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LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: PROLETARIANISATION IN JAMAICA

by

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PREFACE

Over the past few years the ILO has commissioned a number of studies of labour force participation in low-income countries. All of those studies have been statistical in nature, often based on a sample survey. They have provided information on individual characteristics correlated with participation or non-participation in the labour force, and in a few cases have considered the influence of such macro-economic factors as the level of unemployment. In the main, there has been some explicit or implicit household decision-making model of behaviour underlying the empirical work, and consistent with that the analysis has been conducted in terms of individual responses to some existing structure of incentives, opportunities, and preferences.

The present paper attempts to take a rather different approach, emphasising the historical-structural factors which have shaped the level and pattern of labour force participation in Jamaica.[1] It attempts to explain by examining the institutional factors conditioning behaviour, by considering the interaction of the structure of production, the structure of the labour market, and the socio-economic correlates of both. It is primarily concerned with the process of "proletarianisation", the process by which labour force participation in wage labour is transformed from being predominantly discretionary to predominantly obligatory and necessary. The Jamaican labour market has to be understood in terms of commitment to labour force activity, the efforts of capital to secure greater commitment, the response of different groups of workers, and the subsequent adjustments by both workers and employers. As this essay will attempt to demonstrate, it is this process which has determined the pattern of labour force participation in the growing urban industrial sectors of the Jamaican economy.

The paper reproduces relatively few statistics, partly because official data have not been very consistently collected - varying in concepts, scope, and quality. For some of the main issues covered in the paper the type of data required are simply not available, such as indices of labour force commitment. However, in reaching certain of its conclusions the paper draws on material collected in 1974 during the course of a series of interviews with employers, unionists, and personnel managers in a sample of 42 industrial enterprises in Kingston-St. Andrew. Much of the evidence collected was impressionistic, reflecting opinions and experience, and only occasionally supported by statistics.[2] Unfortunately, it is unrealistic to expect more "hard data" on which to draw conclusions in this type of analysis.

This is regrettable and makes the paper more "descriptive" than would be desirable.

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[1] The other approach is adopted in a complementary paper. Guy Standing, "Female Labour Supply in an Urbanising Economy", Population and Employment Working Paper No. 44 (ILO, Geneva, November 1976).

[2] A questionnaire was used as a basis for interviews. A summary and necessarily anecdotal account of this material is contained in another paper, which is available on request.

Introduction

The Jamaican economy was founded on slavery and plantation agriculture, and later bolstered by the use of indentured labour, mostly imported from the Indian subcontinent after slavery was abolished. These historical origins cannot explain all subsequent developments, nor the persistence of social and economic structures that they did produce, but the agricultural and social traditions established in and immediately after the period of slavery undoubtedly shaped subsequent patterns of labour force participation and help to explain the present structure of the labour market, as well as the prominent economic role played by women.

Jamaica has always been a basically agricultural economy, though the rapidity of urbanisation in recent years has been associated with a considerable shift in the industrial structure. It has also always been a very open economy, both as a British colony and since Independence in 1962; indeed partly because of its long reliance on the influx of foreign capital and technology and on the importation of most of its consumer goods, it has sometimes been called "a welcoming society".[1] It was, therefore, entirely in keeping with the image and role of the Jamaican economy as a welcoming society that, at least until about 1972 when the government of Michael Manley was elected, successive governments after World War II pursued an economic policy of "industrialisation by invitation".[2] That policy, which was merely a continuation of past practices, led to a large extension of foreign ownership and control, and in recent years the evident dominance of the Jamaican economy by foreign capital, notably through the presence of a growing number of foreign-owned multinationals in control of key sectors of the economy, has encouraged many observers to cite Jamaica as a classic example of "dependent underdevelopment".[3]

The strategy of industrialisation-by-invitation, associated with Arthus Lewis, and enshrined in legislation giving considerable financial encouragement to foreign investment, involved a number of crucial assumptions. It was hoped that by attracting foreign-owned manufacturing firms employment would be increased, so that labour would be taken off the land, which would lead to a transformation of agriculture, rising productivity and higher incomes.[4] To ensure eventual autonomy it was seen as essential to develop a high savings propensity among the Jamaican population so as to provide the necessary accumulation to secure growing Jamaican control of the industrial sector. The assumption that this would occur was naive,

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[1] F. Taylor, Jamaica - The Welcoming Society: Myths and Reality, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, Working Paper No. 8, 1975.

[2] The reliance on foreign direct investment was epitomised by the Second Five Year Plan in which it was stated, "The scarcity of capital, and the priority given to the reduction of unemployment, make a continued dependence on foreign capital inevitable." Second Five Year Plan, Jamaica, Vol. II, p. 12. Though the strategy was more often questioned in the early 1970s similar policies were still being recommended - for instance by the Organisation of American States. See OAS, Report of the Mission in Jamaica on Employment Generating Projects (Washington DC, 1974).

[3] See, inter alia, N. Girvan, Foreign Capital and Economic Underdevelopment in Jamaica (Mona, ISER, 1971). After sugar and bananas, long the dominant concerns of foreign capital, the multinational interest in Jamaica was given a tremendous boost by the mining of bauxite there after 1943.

[4] W.A. Lewis, "The Industrialisation of the British West Indies", Caribbean Economic Review, Vol. 2, May 1950, pp. 1-61.

since the modern manufacturing and service industries imported from capital-rich, industrialised economies were geared to a high rate of consumption among those high income-earners who were supposed to provide the means of indigenous capital accumulation. One of the consequences of the strategy, therefore, was the generation and perpetuation of "dualistic" patterns of consumption, as well as of production, which have maintained the weak links between the modern capitalist sector and the remainder of the economy. Imported consumption norms and the presence of foreign capital-intensive firms generated high incomes for a small proportion of the population whose propensity to consume was very high, conditioned in part by the close contact with foreign personnel working in Jamaica and foreign standards of living. The pattern of consumption and the expectations that have accompanied it have had a direct bearing on the pattern of labour supply and labour commitment. Not only have pay patterns within the foreign-owned (and local) firms been in continuous comparison with those overseas, but in many cases worker expectations and aspirations have been conditioned by foreign experience, notably from living and working in such places as New York or London. So the pattern of industrialisation has not only involved a high level of imports of capital equipment and consumer goods and, through a low propensity to save among the middle-class, a low rate of capital accumulation, but has also generated a high level of consumer expectations in general which could only be realised by a small minority of asset holders and salaried white-collar and technical workers. That in itself was conducive to breeding resentment and dissatisfaction among the mass of workers denied access to the high wage jobs, thereby tending to weaken commitment to wage labour among those only able to get work in the relatively low wage firms.[1]

The second crucial assumption underlying the industrialisation-by-invitation strategy was that Jamaicans employed by the multinationals would develop attitudes and skills that would enable them to take over the management and operation of manufacturing industry. To what extent that materialised is a matter of debate, but bearing in mind the nature of modern technology and the vertically integrated structure of many multinationals the assumption was also a dubious one to make. What is clear is that there has been a continuing "shortage" of skilled labour and a continuing lack of supervisors or "middle-management" skills, which have hindered the growth of employment and productivity.[2] Modern technology, involving mechanised and process production methods allied to a highly bureaucratic management structure, has been superimposed on the Jamaican economy. Within such modern bureaucratic enterprises the highly developed division of labour has typically

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[1] Lewis recognised that "if your cousin is getting £8 per week working in a bauxite mine ... you are no longer willing to accept £3 per week for working on the roads." W.A. Lewis, "Closing Remarks", in W. Baer and I. Kerstenetzky (eds.), Inflation and Growth in Latin America (Homewood: Irwin), 1964, p. 27. Lewis made similar remarks elsewhere and attributed the associated rise in the reserve price of labour to envy. W.A. Lewis, Development Planning (London, Allen and Unwin), 1966, p. 77.

[2] Jamaican Institute of Management, Preliminary Survey of Jamaican Management Manpower (Kingston), 1969. One major tendency has been that highly educated, highly skilled workers have gravitated towards the foreign-owned and the largest locally-owned firms where they have not been fully utilised. The social opportunity cost of this concentration has been high, since other firms have consequently experienced a shortage of such manpower, which in turn has contributed to under-utilisation of productive capacity, an inability to develop a skilled, committed labour force in those enterprises, and the high rate of unemployment.

produced a job structure quite different from the type characteristic of manufacturing and other industries in Europe in the nineteenth century. And, as will be argued at length in a later section, that has tended to produce a pattern of labour force participation quite different from the one that emerged, for example, in the course of the industrialisation of Great Britain.

Coincidentally or not, the period of "industrialisation by invitation" coincided with rising open unemployment, greater inequality of incomes, a rapid rate of urbanisation without any commensurate expansion of industrial-urban employment, a continuing decline in the sugar industry, once the staple of the Jamaican economy, a continuation and even for a time an acceleration in the rate of emigration, and a widening of income differentials between the rural and urban areas and between those employed in white-collar occupations or in foreign firms and the mass of workers. In short, the period of industrialisation-by-invitation almost certainly exacerbated the dualistic nature of the economy first established by plantation agriculture and colonial rule.

In this paper the proletarianisation of the Jamaican labour force will be analysed in the context of the dualistic nature of the economy and society. The main thrust of the argument is that the historical origins and the underlying structure of the economy have been associated with the emergence of only a "semi-committed" proletariat and that, in view of the semi-commitment to wage-labour by a large proportion of the male labour force, the extent of sexual dualism in the labour market has been muted.[1]

Briefly, the widely acknowledged lack of commitment to wage labour among male workers can be explained largely in terms of the unresolved conflict between the peasant-smallholder class and the capitalist-plantation sector in the rural areas, and of the chronically high rates of open unemployment and its associated poverty in the urban areas. The nature of the family-kinship structure, which has been a factor determining the economic activity of women as well as the semi-commitment of male labour, in itself has been a function of the persistent poverty associated with the underdevelopment of the rural economy, given its historical origins, and with the poverty, insecurity and "scuffling" existence of urban life.

Agriculture and proletarianisation

This study is primarily concerned with the pattern and determinants of female labour force participation in the urban area of Kingston-St. Andrew. As such it would be incomplete if it did not first analyse the process of proletarianisation in agriculture and the historical determinants of labour supply and labour force

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[1] By "commitment" is meant a predictable, stable and efficiently productive labour supply in which the wage-worker's perceived interests match those of the employer. By "sexual dualism" is meant a segmented labour force in which, perhaps as a result of differences in educational opportunities, men assume the role of "primary" workers, fully committed to regular labour force participation and having access to a broad range of skilled, career-oriented jobs, while women become "secondary" workers, largely relegated to a narrower range of semi-skilled, low status, low wage jobs and at most semi-committed to intermittent labour force participation. In its extreme form sexual dualism would entail men working entirely in labour force and women in domestic activities.

commitment in rural Jamaica. Although what follows is brief and somewhat simplified, the major point that needs stressing is that as a result of agricultural developments throughout the post-Emancipation period only a limited and, in the main, uncommitted wage-labour force emerged. Indeed, over this protracted period the difficulties in securing labour supply to the capitalist sector were such that labour instability was almost institutionalised, preventing the formation of any sizeable "labour aristocracy" or, in the language of dual labour market theory, a highly skilled, fully committed "primary" labour force distinct from "secondary" workers in terms of productivity, skills, earnings and labour force attachment.

Throughout the history of Jamaican agriculture there has been a clear conflict of interest between the needs of the plantations and those of the peasant-smallholder class. The plantations have almost always complained of a shortage of labour, yet at best the tactics adopted to secure an adequate and predictable supply of wage labour were only partially successful and in some periods at least counterproductive.

The conflict of interest producing and compounding the labour problem can be traced back to the years following Emancipation in 1834, or probably more correctly to the years following the end of the Apprenticeship period in 1838, when the plantations lost the assurance of an unlimited supply of cheap labour.[1] Thereafter, since land was plentiful, most ex-slaves preferred to farm small plots of their own land rather than continue to work on plantations. Estate labour was disliked because of its association with slavery but it also yielded a low and uncertain income to the worker, often considerably less than the equivalent return to effort in agricultural self-employment. Yet rather than raise wages to attract workers back to the estates, most planters kept wages down, preferring to adopt coercive methods to secure the required labour and to rely on the immigration of indentured labour.

Part of the problem was the shortage of credit and capital, which made it hard for the plantations to pay higher wages.[2] Yet even when they could have afforded to raise wages, coercive and paternalistic methods of obtaining labour were adopted.

Since much of the agricultural labour supplied to the estates came from smallholding peasants, the fact that a large proportion of the rural population owned land requiring their own labour meant that their labour force participation in the wage sector was largely discretionary and dependent on their demand for cash. And as long as wage-labour remained discretionary a secure, stable wage-labour force could not be guaranteed. Since the demand for cash income was largely limited to clothing and capital needed to buy instruments of cultivation, and since neither of those items were likely to be urgently required on any particular day or week, the workers often "refused to be bound to work on a given day".[3] And since, in the

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[1] G. Eisner, Jamaica 1830-1930 (Manchester, Manchester University Press), 1961, p. 192.

[2] One observer writing in 1861 noted, "Jamaican labour is essentially of this transient and uncertain character. It is not the negro's fault; very few estates can afford to keep up a large and constant agricultural force", W.G. Sewell, The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies, 1861 (New York, 1968 edition), p. 264.

[3] G. Cumper, "Labour Demand and Supply in the Jamaican Sugar Industry, 1830-1950", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 2, No. 4, March 1954, p. 61.

absence of a broad range of wage-goods, labour supply to the estates was presumed to be inversely related to the wage-rate paid, planters were loath to raise wages; with higher wages the labourer would have had to work a shorter time to secure a given "target" income. In this context the planters' strategy was simply to raise the effort price of labour in the subsistence sector and to produce a rural proletariat dependent on regular wage labour.[1] The alternative would have been to implement a deliberate policy of high wages in the hope that by raising income aspirations workers would have gradually become tied to wage-labour, thereby reducing the discretionary nature of wage-labour force participation. Partly because of a general inability to pay higher wages and partly because, in the absence of a broad range of wage-goods, such a policy would have been both costly and risky, it seems to have been ruled out. Indeed, a low wages policy was more in evidence, which further alienated the workers from plantation labour. Sewell claimed of the planters, "They do not seem to reflect for a moment that the best interest of a proprietor is to elevate, not to degrade, his labourer".[2] Wages were not only low but uncertain, so that even many of the landless labourers rejected the work, preferring to migrate to the towns or engage in petty trade.[3]

In general, then, the planters' actions aggravated rather than relieved the situation.[4] From the outset, the general policy of the estate owners was to make resident estate workers dependent on the employer, while taking every possible action to prevent the workers' acquisition of land for independent farming - for instance, by the payment of wages in arrears and arbitrary stoppages of wage payments for one reason or another.[5] Of course such tactics only intensified the odium associated with plantation labour. Writing of what he observed in his travels, Sewell concluded that in all the British West Indies "by mismanagement and unpardonable blunders of policy, the life of the field labourer has been made so distasteful to the peasant that the possession of half an acre, or the most meagre subsistence and independence, seems to him, in comparison with estate service, the very acme of luxurious enjoyment".[6]

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[1] As early as 1838 the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Grey, was asserting that the emancipated slaves should be made "to look to labour on neighbouring estates as their main dependence". He also felt that the peasants should be put "in circumstances in which a greater amount of labour than at present shall be required to supply their wants". W.L. Mathieson, The Sugar Colonies and Governor Eyre 1849-1866 (London, Longmans), 1936, pp. 15, 87.

