

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

FJM-2
ANGUILLA: RETURNING A YEAR LATER

Anguilla
West Indies
December 1, 1968

Dear Dick:

If you fly south-east from Puerto Rico to St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands and the lesser antilles, avoid using Caribair. Though it's the largest air-service connecting these islands, it is seldom on time, congested and hot. The Leeward Islands Air Taxi (LIAT) is far better, always on time and is, all 'round, an excellent service. Besides, the LIAT stewardesses are always pretty.

Coming to Anguilla (by LIAT incidentally) this month repeats the trip I made here last year about the same time. Fortunately, I happened to return to the island on a night when a party was being given by some departing V.S.O.s (the British equivalent to U.S. Peace Corps workers). The party afforded me the opportunity to greet many old friends and to catch up on events here during the last six months.

Returning to Anguilla this time, it strikes me how many extraordinary things, accepted as the normal course by Anguillans, occur here. For over a year and a half, these people have been internally self-governing, managing for the most part their own affairs and resisting any move to have them return to the St. Kitts Government from which they seceded more than 18 months ago. Doing without constitutional recognition by other states, without much in the way of a judicial system and with the consequent problems of justice and development, it's agreed by the Anguillans and by most observers (including the British Government) that the island is better off now than it was under the control of Premier Robert Bradshaw, head of state in St. Kitts.

Since I left in late March, the Anguillans have held new elections, a new magistrate has been appointed, the treasury books are balanced, roads are being widened, the airport has been paved, four new denominations of Anguilla stamps have been issued and The Beacon, the Anguillan news-sheet, has been expanded to eight pages. There is more stability here. The new elections produced a better, more experienced Island Council. Mr. Raphael Lake, the new magistrate, just jailed six young turks who had disrupted a "dance-social"; they'll be serving their six-month terms working on the roads. In all, most agree that the summer, though dry, was a time of stability and progress.

Last month, the chairman of the Island Council, Ronald Webster, met with Bradshaw and British officials in the Foreign Office. They held their conference in London in an attempt to work out a long-term solution to the Anguillan secession; temporarily, the problem has been alleviated by a mutual, "non-aggression pact" worked out last year. This temporary agreement ends January 9, 1969.

Very little appeared in the British press about the London talks between Anguilla, St. Kitts and the British Government. In substance however, the only accomplished fact of these talks was a further hardening of the issues. Reports filtering from the meetings indicated that the British Government was more sympathetic to the Anguillan position, but that HMG was helpless in the face of the "legality" of Bradshaw's position and the constitutional ties which bind Anguilla to the St. Kitts federation. What HMG would like to see, of course, is an Anguillan return to the federated fold. If this is unlikely (it is) it is equally unlikely that Bradshaw is going to relinquish his insistence for their return.

Assuming this impasse the second week of January, 1969, the most probable result will first be a statement of this fact by the British Foreign Office. Perhaps there will be some moderate pressure put on Bradshaw to allow the defacto condition of things (the separation of the two governments) to become constitutional. This being unheeded, HMG may then call upon the other Caribbean states to pass judgement on the issue; and reluctantly, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Antigua and Guyana will have to become openly involved.

There is good reason to think that at the same time, Anguilla will again declare its UDI from St. Kitts and continue its independence, perhaps even from Great Britain as well.

The crucial positions will be those taken by the other Caribbean states since it will be up to them largely whether Bradshaw is convinced he can win or whether Anguilla is granted recognition. At this point, only tentative conjectures can be made about these states. Both Webster and Bradshaw will be making the rounds of these islands, visiting heads of state in hopes of gaining their support.

The Bahamas will probably keep aloof from the entire dispute. Viewing themselves as part of the British Commonwealth, with certain ties to the Caribbean stemming from this association, Bahamians do not really consider themselves West Indians and do not want to be identified with their problems. Soon in fact, the Bahamas may become an independent nation on its own (some feel no sooner than three, no later than five years). This week a change of title for the Bahamas head of state, Lynden O. Pindling, goes into effect. He is now "Prime Minister" rather than "Premier"; a significant change since "Prime Ministers" are heads of state in independent nations, whereas "Premiers" are heads of state in dependent territories. Further, the Bahamas are now known



as The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, not Crown Colony of the Bahamas as they were known previously. In this delicate time before independence therefore, it is even more unlikely that they will involve themselves in the disputes of the Lesser Antilles. Perhaps it is just as well, since the fear of fragmentation is very strong in the Bahamas, a nation comprised of hundreds of small islands spread over 100,000 square miles of ocean.

Jamaica in the past has given muted but solid support to Anguilla. In August of 1967, its Prime Minister, Hugh Shearer, led other Caribbean leaders in a stand against the forceful suppression of the Anguilla

secession. He told Lord Shepherd that the British Government would have to do its own dirty work, "if dirty work is to be done". This remark was in a reply to Lord Shepherd's proposal (Shepherd is HMG's minister for Commonwealth Affairs) that a detachment of Royal Marines be landed with St. Kitts police on Anguilla, to be followed by detachments from Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica and Guyana. Shearer's policies for Jamaica ruled out such a landing. Lately, he has shown signs of pulling Jamaica further out of Caribbean affairs as exemplified by the recent attacks on the University of the West Indies, a federal structure with a branch university in Jamaica. Shearer hinted that he was thinking of nationalizing the University, but nothing came of this threat. If it comes down to "a crunch" however, Shearer's government could well take Anguilla's side.

