<sup>68</sup> James, "Antigua and Barbuda," 63.

<sup>69</sup> James, "Antigua and Barbuda," 64.

## Chapter One: the Schism of 1967

No history of Antigua during this period could ignore the influence the trade union movement has had on the shaping of events. I might go so far as to say that the history of Antigua from 1939 to 1964 has been the history of the trade union.<sup>70</sup>

Nouvelle Richards, scribe of the Antiguan labour movement, 1965.

This chapter explores the 1967 schism within the Antiguan labour movement. It proposes that this event laid the foundations for oppositional party politics in Antigua and the political polarisation this would later create. This chapter shows that the nature of the schism and the rhetoric surrounding it generated a highly emotional and hostile political environment. Political arguments were couched in personalised terms, invoking language of treachery and stoking animosity between the two sides. This emotionally-charged atmosphere fed into an 'us versus them' and an 'all or nothing' approach to politics which encouraged the emergence of partyism in Antigua. Partyism - the pursuit of political power for one's group at any cost - entrenched this emotional and hostile opposition in Antiguan political culture and established the preconditions for societal and later pernicious polarisation of Antigua.

As shown in the Introduction, at the time of Associated Statehood in February 1967 Bird and Labour had internal political domination of Antigua. As President of the hegemonic ATLU, leader of the dominant ALP, and Chief Minister, Bird had a level of power that constituted an elected dictatorship. While dissenting voices existed outside of Labour, these were never popular enough to win election or challenge Bird's authority. This sets Antigua apart from other Anglophone Caribbean nations which exhibited competitive multi-party democracies - a hallmark of the Westminster System - while Antigua maintained an elected one party dictatorship.<sup>71</sup> This situation radically and permanently changed from May 1967 onwards.

At an executive meeting of the ATLU on 5 May 1967, Bird introduced a resolution dismissing the union's General Secretary, George Walter. Bird claimed that 'I have come to the conclusion that we cannot work together and that some parting must take place.'<sup>72</sup> When pressed for an explanation, Bird accused Walter of advising Barclays Bank against lending money to the Antiguan Government to complete the nationalisation of the sugar industry and its land. Allegedly, Walter had done this to gain leverage in negotiations with the Government on behalf of workers at the Antigua Sugar Factory (ASF). However, this accusation had previously been investigated by a union sub-committee and found to be false. Accordingly, Walter initiated legal proceedings against the ATLU and was awarded \$5,694 in damages, a verdict that was upheld by the West Indies Court of Appeal.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Nouvelle Richards, *The Struggle and the Conquest: Twenty Five years of Social Democracy in Antigua*. (St Johns: Self-published, 1964), 0.

<sup>71</sup> Matthew Bishop, "Slaying the 'Westmonster' in the Caribbean? Constitutional reform in St Vincent and the Grenadines," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 13, no.3, (2010): 424.

<sup>72</sup> Okpaluba, "A Trade Union's Right to Discuss," 558.

<sup>73</sup> Okpaluba, "A Trade Union's Right to Discuss," 558.

George Walter was a long-term leading light of the ATLU, having edited its newspaper *The Workers Voice* and been its General Secretary since 1960. Born in 1928, Walter attended the Antiguan Grammar School and established a small fishing business in St John's. Walter encouraged other fishermen to join the ATLU and in the mid 1950s helped establish the Fishermen's Section as the 50th section of the ATLU before being elected its chairman.<sup>74</sup> Walter therefore had a long history with the ATLU at the crossroads between leadership and rank-and-file members. From the Fisherman's section Walter cultivated relationships with members and skills as a coordinator and orator, eventually being elected General Secretary in 1960. Throughout the 1960s Walter amassed huge popular support through engagement with the membership and his proactive stance on labour issues. As well as being popular, Walter also came to criticise certain aspects of Bird's leadership, particularly the overlap of personnel in the ATLU and the government. Threatened by his popularity and criticism, Bird used the Barclays Bank sabotage accusation to dismiss Walter on 5 May 1967.

This chapter will explore the motives behind Walter's dismissal before turning to the public reaction to understand why this purge led to a popular schism. The role of the media is then explored, with focus given to the language used by each side. In particular, the rhetoric of treachery set the tone for all subsequent political debate in Antigua.

This discussion supports scholarship on the role of charisma in the Anglophone Caribbean. In particular, I draw on George Danns's theory of the new charismatic or mesmeric leader to analyse how Bird maintained authority in the 1960s and also how he began to lose it before, during, and after the 1967 schism.<sup>75</sup> This chapter also affirms the perception that parties in the Anglophone Caribbean emerged out of trade union movements, though in this case that fact was a cause of political disaster as well as strength.<sup>76</sup> Overall, this chapter shows that the 1967 dismissal and schism set the scene for the growth of oppositional politics underpinned by partyism and set Antigua on a course towards polarisation.

## Motives for Walter's dismissal

The accusation of sabotage was used by Bird to conceal two political motivations for dismissing Walter. First, a direct popularity contest between Bird and Walter - Bird hoped to remove a potential political rival in a single dismissal. But the more important motivation concerns what I call the Two Hats Problem. I use this term to refer to an overlap in leadership between a trade union and a political party, such as Bird being both President of the ATLU and leader of the Labour Party. The terminology comes from Keithlyn Smith who, in his reflections on Antiguan trade unionism in *No Easy Push Over*, identified the 'objectionable doctrine of one head wearing two hats' as a major obstacle for Antigua's trade union movement.<sup>77</sup> This overlap results from the fact that in the Anglophone Caribbean political parties have usually emerged from trade union movements, whose organisational structure and social networks provided an institutional framework on which political parties could be constructed.<sup>78</sup> In the most extreme cases where little to no differentiation between

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<sup>74</sup> "Sir George Walter," Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union, 2017, accessed Aug 27, 2020, <http://abwunion.com/founding-fathers/sir-george-walter-2/>.

<sup>75</sup> George Danns, *Domination and Power in Guyana: A study of the police in a third world context* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982), 68.

<sup>76</sup> Bishop, Corbett, and Veenendaal, "Labor Movements and Party System Development," 4.

<sup>77</sup> Keithlyn Smith, *No Easy Push-o-ver*, (Scarborough, Ontario: Edan Publishers, 1994), 135

<sup>78</sup> Bishop, Corbett, and Veenendaal, "Labor Movements and Party System Development", 4.

union and party happens - of which Antigua's Labour is an example - the executive members of the union automatically assumed the leadership of the party. When these 'union-parties' adopted responsibilities in colonial administrations - and later in independent governments - this overlap became problematic because the interests of a government and a trade union often conflicted.

The Two Hats Problem became more pronounced as a result of Associated Statehood in February 1967. Firstly, Associated Statehood constituted a political realignment whereby the Antiguan Government, now headed by Bird and Labour, became the target of public political dissatisfaction. Previously, Labour had been able to blame the colonial administration for economic hardship. This produced a political paradox whereby the same men were the target of popular dissatisfaction (the Government) whilst also being working people's most effective spokespeople (the Union.) Secondly, now responsible for Antigua's finances, Labour needed to balance the demands of organised labour with the requirements of the national economy. Often, the former were sacrificed in favour of the latter. Similar situations were found throughout the Anglophone Caribbean, notably in St Kitts and Nevis where Bradshaw and subsequent Premiers' conflicted positions contributed to Labour's 1980 electoral defeat.<sup>79</sup>

An example of the Two Hats Problem in effect in Antigua is the 1966 West Indian Airlines dispute. Union-purist Keithlyn Smith demanded industrial action to support workers employed by the airline while Bird opposed any activity that could discourage investment in the tourism industry.<sup>80</sup> Here Bird sacrificed workers' interests in favour of the national economy, prioritising his job as Chief Minister over his role as union President. This incident also demonstrates the central role of foreign investment in Antiguan political decision making.

Bird wished to retain his Two Hats for two reasons. First, while he did not go so far as Jamaica's Bustamante in the explicit practice of what Richard Hart has called 'Proprietary Unionism', Bird viewed the ATLU as an organisation which he had a right to lead.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, Bird drew much of his authority and legitimacy from his dual role as leader of Antigua's workers' union and its popular political party. For Bird, these positions were fundamentally entwined, with one supporting and strengthening the power bestowed by the other. Separating these positions, as Walter wanted to do, would decrease Bird's power in Antigua and threaten his hold on whichever of the two positions he retained. Bird's desire to remain both Chief Minister and Union President was the first and foremost motivation behind Walter's dismissal.

Bird's second motivation was the threat posed by Walter's popularity. During the 1960s, while Bird was distracted from Union business by his work as an MP, minister, and Chief Minister, Walter amassed support among the ATLU rank-and-file. Throughout the 1960s, Walter, as General Secretary, travelled throughout Antigua speaking to working people, which made him the approachable face of the Labour movement. In contrast, Vere Bird, Lionel Hurst, Bradley Carrott, and other 'union-ministers' became less relatable and less appealing. This was commented upon explicitly by multiple interviewees who remarked that prior to becoming Chief Minister, Bird would tour the villages and mediate in matters as seemingly trivial as family arguments.<sup>82</sup> One villager said that after his involvement in politics this stopped and Bird 'lost his way' by falling out of touch with working people.<sup>83</sup> The fact that this was said by a long-term Labour supporter shows that even some of his own loyalists recognised a divergence in Bird's priorities. In contrast, Walter was, in his own words,

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<sup>79</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour*, 135.

<sup>80</sup> "Gov't to mediate in strike", *Antigua Star*, July 19, 1966, VHPC.

<sup>81</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour*, 34.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Urlings villagers, numbers 1, 2, 11, November, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with villager, number 11, November, 2019.



“providing the bread and butter...[he] became very popular.”<sup>84</sup> Bird’s withdrawal mirrored that of other Caribbean leaders. For example, Pedro Noguera has explored how Eric Gairy, after gaining power in Grenada in the 1970s, replaced popular appeal with targeted use of patronage and favours to maintain necessary strategic support. As a result, as Gairy’s ‘control over government became more secure and his confidence grew, he became increasingly aloof and isolated from his followers.’<sup>85</sup> In Antigua, in the wake of Bird’s own aloofness Walter mobilised support among working people, especially the young and urbanised in new and growing sectors like tourism.<sup>86</sup>

As well as physically distanced, Bird’s Cabinet became less ideologically aligned with the working class. This happened because of simultaneous deviations from the status quo consensus. On the one hand, the Two Hats Problem meant that Bird’s actions in government became more geared towards the needs of a stable and reliable capitalist economy, at the expense of his earlier more radical reformist socialism. On the other hand, a new generation of political activists was emerging. This new generation was better educated, had some experience of living and working standards abroad, and was familiar with the political thought emanating from the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. This generation combined socialist ideology and civil rights discourse to advocate for further social and economic reform in Antigua. A leading example of this new generation was Tim Hector, a student of C.L.R. James, who abandoned academic study in Canada in 1967 to advance the radical anti-colonial movement in his native Antigua.<sup>87</sup>

The ideological divergence between the early labour movement and the younger generation was emphasised by a different attitude to the state of decolonisation in 1967. For Bird and his allies, ministerial governance and universal suffrage were achievements to be celebrated and perfected. However the younger generation, which grew up with these rights as accepted norms, saw such freedoms not as successes but as starting points in the long fight for true independence. This created a generation of Anriguans who felt less duty-bound to support Bird and more willing to champion radical activists such as Walter. Growing up in a semi-democratic country with self-governance on the horizon also increased the expectation of fuller democratic practices among this generation. This meant they were more sceptical of the conventions which, for instance, saw Bird’s position as Chief Minister and ATLU President uncontested. Bird himself was aware of this shift in popular opinion and attempted to instil a sense of obligation towards himself and Labour among younger Antiguans. One way he did this was to begin public speeches with long lists of ALP achievements in an attempt to link Antiguan development with his and his party’s actions.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, better education, exposure to radical literature and movements, and heightened expectation of democracy throughout society meant that this younger generation provided Walter with a pool of support when he was dismissed from the union.

This generational dynamic can be seen at play in debates around tourism and how this growing sector should be managed. On one side, Bird recognised that tourism would only flourish in Antigua through extensive foreign investment. To attract investment, Bird wanted to foster a stable domestic economy, part of which involved limiting industrial action. This has already been shown in

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<sup>84</sup> “One and One Interview with George Walter”, ABS TV Antigua, uploaded 31 Jan, 2018, accessed 12 Feb, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UO4NA3wSOxU>.

<sup>85</sup> Pedro Noguera, “The limits of charisma,” in *Caribbean Charisma: Reflections on Leadership, Legitimacy, and Populist Politics*, ed. Anton Allahar (Boulder: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 83.

<sup>86</sup> Kerr to CO, 15 February, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> Paget Henry, “Black Power in the Political Thought of Antigua and Barbuda,” in *Black Power in the Caribbean*, ed. Kate Quinn (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 188.

<sup>88</sup> “Monthly Intelligence Reports, Antigua 1963-65,” May 1963, CO 1031/4776, TNA.

the 1966 West Indian Airlines example [see page 19] wherein Bird refused to sanction union strikes that threatened to deter investment in tourism. In contrast, Walter argued that Antigua's transition to a tourism economy provided an opportunity to proactively assert local financial control, enshrine workers' rights in the emergent hospitality sector, and put an end to centuries of white financial domination. The contrast between Bird's 'kid-gloves' approach and Walter's proactivity demonstrates the divergence between the old and the new generation of labour activists. This generational dynamic was recognised by contemporaries and commented upon frequently in the Administrator's intelligence reports. One of these reports, for instance, spoke of long-running arguments between "the older hands of the Labour Party" and "the younger."<sup>89</sup> A similar observation was made by deputy-BGR Desmond Kerr who recognised the 1967/68 divisions as largely between "the younger field officers of the union and its Executive."<sup>90</sup> Recognising this dynamic and Walter's rising popularity with the younger generation of workers provided Bird with a further incentive to dismiss Walter from the ATLU. If Bird thought that purging the ATLU of Walter would eradicate the threats to his own political supremacy, he was wrong. In fact, by dismissing Walter, Bird helped bring about the period of multi-party politics in Antigua and heralded the dawn of polarisation.

### **Walter's dismissal in a wider context**

Walter's dismissal exemplified Bird's leadership style which was despotic from the moment he became ATLU President in 1943. Within the first year of his Presidency, Bird oversaw a number of dismissals and resignations, all of which stemmed from disagreements with his leadership. Ashley Kirwan quit as chairman of the ATLU Factory Branch in protest at Bird's autocratic control of the ATLU.<sup>91</sup> Also in 1943, the editor of the *Workers' Voice*, Musgrave Edwards, was forced from the ATLU after criticising Bird and the Executive Committee.<sup>92</sup> A year later, Emmanuel De Souza left the ATLU and formed the Antigua United Port Seamen and General Workers Union and a political arm, the Antigua Democratic Labour Party, to (unsuccessfully) challenge Labour's hegemony.<sup>93</sup> The first factional purge happened in 1948 when ATLU General Secretary Samuel James was ousted by Bird because he had criticised the President's leadership.<sup>94</sup> A group that Novelle Richards called 'The James Faction' was also expelled, making this the first factional purge in Antiguan history.<sup>95</sup> Many of these dissidents joined the tiny middle-class Antiguan National Party or the Antigua Democratic Labour Party, neither of which had an impact on elections.<sup>96</sup> As well as causing arguments within the ATLU, Bird's autocracy was commented upon throughout wider society. On one end of the social spectrum sugar labourer Samuel Smith commented that "If it wasn't the president's idea, it wasn't any good."<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the Governor reported as early as 1949 that "Mr Bird is suffering from a lust for power"<sup>98</sup> and in 1951 that "Mr Bird's egomania is on the increase, and he is developing into a local

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<sup>89</sup> "Monthly Intelligence Reports, Antigua 1963-65," May 1963, CO 1031/4776, TNA.

<sup>90</sup> Desmond Kerr to SS Colonies G M Thompson, 9 April 1968, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>91</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 146

<sup>92</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 146

<sup>93</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 146.

<sup>94</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 146

<sup>95</sup> Richards, *The Struggle and the Conquest*, 66

<sup>96</sup> "General Elections in Antigua," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>97</sup> Keithlyn Smith and Fernando Smith, *To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, an Antiguan Workingman 1877-1982* (Scarborough, Ont: Edan's Publishers, 2015), 146.

<sup>98</sup> Baldwin to Chrech Jones, 24 Aug, 1949, CO/537/4883, TNA.

Hitler.”<sup>99</sup> Bird therefore had a widely recognised propensity for ousting opponents and censoring dissident opinion. This makes 1967 all the more significant because this dismissal or purge unlike the others resulted in a schism of the labour movement.

Bird’s autocracy stemmed directly from the highly personalised nature of political power in 1960s Antigua. Most significantly, the supreme and guiding law of the ATLU was not a manifesto or set of policies but the exclusive edict of Bird. Bird’s word was law because of the strength of his charismatic leadership - which is discussed elsewhere in this dissertation - and the lack of a codified manifesto to guide union activity. A 1961 booklet on ‘ATLU Rules’ lists the Union’s objectives in broad terms such as ‘maintain wages, conditions, and protect interests’, and ‘furtherance of lawful political objects affecting labour.’<sup>100</sup> These were deliberately ambiguous in order to maximise the union’s appeal to as many workers as possible and maintain acceptability in the eyes of the colonial administration and businesses. Lacking a codified manifesto encouraged spontaneous decision making by the President. Bird’s charismatic authority then made these decisions unquestionable in the eyes of many. This combination meant union members had no protection against Bird’s autocracy. Ultimately, in the words of Governor Baldwin, “No man must be against him and what he says must be obeyed.”<sup>101</sup>

Bird’s autocracy was no outlier in the Anglophone Caribbean in the decades after WWII. In particular, Bird’s behaviour leading up to 1967 supports Paget Henry’s discussion of personal power accumulation in the pre-independence period. In relation to Caribbean political parties and nation states, Henry theorises that political power can be accumulated as a form of privately held capital which can be ‘reinvested’ through self-entrenchment in positions of power, withdrawal from base or popular control, and controlled use of factionalism.<sup>102</sup> This enlarged capital can then be exchanged for social status, commodity wealth, and more political power.<sup>103</sup> Each of these modes of accumulation were demonstrated through Bird’s leadership of both the ATLU and the ALP. Paget’s and others’ theories of power accumulation will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## **The Public Response and Bird’s Charisma**

The foregoing discussion has argued that Walter’s dismissal and Bird’s authoritarianism were not unique in Antigua or the wider Caribbean. Why then did this dismissal lead to an unprecedented rupture of the Antiguan labour movement and establish the preconditions for partyism? The answer to this lies in the response of ordinary working Antiguans. Previous dismissals had not led to schism because the likes of Samuel James had not carried popular support, the nature of the purge was secretive, and Bird’s word was unquestioned by the majority of Antiguans. These conditions no longer applied in 1967. As has been discussed, through the 1960s, Walter cultivated significant personal support while Bird became alienated from his own base. Walter’s supporters were predominantly the young and the educated, less enthralled to Bird as their hero and more supportive of Walter’s calls for further socio-economic reform to forestall a new white capitalist hegemony. Finally, Walter ensured that his dismissal was a matter of public debate and initiated legal action so that all Antiguans would be cognisant of his ousting and able to make up their own minds whether or

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<sup>99</sup> Baldwin to SS, 23 March, 1950, CO/537/6118, TNA.

<sup>100</sup> The Rules of the Antigua Trades and Labour Union, 1961, TU.AQ.ATLU.4, ICS.

<sup>101</sup> Baldwin to SS, 23 March, 1950, CO/537/6118, TNA.

<sup>102</sup> Henry, “Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean,” 8.

<sup>103</sup> Henry, “Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean,” 8-9.

not they could continue to support Bird's autocratic rule. Ultimately, it was the reaction of working Antiguan that made 1967 a turning point.

It must be emphasised that sources relating to the thoughts of working Antiguan are rare. Reasons for this have been outlined in the Introduction and include poor literacy rates, low incentive or resources to record thoughts, and poor preservation. Nonetheless I have tried to piece together the public's response to the events of 1967 by drawing on all available data. Moreover, though we have little evidence of how people thought, we do have data about what they did and may draw inferences from those facts.

One objective measurement from which we can draw inferences is the movement of working people out of the ATLU, voluntarily following Walter. On 16 May, 11 days after his expulsion, Walter established the Antigua Workers Union (AWU). There are no statistics on how many workers joined the AWU in its early months because no official count of workers was performed in 1967; until new contracts were negotiated in 1968 most AWU members were still officially members of the ATLU. However, it is commonly argued that around 70 percent of ATLU members abandoned Bird and joined the AWU.<sup>104</sup> Speaking to Alexander in 1979, ATLU second vice-president Bradley Carrott remarked that following the departure of 70 percent of its members, including all of its field officers, the ATLU had "almost ceased to exist."<sup>105</sup> It is significant that field officers abandoned the ATLU because these were the men most involved in the day-to-day running of the union and in closest contact with its members. The departure of these officers deprived the ATLU of their expertise and connections and made a mass departure of rank-and-file members likely. It is notable that 70 percent of the ATLU's membership defected despite the fact the AWU was not officially recognised by the government, the Antigua Employers Federation, or the majority of businesses. This demonstrates profound popular belief in the legitimacy of Walter's leadership, supporting the points made earlier about him being seen by most as the truest representative of their interests. Like the ATLU before it, in the eyes of Antiguan the authority of the AWU and its leaders came not from legal sanction but from popular support.

Another way the public reacted to Walter's dismissal was through attendance at public meetings. The first of these was on 10 May, 5 days after the dismissal, at the Antigua Recreation Ground in St Johns. Talking about that crowd, Walter claimed "probably half of Antigua turn up" and that he had "never seen a crowd like that in all my life."<sup>106</sup> Of course one would expect Walter to exaggerate the crowd's size in order to present himself as a popular leader. Nonetheless, it cannot be disputed that a large number of Antiguan attended this explanatory meeting. This is hugely significant because it shows that for the first time Bird's edict was not accepted as an unquestionable truth. By merely attending the meeting, workers implied they were at least sceptical about Bird's version of events and wanted to know more. The 10 May meeting signifies the beginning of the end of Bird's universal charismatic authority and signals the rise of partisan politics for the first time. To fully appreciate the significance of these events one must consider the important role of charismatic authority in Caribbean political culture.

The role of charisma in Caribbean politics has been widely discussed and some scholars, including Nigel Bolland, Olwyn Blouet, and Paget Henry, even reference Bird in their discussions. Unfortunately, Walter has received little attention which is regrettable because Walter's rise to power

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<sup>104</sup> The 70% figure is found in Bolland (2002, 600), Alexander (2004, 167) Tungteng (1975, 53) This figure is supported by the fact that in the 1968 by-elections the AWU/PLM candidates won 71% of the popular vote (Bolland, 600).

<sup>105</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour*, 167.

<sup>106</sup> "One and One Interview with George Walter".

has as much to reveal about charismatic leadership as Bird's. To unpack charismatic authority, I am particularly drawing on Danns's theorisation of 'mesmeric' or 'new charismatic' authority which emerged from the 1980s following his experiences in Guyana.<sup>107</sup> Some, including Paget Henry, have criticised Danns' work as too Guyana-centric and military/police focussed but I find his idea of the 'mesmeric leader' insightful and applicable to the Antiguan case study.<sup>108</sup> Traditional Weberian charismatic authority stipulates that leaders gain authority through a perceived special ability which uniquely qualifies them to hold political power, usually for the purpose of reforming the existing socio-political system.<sup>109</sup> According to Danns, traditional Weberian charismatic authority is not applicable to the modern Caribbean context because of several social and political differences between western Europe and the Caribbean, as well as a marked difference in the modus operandi of modern Caribbean leaders like Bird. The new charismatic leader is perceived to have a special ability to lead, but this stems from their membership of the majority group and their symbolism of the popular cause. This differs from Weberian charisma where the leader is deemed to be somehow unique or special and is themselves the cause, rather than representative of the cause.<sup>110</sup>

The methods of new charismatic leaders also differ from the Weberian model, especially in the way the latter seeks to revolutionise or recreate society while the former operates entirely within the existing institutional political framework.<sup>111</sup> Bird gained power by participating in the colonial political system, not revolutionising it. For Danns, new charismatic leaders gain power within an existing system - in this case being elected - by using popular agitation and rhetoric focussed on economic and utilitarian goals.<sup>112</sup> This focus on economy rather than social revolution is another feature that differentiates charisma from Danns's new charisma. Once in a position of power, the resources available to the new charismatic leader, such as powers of patronage and appointment, can be exploited to generate a highly personalised form of political power. If maintained long enough, this personalisation of politics makes the new charismatic leader inseparable from the political office he holds. On gaining political power through constitutional decolonisation, the mesmeric leader must exchange the politics of agitation for the politics of stability. This involves turning the government institutions against which they previously rebelled into objects of popular trust and support. Danns proposes that the mesmeric leader can maintain control through a 'personalised' form of Weber's rational-legal authority where institutionalised power systems are combined with extreme use of patronage and the removal of all dissenting opinion.<sup>113</sup> This perfectly describes Bird's initial period in power which the acting British Representative in the West Indies, Desmond Kerr, described in 1968 as "maintained by a judicious mixture of benevolent paternalism and autocratic coercion."<sup>114</sup>

However, Bird failed to transform government institutions (at the head of which Associated Statehood had just placed him) from objects of resistance to objects of trust. This exposed Bird as Premier to the same criticisms he had levelled against the prior colonial administration. This shift correlated with the previously discussed generational dynamic whereby a growing proportion of the population had less unquestioning faith in Bird's authority and ability. These developments resulted in many members of the Antiguan working class perceiving Bird as leading a new elite sympathetic to the demands of white foreign capital. For these people, Walter was the most legitimate and effective

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<sup>107</sup> Danns, "Politics, Corruption and the Police," 121.