[2] Sewell, op. cit., p. 112.

[3] Ibid., p. 113. W. Marshall, "Notes on Peasant Development in the West Indies", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 17, No. 3, September 1968, pp. 252-263.

[4] It is hard to disagree with Arrighi's view that "low wages strengthen the tendency for the participation in the labour market to be of a temporary nature, which in turn accounts for the persistently unskilled character of the labour force". G. Arrighi, "Multinational Corporations, Labour Aristocracy and Economic Development in Tropical Africa", in G. Arrighi and J. Saul, Essays on the Political Economy of Africa, 1971, p. 120.

[5] Cumper, op. cit., p. 61.

[6] Sewell, op. cit., p. 154.

The major means, therefore, by which the planter class attempted to secure an adequate low-wage labour supply was by raising the effort price of labour in the subsistence sector, reducing incomes there and inhibiting expansion and diversification, with the intention of compelling the peasants to become wage labourers. Various methods of achieving that objective were adopted. Access to land was restricted; to discourage workers from concentrating on their own farming, planters charged "high and capricious rents" for estate housing and offset rents against wages, making it hard for those who had not already done so to set up independently.[1] And, more directly, over a long period the small-scale sector was systematically suppressed. For instance, banking and credit were diverted from small-scale agriculture and artisanry, and towards the import-export trade, while public expenditure on marketing, research, irrigation, roads and infrastructure was generally held to a minimum.[2] And since the planter class controlled the social and political institutions in Jamaica, it was not surprising that educational facilities were neglected or made dysfunctional from the peasants' point of view. Thus Sewell claimed it was "the planters' policy to keep the people uninstructed" and that the government acquiesced in that design.[3] Education was not required for manual wage labour, but it is probable that the lack of education reduced the peasants' ability to make technological or organisational improvements in their farming or to diversify into other occupations to broaden the economic base of the community.

Faced with these obstacles and presented with little alternative to continued poverty, whether they worked on the estates or in the subsistence sector, the rural work force responded by concentrating on mere survival. This they did primarily by opting for what has been called "occupational multiplicity", combining a number of different forms of economic activities, often on a casual or irregular basis.[4] This pattern, involving intermittent participation in wage labour, came to characterise Jamaican rural life.[5] A growing proportion of rural workers combined smallholder farming with petty trading, manual wage labour on a task rate basis, and communal labour of one kind or another.

So although the planter-employer class may have successfully curbed the growth and incomes of the small-scale subsistence sector, they were unable to secure an "unlimited supply of labour" at wage rates they were able and willing to pay. In these circumstances employer reactions varied. Some remained highly paternalistic, often hiring whole families, the men as field-workers, the women as domestics.[6] But when sugar prices, and then wages, fell the workers realised that this

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[1] Cumper, op. cit., p. 48.

[2] L. Best, A Short Biography of the Labour Market in the Caribbean, (Institute of Economic and Social Research, University of the West Indies, mimeo, no date).

[3] Sewell, op. cit., p. 255.

[4] L. Comitas, Occupational Multiplicity in Rural Jamaica, in V. Garfield and E. Friedl (eds.), Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society (Seattle), 1963, pp. 41-50.

[5] M.G. Smith, A Report on Labour Supply in Rural Jamaica (Kingston, Government Printer), 1956, p. 17.

[6] G.E. Cumper, "Labour and Development in the West Indies, Part I", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 10, No. 3, September 1961, pp. 278-305.

relationship no longer offered the security which for them had been its redeeming feature. As that happened the number of workers fully committed to individual employers or continuous wage labour dwindled still further.

Many employers attempted to overcome the uncertainty of labour supply by relying on piece-rates, hiring workers to do specific tasks - or in effect attempting to adapt to the available labour supply given their inability or unwillingness to pay higher wages. This approach has been maintained so that, according to Davison writing in 1965, the employers' "traditional policy has been to work with an irregular, undisciplined, itinerant labour force in excess of requirements with low output, irregular attendance and low earnings".[1]

In short, the rural labour market that has emerged since Emancipation can be summarised in terms of an unresolved conflict of interest, adaptation and stagnation. The workers, for the most part unable to develop indigenous enterprise or occupational skills, resorted to an existence of occupational multiplicity, unable and unwilling to devote their labour to one particular form of employment. The employers for their part relied on piece-rate wage labour, in effect accepting and institutionalising the lack of commitment to regular wage labour. And these two traditions shaped the pattern of labour supply to the emerging industrial sector, in which a committed full-time labour force was required and for which male workers attuned to a tradition of piece-work and occupational multiplicity were ill-equipped. Indeed it has been argued that seasonal employment, coupled with employment insecurity, low wages, the lack of dignity and self-respect experienced by workers because of the paternalistic nature of management, and the general ambience of insecurity, casualness and transience which characterised plantation-dominated agriculture led to "a general demoralisation of the Jamaican working man". What this meant is that a psychological accommodation developed among members of the rural proletariat which made them "not so much unemployed as unemployable", and which led to the "formation of demoralised personalities and unsystematic, though understandable, attitudes to work".[2] In short, in the course of agrarian change after 1834, during which both the export-plantation sector and the independent small-scale sector stagnated, there was no formation of a stable rural proletariat consisting of male workers fully committed to wage labour. And this meant that there was no labour force on which the emerging industrial urban sector could rely for an efficient supply of wage labour. The industrial-commercial sector tended to adapt to the situation of labour surplus and low commitment to wage labour by hiring more workers than was strictly necessary to cover production needs so that high rates of absenteeism or labour turnover did not disrupt production. On some occasions the low commitment has been encouraged by institutional actions. Thus in the late 1930s government departments were instructed by the Jamaican Government to hire workers for two or three days a week rather than a smaller number on

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[1] R.B. Davison, Labour Shortage and Productivity in the Jamaican Sugar Industry (Mona, ISER), 1965, p. 37.

[2] O. Patterson, "Social Aspects of the Sugar Industry", New World Quarterly, Vol. 5, Nos. 1-2, 1969, p. 48.

a full-time basis. This tended to increase pressure on daily wage rates, and by failing to provide workers with a living wage led to considerable worker dissatisfaction, although it also encouraged workers to adapt to this pattern of intermittent employment.[1] Brown also mentioned "the policy of rotational employment, whereby a man works for a fortnight and then is discharged to make way for another, the object being to distribute a share of the available employment as widely as possible".[2] This type of policy only served to perpetuate the lack of commitment to regular full-time employment and hindered the development of a male-dominated labour force. To the extent that male workers were not fully tied to wage-labour employment, they failed to develop work-skills. And, through being intermittent labour force participants, their lack of regular, reliable earnings checked the development of a labour force in which men were "primary" workers and women "secondary" workers. In the continuing absence of a male labour force fully-committed to wage labour, sexual dualism in the labour market was not encouraged. And thus a pattern of employment originating with the continuing conflict between the plantation sector and rural workers has had an important bearing on the level and pattern of female labour force participation in the urban-industrial-commercial sectors of the Jamaican economy.

Unemployment and urbanisation

Despite high levels of urban unemployment ever since Emancipation there has always been a tendency to drift towards the urban areas, and in particular to Kingston (or more accurately to the metropolitan area of Kingston-St. Andrew). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the colonial government discouraged the establishment and expansion of towns since it was felt that any drift to the urban areas would deplete the labour supply to the plantation sector. For instance, one eighteenth century commission in allowing several ports to be established added "provided the said act will not encourage the Inhabitants to reside in Towns, and there set up Manufactures for the Supply of their own Necessities ... which will not only discourage the Trade carried on from this Kingdom as well as our own Manufactures ...".[3] And in describing the urban drift in the mid-nineteenth century Sewell commented, "I do not doubt that many proprietors really suffer from the partiality of young men to towns; but at the same time I do not doubt that many of these young men prefer, and very naturally prefer, the greater certainty of regular payment that town business offers."[4]

[1] G. St.J. Orde-Brown, Labour Conditions in the West Indies, (Cmd. 6070, London, HMSO), July 1939, para. 52, p. 81.

[2] Orde-Brown saw this policy as a sop to incipient violence rather than action seen as economically justified. "Even now the wharf labourers, who are among the best paid workers in Kingston, are conspicuously dissatisfied, since their opportunities to earn are so irregular." (para. 56).

[3] Quoted in F.W. Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies 1700-1763, (New Haven), 1917, p. 20; and in Roberts, op. cit., p. 164.

[4] Sewell, op. cit., p. 207.

But urbanisation has been most rapid in the twentieth century, particularly since the policy of industrialisation-by-invitation was adopted, though largely because opportunities for emigration were curbed in the 1920s and 1930s, urban growth was also rapid between 1921 and 1943.[1] Internal migration was greater between 1943 and 1960 than between 1921 and 1943, and greater still between 1960 and 1970.[2] This was the major factor in the urban growth. As a result, according to one estimate, in 1960, 30 per cent of the population lived in urban areas; by 1970 the figure had risen to 37 per cent, and it was projected to be more than 60 per cent by 1990.[3] No less than 82 per cent of Jamaica's population growth from 1960 to 1970 was registered in the country's urban areas.[4] Though other towns have shared in the recent urban growth, most of the population living in urban areas are concentrated in the Kingston-St. Andrew metropolitan area, a classic "primate city" which in 1970 was about twelve times larger in terms of population than the next largest urban centre.

The growth of the capital has been closely connected with the commercial and industrial growth of the country.[5] It has always experienced high levels of unemployment, and it is evident that the rapid industrialisation in the post-1945 years did not lead to any appreciable increase in industrial employment. Nevertheless, partly because of the underdevelopment of the rural economy, the drift into the city continued and accelerated. The migrants have been mostly young and a large majority have been female.[6] As a result of this selectivity the ratio of females to males in the urban population has always been extremely high, both by comparison with the high ratio recorded for Jamaica as a whole and compared with other countries. Women too have accounted for a disproportionately large proportion of the urban unemployment. Yet although the chronically high levels of unemployment might have been expected to push women out of the labour force - as seems to have been the case in many countries - this tendency seems to have been rather weak. Women have continued to take a high proportion of total employment and have continued to move into the city despite the high unemployment prevailing

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[1] L. Hewitt, "Internal Migration and Urban Growth", in G.W. Roberts (ed.), Recent Population Movements in Jamaica (CICRED), 1974, pp. 24-55.

[2] Ibid., pp. 34-39.

[3] J.W. Trowbridge, Urbanisation in Jamaica, International Urbanisation Survey Report to the Ford Foundation, no date, pp. 2-3. Hewitt reported a growth from 35 to 41 per cent between 1960 and 1970, op. cit., p. 49.

[4] Trowbridge, op. cit. In his analysis only 3.7 per cent of the island's area was classified as "urban" in 1970.

[5] Initially Kingston was a trading centre serving Spanish America, with re-exportation its primary function. It has always been more a commercial than an industrial centre, though this has been changing. Incidentally, it is the St. Andrew portion of the metropolitan area which has experienced the expansion of recent years.

[6] K. Tekse, Internal Migration (Department of Statistics, Kingston), 1968. Between 1960 and 1970 the net in-migration of males in the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew was 25,433 compared with 46,002 females. Hewitt, op. cit., p. 40.

there. In fact, although the paucity of reliable or consistent statistics makes it difficult to state with assurance that the level of female economic activity has increased or decreased in recent years, there is no doubt that the rate of participation has been remarkably high by international standards. According to Durand the level of female participation in non-agricultural economic activities in Jamaica has been among the highest in the world.[1] And according to the Government Department of Statistics, in October 1973 the activity rate of women over the age of 14 was nearly 59 per cent, a high level even allowing for the "loose" criterion adopted for inclusion of non-employed women in the labour force.[2] Moreover, during the post-1945 period there seems to have been a slow substitution of female for male labour within the non-agricultural sector of the economy. The Department of Statistics' data suggest that, excluding agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining, the female proportion of total employment in Jamaica increased from 44.6 per cent in July 1968 to 49.4 per cent in October 1973.[3] And, although the figures provided by the Factory Inspectorate of the Ministry of Labour are somewhat unreliable, within manufacturing industry there has almost certainly been an upward trend in the female proportion of total employment, rising from about 23-24 per cent in the early 1950s to nearly 35 per cent in 1973.[4] So, the urbanisation and continuing migration to the city has coincided not only with chronically high urban unemployment but with a high rate of female labour force participation in the urban labour market.

Unemployment, and especially urban unemployment, has always been regarded as a major social and economic problem in Jamaica. Though the plantations have complained of a shortage of labour throughout the post-Emancipation period there were always large numbers of unemployed and a large body of workers who subsisted by doing casual labour interspersed by periods of idleness. For instance, in 1861 Sewell noted that there was unemployment in the urban areas of Montego Bay and Manchester, and that not only was there widespread worksharing but that employers other than the plantations had little difficulty in securing labour whenever they wished.[5] Later in the nineteenth century unemployment contributed to the mass emigration of manual workers to Panama and elsewhere. Indeed, until about 1921 emigration on a large scale seems to have been both the consequence of a lack of employment opportunities and the factor checking the rise of unemployment. With the declining opportunities for emigration in the 1920s and 1930s

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[1] J.D. Durand, The Labour Force in Economic Development (New Jersey, Princeton University Press), 1975.

[2] Labour Force Survey, October 1973 (Department of Statistics, Kingston), 1974, Table I, p. 18.

[3] Ibid., Table II. Note that most of this non-agricultural employment has been in urban areas, largely in the capital city.

[4] Ministry of Labour, Annual Reports, 1950-64 (Kingston) and unpublished Annual Reports, 1965-73.

[5] Sewell, op. cit., pp. 212, 224, 283, 285.

there was no longer an outlet for the unemployed, and the growth of unemployment became a major factor contributing to the riots of 1938, which resulted in a Royal Commission being set up to study the situation. Unemployment was estimated to be extremely high by the 1943 Census and, albeit somewhat less so, in the Unemployment Survey carried out in 1946. The problem was further highlighted by Labour Force Surveys in 1953 and 1957 and by the Census of 1960. Though these various surveys adopted varying definitions of employment and unemployment, it seems unemployment fell slightly during the 27 year period between 1943 and 1960.[1] The fall was due not to any rapid expansion of employment associated with industrialisation but to an acceleration of emigration in that period, mostly to the United Kingdom.[2] After 1960 unemployment seems to have increased and by the 1970s had reached levels in excess of 20 per cent of the labour force. In 1973 in the Kingston-St. Andrew metropolitan area unemployment was estimated to account for 26 per cent of the labour force.[3]

While the capital-intensive and dualistic nature of Jamaican industrialisation and the slow expansion of employment are the major causes of the persistently high unemployment, it has often been attributed to, first, a widespread unwillingness to take available employment opportunities or to remain in regular employment, and second, to the fact that many of the unemployed are "unemployable".

