



The Antigua and Barbuda High Commission

Official Newsletter - Issue 130 -- November/December 2008

Cariforum-EU EPA ready for implementation

Prime Minister, Baldwin Spencer, has announced that the Cariforum-EU EPA has been ratified and is poised to enter the implementation phase.

During his presentation in Parliament, PM Spencer acknowledged that many stakeholders have expressed that they do not know enough about the agreement.

He said the process of implementation is a long, ongoing one and people will be engaged in many EPA discussions in the months to come.

“The trade and commerce sector of the Ministry of Finance will be having continuous public engagements with stakeholders,” PM Spencer said.

According to Michele Lowe, senior co-ordinator for hemispheric and bilateral relations in the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), ratification is the first step to legally incorporating commitments into law.

While many believe that signing the Cariforum-EU EPA in mid-October was the first step to binding Antigua and Barbuda to the agreement legally, Lowe told the Antigua Sun that one cannot have “entry into force” of an agreement, unless there is ratification.

Antigua and Barbuda, Lowe said, is now legally bound to make sure it does not do anything to frustrate the spirit of the EPA.

Entry into force will not come right away, Lowe stated, it will only come when both sides complete the ratification process.

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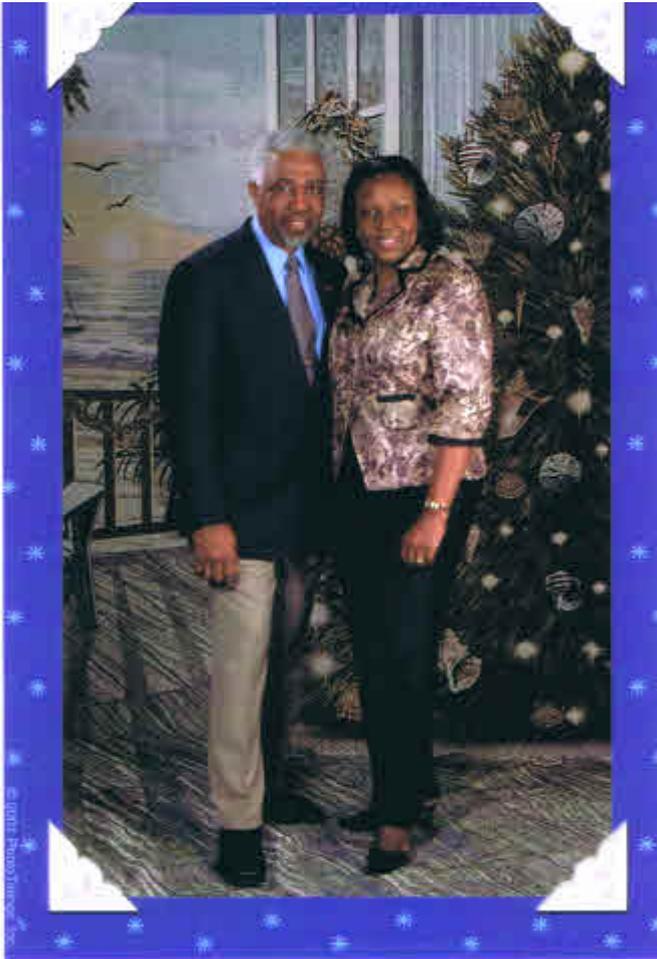


Governor-General H. E. Dame Louise Lake-Tack inspecting the Guard of Honour at the Independence Day celebrations

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HIGH COMMISSIONER'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE DECEMBER 2008



His Excellency and Mrs Roberts

Another twelve months have past and as we take time out to think of our own families near to us and those family members far from us, let us also bear in mind the words of our Lord "love thy neighbour as thyself". Let us take time to think of others who during what would normally be a happy and festive period are devoid of much happiness. They may have lost their jobs, their homes or family members or maybe one of more of the above. To them the desire to celebrate the joyous commemoration of the birth of the Saviour of the world has waned. There is instead sadness, emptiness and heartache.

I was watching a movie with my wife one December evening and was warmed by the friendly gesture of a family who received a US Vietnam Veteran into their home and brought back into his life happiness and warmth, love and laughter. In return he brought hope and the joy of Christmas. Sometimes we have to be reminded that it is necessary to give in order to receive. A small mustard seed cannot turn into a tree until and unless it gives up its body as food for the young shoot.

In the world today, there is so much fear and uncertainty. The plans which we would have painstakingly made for a bright future have gone up in smoke. Our savings and pension have lost significant values. Should we not be calling to mind our Lord's admonition not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth? Yet, we, like the farmer in another story related in the Bible, feel the need to provide our own assurance of the future without the help of Jesus.

Some time ago someone circulated this message by George Carlin which reminds me of the world today:

"The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider Freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom. We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbour. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time

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when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete...

Remember; spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever. Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember, to say, 'I love you' to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.

Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

I therefore take this opportunity to wish each of you on behalf of my family and me, the staff of the High Commission and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May God continue to bless and protect each and everyone of you now and in 2009.

H.E Dr Carl B. Roberts

Government Announces New Benefit Programme for two Vulnerable Groups in Society

The Government of Prime Minister the Hon. Baldwin Spencer has announced another benefit programme to assist two vulnerable groups in the society.

During the presentation of the 2009 Speech from the Throne on Monday, 24th November, Governor-General Dame Louise Lake-Tack announced that the government, in conjunction with PDC Caribe Antigua and Barbuda, will be introducing an initiative called the People's Benefit Programme which will offer tangible assistance in the form of a monthly benefit to the disabled and the economically disadvantaged.

Dame Louise outlined that the project involves the issuance of a special debit card to programme beneficiaries which will be used to purchase food and personal household items at the

Central Marketing Corporation and the Fisheries Complex during the initial stages of the programme. The project is expected to be expanded later to supermarkets owned by citizens throughout Antigua and Barbuda.

"The project is targeted at some 2,000 individuals of which, approximately 500 will fall in the disabled category, with the remainder comprising disadvantaged households. The Peoples Benefit Card will be issued in conjunction with a local indigenous bank, the ABI Bank and will require the placement of point of sale debit card swipe machines to process payments at the respective merchants. The merchants would be guaranteed same day processing of payment as with any commercial debit or credit card," Dame Louise announced.

Each month every recipient's card will be topped up to the value of EC\$200 dollars with the unused portion of the monthly benefit expiring at the end of each month.

Commenting on the project, Prime Minister Spencer said that this programme follows the Senior Citizens Utility Subsidy Programme which provides financial assistance to senior

citizens on the payment of their utility bills. "Once again we are able to use the funds associated with the Petro Caribe Initiative to come to the assistance of the most vulnerable in our society. My government is once again demonstrating that we are serious about putting people first. Our programmes are designed to ensure that every citizen including our disabled and elderly live comfortable lives," said the Prime Minister.

"With over 2000 persons benefiting from this new programme, my government is ensuring that we positively impact the disposable income and quality of life of the disabled and the economically disadvantaged," he noted.

At a monthly subsidy of EC\$200 per person the project is estimated to cost the Government some EC\$4.8M annually.