<sup>108</sup> Henry, "Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean," 9.

<sup>109</sup> Danns, *Domination and Power in Guyana*, 68.

<sup>110</sup> Danns, "Politics, Corruption and the Police," 122.

<sup>111</sup> Danns, *Domination and Power in Guyana*, 69.

<sup>112</sup> Danns, "Politics, Corruption and the Police," 121.

<sup>113</sup> Danns, "Politics, Corruption and the Police," 121.

<sup>114</sup> Kerr to SS Colonies G M Thompson, 9 April 1968, FCO 43/57, TNA.

leader of the labour movement. The gradual collapse of Bird's charismatic authority is demonstrated by workers' attendance at Walter's 10 May public meeting.

The destabilisation of Bird's charismatic authority can also be seen in the changing relationship between Bird and the public. Two days after Walter's public meeting, the ATLU organised their own in order to challenge Walter's narrative. That this meeting was called at all is significant because it is the first time Bird was put on the defensive and felt required to justify his actions to the public. Previously, Bird's charismatic authority was such that his actions needed no explanation. The behaviour of the 12 May crowd reinforces this point. Even the pro-Labour *Workers' Voice* reported that Bird was booed and heckled to such an extent that he was forced to flee under police escort.<sup>115</sup> This behaviour shows the erosion of Bird's charismatic authority and speaks to a profound shift in the attitudes of working people which would later coalesce into political polarisation along party lines.

## The Role of the Media

This chapter will end by exploring how the events of 1967 were presented in Antigua's printed media and how Walter overcame personal attacks in the press to lead a new anti-Bird movement. Newspapers and pamphlets are a valuable source as they provide insight into how competing factions argued their points and how political rhetoric evolved over time. It is important to consider the debates and opinions to which working people were exposed on a near-daily basis as this impacted how they thought and acted. This is of particular relevance to 1960s Antigua where reading and discussing published material was a communal activity and where readership was a meaningful marker of one's identity. A lifelong Labour activist told me that they would organise group readings of *Workers' Voice* in their village and that these became a weekly community event with food and music, exclusively for Labour supporters.<sup>116</sup> The principal publications in 1967 were the pro-Labour *Workers' Voice* newspaper and the anti-Labour ABDM Pamphlets.

The *Workers' Voice* was the official newspaper of the ATLU, with publication ranging from daily to weekly, depending on circumstances. Bird had close, unofficial authority over the paper's content. Its editor was always a close ally upon whom Bird could depend to espouse a pro-Bird, pro-Labour message. Deviations from the party line were punished immediately. For example, in 1964 Bird sacked the editor for publishing two articles questioning government policy, replacing him with Levi Joseph, a close friend.<sup>117</sup> For much of the period under study, the editor was Dorcas White, a young and talented Bird loyalist.<sup>118</sup> The author of most headline articles is not stated so we must assume these are the work of White or other Bird-approved journalists, possibly even Bird himself. Other articles were written by Labour activists including John St Luce - a Labour executive and later an ALP Senator, Representative, and Minister. Moreover, the *Voice* was printed at the ATLU printery, so Bird and his ATLU leadership allies had literally close oversight of the paper and its content. The *Voice* must therefore be read as a piece of Bird-sanctioned Labour propaganda designed to maintain support for Bird and sabotage any efforts to draw power away from him.

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<sup>115</sup> "Trades Union Public Meeting Stalled", *Workers' Voice*, May 13, 1967, J1567, ANA.

<sup>116</sup> Interview 1, November 2019.

<sup>117</sup> Monthly Intelligence Reports, Antigua: January 1964" May 1964, CO 1031/4776, TNA.

<sup>118</sup> John Lent, *Third World Mass Media and Their Search for Modernity: The Case of Commonwealth Caribbean, 1717-1976*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 277.

In relation to Walter's dismissal, the *Voice* initially maintained a 'nothing to see here' approach. However, as Walter's popularity grew this narrative was replaced by a series of vicious personal attacks, which set the tone for the personalisation of party politics in years to come. In the 1967-76 period Antigua, political campaigning and the partisan media were almost entirely dedicated to negative campaigning. This is where campaigns and partisan media differentiate political groups from each other by attacking the integrity or ability of their opponent.<sup>119</sup> In a 2015 study on US politics since 2008 Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster concluded that negative campaigning directly contributes to polarisation by strengthening party loyalty and undermining trust between opposing groups.<sup>120</sup>

On 7 May, two days after Walter's expulsion, the *Voice* ran an editorial entitled "Who is responsible?" in which it detailed the responsibilities of a union's General Secretary.<sup>121</sup> The piece's gist was that a General Secretary is an employee of a union and must only act on the instruction of the union's executive committee; the implication being that a secretary who acts beyond his brief ought to be fired. Even though George Walter's name does not appear in this editorial the association is obvious. Similarly, the *Voice*'s 10 May cover story discussed the appointment of Joseph Lawrence and the Sheppard brothers to senior positions in the ATLU without mentioning the fact that these appointments were necessary to fill vacancies left by Walter, Halstead, and Smith.<sup>122</sup> The most astonishing example of the *Voice*'s 'head in the sand' attitude may be found in a 13 May cover story. In it the *Voice* conceded that heckling led to the ATLU's 11 May public meeting being abandoned but went on to say that, otherwise "business went on at Union's headquarters as usual"<sup>123</sup> Given the state of worker agitation at the time this is an extraordinarily bold claim which epitomises a blatant 'nothing to see here' attitude. This demonstrates that even in the wake of Bird's rejection by the public, the leadership behind the *Voice* were still hoping that their readers would ignore Walter and his supporters and that he would quietly disappear like previous purge victims. This demonstrates a misjudgement of the public mood by Bird, failing to appreciate the emotional strength behind Walter's popular support and the extent to which his charismatic authority had been degraded.

The dismissive narrative outlined above proved unsustainable in the context of obvious public support for Walter, prompting the *Workers' Voice* to launch character assassinations on ATLU separatists. The lead story on 14 May called Walter and Halstead 'self proclaimed conspirators' and accused them of 'plotting and campaigning against the Union's Executive' and hiring 'a gang of organised hooligans' to heckle Bird at the 11 May meeting.<sup>124</sup> A week later the editorial accused Walter of 'an attempt to bully democracy out of the mind of every worker' and claimed his behaviour was 'damaging to every workman and workwoman in the community.'<sup>125</sup> The shifting narrative of the *Voice* shows three things. First, Walter's popular support was so substantial that it could no longer be hoped that the anti-Labour challenge would simply die away. Second, it again shows Bird to misjudge the public mood - these attacks on Walter, by extension, attacked those who supported him and reaffirmed the notion in the minds of many that the Labour government was a new, out of touch, elite while Walter was the principal defendant of working people. By attacking rather than engaging with

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<sup>119</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 22.

<sup>120</sup> Alan Abramowitz and Steven Webster, "All Politics is National: The Rise of Negative Partisanship and the Nationalization of U.S. House and Senate Elections in the 21st Century," (conference paper: Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 16-19, 2015), 12.

<sup>121</sup> "Who is responsible?", *Workers' Voice*, 7th May, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>122</sup> "New Men at Union Headquarters", *Workers' Voice*, May 10, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>123</sup> "Trades Union public meeting stalled", *Workers' Voice*, May 13, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>124</sup> "Walter and Halstead run from truth", *Workers' Voice*, May 14, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>125</sup> "Brainwashing", *Workers' Voice*, May 21, 1967, J1563, ANA.

disagreement, Labour set the tone for a 'my party, right or wrong' dynamic and introduced political absolutism into Antigua. This created the climate in which partyism and political polarisation would rapidly and permanently be established as defining features of Antiguan political culture.

At the same time that the *Workers' Voice* issued attacks on Walter and his supporters, it began a frantic defence of Bird's leadership to contrast with their attacks on Walter. A 7 May editorial invoked the ATLU's democratic structure to defend the right of the executive committee to take bold action on behalf of the union.<sup>126</sup> On 24 May the editorial asked: "We wonder what would happen if there was not love for the people of this island in the heart of Premier V C Bird, President of the AT&LU".<sup>127</sup> The article went on to call Bird a "fearless, determined, conscientious Leader" and claimed that the ATLU was "upholding what is right in the sight of God and man". This impassioned defence of Bird, particularly its invocation of religious language in a highly Christian community, reinforces the points made above about the pro-Bird faction's recognition of the seriousness of the pro-Walter movement and hence threat to its rule. It also complements the above points made about Bird's recognition that there was a younger generation of workers, who did not feel a strong sense of obligation and loyalty to him. As with Bird's public address, this is the first time the publication had to make an effort to defend Bird's position. Prior to this Bird could rely on his charismatic authority to maintain control. This highly personalised and romanticised focus on Bird's personality reflects the personal nature of the *Voice's* attacks on Walter and established personalities as the focal points of political debate.

As Labour launched its rhetorical campaign of 'us versus them' and focussed on personalities, its opponents were coalescing into a single movement. From here the term 'Opposition' will refer to the political group brought together by the momentum of Walter's anti-Bird movement. As stated in the Introduction, there existed prior to 1967 a number of small political groups that did not support Labour, most notably Hall's ABDM. However, they never won election to the House of Representatives (HoR) because of their perceived middle-class and/or white leadership and interests. Walter's dismissal rallied these disparate groups by providing a popular base in the form of the AWU and a popular leader in Walter himself. Importantly, unlike the white Antiguan landowner Hall, Walter was a member of the Antiguan black working class, perceived to legitimately represent the interests of working people. Walter's brother, Selvyn, reflected on this in his "Of Dis and Dat" column published in the *Antigua Observer* from 2011 to 2012. Here Selvyn Walter wrote of the ANP and ABDM that "people were distrustful of the black/white/middle-class/privilege combination" but when it came to Walter and the AWU they "were of the people. Their very own"<sup>128</sup> Walter was therefore seen to provide a leadership that was sincere and legitimate where Hall's was not. Yet at the same time, Walter was able to draw on the institutional party structure of the ABDM and the experience and resources of Hall. This helps explain why, when it emerged, the Opposition appeared so well-formed and with a strong momentum to which Bird was pressured to respond.

The growth of a united Opposition is demonstrated by the pamphlets or 'White Papers' published by the ABDM. These were weekly pamphlets secretly printed by Robert Hall throughout the 1960s.<sup>129</sup> They were distributed freely and shared widely before being destroyed, making readership difficult to gauge accurately. From 1967 onwards, these pamphlets supported Walter's anti-Bird cause and began to echo Labour's focus on personalities and alarmist language. On 2 June,

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<sup>126</sup> "Who is Responsible?" *Workers' Voice*, May 7, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>127</sup> "Lest we Forget", *Workers' Voice*, May 24, 1967, J1563, ANA.

<sup>128</sup> Selvyn Walter, "Of dis and dat: The pioneering attempts to establish an opposition. Part Seven," *Antigua Observer Online*, Dec 15, 2011, accessed Nov 18, 2019, <https://antiguaobserver.com/?p=40726>. np.

<sup>129</sup> Told to me by Robert Hall's son, Vernon, November 2019.



one pamphlet accused Bird of fleeing to the USA to avoid questioning by the Secretary-Treasurer of the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), Basil Blackman, whom Walter had invited to mediate in the dismissal dispute.<sup>130</sup> Attacking Bird as a coward refuted Labour's assertions of the Premier's statesmanship and presented him as childish and unfit to govern an independent nation. Moreover, by taking the initiative to involve the CCL Walter appeared as the bigger man and confident in the legality and legitimacy of his actions. Pitting one leader against another and arguing over their character was to become the defining feature of Antiguan politics and fed into a culture of partyism and polarisation.

A subsequent AMBD pamphlet continued the narrative of Opposition formation. When Walter addressed a 'mammoth crowd' on 17 May, onlookers shouted "We must get them [government ministers] all out of the union" and called for Walter to "form a new union for us."<sup>131</sup> The pamphlet goes on to claim that the crowd demanded "we don't want no government man in dey [the new union]. Dem a crook awe."<sup>132</sup> As a politically motivated document this pamphlet's account is likely to have presented an idealised version of events. Nonetheless, it is useful as an indicator of Opposition attitudes and reflects the political thinking leaders like Hall and Walter wanted at the centre of their new movement. The crowd's supposed focus on getting the government out of the union suggests that, at that moment, the Opposition's driving motivation was to establish union-party separatism as a norm in Antiguan political culture. This is significant because it shows that in its beginning the Opposition had a driving principle other than creating a political party and contesting elections to oust Bird. Adherence to an ideology of party-union separatism lasted for less than a year. By the end of 1968, the survival of the Opposition as a political group had become its own motivation and by 1971 partyism and the empowerment of one's party had eclipsed party-union separatism as a guiding principle entirely. These developments will be explored in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

## Conclusion

1967 is arguably the most important year in Antigua's modern history. As well as bringing Associated Statehood, 1967 ended decades of one-party hegemony and permanently challenged the elected dictatorship of Bird. Until 1967 Bird had confidently relied on his unchallenged positions as Chief Minister, President of the ATLU, and leader of the ALP to guarantee all-encompassing political power within Antigua. This permanently ended with the expulsion of Walter from the Union and resultant schism of the labour movement. Unlike previous purges, Walter's dismissal generated a popular movement because of Walter's polarity among rank-and-file workers, the emergence of a younger and more ambitious generation, and the ongoing debate about the Two Hats Problem which reached a crescendo in the context of Associated Statehood from February 1967.

The schism of 1967 was highly emotionally charged with arguments couched in personalised language and drawing on rhetoric of treachery and betrayal. With the transfer of 70 percent of members and all field officers, the AWU emerged as a fully-formed and well-resourced union in 1967 able to directly challenge the ATLU and, by extension, the ALP and Bird. This meant that an 'us

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<sup>130</sup> "Premier-President Evaded Secretary-General, C.C.L. (Cont'd)" *ABDM Pamphlets*, 85, no. 49, 10 June, 1967, VHPC.

<sup>131</sup> "Premier-President Evaded Secretary-General, C.C.L."

<sup>132</sup> "Premier-President Evaded Secretary-General, C.C.L."

versus them, all or nothing' approach to politics was the default setting when a political challenge emerged. For Labour, the AWU was a trouble-making group of treacherous malcontents using decolonisation and economic change as a vehicle for self aggrandisement. For the AWU, Labour had become a new elite allied with big business and white investors at the expense of workers. The inability to understand, let alone respect the other side's argument set the terms for political debate going forward and paved the way for political polarisation. By giving birth to popular political disagreement, 1967 established the preconditions for political polarisation, societal polarisation, and eventually pernicious polarisation.

However, societal and pernicious polarisation were not guaranteed consequences of the 1967 schism. The thing that drove Antigua into societal and pernicious polarisation was partyism - the desire for each side to win and maintain political control at any cost. Partyism developed in Antigua in 1968 in the context of civil unrest and the establishment of a popular opposition political party.

## Chapter Two: The formation of the PLM, civil unrest, and by-elections in 1968

Seventeen years after the granting of Universal Adult Suffrage, the Opposition chickens, after surviving extreme political pressure, death threats, stonings, violence, economic boycotts, social ostracism, salvoes of racism and ridicule, had finally come home to roost in the Parliament of Antigua & Barbuda.<sup>133</sup>

Selwyn Walter, brother of George Walter, reflecting on 1968.

The previous chapter showed that the expulsion of George Walter from the ATLU in 1967 resulted in a schism of the labour movement and set the scene for oppositional politics in Antigua. This chapter analyses the fallout of 1967 and shows that over a course of a year Antigua became politically polarised as, for the first time, two political groups competed for popular support. By the end of 1968 Antiguan political culture was characterised by rhetoric that made appeals to people's belief about different leaders and groups' personality rather than to facts, policies, and ideology. The personalisation of politics and the extremist rhetoric used was driven by heightened partyism which prioritised control of government above all else.

This chapter begins by examining the measures pursued by Labour to forestall the successful emergence of the AWU and maintain their own predominance. In particular, Bird mirrored contemporary Caribbean leaders in using legislation to impede the activity of potentially troubling unions, such as the AWU. Bird was aided in his opposition to the AWU by Antigua's business and economic elite who had a shared interest in maintaining the status quo.

This chapter then analyses the consequence of this repression which was two months of civil unrest. It is important to appreciate that the AWU was born through months of struggle and conflict because this confirmed hostile opposition as the foundation of Antiguan political rhetoric. The AWU literally had to fight for its survival in some cases and this, more than anything, concretised 'us versus them, all or nothing' as the driving thought process behind Antiguan politics.

This chapter then addresses the establishment of the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) in April 1968 and the four by-elections it won in August. The establishment of the PLM consolidated the development of oppositional politics in Antigua and facilitated political polarisation of Antiguan society. By the time of the August elections Antigua was clearly split between support of the ATLU and ALP or the AWU and PLM. Over subsequent years as these two groups adopted partyism as their ideology, political polarisation developed into societal and finally pernicious polarisation.

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<sup>133</sup> Selwyn Walter, "Of dis and dat: The pioneering attempts to establish an opposition. Part 13", *Antigua Observer Online*, March 1, 2012, accessed Nov 18, 2019, [https://antiguaobserver.com/category/headline\\_news/category/specials/page/44/](https://antiguaobserver.com/category/headline_news/category/specials/page/44/). np.

## The Opposition - suppression

The AWU was founded on 16 May 1967 and immediately faced challenge from the Labour government and business elite. For the government, control over the working population through the ATLU was central to political predominance. Labour's political leadership drew much of their legitimacy and authority from their seniority in the labour movement. Their claims to political power had begun, in the 1950s, through their championing of workers' rights and they had gained positions in the colonial government by virtue of their authority within the ATLU. Moreover, the ATLU membership provided the majority of the ALP's popular support and the structures and personnel of the ATLU were central in mobilising electoral support for the ALP. A comparative reduction in the strength of the ATLU would translate directly into a weakening of the ALP. Therefore, Labour pursued any measures reasonably available to them to prevent the successful emergence of a rival union.

The reason the business elite was keen to suppress the AWU is more complex. 'Business elite' refers to the predominantly white British and American businessmen who founded and ran industries and tourism-related enterprises in Antigua, most of which were large-scale employers such as West Indies Oil and hotels represented by the Antigua Hotels Association. Through the Antiguan Employers Federation (AEF, established in December 1950), the business elite worked together to maximise the profitability of their enterprises. Strategies used by the AEF included synchronising rates and modes of payment, contract lengths and terms, and relations with external markets and industries. The AEF also used their monopoly on Antigua's industry and tourism to lobby the Government for favourable business conditions. For example, in March 1968 David Shepard, a chief investor in the Hawksbill Beach Hotel, threatened government officials with reduced investment in Antigua should hotel employers be excluded from wider industrial dispute arbitration.<sup>134</sup>

The preeminent position of the business elite was most acute in the tourism sector which was almost entirely owned by a small clique of white foreign investors. Faced with the decline of sugar, Bird sought massive direct investment in tourism from capital-rich private companies who could quickly build the hospitality infrastructure necessary for Antigua to gain a competitive advantage in Caribbean tourism. To attract investment, foreign capitalists were made to 'feel at home' in Antigua through government incentives ranging from lucrative land deals, to favourable property rights, to duty exemptions, all of which created perfect 'conditions of capital realisation and expatriation'.<sup>135</sup> Strikingly, as early as 1961 economist Carleen O'Laughlin (University of the West Indies) warned about the long-term problems presented by the exploitation of Antigua's 'natural tourist facilities' by this new foreign capitalist elite.<sup>136</sup> The result of this investment was that while Antiguans gained political control through constitutional decolonisation, in Trevor Farrell's phrasing 'ownership and control of the commanding heights of the local economy remained firmly in the hands of metropolitan investors.'<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Letter, David H Shepard (investor in Hawksbill Beach Hotel) to George Thompson, 25 March 1968, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>135</sup> Henry, "Decolonisation and the Authoritarian Context of Democracy in Antigua," 307.

<sup>136</sup> O'Loughlin, "Problems in the economic development of Antigua," 241.

<sup>137</sup> Trevor M A Farrell, "Decolonisation in the English-Speaking Caribbean: Myth or Reality?" in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, Democracy, and Development*, ed. Paget Henry & Carl Stone (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), 7.

Bird's leadership had facilitated and encouraged the economic takeover by (mostly foreign) white investors. Paget Henry has charted Bird's abandonment of black socialism - advocating total social and economic restructuring of the post-plantation society - in favour of an accommodationist and ultimately capitalist state.<sup>138</sup> Recognising the need for immediate investment in tourism, Bird created an Antiguan example of 'industrialisation by invitation' - a common Caribbean strategy of economic development described by the Nobel-prize winning St Lucian development economist W. Arthur Lewis as the stage when governments incentivised foreign investment in new industries through tax breaks and other mechanisms. The result was a relationship between the Antiguan government and the economic elite founded upon cooperation and, if anything, subordination of the state to the wishes of the economic elite.<sup>139</sup> Ergo, Antigua's business elite had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo which had enabled them to monopolise the tourism sector and maximise the profitability of their enterprises. An ambitious and energised AWU threatened to rejuvenate the labour movement and political turmoil could strip investors of their favourable terms. The ATLU meanwhile, under Bird's leadership, was at least a known enemy and likely to be more amenable to the business elite's goals than an unknown and ambitious AWU. Business thus joined the Labour government in opposing the successful emergence of the AWU.

The first way the government tried to suppress the AWU was through a series of laws designed to curtail the power of trade unions and expand government control over organised labour. The 1967 Trades Dispute (Arbitration and Settlement) Ordinance established an Industrial Court modelled on that in place in Trinidad and Tobago.<sup>140</sup> This law stated that industrial disputes must be argued before and settled by the industrial court and that no union-organised industrial action could take place in relation to a matter once it was before the court. This effectively moved the arena of industrial relations away from the public sphere and closed it inside a courtroom. It also took authority and initiative away from labour leaders like Walter and Halstead and gave it to government-appointed judges. These judges were chosen by the government and selected to represent the government, businesses, and workers. The Labour government could therefore rely on two of the three judges deciding against any legal action brought by the AWU.<sup>141</sup> It was false, therefore, for Labour's Minister of Labour, Lionel Hurst, to claim the law "assured the equilibrium of the economy."<sup>142</sup> Rather, this Act strengthened the Bird government's control of the economy at the expense of trade unions and in particular the AWU. It is important to note, however, that this law hindered the work of the ATLU as much as that of the AWU. The 1967 Act therefore marks the first significant act of partyism by Labour - Bird's government passed a repressive law designed to maintain the party's control of power even if it meant impeding the work of their own supporting union. This is an example of party survival at any cost becoming the driving force in Antiguan political culture.

A second method used by the government to impede the successful emergence of the AWU was to deny the new union the legal authority to negotiate on behalf of workers. This was done through a legal technicality, exploited by the Labour government working in tandem with employers. In 1967, there were no laws restricting the formation of trade unions. The 1967 Constitution itself guaranteed all Antiguan the right to form and join any trade union of their choosing and protected

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<sup>138</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua and Barbuda*.