The claim that much of the unemployment and "visible underemployment" is voluntary has been popular since the nineteenth century, originating with the view that the Negro was inherently "lazy", averse to any form of hard or regular labour. This racialist view was later modified, the assumption being that most workers had "target incomes", only being available for wage labour when cash income was required. This was the planters' view, which has persisted. Thus the notorious 1945 Economic Committee claimed "voluntary underemployment" in Jamaica was widespread because many workers had their own plots of land.[4] According to its report there were no strong incentives to increase work effort because there were few places for the working-class to spend money and because in Jamaica there was little need to build houses or to buy large quantities of clothing or other items essential in colder zones of the world. The Committee supported the view that workers had target incomes and that higher wages would tend to reduce labour supply. As so often before, it was concluded that what was

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[1] C.P. McFarlane, Education and Employment, Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, University of West Indies, 1969, p. 72. In reaching the conclusion that the unemployment rate fell, McFarlane made some adjustments to the figures to achieve a greater degree of comparability.

[2] O. Jefferson, The Post-War Economic Development of Jamaica (Mona, ISER) 1972, pp. 28-34.

[3] Labour Force Survey, 1974, op. cit. Of course the recorded level of open unemployment is a statistical artifact which only represents one dimension of the employment problem. It is nevertheless an indication of the underutilisation of manpower, if only the most conspicuous one.

[4] Report of the Economic Committee (Government Printer, Kingston), 1945.

needed was a "stimulus to ambition and an incentive to effort".[1] Later, in a study conducted in the 1950s, Maunder claimed that "voluntary unemployment is as important a source of non-utilisation of the potential available as involuntary unemployment".[2]

He also felt that in an economy such as Jamaica the experience of unemployment involved less "frustration and discontent" than in an industrialised economy where "the unemployed are not adjusted to the situation".[3] Much later still, a PREALC Report mentioned that "voluntary partial unemployment" seemed widespread, though it recognised that involuntary unemployment and underemployment were the major problems.[4] The Report commented, "Employers in the talks we had with them, tended to say that if people were unemployed, it was often because they chose to be so. Employers likewise usually stressed that workers liked to change their job frequently."[5]

Most observers have argued that target income behaviour and the low utility of income have produced voluntary unemployment.[6] But another popular view has been that many of the younger unemployed decline to take available employment because they fail to match their expectations and aspirations. Thus a prominent official at the Ministry of Labour asserted that "many unemployed persons consider certain types of jobs as undignified and inferior and will not be employed in them even though they are not qualified for better jobs", behaviour which he attributed to excessive aspirations borne of the "bias towards academic subjects in schools".[7] In a sense this is an outgrowth of the traditional view, for it assumes that labour force participation is still to some extent discretionary. A related suggestion is that since the wage and employment structure is dualistic many prefer to wait for relatively high wage employment rather than take some low income job.[8]

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[1] Ibid., p. 14.

[2] W.F. Maunder, Employment in an Underdeveloped Area - A Sample Survey in Kingston, Jamaica (Yale University Press, New Haven), 1960, pp. 29-30.

[3] Ibid., p. 163.

[4] ILO, Employment and Unemployment in Jamaica, Report of a mission undertaken by the PREALC team (ILO, Geneva), 1972, Part II, p. 150.

[5] Ibid., Part I, p. 55.

[6] E. Hoyt, "Voluntary Unemployment and Unemployability in Jamaica, with Special Reference to the Standard of Living", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. II, June 1960, pp. 129-136. Cumper argued that this was so in rural areas. G.E. Cumper (ed.), The Economy of the West Indies (Mona, ISER), 1960, pp. 126-151, 178.

[7] L.A. Kirkcaldy, "Institutional Reforms in a Strategy of Employment Creation. The Case of Jamaica", in K. Wohlmuth (ed.) Employment Creation in Developing Countries - The Situation of Labour in Dependent Economies (New York, Praeger), 1973, p. 283.

[8] Lewis, 1964, op. cit., p. 27; G. Tidrick, "Wage Spillover and Unemployment in a Wage Gap Economy: The Jamaican Case" (Research Memorandum No. 47, Williams College, Mass., 1972).

It is hard to assess the extent of voluntary unemployment. The claim that income has low utility is a static and much discredited argument, implicitly assuming workers have "limited wants". In Jamaica there is no evidence to support it. The one detailed study of consumer expenditures so far conducted found that the elasticity of expenditure with respect to income was close to unity and for low income groups was above unity, findings inconsistent with the limited utility of income proposition.[1] Nor is there evidence to support the claim that the unemployed have excessive aspirations and expectations.[2] Two types of notionally voluntary unemployment do seem to remain. When most youth are faced with the prospect of one or more prolonged periods of unemployment, the stigma associated with unemployment - the "disapprobation cost" - may be less than if unemployment was more exceptional.[3] Secondly, in a chronically labour surplus economy commitment to regular employment will be reduced by the perceived need of the employed to share their income with dependents and the unemployed as a security measure. The effect of the principle of "balanced reciprocity" will be considered in more detail later. But a high propensity to share evidently could allow individuals to remain voluntarily unemployed and to maintain high reservation wages. However, even if both these types of "voluntary" unemployment existed their significance would be due to the chronically high level of unemployment, rather than being a major cause of that unemployment.

The view that many of the unemployed are "unemployable" assumes they are unable to secure employment because their potential productivity is below the market wage rate. This was the opinion of the 1945 Economic Committee, which was sceptical about the high level of unemployment recorded in the 1943 Census, not only claiming that much of the unemployment was voluntary but that a large proportion consisted of "unemployables, beggars, criminals, prostitutes, and so forth."[4] In partial support of this view they cited the prevalence of malnutrition and disease among workers, from which it was concluded, "hence they have neither the strength nor the heart to do a great deal".[5] Of course, the problem is to identify cause and effect, for prolonged unemployment and poverty tend to produce unemployability.

Many urban youth enter the labour force with the prospect of several years of unemployment, in some cases interspersed with short periods of low-paying, menial work. During this period their commitment to labour force activity is

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[1] L. Taylor, Consumers' Expenditure in Jamaica (Mona, ISER), 1965.

[2] M.G. Smith, "Education and Occupational Choice in Jamaica", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 9, No. 3, September 1960, pp.332-354; R.K. Kerton, Labour Theory and Developing Countries: The Individual's Supply of Effort in the Caribbean, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1969. Also, Standing, 1975, op. cit.

[3] But Maunder's claim that the unemployment involves little "frustration and discontent" is surely rubbish. The violence and crime in Kingston among the unemployed are legendary.

[4] Report, 1945, op. cit., p. 14.

[5] Ibid.

not developed and their ability to undertake sustained work is systematically undermined by the debilitating experience of idleness. Such prolonged unemployment generates a pervasive sense of anomie and disaffection, which implies that in the course of an unsuccessful period of unemployment many become passive, pessimistic, and thus ineffectual job-seekers.[1] This is particularly likely to affect the attitudes and working ability of the majority of teenagers who leave school at the age of 15 or thereabouts, since employers have generally been loath to hire workers under the age of 17 or 18.[2] During the interim period many youths not only fail to learn skills, or develop labour force commitment, but relapse into illiteracy.[3] In effect, a large body of the urban unemployed drift out of the labour market for most jobs, becoming "scufflers", increasingly unemployable and unable to do regular full-time work.[4] As an official report noted after the riot of 1938 - and as we have seen, in the ensuing decades the unemployment situation scarcely improved - "There has grown up in Kingston a body of some thousands of persons for whom employment is at best intermittent. The tendency for such people to become unemployable, if not criminal, will be obvious."[5] Drifting into various casual and often illegitimate activities to ensure physical survival - so often the reality of the so-called "informal sector" - the long-term unemployed form a classic lumpenproletariat, anomic, criminal, and often violent.

This widespread withdrawal from the active labour force is only the most conspicuous effect of unemployment on the pattern of labour force participation and employment in Kingston. By checking the development of skills and labour force commitment it has also been a factor preventing the emergence of a dualistic labour force in which men become primary workers and women secondary workers. In most economies male workers have formed such a primary labour force, in part through acquiring skills and labour force commitment in the early stages of their working lives. But in Kingston the high unemployment has had the effect of making the labour force relatively homogeneous, since urban youth have received little or no reinforcement to labour force commitment, and indeed many have become "secondary", intermittent labour force participants.

The unemployment reduces the expected income of male workers, while the inability of young male workers to develop skills and commitment through on-the-job experience and job security tends to prevent any large divergence between the opportunity incomes of male and female workers. Both these tendencies encourage women to remain in the labour force. Moreover, the widespread tendency for men

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[1] It has been shown that among the working-class the sense of pessimism and passivity, or anomie, is widespread. G.J. Kruijer, Report on Some of Jamaica's Social Problems (Kingston, unpublished, mimeo), February 1968.

[2] M.G. Smith, "Aimless, Wandering Adolescent Groups", in S. Carter (ed.), The Adolescent in the Changing Caribbean (Mona, UCWI), 1963.

[3] See the later section on education.

[4] G.S. Clarke, "Population Pressure in Kingston: A Study of Unemployment and Overcrowding", Transactions and Papers of the Institute of Geographers, 1966, Publ. 8, 38, pp. 165-182.

[5] G. St.J. Orde-Brown, Labour Conditions in the West Indies, Cond. 6070 (London, HMSO), July 1939, para. 65, p. 85.

to become semi-committed labour force participants has meant that for a wide range of jobs most potential recruits have been, in effect, secondary workers. This will have encouraged a greater division of labour, a tendency to make jobs suitable for secondary workers, and the growth of industries and enterprises in which production is based on secondary workers.

The lack of any general difference in productivity arising from differential labour force commitment leads to greater reliance on other supply characteristics in the allocation of job opportunities. And in that respect certain factors associated with unemployment further weaken the likelihood of sexual dualism. First, whereas in most economies male youth have been regarded as the most trainable, in circumstances where there is high youth unemployment prolonged idleness can be expected to make them increasingly unattractive to employers, who will tend to use duration of unemployment as one criterion in their recruitment policies. And because certain groups will be associated with long-term unemployment and the behavioural traits encouraged by it employers will tend to "discriminate" against workers from those groups.

Second, the high ratio of passive to active job-seeking unemployed means that the effective competition for jobs is less than implied by the aggregate level of unemployment. That favours the intermittent labour force participant, notably the woman who withdraws from the labour force to have children, and the migrant labour force entrant. As such it is one factor which reconciles the continuing flow of migrant job-seekers to Kingston, mainly women, with measured rates of urban unemployment in excess of 20 per cent. Further, the pattern of migration has produced an urban labour force comprising almost as many women as men, despite lower female labour force participation rates. That has reduced the likelihood of any discrimination against women, encouraged the growth of enterprises employing women, and tended to lower the female opportunity wage.

Third, the pattern of urban unemployment, in checking the competitive advantage of urban male workers, makes the labour force relatively homogeneous and the labour market relatively "open". In particular, the distribution of employment is likely to be determined by the workers' relative supply price of labour to a greater extent than in a labour market characterised by a more rigid stratification of workers and jobs. As such, the major determinants of an individual job-seeker's probability of employment will include the intensity of job-search, the aspiration wage (both relative to the market wage and to those of other job-seekers), and the "effort bargain".[1] Defining the aspiration wage as the minimum wage rate for which the individual job-seeker would accept employment, a survey of unemployed job-seekers in Kingston in 1974 found that women and migrants had significantly lower aspiration wages and were prepared to work longer work-weeks than men and more urbanised workers respectively.[2] On the assumption that men and women, and migrant and non-migrant job-seekers were fairly homogeneous with respect to potential productivity, and that willingness to work long work-weeks

[1] The question of formal "credentials" will be discussed later.

[2] Guy Standing, Aspiration Wages, Migration, and Female Employment, Population and Employment Working Paper, No. 23, (Geneva, ILO, 1975).

was a reasonable proxy for commitment to wage labour - or that workers who were willing to work long work-weeks were more exploitable than workers prepared to work fewer hours for any given wage rate - the observed differences would tend to encourage a substitution of women and migrants for male urban workers.[1]

These behavioural factors do help to account for the high female labour force participation rate and continuing migration despite the level of urban unemployment. Another marginal factor has been the informal labour market. As in most industrialising economies the formal mechanisms for placing workers in jobs have been extremely weak in Kingston, the main feature being that workers have been hired on a rather haphazard basis, typically "at the gate" or on the recommendation of existing workers. As this informality has placed a high premium on contacts between the employed and the potential job-applicants, it has left the long-term urban unemployed poorly placed since they tend to have their contacts with other unemployed and to gravitate to areas of poverty where the unemployed are concentrated. Potential migrants and women outside the labour force are probably as likely to be quickly informed of job-openings by friends or relatives in employment. The one formal instrument which might have been expected to have increased the probability of employment for the urban unemployed is the Government Employment Service (GES). But not only has this been largely ineffectual; it has probably favoured female and migrant workers. For many years it specialised in low-wage jobs and was concerned primarily with domestic employment, the type of work traditionally taken by women when they first entered Kingston from the countryside.[2] Since much of that type of labour was hired on a casual basis, for many women the GES became almost an intermediary employer reducing the cost of searching for work and improving the efficiency of the labour market, albeit marginally.[3] In recent years the GES has changed from being predominantly a domestics' placement agency to one providing a service for low-level clerical workers as well. Since women have also taken many of those jobs the GES has somewhat reduced the relative and absolute cost of labour force participation for young unemployed women with those skills. In sum, the nature of the GES has encouraged women to make greater use of the exchange than men, and has thus been a small factor encouraging female labour force participation. It has probably

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[1] It is perhaps unnecessary to reiterate the basic assumption underlying that deduction, but it will be recalled that one of the central arguments of this essay is that historical and socio-economic factors have tended to equalise the degree of labour force commitment of men and women. This has removed one important factor (perhaps the important factor) that has contributed to the sexual dualism in most countries where male workers have been regarded as more likely than women to remain or become stable wage workers, committed to their employment and likely to yield a return to their employers from on-the-job training and experience.

[2] Tekse, 1967, op. cit.