Government has already appointed a nine-member committee made up of stakeholders from several civic and non-governmental organizations to oversee the programme. This committee will have final approval of all applications to the programme.



May this Christmas bring you an abundance of joy and happiness.

We wish you a very prosperous New Year



Work on Public Library continues

The Honourable Bertrand Joseph, Minister of Education recently remarked that despite the unfavourable weather conditions, work on the National Public Library is progressing smoothly.

According to the Minister, contractors have already put on the roof on the

western section of the building. He continued, "Once that has been completed, they will start the plastering and then move on to the eastern section where they will also put on the roof. The construction is coming along nicely in terms of the timeline that we have identified for the completion of the project."

Minister Joseph also said that he is heartened that every time he visits the site, contractors are very busy at work.

Project Manager Zenworth Davis said besides the recent weather conditions, there are challenges with respect to the correction of certain work on the building, which had not received any work for some time. He said they are working seriously to correct the areas, which were not taken into consideration since the project was priced based on the bill of quantity.

Passport Procedures for first-time applicants

Please note that effective immediately, all first-time applicants for Antigua and Barbuda passport must be interviewed (in person at the High Commission or by telephone) and the following documents (in addition to birth certificates etc.) have to be produced:

1. The parents of applicants under age 16 must be interviewed and a copy of their photograph identification (e.g. passport) be produced for our records.
2. Applicants over age 16, if claiming citizenship by

3. All applicants must provide the name of a Referee in Antigua and Barbuda known by the applicant or his/her parent.

REMINDER

RENEWALS

An application can also be submitted on your next visit to Antigua or you could authorise (written authorisation) a family member or friend living in or travelling to Antigua to do so on your behalf. Please note that, if the applicant is not resident in Antigua and the application is submitted directly in Antigua (and

descent, will need to provide a copy of the parent's photo identification (e.g. passport) through whom entitlement to citizenship is obtained.

not through the High Commission) the application form must be certified by the appropriate person resident in Antigua (See section 9 and note 6 of Form M **OR** Section 9 and note 7 of Form L).

LEGALIZATION (Apostille)

Please note that all non-Antiguan and Barbudan documents have to be legalized, which in the UK can be done by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (www.fco.gov.uk). Only certified copies/original documents are acceptable. Please see notes.

APPLICATION FORMS

Application forms can be downloaded from the Government's website www.antiguabarbuda.gov.ag or from the High Commission's website www.antigua-barbuda.com

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Contrary to statements made about Antigua and Barbuda's legal entry into the Cariforum-EU EPA, Lowe told the SUN that, "Antigua and Barbuda is not the last to ratify; it is the second country to ratify. All others have done provisional applications."

In these countries, what was needed was just a Cabinet note, which is passed through Cabinet, after which the other side (in this case the EU) is notified that the necessary procedures have been put into place to provisionally apply the agreement.

Antigua and Barbuda's laws do not allow it to undertake provisional application; therefore, the EPA was fast-forwarded to the ratification process.

Lowe said there is much to do after the ratification which will allow Antigua and Barbuda to fully implement its obligations and commitments under the EPA. **Source: Antigua Sun**

Philip Campbell, New Deputy Commissioner of Police

A new Deputy Commissioner of Police has been appointed to join the executive team of the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda.

Philip Campbell fills the fourth and final position of the team, a position previously held by Acting Commissioner Thomas Bennette.

Campbell, a Canadian, brings a wealth of experience to his new position with over 35 years experience in law enforcement. At the conclusion of his formal education, he enrolled as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Following basic training in Regina and Saskatchewan, he was posted to the "J" division, Province of New Brunswick. In addition, Inspector Everton Jeffers has been officially announced as head of the police's Strategic Communications department (Stratcom).

Jeffers is filling the post left vacant by Inspector Cornelius Charles almost two weeks ago. Jeffers has been an officer in the Royal Antigua and Barbuda Police Force for almost 26 years. He has worked in a number of departments in the Force, including the Special Patrol Group (SPG), the Narcotics Department and the Immigration Department, which was once a department of the Force. Jeffers is presently a part of the long-standing Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) investigation team.

New trade agreement with Canada on the horizon

Antigua and Barbuda, under the umbrella of CARICOM, is preparing to embark on negotiations of yet another trade agreement, this time with Canada.

The CARICOM-Canada (CARIBCAN) agreement will be one in which the rules that govern free trade, as determined by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), will inform any future trading between CARICOM member states and Canada.

Under the CARIBCAN agreement, Canada has pledged CDN\$600 million to CARICOM members for assistance in those countries, which properly identify the specific areas where development support is being sought.

This is similar to negotiations under the recently ratified Cariforum-EU EPA, whereby the EU pledged 165 million Euros to Cariforum, to be funded through the European Development Fund (EDF).

Both these funds, however, will be distributed, more or less, on a "first come first serve" basis, a point which Trade Co-ordinator, Ambassador Dr. Clarence Henry has emphasised as being the reason why Antigua and Barbuda must try hard to stay ahead in organising its demands.

"We must ensure that Antigua and Barbuda takes its planning activities to the table first. In the past, when it came to regional resources, we tended to wait and acted late, while others had more or less, taken all and left none for us."

Some of the other aspects of the CARIBCAN agreement were discussed at Tuesday's meeting for various stakeholders.

Michele Lowe, senior trade policy advisor for the CRNM, presented an

overview of the CARIBCAN Agreement at that meeting.

One of the aspects of the proposed agreement involves an emphasis on "asymmetrical obligations", which mimics the "asymmetrical reciprocity" term used to describe trade concessions in the Cariforum-EU EPA.

Under previous trade agreements, countries like Antigua and Barbuda, were given special and differential treatment because of factors such as geographic and economic size, competitive ability and supply-side constraints.

Under the CARIBCAN, countries like Antigua and Barbuda will still receive differential treatment, but to a lesser degree as informed by this notion of "asymmetrical obligation".

Lowe also noted commitments to development of Caricom member states made on the part of Canada, which will manifest themselves in various ways including the delivery of technical and financial assistance to CARICOM.

*May you have the kind of Christmas that
beautiful memories are made of.*

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Commonwealth Countries League (CCL) Fair

On the 7th and 8th November 2008 Antigua and Barbuda was one of over 30 Commonwealth Countries participating at the CCL Fair held at the Kensington Town Hall.

“Since 1925 the Commonwealth Countries League has worked to promote the development, education and empowerment of women. Through its charity, the CCL Education Fund, formed in the 1960’s, it sponsors girls of proven potential

enabling them to complete their secondary or high school education where, without such help, they would be unable to do so.

The main funding for the charity comes from the annual Commonwealth Fair held in London during November. Donations are also received from companies and individuals but if the work is to continue and expand the organization needs all the help it can get.”

Source: <http://www.ccl-int.org.uk/education>



Mrs Pauline Roberts

Organizer of Antigua and Barbuda’s Stall and Committee Member of the Commonwealth Fair 2008

Our stall, as usual, featured Antigua made arts and crafts, Antigua rum, rum punch, fudge, sugar cakes, cakes, peanut sugar cakes and much more.