Antigua's proximity to St. Kitts and the close working ties its Premier, Vere Bird, has with Robert Bradshaw and the St. Kitts government probably assures Antigua's support of the Kittian position. Bird and Bradshaw are old friends, long time union politicians, trade-union graduates of the old school and committed to support one another. Both are having their political troubles these days. Bird is in fact in difficulty in Antigua. He faces growing opposition from another party and from all accounts his government could be out of office before long. It may be that Bird's support of Bradshaw will be less damaging to Anguilla because of this political trouble. Elections may soon be held in Antigua and Vere Bird could be moving beyond the political pale.

The Hon. Errol Barrow, Prime Minister of Barbados, is probably one of the stronger Anguillan supporters in the Caribbean. For example, one day last winter Barrow arrived unannounced by LIAT charter, walked into my office and asked if we could use a couple of generators he had in Barbados. This gesture and in other small ways (he once offered to train the Anguillan police, thus infuriating the Premier in St. Kitts) Barrow has shown himself to be a good friend to Anguilla. In the final countdown, he and his government may be counted pro-Anguillan.

Right: Part of what Premier Bradshaw wants back. View from ridge overlooking Anguilla's Crocus Bay.

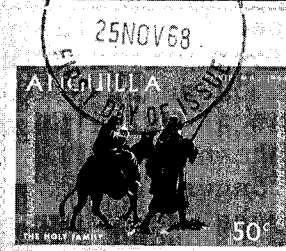


Guyana's Forbes Burnham has been a strong voice against Anguilla's secession in the past. His Minister for Foreign Affairs has again recently spoken in opposition to Anguilla's position, pointing out that a small place, like it or not, cannot survive economically alone; that Anguilla's secession, once successful, would lead to further fragmentation in the Caribbean. Guyana, then, seems to be Bradshaw's strongest and most powerful ally; though there are some reports that Burnham is growing more and more disenchanted with Bradshaw's disruptive politics. Such disenchantment stems from unconfirmed reports that a Guyanese lawyer, working for the St. Kitts' Premier, tried to bribe some Anguillans living in St. Thomas to testify against their government back home in Anguilla. At any rate, there is no concrete reason to believe that there has been any major shift in Guyana's policies regarding Anguilla. Burnham's government must be considered in support of St. Kitts.

Of the major states in the Caribbean this leaves Trinidad. Dr. Eric Williams, Trinidad's Prime Minister, is regarded as one of the leading statesmen in the Caribbean. A thoughtful and intelligent politician, Dr. Williams has been the leading spokesman for Caribbean joint cooperation and federation. His position on Anguilla, extremely crucial to both sides of the dispute, is at this time unknown. There is one important factor, however, which may bring Trinidad to Anguilla's side. In the recent talks in London, Anguilla's lawyer was Hudson Phillips. Phillips happens to be the deputy-chairman of the party now governing Trinidad and a close friend of Dr. Williams. I recall the day when Phillips first came to Anguilla about a year ago. He had been one of the defence lawyers during a series of conspiracy trials then being held in St. Kitts. Following those trials, and after having seen Bradshaw's courts operate at first hand, Phillips decided to offer his services to Anguilla. He arrived unannounced one afternoon and had a short meeting with the provisional council of the island; and then he quietly left. Few then realized that less than a year later he would be going with Ronald Webster to London as the Anguilla Government's advocate; nor that in the various possibilities for the future, the Trinidadian Government would play such a critical role in Anguilla's destiny. With Hudson Phillips and the Government of Trinidad's support, the balance could well tip in favour of Anguilla's independence.

There is then, here in Anguilla, a cautious optimism as Christmas approaches and the New Year begins. Britain has been unable to effect a solution. The Government in St. Kitts is still bound to hold Anguilla. The Anguillan course seems to be an appeal to the other Caribbean states, and if necessary, preparation for further months of "going it alone". Christmas thus, for Anguilla, will be a time of preparation and a time for waiting.

Yours,
Frank M. Donald
Frank McDonald



FIRST DAY COVER

Note on Anguilla stamps: In need of stamps, yet determined not to use "St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla" stamps, the Government of Anguilla (on 9/4/68) took its entire stock of stamps then in its post office and overprinted them "Independent Anguilla" and the words "St. Christopher Nevis Anguilla" blocked out. This first set of 35,775 stamps, in short supply, were used for about one month. Only three complete sets and a few odd stamps were sold in mint condition. Most of them sold, the remainder were destroyed on the 25th of November, 1967. Those left are among the most valuable stamps in the world today. They are currently selling for \$5000.00 for a complete mint set, with smaller denominations selling for very high prices. Since then, new "Anguilla" stamps have been minted and are being sold at the post office. These stamps are accepted by the United Postal Union and are therefore used for all mailings. In addition to the permanent series, there have been four commorative issues released. The above Christmas issue is the last for this year.

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