[3] The role and performance of the Government Employment Service is discussed in a paper submitted to the National Planning Agency in 1974. Guy Standing, Registered Unemployed in Kingston (Kingston, mimeo.), 1974. It was evident that many women had come to rely on the GES as an employer subcontracting their labour out, often to private households and often on a day-work or short-term basis. In one admittedly extreme case a female registrant at the exchange had been employed by 98 different employers in the eight years after she first registered at the exchange on arrival from the countryside.

encouraged an increase in female employment as well, since many small-scale employers, particularly those hiring domestics, may not have hired anybody in the absence of the GES.[1]

Conversely, however, many industrial employers have been discouraged from using the GES because of its tendency to send "low quality" labour to fill vacancies registered with it. This has been the consequence of the "equity" policy pursued by the GES, of sending those who have been longest on the register rather than those most likely to be employable. So there has been a tendency to send workers who are among Kingston's "unemployables".[2] In reducing the use and status of the GES this policy has afflicted both men and women, but men have tended to suffer more because the number and range of job vacancies registered have been somewhat greater for women.

In short, women have been better served than men by the GES, which has marginally encouraged female labour force participation and failed to encourage active job-seeking by unemployed men by failing in its primary function of reducing the cost of job-search. Had the exchange worked efficiently or had there been an effective substitute, so that the urban unemployed were effectively placed first in the queue for jobs, migrants would have been discouraged by the low probability of employment, low expected incomes, and the long duration of unemployment they could expect. Lacking a facility to ensure such a queuing process, the labour market has tended to exacerbate the city's high unemployment, by not deterring migration, by reducing labour force activity among the unemployed men, and as a corollary, by contributing to the growth of a large pool of unemployable and "passively" unemployed workers.

From this analysis it is possible to trace the consequences of the persistently high level of unemployment for the pattern and level of labour force participation. It has produced widespread discouragement and anomie, which has meant that a large proportion of the unemployed drop out of the labour force to become passively unemployed. It has also generated a large body of unemployable workers.[3] Both have encouraged the continuation of rural-urban migration in the face of high levels of unemployment. The unemployment itself has discouraged skill acquisition and labour force commitment because of the inherent job insecurity and low expected earnings, particularly among youth. The female labour force participation has been encouraged by the low commitment by male workers, their low expected

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[1] The availability of the GES reduces the employer's costs of recruitment, including the cost of "screening". Whether rightly or wrongly there would be a tendency to regard a worker channelled through a government agency as relatively likely to be "reliable and honest".

[2] In practice the policy has not been as clearly defined as suggested here, but the GES has suffered from the fact that it is not clear whether it is a welfare agency or a purely economic one concerned with operational efficiency. Standing, 1974, ibid.

[3] Of course, one should be wary of this term, in so far as it can easily shift the "blame" for the unemployment from the structure of production to labour. What is meant is unemployable at the time of hiring, from the employer's point of view. Once "unemployable", there may be no means by which an individual could acquire or reacquire the capacity, confidence, or inclination to be employable.

earnings, which have encouraged the persistence of informal conjugal relationships, and the tendency for unemployed youth to become unemployable. In itself the high level of female unemployment will have discouraged many women from entering or remaining in the labour force. Yet it is clear that the chronically high level of unemployment in Kingston has not made women into a largely inactive "reserve" labour force.

Family structure

One of the social features of Jamaica most associated with its history is the loose or informal family structure, which has had a close bearing on the pattern of labour force participation. It has been associated with low levels of labour force commitment among men and a desperate need for employment among women.

Ever since the period of slavery most couples have lived in some form of "consensual union", varying from some "visiting" relationship to a durable "common-law marriage" partnership. Only among the middle-class has the norm been legal marriage sanctioned by the church and recognised as legally binding, though it has also been quite common among older working-class couples. In effect, unlike most societies in which marriage involves a simple dichotomy, in Jamaica marriage involves a range of types of union. What really distinguishes one type from another is not so much their legal status but the expected duration of cohabitation. Formal polygamy has always been practically non-existent, despite the high ratio of women to men, but it is quite common for a woman to have children by a number of different men - by what is sometimes called "serial monogamy" - and for a man to support or "visit" a number of different women at the same time.

It is doubtful whether there has ever been any standard family type, though studies have found that some types of partnership are more common among certain socio-economic groups than others and that formal marriage is positively correlated with education.[1] But in any case illegitimacy is normal rather than exceptional, for about three out of every four children are born illegitimately.

The origin of this pattern of informality and illegitimacy is fairly easily explained. Slavery systematically undermined the status of the male as family head and produced a lack of concern over illegitimacy, as well as a lack of paternal authority.[2] Before 1834 slaves were often forbidden to marry, and the distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy was weak. But even after

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[1] Among the pioneering studies, see E. Clarke, My Mother Who Fathered Me, 1957; M.G. Smith, West Indian Family Structure, 1962.

[2] Ruth Landes, "Negro Slavery and Female Status", in Les Afro-Américains (Institute Français d'Afrique Norse, Dakar), 1952, pp. 256-66. For an interesting historical study of household types among slaves, see B.W. Higman, "Household Structure and Fertility on Jamaican Slave Plantations: A Nineteenth Century Example", Population Studies, Vol. 27, No. 3, November 1973, pp. 527-50.

Emancipation plantation life weakened family cohesion.[1] What might appear less easy to explain is the persistence of the pattern for nearly a century and a half after slavery was abolished. Many attempts have been made to alter the pattern, without any lasting success. Thus, despite repeated officially-sanctioned initiatives designed to increase the incidence of formal marriage among working-class Jamaicans, including "marriage drives" led by governors' wives and other middle-class dignitaries, as well as religious bodies, the legal marriage rate has remained very low, and in recent years it is probable that the divorce rate has increased faster than the marriage rate.[2]

One of the main factors inhibiting any change has been the persistence of the plantation structure in rural Jamaica, for life has continued to revolve round the estates even though they have been declining in both number and influence.[3] The pattern of seasonal employment and migratory labour in the areas dominated by the plantations have hardly been conducive to stable family life. But the fact that among the working class there has been no appreciable change can be largely explained by their continued poverty and life of insecurity, unemployment and underemployment.[4] Legal marriage is not so much shunned for what it represents; on the contrary, it seems to be a desired objective of most people, albeit something of an idealised one. Rather, marriage has been shunned because of its impracticable nature.[5] The psychic or social costs of not getting married have been less than the costs of getting and being married. Given the objective conditions in which the Jamaican working class are placed, marriage is simply anachronistic. It imposes its own code of behaviour, which for younger Jamaican men is often impossible to attain or maintain, and it involves costs that are typically excessive and benefits that are typically minimal. Among the costs,

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[1] A number of reasons why Caribbean slave owners discouraged formal family development at least before the abolition of the slave trade when American slave owners were encouraging it are discussed in a recent controversial study: R.W. Fogel and S.L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery, 1974. Even so, some observers have noted the persistence of historical tendencies in the US similar to those found in the Caribbean. For instance, as Bernard noted, "At least one element of the old plantation family pattern persists even in the urban slum family of today: the relatively greater value attached to motherhood than to wifehood." J. Bernard, Marriage and Family Among Negroes, 1966, p. 104. For an analysis of the pronatalist policies adopted towards the end of the eighteenth century, see G.W. Roberts, The Population of Jamaica, 1957 pp. 234-247.

[2] K. Tekse, Population and Vital Statistics, Jamaica, 1832-1964 (Department of Statistics, Kingston), 1974. The most celebrated attempt to increase the marriage rate was the Mass Marriage Movement of 1944-45.

[3] A number of studies have found family ties to be stronger in small-scale farming than in estate communities. For instance, Clarke, op. cit.

[4] Smith found that urbanisation increased instability of mating organisations and led to increased fragmentation of nuclear families. Smith, 1962, op. cit., p. 242.

[5] In fact in the circumstances in which the Jamaican working class have been forced to live it is arguable that formal stable marriage should be regarded as the deviant case, considering the economic marginality of most of the population. For a similar Latin American view, L.R. Peattie, The View from the Barrio, 1968 p. 47. See also A. Marino, "Family, Fertility and Sex Ratios in the British Caribbean", Population Studies, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, July 1970, pp. 171-172.

the expence of the marriage ceremony itself has acted as a significant impediment. In addition, marriage has been associated with certain specific achievements and it imposes certain behavioural expectations on both the man and the woman. As noted by Back and Stycos, "A piece of one's own land, a steady job, a house and a spouse outside the labour force are examples of the kinds of security custom requires of a man before marriage."[1] It has also often been observed that among the working class there is a "feeling that a married woman becomes respectable and should not work even if poor".[2]

Formal marriage is really a consumer good which for most young Jamaicans is only attainable if middle-class status is achieved; indeed, among the younger age groups being legally married is almost symbolic of belonging to the middle-class and has long been the case.[3] But formal legal marriage, as contrasted with "visiting" or longer-term consensual unions, is also in a real sense a lifetime consumption goal for many working class Jamaicans. If it takes place at all, it is likely to come some time after a couple have had and raised children.

TABLE 1

Women by conjugal status by age, 1943 and 1960
(Percentage distribution)

Status: / Age	Single		Common law		Married	
	1943	1960	1943	1960	1943	1960
15-19	93.0	87.9	5.3	7.8	1.7	1.2
20-24	65.6	51.6	23.6	29.1	10.7	10.7
25-29	46.4	29.3	29.8	33.7	23.3	25.3
30-34	37.5	20.8	28.1	29.7	33.2	35.5
35-39	33.8	17.4	24.7	25.3	38.9	41.2
40-44	33.4	15.8	18.8	19.8	42.4	44.5
45-54	33.9	16.6	11.1	13.3	43.2	42.9

Source: K. Tekse, 1974, op. cit.

[1] J.M. Stycos and K.W. Back, The Control of Human Fertility in Jamaica (New York), 1964, p. 91.

[2] Ibid., pp. 325-326. See also Clarke, op. cit., 1966 edition, p. 78; and D. Ibberson, "Illegitimacy and the Birth Rate", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 5, No. 1, March 1956, p. 99.

[3] For instance, the 1943 Census Report noted, "Marriage to a considerable extent entails a degree of prosperity or prospects". 1943 Population Census Report, Central Bureau of Statistics, Eighth Census of Jamaica and its Dependencies, Government Printing Office, Kingston, p. XIVI.

For young working-class men who cannot afford to consider marriage the lack of formal family responsibilities has tended to weaken any nascent labour force commitment on their part. For although there may be an intense individualism "emphasised by the absence of the economic and social bonds which tie the generations together and which are characteristic of peasant communities everywhere", a society based on such informal and instable relationships "does not make as heavy demands on men, nor impose such narrow limits on his conduct, as do other societies".[1] Yet while the element of compulsion to labour force commitment represented by formal family responsibilities is lacking, men are often faced by a number of potential and competing demands on any income that they do earn. They may have a mother dependent on their earnings, a current girl-friend and one or more other women by whom they have had children, all of whom would want a share of the man's earnings.[2] Situations like that exist in most countries, but in Jamaica it is endemic and unexceptional. It is significant because it indicates one way by which working-class men lack the incentive to work on a regular, committed basis. For many workers there is simply no prospect of significantly improving their own income and savings by working harder or more efficiently.

Disincentives to labour force commitment are embedded in the informal family structure. Because households consist of informal, flexible arrangements behavioural adjustments are more practicable than in societies in which marital and household structures are formalised, rigid and essentially permanent arrangements. As a result there is a tendency for individuals to gravitate towards those households capable of supporting dependents. Thus, among the working-class there has been a much-noted tendency for additional increments of income earned by one or more of its members to lead to increments of dependents attaching themselves to the household. These will normally be relatives, but may be quite distant relatives or not relatives at all; they may attach themselves by becoming members of the household, or by joining the "yard" in which a family is living, or they may merely take to visiting for meals or financial assistance. Whatever the exact relationship the result has been that individual workers have generally been expected to have a high propensity to share their income. So for an individual worker any increase in earnings has typically been translated into a much smaller or even negligible increase in income available for personal consumption.[3] In economic terms, the elasticity of consumption requirements with respect to changes in income has been close to unity. This implies that there is very little incentive for a man, in particular, to attempt to raise his income, especially as manual workers could only expect their earnings to rise by small amounts over an extended period.[4] But why should this pattern have continued?

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[1] T.S. Simey, Welfare and Planning the West Indies (Oxford University Press), 1946, p. 23.

[2] J. Blake, Family Structure in Jamaica: The Social Context of Reproduction (New York, Free Press), 1961; S.M. Greenfield, "Socio-Economic Factors and Family Form", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1961, pp. 72-85.

[3] G.E. Cumper, "Lewis's Two-Sector Model of Development and the Theory of Wages", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1963; R.K. Kerton, "An Economic Analysis of the Extended Family in the West Indies", Journal of Development Studies, Vol. 7, No. 4, July 1971, pp. 423-434.

[4] Note that, according to conventional micro-economic theory, labour supply may be positively related to the number of dependents. Indeed this seems intuitively reasonable, but work effort is unlikely to be positively related to the prospective number of dependents when the latter would be a direct function of work effort, or rather the income associated with it.

If a man earning a relatively good income, as measured against the average levels received by the working-class, has to share that income, how is it that he does not refuse to continue sharing it? The answer is that sharing is done on the basis of prospective reciprocity. Insecurity and uncertainty are so endemic and serious for working-class Jamaicans that a man earning a moderate income will feel it is in his long-term interest to share what he has while he has it, so that he can ask for reciprocal favours at a later date when he no longer has a job or an adequate income. Only when individuals see themselves as becoming habitual donors without the prospect of receiving or needing to receive reciprocal aid in the future will the chain be broken and a "spirit of self-reliance" (or individualism) develop among the working-class. Only then will income incentives be likely to be translated into greater labour force commitment, particularly to wage labour. And that would be likely to happen only if opportunities for socio-economic mobility were greatly improved and if the chronically high rate of unemployment fell, so providing a greater degree of security for those in employment and improved prospects of securing a steadily rising income.

Job and income insecurity and low levels of labour force commitment are inter-related, the one exacerbating the other. Together they have ensured that family work roles have rarely been fixed and clearly defined. In particular, to compensate for the lack of commitment and the attendant low income and insecurity among male manual workers, most women have been under strong pressure to earn an income. Of course, the informal family structure has also meant that women have rarely been able to rely on continuing financial support, even when their partners have had regular employment and an adequate income.[1] Moreover, many women of necessity have been primarily responsible for the maintenance of their children, without any assurance of support from the father who may be unemployed, in irregular employment, or simply unwilling to give a woman financial assistance. As an official Government report put it in 1944, and the situation has certainly not changed, "It can hardly be expected that a young labourer who is only just able to support himself should willingly contribute to the support of an unwanted child by a woman for whom in a great number of cases he has probably but little real affection."[2] So it has often been claimed that men, not being required to maintain their children, choose to neglect any responsibility for them. For instance, the 1937 Jamaica Nutrition Committee firmly asserted, "It is common for the women of the labour class to bear all or most of the family burden ... One of the chief reasons for destitution and the need for parochial aid arises from this irresponsibility of the male parent."[3] But evidence suggests that it is more often simply the inability of men to support both themselves and their

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[1] For instance, as noted by Edith Clarke, "In concubinage ... the woman accepts the fact that she will have to contribute to the household budget by doing whatever work she can find." Clarke, op. cit., p. 105.