Antigua and Barbuda participates at Gourmet Food and Wine Expo

Antigua and Barbuda was represented for the first time at the 14th Gourmet Food and Wine Expo held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in Ontario, Canada from 20th - 23rd November.

The over 35,000 visitors sampled the culinary delights of the twin island state.

According to Erica Henry-Jackman, Sales and Marketing Manager for the Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Office (Canada), "This was the perfect opportunity for the Canadian Office to continue our very successful 15 month Culinary Tourism campaign, featuring Antigua's English Harbour Rum. It also allowed us to

further highlight the culinary geniuses of our chefs and their cuisines."

Appearing at the Antigua and Barbuda booth was Chef Wayne Forde. Forde has had a number of years experience as a chef and currently holds the position of Senior Sous Chef at The Verandah Resort, where he has worked since October 2007.

The menu showcased a range of Antiguan and Barbudan dishes over the four day period, which included pumpkin and ginger soup, salt fish cakes, corn bread and peas stew, veggi pepperpot and fungi, sugar cakes, and guava cheese.

Assisting him in preparing the dishes was Chef Keith Otto and Chef David Richards, who are both Antiguan chefs residing in Canada. Elmore Norris, another Antiguan who



Chef Wayne Forde

Senior Sous Chef at the Verandah Resort

resides in Canada, rounded off the team as the bartender.

Norris utilized the well-renowned English Harbour Rum to serve up cocktails.

The Gourmet Food and Wine Expo offers visitors an extensive array of fine wines and specialty foods from around the world.

Delores Lovell Scholarship Award launched

Tracy St. Aimee of the Mary E. Pigott School has become the first recipient of the "Delores Lovell" scholarship award, which will be given annually to high achievers of that institution.

The presentation was made to St. Aimee, who recently completed the Junior Secondary examination at the school's annual graduation exercise, by Sandra Lovell-West.

Mrs West, a daughter of the late Delores Lovell explained that the scholarship is in memory of her late mother who was taught by Mary E. Pigott, a woman who had a huge impact on her life while she attended the St. John's Girls' School.

"My mother attended the Girls' School and was impressed with the way in which Miss Pigott dealt with students,

and she attempted to pass that message on that it doesn't matter who you are or your background, you can attain greatness if you set your mind to achieve."

Latrisha Robinson, Kady Merrifield and Akeem Michael were the other students in the running for the award. They were all interviewed by a panel of judges, which included Kathleen Flax, niece of Mary E. Pigott, and were questioned on their future aspirations even as they prepare to proceed through secondary school.

The panel was said to be impressed with the responses given by the students, and spoke about how articulate and intelligent they all were, but St. Aimee stood out the most. She received a one thousand dollar scholarship, which has been placed in a fixed deposit. Mrs. West says it is to teach the student to "begin a life of thrift."

Additionally, the winner received a replica of a challenge trophy, which will be kept at the school, with the

name of the winner engraved as a high achiever. The other students were recipients of book prizes.

Chief Education Officer Jacintha Pringle fully endorses the scholarship award.

"It is a great motivation for grade six students, who need such citizens to assist them.

Many of them can do with the additional help, and once they know there are individuals who are willing to support them, they will strive to do better."

Mrs. Pringle pointed out that the Ministry of Education should make it its duty to track those high achievers through their school years. By so doing, she thinks it will "encourage them to maintain a high level of academic success."

Sandra Lovell-West who resides in Trinidad says she hopes to improve the scholarship offering in the future.

Governor-general visits Holberton

Governor-General Dame Louise Lake-Tack, on her annual visit to Holberton Hospital on Wednesday, 17 December was quick to spread some Christmas cheer and to commend the staff for their work during the year, most likely the last at that venue.

The inevitable move to Mount St. John was brought up from time to time during the ceremony's proceedings, which caused many to reflect on what Holberton Hospital has meant to Antigua over the years.

Health Minister John Maginley, stated, "What will be our legacy?...think of how many persons were born out of this hospital... How many have spent a sleepless night here concerned for

loved ones... How many people from other countries have been treated here..."

With that said, Maginley expressed his congratulations to the student nurses and staff at Holberton, who have kept on despite what Maginley called, people's insistence on "crying down" the institution.

Permanent Secretary at the Ministry, John Jarvis, touched on that point as well saying, "I feel badly when on the radio, people seem to take delight in bashing those who work at Holberton...Folks at Holberton go way beyond the call of duty not for remuneration but out of love."

Maginley also shared that while visiting Mount St. John's yesterday, he found some nurses in one of the rooms.

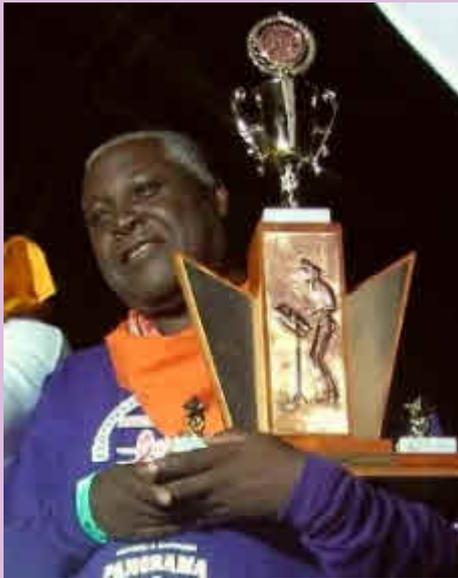
Maginley enquired what they were doing and was told that they were using their off time to practice on the new systems, so that they would be better prepared once the move to Mount St. John Medical Centre is opened.

He stated, "That's what dedication is all about."

Also, according to Maginley, he understands the impatience people feel when they are in emergency care or with their loved ones and it feels like too much time passes before they are seen.

He reminded those present that doctors and nurses are "not machines that can be plugged in and plugged out," but human beings.

He said, "Unless you have a true appreciation of what it takes to be a health care professional, you should not condemn them."



Antigua and Barbuda Steelpan Icon, Leroy "Jughead" Gordon, Passes Away at 61

The steelband fraternity and other community members of Antigua and Barbuda will greatly miss one of its well-known steelband cultural icons Leroy "Jughead" Gordon, who passed away on Thursday, November 13, 2008 after ailing for some time.

Gordon, who was a founding member of the Harmonites International Steel Orchestra reportedly succumbed to heart failure linked to cancer complications at the Winter's Medical Clinic in Antigua. Gordon was still actively involved with the Harmonites Steelband.

A former president of the Antigua and Barbuda Pan Association - on November 3, the nation's 27th anniversary of Independence - Gordon had just been recognized for his lifelong contribution to the country's overall carnival culture, and the steel band art form. He was bestowed the honour of 'Officer of the Most Precious Order of Princely Heritage.'

Leroy "Jughead" Gordon will be missed by many.

Keva Margetson laid to rest

The Holy Family Roman Catholic Cathedral was overflowing with people who gathered to say goodbye to Keval Joan Margetson on Friday 5th December.

The service, led by Celebrant the Most Rev. Donald J. Reece and punctuated, as it were, by touches that were distinctly Keval flavoured, said a fitting farewell to a much-loved and respected woman.