<sup>139</sup> Paget Henry, 'Decolonisation and the Authoritarian Context of Democracy in Antigua', in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, Democracy, and Development*, ed. Paget Henry & Carl Stone (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), 307.

<sup>140</sup> Rose-Marie Antoine, *Commonwealth Law and Legal Systems* (Oxford: Routledge-Cavendish, 2008), 350.

<sup>141</sup> Owen Mathurin, "Electoral Change in Montserrat and Antigua," *Readings in Government and Politics of the West Indies*, ed. Trevor Munroe and Rupert Lewis (Mona: University of the West Indies, 1971), 148.

<sup>142</sup> "Antigua to have an Industrial Court", *The Antigua Star*, 9 February, 1967, ANA, J1646.

such organisations from government interference.<sup>143</sup> This affirmed the provisions of a 1962 colonial-era law legalising workers' combinations.<sup>144</sup> The AWU could therefore officially and legally begin operating from its Tanner Street headquarters on 1 June 1967.<sup>145</sup> However, legal protections guaranteeing the right to industrial action only applied to unions formally recognised by employers. This recognition relied on establishing the level of union support in a workplace through an official 'count' of workers. The loophole identified by the government and exploited by employers was that an official count could be denied whilst existing contracts, as negotiated by the ATLU, were in effect.<sup>146</sup> This meant that the AWU could only function with legal sanction and protection after existing contracts at each firm expired; any industrial action before would be a breach of the law, entitling employers to terminate contracts with AWU members. In this way, the Labour government was able to legally inhibit the work of the AWU without denying its right to exist.

Labour presumably hoped that circumscribing AWU activity would deter further defection from the ATLU and entice converts back. This was a misjudgement of public opinion and failed to recognise the emotional and principled element of Walter's support. Rather than encouraging ex-members to return to the ATLU, the government's refusal to allow the AWU to operate had a rallying effect on the new movement. By using legal technicalities to suppress worker activism, Bird appeared to have more in common with the old colonial administration than with the modern labour movement. Like many of his Caribbean contemporaries, Bird ended up becoming the anti-labour government elite he had set out to oppose. In this regard, Noguera's reflections on Eric Gairy may be directly applied to Bird's 1967-71 political decline: 'By the time his regime collapsed, he had become a part of what he had once fervently opposed - a member of Grenada's ruling elites. His ties to the peasant and working class majority were now reduced to a distant memory.'<sup>147</sup>

Following the government's lead, Antiguan employers refused to recognise or negotiate with the AWU as illustrated by the Camacho-Jarvis case of 1968.<sup>148</sup> Shop worker and new AWU member Janet Jarvis was sacked by her white employer Rose Gamacho, who refused to negotiate with Jarvis' AWU representatives. Gamacho was supported in this instance by the government who agreed that because Jarvis had been employed as an ATLU member on a contract negotiated by the ATLU, the AWU had no right to represent her in matters relating to that contract. In this way, the government and employers engineered a situation whereby joining the AWU was tantamount to forfeiting all trade union protection. However, AWU supporters organised a protest outside Ms Gamacho's shop until she agreed to negotiate with the AWU.<sup>149</sup> Camacho herself identified that in this instance the AWU's picket was not about her but 'what they are really fighting against is the Government and the Antigua Trades and Labour Union.'<sup>150</sup> Though small in scale, this incident demonstrates the conflict between the new AWU and the Labour-business hegemony. The success of the AWU's picket established the AWU as an effective organisation in the eyes of its supporters and a formidable and disruptive opponent in the eyes of employers. This example also illustrates how throughout 1968 every political or labour-related episode served to further polarise the two sides, escalate extremes of opinion, and entrench viewpoints.

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<sup>143</sup> Antigua and Barbuda Constitution Order, 22 February, 1967. 11.(1).

<sup>144</sup> Antigua Trade Unions Act, Laws of Antigua, 1962, Ch. 37.

<sup>145</sup> "Background of ABWU" Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union, 2017, accessed Aug 8, 2020. <http://abwunion.com/about/history-of-abwu/>.

<sup>146</sup> Tungteng, "Reflections on Labour and Governing in Antigua," 44.

<sup>147</sup> Noguera, "The limits of charisma," 84.

<sup>148</sup> Tungteng, "Reflections on Labour and Governing in Antigua," 44.

<sup>149</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua*, 156

<sup>150</sup> "Camacho: We Will Sue," *Antigua Star*, June 10, 1967, J1646. ANA. St John's, Antigua.

## The Opposition - emergence

The suppression of the AWU created an unstable tension in Antigua. It should be emphasised that in the Anglophone Caribbean trade unions represented the first organisations of democratic expression and activism, usually predating political parties and democratic participation. To repress a trade union was therefore tantamount to anti-democratic colonial-style despotism and provoked understandably extreme reactions. Furthermore, by suppressing the AWU Bird excluded many Antiguanians from the political space. Pedro Noguera has shown that charismatic leaders, like Bird, have a tendency to dominate political landscapes to such an extent that ‘traditional forms of resistance are futile.’<sup>151</sup> The most obvious form of political resistance in Antigua’s case was union-organised industrial action but it also included the ability of the AWU to organise as an official union, to hold rallies and meetings, and take part in workplace negotiations. All of these forms of expression were closed off by Bird’s efforts to maintain his position and the vested interests’ goal of perpetuating a beneficial status quo.

With traditional means of expression unavailable to AWU supporters, this state of tension culminated in a period of civil unrest. This mainly took the form of illegal strikes and demonstrations, but there were flash points of violence and property damage which culminated in a State of Emergency and British intervention. It is notable that Antigua’s year of unrest fits a regional pattern of heightened political violence and expression, particularly in relation to workers’ rights and racial equality. In 1967 and 1968 the US Civil Rights Movement underwent drastic changes, including the establishment of the Black Panther Party in October 1967 and the assassination of Martin Luther King in April 1968. In a regional context, there were race riots in Guadeloupe and the crisis of Anguilla’s secession from St Kitts-Nevis, both beginning in May 1967. These issues were discussed in Antigua’s public sphere and articulated through popular media such as calypso and soca music. In 1969, Antiguan calypsonian MacLean “King Short Shirt” Emmanuel reflected on MLK’s assassination, unrest in St Kitts, and Antigua’s state of emergency in his song ‘Racial Violence’.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, Joseph Hunte’s first publicly performed song of 1969, ‘We Shall Overcome’, draws parallels between the Civil Rights Movement, Antigua’s struggle for a workable democracy, and Afro-Caribbean struggles against slavery.<sup>153</sup> These songs demonstrate the great extent to which civil protest and abuses of government power were understood and discussed by working-class Antiguanians and help partly explain the rapidity and unprecedented energy with which civil unrest broke out in 1968.

Antigua's Civil unrest predominantly took the form of illegal strikes. These often began as workplace issue-strikes before escalating into general and sympathetic walk-outs, all organised by Walter. It must be emphasised that strike action had a major effect on Antigua and was a more effective tool there than in larger economies such as the UK. This is because, firstly, Antigua’s economy was highly dependent on the export of agricultural goods, especially sugar. A stoppage at any stage in this trade - from farm to dock – posed huge economic risks. Additionally, while transitioning to a tourism-based economy, the Antiguan government relied on enticing foreign capital to invest through incentives such as tax breaks and property rights but also through providing a stable internal market and economy. Erratic strikes which the government was powerless to control

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<sup>151</sup> Noguera, “The limits of charisma,” 73.

<sup>152</sup> Lord Short Shirt, *Racial Violence*, Calypso Caribbean, West Indies Records, 1969.

<sup>153</sup> “Our Story in Song; Examining the Social Consciousness of Calypso, Joseph Hunte, Tedx Antigua.” Youtube Video. Posted by Tedx Talks. June 25, 2015. Accessed 15 February, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH3pR\\_hKLow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH3pR_hKLow).

disincentivised investment and caused further difficulty for the government. The strike was thus a powerful tool for the AWU and formed the basis of civil disobedience and unrest.

The most effective strikes were among waterfront workers responsible for loading and unloading cargo ships. Though small in number (350 workers), this sector was the cornerstone of the Antiguan economy and most of its workers were supportive of the AWU.<sup>154</sup> The waterfront had a disproportionate impact on the economy for two reasons. First, as previously stated, in 1968 Antigua still relied heavily on the export of agricultural goods. The most important in this regard was sugar which was a state-owned industry so the inability to sell sugar contributed doubly to the government's trouble. Secondly, in the 1960s Antigua's trade deficit of US\$9,648,000 was the largest among British-controlled Caribbean islands.<sup>155</sup> This meant Antigua was reliant on imports of everything from supplementary foods to consumer items, as well as the materials, furnishings, and luxury goods required by the growing tourism sector. A strike on the waterfront would therefore pose further trouble for the burgeoning tourism sector and have a disproportionately negative impact on the middle and upper classes who relied on a constant inflow of consumer goods. Recognising Walters' popularity among waterfront workers, Deputy-BGR Kerr referred to the St John docks as the AWU's 'heartland.'<sup>156</sup> Similarly, Bird conceded that the epicentre of AWU support was 'principally on the waterfront.'<sup>157</sup>

With the waterfront as a core, the AWU organised larger strikes and ultimately called for a general strike for 12 February 1968. This was announced in a joint press release on 31 January 1968 issued by all opposition groups working together. This document is significant as it was the first formal act carried out by a united Opposition, representing the coming together of the coalition of discontent into a united group. The statement delineated 14 points of grievance with the Labour government which it accused of 'continued illegal, undemocratic, and unconstitutional actions' and called for a general strike to indicate 'a vote of no confidence in the Government of Antigua.'<sup>158</sup> The strike was to take place on 12 February and foreign media were invited to observe. This invitation is notable because it presents the Opposition as a legitimate and authoritative 'official Opposition' in the Westminster style, granted recognition and status by the world's media. The ABDM separately published a series of their White Papers to echo the press release and maintain enthusiasm for the strike. For example, on 10 February the ABDM called on Antiguan to 'protest against the oppression and the subjugation we are all subjected to by Antigua's dictator, V C Bird, and his government.'<sup>159</sup> The language used here reaffirms the notion that the AWU's fight for recognition represented the struggle of all oppressed groups against tyrannical governments. Again, Bird was presented as out of touch with working people, while Walter and the AWU were perceived to be the new and truest advocates of the working man's cause.

The Opposition demonstration accompanying the 12 February general strike attracted an estimated minimum of 6,000 peaceful supporters from a total Antiguan population of 62,521.<sup>160</sup> The

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<sup>154</sup> "State of Antigua W.I., Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Report of the Labour Department for the year 1969", Government Printing Office, Antigua, 1971, Labour Affairs in Antigua, FCO 63/694, TNA 17.

<sup>155</sup> Gibbons, "Economic and Demographic Factors in Improving Living Standards in the Caribbean Region," 77.

<sup>156</sup> "Report on Antigua Disturbances", Desmond M Kerr to SS Commonwealth, G M Thompson, 9 April, 1968.

<sup>157</sup> Roberts to Sewell, 25th August 1967, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>158</sup> "Press Release, From AWU, ABDM, APM" 31 Jan 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>159</sup> ABDM Pamphlets, 86, no 32, 10 February, 1968, VHPC.

<sup>160</sup> Roberts to CO, 13 February 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.



fact that almost 10 percent of Antiguan demonstrated in St John's shows the popularity and momentum harnessed by the Opposition. This is particularly the case when one considers that these 6,000 demonstrated despite pro-Labour intimidation and threats to personal safety, the threat of police action to curtail the demonstration, and the potential of recrimination from the government or pro-Labour elements in the community or the workplace. These 6,000 men and women may thus be taken as representative of a much broader pro-Opposition population. Ultimately, the scale of these demonstrations showed that there was a huge section of working society deeply opposed to the Labour leadership and wanted change - so committed that they were willing to risk recrimination and retribution. In the long term, these demonstrators also proved that there was the popular momentum necessary on which to build a viable opposition political party.

It is notable that this strike and demonstration attracted so much support, despite extensive preemptive measures by the Labour government to forestall and even criminalise it. In the days and weeks leading up to 12 February, Bird's Labour used the powers of the government to suppress critical voices and prohibit opposition activity. They did this through legislation, use of the police and security forces, and declaring a state of emergency. It should be highlighted that from February 1967 Antigua was an internally self-governing state which meant that the Bird government had a greatly expanded ability to use government powers to impede the work of an opposition movement. First of all, the government passed a Public Order Act in 1968 which curtailed the ability of the AWU to host public meetings and rallies by requiring Ministerial approval for such meetings and criminalising public gatherings that did not have prior permission.<sup>161</sup> It was part of a pattern of anti-expression and anti-activism laws passed throughout the Caribbean in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Notable comparisons are Trinidad's 1965 Industrial Stabilisation Act, Dominica's 1968 Seditious and Undesirable Publications Act, and Barbados's 1970 Public Order Act.<sup>162</sup>

A second tool used by the government was the use of police to disperse critical demonstrations including peaceful picketers outside the Administration Building in February.<sup>163</sup> Thirdly, the government granted itself more extensive powers, such as the ability to impose a curfew, through a State of Emergency which was declared in March 1968. Finally, the government inhibited AWU access to public buildings and spaces like schools or the recreation ground to stage rallies and also denied them the opportunity to broadcast announcements over the state-operated radio. At its most extreme, the government was able to call for British aid in deterring civil unrest. On the same day the press release was issued, the Antiguan Government made a request to the British Colonial Office to be provided with military equipment - including submachine guns and armoured cars - for use in case of civil disorder.<sup>164</sup>

Ultimately the February general strike and demonstration was unsuccessful. Recognising the coercive authority available to the government and wishing to avoid accusations of causing societal breakdown, Walter deescalated the situation and tensions were eased for a month. During this time the AWU continued to spread its anti-tyranny message and to test the strength of public opinion in favour of a new strike-movement. A renewed effort began in March 1968 when the Antigua Hotels Association (AHS) refused to recognise the rights of AWU workers at their hotels. This led to strikes in which between 80 and 95 percent of all workers at five hotels walked out on strike in the second

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<sup>161</sup> Public Order Act, Angitua and Barbuda, 1968.

<sup>162</sup> Alexander, *A History of Organised Labour in the English Speaking West Indies*, 182.

<sup>163</sup> "AWU Pickets Administration Building", *Workers' Voice*, February 20, 1968, VHPC.

<sup>164</sup> Roberts to CO, 31 January 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

week of March 1968.<sup>165</sup> This escalated into a general strike on Friday 15 March which closed the waterfront and large businesses including West Indies Oil.

The daily dispatches from the British Government Representatives testify to a volatile situation from 16 to 20 March. During this time Bird's government was deemed to have lost control of St John's and an 18 March State of Emergency was shown to be ineffective and reducing unrest.<sup>166</sup> Reports assert that there was shooting, use of tear gas, molotov cocktails, and rioting, all of which left the police unable to cope and obliged Bird to call for UK aid in maintaining order.<sup>167</sup> However, by the time HMS Leopard arrived the situation had been deescalated by a conference called by the Governor on 20 March at which Bird and Walter agreed to resolve the situation peacefully. With representation from Labour, the AWU, the ABDM, and employers, this conference resolved to terminate the State of Emergency as well as all strikes and protests, allow all strikers to return to work without prejudice, and create four new constituencies to give Opposition voices the chance of a platform in Parliament. These resolutions were announced to the public the same day in a joint broadcast wherein Bird and Walter appealed for calm and reconciliation. While a small number of extremists on both sides continued to cause violence, Kerr reported that 'the vast majority of the population, having had one look at the abyss for which they were headed, were glad to have been rescued from destruction.'<sup>168</sup> The Antigua Christian Council declared a national day of prayer to give thanks for the end of hostilities.<sup>169</sup>

The conduct of each side in this brief period of civil unrest highlights the development of polarising party politics in Antigua and the permanent collapse of Labour's hegemony. The most striking feature of the unrest was the enthusiasm expressed by Walter's supporters. Thousands protested and participated in strikes despite significant deterrent in the form of criminalisation of their activity and the threat of workplace dismissal and intimidation by Labour loyalists. This publicly demonstrated support shows that many Antiguan held a deep and sincere commitment to the Opposition able to withstand the repressive effort of business and government. This commitment was particularly profound and emotionally charged because for the AWU, the battle for union's rights was inseparable from the wider regional struggles for working-class freedoms and democracy. This was expressed most emphatically in a March White Paper which deserves quoting in full:

Thousands of people stood up, fought the police, Defence Force, and Defence Reserves and beat off emergency forces with stones, bottles, sticks, knives and other missiles. The shots fired by the defence troops meant nothing to the people. In this, the battle of Antigua, the battle for freedom and democracy was won.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Roberts to CO, 12 March, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>166</sup> Sewell to Hall, 19 March 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA

<sup>167</sup> Roberts to CO, 19 March, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.; Roberts to CO, 22 March 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.; CO to Roberts, 22 March 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>168</sup> Kerr to Thompson, 9 April 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>169</sup> "Antigua Normal Again", *Focus*, March 31, 1968, VHPC. 6.

<sup>170</sup> ABDM Pamphlets, 86, no 39, 30 March, 1968, VHPC.

This romanticised account encapsulates the way 1968's civil unrest was seen as part of a wider struggle for democratic rights and freedom. Conceiving of the AWU cause as a struggle for freedom encouraged an all-or-nothing approach to politics which encouraged hard-line thinking and facilitated polarisation.

The experience of Civil Unrest also damaged Labour's reputation in the eyes of AWU supporters and sympathisers. Repressive government action strengthened Opposition arguments that Labour had abandoned the working class in favour of allying itself to white foreign capital. For example, during the AWU's general strike the government publicly supported West Indies Oil and the AHA in taking a hardline against strikers and saying 'they will dismiss all strikers who do not return to work on [the following] monday.'<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Labour actively aided the employers during the strike by providing strike-breakers through the ATLU. These acts came in addition to the Public Order Act and use of the police to disperse peaceful AWU meetings. This showed Labour to be on the side of business and their own supporters rather than the majority of workers. Moreover, faced with civil disobedience, rather than negotiate and compromise the Labour government adopted a stricter and more closed-minded approach to the Opposition. In relation to the March protests, British Representative Roberts remarked that 'In [their] new mood government are much less ready to listen to, let alone accept, outside advice than was [the] case in February.'<sup>172</sup> In other words, Antiguan politics was becoming increasingly absolutist and there was decreasing room for cooperation. As will be shown in the next chapter, this resulted in party political polarisation on an extreme level.

Specific to the leadership of Bird, the experience of civil unrest in 1968 further undermined his charismatic authority in the eyes of non-Labour loyalists. Bird used the same methods of repression against the AWU that the colonial administration had used against the ATLU in the 1940s and 50s. The most explicit of these was enforcing a curfew. As Sutton has emphasised, personal freedom and mobility had a special place in the Caribbean conscious because of the legacy of restricted mobility in the era of slavery and indentured labour.<sup>173</sup> A curfew thus had greater significance in Caribbean politics than other locations and further supported Opposition assertions that Bird had become more aligned with the white economic elite than the Antiguan working class. This made Bird susceptible to the same methods and rhetoric of attack which he had used against the colonial administration and which he had taught to the labour movement. The use of colonial-style methods of repression meant Bird's power was not 'perceived by the ruled as fair and correct' - a necessary feature in charismatic leadership.<sup>174</sup> Instead, Bird's actions testified to a growing ideological disconnect between himself and the majority of Antiguan people. As VanDyke has argued, an ideological disconnect between the leadership and base is one of the main causes for political party failure as it exposes the leadership to challenge from more relatable or likable potential leaders.<sup>175</sup> This was the case in 1968 Antigua where Walter was seen by a majority of the working class as the more authentic and effective representative of the working class. This identity provided Walter legitimacy and authority and enabled him to take up the mantle of 'working man's champion' that Bird had abandoned.

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<sup>171</sup> Roberts to CO, March 17, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>172</sup> Roberts to CO, March 17, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>173</sup> Sutton, "Politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean," 53.

<sup>174</sup> Anton Allahaar, *Caribbean Charisma: Reflections on Leadership, Legitimacy, and Populist Politics*. (Boulder: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 3.

<sup>175</sup> Brandon Van Dyck, "Why New Parties Split: The schism of Peru's United Left in comparative perspective", *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 4, (2018): 9.

The AWU's first year was thus characterised by a fierce struggle for existence and recognition. Research conducted in 1971 by Joseph Raphael, then a Masters student at Memorial University of Newfoundland, concluded that 85 percent of the major strikes and stoppages of 1968 were directly caused by the employer's refusal to recognise the AWU while no strikes were instigated by the ATLU<sup>176</sup>. This struggle instilled in supporters a highly energised commitment to the AWU's cause as a fight for justice and democracy as well as labour rights. For AWU members, the notion of fighting for their right to organise had a similarly galvanising and emotional effect as the earlier struggle of the ATLU against colonial governments. The notion that the fight for the AWU was about more than just workers' rights instilled in the movement a deeply emotional commitment. This underpinned the extreme polarisation which was to follow and contributed yet more to the personalisation of Antiguan politics and the rise of party membership as a marker of social identity.

### **By-elections in 1968**

The inability of the AWU to function demanded its involvement in politics. The experience of 1967 showed the Opposition that the political-economic system in which they operated was being used by government and business to maintain the status quo in contravention of significant public opinion. Systemic transformation required legislative changes and this necessitated the entry of the Opposition into politics. This echoed the 1940s when the ATLU recognised that securing change for working people was most effectively done through participating in the political process. Democratic success in Antigua required a well-organised political party able to compete with the experienced and well-financed ALP. Moreover, the new party needed to be based on wide popular support able to legitimately appeal to the working class. Previous experience showed that Hall's ABDM was unable to gain popular support because of its perceived middle-class nature. It followed, therefore, that a new party should be established in close association with the AWU and with the express goal of helping the AWU combat Bird's hegemony.

The new party was the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM.) The PLM was a broad coalition of anti-Labour politicians and activists brought together by George Walter and Robert Hall. As with trade unions, in 1968 there was no legislation regulating the formation of political parties in Antigua and the PLM was formally established on 24 April 1968. It is a peculiar feature of Antiguan politics that Labour has only ever been defeated in an election by a new party resulting from a coalition of different groups. This happened with victories in 1971 by the PLM and in 2004 by the UPP.<sup>177</sup> One of the most striking features of the PLM's early support was that it included people of all classes and ethnicities, from the white land-owning Robert Hall to the Black Power writer Tim Hector. BGR Charles Roberts called this new party an 'unnatural alliance,' suggesting he thought it was unsustainable and doomed to fail.<sup>178</sup> George Walter's brother, Selwyn, was understandably more charitable when he described the PLM as 'a heterogeneous collection'.<sup>179</sup> The PLM's diversity is significant because all previous Antiguan political parties had shown distinct class identities. For

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<sup>176</sup> Joseph Raphael, "Nascent Unions: A Study of Trade Union Development and Labour Relations in the English-Speaking Caribbean with Particular Reference to Jamaica, Antigua, Trinidad and Tobago", (masters thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971), 77.

<sup>177</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda, past election results: 1951-2014," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>178</sup> Roberts to CO, 23 March, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>179</sup> Walter, "Of dis and dat - Part 13".

instance, Antigua's small professional middle class had given its electoral support to minor parties like the Antigua National Party (ANP), whose candidates were mainly lawyers and professionals such as Louis Lockhart and Claude-Earl Francis.<sup>180</sup> The fact that the PLM was able to quickly and effectively co-opt middle-class candidates and voters suggests that class was declining as a motive of political behaviour in 1960s Antigua. Rather than ethnicity or class, Antiguan politics became more defined in party-political terms; namely, 'Labour' or 'Opposition.' This was a nascent partyism whereby the survival and empowerment of one's party group became the driving factor behind political action and eclipsed other incentives such as ethnicity or class.