[2] Report of the Committee to Enquire into Ways and Means of Training Adolescents (Government Printing Office, Kingston), 1944, cited in Simey, op. cit., p. 15.

[3] Report of the Jamaica Nutrition Committee, 1937, paragraph 4, cited in Simey, op. cit., p. 15.

detached children which primarily explains why most men have not given regular and adequate assistance.[1] As Simey noted long ago, "A man will do his best to care for his children, as a rule, but the insecurity of his position in the family and his poverty make it very difficult for him to discharge obligations of parenthood which are accepted without question in Great Britain and North America."[2]

This inability to support a family and the lack of any tradition of formal responsibility have tended to reduce the labour force commitment of men.[3] Women have been under correspondingly greater pressure to get work, so the family structure could be said to have equalled the degree of commitment to wage labour, and thereby checked the extent of sexual dualism. However, the relative employment position of women in the non-agricultural labour force also generally reflects the distribution of education and training opportunities, and in many societies educational discrimination has ensured that as wage labour and non-agricultural employment have expanded, women have been eased out of the labour force.

Education, training and women's employment

Despite rapid urbanisation and industrialisation since 1945, Jamaica is still basically an agrarian economy, in which a large proportion of the population are occupied as "quasi-peasants" (the exact term is a matter of some debate), working a small piece of land and doing irregular wage labour or combining petty trade and casual labour. As such it is only in recent years - and then haltingly - that formal education has become really significant.

Initially schools were established for those few poor whites and free coloureds whose role was to form the nucleus of an administrative class. That apart, for over a century after Emancipation the educational needs of the majority were largely ignored. Not only did the shortage of facilities and the resultant chronic overcrowding discourage school attendance but to the mass of quasi-peasants exhorted to send their children to school, formal education seemed and

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[1] G.J. Kruijer, 1968, op. cit.; Central Planning Unit, Report on an Anomia Survey, 1969 (uncirculated, Kingston).

[2] Simey, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

[3] Maunder speculated that as the result of illegitimacy most children had "no character training fitting for regular employment". Maunder, 1960, op. cit., p. 50. Kerr concluded that in Jamaica early family life encouraged a pattern of dependence rather than initiative. M. Kerr, Personality and Conflict in Jamaica (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press), 1951, pp. 115-116. Moreover, in maternal households boys are less likely to be pressed into occupational roles, are likely to have greater freedom of movement, less discipline, and less example.

was overwhelmingly irrelevant, since its primary purpose was to produce clerical skills.[1] As schools offered little or no hope for social or economic advance they were shunned and indeed it seems daily attendance rates, while always low, declined during the course of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.[2] The problem has remained acute ever since.

The loose family structure in Jamaica has often been blamed for this pattern of irregular school attendance by working-class children. As the 1941 Concubinage Report lamented, "In a large number of cases, the non-attendance of children at school is caused by the fact that the parent or guardian is himself or herself almost illiterate, and sees no reason why a child should not remain illiterate, and is unwilling to exert the authority or take the daily trouble to send the child to school."[3] Whether that explanation was valid at the time or in subsequent years, the lack of paternal authority seems to have been a major factor behind the notably low attendance rates of boys.[4] No doubt poverty, lack of adequate facilities, the shortage of trained teachers, the need for child labour, the lack of parental control and faith in the potential benefits of the available education, and the low expected returns to education in rural conditions all contributed to the ineffectual educational process. And even among those who acquired some primary education it was rarely of lasting economic benefit for the individual or family concerned. For instance, partial education was typically ineffectual because the limited market for acquired skills and the limited access to cash to assist in the use of skills acquired by education (if any) forced almost all the rural population to subsist through casual labour, part-time farming, and higgling. Systematically forced to live by expediency they were simply unable to indulge in rational long-term human investment and career planning. However, the system as it has existed has had the significant function of assimilating women into the non-agricultural "modern" labour force, since evidently the factors depressing both the school attendance rates of boys and their educational progress have been less inhibiting for girls.[5] For instance, both the 1943 and 1960 Censuses indicated that more girls were attending school than boys (Table II). Similarly, at least since 1921 the female literacy rate

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[1] It was not in the interests of the colonial regime, whose interests coincided with those of the plantation owners, to produce an educated rural proletariat. As noted earlier, if the peasants had been educated they would have been in a better position to improve their own cultivation techniques and develop skills that would have strengthened the "self-reliance" of the part of the economy outside the plantation sector. That would have reduced the labour supply to the estates and forced wages up. At one time Lord Grey, Secretary of State for the Colonies, proposed a new type of school designed to correct the deficiency of labour, being largely agricultural and intended to create new wants and tastes for wage goods so as to stimulate "a love of employment". The scheme never materialised. Mathieson, 1936, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

[2] Eisner, 1961, op. cit., pp. 331, 336.

[3] The Concubinage Report, Kingston, 1943, p. 4, quoting from the Department of Education's Annual Report, 1937.

[4] Simey, op. cit., p. 17.

[5] One reason for this may be simply the lack of paternal authority and encouragement, which are likely to contribute to a high level of truancy. See note 3, p. 23.

TABLE II

School attendance rates by sex and age, 1943, 1960
(Percent attending)

Age	Males	Females	Males	Females
	1943		1960	
6-14	71.2	75.0	86.1	87.9
15-19	7.7	8.3	13.4	17.0
20-24	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.0

Source: 1943, 1960 Censuses of Jamaica. Number attending during week of census.

Note : Attendance in public primary schools have been much lower than private schools. See Facts on Jamaica: Education, Department of Statistics, Kingston, 1973, pp. 16-17.

has been conspicuously better than the male equivalent.[1] Indeed, the differential tended to grow. In 1921 about 35 per cent of males over 10 years old were recorded as totally illiterate, compared with 32.7 per cent of females. In 1943, 23 per cent of females over seven years old were classified as illiterate, compared with 28.4 per cent of males.[2] The 1960 census suggested there had been significant improvements over the previous 17 years but, if anything, the relative position of women had also improved, with only 12.4 per cent of the female population over the age of 10 being unable to read or write, compared with 19 per cent of the equivalent male population (Tables III and IV).

In addition, a larger proportion of women had received more than six years education, and it was only at the very highest and numerically least important level, where degrees were concerned, that males outnumbered females (Table V). But schooling only tells part of the story, since in Jamaica there is a tradition of part-time education and private studying for exams designed to secure an "entry-ticket" to non-agricultural wage employment. In general, this informal education represents a sad and forlorn spectacle of failure, but again many more girls than boys have been involved (Table VI). Similarly, in 1971 an official report on adult literacy classes found that women were attending more conscientiously than male enrollees.[3]

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[1] Although the 1911 Census figures suggested that female illiteracy was slightly greater at that time it is really only after the 1940s, as the proportion of non-agricultural jobs increased, that literacy and general education became an important labour force "skill" for the working-class. For an analysis of attendance rates in the mid-1950s, see C.A. Moser, The Measurement of Levels of Living, 1957, p. 17.

[2] Census of Jamaica, 1943, Report, p. LVIII.

[3] Report of the Literacy Evaluation and Planning Committee, Ministry of Youth and Community Development, Kingston, 1971. There seems to have been a difference in the definition of literacy used in the Censuses and by the National Literacy Board which in 1974 estimated functional illiteracy to be much higher than suggested in the Censuses. See National Planning Agency, 1973 Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 1974, p. 220.

TABLE III

Literacy by sex, 1911-1960 (proportion of those 10 years old or older)

Percent who could read and write			
Year	Male	Female	Female/Male Ratio
1911	55.85	52.03	0.93
1921	57.98	58.53	1.01
1943	71.04	76.35	1.07
1960	80.94	86.61	1.07
Percent illiterate			
			Male/Female Ratio
1911	34.06	35.46	0.96
1921	34.95	32.67	1.07
1943	26.63	21.37	1.25
1960	18.00	12.44	1.45

Source: Census of Jamaica

TABLE IV

Ability to read and write by sex and age, 1960

(Proportion of those 10 years old or older)

Age:	15-19	20-24	25.29	30-34	35-39
Males	86.31	83.46	82.06	81.07	79.34
Females	94.55	91.04	89.13	87.88	85.59

Source: 1960 Census of Jamaica

TABLE V

Adult Population, 15 years of age and over, classified by standard of education attained and age by sex, 1960

Jamaica

	Males			Females		
	15+	15-19	20-24	15+	15-19	20-24
Nil	19.01	11.54	14.40	13.58	5.08	8.08
Primary: Less than 4 years	8.33	6.96	7.77	7.08	4.00	5.55
Primary: 4-5 years	20.99	20.67	20.80	20.97	16.78	19.19
Primary: 6-8 years	43.55	50.86	47.23	49.05	59.69	54.39
Jamaica Local 2nd and 3rd year	1.41	1.31	1.77	2.13	2.80	3.43
Without secondary school	3.42	6.60	3.99	4.23	9.07	5.01
School Certificate Secondary	2.75	2.05	3.89	2.77	2.58	4.23
Degree	0.55	0.00	0.14	0.18	0.00	0.12

Source: Census of Jamaica, 1960, Vol. II, Part A, Table 6, p.3-70, and Table 7, p.3-86.

TABLE VI

Proportion of male and female population not at school aged 15-19, 20-24 receiving some non-school education, 1960 (per cent)

	Males		Females	
	15-19	20-24	15-19	20-24
University	0.10	0.53	0.10	0.28
Part-time	2.29	0.79	4.15	0.99
Private study	3.54	1.37	6.59	1.58

Source: Derived from Census of Jamaica, 1960, Vol. II, Part A, Table 5, pp. 3-58, and Table 4, pp. 3-46.

So whatever can be said in criticism of the Jamaican educational system, it cannot be denied that girls, perhaps fortuitously, have tended to benefit more than boys. Studying the historical record of Jamaican education it is simply not possible to accept Ester Boserup's generalisation, "Everywhere boys were sent to school before girls, or many more boys than girls went to school. Therefore ... illiteracy ... became more characteristic of women."[1] Moreover, the relatively good education of women has been both cause and effect of their relatively high employment ratios in many non-agricultural sectors of the Jamaican economy. For because women have been relatively educated and literate they have been technically better prepared to take a wide cross-section of jobs requiring literacy, and because they have been able to take a fairly high proportion of such jobs the opportunities open to men in that sort of employment have been reduced, which has had the effect of further discouraging boys from "investing" in schooling, or more likely their relatives' pressure on them to attend school regularly and to continue education.[2] Of course, this situation is quite unlike

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[1] E. Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development, 1970, p. 57. Her analysis was of low-income countries in general, of which Jamaica was one.

[2] In recent years a widespread belief has been cultivated that education is the means of moving out of the rural areas and urban ghettos into white-collar employment. This is a fairly recent development, however, and in any case has involved a conflict between egalitarian norms of behaviour within the proletariat--that in poverty and adversity they have common interests - and the norms of individual achievement superimposed on the local community by the competitive nature of the economy and transmitted in part by education. This clash of values may have imposed psychic costs to the pursuit of education, producing a certain ambivalence of behaviour: the ineffectual pursuit of education coexisting with a belief in its virtues. There seems to be no evidence on this, which is a purely speculative hypothesis, but at least it seems to be consistent with those studies among school-children and the evidence showing high educational aspirations, poor attendance and low success.

that of most other industrialising countries where education has effectively discriminated against women from the outset. In those countries the superior education of men has enabled them to take most of the literacy-requiring, or "modern" jobs, thereby checking the growth of female wage employment and discouraging women from active or legitimate participation in the labour force.

It is the level of education relative to that received by men which is important in determining the extent of female participation in the industrial, commercial and administrative labour force, which collectively grows as economic development proceeds. Thus in Jamaica, since women have been relatively well-educated the imported methods of production, and the bureaucratic administrative structure which have usually accompanied them, have resulted in a notable expansion of female wage employment. First, the increasingly mechanised methods of production, typically introduced by foreign-owned multinational enterprises, have relied heavily on semi-skilled labour, including many process workers, who have often been women. Secondly, the existence of a chronic surplus of labour, in itself exacerbated by the production techniques introduced from abroad, have encouraged firms to use certain worker characteristics as screening devices in their recruitment policies, the most notable and easily implemented being literacy and education. Thirdly, the nature of the production methods, based on a fine division of labour, has tended to put a premium on written communications, which necessarily increased the aggregate demand for literate workers. Fourthly, the growth of tertiary economic activities of the "modern" type, and the bureaucratic needs of technology-intensive industries, have stimulated a demand for clerical workers. Because there has been a tendency to introduce industry in large-scale, capital-intensive form there has been a large bureaucratic element, and because Jamaica, in common with many other non-socialist industrialising economies, has had to rely on state bureaucracies to stimulate economic growth in the absence of an indigenous capitalist base, educational qualifications have been essential requirements for a growing proportion of total employment.

Since women have tended to be more educated and literate than men, this demand for literate workers contributed to their continuing and expanded employment in an economy where women's traditional own-account activities in the "informal" sector were being eroded by the growth of the formal distributive, commercial and productive sectors.[1] Their superior or equal education enabled them to avoid taking only the low-status, low-wage jobs; for although many women have been restricted to low-wage menial jobs, the most common being domestic work, many others have been able to earn average and above average wages and salaries (Table VII). Admittedly, there is some suggestion that women have had to be more educated than men to get employment, since for any given level of education women have tended to comprise a larger proportion of the unemployed than the employed

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[1] Traditionally, trade in peasant produce (and in many imported produce) has been the province of women. Higglers, as they are called, have always been in a highly competitive market, and a woman's higgling ability has often been a determinant of her "marital" prospects.

TABLE VII

Per cent Female of Employed Labour Force by Occupation
1968, 1969, 1972, 1973

	1968		1969		1972		1973	
	April	Oct	April	Oct	April	Oct	April	Oct
Prof., tech., admin., exec., managerial and related	50.56	49.07	51.52	54.01	53.12	54.61	57.89	55.27
Clerical and Sales	49.08	52.48	53.03	55.49	55.43	56.45	58.38	56.79
Self Employed and Independent	31.29	35.53	34.77	36.82	33.84	34.66	35.88	34.19
Service	81.68	78.77	78.78	80.03	76.36	79.03	73.81	75.71
Crafts, Production, Process and Operators	13.21	14.06	15.11	17.79	12.08	13.57	13.41	9.40
Unskilled manual	21.00	25.38	23.95	26.56	22.36	16.83	21.93	18.36
Occupation not specified	43.90	-	-	-	22.73	15.00	32.00	40.00

Source: Labour Force Survey: 1973, Kingston, 1974.

(Table VIII).[1] However, in contrast to the situation in most countries, in Jamaica women have taken a large proportion of white-collar, professional jobs as well as lower level clerical employment.