Keval, who died on the 30th November following a five-month battle with colon cancer, was laid to rest in an atmosphere of thanksgiving and celebration.

From the sweetness of the breeze that flowed freely through the cathedral's wide open windows to the choice of hymns tunefully emitted from both choir and congregants, Keval's life was reviewed with thanks and praise.

Ushers, in national dress matched the attire of the choristers; the fabric that Keval felt was important enough to campaign for, reached even Bishop Reece's mitre and gown, the colours repeated in the single wreath, a mix of white anthuriums, lilies and light red roses resting upon the coffin.

Those blessed with the gift of having known Keval, nodded in agreement when adjectives like independent, panache, energy and serving were used to describe her and what her life stood for.

Those who did not know Keval or had merely received the blessing of an encounter with the spirited lady, gave testimony by their presence that she had nevertheless touched their lives.

Keval Margetson accompanied her parents from England to Antigua when she was six. The cute, smaller twin to Leslie and sister to Judy and Robin, started a love affair with Antigua to which she was ever faithful.

She was an inquisitive, industrious student who maintained throughout her life, a strong sense of family loyalty.

What people will take from her funeral service is a memory of a woman who, as D. Gisele Isaac said in her eulogy, squeezed every drop out of life.

Keval had a charisma that was integral to every organisation she worked for or gave her time voluntarily to.

As a founding member of Professional Organisation for Women in Antigua (POWA) she derived ways to keep the organisation alive and involved in matters pertinent to inhabitants of the country she loved.

Isaac remarked that working with the Bank of Antigua, Keval's conscientiousness would have people convinced that the bank was Keval's and not Sir R. Allen Stanford's.

Bishop Reece in his homily paid tribute to Keval as a woman who lived life just as Jesus instructed that we should.

He shared with listeners Keval's practice of spending solitary moments of prayer in the sanctuary of the Cathedral.



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA ADDS EXCITEMENT TO WORLD TRAVEL MARKET

To thank its trade and media partners for their partnership and support during 2008, the Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office hosted a variety of exciting events in the run up to World Travel Market, the largest UK travel event of the year

along the River Thames on board The Silver Barracuda for their Annual Appreciation Party. The event was a fun-filled evening of rum punch, good food and traditional Antigua hospitality!

Over one hundred UK-based travel agents, tour operators, airline representatives, hotel partners and members of the press joined senior representatives from the twin island nation, including Mrs. Sharon Peters, Permanent Secretary, Carol Hay, Director of



Minister Harold Lovell at the World Travel Market (WTM) with HE Dr Carl Roberts, High Commissioner for Antigua and Barbuda on his left and on his right - HE Mr Paul Farquarhson, High Commissioner for The Bahamas and Mrs Pauline Roberts



'Lionel Ritchie' flanked by Tourism staff - left to right are Cherrie Osborne, Carol Hay and Joyce Fyfe

Capital of the Eastern Caribbean', highlighting its many sporting events, festivals and the second Romantic Rhythms Music Festival to be held from 5-7 June, 2009.

On Sunday 9 November Antigua and Barbuda's efforts were recognized by Virgin Holidays who presented the Tourist Office with its Bronze Award for "Best Destination Partnership."

On Tuesday 11 November at World Travel Market, the Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office provided on-stand entertainment for Partners and UK media over drinks and traditional Caribbean delicacies. Guest

held at Excel in London between 10 and 14 November.

To start off the celebrations, on Thursday 6 November the Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office set sail

Tourism for the UK and Europe, as well as one of Antigua and Barbuda's most famous sons, cricket celebrity, Ambassador Richie Richardson.



Carol Hay, Director of Tourism UK & Europe

Carol Hay thanked the partners for their continued support and twelve lucky raffle guests received a bottle of premium champagne and the much sought after 5 year old English Harbour Antigua rum. Carol used the occasion to promote the Islands' focus for 2009 as the 'Events



(Above, right) Sir Viv Richards and HE Dr Carl Roberts at the WTM

appearances included cricketing legends Sir Vivian Richards and Richie Richardson, and a very special 'Lionel Richie' who



Carol Hay, Director of Tourism UK & Europe commented: "2008 has been an eventful year for Antigua and Barbuda and we were very grateful for the support received at this year's World Travel Market from partners and the media.

This event provides the Antigua and Barbuda Tourist Office with the opportunity to create awareness of the destination and allows us to strengthen our partner relationships and gain new contacts. The event also provides us with an opportunity to thank those who have worked with us during the year at our annual Partners Appreciation Party. We are very pleased with the outcome of this year's event and look forward to working with every



Visitors to the Antigua and Barbuda Stand at the World Travel Market was given Antigua-style hospitality

serenaded the guests with a rendition of the well known song 'Hello' to promote the destination's exciting Calendar of Events for 2009, including the Romantic Rhythms Music Festival. Carol stated, "We have a host of talented musicians in Antigua and the Music Festival enables us to showcase our local talent along with International stars."

The Minister for Tourism Hon. Harold Lovell attended the event and met with various airlines, and tour operators to discuss initiatives for marketing Antigua and strengthening relations. Minister Lovell was joined by Mrs. Sharon Peters, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Carol Hay, Director of Tourism for the UK and Europe as well as representatives from the French and German Tourist Offices who also attended the four day event.



Minister of Tourism Hon. Harold Lovell flanked by Sir Viv Richards on his left and Ambassador Ritchie Richardson on his right

*With every good wish for a Merry Christmas
and a happy New Year*

60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Message by Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma.

“10th December 2008 marks 60 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Commonwealth countries were involved in its drafting then, and they are involved in its implementation today.

There has been a long and close relationship between the countries of the Commonwealth and the promotion of human rights.

The Declaration champions the links between human dignity and equal rights, and between freedom, justice and peace. It is a statement of principles, setting out ideals and aspirations for all countries.



Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma at a CARICOM meeting in Antigua and Barbuda, 2008

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As we in the Modern Commonwealth seek to bring this vision of a life of dignity to our almost 2 billion people, there is so much of our work which sees the Declaration turned into the Deeds of the first decade of the 21st century.

The Declaration speaks to our Commonwealth work on the right

to education, to our work on the right to freedom of opinion and expression and to our work on the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of the individual, and of the family.

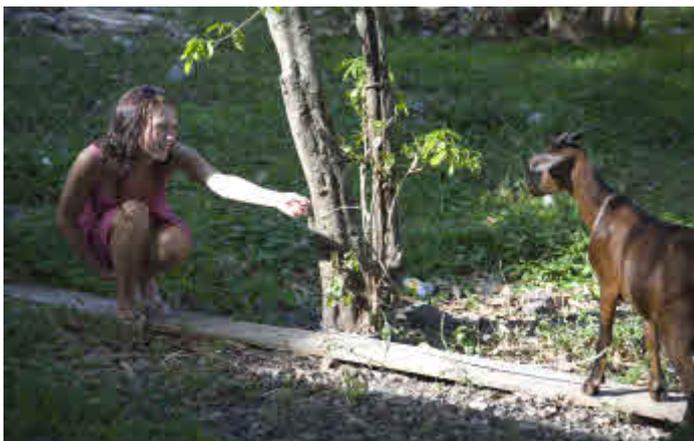
The Declaration enunciates so many of the principles at the heart of our Commonwealth democracy work. It spells out the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, and to participate in the government of one’s country. It establishes the right to work, and the principle of equal pay for equal work. Most fundamentally, it declares that ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ – a principle at the heart of the Commonwealth.