It is striking that the PLM case study confirms and complicates conventional theory on party formation in the Anglophone Caribbean. On the one hand, the PLM fits the pattern of political parties emerging out of trades union and using the rhetoric, infrastructure, and leadership hierarchy of that union as the framework for a political party.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, it is unusual that a second popular union-party group only emerged 28 years after the first. Only from 1967/68 onwards did Antigua begin to mirror its fellow Anglophone Caribbean nations and adhere more closely to conventional notions of the Westminster System, of which competitive multi-party politics is a hallmark.<sup>182</sup>

The PLM was established in April 1968 to contest four by-elections to be held in August. At the 20 March Governor's meeting, called to settle civil unrest resulting from suppression of the AWU, four new constituencies had been established. This was the result of compromise on both sides. During negotiations the Opposition had requested Bird's government resign and a General Election be held while Labour refused to capitulate at all; in the end four new constituencies were established to allow the Opposition an opportunity to have representation in Parliament but allowing the Labour government to complete its term in office.<sup>183</sup> The four constituencies were negotiated so as to prevent either Labour or the Opposition having an easy contest in all four seats. In the elections on 22 August, the four-month-old PLM won all four seats. Reuben Harris, Donald Halstead, Sydney Prince, and Robert Hall were elected, with the latter becoming Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.

Before analysing the result, it must be recognised that a notable feature of the 1968 by-elections was a low turnout of 44 percent.<sup>184</sup> This is surprising considering the energised political climate and the high-stakes context of the first genuinely contested Antiguan elections. However, low turnout should not be seen as evidence for voter apathy. Rather, it can be explained through a brief appreciation of several important theoretical considerations relevant to young democracies and postcolonial states. Firstly, the notion that public grievance correlates with high voter turnout is Euro-centric as it neglects the fact that democracy as a method of grievance resolution was new in colonial settings. Here, other methods such as strikes and protest have a longer and more proven tradition and were viewed as more effective and legitimate means of expression than voting. Secondly, in colonial societies, politics was regarded as a piecemeal process with changes resulting from direct action called to resolve a specific issue - such as the sacking of an employee. There was not the political culture of 'storing up' grievances to be vented at the next election which characterises more established democracies like the UK. The practical result of this 'act now' political culture was that during periods of relative calm - such as August in Antigua in 1968 - there was little motivation to become politicised and perform political acts such as voting in by-elections.

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<sup>180</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda, past election results: 1951-2014," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>181</sup> Bishop, Corbett, and Veenendaal, "Labor Movements and Party System Development," 4.

<sup>182</sup> Bishop, "Slaying the 'Westmonster' in the Caribbean?" 422.

<sup>183</sup> Report on Antigua Disturbances, Kerr to Thompson, 9th April, 1968, Antigua Political Affairs: (Internal) Political Situation, c.1967-69, FCO 43/57, TNA.

<sup>184</sup> Reiss to Mitchell, 28 August, 1968, FCO 63/431, TNA.

And finally, we must consider the role of ‘violence’ in colonial politics. Colonialism is a social system predicated on a permanent state of violence.<sup>185</sup> In this context, ‘political violence’ refers to methods of expression available to colonial societies, such as strikes and protests, most of which were declared illegal by the colonial authority. As Koelble has shown, political system changes - such as the introduction of Antiguan universal suffrage in 1951 - do not eliminate violence-culture by themselves because the socio-economic characteristics of exploitation, repression, and racism persist beyond political changes.<sup>186</sup> A culture of political violence, an ‘act now’ tradition, and a distrust in democracy, it could be argued, combined to reduce voter turnout in many colonial societies, including Antigua.

But there are certain characteristics of Antiguan politics which also help to explain the reduced turnout in the 1968 by-elections, including voter intimidation - which ranged from gang activity at rallies to burning down campaigners’ homes, which was a common characteristic of Antiguan politics and disincentivised fuller political participation. While later Antiguan elections were monitored by outside organisations like the Commonwealth Observer Group but these early elections were not. To gauge the prevalence and effectiveness of voter intimidation we must look to anecdotal evidence and archived media records. As well as intimidation, turnout in 1968 was reduced by the confusing political context in which they were conducted. The by-elections were the complicated result of months-long high-political negotiation between political leaders and colonial authorities. This behind-closed-doors politicking was the opposite of ‘act now’ culture and alienated many would-be voters who were confused by the notion of a by-election and unable to register in time for voting in August.<sup>187</sup> A lot of would-be-voter confusion and disinterest is attributable to the failure of the ALP and PLM to function effectively as mobilising agents in the run up to the by-elections.<sup>188</sup> For example, neither party produced any campaign literature or manifesto for the elections and there is no evidence of an effort to register voters or to maximise turnout.

There is no demographic data about the class, age, or gender of voters as exit polls and demographic surveys were not conducted. Nonetheless, there are some important insights to be drawn from the election results. Three of the four by-elections were straight contests between ALP and PLM candidates. In St George there was a third candidate, Norris Isaac who ran as an ABDM candidate. Overall the PLM won 71percent of the popular vote.<sup>189</sup> The most successful PLM candidate was Donald Halstead, who secured 627 votes, representing 80 percent of the votes cast in that constituency. This is a meaningful victory because Donald Halstead was Walter’s deputy and had been expelled from the ATLU at the same time. Since May 1967 Halstead had been, like Walter, highly vocal in his critique of Bird’s regime and a staunch advocate of union-party separatism. The size of Halstead’s victory demonstrates that voters were broadly in support of the Opposition movement and opposed to the continuation of the Bird party-union regime. That this happened in the constituency of St John’s City North gives even more evidence that the AWU/PLM was most popular in urban areas with high concentrations of younger voters in newer jobs, such as manufacturing or dockworking. It should also be noted that Halstead was remarkably charismatic and a great deal of his vote share may have been generated through this personal affection, not his political party platform.

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<sup>185</sup> Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Koelble, “The Politics of Violence and Populism in Post-colonial Democracy: The Role of Political Society in South Africa,” *Berlin Social Science Center* 102 (2018): 1

<sup>187</sup> Interview 2, November 2019.

<sup>188</sup> Anibal Perez-Linan, “Neoinstitutional accounts of voter turnout: moving beyond industrial democracies,” *Electoral Studies* 20 (2001): 288.

<sup>189</sup> Reiss to Mitchell, 28 August, 1968, FCO 63/431, TNA.

However, this does not detract from the fact that a victory of this size represents a popular rejection of Bird and Labour and an approval of the Opposition.

The huge support shown for the PLM demonstrates the development of Antiguan partyism in several ways. Firstly, over 3,000 people, or 70 percent of those voting, were motivated to vote for a new party which was an unknown entity in the Antiguan political scene. They did this despite the fact that the PLM encompassed a wide spectrum of political opinion from Robert Hall to Tim Hector. These voters were so ardently anti-Labour and pro-Opposition that the nature of the Party's platform was of less importance than the simple fact of voting for the Opposition. This demonstrates early partyism because PLM voters were not voting for an ideology or set of policies but were supporting a party whose defining feature was its party identity and its opposition to Labour.

Equally, it is significant that despite the chaos, civil unrest, and authoritarian government measures exhibited over the preceding months, over a quarter of voters in these elections still voted for the governing party's candidates. This demonstrates faith in the Bird regime which may be symptomatic of the sense of duty to support Bird discussed earlier, the role of patronage or voter intimidation, profound opposition to the PLM, or a combination of all three factors. These issues will be discussed more fully in the next chapter when analysing the 1971 General Election.

## **Conclusion**

Antiguan political polarisation came of age during the tumultuous events of 1968. Following directly from the fallout of the 1967 labour schism, 1968 was the year in which non- and anti-Labour groups coalesced into a recognisable and united Opposition, represented by the AWU and the heterogeneous PLM. After 1968 Antigua mirrored other Anglophone Caribbean countries in that it had oppositional politics, though it was unusual in that one of the two parties was a heterogeneous opposition group rather than a well-defined political party. Nonetheless, the struggles of the AWU and the formation of the PLM demonstrated and exacerbated the division of Antiguan society into two hostile political groups. The civil unrest that resulted from the Labour government's efforts to suppress the growth of an opposition supercharged anti-Labour forces, giving an emotional aspect to their newfound political identity. This in turn deepened the division between supporters of Labour and the Opposition and curtailed rational debate and compromise in favour of emotional and absolutist attitudes towards political conflict. This approach to politics prioritised partyism as the driving force in Antiguan political culture because each side saw the attainment of power as their first and ultimate objective, even at the expense of all else.

This absolutist oppositional politics had deep roots in Antiguan society, stretching back to practices of slavery in the colonial period when Antiguan society was maintained through a constant state of violence. This violence-based form of politics continued into the twentieth-century labour movement when trade union activism pre-dated democratic politics. This oppositional and aggressive form of politics was well-suited to the form of two-party politics which the emergence of the AWU and PLM facilitated. These violent traditions, combined with the emotional nature of each party's sense of loyalty and purpose, cultivated attitudes whereby party and leadership were quasi-religious infallible entities to be defended and promoted at all costs. The immediacy with which this partisan attitude developed in Antigua is demonstrated by the 1968 by-elections during which a brand new party was able to secure a landslide despite its heterogeneous leadership and lack of a policy platform. The summer of 1968 heralded the period of two-party dominance in Antigua characterised by a stark

division of Antiguan based on their party affiliation. From 1968 onwards party loyalty became a dominant source of identity for Antiguan and the division between Labour and the Opposition became the axis around which Antiguan culture and politics revolves to this day.



## Chapter Three - The 1971 General Election

I have concluded that the fight for political power between political parties has the potential to destroy democracy, to terminate friendships and comradeship, to ruin years of development and to endanger the well-being of a nation's people.<sup>190</sup>

Lester Bird reflecting on sixty-eight years of Antiguan democracy, 2019

The foregoing chapters have examined the nature and consequences of the 1967 schism. In particular, it has been shown that the formation and electoral success of the PLM in 1968 established oppositional politics in Antigua and contributed to political polarisation of the Antiguan community. This chapter turns its attention to the theory of societal polarisation and how it applies to the Antiguan experience leading up to the 1971 General Election. The following will show that, faced with a General Election, both Labour and the AWU/PLM fully adopted partyism as their guiding policy, abandoning all other principles in the 'all or nothing' pursuit of political power. In this pursuit, partyism encouraged political strategies and rhetoric which escalated the emotionally charged and hostile character of Antiguan politics. By doing so, partyism directly contributed to the societal polarisation of Antigua.

As outlined in the Introduction, my approach to societal polarisation draws on recent scholarship by Jennifer McCoy and others.<sup>191</sup> While this dissertation benefits from McCoy's work, it also has a contribution to make. For example, while McCoy et al's 2018 study considers the examples of a range of established and postcolonial democracies from the USA to Venezuela, it fails to acknowledge how theories of polarisation may apply to very small states. This dissertation argues that Antigua's small size directly contributed to a quicker and more extreme experience of polarisation. Moreover, this dissertation shows that theories designed to explain phenomena happening in democracies today can be projected backwards to illuminate past events such as those under investigation here.

According to McCoy et al, societal polarisation describes a state in which political polarisation has spilled over into everyday life.<sup>192</sup> This means that one's membership of a political party dictates what newspaper one reads, the clubs one's children attend, and how one is treated in the workplace. In this way, political identity (party membership) consumes or supersedes all other markers of social identity such as class, ethnicity, regionality, or profession. In some cases these lesser identities become 'aligned' with the macro political identity, such as in the US where Republicanism has purposefully courted support from people who identify as socially conservative, Christian, wealthy, and so on.<sup>193</sup> Such social differences are 'part of the democratic game' and contribute to a vibrant political milieu, but when they become wholly aligned with a political movement they widen

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<sup>190</sup> Lester Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, (St Johns, Antigua: self-published, 2019), 219.

<sup>191</sup> McCoy and Rahman, "Polarized Democracies in Comparative Perspective,"

<sup>192</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 20.

<sup>193</sup> McCoy and Rahman, "Polarized Democracies in Comparative Perspective," 1.

the gulf between two parties, making the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy more visible and explicit.<sup>194</sup> Alternatively, these lesser identities can become ‘flattened’ by the greater political cleavage, meaning they are reduced in perceived importance next to the overriding identity of party membership.<sup>195</sup> This in part results from the fact that partisanship exerts ‘a stronger psychological bind’ than other forms of social affiliation.<sup>196</sup>

This Chapter will show that in the run-up to 1971, Antigua became societally polarised. This was a gradual development resulting from several simultaneous processes. Crucially, each of these causal processes were themselves motivated by the political ideology of partyism. As partyism prioritises party survival at any cost, it encouraged policies and actions which emphasised hostility between opposing parties and strengthened the role of party membership as a social identity. The most impactful example of partyism contributing to societal polarisation is the streamlining and Walterisation of the PLM ahead of the 1971 election. This focussed the party into a clearly defined homogenous group that was defined entirely in terms of its hostility to the ALP. This chapter will go on to show that the 1971 election itself was a highly emotionally charged affair with political rhetoric focussing on judgements about personalities rather than politics. Moreover, it will be shown that 1971 marked an apogee of societal polarisation, with partyism and party-conflict dominating politics and society to the exclusion of all other principles and ideology.

## **The State of Party Politics prior to 1971**

The party-political divide that emerged in 1968 between the ALP and the PLM was highly emotionally charged and expressed in highly personal and alarmist language. However, the PLM lacked the cohesion necessary for this political polarisation to morph into societal polarisation as described above. This was because the PLM’s heterogenous leadership facilitated and even encouraged a diversity of opinion and belief at the level of the party’s executive. Societal polarisation depends upon two very clearly defined groups operating in stark opposition to one another. For this to have happened in Antigua in 1968 there would have needed to be a stream-lining of the PLM’s leadership; that is, a party wholly united around a single cause - its own survival. This, however, changed in the years leading up to the 1971 general election.

This change happened through a process of what I would call ‘Walterisation’; that is, George Walter’s ‘internal domination’ over the party.<sup>197</sup> Though the PLM had been established as an independent political party led by Robert Hall and supported by the AWU, the influence of the union over the party grew between 1968 and 1971. This represented a relaxation of the founding principle of party-union separation, Walter’s solution to the Two Hats Problem. The reduced importance given to this principle is a marker of partyism because principles or ideologies that are not specifically designed to advance the party’s interests are severed. The most obvious instance of Walterisation was Walter’s replacing Hall as leader of the PLM.

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<sup>194</sup> Somer and McCoy, "Transformations through Polarizations and Global Threats to Democracy," 10.

<sup>195</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 22.

<sup>196</sup> Sean J. Westwood et al, “The tie that divides: Cross-national evidence of the primacy of partyism,” *European Journal of Political Research* 57, (2018): 334.

<sup>197</sup> Brandon Van Dyck, “Why New Parties Split: The schism of Peru’s United Left in comparative perspective,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 4 (2018): 7.

Throughout 1968 and 1969, George Walter expressed frustration with what he called the ‘cavortings of the PLM’ and their failure to ‘form a united group’ in the House of Representatives.<sup>198</sup> Walter was particularly annoyed that Hall failed to instigate meaningful debate in the House and relied on ‘abuse of government and a desire to open up old sores.’<sup>199</sup> This was interpreted by Hall’s constituents as ‘subservience’ and lost him ‘considerable support’.<sup>200</sup> Incidentally, this accusation is the first demonstration that there was in fact little ideological difference between the PLM and ALP and the only meaningful point of opposition was party-political polarisation.

At the 1969 PLM Conference, Walter used his personal influence to ensure that 90 of the 370 delegates were leading figures from the AWU. These voters formed a ‘union caucus’ which, along with 90 additional delegates, voted Walter to replace Hall as PLM leader. Hall received 80 supporting votes, while 110 abstained. According to acting British Government Representative Reiss, this high abstention rate resulted from intimidation by Walter’s union caucus, which political delegates saw as ‘evidence that the AWU were trying to dominate the political party.’<sup>201</sup> After becoming leader, Walter officially resigned his Union leadership position in accordance with the principle of union-party separatism. However, his replacement was his close friend Kethlyn Smith and thus he was able to exert direct personal influence. As leader, Walter hoped to create ‘a sound Party machine’ able to take on the ALP.<sup>202</sup>

Further facilitating the Walterisation was the appointment of Walter supporters and AWU loyalists to prominent positions in the PLM. In November 1969, British Representative Kerr reported that Walter had ‘cut down to size’ prominent political figures like Tim Hector and Donald Halstead, but that ‘a good deal more had to be done to put the party into shape’.<sup>203</sup> A petty example of how Walter cut Halstead ‘down to size’ was to restrict the amount of time he was permitted to speak at public meetings from his customary 60 minutes to less than 20.<sup>204</sup> The proactive demotion of factional leaders like the radical unionist Halstead and the intellectual Hector is an example of the self-entrenchment mechanisms used by political leaders. Drawing on Michels (1968), Paget Henry has identified four methods of ‘political accumulation’ that enabled Antiguan leaders to use their position to gain authority and power in a self-replicating cycle of aggrandisement: self-entrenchment, withdrawal from base control, factional competition, and political-social capital conversion.<sup>205</sup> Walter’s takeover of the leadership and his debasement of Halstead and Hector in favour of his own aggrandisement are early examples of these methods of political accumulation at work in the PLM. They also foreshadow the internal domination that was to occur during the PLM’s time in government, and be examined in the next Chapter.

It should be emphasised that Walter’s takeover happened less than a year after the expansion of the rights and responsibilities of the office of Leader of the Opposition, as negotiated by Robert Hall. On 7 December 1968 Bird, Hall, and their associates met to discuss and agree a formalisation of the role of the Leader of the Opposition, which until then had no official status in Antigua or provision under the 1967 Constitution. That meeting agreed to: the establishment of an office for the Leader of the Opposition; the provision of support staff and funding to that office; the appointment of

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<sup>198</sup> [Name redacted, I suspect Kerr] to Sewell, 4 November, 1968, FCO 63/1, TNA.

<sup>199</sup> [Name redacted, I suspect Kerr] to Sewell, 4 November, 1968.

<sup>200</sup> [Name redacted, I suspect Kerr] to Sewell, 4 November, 1968.

<sup>201</sup> Reiss to Roberts, Antigua Monthly Review Report, December 1969, Reports on Political Situation in Antigua, 1970/71, FCO 63/430, TNA.

<sup>202</sup> Kerr to Watson, 13 November 1969, FCO 63/430, TNA.

<sup>203</sup> Kerr to Watson, 13 November 1969.

<sup>204</sup> Kerr to Tom Sewell, 31 January 1969, FCO 63/1, TNA.

<sup>205</sup> Henry, “Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean,” 9.

Members of the Opposition to statutory bodies and committees; and a discussion going forward on shared use of state-operated radio, television, and buildings for party political purposes.<sup>206</sup> When Walter assumed party leadership, he thus did so over an entrenched political machine with an established position and staff. This further enabled Walter to reorganise the PLM by providing official control over resources from jobs to sanctioned meetings, all of which could be used to build personalised patronage and support.

The ‘Walterisation’ of the PLM illustrates VanDyke’s recent assessment of factors affecting new party sustainability. Writing about the experience of modern Latin American democracies, VanDyke (2018) has demonstrated that while ‘external appeal’ contributes to immediate or short-term electoral success, long-term party sustainability requires ‘internal domination’ of the party by the leader.<sup>207</sup> Defined as ‘uncontested, pre-eminent power within one’s party’, internal domination stems from external electoral appeal; cross-factional ties; moral authority (the leader’s credibility and respect among party members, usually derived from their pre-political background); and ideological alignment with the base.<sup>208</sup> Walter exhibited all of these factors. His external electoral appeal was demonstrated by the mass support given to the AWU immediately after its establishment and the enthusiasm of its members for industrial action organised by Walter. Walter’s moral authority and ideological alignment with the base both stemmed from his identity as a black working-class trade union activist perceived to espouse a purer and more socialist worker-centered ideology than the Bird regime. Finally, Walter’s propensity for cross-factional collaboration was demonstrated by his bringing together the broad coalition of discontent to form the PLM. These factors allowed Walter to dominate the PLM to a degree that matched Bird’s control over the ALP. In turn, this domination gave Walter sources of patronage which, as recent scholarship has demonstrated, while not conducive to long-term and durable party cohesion, did help to consolidate Walter’s position.<sup>209</sup>

Walter’s takeover of the PLM furthered polarisation of Antiguan political culture. It did this by tying the party more closely to the AWU and creating a more defined movement in opposition to Bird’s Labour. Polarisation is most effective and damaging when the two opposing groups are clearly defined, thus allowing sharper and clearer contrasts to be drawn between them. Walter’s takeover removed ambiguity over the PLM-AWU relationship and reduced the diversity of opinion expressed at senior levels in the party. This meant that the PLM was more clearly contrasted with Labour and the PLM-ALP divide became even sharper.

## **1971 - The campaign and the result**

Following the Walterisation of the PLM, Antigua prepared for the 1971 elections in a context of polarisation and partyism. The campaigns themselves demonstrate this through their lack of ideological or policy content and a focus on personalities and hostile rhetoric. Notably, the 1971 manifestos were the most comprehensive and highest quality political documents made in Antigua up to that point. However, there was little contrast between the parties in terms of policy or ideology. Both the PLM and the ALP followed a loose principle of capitalist-labourism, the doctrine that

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<sup>206</sup> Kerr to FCO, 10 December, 1968, FCO 63/1, TNA.

<sup>207</sup> Van Dyck, “Why New Parties Split,” 891.

<sup>208</sup> Van Dyck, “Why New Parties Split,” 895.

<sup>209</sup> For a reappraisal of the role of patronage in party and elite formation and security see Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, “Beyond Patronage: Violent Struggle, Ruling Party Cohesion, and Authoritarian Durability”, *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 4 (2012): 869-889.

aspired to improve the lives of working people whilst recognising constraints imposed on a peripheral post-plantation society in a globalised capitalist economy.<sup>210</sup> Most importantly, both parties realised the need to prioritise investment by foreign capitalists into the young tourist sector. The 1971 election was therefore a decision not between two competing ideologies or visions for Antigua, but between two groups vying for the chance to implement the same vision. This is most easily shown through a comparison of the two manifesto's main points - tourism and leadership.

An important contextual consideration is that 1971 was the first genuinely contested Antiguan general election and the first to produce significant electioneering literature. Prior to 1968 many electoral seats went uncontested with the ALP winning every campaign in which they stood, and the only campaign literature were small and vague booklets on the labour movement. In contrast, the 1971 election heralded the period of extensive and expensive political campaigning following the establishment of a popular well-funded second party and an Official Opposition. The introduction of sophisticated manifestos is part of a wider maturation of the Antiguan political process which boosted voter participation, as outlined below.

The two manifesto's handling of tourism demonstrates the lack of ideological difference between the ALP and PLM. This was the most important issue facing Antigua in 1970-71 and both parties were united in recognising a need to attract foreign investment. Tourism was the third topic in the ALP's manifesto - coming after leadership and finances. The early placement of tourism, ahead of sugar, agriculture, and industrial relations shows that the ALP recognised the primacy of this sector which employed 60 percent of the workforce in 1971.<sup>211</sup> The ALP claimed it would be 'giving every encouragement to the tourist industry' and aspired to 'maintain our position in this very competitive and sensitive industry.'<sup>212</sup> To do this, the ALP made pledges including making state-owned ex-Syndicate Estates land available to Antiguan establishing entertainment enterprises and attracting 'financial agencies' to Antigua to develop tourism. The ALP also placed an emphasis on education and training as pathways to maximise Antigua's benefit from tourism. In 1971 all high-paying tourism jobs were reserved for foreigners with training and experience in the hotel industry. This meant that the highest wages went to foreigners, who often sent their cash home. Training was seen as a way of increasing Antiguan's participation in the tourism sector whilst not impinging on the 'make investment welcome' approach that characterised 1960s fiscal policy. We can therefore see training as part of the capitalist-labourist ideology guiding Antiguan politicians at this time - they wanted to increase the opportunities of working people but would not contemplate reforming the structure of the island's capitalist economy to do so. This approach had already shown some success: in 1969 the Hotel and Catering School trained 300 school-leavers in low to middle-level jobs in the hotel trade from cleaning to reception staff and had provided scholarships for further hotel training in North America and Europe.<sup>213</sup>

The PLM's treatment of tourism in its electioneering material contains the same capitalist-labourist ideology. The PLM also pledged to expand hospitality training and maximise Antiguan's benefit from the industry - for instance by exploiting Carnival as a tourist attraction. Under the PLM's plans the tourism sector would continue to be owned by foreign investors and profits would continue to leak abroad. This shows that the PLM were equally resigned to the fact that the economy was and would be controlled by foreign capital and the best Antiguan could hope for was

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<sup>210</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua and Barbuda*, 93.

<sup>211</sup> "Antigua Labour Report, 1971, by John Dreghorn," Labour Affairs in Antigua, FCO.63/694, TNA.