Education and female economic inactivity

It is generally hypothesised that education is a major determinant of the probability of labour force participation. But the international evidence and economic theory suggest, first, that for women such a positive correlation is not universal, and second, that the existence of a positive relationship is most likely when there is little educational discrimination.[2] In that case a positive relationship could be expected in Jamaica, and although there is some suggestion that the relationship is non-linear, in general the evidence supports that expectation. It can be illustrated by reference to Tables X and XI, which are based on 1970 Census data.

These tables and the accompanying graphs utilise two concepts of economic activity. The first is what the Census describes as the work rate, defined as the proportion of the adult population not attending school who were either working on their own account or working for others. Based on this measure Table X and Graph I suggest that between the ages of 15 and 64 those with less than secondary education had consistently lower levels of economic activity than more educated women. Those with no education or with some primary education had much the lowest recorded work rates. This was partly because such women were concentrated in rural areas and/or involved in various forms of unrecorded economic activities. But the main factor seems likely to have been the inability of this group to secure any form of employment.

The most conspicuous feature of the observed pattern of work rates is the sharp distinction between those with more and those with less than secondary education. While secondary education may be a "threshold" for many forms of non-agricultural wage employment, one factor contributing to this sharp difference is the wide gap between the potential earnings of those with secondary or higher education and those with less who are relegated to unskilled labour. Because of this, and particularly because wages paid to domestic servants are so low, there has been a strong incentive for educated women to take wage or salaried employment while delegating their childcare and other domestic responsibilities.

One interesting feature of the observed pattern is the fairly flat curves during the child-bearing years. However, since it is the relative educational level which is relevant it is difficult to interpret such cross-sectional patterns in life-cycle terms. For instance, women aged 25 to 34 with secondary education had a relatively high level of education for their age group compared with those with secondary education in a younger age group. This is simply because the average level of education tends to grow from one age cohort to another.

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[1] Table IX shows that for many professions women were more qualified educationally than men. For an earlier, comparable finding see Maunder, op. cit.

[2] Guy Standing, "Education and Female Participation in the Labour Force", International Labour Review, Vol. 114, No. 3, November-December 1976, pp. 281-297.

TABLE VIII

A: Per cent of Female Employment by Educational Attainment, 1972, 1973

	1972		1973	
	April	Oct.	April	Oct.
No formal education	26.80	29.52	27.04	27.95
Primary	36.50	37.90	38.70	37.55
Post-Primary	49.07	47.47	49.69	46.53
Other	100.00	43.75	47.62	41.67
Not Reported	31.25	37.93	39.34	35.71

B: Per cent Female of Total Unemployment by Educational Attainment, 1972, 1973

	1972		1973	
	April	Oct.	April	Oct.
No Formal Education	48.98	61.05	63.27	61.43
Primary	66.44	64.76	68.65	67.09
Post-Primary	68.06	68.42	72.32	63.64
Other	75.00	87.50	71.43	100.00
Not Reported	66.67	33.33	50.00	57.14

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1973.

TABLE IX

Women in Professional Occupations: Selected Professional Occupational Groups by Highest Exams Passed

Jamaica

1970

	Per Cent Female	Proportion with Diploma or Degree		Proportion with GCE 'A' or 5 'O'	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Draftsmen	8.5	5.8	10.5	17.0	23.7
Chemists	9.3	36.9	82.6	11.1	0.0
Medical Specialists	17.6	92.0	68.7	6.7	25.0
Medical Doctors	18.9	94.8	97.8	3.1	1.1
Laboratory Technicians	42.5	5.6	16.0	24.3	45.8
Dentists	6.5	63.6	77.8	1.6	0.0
Dental Assistants	36.9	2.0	3.4	3.0	3.4
Pharmacists	53.1	17.8	17.0	32.6	49.0
Physio/Occup Therapists	63.4	40.0	65.4	0.0	23.1
Radiographers	63.8	20.0	22.7	32.0	45.5
Statisticians	54.8	47.4	60.9	15.8	21.7
Cost Accountants(Qual.)	18.3	25.0	18.6	37.0	39.5
Chartered and Cert Accts.	12.6	28.4	18.0	29.8	27.9
Public Accts.	17.1	14.0	4.0	26.4	28.0
Auditors	18.4	11.0	12.1	34.9	27.3
Lawyers	11.1	62.1	60.0	23.2	31.4
Teachers:					
Univ. and Higher Ed.	36.0	94.5	84.8	0.9	4.5
Secondary	68.5	73.6	67.0	9.1	9.8
Primary	81.2	21.3	16.6	8.2	6.7
Journalists etc.	26.6	14.9	8.8	34.0	47.1
Librarians	91.8	15.8	19.2	15.8	36.6
Sociologists	59.1	77.8	69.2	22.2	23.1
Social Workers	58.1	32.0	27.9	6.8	11.0
Personnel and Occ. Spec.	18.9	33.5	39.5	18.9	32.6
Managers (catering etc)	42.5	19.5	10.7	18.9	1.9
Proprietors(catering etc)	55.2	5.7	1.8	6.8	5.1
63 Professional Occup.	33.2	1.7	2.2	1.7	3.1

Source: Unpublished Census data.

TABLE X

Female Work Rates by age and educational attainment

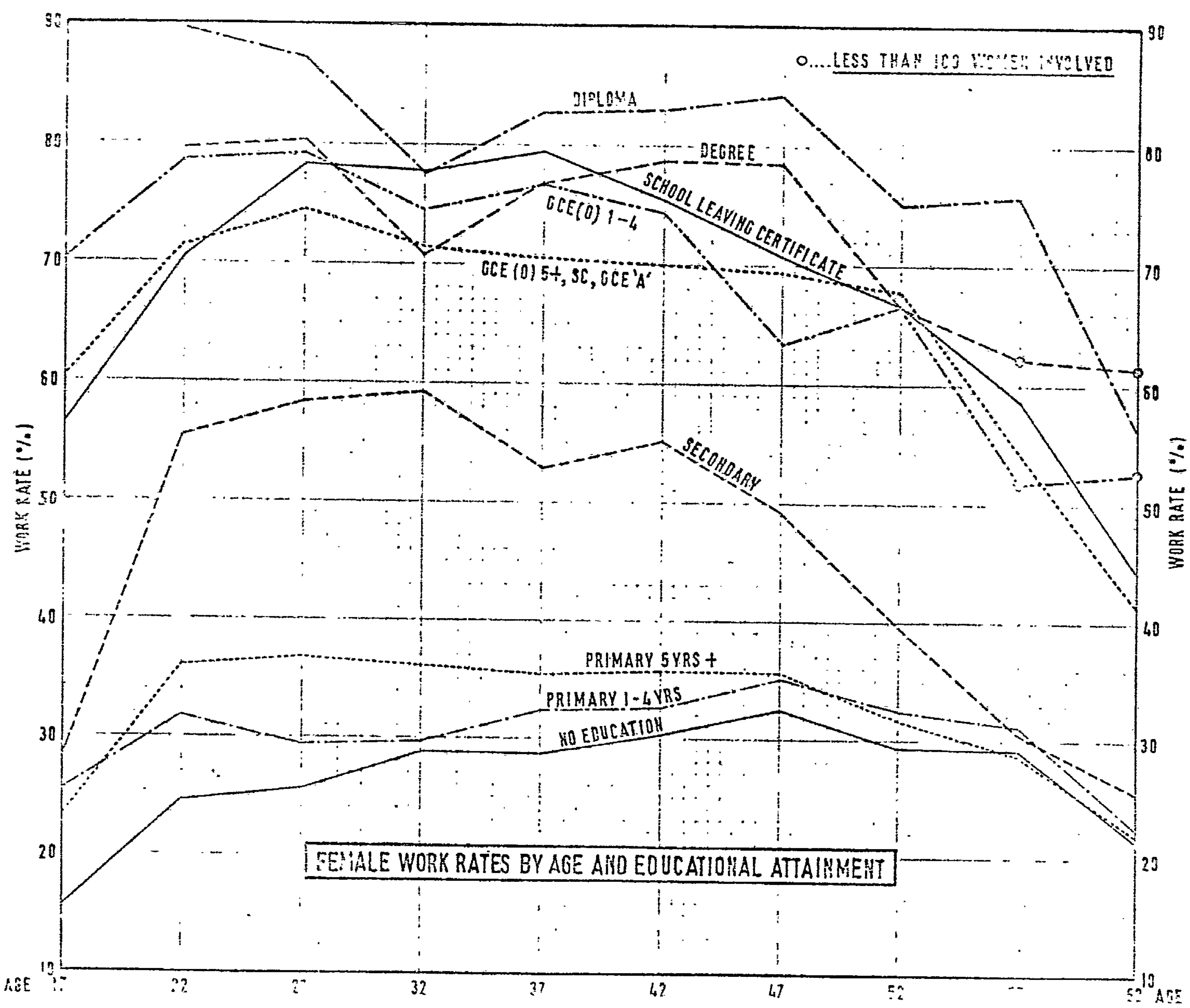
Jamaica - 1970

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	14+
* A	15.73	24.82	25.53	28.93	28.76	30.19	32.45	29.16	29.06	21.59	12.30
B	25.32	31.79	29.27	29.75	32.31	32.71	35.08	32.45	31.04	22.85	26.95
C	23.22	36.05	36.91	36.04	35.32	35.97	35.71	31.81	28.95	21.86	29.97
D	28.08	55.34	58.22	59.06	52.98	55.04	49.17	39.79	30.43	25.64	43.40
E	56.64	70.44	78.15	77.91	79.48	75.54	70.79	66.79	58.94	44.38	67.51
F	70.20	78.78	79.04	74.50	76.71	74.31	63.37	66.67	51.85	52.63	74.96
G	60.27	71.32	74.47	71.34	70.55	69.99	69.37	67.95	54.14	41.21	67.80
H		89.47	87.10	77.61	82.88	82.99	84.17	75.00	75.76	56.20	78.62
I		79.85	80.14	70.86	76.90	78.75	78.53	66.35	62.16	61.22	74.33
J		30.94	42.60	40.34	39.30	38.82	38.01	33.73	30.94	23.09	33.38

Source: Derived from 1970 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Vol. 4: Economic Activity, Part I- Jamaica, Table 6, pp.372-379. Work rates are derived from information on the individual's main activity during the 12 months preceding enumeration. The figures represent the proportion of the specified age group who mainly worked, where work encompassed those who worked for others, whether for government, private employers, or as unpaid workers, or who had their own business or farm, whether with paid help or without it.

* A No education
B Primary 1-4 years
C Primary 5 years +
D Secondary
E School Leaving Certificate
F GCE 'O' 1-4
G GCE 'O' 5+, SC, GCE 'A'
H Diploma
I Degree
J Total

GRAPH I



This factor makes any life-cycle analysis dubious, since cohort analysis would evidently be more appropriate. However, by an admittedly crude and static method of calculation it is possible to estimate the amount of time a woman with a given level of education could expect to work in the non-domestic labour force between the ages of, say, 20 and 64. According to Table X a woman with between 1 and 4 years of primary education could be expected to work for about 14 years in that period, approximately a year and a half more than a woman without primary education. For a woman with some secondary education the expansion in income-earning life was quite dramatic, from 14 to 21 years. Above that level the effect of additional education was small and indeed a woman with GCE "O" or "A" Levels would be likely to work slightly less than a woman with only a school-leaving certificate. At the top levels, a woman with a degree would have been likely to work for about 33 years, while a woman with a diploma would probably work for no less than 36. So, in general, the lifetime work rate of women in Jamaica is closely and positively related to educational attainment.

Of course, the work rate is neither a supply nor a demand index, for it reflects both the desire and the ability to be economically active. In the Jamaican Census perhaps the more valid index of the relationship between education and women's labour "supply" is the proportion of potential working time which is devoted to "home duties". While this has different connotations in a rural economy than in an industrial one, one should not suggest that "home duties" (the Jamaican Census term) are more or less productive or useful than economic activity.[1] However, the concept of "home duties" is useful for estimating the observed relationship between women's education and their participation in the non-domestic labour force. In doing this, it is relevant to note that in the 1970 Census women doing "home duties" were separated from those actively seeking work or available for and wanting work even though they had not looked for work for some time. For that reason the home duties rate can be regarded as a reasonable approximation of supply-determined economic inactivity.

Between the ages of 25 and 60 the relative home duties rates suggest that those without formal education were likely to spend most of their time in domestic activities whereas those with diplomas would spend only a little over five years concentrating on home duties (Table XI and Graph II). Those with just a school-leaving certificate would seem likely to spend about seven years outside the labour force, somewhat less than those with five or more "O" Levels or "A" Levels (about 10 years) or those with degrees (7.6 years). In an economy with an acute shortage of highly educated manpower the non-participation of those relatively educated women may represent a considerable loss to the economy. Nevertheless, in general it seems education has been an important means by which women have been attracted and absorbed into the labour force.

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[1] For a discussion of the conceptual ambiguities, see Guy Standing, "Concepts of Labour Force Participation and Underutilisation", Population and Employment Working Paper, No. 40 (Geneva, ILO, July 1976).

TABLE XI

Proportion of Female Population not attending school engaged in 'home duties' by age and educational attainment, Jamaica, 1970 (per cent)

Age	No exams passed	School leaving	GCE 1-4 'O'	GCE 'O'5+ SC, GCE 'A'	Diploma	Degree	Other	Total
15-19	33.78	6.28	3.02	1.12			14.84	30.76
20.24	42.76	6.86	5.73	6.04	6.07	7.98	16.95	36.38
25-29	50.54	9.79	14.06	19.69	10.60	16.48	21.05	45.90
30-34	54.97	13.62	21.78	26.02	17.84	26.07	27.69	51.22
35-39	57.29	14.50	19.63	27.10	13.95	21.66	29.69	53.75
40.44	57.37	16.94	24.31	27.82	14.63	18.75	32.68	54.70
45-49	57.21	24.91	33.66	28.85	13.31	19.02	35.84	55.23
50-54	59.61	25.53	28.00	29.38	19.68	28.85	40.61	57.97
55-59	59.77	30.28	37.04	35.71	16.16	21.62	43.89	58.25
60-64	57.91	32.22	36.84	38.46	16.79	26.53	43.24	56.86
14+	49.96	13.24	9.57	19.32	13.06	19.28	24.88	46.76

Source: Population Census, 1970, ibid., Table 7, pp.382-385.