It’s through work in schools and colleges – and in the workplace, the court, the police station and the health clinic – that the most important impacts of human rights work are felt.

The Declaration reaches 60 years of age just as the Commonwealth approaches its own 60th anniversary.

On this day I salute the continued relevance and vision of the Declaration, and commit our collective and individual Commonwealth efforts to make real its aspirations.

WILD LIFE IMAGES



CPTM by HE Dr. Carl Roberts

In the first part of this mini-series of articles covering the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM), I looked at its formation and one aspect of Smart Partnership or Sharing. In this article I will address the membership of the organisation and the base of its support through Smart Partnership Networkers.

CPTM's membership is drawn from the member states of the Commonwealth along with public and private sector organizations and many smart partner networkers. These smart partner networkers are professionals (current and former senior company officials, current and former senior civil service officers and other significant entrepreneurs) who freely give of their time and experience, skills and knowledge in the spirit of Smart Partnership practice "prosper thy – neighbour". Each year the Smart Partnership Movements Dialogue "get – together" meets in a particular country to discuss and make suggestions for an integrated approach to critical issues of national development under a theme which focuses on current world issues. The last dialogue was held in Mulungushi Centre, Lusaka, Zambia, under the theme "transforming communities

through realizing national visions". Dialogues have been held eight times in Langkawi, Malaysia; seven times in Africa (Uganda, Zambia) and two times in the Caribbean (Barbados).

CPTM's activities are backed by a small number of staff at the main office in London. The office is called the London Hub and is supported by the National Hubs and Nodes in several countries including Barbados, St. Lucia, Malaysia, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda among others.

CPTM's mission is to "enhance national capabilities for the creation of and participation in global wealth, through sound technology management and using public / private sector partnerships".

"Smart partnership" is a philosophy developed and practiced by CPTM Smart Partners since the 1990's. It is a proactive process carried out through "real-time" networking, where the group collectively relies on individual Networkers knowledge and resources to bring about outcomes of mutual benefit, in essence providing a "win-win-win" situation for all those involved. "Dialoguing" is the prime vehicle through which Smart Partnership is further promoted. Dialoguing in the Smart Partnership Fashion enriches, sustains and expands this network for individuals: each of whom possesses valuable hands-on experience and who, collectively, have backgrounds that support

various disciplines and national boundaries.

The national Hubs and Nodes are sometimes referred to as "Webs" and Caribbean webs are in operation in Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. The theme of the international dialogue in Barbados in 1999 was "Smart partnership in Small States for the Development of Wealth". Other themes over the years addressed "global trends in emerging economies", "enhancing the climate for foreign direct investment", "reconciling Development challenges with global security through dialogue", "poverty eradication through human capital development and capacity building" "realizing national visions through smart partnership" and "Smart partnership in economic development and diversity" among others.

I will develop other aspects of CPTM in my next article.

Source: CPTM Website.



Antiguan Flagged Vessel Hijacked in the Gulf of Aden

“Crew members reported safe”

On the 17th December the Maritime Administration of Antigua and Barbuda announced that the Antigua and Barbuda flagged vessel BOSPHERUS PRODIGY had been attacked and subsequently hijacked by armed pirates in the Gulf of Aden in the Arabian Sea.

Since the report of the hijacking, The Maritime Administration of Antigua and Barbuda has been in close and continuous contact with the vessel's Management Company in Istanbul to monitor the situation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. John's, Antigua along with the Permanent Representatives of

Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations and the International Maritime Organisation have also been fully informed of the developments.

The following details events as reported to the Maritime Division of Antigua and Barbuda by the ICC-International Maritime Bureau (Piracy Reporting Centre):

- Late Monday December 15, 2008, an alarm message was received by the ICC-International Maritime Bureau (Piracy Reporting Centre) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from the Antigua and Barbuda motor vessel "BOSPHERUS PRODIGY" Off. No. 2822, Call Sign V 2 P C 4, stating that the Antigua and Barbuda flagged vessel had been attacked and subsequently hijacked in the Gulf of Aden by armed pirates in two speed boats coming from the South.

- On Tuesday December 16, 2008 at about 12:00 noon Eastern European time, one Royal Navy helicopter flew above the vessel and learned from the vessel's Master that seven (7) pirates were on board.

- Also on Tuesday via the vessel's SSAS (Ship Security Alert System) which has been in operation continuously since the hijacking, it appeared that the vessel under the control of the pirates was proceeding towards the city of EYL on the East Coast of Somalia.

- No further information is available at this time but it is believed that the nine member crew is safe.

The m/v BOSPHERUS PRODIGY whose registered owner is Naviblue Corporation of St. John's, Antigua, is managed by Iskomarine Shipping and Trading Inc. of Istanbul, Turkey

CARDI swings its door on 'open day'

The Antiguan branch of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) has gone public about its endeavours for the first time.

The initiative, known as the CARDI Open Day Session, has been enacted at stations throughout the Caribbean region since 31 Oct., and Wednesday 17th December was Antigua and Barbuda's turn. According to Dr. Gregory Robin, the nation's country representative, holding the open day allows for transparency and accountability since the projects of the station are made public.

The session was also intended to inform those members of the general public about the research and development (R&D) CARDI undertakes as it relates to food security, one of the institute's main focus.

Experiments are currently being conducted at Betty's Hope, the Greencastle Agricultural Station and Cades Bay.

This study seeks to determine which of the island's agricultural zones are most suitable for growing sweet potatoes.

That, however, is not the only CARDI initiative. It also has a vegetable production programme in which corn, watermelon, table squash and pumpkin are being cultivated. These will go toward efforts to enhance Antigua and Barbuda's food security and the

National School Meals Programme once they are ready for harvest.

The local CARDI post has also been working to satisfy the mandate its parent branch, in Trinidad & Tobago, has set for the region.

This dictates the need for seed production and so the institute has been working closely with Japanese consultants to keep its efforts up to scratch.

Support for the venture will also be provided by the Japanese government for labs and storage facilities.

Acting as a seed repository is another role of the local CARDI branch.

Source: Antigua Sun

Strict new rules for foreign students

The British Government has announced that foreign students hoping to come to the UK to study will have to meet strict new criteria,

The Home Office has published proposals for much tighter rules for foreign students - and the universities and colleges hosting them - under the student tier of its new Points Based System.

All colleges and universities that want to recruit foreign students will now need a licence to do so and will have to take greater responsibility for their international students, helping Government crack down on bogus colleges who abuse the system.

For the first time education providers face a ban on bringing over international students if they fail to follow strict new rules - including alerting the UK Border Agency (UKBA) if students fail to enrol.

Students will also face stringent new criteria if they want to study in the UK,

ensuring only those who benefit Britain can come. Before they can study here, foreign students must:

- be sponsored by a UKBA licensed education institution;
- prove that they have the means to support themselves and their families while studying here; and
- supply their fingerprints.