<sup>212</sup> ALP Manifesto 1970, PP.AQ.ALP.3, SHL, 9.

<sup>213</sup> "Annual Report of the Labour Department for the year 1969", Govt Printing Office, Antigua, 1971, Labour Affairs in Antigua, FCO 63/694, TNA, 4.

employment in hotels and trickle-down benefit through tourist spending. No systematic economic reform was proposed such as tax breaks for local businesses and tax increases on foreign-owned companies operating in Antigua. It is striking that the PLM were so unambitious in opposition, when opposition parties are usually more aspirational than governing parties. This suggests that even in opposition, the PLM recognised the incontrovertible fact that as things stood, Antigua could not afford to do anything to deter investment. Furthermore, it suggests that the PLM as a campaigning party did not need to be ambitious in its manifesto because policy and ideology played a minimal role in Antiguan politics. To an extent, the party could rely on societal polarisation to secure its necessary support, it did not need to court voters with campaign promises or policy ideas. Again, this shows the existence of partyism whereby all other principles and ideologies become subservient to the party's survival and empowerment.

Partyism is also demonstrated by the manifestos' only meaningful area of disagreement - the past record of the Bird regime. Both the ALP and PLM opened their manifestos with attacks on the opposing party and praise of their own leaders and members. These arguments are couched in strikingly hostile terms and the rhetoric focuses entirely on personalities, not policies. For example, the PLM condemned Bird's premiership, claiming 'Bird and his Labour Party have FAILED Antigua' and left a legacy of 'scandals and charges of corruption'.<sup>214</sup> Over three pages the PLM delineate every grievance with Bird's government under headings such as 'Electricity', 'Roads', and 'Agriculture'.<sup>215</sup> The PLM was uniquely positioned to conduct this attack on the ALP because, as a young party without a government record to defend, the PLM were able to attack the government without exposing themselves to a similar tactic of critical evaluation from their opponents.

In contrast, the ALP manifesto began with a defence of Labour's record. Of special significance is the presentation of Bird and Labour as well-experienced statesmen. The section 'A Party of Political Leadership' connected the ALP with 'Political developments in the Commonwealth Caribbean' such as democracy and Associated Statehood.<sup>216</sup> The linking of Labour and decolonisation invoked the notion of duty by implying that voters have an obligation to vote for Labour as it was Labour which secured them that right to vote in the first place. Regarding Labour candidates, the manifesto claimed they were 'motivated by sincerity and dedication.'<sup>217</sup> In contrast, the PLM candidates were accused of 'vindictiveness, subversion or treachery.'<sup>218</sup> This is a good example of the personalisation of politics typical of partyism in a polarised society. Most importantly, the language of 'treachery' reflects the notion of 'the other' as a threat to party or national survival which is a well-established feature of extreme polarisation.<sup>219</sup>

The 1971 manifestos show that at this time there was no meaningful ideological difference between the PLM and the ALP. Instead, the parties were defined in terms of their differentiation from and opposition to one another. Lacking policy difference, the election campaign focussed on the personalities of political leaders, often deploying language of incompetence or treachery. In an already polarised society, this rhetoric compounded the hostility between supporters of the ALP and PLM and further deepened the divide between the two groups as each saw the other not simply as on the wrong side of an argument but as dangerous. This was the same rhetoric that was being asserted daily in the partisan printed media. For example, the day before the election, the PLM-backing

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<sup>214</sup> PLM Manifesto, 1970, PP.AQ.PLM.1, SHL, 2.

<sup>215</sup> PLM Manifesto, 1970, 2-4.

<sup>216</sup> ALP Manifesto 1970, PP.AQ.ALP.3, SHL, 5.

<sup>217</sup> ALP Manifesto 1970, 3.

<sup>218</sup> ALP Manifesto 1970, 3.

<sup>219</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 22.

*Antigua Star*'s editorial implored readers to vote PLM on the basis that only the PLM has 'the kind of men who possess the know-how to redeem Antigua.'<sup>220</sup> Again, vague assertions about the personality of individuals is posited as the basis on which people should cast their vote. Void of ideological debate and policy difference, Antiguan politics in 1971 was thus less about *how* Antigua should develop, but *who* should control the development.

The results of the 1971 election further demonstrate how ingrained partyism and societal polarisation had become, specifically the high turnout. It should first be noted that the electoral system used in 1971 was outdated, controversial, and confusing. Just six months before the election, an Elections Act was passed which mandated for voter registers to be compiled ahead of the election. Controversially, rather than requiring all voters to register anew to reflect the new constituency layout post-1968 (as the PLM Representatives demanded), the Act merely redistributed names already on the register from 1965 and allowed for unrecorded voters to register in person.<sup>221</sup> It was feared that this would open the voting process to corruption by duplicating older voters (the majority of whom supported Labour) who would remain on the register in their old constituency and could register in their new one.<sup>222</sup> Simultaneously, it was feared that younger voters who had come of age (21) since 1965 and were majority PLM supporters would not be registered in time to vote. Further confusing the election, constituency boundaries were decided by area rather than population and had not been adjusted to take into account high levels of urbanisation and migration to St John's over preceding years. This created population imbalances between constituencies; for instance St John's Rural West had 3,720 registered voters while St Philip South had 1,094.<sup>223</sup> A report prepared after the election urgently advised 'modernising the present electoral system.'<sup>224</sup> As there was no international observation of these elections and the winning PLM saw no benefit from a post-election enquiry it is not possible to assert the practical consequences of the corruption and confusion made possible by the outdated system in 1971.

Despite the confusion and accusations of corruption, the 1971 General Election was (in terms of numbers of people voting) the largest democratic exercise in Antigua up to that point. Between the previous general election in 1965 and 1971, the number of votes cast increased by 84 percent from 9,134 to 16,765.<sup>225</sup> The number of registered voters increased in the same period by 43 percent.<sup>226</sup> This far exceeded the rate of population growth which in the same period was only 9.6 percent.<sup>227</sup> Moreover, the 55 percent turnout was the highest since 1956.<sup>228</sup> 55 percent may appear low given the context, but reasons for this are numerous and echo factors discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the low turnout in 1968, including voter intimidation, lack of trust in the political system, and confusion over the voter-registration process. Nonetheless, the 1971 election, it could be argued, was the most popular democratic exercise in Antiguan history. This demonstrates two phenomena which point to societal polarisation.

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<sup>220</sup> "Only the PLM can save Antigua now", *Antigua Star*, February 10, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>221</sup> Reiss to Kerr, 28 August 1970, Elections in Antigua, 1970/71, 63/431, FCO.

<sup>222</sup> Reiss to Kerr, 28 August 1970.

<sup>223</sup> "General Elections in Antigua", *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>224</sup> Report on the General Election during 1971 of Members to serve in the House of Representatives (4th March, 1971) E G O'M Berridge, Supervisor of Elections), VHPC.

<sup>225</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past Election Results, 1951-2014." *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>226</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971", *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>227</sup> "Population, total - Antigua and Barbuda", *The World Bank*, available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AG>, accessed 27 April, 2020.

<sup>228</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past Election Results, 1951-2014." *Caribbean Elections*.

First, prior to 1971 the ALP and PLM developed as mobilising agents able to ‘get out the vote.’ Though the 1967 Constitution theoretically established the Westminster System in Antigua, many of the customs of that system - such as competitive party-politics, separation of powers, and contested elections - were lacking. By 1971 these Westminster-deviations had been resolved through the emergence of a viable opposition party and the introduction of an Official Opposition. Part of this democratic maturity was a sophistication of voter-mobilisation mechanisms which increased public political participation. Higher quality manifestos produced for 1971 are an example of this political maturity. This development partially explains higher turnout in 1971 as the parties worked to maximise voter registration and turnout. Democratic maturity reflects partyism because it shows the two parties developing into coherent and well-organised political machines. This complemented other processes such as the Walterisation of the PLM and made the divide between PLM and ALP more pronounced and restricted room for apathy or overlap. Developing into more coherent political machines facilitated a more rapid and permanent drift apart and contributed to long term polarisation.

Secondly, increased political participation reflects the role societal polarisation had in squeezing the ability of Antiguan to simply ignore politics. As party-politics permeated the entire bandwidth of daily experience, from employment opportunities to the newspapers one reads, the ability of Antiguan to be politically disengaged was reduced. This is demonstrated by a huge mobilisation of previously disinterested voters, as revealed by electoral data. Between the general elections of 1965 and 1971, the number of Labour votes fell by only 12 percent, or 866 votes. However, in terms of vote share, Labour support fell by 52 percent from 80 to just 38 percent in 1971.<sup>229</sup> This data means that in the 1971 general election, the PLM drew a few votes from the ALP but most of its 9,761 votes came from a reservoir of people who had not voted before. This reveals a significantly reduced space for political disinterest. The reason for this was societal polarisation which effectively forced increasing numbers of people to choose to support either the PLM or ALP. A main way this was done was through workplace discrimination whereby employers would favour applicants who shared their party loyalty. Additionally, the 1967-71 experience of repression and opposition taught those sympathetic to the AWU cause that political participation was a necessary activity. The tense and emotionally charged context of the election gave this sense of obligation a degree of urgency, further motivating increased turnout.

The results of 1971 thus demonstrate the presence and efficacy of partyism. Partyism generated a tense and high-stakes political environment wherein political rhetoric about treachery and duty mobilised the electorate to unprecedented levels. People felt the need to vote in large numbers even through there was little ideological difference between the two competing parties. Conventionally, this would produce apathy and reduce the urgency of democratic participation. Instead, competing beliefs about the personalities and character of the opposing parties served to raise interest in politics to levels never seen before. By 1971, both parties had become well organised and streamlined groups, defined chiefly by their hostility to one another. The strong performance of both parties in the election showed that two-party politics was to become a permanent feature of Antiguan political culture. This would act to deepen societal polarisation and widen the divide between supporters of the ALP and PLM.

## **Labour’s Defeat in Context**

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<sup>229</sup> “Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971”, *Caribbean Elections*.



There are two contexts to view Labour's 1971 electoral defeat. First, a Caribbean-wide extremist lurch in politics illustrated by the emergence of Black Power, left-wing movements, and repressive politics. And second, the widespread rejection of well-established working-class parties in favour of new and often coalition-based groups in the smaller nations of the Eastern Caribbean. Of these, the latter context is more applicable to the Antiguan experience.

In the Caribbean, the ALP's defeat coincided with a shift towards political extremes of activism and reactionary government policy, epitomised by the rise of Black Power movements in the 1960s and 1970s. The growth of Black Power was part of a wider reorientation of international political discourse in the late 1960s which recalibrated the focus of working people's struggles away from a Cold War era east-west dichotomy and towards the quasi-colonial exploitative relationship between the global north and south.<sup>230</sup> In the Caribbean, Black Power refers to a loose socio-political movement ranging from organised political parties to public demonstrations.<sup>231</sup> In contrast to the US, Black Power in the Caribbean was often economically or institutionally focussed, concerned with resolving the long-term consequences of colonial rule and the continuation of light-skinned or white political and economic control.<sup>232</sup> An example of such a group was Trinidad's National Joint Action Committee, established by Geddes Granger in February 1969 to critique the reliance of Eric Williams' economic programme on white capital investment.<sup>233</sup>

Despite its significance in the Caribbean's more well-studied nations such as Jamaica and Trinidad, Black Power failed to mobilise significant popular support in the Eastern Caribbean. Black Power parties in the Eastern Caribbean remained fringe groups such as the United Black Socialist Party in Dominica, the Forum group in St Lucia, and the Afro Caribbean Liberation Movement in Antigua.<sup>234</sup> There are several reasons Black Power did not become a powerful political force in the Eastern Caribbean. For one thing, there was no academic community through which Black Power ideas could be discussed and disseminated to the young and politically active. In Jamaica the University of the West Indies at Mona served as a headquarters for the discussion and development of the Black Power philosophy of writers from C L R James to Watler Rodney.<sup>235</sup> No such institution existed in the Eastern Caribbean. Moreover, many Eastern Caribbean countries, after 1967 were internally self-governed by majority or entirely black parliaments and governments. In this setting, the overwhelming socio-political priority became resolving the problem of white economic dominance in their economies, especially over the growing tourism sector. The political energy and space that could have been occupied by Black Power Movements was therefore consumed by economic and structural debates around how to wrest control of the economy away from white capitalists. In Antigua, this lack of political space, combined with the unassailable dominance of the ALP and PLM meant that Tim Hector's ACLM won just 1.19 percent of votes in the 1980 General Election.<sup>236</sup>

The more appropriate context in which to analyse Labour's defeat is therefore the Eastern Caribbean. In the late 1960s and early 1970s many Eastern Caribbean electorates turned away from ruling and well-established parties. Defeated parties include the St Lucia Labour Party in 1964, the

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<sup>230</sup> Percy Hintzen, "Afro-Creole Nationalism as Elite Domination," in *Caribbean Political Thought: Theories of the Post-Colonial State*, ed. Aaron Kamugisha (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2013): 22.

<sup>231</sup> Kate Quinn, *Black Power in the Caribbean* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), 27.

<sup>232</sup> Herman L. Bennet, "The Challenge to the Post-Colonial State," in *The Modern Caribbean*, ed. Franklin Knight and Colin Palmer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 132.

<sup>233</sup> Spencer Mawby, *Ordering Independence: The end of empire in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1947-1969*, (London: Macmillan, 2012), 236.

<sup>234</sup> Quinn, *Black Power in the Caribbean*, 26.

<sup>235</sup> Mawby, *Ordering Independence*, 235.

<sup>236</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971", *Caribbean Elections*.

Montserrat Labour Party in 1966, and the People's Political Party in St Vincent in 1967. This rejection had similar motivations as the rise of Black Power and leftist groups in the wider Caribbean. Most importantly, the failure of Labour governments to translate local political control into local economic advancement resulted in what Kate Quinn has called 'a crisis of failed expectations'.<sup>237</sup> In the Eastern Caribbean, rather than an intellectually-driven shift towards Black Power or left-wing politics, this crisis was articulated through a wide-spread rejection of established parties and their charismatic leaders. As Pedro Noguera has demonstrated, the failure to meet popular expectations was a particular threat to charismatic leaders such as George Charles, Ebenezer Joshua, William Bramble in each of the above-mentioned countries.<sup>238</sup> This is because such leaders gained and sustained support through popular belief in their special ability to deliver improvements for working people. Charismatic authority is not self-sustaining but needs constant reaffirmation through demonstrations of the leader's special ability.<sup>239</sup> Such demonstrations could include the provision of sufficient jobs and opportunities, a drastic improvement in living and working conditions, and a perceived reduction in the power of foreign capitalists in the local economy. In the absence of such demonstrations, popular belief in the special ability of the leader crumbles and voters turn to alternative parties.

Placing the ALP's defeat in the Eastern Caribbean context helps to explain why the ALP was defeated by an opponent that was not drastically ideologically different and did not draw on notions of Black Power or left-wing politics. As shown by the comparison of the manifestos, the PLM did not provide an ideological alternative to the ALP but instead offered a difference of leadership and personnel. This is because the PLM did not *need* to provide an ideological alternative in order to capitalise on popular dissatisfaction. Rather, the PLM needed to reinforce notions of Labour compromising with white capital and compound the criticism with accusations of incompetence. Furthermore, by simply providing a viable alternative, the PLM attracted votes from those who were simply fed up with the Bird regime's continued failure to deliver on their promises. The 'crisis of failed expectations' thus fuelled partyism by driving voters in the Eastern Caribbean to enthusiastically support a party based solely on its opposition to the government. In this sense, it benefited the opposition party to be as hostile and emotive as possible in its anti-government attacks.

Partyism thus encouraged extremist and alarmist rhetoric which in turn deepened animosity between opposing sides and exacerbated societal polarisation. Without policy differences to debate, partisan politics focussed on accusations of treachery and personal incompetence based on party affiliation. Extremist rhetoric and totalitarian attitudes towards opposing parties entrenched societal polarisation by stoking hostility between members of opposing parties and reducing the space for rational debate and compromise. At the same time, partyism's focus on parties and personalities reduced the public intellectual space available for creative solutions to the crisis of failed expectations, such as those espoused by Tim Hector's ACLM. When principles like socialism or Black Power were articulated, they could not appeal to a wider audience because by the 1970s party competition had become the driving force in Antiguan political culture. Partyism and the polarisation it fuelled were thus self-enforcing phenomena: discontent led to desperation which encouraged partyism which reduced the opportunity for creative political solutions, which led to further discontent, which led to more hardline partyism, and so on. The ability to create a barren

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<sup>237</sup> Quinn, *Black Power in the Caribbean*, 3.

<sup>238</sup> Noguera, "The limits of charisma," 73.

<sup>239</sup> Brian Meeks, "Jamaica's Micahel Manley (1924-97): Crossing the contours of charisma," in *Caribbean Charisma: Reflections on Leadership, Legitimacy, and Populist Politics*, ed. Anton Allahar (Boulder: Ian Randle Publishers, 2001), 196

political-intellectual environment where creative ideas were suffocated has been one of the most damaging long-term effects of partyism in Antigua.

### **Loyalty in Antiguan political culture**

A characteristic of a societally polarised society is ‘emotional loathing, fear, and distrust.’<sup>240</sup> This was the case in Antigua in 1971, as shown by the alarmist language used by political activists and the growing social divide between supporters of opposing parties. This was also made clear to me by every interviewee to whom I spoke in November and December 2019. One, a lifelong Labour supporter, told me that the 1971 election instigated a feud in his family, with one side choosing to vote PLM for reasons that he still claimed to be unable to explain.<sup>241</sup> Conversely, a current UPP supporter commented that it was common to receive verbal abuse and physical intimidation if you walked through or rode the bus through a Labour village. Though she did not admit to being a victim of politically motivated violence herself, she did claim that in the 1970s in particular it was common for politics to be the cause of much physical violence between men.<sup>242</sup> The son of an early PLM campaigner claimed that his family home had been burned down by Bird loyalists because his father was an early supporter of Hall, the ABDM, and then the PLM.<sup>243</sup> Such anecdotal evidence is commonplace in Antigua and to an alarming extent appears accepted as a natural feature of democratic politics.

While high emotionality is a common feature of all societally polarised societies, there were several features of Antiguan political culture in 1971 that made politics in Antigua at this time particularly emotionally charged. These factors are: emotional hijacking, self-entrenchment of political decisions, the moral aspect of political decision making, and the irreversibility of political decisions. Appreciating each of these enables us to understand more fully why Antiguan political culture became so emotionally charged during and after the 1971 election.

The first factor contributing to an emotionally charged political climate is what Keisha Mitchell (University of the West Indies) calls ‘emotional hijacking.’<sup>244</sup> This is a process whereby political campaigns purposefully appeal to feelings and beliefs to gain support or undermine opponents. In acute cases, Mitchell continues, ‘all rational thought disappears’ and evidence-based argument is replaced entirely by emotional and belief-based rhetoric.<sup>245</sup> This was the case in Antigua in 1971. By this time, partyism had couched political discourse in party-political terms and based arguments on personalities rather than facts. The effect of emotional hijacking is demonstrated by the parties’ manifestos. For example, the ALP asserted that the sugar industry ‘will perform an ever greater role in the structure of the State.’<sup>246</sup> This claim was completely wrong because the 1966 Evans Report had concluded there was ‘no long term future for the sugar industry in Antigua’ and that the sector must be closed down as quickly as possible.<sup>247</sup> That the ALP could make such an assertion

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<sup>240</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 23

<sup>241</sup> Interview 1, November 2019.

<sup>242</sup> Interview 2, November 2019.

<sup>243</sup> Interview 13, December 2019.

<sup>244</sup> Keisha A Mitchell, "Politics, Power and Identity in the Caribbean Psyche," *International Journal of Research in Engineering, IT and Social Sciences* 6, no. 7 (2016): 34

<sup>245</sup> Mitchell, "Politics, Power and Identity in the Caribbean Psyche," 34.

<sup>246</sup> ALP Manifesto, 1970.

<sup>247</sup> "Report on the Sugar Industry and Agriculture in Antigua", Commission of Enquiry in Antigua, 1966, VHPC, 82.

shows that facts played such a minimal role in political debate that a centrepiece of Labour's manifesto could be objectively incorrect without significant consequences. Unquestioning faith in the party meant that evidence contradicting the leader's word could be disregarded. Emotional hijacking contributed to societal polarisation by making it difficult to argue with political opinions that have no basis in evidence and are thus 'not only objectionable but also unintelligible'.<sup>248</sup> This generates frustration and suspicion which further widens the divide between supporters of opposing parties and contributes to the mistrust characteristic of societal polarisation.

The second reason Antiguan party loyalty was so emotionally charged relates to what Stephen Greene called Perceptual Screen Theory (PST.) PST states that members of a group interpret information differently so as to favour their own party - the 'in-group'.<sup>249</sup> This was demonstrated in 1990 by Mackie et al who surveyed students' responses to arguments written by members of their own university (the in-group) and members of another (the out-group).<sup>250</sup> They found that the identity of the source had a direct effect on the respondents' agreement or disagreement with the argument, with respondents agreeing strongly with the in-group argument. More recently, Paul Hanel et al surveyed British and American participants to see how PST affected people's responses to 'aphorisms' or quotes with no clear political motivation. They found that in all cases aphorisms thought to originate from the in-group created stronger agreement than aphorisms from the out-group, showing PST to apply to any claims, not just political statements.<sup>251</sup> This is of great relevance to politics where much 'headline' political rhetoric concerns generalist, inclusive aphorisms; Hanel et al reference Theresa May's 'strong and stable leadership' aphorism for example.<sup>252</sup> Knowing that non-political aphorisms of this kind can produce hostile opposition between competing parties helps us understand why Antiguan politics became so emotionally-charged even in the absence of ideological disagreement between the ALP and PLM. PST is particularly effective in small and developing states like 1970s Antigua because low levels of education and poor telecommunication facilities mean exposure to non-partisan media is minimal to begin with and one has a greater reliance on other in-group members for news and opinion. Postcolonial states therefore have a built-in vulnerability to PST.

The third factor contributing to Antigua's emotional political culture in 1971 was the moral component of political decision making. This issue is not unique to Antigua or the Eastern Caribbean but it is made acute in small states like Antigua where one's party loyalty is well known and widely discussed. This factor draws on social identity theory's explanation of how one's self-perceived membership of a group influences one's social and political attitudes and perceptions. In particular, the perceived differences between the 'in group' and the 'out group' are emphasised beyond reality.<sup>253</sup> At the extremes, this can spill over from perceived political differences into social differences which results in moral judgement being associated with different political opinions - a hallmark of societal polarisation. For example, many Labour supporters today invoke impassioned language of treachery and sabotage when discussing PLM support in 1971.<sup>254</sup> One anti-Labour interviewee claimed that the

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<sup>248</sup> Murat and McCoy, "Transformations through Polarizations and Global Threats to Democracy," 10.

<sup>249</sup> Steven Greene, "Understanding Party Identification: A Social Identity Approach", *Political Psychology* 20, no. 2 (1999): 395.

<sup>250</sup> Dianne Mackie, Leila Worth, Arlene Asuncion, "Processing of persuasive in-group messages," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58, no. 5, (1990): 813.

<sup>251</sup> Paul Hanel, "The source attribution effect: Demonstrating pernicious disagreement between ideological groups on non-divisive aphorisms," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 79, (2018): 61.

<sup>252</sup> Hanel, "Source attribution effect," 52.

<sup>253</sup> Greene, "Understanding Party Identification," 393.

<sup>254</sup> Interviews 1, 5, 10, November 2019.

motives of voters in 1971 were ‘always in question.’<sup>255</sup> Generally, opponents accused Labour supporters of being a ‘bought vote’ - bought either by the government or by big business, either through bribery or patronage. On the other hand, PLM voters were accused of turning their backs on the black working-class cause and conceding defeat to white economic control in the hope of short term financial rewards.<sup>256</sup> This judgement-laden political attitude was stoked by party rhetoric which purposefully ‘stoked and mobilised anger in order to gain and maintain support.’<sup>257</sup> Again, this factor reduces the space for discussion and mutual understanding, compounding the polarising effects of non-rational decision making and echo-chamber thinking.

The final reason Antiguan political culture was so emotionally charged in 1971 was the irreversibility of political decisions. In his memoir, *The Comeback Kid*, Lester Bird (ex-Prime Minister and son of V C Bird) said that only 10 percent of Antiguan voters require persuasion at election time, the vast majority will not change their support.<sup>258</sup> Another ex-minister told me that Sir Lester’s 10 percent is an overestimation, and winning elections is about persuading a ‘tiny minority’ of voters who can usually be bought with job offers.<sup>259</sup> This irreversibility results from what I call a two-phase entrenchment experience. Phase one inculcates party membership as a social identity from childhood, handed down to children by their parents and enforced through play groups and clubs that reflect the parents’ party affiliation.<sup>260</sup> As with religious belief, political party leanings and in some cases loyalties are present by adolescence.<sup>261</sup> Russell Dalton has pointed to the inconsistency of party support in new democracies in central Europe, Africa, and East Asia as evidence of the potency of party support when passed from parent to child.<sup>262</sup> The second phase of entrenchment happens in adulthood through workplace patronage or intimidation. Two of three public sector workers interviewed in November 2019 reported being arbitrarily fired for being members of the ‘wrong’ party in the 1970s; the third claimed to have been threatened with dismissal if they didn’t vote in the 1976 election.<sup>263</sup> The idea of jobs being used as a reward or punishment for political loyalty was confirmed as a common-knowledge political strategy by an ex-minister.<sup>264</sup> Multiple interviewees, including the same ex-minister as well as two retired workers and a non-Antiguan resident, commented that an exchange of public sector workers was a common event following every election in Antigua whereby supporters of the outgoing party were fired and replaced by supporters of the new governing party.<sup>265</sup> Resigned acceptance of partyist corruption at this level is an example of how, once societal polarisation is set in motion, it becomes self-sustaining because a majority of people either seek to benefit from it or find it more convenient to just ‘go along with’ it.<sup>266</sup> The promise of rewards for loyalty and punishments for apostasy encourage fervent and public displays of unquestioning party

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<sup>255</sup> Interview 8, November 2019.

<sup>256</sup> Interview 2, November 2019.

<sup>257</sup> David Ost, “Politics as the Mobilization of Anger: Emotions in Movements and in Power,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2, (2004): 230.

<sup>258</sup> Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, 117.

<sup>259</sup> Interview 7, November 2019.

<sup>260</sup> Interview 12, November 2019.

<sup>261</sup> Russell Dalton, “Party Identification and its Implications,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Politics*, May 2016, accessed Aug 26, 2020, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-72>, np.

<sup>262</sup> Dalton, “Party Identification and its Implications,” np.

<sup>263</sup> Interviews 1, 2, 11, November 2019.

<sup>264</sup> Interview 7, November 2019.

<sup>265</sup> Interviews 1, 3, 7, 8, 9.

<sup>266</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, “Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy,” 21.

support. In tandem with the other three factors, this heightened the emotionally charged nature of Antigua politics in 1971.

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing had shown that by the 1971 General Election Antiguan political culture was characterised by societal polarisation. This had been driven by the ideology of partyism which drove opposing sides to pursue any strategy that would undermine their opponent and bring them political power. Such strategies focused on negative campaigning, particularly attacking the character of opposing leaders and party members. The emotionally-charged content of these attacks fed into a culture of distrust and hostility which widened the gulf between supporters of the ALP and PLM. Emotional hijacking by political leaders instigated a hostile and competitive political environment which then became self sustaining through echo-chamber exposure in the partisan media and entrenchment of party membership as a social identity.

By the 1970s party membership had a huge impact on diverse areas of Antiguan daily life. This chapter has focussed on the employment and shown how party membership led to workplace discrimination, particularly in the public sector. It has also been shown that low level workplace corruption - whereby members of the governing party are 'rewarded' through employment and members of the opposition party are 'punished' with dismissal - has become an accepted part of Antiguan employment culture. The high degree to which party politics has interfered with conventional employment standards is a perfect example of societal polarisation.

It has also been shown that partyism squeezed Antigua's political intellectual space in this period by restricting the room for any opinion or idea that did not contribute directly and immediately to the empowerment of the party. This led the PLM to abandon their foundational principle of party-union separation. It also meant that neither the ALP nor the ALP came up with creative solutions to the problem of white and foreign ownership in the tourism economy, and instead both embraced capitalist-labourism as the general ideological basis for their 1971 campaigns. Partyism's ability to suffocate political debate also diminished the opportunity for intellectuals like Tim Hector and Black Power activists to gain popular support or interest in their ideas. This helped to generate an intellectually barren political environment in Antigua, where creative policies were forsaken in favour of more negative campaigning and the politics of hostile opposition. Through the partisan media, experience of workplace and other partisan discrimination, and the development of political parties as social identities, societal polarisation became self-sustaining. The next chapter will show that in the run up to the 1976 election this facilitated a rise in pernicious polarisation.



## Chapter Four - The 1976 General Election

Antigua has become - like Germany - a nation of two peoples. There is too much hate for one another. Too much suspicion and envy against our brother. Hopes and fears have been crushed. Our people are in despair!<sup>267</sup>

Foreword to the 1976 Labour Manifesto.

Chapter three demonstrated that by the 1971 General Election, Antigua had become societally polarised along party lines. This chapter will show that between 1971 and 1976, Antigua experienced pernicious polarisation. As outlined in the Introduction, pernicious polarisation, according to McCoy et al, is when the societal polarisation of a society causes ‘problems of governance.’<sup>268</sup> This results from a relationship between the two parties which at best is characterised by apathy and distrust and at worst is dominated by hostility and rejection.<sup>269</sup> This negative relationship exacerbates intolerance and distrust and minimises opportunities for cooperation from which constructive political relationships can develop.<sup>270</sup> One problem caused by pernicious polarisation is political gridlock resulting from the refusal of opposing sides to cooperate. While important in countries like the USA, the issue of gridlock is less problematic in countries like Antigua where the Westminster System grants full power to parties with a majority in the legislature.<sup>271</sup>

A more significant consequence of pernicious polarisation, as Iyengar et al have highlighted, is that it undermines the legitimacy of government actions in the eyes of the opposition party.<sup>272</sup> This heightens the potential for civil disobedience, breakdown in law and order, and the collapse of government. Extremism becomes acceptable in the eyes of partisans through the tendency for hostile rhetoric to present the opposing group as a threat, either to their own party’s survival or the future of the nation as a whole.<sup>273</sup> In such a climate, action which may otherwise be regarded as extreme becomes seen as necessary. Among the opposition, extremism can involve disobedience and anti-government activism, while the governing party may pursue unconstitutional and anti-democratic means of repressing the opposition.<sup>274</sup>

To demonstrate that Antigua was perniciously polarised between 1971 and 1976, this chapter will examine three interrelated phenomena. It begins by discussing the accumulation of power by political elites within the PLM and ALP. This represented a power-grab which was made acceptable and deemed necessary by party members in light of their belief in the threat posed by the opposing

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<sup>267</sup> ALP Election Manifesto, 1976, VHPC.

<sup>268</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy", 19.

<sup>269</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy", 19.

<sup>270</sup> Carothers and O’Donohue, *Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarisation*, 2.

<sup>271</sup> In Antigua the unelected Senate is appointed according to political party affiliation to mirror the House of Representatives. It does not therefore act as an effective check on party power in the legislature in the way the House of Lords can.

<sup>272</sup> Shanto Iyengar Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes, “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76, no.3, (2012), 24.

<sup>273</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy", 22.

<sup>274</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy", 22.



party. The chapter then addresses the heightened culture of authoritarianism and extremism that became apparent in this period. In particular, repressive legislation by the PLM government and a Labour-supporting terrorist campaign are powerful markers of pernicious polarisation. The final such marker is the methods used by political parties to entrench support and loyalty among their members. This is demonstrated through an analysis of language used in printed partisan media and a consideration of efforts to expand party loyalty among children. The chapter closes with a brief analysis of the 1976 election result and a reflection on what that result shows about the state of Antiguan polarisation in 1976.

## **Accumulation of Political Power**

The first phenomenon which points to a culture of pernicious polarisation is the accumulation of power by political elites, both in the governing PLM and the opposition ALP. The accumulation of political power in itself is not a marker of pernicious polarisation and nor is it unique to this moment in Antigua's history. However, the manner and rapidity of this accumulation after 1971 is striking and represents a pernicious development in Antiguan political culture. Moreover, the methods of accumulation pursued by the PLM and ALP were motivated by and made permissible by a culture of pernicious polarisation.

As the party of government, power accumulation was most visible in the PLM and took three forms: securing Walter's personal control of the PLM; entrenching PLM control of government and public agencies; and reducing the AWU's influence over the PLM. Chapter Three has already demonstrated how Walter secured leadership within the PLM. After becoming Premier in 1971, Walter replicated this process at the level of national government and public sector. The most important resource available to Walter as Premier was the power of high-level appointments, which he used to secure loyalty at strategically important nodes of influence in government and the public sector. Looking at Latin America, Levitsky et al have shown that 'significant long-term patronage' networks are crucial to the survival of young political parties, particularly when they lack a strong unifying ideology.<sup>275</sup> This was the case for the PLM, where Walter used powers of patronage to strengthen the cohesion of his party and to consolidate his personalised control over it. In doing so, he contributed to a long tradition of political patronage across the Caribbean. The most obvious example of Walter's use of patronage was his expansion of Government from five ministers to eight, plus inviting three additional Permanent Secretaries to attend Cabinet. Walter was able to do this because the 1967 Constitution placed no restrictions on the size of the government. Walter used every Constitutional means available to him to secure personal loyalty within the government. The expansion of the government was noted by the British Representative who described an eleven-member Cabinet in an island of that size as 'unwieldy' and suggested it was done to accommodate factions within the PLM.<sup>276</sup>

While factional accommodation may have been a consideration, there were two further and more important motives for Walter's expansion of Government. First, more appointments gave Walter patronage over a greater number of Antigua's most important politicians who would now offer greater loyalty to Walter personally rather than to the party generally or to their constituents. Secondly, by increasing the number of ministers Walter reduced their relative power by diluting Cabinet collective

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<sup>275</sup> Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyke, *Challenges of Party Building in Latin America*, 12.

<sup>276</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971, 'Elections in Antigua, 1971', FCO 63/687, TNA.

responsibility among a greater number. In an essay on Indonesian coalition politics, Dan Slater highlighted how spreading a discrete quantity of resources (government positions and power) among more claimants (coalition partner parties) reduces the ability of single partners to amass power and become potential rivals.<sup>277</sup> This can be applied to Westminster Systems where the claimants on government power are members of the Cabinet. Ergo, by increasing the size of the government, Walter reduced, in relative terms, the independent authority of and threat from individual Ministers. By implication this heightened the relative power of the Premier who retained the same prerogative powers as *primus inter pares* in a Westminster-style government. The exploitation of the Premier/Prime Minister's prerogative powers is a common problem with the Westminster System, particularly in small and developing states as in the Eastern Caribbean. In a paper on Commonwealth constitutional development, Cynthia Barrow-Giles (University of the West Indies) has pointed directly to 'excessive powers of the Prime Minister and their implications for autocratic government' as an issue requiring urgent reform.<sup>278</sup>

Barrow-Giles has raised a second point of concern about the Westminster system in small Eastern Caribbean states: the lack of separation of personnel between the legislative and executive. Again, this was exaggerated under Walter because from 1971 members of his government constituted a super-majority (ten out of thirteen) of PLM MPs, as well as a simple majority of all MPs (ten out of seventeen.) Consequently, Walter's actions served to heighten the overlap between the legislature and the executive, further diminishing the separation of powers. The legislature was thus weakened as a check of government action, being reduced to 'little more than a rubber stamp.'<sup>279</sup> This made it easier for Walter to pass repressive legislation such as the Newspaper Laws discussed below.

A further mechanism of power accumulation used by Walter was the exploitation of factions within his own party. Drawing on Michels, Paget Henry has shown that 'factional exploitation' is an effective method of power accumulation, particularly common in the Anglophone Caribbean. In his 1991 treatise, Henry predominantly focuses on the use of purges by Bird to consolidate control of the ALP between 1943 and 1967.<sup>280</sup> However a more subtle type of factional competition is the careful manipulation of senior individuals' positions within one's party. These may be adjusted so as to reduce the potential of a threat from colleagues whilst keeping them within the party and avoiding the scandal and backlash of a purge.

The position of Donald Halstead's within the PLM demonstrates this careful manipulation. Halstead was a close ally of Walter, having also been dismissed from the ATLU in 1967. Halstead was extremely popular with AWU members and had a reputation for being even more militaristic and pro-worker than Walter. This meant that Halstead posed a potential threat to Walter's leadership in the same way that Walter had challenged Bird's. It was therefore prudent for Walter to subtly reduce the authority of Halstead whilst keeping him in the PLM and not offending his supporters. Walter did this in a variety of ways which collectively worked to reduce the threat of Halstead as a potential rival. For example, Walter refused Halstead the position of Deputy Premier, giving it instead to Robert Hall. This avoided giving Halstead too much power and simultaneously strengthened the loyalty of Hall and his supporters. The BGR specifically noted this appointment as an example of Walter trying to 'clip [Halstead's] wings.'<sup>281</sup> In this way Walter exploited factions within his own party to reduce the

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<sup>277</sup> Dan Slater, "Party cartelization, Indonesian-style: Presidential power-sharing and the contingency of democratic opposition" *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18, no. 1, (2018): 43.

<sup>278</sup> Cynthia Barrow-Giles, "Regional trends in constitutional developments in the Commonwealth Caribbean," (conference paper, SRC; Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, January 2010.), 9.

<sup>279</sup> Corbett and Veenendaal, "Westminster in small states," 443.

<sup>280</sup> Henry, "Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean," 19.

<sup>281</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

power of potential rivals and strengthen his own position as party leader and as Premier. With full internal domination of the party and Cabinet, Walter could pursue extremist and radical measures designed to suppress the ALP and ensure the continued empowerment of the PLM.

After Walter had secured loyalty within government, he extended his government's control over state-run public institutions, including the police and civil service. By 1971, Bird and Labour had been the dominant force in Antiguan politics for over 20 years. It was therefore assumed by many in the Opposition that public institutions would be dominated by Bird-loyalists inclined to sabotage the work of the new government. For example, Walter immediately expelled non-Antiguan members (mainly from St Kitts and Dominica) of the ADF which was regarded by the PLM as a private pro-Bird paramilitary group, rather than a peace-keeping nonpolitical organisation.<sup>282</sup> This perception was rooted in the fact that all ADF personnel were Bird appointees and the ADF had been over-zealous in their disbanding of AWU and PLM demonstrations.<sup>283</sup>

Similar changes of personnel took place in the police, civil service, and among public sector employees in nationalised and state-run enterprises.<sup>284</sup> Some of these alterations were constitutional, relying on the powers granted to the Premier, but others relied on extra-constitutional pressure and intimidation. In late February 1971, British Representative Reiss reported that Walter was planning a 're-organisation of the Civil Service' that would lead to 'victimisation' of Labour supporters.<sup>285</sup> Reiss also claimed that the new government had a 'list of opponents' whom they planned to remove through any means possible from the denial of work permits to arbitrary dismissal. High on the list was the prominent lawyer Cosmos Phillips who was pressured to resign his chairmanship of the Public Services Commission (PSC).<sup>286</sup> Under section 83 of the 1967 Constitution, the PSC was established as an independent non-political body with power to appoint civil servants, including the Director of Public Prosecutions.<sup>287</sup> A neutral Civil Service is a hallmark of the Westminster System and was enshrined in the 1967 Constitution. The intrusion of party-politics into the Civil Service is a marker of pernicious polarisation as it subverts constitutional rules and conventions. It also damages good governance by replacing experienced civil servants with party loyalists, prioritising party politics above meritocracy. Removing scrutiny by intermediary institutions like the Civil Service enabled the PLM government to more easily pass and enforce reactionary measures like the Newspaper Acts. These in turn furthered polarisation by contributing to the opposition's sense of fear and powerlessness, driving extremism by Labour supporters. This illustrates how pernicious polarisation has a self-entrenching effect.

The final mechanism of power accumulation by the governing PLM was the reduction in the autonomy of the AWU. This echoed Bird's efforts in the late 1960s to restrict the power and independence of all unions, including his own ATLU. In both cases, reducing union activity is an example of partyism because it shows politicians taking repressive action, even against their own base, in order to preserve and empower their party at any cost. Just as Bird tried to eliminate both the ATLU and AWU as threats to the ALP, Walter tried to reduce the capability of the AWU to threaten PLM authority and stability. Walter's own experience in establishing the AWU taught him that an autonomous and energised union could cripple a government. He therefore set out to reduce the autonomy and power of his own AWU in order to strengthen his party. This was done primarily by a

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<sup>282</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

<sup>283</sup> Reiss to FCO, 6 February, 1971, 'Elections in Antigua,' 1970-71, FCO.63/687. TNA.

<sup>284</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua and Barbuda*, 164.

<sup>285</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

<sup>286</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

<sup>287</sup> Antigua and Barbuda Constitution Order, 22 February, 1967, 83.1 and 85.1.

purposeful abandonment of the principle of union-party separatism whereby the Two Hats Problem was converted into the Two Hats Asset.

A notable example of a purposeful overlap of personnel was Donald Halstead who served as Minister for Home and Labour Affairs whilst retaining his position on the AWU Executive Committee. This gave the PLM Government a vocal and highly popular voice within the AWU leadership.<sup>288</sup> This was possible because neither the AWU or PLM constitutions forbade overlapping personnel - this was just convention which was broadly accepted as mandatory until 1971. From 1971 partyism eroded this convention, making any action designed to strengthen the party acceptable and necessary in the eyes of supporters.

Further party-union overlap was orchestrated through the Senate. As Premier, Walter appointed AWU vice-President Malcom Daniel and AWU Executive Committee member Prince Hurst to be PLM Senators.<sup>289</sup> These appointments closely tied the AWU leadership to the interests of the PLM and further diminished the autonomy of the AWU executive. Appointing these senators also brought Walter the personal loyalty of two powerful AWU leaders. Walter's aim was to make the demands of the AWU subservient to the interests of the governing PLM and thereby forestall any union-based threat to the government and party. By bringing the most popular leading unionists under the PLM umbrella, Walter prevented a repetition of his own 1967 stand against the ATLU/ALP leadership. Again, this is an example of party survival eclipsing all other principles, in this case trade union independence and activism.

The success of this tactic may be seen in the de-escalation of AWU activism in the 1971-76 period. A notable example at the time was the Cable and Wireless strikes organised by the AWU. After the PLM gained power, Halstead used his position of authority within the AWU to end these 'disruptive tactics' even though no industrial settlement had been brought about.<sup>290</sup> This is an example of workers' and union interests being made subservient to party success and stability.

The abandonment of party-union separatism was recognised and criticised by some contemporaries, such as calypsonian King Short Shirt. In 1975 Short Shirt sang that "With government, union, and employers now all combined...Brothers, they go rob we blind."<sup>291</sup> Here Short Shirt recognised that by restricting and regulating union activity through its leadership, the PLM hindered the AWU's ability to operate as an advocate for workers' rights. Moreover, the sense of hopelessness conveyed in Short Shirt's lyrics reflects a feeling of powerlessness on the part of some government critics as the union-party overlap also restricted the AWU's ability to function as a check on government. Subtly curtailing the ability of civil society institutions to hold government to account is a particularly perfidious effect of pernicious polarisation. This was also recognised by union purists such as the AWU General Secretary, Keithlyn Smith who was one of the few AWU-PLM leaders maintaining support for union-party separation. Early on in the PLM government, Smith warned the AWU Convention that the PLM must respect the AWU's autonomy or "risk losing union support."<sup>292</sup> This was an empty threat as withdrawing support from the PLM would risk handing power to Labour. Moreover, Smith himself somewhat sacrificed union-party separation by becoming a PLM senator in

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<sup>288</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

<sup>289</sup> "Social Security on the brink of disaster (Part IV)", *Antigua Observer*, April 17, 2020, Accessed May 7, 2020, <https://antiguaobserver.com/social-security-on-the-brink-of-disaster-part-iv/>. np.

<sup>290</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 22 November 1971, 'Elections in Antigua, 1971', FCO 63/687, TNA.

<sup>291</sup> King Short Shirt, "Cry for Change", *True Patriot*, A&B Records, 2017 (first performed at 1975 Antigua and Barbuda Carnival).

<sup>292</sup> *Antigua Star*, 25 September, 1971, J1642, ANA.

1976 whilst retaining his position as AWU General Secretary.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, by 1976, even the most principled purists like Smith succumbed to the overwhelming influence of partyism.

The accumulation of political power by the PLM leadership was both a symptom and a cause of pernicious polarisation. Accumulation of this kind reveals the presence of pernicious polarisation because activity which would otherwise have been unacceptable - in this case reintroducing the Two Hats Problem - was now deemed necessary for the survival of the party. At the same time, this accumulation exacerbated polarisation because reducing diversity of opinion in Cabinet and restricting the independence of the AWU focussed the PLM's activity behind the single purpose of party survival at any cost. The next section will show how this directly facilitated the kind of unconstitutional and authoritarian government action typical of perniciously polarised societies and only widened the gulf between supporters of the ALP and PLM.

The accumulation of political power was also pursued by leaders of the ALP. Though Bird and Labour were out of government for the first time in twenty years, this was not, as Douglas Midget has pointed out, 'an exile without renewal.'<sup>294</sup> The 1971 defeat instigated a two-part reorganisation within the party at both the grass-roots and leadership levels. This was designed to increase the party's appeal to a younger generation of voters whilst simultaneously tightening direct control of the party by the 'Bird clique.' I use this latter term to refer to the small circle of veteran Labour leaders who had controlled the ALP since its establishment. These men were ardent Bird-loyalists and included John St Luce, Lionel Hurst, Ernest Williams, and others. Within the Bird clique was an emergent Bird Dynasty, focussing around the political and legal careers of his sons Lester and Vere Jr.

One way the Bird clique accumulated power was to appoint Labour grandees who had failed to be elected in 1971 to the Senate, including Lester Bird and John St Luce.<sup>295</sup> The 1967 Constitution required the Governor to appoint three Senators at his own 'discretion' after 'consultation' with the Premier.<sup>296</sup> After the formalisation of the Official Opposition in 1968, appointees for these seats were nominated by the Opposition. Labour used this power to ensure that its leading figures secured a seat in Parliament, even if they had been rejected by the electorate. This disregard for voter opinion is an example of the elite's withdrawal from mass control, a second strategy of power accumulation identified by Paget Henry.<sup>297</sup> At the same time, Lester Bird was elected Chairman of the ALP. This meant that Lester Bird had ultimate authority over the internal management of the Labour party as well as a platform to challenge the government in the Senate.

Meanwhile, Vere Bird Sr was appointed Labour's 'Political Leader', despite also being defeated in the election.<sup>298</sup> Political Leader was a new title seemingly invented to grant Bird supreme authority within the party, regardless of electoral outcomes. This was tantamount to declaring Bird 'Labour leader for life', and is comparable to Bustamante's 'proprietary' leadership of the Jamaican Labour Party.<sup>299</sup> Meanwhile Ernest Williams became Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.<sup>300</sup> Williams was another stalwart Bird-loyalist and had first been elected alongside Bird in 1951.<sup>301</sup> After

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<sup>293</sup> "Sir Keithlyn Smith", *Antigua and Barbuda Workers Union*, 2017, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://abwunion.com/founding-fathers/sir-keithlyn-smith/>. np.

<sup>294</sup> Douglas Midget, "Icon and Myth in a Caribbean Polity," *Modern Political Culture in the Caribbean*, ed. Holger Henke and Fred Reno, (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 190.

<sup>295</sup> *Antigua Star*, 24 February, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>296</sup> Antigua and Barbuda Constitution Order, 22 February, 1967, 23.2.b.

<sup>297</sup> Henry, "Political Accumulation and Authoritarianism in the Caribbean," 9.

<sup>298</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971, 'Elections in Antigua, 1971', FCO 63/687, TNA.

<sup>299</sup> Richard Hart, *Towards Decolonisation: Political, labour and economic developments in Jamaica, 1938-45* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>300</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971.

<sup>301</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971," *Caribbean Elections*.

1971 the Bird clique thus secured tight control over the party at all levels - in the Senate, in the House, and among the Party Executive. Thus, while they had lost the election, the Bird-clique had no intention of relinquishing power over the party but instead chose to strengthen their internal positions of dominance. This reinforcement of the Bird-clique in unassailable positions of leadership exemplifies what LeBas and Munemo referring to Zimbabwean authoritarianism have called a 'more closed political regime'<sup>302</sup> Just as the PLM became focussed on Walter-led partyism, the ALP became a closed political regime built entirely around the Bird-clique and their own partyism.

A simultaneous process of opposition-era rejuvenation within the ALP was an expanded appeal to young voters. Reflecting the personality-centric nature of political rhetoric in this period, this appeal was accomplished through personnel changes not policy reform. For the 1976 election, Labour presented a slate of 'second generation' Antiguan Labour politicians, including Bird's sons Lester and Vere Jr, Bill Abbot, Hugh Marshall, and Robin Bascus. These replaced the 'first generation' of veteran Labour politicians: candidates like Danefield Hurst, Joseph Lawrence, Bradley Carrott, and Donald Sheppard who had stood in most or all elections prior to 1976 but never campaigned again after 1971.<sup>303</sup> Instead, they were replaced in 1976 by nine first-time Labour candidates.<sup>304</sup> One of these was St Phillip's (North) candidate, Robin Yearwood, who was first elected in 1976 and has retained the seat ever since. The second generation campaigned on more or less the same policy platform as their predecessors in 1971, with little change between the two manifestos. This fits the narrative of partyism making politics more about the people in the party than the principles and policy the party stands for. Welcoming a new generation of candidates while strengthening their hold of central party power enabled the Bird-clique to enhance the external appeal of their party whilst maintaining their internal dominance.

The second way in which ALP accumulated political power after the 1971 elections was through a reduction in the autonomy of the ATLU. The ATLU-ALP relationship was more complex than that of the AWU-PLM but the motivation for reformulation was the same: party strength and survival. As mentioned, the ALP and ATLU had been formally separated on 24 November 1968, though non-executive level leadership and organisational structures remained the same. After 1971 the ALP established constituency branches that were independent of local ATLU sections.<sup>305</sup> These new branches were led and staffed by a younger generation of activists recruited specifically to heighten the party's appeal to younger voters. However, behind the scenes the ALP leadership moved to ensure they retained control over the affiliated Union. Two long-term Bird allies took the leading positions in the ATLU; Lionel Hurst became President while Adolphus Freeland became General Secretary. As with the Birds and St Luce, Hurst and Freeland had failed to win election in 1971. This is another example of Labour inserting its grandees into powerful positions, despite electoral opinion. Having staunch Bird-allies as President and General Secretary of the ATLU bound the union to the interests of the party in the same way the PLM had tied its own success to the AWU's interests.

Control of the ATLU was important to Labour for two reasons. First, union activism could be used as a tool by Labour to challenge the strength and upset the politics of the governing PLM. Secondly, it lessened the risk of a second challenge to the ALP's authority by the union and reduced the risk of another party-damaging schism. As with the PLM and the AWU, the autonomy and

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<sup>302</sup> Adrienne LeBas, and Ngonidzashe Munemo, "Elite Conflict, Compromise, and Enduring Authoritarianism: Polarization in Zimbabwe, 1980–2008," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 681, no. 1 (2019): 211.

<sup>303</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>304</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda General Election Results - 11 February 1971," *Caribbean Elections*.

<sup>305</sup> Henry, *Shouldering Antigua and Barbuda*, 164.

authority of the ATLU was being worn away in pursuit of party unity and strength. Writing in 1975, contemporary observer Professor Kunteng (Vanier College, Quebec) concluded that despite formal separation between union and party, Bird ‘maintained a firm grip on both, and was accepted as the undisputed leader.’<sup>306</sup>

Therefore, both the ALP and PLM abandoned the principle of union-party separation in favour of an amalgamation of the organisations’ leaderships. The phenomenon of union disempowerment, while acute in Antigua, was exhibited in multiple instances throughout the Anglophone Caribbean. Paul Sutton has shown how the power of organised labour was diminished through co-opting trade union leaders into government and making the union dependent on ‘favour by government for the privileges and opportunities that come their way.’<sup>307</sup> This perfectly describes the reorganised party-union relationships in Antigua between 1971 and 1976.

The reformulation of the ALP-ATLU and PLM-AWU relationships is one of the clearest examples of partyism in this period. Each party restructured its relationship with its supporting union in order to secure party unity and strength to win the next election. This meant abandoning the principle of party-union separation which previously had been the founding policy of the AWU. Moreover, the maneuvering of political elites at the top of both party and union was deemed acceptable to most supporters because it was done for the greater good of party survival. While some like Keithlyn Smith and King Short Shirt criticised the ongoing Two Hats Movement, it is notable that most Antiguan did not. This more than anything shows the rapidity and strength with which partyism came to dominate Antiguan political culture in this period.

The political take-over of the unions is also one of the best examples of pernicious polarisation. This is because independent civil society organisations like unions, able to hold government to account, are a key feature of democracy. The partyist takeover eroded this ability by making the autonomy of the unions subservient to the interests of their respective parties. This weakened Antiguan democracy - the very definition of pernicious polarisation.

The accumulation of political power that took place in Antigua after the 1971 election is an example of what Olwyn Blouet (Virginia State University) has called the ‘Caribbeanisation’ of the Westminster System.<sup>308</sup> A key feature of Caribbeanisation is the expanded role of personal power and patronage, especially of the Premier/Prime Minister. The Westminster System grants the Prime Minister significant personal powers, such as the power of appointment, but this becomes exaggerated in a small place like Antigua. Duncan and Woods explained the highly personalised nature of island-state politics in terms of the ‘strong personal ties’ between politicians and the public.<sup>309</sup> Recently, Veenendaal and Corbett have emphasised the ‘very personal ‘face-to-face’ basis’ of clientelism in Caribbean and Pacific island-states where small constituencies inculcate close professional and personal relations between politicians and voters.<sup>310</sup> The smallness of island-states as communities and as polities means that a certain degree of personalisation is effectively built-in the practice of democracy.

Caribbeanisation and its emphasis on patronage both fed off of and contributed to pernicious polarisation. As outlined in the previous chapter, employment was used as a tool to reward party

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<sup>306</sup> Tungteng, "Reflections on Labour and Governing in Antigua," 39.

<sup>307</sup> Sutton, "Politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean," 57.

<sup>308</sup> Olwyn M Blouet, *The Contemporary Caribbean: History, life and culture since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 70.

<sup>309</sup> Natasha Duncan and Dwayne Woods, "What about us? The Anglo-Caribbean Democratic Experience", *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 45, no.2 (2007): 209.

<sup>310</sup> Wouter Veenendaal and Jack Corbett, "Clientelism in small states: how smallness influences patron-client networks in the Caribbean and the Pacific," *Democratisation* 27, no.1 (2020): 67.

members and punish opposition supporters. This is blatant partyism as it prioritises party aggrandisement over rational employment reasoning and meritocracy. Party-preference in the workplace is particularly pernicious in the public sector as it constitutes a form of corruption whereby the government exploits its powers for its own partisan gains. Job offers in the public sector can be used to buy voters' support which undermines the principle of fairly contested elections. Moreover, the governing party can use powers of appointment to position party supporters in key nodes of non-party government or state institutions like the police or civil service. This undermines the impartiality of these institutions which is a key principle of the Westminster System and reduces checks on the governing party's actions. At the same time, excessive use of patronage by the governing party furthers polarisation. It does this by stoking resentment among the opposition party which further undermines opportunities for cooperation and compromise. Moreover, unchallenged corruption of this kind generates emotions of powerlessness among the opposition, encouraging them to pursue more extreme partisan action. Regarding the government as corrupt makes extreme action legitimate in the eyes of the opposition. This is a good example of the self-sustaining downward spiral generated by pernicious polarisation.

## Heightened Authoritarianism

A notable feature of Antiguan political culture between 1971 and 1976 is authoritarianism. I shall follow Carl Stone's definition of authoritarianism in the Anglophone Caribbean context: 'a strong authority system which locates command positions of power and control over a political and social system in the hands of political actors or institutions that are controlled by and loyal to interests at the upper end of an old, new, or emergent social hierarchy.'<sup>311</sup> In the case of Antigua, this new social hierarchy was the leadership of the two political parties.

Authoritarianism was not unique to this period of Antigua's history and it was not uncommon in the Anglophone Caribbean. Rather, authoritarianism has been recognised by a number of Caribbean scholars, including Nigel O. Bolland and Carl Stone, as a well-established feature of Anglophone Caribbean politics. Some have explained this in terms of an antagonistic political culture borne of centuries of colonial experience, while others have pointed to the Westminster System's susceptibility to manipulation by 'maximum leaders' and cliques in small and developing nations.<sup>312</sup> Similarly, authoritarianism was not a new phenomenon in Antigua after 1971. Authoritarianism underscored the entirety of Antigua's colonial-era political culture; as Danns has pointed out: 'colonialism is synonymous with authoritarianism.'<sup>313</sup> But this authoritarian culture continued throughout decolonisation and came to characterise Bird's leadership. For instance, the culture of purges and dismissals typical of Bird's Presidency of the ATLU fit Stone's definition of authoritarianism as they were designed to focus power in the hands of the new social hierarchy.

Authoritarianism was therefore present in Antigua prior to 1971. What we see after the PLM gains power, however, is a noticeable spike in authoritarian tendencies. This was driven by partyism

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<sup>311</sup> Carl Stone, "Democracy and Socialism in Jamaica: 1972-1979," in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, democracy, and development*, ed. Paget Henry and Carl Stone (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), 237.

<sup>312</sup> Bolland, *The Politics of Labour in the British Caribbean*, 590.; Carl Stone, *Democracy and Clientelism in Jamaica* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980), 99

<sup>313</sup> George Danns, "Decolonisation and Militarisation in the Caribbean: The case of Guyana," in *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, democracy, and development*, ed. Paget Henry and Carl Stone, (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983.) 66.



and the PLM's desire to use any means available to maintain their hold on political power. This escalation in authoritarianism highlights the perniciousness of political polarisation because the government abused its powers to undermine democracy for their own benefit. This affirms McCoy et al's proposition that pernicious polarisation can have a destructive effect on democracy itself.<sup>314</sup>

Immediately on gaining power the PLM introduced six bills which many Labour supporters still see as signalling 'the repressive direction the [PLM] government was preparing to take.'<sup>315</sup> Of these, the two 'Newspaper Acts' are the most explicitly partisan. The 1971 Newspaper Registration (Amendment) Act required newspapers to obtain a licence to print and sell their publication. This licence cost EC\$600 a year and required the approval of the appropriate government minister.<sup>316</sup> Meanwhile, the Newspaper Surety (Amendment) Act required all newspapers to make an outright surety deposit with the treasury of EC\$10,000 in cash, unless the appropriate minister was convinced of the publication's ability to cover all potential costs.<sup>317</sup> The purpose of these laws was to shut down opposition newspapers the *Worker's Voice* and the *Antigua Times*. They did this by effectively giving the government the ability to financially cripple opposition newspapers whilst allowing supportive publications to avoid the surety deposit. These laws constitute an unconstitutional power-grab by the government through which the media was prevented from scrutinising politicians' actions. As free debate is a hallmark of democracy, these laws require special attention as a marker of pernicious polarisation.

The newspaper laws were extreme by contemporary standards. Previously there had been no legal requirement for Antiguan newspapers to obtain a licence or pay an annual fee. A 1910 Newspaper Surety Act did require newspapers to have surety but only of EC\$960 and this could be in the form of a government bond. The 1971 Acts are also extreme by contemporary comparisons: Barbados legislation required a newspaper surety of \$240; Trinidad mandated \$1,000; and Jamaica required a licence fee equivalent to EC\$60.<sup>318</sup> Yet attempts to regulate the press were a common feature of Caribbean politics in the 1970s. In 1972 John A Lent (later Professor Lent, Temple University, Philadelphia) completed a PhD on mass media in the Commonwealth Caribbean, followed by an investigation into press freedom in the region in 1973. Lent observed Caribbean leaders using two primary methods to 'redefine' press freedom.<sup>319</sup> First, some governments attempted to control press coverage through ownership of news outlets. Lent raised the examples of Trinidad where two thirds of the electronic media was owned by the government, and St Kitts where the Bradshaw government owned the broadcasting outlet and a newspaper.<sup>320</sup> The other way governments tried to control the press was through regulatory legislation supposedly aimed at protecting individuals against libel and the state against sedition. Lent demonstrates this in the case of Dominica's 1968 Undesirable Publications Act and the 1971 St Kitts and Nevis Press and Publications Board Act.<sup>321</sup> The PLM's Newspaper Acts thus fit into a Commonwealth Caribbean context where legislation was used to expand government powers over independent and opposition media outlets.

*Antigua Star Ltd* initiated legal action against the government on the basis that the laws were unconstitutional.<sup>322</sup> Both laws were struck down as contraventions of the Antiguan Constitution which

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<sup>314</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 25.

<sup>315</sup> Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, 90-91.

<sup>316</sup> The Newspapers Registration (Amendment) Act, Antigua, No. 8 of 1971.

<sup>317</sup> The Newspaper Surety Ordinance (Amendment) Act, Antigua, No. 9 of 1971.

<sup>318</sup> *Antigua Star*, 14 July, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>319</sup> John A Lent, "Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean," *Index on Censorship* 2, no.3 (1973): 55.

<sup>320</sup> Lent, 'Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean', 56.

<sup>321</sup> Lent, 'Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean', 56.

<sup>322</sup> Heard by The Court of Appeal of the West Indies Associated States Supreme Court (Antigua).

guaranteed freedom of expression and opinion.<sup>323</sup> In particular, the Court of Appeal criticised the licence fee on grounds that ‘a person cannot be required to purchase that which the Constitution has freely granted’, meaning the right to free expression.<sup>324</sup> Though nullified for the duration of the PLM government, these Laws remained statute in Antigua pursuant to a Privy Council decision handed down in 1976 that these laws, though ‘not free from difficulty’, were not unconstitutional - the licence fee for instance could be regarded as a form of tax which the government was justified in levying.<sup>325</sup> On regaining power in 1976 - the same year the Appeal Court decision was overturned - the ALP began publishing a government-run and tax-payer funded newspaper, *The Nation*, which was highly partisan in blatantly attacking opponents of Bird and Labour.<sup>326</sup>

That these laws were introduced in the first place speaks to the pernicious nature of Antiguan polarisation. By 1972 Antigua was so polarised along party lines that many were willing to see severe curtailment of their constitutional freedoms in the name of party security. This is demonstrated by the press coverage of the bills’ passage through Parliament. The PLM-supporting *Antigua Star* defended the laws as necessary to protect citizens against lies and slander. For months the *Star* ran articles preparing the ground for the bills’ introduction by asking ‘How long are some newspapers going to be allowed to print lies’ and asserting that ‘Freedom of the press does not extend that far’.<sup>327</sup> The *Star*’s rhetoric and style of argument in these pieces perfectly illustrates the echo-chamber effect of polarised opinion where readers of the same newspaper adhere to shared points of view which otherwise would have been regarded as extreme. This type of press coverage contributed to a political culture in which the ALP was seen as a threat not just to the success of the PLM but to the survival of Antigua as well. This is a hallmark of pernicious polarisation.<sup>328</sup> The idea of a threat to national survival effectively places a society on a war-footing which permits and even demands extreme action by the government in order to defend the country. This rationale explains why the PLM were able to pass such unconstitutional and authoritarian legislation.

The Newspaper Laws were one example of Antiguan governmental interference in the media. Supplementary examples include the deportation of staunch PLM critic and *Workers’ Voice* editor Dorcas White, originally from Montserrat.<sup>329</sup> The official reason for White’s deportation order was that she lacked a work permit, though many including the British Representative saw her deportation as a politically motivated exploitation of government powers to quash popular opposition voices.<sup>330</sup> The same tactic was used in St Lucia to deport Barbadian-born editor of *Voice of St Lucia* Denzil Agard after he criticised a minister’s speech in 1970.<sup>331</sup> Such deportations are an example of the ways societal and pernicious polarisation cause politics to spill-over into areas of daily life and provoke problems, such as workplace discrimination.

As well as newspapers and their editors, the PLM attacked the radio. Strict licences meant that Labour-supporting radio stations ZAL-TV and ZDK were banned from making political announcements of any kind.<sup>332</sup> At the same time, Labour were denied airtime on the government-run

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<sup>323</sup> Antigua Constitution Order 1967, Part 1, Section 10 (1).

<sup>324</sup> The Antigua Court of Appeal, Civil Appeal No. 4/1972, pp. 17-20.

<sup>325</sup> Attorney General of Antigua and Barbuda v. Antigua Times Ltd., (1976, A.C., 16) Privy Council (1976).

<sup>326</sup> Angela Byre and Beverley Byfield, *International Human Rights Law in the Commonwealth Caribbean*, (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1991), 184.

<sup>327</sup> *Antigua Star*, 17 April, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>328</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarisation and the Global Crisis of Democracy", 22.

<sup>329</sup> *Antigua Star*, 24 February, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>330</sup> Reiss to Barltrop, 19 February 1971, ‘Elections in Antigua, 1971’, FCO 63/687, TNA.

<sup>331</sup> Lent, *Third World Mass Media*, 277.

<sup>332</sup> Lent, "Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean," 68.

Antigua Broadcasting System which did allow political broadcasts.<sup>333</sup> Again this regard, Antigua did not stand out; politically-motivated radio regulation was found throughout the Caribbean. For example, St Kitts-Nevis's state-owned ZIZ station allowed Premier Bradshaw to make a politically motivated attack on the PAM in 1967 while denying the PAM any right to respond.<sup>334</sup> Efforts to regulate the flow of information for the purpose of winning votes is evidence of pernicious polarisation because it curtails rights expressly guaranteed in the Constitution. However, as with party-union separatism and the newspaper acts, these actions were regarded as legitimate by party supporters in order to guarantee the survival of the party.

An authoritarian shift was also apparent within the Labour opposition. This is significant because by choosing to reciprocate the PLM's authoritarianism with heightened authoritarianism of their own, the ALP helped to worsen pernicious polarisation in Antigua. This aligns with recent work by McCoy and Somer which highlighted the fact that in perniciously polarised politics, the opposition may decide how to respond to polarising forces emanating from government (such as the PLM's Newspaper Acts or civil service reform). In such scenarios, the opposition can either capitulate and compromise or reciprocate the polarisation through agitation and mobilisation.<sup>335</sup> In the case of Antigua, the ALP clearly chose to reciprocate polarising forces and thus contributed to making pernicious polarisation an entrenched feature of Antiguan political culture.

The most extreme form of an authoritarian shift in Labour was the emergence of an anti-government terrorist organisation unofficially aligned with the ALP called the Antigua Freedom Fighters (AFF). It is appropriate to label the AFF a terrorist organisation because it existed solely to intimidate PLM supporters and create a climate of fear and tension, undermining the PLM's ability to govern. The AFF claimed responsibility for a series of non-fatal bombings and bomb-plots between 1971 and 1973. Threats about bombings were made over the Bird family-owned ZDK Radio station and resulted in numerous evacuations of schools and public buildings. In 1973 police arrested leading Labour activist Clarence Pilgrim on a charge of possessing illegal printing machinery used to print literature for the AFF. Pilgrim was represented by the law firm Bird and Bird (established by Lester Bird and Vere Bird Junior) who ensured the trial dragged on until Labour were returned to power in 1976 and the charges were dropped.<sup>336</sup> Following Pilgrim's 1973 arrest the activity of the AFF stopped for a time.<sup>337</sup> It is difficult to gauge how popular or how large the AFF was. Their own claims, which are likely to be exaggerated, put the membership at 487 in June 1972.<sup>338</sup> But more important than the membership was the AFF's links to people in powerful places who provided it with access to considerable funds and resources, not least those necessary to make broadcasts and build functioning explosives.

Beyond their bombing campaign, the AFF also produced fliers similar in style to the ABDM White Papers but with more aggressive content. The aim of the AFF papers was twofold. First, they complemented bomb-scares with threats of violence such as 'The PLM ministers should be dead, blown to hell up...they must die it is the only way.' [sic]<sup>339</sup> Secondly, the pamphlets contributed to the personalisation of Antigua's political rhetoric by slandering leading PLM politicians and supporters.

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<sup>333</sup> Lent, "Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean," 68-69.

<sup>334</sup> Lent, "Press Freedom in the Commonwealth Caribbean," 68.

<sup>335</sup> Somer and McCoy, "Transformations through Polarizations and Global Threats to Democracy," 16.

<sup>336</sup> Douglas Payne, "The Failings of Governance in Antigua and Barbuda, the Elections of 1999," *Policy Papers on the Americas*, 10 no. 4, (1999): 8.

<sup>337</sup> Payne, "The Failings of Governance in Antigua and Barbuda", 8.

<sup>338</sup> AFF Pamphlet, 24 June 1972, VHPC.

<sup>339</sup> AFF Pamphlet, 25 July 1972, VHPC.

For example, the AFF claimed that ‘The PLM ministers deal in dope, they love obia’.<sup>340</sup> The same pamphlet called the lawyer Louis Lockhart a marijuana addict and accused Halstead of deporting a woman because ‘she refuse to give him sex.’<sup>341</sup> A subsequent pamphlet called Robert Hall a ‘cocobay bitch’ and accused his wife of having children through extra-marital affairs.<sup>342</sup> This type of personalised rhetoric was especially powerful in a very socially conservative and Christian community like Antigua where drug use, promiscuity, and black magic were particularly serious taboos.

The AFF pamphlets show that significant pernicious polarisation was caused by partyism in this period. With no competing ideology or policy to argue about, the AFF focused exclusively on slandering the character of political leaders and their supporters. Partyism's dogma of 'party power at any cost' had become so strong by the 1970s that the AFF felt no topics were off limits. They did this with a degree of hostility and threat that had not been seen in Antigua before. Compared to the ABDM pamphlets or partisan media, the content of the AFF pamphlets mark a significant escalation in the hostility and aggressiveness of political rhetoric. Though the AFF was a small and niche group, their willingness and ability to print such explicit material testifies to a highly emotive and unprecedentedly polarised community in the early 1970s.

## **Entrenching Polarisation**

The accumulation of political power and heightened authoritarianism both indicate a perniciously polarised society between 1971 and 1976. A final factor demonstrating Antigua's pernicious polarisation in this period was expanded mechanisms for entrenching party loyalty. As with authoritarianism, efforts to spread and sustain party support are not unique to Antigua or to this period. But it is the sudden and extreme escalation of old and new methods used by the parties in this period which point to pernicious polarisation.

Newspapers are and always have been highly partisan organisations, particularly when they were established to advocate the interests of a particular social group. The *Workers' Voice* and *Antigua Star* always strongly supported the ATLU and AWU respectively. After 1971 however, there was a pronounced escalation in the aggressive, emotive, and personalistic language used by these papers with regards to politics and politicians. The relationship between these newspapers and the respective party leaders cannot be overstated: the *Antigua Star*'s principal owners were Donald Halstead and Gerald Watt - PLM ministers for Home Affairs and Public Utilities.<sup>343</sup> *Worker's Voice*, meanwhile, was printed directly out of the ATLU offices.<sup>344</sup> We may therefore assume synchronicity between the content of these two papers and the opinions of party leaders.

Consequently, these newspapers acted as echo-chambers where the beliefs of the two party groups were reinforced daily through selective exposure to affirming evidence. Readership numbers are difficult to determine for Antiguan newspapers and there was extensive sharing and group-reading of the *Voice* and *Star*. This communal aspect of media exposure further reinforced the echo-chamber effect. Furthermore, both the *Voice* and the *Star* contained non-news features such as articles on culture or community competitions. These reinforced the role of political parties as social identities by

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<sup>340</sup> AFF Pamphlet, 25 July 1972, VHPC.

<sup>341</sup> AFF Pamphlet, 25 July 1972, VHPC.

<sup>342</sup> AFF Pamphlet, 24 June 1972, VHPC.

<sup>343</sup> Lent, *Third World Mass Media*, 101.

<sup>344</sup> Lent, *Third World Mass Media*, 207.

providing a cultural and communal basis to the group that went beyond simple party membership. This is a clear example of societal polarisation and it made the divide between PLM and ALP supporters both more profound and more durable as it was predicated on more than just the fact of party membership. The highly personalised attacks and extremist language contained in the media pushed this press coverage from conventional political polarisation towards pernicious polarisation because it contributed towards the culture of distrust and intimidation which led to a breakdown in good democratic government in the 1971-76 period.

Following the 1971 election, the *Antigua Star* made no attempt to bring supporters of the ALP and PLM together or to appeal to ALP voters as potential readers. Instead, the paper accused Labour of being ‘still on the campaign’ and likened them to ‘children playing with matches and gasoline.’<sup>345</sup> This rhetoric reflects the antipathy and distrust that characterised the relationship between opposing sides in a polarised society.<sup>346</sup> Specifically, talk of ‘matches and gasoline’ reflects the propensity for perniciously polarised societies to see the political ‘other’ as a threat to the nation itself.<sup>347</sup> Moreover, explicitly likening Labour to ‘children’ implies that the ALP were in some way immature, ignorant, or irrational and thus incapable of good governance. Again, such subjective assertions about the personalities of politicians is a hallmark of pernicious polarisation. Accusations that the ALP were dangerous and immature were mutually reinforcing as poor government decisions often result from ignorance or poor thinking. The manner in which this single *Star* article bolsters the message that Labour was not fit to govern is indicative of the consistently personalistic and aggressive news coverage exhibited by these papers on a daily basis.

The presentation of Labour as incompetent recurred throughout the *Star*’s political coverage. In a notable example, an editorial claimed the new PLM government would be more tolerant of an Opposition because of the party’s ‘higher intelligence level among the members and their superior breeding’.<sup>348</sup> While it is a fact that Walter’s Cabinet contained more graduates, the language around ‘higher breeding’ reflects an insidious rhetoric of difference and judgement. Nothing as explicit and offensive as this had been published in the *Star* or *Voice* prior to this period and this indicates the presence of pernicious polarisation. Firstly, this terminology is an unprecedentedly offensive smear on the character of Labour leaders and by extension their supporters. This is particularly noticeable in a society experiencing the horrendous effects of racism which is often predicated on pseudoscientific ideas about a link between ethnicity and intelligence. Secondly, the language of ‘higher breeding’ attempts to establish material differences between Labour and the PLM. To do so would make the gulf between the parties permanent and unbridgeable. This is an extreme example of the routine methods of group identity entrenchment where differences between groups are emphasised beyond reason, especially at times when such identities are most salient such as the aftermath of an election.<sup>349</sup> The language used by the *Star*, not to mention the confidence with which even the editor invoked offensive and discriminatory language, shows the great extent to which pernicious polarisation had become an embedded and insidious component of Antiguan political culture.

The incompetence rhetoric continued right up to the 1976 election and was parroted by party publications as well as the media. The PLM’s 1976 Election Manifesto opens with a foreword by Walter in which he refers to the pre-1971 period as ‘a barren political landscape’.<sup>350</sup> He goes on to

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<sup>345</sup> “ALP-ATLU still on the campaign”, *Antigua Star*, 17 April, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>346</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 19.

<sup>347</sup> McCoy, Rahman, and Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy," 22.

<sup>348</sup> “New Government must be tolerant of Opposition”, *Antigua Star*, 24 February, 1971, J1642, ANA.

<sup>349</sup> Nicola Gennaioli, and Guido Tabellini, “Identity, Beliefs, and Political Conflict”, *SSRN*, Dec 31, 2018, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3300726>, 6.

<sup>350</sup> PLM Election Manifesto, 1976, VHPC, 1.

claim that Labour were 'incapable, intellectually and pragmatically, of leading the people.'<sup>351</sup> This echoes the rhetoric of intelligence and aptitude discussed earlier and again reflects a highly personalised form of political antagonism. Again, while earlier party political publications had slandered the character of opposition politicians, the focus on qualities like intelligence was unprecedented and indicates a serious upsurge in polarisation.

Beyond the partisan media, pernicious polarisation may be seen in the dramatic escalation of methods of party recruitment and support in the post-1971 period. A notable new mechanism of entrenching party support within communities was to turn attention to children and mobilise party support early in life. Efforts to bring children into the 'political party family' were seen throughout the Caribbean in this period. In Jamaica in 1968 the People's National Party set up the PNP Youth Organisation while in 1970 Bruce Golding co-founded Jamaica Youth as an arm of the Jamaica Labour Party.<sup>352</sup> Guyana saw the establishment of two youth movements, each aligned to one of the political parties: the Progressive Youth Organisation supporting the PPP and the Young Socialist Movement supporting the PNC.<sup>353</sup> In Dominica, the Dominica Freedom Movement established the Young Freedom Movement which mobilised young people to support and join the party throughout the 1970s.<sup>354</sup>

In Antigua, the most effective political youth movements were established by the Labour party as part of their opposition-era renewal. Labour established two island-wide youth organisations with local bodies that mirrored the structure of the ALP and the ATLU. The ALP Youth Movement (ALPYM) was led by 'dynamic and forceful young men and women' with the aim of securing party loyalty among children while the ATLU Junior Executive recreated the Union's structure for young would-be activists.<sup>355</sup> From the start, convention dictated that Labour-supporting parents would send their children to join Labour youth organisations - one political activist told me that in this respect youth groups reflected religious youth groups, with children's participation depending on the affiliation of the parents.<sup>356</sup> Youth movements were therefore less about widening the party's appeal and more about solidifying support among existing members and actively trying to make the societal polarisation of Antigua permanent. Seeing to entrench the division of a society is a sign of pernicious polarisation as it shows politicians seeking to secure their own positions at the expense of social unity and harmony.

Being in the ALPYM was akin to membership of a club, with the party colour (red) and logo (flaming torch) becoming symbols of group and individual identity. The wide dissemination of symbols among children is an example of what Levitsky et al call efforts to 'cultivate strong partisan identities' - the first mechanism crucial to party survival.<sup>357</sup> The application of this mechanism to children, who could not vote, had several perceived benefits for the ALP. First, children were told to encourage their Labour-supporting parents to vote in elections. This constituted an ongoing 'get out the vote' campaign designed to overcome the problem of low voter turnout. It is interesting that this implies that by 1976 Labour did not attempt to convert PLM supporters, but relied heavily on

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<sup>351</sup> PLM Election Manifesto, 1976, VHPC, 1.

<sup>352</sup> "It's Bruce's Turn," *BBC Caribbean*, BBC, Sept 11, 2007, accessed Aug 29, 2020, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news/story/2007/09/070911\\_goldingprofile.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news/story/2007/09/070911_goldingprofile.shtml).

<sup>353</sup> Ralph Premads, "Competitive Party Organizations and Political Integration in a Racially Fragmented State: The Case of Guyana," *Caribbean Studies* 12, no.4 (1973): 21.

<sup>354</sup> "Dominica - Politics", *GlobalSecurity.org*, accessed May 26, 2020, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/caribbean/do-politics.htm>.

<sup>355</sup> Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, 97.

<sup>356</sup> Interview 12, November 2019.

<sup>357</sup> Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyke, *Challenges of Party Building in Latin America*, 10.

maximising turnout among their own supporters to win the election. The 95 percent turnout in 1976 implies this tactic was at least helpful in boosting turnout and contributing to the Labour victory. Secondly, cultivating partisan identities among children laid a foundation for reliable future party support. Crucially, voters who had already been groomed to develop partisan loyalties would be more susceptible to conventional forms of voter manipulation such as the printed media echo-chamber, slander of the opposition, and bribery or encouragement through job offers. This was particularly important following the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1975.<sup>358</sup> Thirdly, Labour's youth groups served as training grounds for new recruits into the party leadership structure - recruits which from an early age were drilled in strict adherence to the party line, veneration of its leaders, and clear-cut antipathy towards members of other parties. Simultaneously, the Junior Executive of the ATLU performed a similar function with regards to industrial relations and trade union affairs.<sup>359</sup> Lester Bird directly credited this youth mobilisation by the ALP with their 'razor-thin margin of victory' in 1976.<sup>360</sup>

The targeting of children by political parties continues today, with parties giving book-bags and lunchboxes to school children for the purposes of inculcating party identity through the dissemination of party logos and symbols.<sup>361</sup> Such donations also bribe or gain the gratitude of parents whilst serving as free advertising for the party. Expanding the 'party family' to include children helps to explain the longevity of political loyalty, particularly the devout veneration of Bird which continues among many, even 21 years after his death.<sup>362</sup> Targeting children in this way reveals pernicious polarisation as it actively undermines social cohesion for party political purposes. Placing the long-term strength of a party above national unity epitomises partyism as it implies that the unity of the party is more important than the unity of the nation.

## The Election Result

The effect of five years of pernicious polarisation were clearly noticeable in the 1976 General Election. Firstly, the turnout of 95 percent remains the highest ever in Antiguan history.<sup>363</sup> This turnout resulted from five years of highly partisan media, the politicisation of children, tightening of party control and use of victimisation or supporter-reward, and the experience of a more extreme and authoritarian political culture. These phenomena eroded the middle ground in Antiguan politics and pushed almost everyone into one of two party groups. In such a perniciously polarised community, one simply could not avoid becoming political and engaging in elections. The tendency for pernicious polarisation to couch political discourse in terms of group and national survival gave urgency to political participation - creating a sense that one must act and vote or risk imperilling one's community.

A second notable feature of this election is the near-unprecedented absence of minor and third parties. In the four general elections since 1951 there had always been a handful of candidates representing an issue-party or a minority group voter-targeting party. These included the middle-class

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<sup>358</sup> Representation of the People Act, Antigua, 1975.

<sup>359</sup> Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, 97.

<sup>360</sup> Bird, *The Comeback Kid*, 91.

<sup>361</sup> Interview with ex-minister, November 2019; and personal observations, November & December 2019.

<sup>362</sup> This is made abundantly apparent through any conversation with most Antiguan. Personal experience, November 2019.

<sup>363</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past election results, 1951-2014".

Antigua National Party in 1956, the pro-democracy Antigua Democratic Labour Party in 1960, and the Antigua Progressive Party in 1971.<sup>364</sup> Though these parties never won a seat, their campaigns were an effort to introduce debate into the political arena, challenge the status quo, and represent particular interests such as middle-class and professional concerns in contrast with the working-class block control of Parliament. In 1976, there were no other choices than the two parties except for Barbuda where the independent and wildly popular Barbudan nationalist Claude Earl Francis was elected. While the Westminster System and First Past the Post voting system create major challenges for small parties, as various scholars have pointed out, the total absence of third parties in Antigua in 1976 illustrates just what proportions polarisation had reached.

Firstly, societal polarisation made it nearly impossible for new parties to establish themselves because society was already so divided between two opposing groups. By 1976, 'party' was such a powerful part of social identity that those who did not belong to one's own party were deemed to be 'the other' and treated as a threat. There was effectively no mental bandwidth available in the Antiguan electorate for a new party to emerge. Secondly, the nature of political debate in Antigua had shifted so as to make ideology or issue-driven parties irrelevant. As has been shown, by 1976 party-political polarisation had moved the terms of political debate away from policy or ideology and focused it entirely on personality and party. This shift ruled out the development of issue-based or pressure group parties in the 1976 election. Finally and relatedly, the collapse of third parties was facilitated by polarisation because the removal of ideology, class, and other political and social issues from the political arena meant that middle-class groups could easily be co-opted into one of the two larger parties. This happened when Rowan Henry's middle-class Antigua People's Party merged with the ALP in 1974. This contraction of Antigua's political space further demonstrates the demise of traditional bases of political thought such as ideology and the indomitable rise of partyism as the only axis in Antiguan political culture.

As well as high turnout and the absence of small parties, the 1976 election was marked by a near-perfect split of the electorate between the PLM and the ALP. In 1976, 24,879 votes were cast, of which 245 were cast for three independent candidates in Barbuda. The remaining 24,634 Antiguan votes were all cast for either PLM or ALP candidates.<sup>365</sup> The ALP got 12,056 votes to the PLM's 12,268, meaning there was a difference of 212 votes or 0.87 percent between the two parties.<sup>366</sup> The unrepresentative nature of the first-past-the-post constituency voting system meant that the ALP's 49.01 percent vote share translated into 65 percent of seats. The near-perfect dissection of voters between the PLM and ALP typifies the polarisation of Antigua around 1976; by this time the polarisation of Antigua was so complete that almost no Antiguan could avoid being supporters of either the ALP or PLM and demonstrating that support publicly through participating in the election.

## Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that between 1971 and 1976 Antiguan political culture became perniciously polarised. Political and societal polarisation prior to the 1971 General Election had divided Antiguan society between supporters of Labour and the PLM. Party membership eclipsed other markers of identity and became the overriding categorisation by which Antiguan identified

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<sup>364</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past election results, 1951-2014".

<sup>365</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past election results, 1951-2014".

<sup>366</sup> "Antigua and Barbuda: Past election results, 1951-2014".



themselves. The ascension of the PLM to government and the relegation of Labour to opposition ushered in a reformatory period whereby the leadership of both parties took action to secure their positions of control and internal dominance. At the same time, both sides underwent an authoritarian shift whereby more extreme action was regarded as not only acceptable but necessary to ensure party survival. In the five years of PLM government fundamental principles of party and union separation, constitutionalism, and law and order were sacrificed in pursuit of party survival at any cost. The consequence of this partyism was a deepening of the ‘us versus them’ cleavage in Antiguan society which is shown by the high turnout and perfect split of voters in the 1976 election. Antagonism, antipathy, and distrust were established as defining features of Antiguan political culture. Reflecting on this, King Short Shirt echoed the sentiments of the quote with which this chapter opened, and lamented that partyism had turned Antigua into a land of “Hatred, injustice, greed and vengeance.”<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> King Short Shirt, “Lamentations”, *Social Commentaries Classics: Part One*, A&B Records, 1991 (Fist performed 1973).

## Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the emergence of party politics in Antigua, and its polarising effect on Antiguan society. Party politics began in 1967 with a schism in the labour movement dividing working people between support of Bird's old anti-colonial vanguard and Walter's new rejuvenated workers' struggle. This cleavage quickly became emotionally charged, particularly with political rhetoric drawing on religious and nationalist tropes of bad-mindedness and treachery. Through such language, political debate in Antigua was articulated in terms of personality, with the character of individual leaders and their parties becoming the focus of attack or defence. This led to an ideology of partyism with the overriding objective of empowering the party at any cost. Soon political polarisation gave way to societal polarisation when almost all areas of daily life became infected by partyism, ranging from applying for jobs to children's clubs. Gradually, this societal polarisation, enhanced echo-chamber thinking in the partisan media, and heightened efforts to inculcate party identity among members helped to bring about a state of pernicious polarisation. Firmly in place after the 1971 election, pernicious polarisation closed off any remaining opportunities for political compromise and partyism began to have serious and long term detrimental effects on Antiguan governance and society. This is demonstrated by the enactment of unconstitutional laws, a marked shift towards authoritarianism within both parties, and the escalation of political intimidation to the level of terrorism by the Antigua Freedom Fighters by 1976.

Understanding the development of polarisation in the 1960s and 1970s is of great importance because its long-term effects are still being felt. Most importantly, pernicious polarisation and the demise of cooperation and debate has led to a high degree of political sterility in Antigua. Throughout the 1970s no creative political solutions were generated to deal with the social and economic challenges Antigua faced. The issue of foreign-ownership in the tourism industry was never resolved and to this day remains the dominant feature of Antigua's economy. Just as noticeably, party-political polarisation remains the dominant feature of Antiguan's sense of identity and contributes to profound and often moving instances of social discord ranging from childhood bullying to family feuds.

But was it inevitable that Antigua's political culture developed the way it did between 1967 and 1976? The foregoing has shown that the rise of polarisation was to a high degree the product of purposeful decisions taken by individual political leaders. The reactions of working people were largely engineered to have the specific effect of entrenching animosity between the membership of the two parties and thereby strengthening the internal position of party leaders. In practically every instance, Antigua's political leaders took the "wrong" decision and acted to perpetuate polarisation, either on purpose or through accident. For example, in 1967 and 1968 Bird had many opportunities to heal the growing labour schism. He could, for instance, have publicly issued an immediate and full explanation of Walter's dismissal and tried to carry union and public support rather than insisting on autocratic control of the ATLU. Similarly, he could have attempted reconciliation with Walter and his supporters rather than instigating a personalised media campaign against him and Halstead. Hindsight makes such things obvious and in 1967 Bird was operating in a truly unprecedented situation. Nonetheless, the failure or refusal of Bird to recognise the scale and emotional nature of Walter's support may well be the greatest missed opportunity of Antigua's modern history.

Faced with a choice between escalation and deescalation, Walter and his supporters also routinely chose the former option. This is most apparent in their time in government. For example, Walter's purposeful efforts to extend his personal control over the PLM restricted debate and

discussion in the party leadership which in turn encouraged more extreme and closed-minded thinking at government level. The opposite would have been beneficial - to maximise diversity of opinion in Cabinet and generate policies built in the spirit of compromise and conciliation which could have attempted to bring the Antiguan people together. Though initially motivated by good intentions, both Bird and Walter, and their successors, have continued a long legacy of authoritarian island-rulers which has its roots in the colonial planters and Governors.

Ultimately, the reason these opportunities were lost was the propensity for Antiguan political culture to conceive of politics as a winner-takes-all game where there is no room for opposing or dissenting voices. This winner-takes-all culture was derived from the Westminster System which prioritises securing a simple majority of seats in the elected legislature to form a functioning and powerful government. Manfred Schmidt is not alone in pointing out that while majoritarian rule can generate innovative, decisive politics, it can also cause confrontation, hostility, and destabilisation.<sup>368</sup> Another flaw of the Westminster System that is exposed in small places is the weak separation of powers between the legislature and the executive. Where the Cabinet is not completely outnumbered by the legislative chambers (as it is in the UK), there is no meaningful check on executive power. This facilitates the passage of legislation like the 1972 Newspaper Acts which otherwise would be regarded as extreme. The presence of these innate flaws in the political system means that Antigua was acutely vulnerable to absolutist, extremist, and authoritarian politics from the start. When party politics emerged in 1968, polarisation was very *likely* and when political leaders then actively pursued partyist policies, polarisation became *inevitable*. It can be argued, then, that polarisation in Antigua resulted from both a poorly suited political system for a small island *and* a political class intent on pursuing a policy of partyism over and above any ideology or principle.

This dissertation has also pointed to the need to consider how polarisation continued after 1976 and in what ways it has shaped Antiguan political culture into the present day. Most importantly, it is essential to assess how a partyism and pernicious polarisation influenced public debate and official negotiations in the run up to independence in 1981. The settlement agreed upon in 1981 was and remains controversial, particularly in its handling of Barbuda. It is important to know if partyism impacted how Barbuda was treated in negotiations between Antigua and Britain and if pernicious polarisation shaped the Antiguan side of those negotiations. Such questions have modern day implications because the rights of Barbudans and the relationship between Barbuda and Antigua are a major topic of debate today. Within this must be engagement with the fact that only the ALP has been a constant of Antiguan politics - every election has seen the opposition party collapse and reform itself into a new organisation. This distinguishes Antigua from the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean and likely had an impact on Independence negotiations.

As well as potentially influencing independence, partyism has posed a number of long-term challenges for Antigua in the postcolonial period. Partyism and pernicious polarisation are threads that link together ongoing issues such as corruption, economic inequality, colourism, and social disunity. Understanding political culture and its relationship with other forms of culture and identity in Antigua are essential to provide possible solutions to these challenges and forge a new and more optimistic path forward. The opportunity for further research in these and other topics is therefore extensive. It is hoped that this dissertation serves as motivation for further investigation, fundamentally prompting more questions than it answers.

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<sup>368</sup> Manfred Schmidt, "Political performance and types of democracy: Findings from comparative studies," *European Journal of Political Research* 41, no.1, (2002): 152.

## Appendices

### **Appendix i: Timeline of Relevant Events**

- 1939 - Moyne Commission arrives in Antigua, **ATLU established**
- 1943 - Bird becomes ATLU President, *Workers' Voice* begins printing
- 1945 - Bird elected to the Legislative Assembly for the first time
- 1946 - Bird nominated to the Executive Council
- 1951 - **Universal Suffrage Introduced**
- 1956 - 'Committee Government' introduced; Bird as Chairman for Trade and Production
- 1960 - Ministerial Government introduced; **Bird appointed Chief Minister**
- 1967 - **Associated Statehood** (27 Feb), Walter dismissed as General Secretary of the ATLU (May)
- 1968 - Civil Unrest & State of Emergency (March), **PLM established** & wins 4 by-elections (Aug)
- 1971 - **PLM win general election**
- 1972 - Newspaper Acts and Public Order Act passed, Sugar Industry closed down
- 1976 - **ALP win election**
- 1978 - ALP signal to UK they will campaign for independence
- 1980 - Parties campaign for independence, ALP win election, Constitutional Conference in London
- 1981 - **Independence**
- 1993 - Bird resigns as ALP leader, replaced by Lester Bird, and retires from public life

## Appendix ii: Antigua's political structure prior to Associated Statehood in 1967

Element	1956 Constitution	1960/61 Reforms	Notes
Administrator	Representative of the Monarch; Head of State.		Alec Lovelace (1954-58), Ian Turbott (1958-64), David Rose (1964-66)
Chief Minister	Position nonexistent. The Colonial Administrator was head of the Executive and had direct governmental powers.	Position of Chief Minister created. Chief Minister appointed by virtue of majority support in the Legislative Assembly.  Governmental powers transferred from Administrator to Chief Minister.	V C Bird was Chief Minister from 1960
Executive Council (EC)	'Committee' government  Specialised 'committees' or departments were overseen by Chairmen appointed by the Administrator. Three of these had to be from elected members of the Legislative Assembly.	Ministerial Government is fully established.  All ministers are now chosen by the Chief Minister.  Ministers for Labour and Finance to be chosen from among elected members of LA.	Bird was chairman for Trade and Production in the Committee System  Bird became Chief Minister from 1960
Legislative Assembly (LA)	13 members: 8 elected and 4 appointed by the Governor.	Elected seats increased from 8 to 10. Nominated reduced to 2.	ATLU won all elected seats.
The Electorate	Voting restrictions abolished in 1951. All Antiguan 21 years and older allowed to vote.	All Antiguan 21 years and older allowed to vote.	

**Appendix iii: Antigua’s political structure established by the 1967 Constitution  
(Associated Statehood)**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Governor	Representative of the Monarch; Head of State.	Wilfred Jacobs was made the first Governor and the first black ‘chief executive’ of Antigua in 1967.
Premier (Prime Minister after 1981)	The Governor is obliged to appoint as Premier the member of the House of Representatives most able to command the confidence of that House. (62.2) The Premier is invited to form a Government by advising the Governor on appointing members of the Senate and House to a Cabinet. (62.3)	Vere Cornwall Bird, 1967-1971 George Walter, 1971-1976 Vere Cornwall Bird, 1976-1981
Cabinet	“Other ministers” to be appointed by Governor on advice of Premier for responsibilities at the discretion of the Premier (61.1) Ministers may be from the Senate or the House. The Cabinet forms the government, responsible for the management of the state.	The Premier could also appoint Permanent Parliamentary Secretaries from the House to support the work of Ministers. PPSs were entitled to attend Cabinet.
Senate	The “Upper House”, approval required for all bills except ‘money bills’. The Senate may not refuse a bill twice in consecutive Parliaments. 10 members, serving for the duration of the Parliament, appointed by the Governor; 7 on the advice of the Premier, 3 at the discretion of the Governor (in practice, this meant after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.) Presided over by a non-government President elected by and from Senators.	The Senate was dissolved and re-appointed at each election. There were no ‘crossbenchers’ and all positions were party political.  Simple majority voting.
House of Representatives	The “Lower House”, responsible for introducing and approving all legislation.  MPs elected by single-member constituencies by FPTP, serving for the duration of the Parliament.  Presided over by a non-government Speaker elected by and from MPs.	Single-member constituencies determined by a Constituencies Commission. At the time of introduction in 1967 there were 10 constituencies, 13 in 1968, and 17 from 1971 onwards.  Simple majority voting.
Electorate	Comprising all Antiguan 21 years and older.	

## Abbreviations

ABDM - Antigua Barbuda Democratic Movement  
ADF - Antigua Defence Force  
AFF - Antigua Freedom Fighters  
ALP - Antigua Labour Party  
ALPYM - Antigua Labour Party Youth Movement  
ANA - Antigua National Archive  
ANP - Antigua National Party  
ATLU - Antigua Trades and Labour Union  
AWU - Antigua Workers Union  
BGR - British Government Representative (to the West Indian Associated States)  
CCL - Caribbean Congress of Labour  
PLM - Progressive Labour Movement  
TNA - The National Archives (UK)  
VHPC - Vernon Hall Private Collection

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