GRAPH II

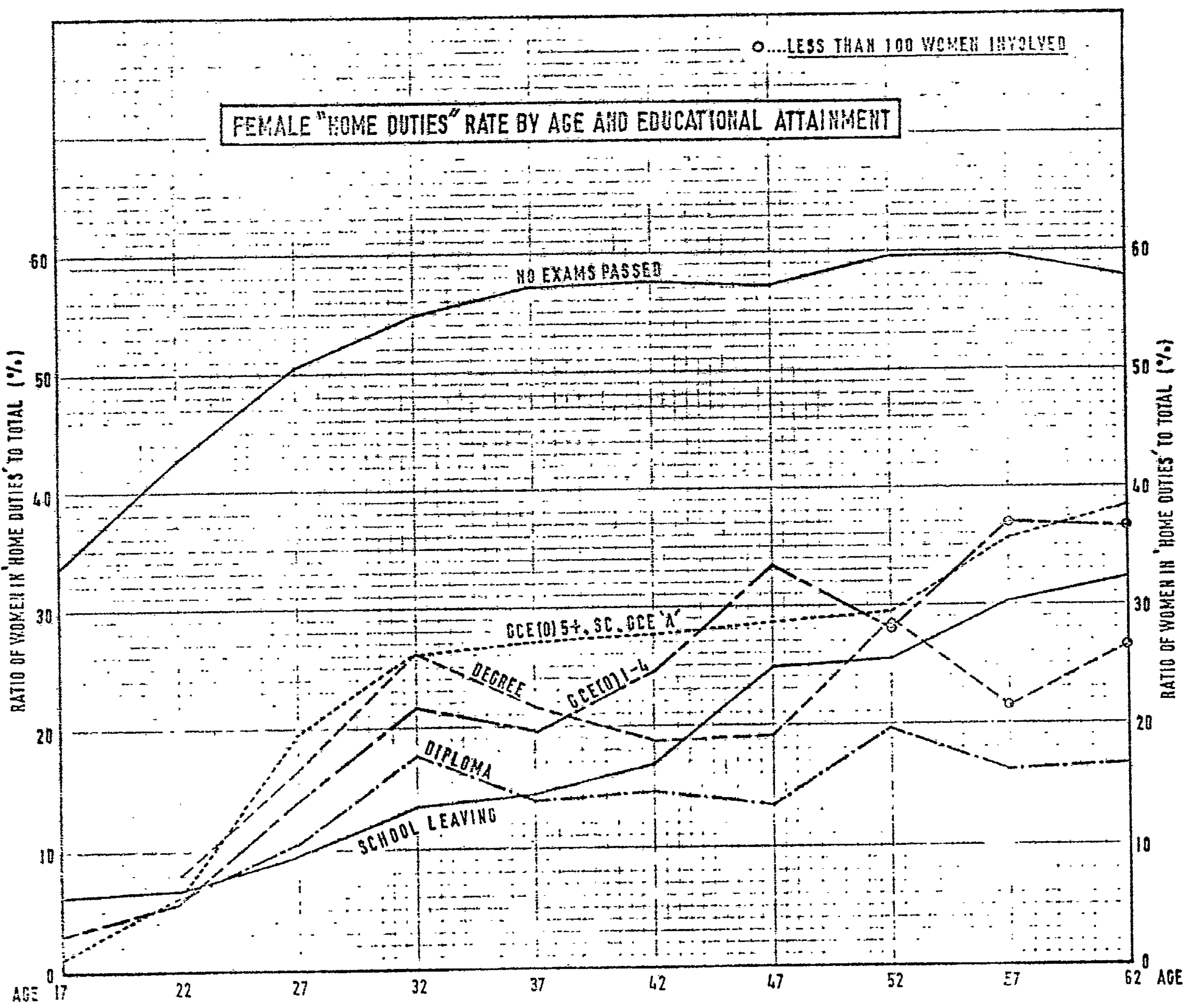

TABLE XII

Adult female population not attending school, by age, 14 years and over: main economic activity by educational attainment, Jamaica, 1970

	Worked for Others			Have own Business or Farm		Did no Work
	Govt.	Non-Govt.	Unpaid	With paid help	Without paid help	
None or Infant	1.09	12.73	0.48	0.83	6.81	77.67
Primary 1-4 years	1.41	15.70	0.43	0.81	8.39	73.05
Primary 5+ years	2.28	18.87	0.61	0.93	6.96	70.03
Secondary	8.21	29.74	0.91	1.43	2.68	56.60
School Leaving Certificate	46.15	18.30	0.31	0.92	1.58	32.49
GCE 'O' 1-4	32.51	40.85	0.33	0.52	0.47	25.04
GCE 'O' 5+ SC, GCE 'A'	26.25	38.43	0.52	1.80	0.57	32.20
Diploma	55.42	20.30	0.45	1.31	0.90	21.38
Degree	46.75	23.53	0.95	2.05	0.60	25.67
Other	18.62	23.12	0.70	1.04	2.61	53.57
Total	5.51	19.61	0.59	0.96	6.32	66.62

Source: 1970 Population Census of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Vol. 4, Part I, Jamaica, Table 6, pp.372-379.

Training and sexual dualism

The significance of education in its effect on the distribution of employment opportunities has to be considered in the context of efforts by employers and successive governments to secure a trained, committed labour force. In most countries the various forms of training have been a major means by which skills, productivity and earnings of male workers have been increased while women have been relatively disregarded. As a result a proportion of the male labour force has formed a labour aristocracy, while women have been eased out of the labour force or have become intermittent "secondary" labour force participants.[1]

In Jamaica the allocation of training opportunities has exhibited this traditional male bias. Although women have resorted to the various "commercial" schools, the industrial training centres and technical institutes set up in recent years have been overwhelmingly designed for male workers, with the exception of the Government-sponsored Garment Training School. The bias of institutional training existed from its inception. The notorious 1945 Report of the Economic Policy Committee, chaired by Professor F.C. Benham, in its discussion of the role of practical training centres, set the tone in commenting, "The object is to fit the boys for making a living on the land, and setting a standard for their neighbours in modern farming methods, and to fit the girls for making helpful wives to small farmers; we entirely approve of all this in principle."[2] The direction of policy was already clear by 1950 when institutional training was still largely restricted to day and evening classes at the Kingston Technical School - for commercial and technical trades and the ubiquitous domestic science - and four Practical Training Centres in various parts of Jamaica. Of these four Centres, three were exclusively for young men, the other providing merely domestic science courses for women.[3] At the same time over 90 per cent of all apprentices and workers in government training schemes were men.[4] It was a pattern reproduced in private training institutions, notably those run by religious organisations.[5] And it continued into the mid 1970s.[6] Throughout that period only one training

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[1] For instance, as a male labour aristocracy of the working class consolidated its position during Britain's Industrial Revolution membership of that aristocracy was associated, inter alia, with an economically inactive wife. E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain", in E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964).

[2] Report, 1945, op. cit., p. 17. Overlooked was the fact that most working-class women were unlikely to be simply "helpful wives" but heads of their own households, dependent on their own income-earning abilities.

[3] Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour (Kingston, 1950), p. 3.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour (Kingston, 1951), p. 7.

[6] Their lack of training opportunities partly reflected the expectation that working-class women would "continue in a life of numerous pregnancies, domestic expediencies, and intermittent labour force participation when childcare facilities were available". S. Gordon, Case Study on Out-of-School Education for Youth Groups, a study for the International Council for Educational Development (Kingston, mimeographed), 1972, p. 45. The shortsightedness of this attitude can be gauged by viewing the provision of training for women as likely to solve many of the very features that were cited as obstacles to their being trained.

centre, in West Kingston, provided opportunities for women to learn the type of industrial skills men were able to acquire.[1]

Yet the bias did not have much effect since institutional training was conspicuously unsuccessful, only partly because youth were educationally ill-equipped to take advantage of it. The failure was marked by persistently high dropout rates from courses at industrial training centres and technical institutes. Many of those who started a training course would have done so in the vague and uncertain hope of a job at the end of it, rather than the firm expectation of one, which was hardly conducive to commitment to the training and effort involved. Many would have been unable to afford to continue the training, and like the poor everywhere many would have been forced to take any job opportunity even though completing the training would have meant a greater future income.

Although there are no figures it is probable that a large proportion of those who dropped out of training courses did so to take a job. In part this reflects the fact that in a country like Jamaica many skills are ill-defined, so that a partially trained worker can often obtain work that pays a premium for the partial training.[2] Without industrial traditions, in industrialising countries such as Jamaica there tends to be a continuum of skills, rather than the clearly established differences that usually exist in industrialised countries.

Because of this and because most young working-class men had a pressing need for current income, institutional training was unable to develop the skills and income-earning potential of men to the point where male-female productivity and income differentials were sufficiently large to encourage a labour market dualism based on sex.

The efforts of private firms have been no more successful than other forms of institutional training. In nineteenth century Britain a skilled labour force was created and preserved by hierarchical control of one group of workers by another, skilled workers exploiting the less skilled but providing them with the necessary on-the-job training based on apprenticeship. In Jamaica, despite attempts by colonial administrators and employers to reproduce such a system, apprenticeship schemes never became established.[3] Always largely restricted to male workers, they declined in significance to the point where they could be disregarded in most industries; even the sugar industry gave up in despair. One of the major reasons for the demise was that traditionally apprenticeship schemes were a highly exploitative means of employing young men, and to a lesser extent

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[1] That is, besides courses in "housecraft training" (the YWCA) or "training" for domestic science. Many young women were groomed to become maids or domestic servants in the United States or Canada.

[2] In an unpublished study conducted for the National Planning Agency, Sherry Girling found that the ability to obtain jobs when only partly trained was a major factor in the high dropout rate among students at the main public training centre, CAST.

[3] They were only established on a significantly large scale in government and quasi-government departments, printing, mechanical trades, public utility companies, and the larger sugar factories. Males comprised the bulk of those apprenticed but some girls were apprentices in nursing, dressmaking and other garment manufacturing, and in printing, albeit on a small scale.

young women, for sub-subsistence wages, and as such many boys found it impossible to continue as "trainees", even when any training was actually involved, which in itself was rare.[1] The unsatisfactory nature of apprenticeship was fully exposed in 1943 when a specially appointed Apprenticeship Committee issued a generally critical report which set out to survey several intrinsic shortcomings and abuses of the system. It noted the tendency of employers to hire youths, ostensibly as apprentices, but in reality as cheap labour paid little or nothing and given little or no training at all.[2] Apprenticeship, which the report showed to be predominantly reserved for boys (paragraph 8), was in effect more a barrier to the acquisition of skills by men rather than a means of acquiring them. Reflecting the abuse of apprenticeship, it was observed that in some industries there was a strangely high ratio of "apprentices" to skilled workers (paragraph 7); and even when training was genuinely involved the lack of any clearly defined criteria for establishing "skills" encouraged many young men to "make efforts to increase their earnings by shifting from one employment to another or by opening up business on their own in a small way before completing training" (paragraph 9). In their turn these semi-skilled artisans hired "apprentices", thereby perpetuating the abuse and systematically undermining the validity and viability of apprenticeship schemes in general. It was, therefore, scarcely surprising that apprenticeship as a system largely faded away in the 30 years following the Apprenticeship Report.

In that period too, many companies were discouraged from training through being unable to prevent the poaching of skilled workers by employers who had not invested in training schemes.[3] Even on-the-job training by experienced older workers was done only reluctantly and seems to have been regarded as somewhat inefficient. The reasons for the reluctance were, first, that it necessitated the use of skilled workers' time, in itself a scarce resource, in training workers who might not make the grade or, if they did, might promptly leave, secondly, that there was sometimes a tendency for an older trainer-worker not to imprint as much skill as he could for fear of losing his job to a more productive younger worker, and thirdly, that since many production workers were paid on a piece-rate basis time spent training often involved a personal cost in lost earnings.[4]

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[1] E. Campbell, "Industrial Training Methods and Technology", Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1953, pp. 5-101.

[2] Report of the Apprenticeship Committee (Kingston), December 1943, para. 9.

[3] As the National Commission on Unemployment noted, "The private sector is not shouldering its fair share of the responsibility for industrial training. The minority of firms which do provide training often do so only to see their best trainees enticed away by competitors who contribute nothing to training." First Report of the Secretariat of the National Commission on Unemployment (Kingston, mimeo.), November 1968, p. 3.

[4] Note that the high intensity of machine-paced labour raises the cost of training by experienced workers, since it necessarily affects their productivity, whereas with less mechanised (or "non-modern") technologies labour tends to be less intensive, so allowing the coexistence of training and working.

In sum during the post-1945 period, while Jamaica's planners relied on a policy of "industrialisation-by-invitation", only the rudiments of a male-dominated labour aristocracy of skilled manual workers emerged. The growing need for skilled labour simply did not generate any corresponding increase in the availability of technical skills. Institutional training failed largely because trainees either could not afford or were not sufficiently motivated to stay the course, while all forms of training tended to fail because there was a premium on partial training and because trainees placed a high value on present income relative to the uncertain, if higher, future income. In addition, apprenticeship and on-the-job training programmes often yielded negligible returns to the companies that practiced them, which hastened the demise of reputable apprenticeship schemes and checked the development of meaningful alternatives.

The result was an acceleration of mechanisation and the introduction of the concept of modular training, somewhat uncritically fostered by the ILO. This is Taylorism in practice, the division of labour taken to its limit, which in recent years the government-controlled Jamaican Industrial Development Corporation, following the ILO line, have been recommending to Jamaican employers. "Training", it is claimed, "becomes a continuum and life-long process, and the worker may alternate between learning and employment throughout his working life".[1] This is an idealistic interpretation of modular training which in practice usually means narrowing the breadth of jobs and, through breaking jobs down into sub-clusters of routinised tasks, seems more likely to encourage a greater division of labour than to produce a more flexible and skilled work force.[2] But what it really reflects is an adaptation by employers, an institutionalisation of semi-commitment to industrial labour. Skilled labour is broken up into detail labour, which checks the development of a skilled labour aristocracy of (male) manual workers. This in turn checks the development of labour market dualism based on sexual lines, characterised by a growing proportion of skilled male workers firmly committed to wage-labour, coexisting with a secondary labour force made up largely of women. The relative failure of training schemes and the relatively high educational attainment of women are thus two crucial reasons why female labour force participation in Jamaica has remained high despite chronically high rates of open unemployment.

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[1] JIDC-ILO-CIDA, Report on Modular Training Methods (JIDC, Kingston, 1973).

[2] The ILO-inspired report cited above defined a module of training as "the smallest amount of skill and related knowledge which will equip a person for employment".

Wage labour and the legacy of paternalism

This failure to develop a skilled labour force has been both a cause and an effect of the continuing lack of commitment by the Jamaican labour force. At various stages of this analysis it has been argued that the persistence of low levels of commitment has been due to the casual nature of much employment, the informal labour market, job insecurity, high unemployment, the informal family structure, and the low levels of education and training. But the origins stem from the essentially unresolved conflict in the plantation economy, and the historical response of employers as they attempted to secure a committed, proletarianised labour force.

As noted earlier, after Emancipation the difficulties of securing a stable labour supply led employers to adopt two principal tactics, which still strongly influence the Jamaican labour market. The first was the adoption of task work and piece-rate wage systems, as a response to the difficulty of securing supervisory labour. The second was a widespread tendency for employers to adopt paternalistic employment practices as a means of retaining a stable labour force, by which employers assumed responsibility for many of the welfare needs of their work forces. In the process employers tended to pay a large proportion of the total wage in some form of fringe or welfare benefits, partly on the assumption that workers had "target" incomes, partly because of the desire to check the ability of workers to save sufficient to set up as petty capitalists or farmers, and partly to secure more permanent attachment to their employment.[1] The plantations set the pattern, but the practice persisted with industrial enterprises, slowly being extended by the introduction of fringe benefits in government employment and multinational firms intent on being, for efficiency and political reasons, high-paying employers. The pattern-setting forced many smaller firms to follow their example, so that most employers introduced a broad range of fringe benefits - pension rights, sickness pay, paid maternity leave, payment of medical expenses, and, albeit on a limited scale, credit facilities. Often these coincided with very low wage rates. Indeed the emphasis on non-wage elements of labour costs as a means of tying workers to the employer tended to lower the wage rate. The high ratio of fringe benefits to wages seems to have secured some semblance of labour stability, in so far as labour turnover has been checked.[2] But to the extent that wages fell below the workers' efficiency wage and often below the opportunity cost of wage labour the supply of effort remained low.[3] So

[1] In some cases, no doubt, the purpose was to raise labour productivity by providing health services, food, clothing, and even lodging.

[2] In the firms studied in 1974, almost all personnel managers or employers reported low turnover, several complaining that it was "too low".

[3] On the concept of the efficiency wage, see Guy Standing, "Aspiration Wages, Migration, and Female Employment", Population and Employment Working Paper, No. 23 (Geneva, ILO), November 1975.

in checking labour turnover the low wage/high fringe benefits package encouraged absenteeism and low effort on the job, though the particular response would have depended on the type of wage system.[1]

The other feature of paternalism was that it tended to hinder the development of formal rules for wage labour. This informality extended from recruitment, to training, to work discipline, and dismissal. By contributing to the inability of employers to secure a disciplined, committed labour force, it also contributed to a widespread resignation among employers.[2] In those circumstances employers tended to adjust to the existence of a semi-committed labour force by increasing the division of labour and relying mainly on semi-skilled workers.

The absence of a skilled labour force also encouraged the growth of semi-skilled employment. With this type of employment, emphasis has been placed on the "skills" of stability, effort and reliability. And, in general, as women workers have been more likely to have such skills, this has tended to favour female employment.

With semi-skilled labour the distribution of employment depends on workers' relative efficiency wages, which depend on their market wage rate, the workers' effort bargain for any given wage, and some indicator of work stability or commitment. In Jamaica, for similar work female wage rates have been relatively low, though the differences have not been substantial and in many firms have shrunk or disappeared.[3] More importantly, because women have generally had a greater need for a regular income to support dependents, and because their unemployment rate has been higher, they have had a greater fear of dismissal and have been under greater pressure to work regularly and more intensively than male workers. In other words, their effort bargain for any given wage has tended to be greater. Furthermore, women have had lower income expectations, while male workers have had greater opportunity for casual day or task labour (the opportunity cost of regular wage labour), which has encouraged higher male absenteeism.[4] Thus several behavioural differences have encouraged employers to prefer female workers.

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[1] In the interviews, employers of task workers complained more of absenteeism; workers paid on time-rate systems were more prone to "slacking on the job".

[2] In many of the firms visited in 1974, it was remarkable how much of the low commitment (high absenteeism, "slackness", etc.) could be explained by outdated, paternalistic employment practices. Details are given in my paper analysing the interviews. Often employers candidly admitted that the only reason for not having changed the practice in question was the likely cost (notably worker reactions) of doing so. But equally often the employer merely rationalised the situation by attributing the low commitment to the character of his workers.

[3] Standing, 1977, op. cit., p. 22.

[4] The limited evidence available suggests that women have had lower turnover and lower absenteeism. Even as early as 1952 this was the conclusion of a World Bank Report. IBRD, The Economic Development of Jamaica, report of a mission headed by J.C. de Wilde (John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1952), p. 210. Campbell also found that employers regarded women as more stable and reliable, and that absenteeism allegedly due to sickness was more common among male workers. Campbell, 1953, op. cit., pp. 67, 75. The interviews of 1974 also found repeated support for this general view; Standing, 1977, op. cit.

The fact is that paternalistic practices tended to equalise semi-commitment among male and female workers, by perpetuating low commitment by male workers and at the same time facilitating female employment. Thus, for instance, the existence of sick leave and maternity leave arrangements, and the resignation by employers to high rates of absenteeism, have enabled women to combine their maternal and work roles. Indeed, since women have generally been more committed and efficient, firms have been inclined to hire female workers on a regular, continuing basis.[1]

Thus female employment has been encouraged because women have been paid lower wages, had lower income expectations, and accepted a greater effort bargain. In that context, too, employers' recruitment and induction practices have been important. The traditional paternalistic method of recruitment is through personal contacts but in Jamaica this has coexisted with an "easy hire, easy fire" practice encouraged by the high level of unemployment, the low level of expected commitment, the low cost of turnover of semi-skilled and unskilled labour, and the lack of supervisory labour or middle-management with the time to recruit on a more considered basis. However, since commitment and in particular work effort have been increasingly valued (as a result of rising <u>potential</u> productivity) employers have tended to adopt a credentialist approach to recruitment. In part this reflects the assumption that the ability and application required to obtain educational qualifications is an indicator of labour commitment and in part it is merely the adoption of foreign practices based on the assumption that education is a measure of worker productivity. But one of the most important reasons for credentialist screening is that it is a relatively low-cost means of recruitment, especially where the opportunity cost of time spent selecting workers is high.

Since women in Jamaica have been relatively educated, credentialism has had the important consequence of encouraging the increased employment of women in a wide range of semi-skilled, skilled, and even unskilled jobs - even though the credentialism often has had little or no relevance to the work in question.[2] Moreover, for any given level of education a man hired for a semi-skilled job would have been relatively dissatisfied and therefore more likely to quit or provide minimal effort. This is simply because a female worker would have expected, and therefore more readily accepted, a lower income.

Thus, credentialism has to be seen as one of many factors encouraging a high level of female participation in non-agricultural employment. Yet its importance has been enhanced by the informal labour market and the persistence of a male labour force lacking the skills or labour commitment that would have provided male workers with the competitive advantage they have usually obtained elsewhere.

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[1] To that extent, given that women workers have been regarded as relatively efficient as semi-skilled workers, the widespread provision of what have been, by international standards, generous arrangements for paid and unpaid maternity leave could be seen as one method of securing a stable labour force.

[2] The paper analysing employment practices in Kingston gives details of some of the more bizarre examples of misapplied credentialism.

Conclusion

With increasing industrialisation and urbanisation sexual dualism can become a characteristic of the emerging wage labour force, such that men assume the role of "primary" workers committed to labour force participation and the acquisition of skills and attendant responsibilities while women become or remain predominantly "secondary" workers only intermittently in the labour force or channelled into low-paying, short-term jobs. But in Jamaica there has been little evidence of a "polarised division of labour" characterised by "a wide gap in productivity and income between men and women within the same sector", which has been described as a general feature of industrialisation.[1] According to that view, "The modern establishments overwhelmingly favour the employment of men, while women are mostly found in home industries. The inferior position of women in urban development is exacerbated by the strong preference for recruiting men to the clerical and administrative jobs."[2] It may be exceptional, but decidedly that description would be inappropriate in Jamaica.

Contrary to the assertion of Boserup and others there has been no development of a male-dominated wage labour force in the course of the early industrialisation of Jamaica. The explanation for this is a multiple one. First of all, since the industrialisation has been largely of recent origin there has been no existence of a skilled labour force with craft skills and traditions of craftmanship, and correspondingly there has been no large and clearly defined labour aristocracy consisting of skilled workers having high status and high incomes as well as other features identified as characteristic of a labour aristocracy. On the contrary, there was no tradition of commitment to regular wage labour by a male proletariat, and in fact women, having generally fewer commitments to agricultural activities and fewer options for productive employment, were more readily available to form a nucleus of an industrial proletariat.

The lack of any committed and skilled male labour force accentuated tendencies inherent in the pattern of industrialisation-by-invitation, for it encouraged the use of techniques using semi-skilled and unskilled labour.[3] Using highly mechanised, automated and bureaucratic technology and organisational structures that evolved in the course of the industrialisation of Europe and the United States, foreign firms have tended to rely on semi-skilled process labour and a highly developed division of labour. This pattern has been adopted by many Jamaican employers and production designers who typically acquired their technical education and training abroad. The widespread use of semi-skilled labour in integrated production processes has placed a high premium on the "skills" of worker stability and predictability and, in its emphasis on recipe knowledge and

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[1] E. Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development (London, Allen and Unwin), 1970, p. 117.

[2] Ibid., p. 139. See also K. Little, African Women in Towns: An [illegible]pect of Africa's Social Revolution (London, Cambridge University Press), 1973, pp. 31-33.

[3] It has been an implicit theme of this analysis that the type of labour used is not simply determined exogenously by technology, but that "supply" factors influence the choice of technology and the composition of production so that they affect the technological and employment structure.

formalised communications, on literacy. Within such production processes the static nature of most production and clerical jobs, and what Scoville would refer to as their lack of breadth, greatly curtail the psychic reward to work and thereby intensify the workers' sense of relative deprivation.[1] The narrower and more static the jobs the more employers would have to employ workers motivated purely by the need-for-income. Moreover, the high intensity of semi-skilled labour implies a high "disutility" or "effort price" of labour which in itself raises the "efficiency" wage rate, the wage at which the worker would work with optimum effort and productivity.

In other words, with technology and industrialisation imported and superimposed on an economy based on plantation and smallholder farming and commerce, there was no opportunity to establish a craft ethic among male workers. According to this ethic, in craft work part of the "income" of the work is the non-financial p psychic reward, which effectively lowers the effort price of labour. Craft workers, such as first woodworkers and then metalworkers in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain, tend to have greater commitment (less alienation) than workers doing detail or standardised labour for whom, as sociologists such as Mills have cogently argued, the demand for income is almost the sole motivation to work. The craft ethic is replaced by a work ethic of instrumentality.[2] With semi-skilled and unskilled jobs that are "narrow" and "static" and lacking the intrinsic appeal required to secure a high degree of normative commitment, the extrinsic rewards of labour needed to ensure adequate commitment and effort have to be correspondingly greater.

Semi-skilled labour, therefore, involves a high effort price of labour which raises the wage rate needed to secure a committed, stable labour force. But another factor reducing the workers's effort bargain for any given wage rate is a divergence between prospective wage earnings and the income required to satisfy a level of consumption to which the working class are socially oriented.[3] If wage incomes, or prospective wage incomes, fall far short of a level sufficient to provide the means to satisfy that level of consumption - or at least the prospect of it - work effort will be reduced until, from the worker's point of view, an appropriate effort bargain is achieved.

Why then does it appear that women workers in Kingston have provided a higher effort bargain than men? First of all, since working class women have usually had primary responsibility for the regular support of child dependants, they have been under greater pressure to work regularly and could thus be expected to find

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[1] See W. Runciman, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London), 1966; on job-breadth, see J. Scoville.

[2] C. Wright Mills, White Collar, 1956.

[3] In Kingston consumption patterns and aspirations are no doubt shaped by the widespread advertising and evident conspicuous consumption by the middle class. But the disparity between wages and the socially stimulated level of consumption aspirations has been such as to produce an attitude of resignation and anomie on the part of many workers.

the instrumentality of existing work opportunities more acceptable. And because women workers have been more concerned with the purely financial aspect of wage labour they are unlikely to have experienced the same sense of frustration as men. The relative deprivation implicit in semi-skilled and unskilled labour would have been greater for men only because women would have been less oriented towards more rewarding skilled, career jobs.[1] Thus women employed in static, routinised jobs are likely to have felt less relative deprivation than men employed in such jobs. In circumstances where men have little opportunity to secure an adequate income from their labour to satisfy the socially determined level of consumption or to satisfy the work ideals of creativity, autonomy, and rising skill and responsibility, they can be expected to respond to the normative conflict by providing an indifferent application of effort in their labour, by a high rate of labour turnover and/or absenteeism, or by resorting to intermittent or ineffectual labour force participation (particularly in regular, formal wage labour) - all of which are conducive to the substitution of female for male labour.

The traditions of paternalism in Jamaica and the low wage/high fringe benefit ratio of worker earnings has not only institutionalised semi-commitment to wage labour by both men and women workers, but has benefited women by providing them with a wider range of work-related benefits. This has encouraged a greater degree of work stability on their part, while it has encouraged high absenteeism and low work effort among men, partly because the various employment practices and payment by piece rates have enabled the tradition of occupational multiplicity by male workers to persist. That in itself has tended to lower male workers' effort bargain in full-time wage labour.

So women workers have tended to have a lower efficiency wage and a higher effort bargain than men because they have been under greater pressure to earn a regular income, have had lower income expectations, have experienced higher levels of unemployment, and had fewer opportunities for occupational multiplicity than men.[2] For these reasons, and because women workers, being generally more educated, have benefited from the practice of credentialism, the industrialisation and urbanisation of Jamaica has encouraged the employment of women.

The level of female participation is high by international standards, but the relatively strong economic position of women in Jamaica should not be exaggerated. The majority have faced a wretched prospect of precarious employment preceded by a period of prolonged unemployment on leaving school. Their opportunity to move from a lifetime existence of poverty has been practically non-existent. To put it mildly, the lot of the uneducated Jamaican woman is not

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[1] Frustration implies continuing orientation towards some goal, and if women are not oriented towards the goal of career, skilled jobs they will tend to experience less frustration in semi-skilled jobs. This is purely a question of social orientation, not a sexual characteristic. On the general point see Runciman, op. cit., and A. Fox, A Sociology of Work in Industry (Collier-MacMillan), 1971, especially p. 73.

[2] Kingston has long contained more women than men, and despite lower economic activity rates women have comprised half the labour force. This in itself will have encouraged employers to utilise female labour and will have tended to raise women's effort bargain (and lower their aspiration wages).

a happy one. Sexual equality in the professions and civil service may not be perfect but it is the women of the "masses" who have been really exploited, most conspicuously as domestic servants (or "help", as they are deliberately called by most middle-class Jamaicans if they catch themselves in time). Most of these women have worked a 50 or 60 hour week for a wage that is perhaps one-fifth of that received by a woman office worker sitting in an air-conditioned office for 38 hours a week. But compared with many other countries women in Jamaica have formed a significant proportion of the non-agricultural labour force and their relative position in the wage-earning sectors seems to have improved in recent years.

Nevertheless, to talk of sexual equality in Jamaica or the "integration" of women into society would be an irrelevance. Men and women share in the poverty and inequality, and no attempt to improve the economic and social status of women could be successful unless at the same time it improved the economic and social status of working-class men.

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