Stricter rules on work placements for students will also ensure that the UK's labour market is protected.

Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said "All those who come to Britain must play by the rules. It is right that foreign students wanting to take advantage of our world-class universities and colleges must meet strict criteria."

"By locking people to one identity with ID cards, alongside a tough new sponsorship system, we will know exactly who is coming here to study and crack down on bogus colleges," he added.

Visas will only be granted to students who show a proven track record in education and are applying for a

course that meets a minimum level of qualification.

They must also be able to demonstrate they can financially support themselves and any of their dependants.

Students on courses for longer than 12 months will have to show they have sufficient funds to pay their first year of fees, plus £9,600 to cover their first year in the UK.

Students wishing to bring their dependants with them will need to show they have a further £535 per month for each person they bring.

In recognition of the many economic and cultural benefits that these students bring to the UK, earlier this year the Government announced a special visa category allowing successful international students who have graduated from a British university to work in the UK for up to two years.

(Source: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)



Young Officer on the move in the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force

2nd Lieutenant Jamal Aska flanked by His Excellency Dr Carl Roberts and Mrs Roberts who was trained in the United Kingdom led a platoon in the Independence Day parade 2008 at the Antigua Recreation Grounds.

Imbalanced EPA Trade Negotiations: "WTO-Plus" Requirements

Peter Lunenborg

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are free trade agreements between the EU, and as ultimately envisaged, 9 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. In general, any provisions in the EPAs go far beyond World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements. This article focuses on one particular example: it states that the General Exceptions in the EPAs are at odds with Art. XX GATT, the General Exceptions article of the GATT. General Exception clauses in all EPAs trample on the African Group position on commodities and the July 2008 modalities on commodities. The Article calls upon the African Group and its supporters to reconfirm their stance on commodities and bring the July 2008 modalities on commodities to life again.

The African Group Proposal on Commodities: tackling commodity price instability

Almost 100 developing countries derive at least half of their export earnings from commodities, meaning they must contend with the problem of short-term instability of primary commodity prices, which is greater than that of prices for non-primary tradable commodities. Most African countries depend on two to three main primary commodity exports for the bulk of their foreign exchange earnings. The rollercoaster of global commodity prices, which can rise or fall by 50 per cent or more in a year, makes sound fiscal planning extremely difficult for both countries and producers. Many smallholder firms cannot bear or share the risks of swinging prices resulting in less than suboptimal agricultural output, as well as deterioration of their livelihoods. Predictable incomes are critical if commodity-dependent countries are to escape the cycle of commodity dependence, increase agricultural output, improve living

conditions in rural areas, and alleviate poverty.

During the African Union Extraordinary Conference, held in Arusha on 23 November 2005, African Ministers strongly emphasized the need to address this problem of instable commodity prices in the WTO negotiations of the Doha Development Round. The African Group consequently submitted a proposal for modalities for negotiations on agricultural commodity issues to the Committee on Agriculture at 7 June 2006 (TN/AG/GEN/18). The ACP Group, LDC Group, Bolivia and Venezuela issued a declaration on 'Development concerns and issues in the current WTO negotiations' on the 21st of June 2007 stating their support for the submitted African Group proposal.

The proposal continues to receive a very strong backing from NGOs all over the world, religious and missionary organizations, development NGOs, and farmers' organizations in both the developed and developing world. In their common position, the "Call for Action on the Crisis in Agricultural Commodities", they express strong support for the African Group's proposal. They invite all the WTO member states to do likewise and call for the policies outlined to be firmly supported and pursued through all relevant channels.

The policies outlined in the African Group's proposal refer to tariff escalation and non-tariff barriers, but the majority of the text is devoted to the adoption of an appropriate legal instrument clarifying GATT rules applicable to joint action by commodity-dependent producers, including international commodity agreements (ICAs).

Transplantation of the African Group Proposal into the July 2008 Modalities on Agriculture

The July 2008 revised draft modalities on agriculture nearly mimics the African Group's proposal and distributes this sizeable text over 12 paragraphs, from paragraph 88 to 99, under the heading "commodities".

With regards to international commodity agreements or supply management systems, the modalities provide for the possibility of Members to take joint action through adoption of suitable measures, including through adoption of ICAs. ICAs may be concluded either jointly by producing and consuming countries or by commodity-dependent producing countries only. The objective of such arrangements is the stabilization of prices of exports of agricultural commodities at levels that are stable, equitable and remunerative.

There is one important difference between the African Group's proposal and the July 2008 text: in the July 2008 text, the potential role of UNCTAD or International Commodity Organizations in international commodity agreement negotiations and technical assistance for such supply management systems, has been abandoned (TN/AG/W/4/Rev.3).

The modalities, almost identical to the widely supported African Group's proposal, build upon the existing WTO framework, specifically Art. XXXVIII GATT on governmental assistance to economic development and XX(h) GATT on the commodity agreement exception. These two articles, already present in the WTO legal framework, constitute the corner-stones in solving the commodity problem.

GATT XX General Exceptions and Free Trade Agreements: "copy-paste"

GATT XX is the General Exceptions article, listing possibilities to impose trade-restrictive measures for internally recognized important and necessary policy objectives, such as protection of public health or the environment. The exceptions listed in Art. XX relate to all of the obligations under the GATT; not just the national treatment obligation and the most favoured nation obligation, but others as well: it provides a general exception to all GATT 1994 obligations. They offer policy space for a party using them; however, the exceptions should not be abused to protect national producers under the guise of lofty principles.

The same legitimate governance priorities recognized at multilateral level apply at the bilateral level as well. Even so, Article XX GATT exceptions do not cover preferential or bilateral trade agreements. Therefore, all free trade agreements (FTAs) include a section on general exceptions. For example, the New Zealand-Thailand Closer Economic Partnership (CEP) copies the GATT XX verbatim into Article 15(1) of the CEP. The EFTA-Chile FTA has opted for the same approach in Article 21. In the Australia-United States FTA, GATT XX and its interpretive notes are simply incorporated and made part of the agreement (Article 22.1).

A stock-taking exercise would in fact reveal that the bulk of FTAs, both North-North as well as North-South FTAs, duplicate the General Exceptions agreed upon at the multilateral level.

Contrasting the General Exceptions Clauses in the EPAs with Art. XX GATT

Currently there are 8 (interim) EPAs: the CARIFORUM EPA with 15 Caribbean countries, the Pacific interim-EPA (Papua New Guinea & Fiji), and the 6 interim-EPAs with 19 African countries. The number and comprehensiveness of EPAs is due to increase: it is envisaged that ultimately all 79 ACP countries will have concluded a free trade agreement with the EU in the near future.

When focusing only on the General Exception provision of the 8 EPAs, notable variance with Art. XX GATT is detected, unlike the other FTAs earlier mentioned. Two main classes of variance can be distinguished: additional exceptions compared to Art. XX and left-out exceptions compared to Art. XX.

In all EPAs, there are additional exceptions not included in GATT XX, such as measures to secure compliance to privacy protection or safety laws, or to deal with defaults on contracts. These additional exceptions are more favourable to the EU. Take the example of measures necessary to secure compliance with laws or regulations relating to privacy

protection. According to Privacy International, none of the ACP countries had a data protection law in place in May 2007, with a few having a pending effort to enact law regarding privacy laws. In short: if you have no or underdeveloped privacy protection laws, there is nothing to secure compliance to, and the chance to avail of this exception is virtually non-existent. On the other hand, the EU has a detailed body of regulations to safeguard various kinds of privacy protection. Added to that, the barrier to utilize EPA general exceptions is lower than GATT XX exceptions because of more frequent use of consultations between the parties and more accessible dispute settlement provisions of the EPA compared to the WTO.

In contrast, there are 3 important GATT XX general exceptions relevant to (commodity-dependent) developing countries that are not included in the EPAs:

- measures undertaken in pursuance of obligations under any intergovernmental commodity agreement
- the measure to restrict exports of domestic materials as part of a governmental stabilization plan
- measures essential to the acquisition or distribution of products in general or local short supply (majority of the EPAs)

As it currently stands, the EPAs do not recognize the above three measures as legitimate policy priorities.

The "WTO-Plus" Requirements of the EPAs

Three general exceptions agreed upon at the multilateral level are expunged in the EPAs. All signed EPAs contain *General Exception* clauses detrimental to commodity dependent developing countries. One of these three crossouts - the exclusion of the international commodity agreements exception - directly conflicts with the African Group proposal on commodities and the consequently drafted July 2008 modalities on commodities which largely incorporates this proposal.

Bilateral agreements supersede multilateral agreement as *ex specialis*. Whatever package is reached in the Doha Round on Art. XX or related articles, the EPAs, as opposed to the Doha package, will be in effect.

A general exception expresses an internationally recognized policy objective, which under certain conditions, is more important than GATT-compliance. These exclusions of GATT XX exceptions, in particular the exclusion of the commodity agreement exception, threaten viable policy options which are totally acceptable at multilateral level.

In fact, any type of international commodity agreement affecting trade with EU is prohibited. The demise of ICAs or supply management systems designed to stabilize prices and alleviate poverty, catering for commodity-dependent developing countries, has been sealed by signature of the EPAs. Nevertheless, ICAs or joint actions by commodity dependent producers are considered by all ACP states as part of their development toolbox and are viewed as legitimate means to reduce poverty, needing clarification and amendment on WTO level.

Disregarding the ACP states in this respect will render the EPA objectives of poverty alleviation and pre-eminence of political choices and development priorities of ACP states in their integration into the world economy, null and void.

Therefore, the African Group and its supporters should urgently reconfirm their stance on commodities, subscribe to the July modalities, and take the necessary action. When no action is taken, any type of international commodity agreement will be practically impossible and may in fact be prohibited forever. This will invalidate all the work done at multilateral level and turn the African Group's proposal, as well as a substantial part of the July 2008 modalities, into a dead letter.

Beyond Art. XX GATT

In a plenary at the conference "Confronting the Global Food

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Funds needed for Window- Replacement Project

By Agnes Meeker

President of the Historical and Archaeological Society
Museum of Antigua and Barbuda

Excerpted from the Museum's Newsletter No.102

As simple as it seems it's a \$207,000 job of which \$92,740 has been raised. We're talking some 53 windows, no make that 54, thanks to another window discovered after the original assessment.

With the funds raised we're ready to begin phase one replacing the windows in the upper level of the museum.

That's 23 windows that must be custom made and transported from St Kitts via DOMUS. The contractor is on standby with work expected to begin mid May, and archaeologist Dr Reginald Murphy, is sourcing the special mortar required.

Phase one will be followed, naturally enough, by phase two, replacement of the windows in the lower level for which funds have not yet been raised and which will require the temporary closure of the museum. This is to allow for the complete dismantling of the exhibits in order to avoid damage.

Phase two will begin as soon as funds permit.

Clearly, this is no simple renovation job. With a building as old and as historically significant, preserving the architectural integrity is top priority, and, as noted, apart from the safety issues that come with windows hanging on their last rusty hinges, there's the building itself and its contents to consider.

The 17 businesses and individuals who've so far contributed to the effort are keeping this from happening. Perhaps because they recognize that the museum houses Antigua's history and should the windows be damaged (as a result the exhibits), we lose it and we'd have to start from scratch. Many of the items on display are irreplaceable, notwithstanding that the information may be backed up on computers.

Perhaps the most significant of these antiques is the building itself.

Completed in 1750, it was built by Peter Harrison, credited as being the first professionally trained architect in America. Also to his credit are still standing buildings like the Redwood Library in Rhode Island, the oldest community library still occupying its original building, the Old Brick Market. It houses the Museum of Newport History. There is also the Touro Synagogue, said to be the only surviving synagogue from the colonial era and Christ Church, a national land mark in Massachusetts.

The neo-Classic Harrison design in Antigua previously served as the country's courthouse and is now a popular stop tourists, school children and history buffs.

Back in the day, a tax was levied for a period of six years to aid on its construction. Today, as we proceed with the massive window replacement project, the Historical Society is asking people to pony up voluntarily. Contributions can be made by calling the museum or by depositing funds directly to the museum account number 1000404, at the Bank of Nova Scotia.

Continued from page 16

Challenge" on 25 November 2008, Pascal Lamy was questioned about the vanished commodity agreement exception in all EPAs. In his reply, he agreed that commodity agreements are acceptable in the multilateral context, but that countries sign bilaterals with provisions going far beyond WTO requirements. However, he noted that bilateral agreements take precedence over multilateral agreements and it is a sovereign choice of a member state to do so.

A WTO-compatible agreement does not mean the forfeit of multilaterally established rights. Restrictions could be imposed in the area of national treatment (Art. III GATT), fees and formalities connected with importation and exportation Art. VIII GATT), export

taxes, or safeguards, but a WTO compatible agreement is not limited to these examples. Unnecessary losses should be prevented.

For that reason, it is advisable for sovereign ACP states, in their respective negotiations leading to either a 'goods only' or comprehensive EPA, to conduct a close and thorough examination of the EPA texts vis-a-vis relevant WTO Agreements to prevent WTO-plus commitments.

Peter Lunenburg works with the Trade for Development Programme, South Centre.



Betty's Hope

Commonwealth Scholar attends University of Surrey

Antigua and Barbudan Ercil Charles, Commonwealth Scholar, is currently pursuing an MSc. in Tourism Development at the University of Surrey.

His studies in the United Kingdom started on September 29, 2008 and will terminate on September 28, 2009.

Mr Charles was previously employed by the Ministry of Education as a teacher at the All Saints Secondary School. He also worked at the Ministry of Tourism as a Tutor/Facilitator at the Antigua and Barbuda Hospitality Training Institute (ABHTI).

His aspiration is to return to full time service at ABHTI, where he can



H.E. Dr Carl Roberts and Commonwealth Scholar Ercil Charles

make a more meaningful contribution to Human Resources Development, and to assist with policy and developmental plans within the Ministry of Tourism.

He says he is extremely honoured to have been chosen as a Commonwealth Scholar and is

working extremely diligently to maintain the high standards of previous and other current scholars of this Award.

Installation of Hundreds of Street Lights to Commence Shortly in Antigua and Barbuda

General Manager of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority Mr. Esworth Martin and First Secretary in the Business Office of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China Mr. Lu Jun, signed the final construction agreement paving the way for the erection of hundreds of street lights across Antigua and Barbuda.

Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the People's Republic of China

H.E. David Shoul said that the signing completes over two years of negotiations for the erection of 1572 street lights across Antigua and Barbuda covering some 65 kilometers of road.

He noted that the project is as a result of a grant in the sum of EC\$10 million dollars provided by the Chinese Government.

It was also disclosed that a team of Chinese officials and technicians will arrive in the country on December 17 to begin preparations for the start of the project which will commence with a ground breaking ceremony on December 30.

Ambassador Shoul said that the Chinese delegation and the government also signed a contract for the covering of the Grays Hill Reservoir which will also be funded through a grant by the People's Republic of China.

The country's Ambassador to China added that he is excited about the finalization of the two projects as they have been in the pipeline for a very long time. He noted that they will positively impact the lives of Antiguan and Barbudans and contribute to security and the provision of a more reliable source of water by APUA.

This phase of the street lighting project is a continuation of the Chinese project which saw the installation of lights from the V.C. Bird International Airport to the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium.



Identity Cards for Foreign Nationals

WHAT ARE IDENTITY CARDS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS?

On 25 November 2008 the UK Border Agency changed the way it issues permission to stay (grants of leave to remain) in the United Kingdom. Identity cards for foreign nationals are a form of residence permit, and replace the vignettes (or stickers) previously placed in passports. Initially this only applies to nationals of countries outside the European Economic Area who are granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom as either a student or on the basis of marriage or partnership. More immigration categories will switch from vignettes to cards at a later date.

All applicants aged six or over are required to give biometrics. These will be scans of all 10 fingerprints and a digital photo. Applicants who are under six are not required to provide fingerprints. The grant of leave to stay

in the United Kingdom will be issued as a standalone card. There will be no endorsement in the passport.

The card is proof of the holder's right to stay, work or study in the United Kingdom. It can also be used as a form of identification (for example, if they wish to open a bank account in the UK). The holder is not required to carry their card at all times, but they must show it at the border, together with their passport, when travelling outside of, and when returning to, the United Kingdom.

Under current legislation, employers have a responsibility to check the entitlement of prospective employees to work in the UK. We strongly advise employers undertake checks on everyone they wish to employ. This will enable employers to establish a statutory excuse against payment of a civil penalty for employing an illegal migrant worker; shows their recruitment process is open and transparent, and ensures their recruitment practices do not discriminate against anyone because of their race.

To help reduce the burden on employers, foreign nationals issued

with an identity card will be required to show it to employers prior to commencing employment. Employers will be able to accept this, alongside the other recommended document to help with checks to confirm the identity and entitlement to work of their prospective employees.

WHEN WILL CARDS REPLACE VIGNETTES IN PASSPORTS?

The roll-out will be phased according to the immigration category under which the migrant is granted leave to stay in the United Kingdom. Any person who applies for an extension of stay as a student or on the basis of marriage or partnership on or after 25 November 2008 will be required to apply for an identity card for foreign nationals. Migrants granted leave to stay in the United Kingdom under other immigration categories will receive a vignette in their passport. Both vignettes and cards will remain in circulation for the foreseeable future. For up-to-date information on which immigration categories are issued with cards please see the UK Border Agency website at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk



Devil's Bridge

Newcomers must earn the right to stay in the UK

Foreign nationals wishing to become British citizens will have to earn the right to stay, the Government announced.

The tough new approach will require all migrants to speak English and obey the law if they want to gain citizenship and stay permanently in Britain, while speeding up the path to citizenship for those who contribute to the community.

The reforms are at the centre of a sweeping overhaul of all immigration laws dating back to 1971 and confirm new modern laws reserving full access to benefits and social housing will be reserved for citizens and permanent residents.

Foreign nationals who commit serious offences will face automatic consideration for deportation - and even minor offences will delay access to citizenship by up to three years.

Public support for the proposals was confirmed by new Home Office polling released today. A Mori poll carried out for the Home Office revealed that:

70 per cent of the public think that newcomers should earn the right to stay in Britain;

83 per cent think that immigrants in Britain should be made to learn English; and

69 per cent agree that newcomers should be penalised on the path to citizenship if they don't obey Britain's laws.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said:

"In recent months we have listened to people across Britain and the message is clear - they want those who want to make Britain their home to speak English, to

work hard, and to earn the right to stay here.

"We are making the biggest changes to our immigration system for a generation, and part of that is making sure those who stay in the UK make a positive impact on their local community."

The draft Immigration and Citizenship Bill published today replaces ten Acts of Parliament and enshrines into law the Government's biggest ever shake-up of the immigration system. The key measures are:

Strong borders

1. new powers for frontline UKBA officers at foreign ports and airports to cancel visas.

2. bringing customs and immigration powers at the border into the 21st century, consolidating and strengthening civil penalties for bringing passengers without the right papers and clandestine entrants to the UK.

Selective migration

3. the Bill proposes a clear legal duty on migrants to ensure they have permission to be in the UK, for example under our new points system.

4. the Bill introduces a single, streamlined power of expulsion for those without permission.

Earning the right to stay

5. migrants will now have to earn their right to stay in the UK.

6. automatic bans on returns with new powers to exclude offenders and powers to require those who are expelled to repay costs to taxpayers if we allow them to come back.

Playing by the rules

7. the Bill gives a new power to require large 'bail bonds' for those awaiting decisions or expulsion, part of a tough menu of conditions for "Immigration bail" as an alternative to detention.

8. confirming tough measures to prevent organised illegal immigration by attacking illegal working with civil penalties for

employers who do not make the necessary checks.

9. simplifying our appeals system to cut red-tape; ensuring that the system is properly sensitive to the needs of vulnerable groups: honouring our international obligations to refugees and ensuring the UKBA safeguards and promotes the welfare of children.

Managing any local impacts

10. full access to benefits for citizens and permanent residents, with migrants contributing a little extra to the cost of local services.

The Home Office confirmed that newcomers will have to pay a little extra before they become citizens to create a fund of tens of millions of pounds a year to help police, schools, councils and local health services to use the money to deal with the short-term pressures of migration in their areas.

Border and Immigration Minister Liam Byrne said:

"Britain is not anti-foreigner, we're a welcoming, tolerant place. But we do expect newcomers to sign up to a deal if they want to stay and build a life in Britain.

"The public overwhelmingly supports the idea of newcomers earning their right to stay. Today we show how we'll make these ideas law, hand in hand with our new points system for selective migration, like the one that's worked so well in Australia."

These changes are part of the biggest shake-up to the immigration system for a generation, and to make sure these changes stick today's Bill will see the currently complex immigration laws replaced by one simplified piece of legislation. By updating the law, and getting rid of any room for misinterpretation, the UK Border Agency can cut red tape and accelerate the speed of its work.

(Source: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk)