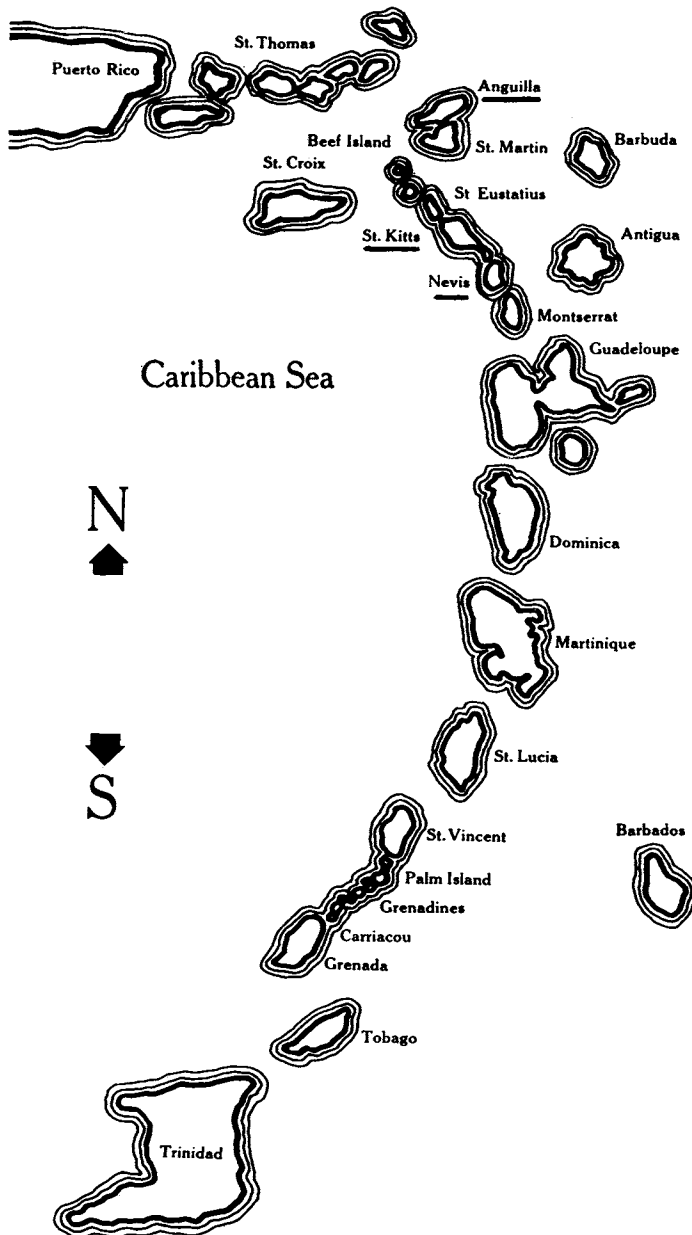


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Anguilla: U.D.I. or not?

Anguilla, W.I.

January 5, 1969



On Anguilla, the Christmas season is normally a carefree, peaceful time. The churches--all nine of them--are filled by 5 am. on Christmas morning. (5 am. services are a tradition in the West Indies dating back to the days of slavery when the servants had to be back on the plantation for their awakening masters by sunrise.) All through the day, Anguillians "make the rounds" visiting friends they usually see frequently during the week--though on Christmas it's a more formal, certainly merrier occasion, made so by the addition of rum and ginger and the serving of Christmas cakes.

The week of Christmas is also the time (repeated only once again during the first week of August) when those who work on other islands return home to Anguilla to see family and friends. The three small airlines which service Anguilla daily operate at full-tilt, shuttling back and forth between St. Thomas, St. Martin and Anguilla. The airport is a jammed and happy place having become the focus of the Anguillan's attention.

This year, however, there are signs of anxiety in the greetings. A political crisis over the question of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence has gripped the attention of the people: the first question asked is about the feasibility or wisdom of declaring U.D.I. from Great Britain which is one step further than the present state of secession from St. Kitts-Nevis.

The case for U.D.I. and a complete break with Great Britain is made by a small

yet vocally powerful group on the island. They (some are native Anguillans, others expatriate Americans) claim that the British Government, in collusion with the Americans, are trying to force Anguilla back to At. Kitts-Nevis, that H.M.G. is really preventing the Anguillian Government from seeking recognition from other Caribbean states and that it would be in the best interests of Anguilla to declare U.D.I. These same individuals clamour for accepting various business deals put forward by numerous American and Canadian speculators as a means of helping the island become economically sound enough to "go it alone". Development schemes come thick and fast, they point out, and that were it not for a couple of "foreign" advisers or the British Government these deals would be helping make Anguilla prosperous today.

As examples of what sort of schemes have been offered to the Anguillans: 1. The International Bank of Anguilla was a project proposed by a couple of New York business partners and supported by one or two Anguillans. The idea was to establish a Bank of Anguilla which would be tax free and a source of easy credit. It would have been owned in part by the Anguillian Government. The day for the signing of the Charter arrived, the men came to Anguilla and the deal was about to be closed. It was only at the last minute that on checking into the American's background it was discovered that as a former vice-president of one of New York's larger banks he had embezzled a half-million dollars.

2. The Anguilla Development Corporation was an apparently sound business arrangement in which an American from Florida offered to bring in and build a building-materials factory. The factory would have produced pre-fabricated building materials, cement, and provided heavy construction equipment as well. It would be owned in part by the Anguillian Government through a purchase of shares, not to exceed 49%, with 51% of the Corporation owned by the American. He would of course have the usual tax concessions. The only hitch was the fact that the Floridian demanded an exclusive for all building done on the island in the future, including homes, hotels, road building and even water reclamation rights. In other words, this man would have been the sole contracting agent in the island and in effect the controlling agent in all future development. A monopoly such as this would have had serious economic as well as political consequences for Anguilla.

The case made against U.D.I. is made by Anguillans with such speculation in mind. The British, it is argued, can offer advice on such future business deals and prevent sharks from making a fast kill. In addition, these Anguillans are concerned about the ability of the island to govern itself internally at present. They propose that a period of cautious growth and training would be better. Besides, they say, a break with H.M.G. would deprive the island of considerable aid in the form of teachers, advisors and engineers aside from the nearly forty thousand pounds which comes from the same source.

The debate over U.D.I. is therefore related to other vital issues such as the continued British presence on Anguilla, the attitude taken toward foreigners, the manner in which future, economic development will take place and the consequent attitude other Caribbean states will have toward Anguilla. The issues have naturally brought a heightened sense of crisis to the island. Many rumours circulate telling of political deals, British-American collusion, assassination and invasion. The situation is not helped by the Government since the governing Council is reluctant to clarify its position too soon.

Ronald Webster, the Chairman of the Council did, however, issue an order prohibiting "any Kittian or friend of St. Kitts" from Anguilla. He has refused to let LIAT, a British-owned air transport service, land on Anguilla because it has direct service to and from St. Kitts. Arriving passengers are carefully scrutinized. Sometimes even former advisers to the Anguilla Government are greeted with suspicious stares--or worse, unkind and belligerent comments. These days, Ronald Webster is less likely to be seen at night, and he prefers to travel about with trusted companions instead of alone as he once used to do. Even the Bank of America's representative on the island (Bank of America opened a branch on Anguilla about a year ago) has been accused of working in collusion with the British Secret Service. (As a result the Bank manager has seen fit to "lie low" and is asking for a leave of absence for a time.)

Most often, however, the irrational comments come from a few misguided patriots; and there may be a few zealots who border on the fringes of paranoia. Anguillians for the most part are extremely sensible people. They are determined to avoid rash statements and abhor violence. They are concerned about their future status but are resisting the overdramatic.

Last week, Ronald Webster called a public meeting in the park: Ronald Webster Park. He spoke to the nearly 500 assembled Anguillians in a non-committal fashion but asked each of the seven members of the Island Council to express his own point of view regarding the question of U.D.I. and the break from Great Britain. This was a completely spontaneous demand on Webster's part since the Council had never even discussed the matter with him in private session. In the United States this would certainly be called participatory democracy.

In every speech but one, each councilman expressed the conviction that continued resistance to a return to St. Kitts was necessary but that an open break with Great Britain, a declaration of U.D.I., would be harmful to Anguilla's cause. Only councilman Wallace Rey, once, head of an inefficient Public Works Department, voiced strong support for a declaration of U.D.I. His attitude is rooted in a hostility toward all outside influence and he represents one of the most chauvinistic of the

island's leaders. An isolationist, Rey is a man who figures that any form of outside influence may be a threat to his own carefully nurtured power-base built up over the past 18 months. He can use "strong-man" tactics and he is equipped with a loud, articulate voice which can intimidate a man very easily. He is capable of saying anything. His rhetoric, in or outside of the council meetings, is quaint and can be eloquent; and his West Indian accent has a lilt to it when Mr. Rey begins to orate. In the event that the island were thrown back entirely on its own resources, Rey would be in a very powerful position and would exercise considerable influence over the island's affairs. Even though he is without a vast following, Wallace Rey is no man to make one's enemy.

Challenging Mr. Rey's comments that day in the park was Mr. Atlin Harrigan, recently elected councilman and long-time editor of the island's weekly news-sheet, THE BEACON. Mr. Harrigan is known throughout the island as the one who first began to argue for secession from St. Kitts-Nevis. He began by writing letters to the editor in an opposition newspaper in St. Kitts. At the time he was an electrician in St. Thomas making very good money. He gave it all up to return to his home in Anguilla in order to help support the movement away from St. Kitts. Harrigan is known for his courage, honesty and integrity. He is a quiet man for the most part, but he will always write as directly as he speaks. He has in the past criticized the Anguillan Government, and done so when it was unpopular. He has an uncommon objectivity, unusual in a small island such as Anguilla. On this particular day, it was clear the Harrigan had the support of most of the people in the park when he called for continued resistance to St. Kitts but continuing link with Great Britain. He did not support a direct and open declaration of unilateral independence.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to predict what action Mr. Ronald Webster will take. He is stubborn and very unpredictable. It is hard to dissuade him once he has made up his mind about anything. A mixture of vanity and pride reinforce this streak. A religious man, (Seventh Day Adventist) Webster begins and ends each council meeting with a prayer. Like so many Anguillans, he also employs numerous references to God and divine providence in his speech and writing, closing each letter with some sort of invocation to God. He is conservative in his morality and in some ways a bit intolerant. He rarely if ever tells a joke. When

Webster laughs, it is a bit forced, and he is uncertain if he really should. He is very formal, to the point of rigidity. These days, with the immense pressures he faces, he has little occasion to smile. He is preoccupied, cautious, and seems concerned with something inside his small, black briefcase to which he has been attached since becoming the island's Chief Executive and Chairman of the Council. He is never without it.

Whether Webster will declare U.D.I. is impossible to say. Some consider it a vague threat with which to intimidate the British Government into giving the island better conditions, a bargaining point as negotiations continue between H.M.G., St. Kitts-Nevis and the Anguillian Government.

On the other hand, Webster may decide to "go it alone" without the formality of making an open statement about U.D.I. He may decide to disregard the usual diplomatic procedures and quietly inform Great Britain that the island would like to maintain its ties with Great Britain in an informal way, while reserving the right to seek assistance from other Caribbean states. This would then relieve the pressure on the British to act in a hostile way towards Anguilla or allow Robert Bradshaw, the Premier of St. Kitts-Nevis, to make diplomatic points by showing how irresponsible Anguilla has been. In the same way, Anguilla might invite H.M.G. to keep a British Representative on the Island in an informal arrangement, or even in accord with the constitutional agreements whereby H.M.G. is entirely responsible for defense and external affairs of all three islands. In other words, this procedure would be a form of unilateral independence without the declaration thrown in.

Financially, the island is doing well enough. The budget figures which were drawn up a year ago show that revenue is greater than had been expected. The government had budgeted revenue at \$169,238.00 BWI but actual revenue for the period totaled \$276,401.63 BWI, a substantial increase. Expenses were also higher than the budget had allowed, but not by nearly so high a percentage as revenue. Last year at this time, after six months of independence from St. Kitts-Nevis, Anguilla had a deficit of \$22,108.00 BWI. This year the audit shows a surplus of \$73,007.77 BWI. In the same period, very little of this revenue has come in the way of aid or donations as it did in the first six month period. The total in donations (not including direct aid from HMG) this year was only \$2,100.00 BWI--down from a total of \$55,993.00 which was donated the first six months of independence. The key source of revenue this year has been postage stamps. The stamps have brought

in about 45% of the total actual revenue collected this year-- and in just the past six months, stamps have brought in nearly \$124,000 B.W.I. There are also Anguilla coins which provide about \$10,000.00 B.W.I. each year. These coins were minted in Belgium and were financed by an Englishman named DeRoth, and are reputed to be popular. They are made with the head of Ronald Webster outlined on the facing.

Aside from stamps and coins, the duties and taxes imposed by the government have brought \$119,037.77 B.W.I. into the treasury which is a very substantial increase over last year's income from duties and taxes. Yet there is a serious problem with the balance of payments since the island must import so much, particularly its foodstuffs. Very little is grown on the island due to the dry nature of the climate.

Defense spending was about the same this year as it was last year, for the same reason: fear of invasion from St. Kitts. The sum spent this year was about \$7000.00 according to the treasury. Anguillians are still watching their beaches, prepared for any possible assault from St. Kitts, though it is thought unlikely that an invasion force could leave St. Kitts without the Anguillian government knowing about it almost at once. There is a very efficient spy network set up between St. Kitts and Anguilla so that very little happens in one place without the other side learning about it very quickly.

According to the latest airport figures, Anguilla had about 6,000 visitors this past year, most of them probably Anguillians returning home for the holidays at one time or another. There are few tourists who know about the beauty of Anguilla's beaches which are truly lovely. They number somewhere near thirty, and are long, winding, with fine, white sand. During the holidays, the island's only functioning hotel had a few families in it, most of them people who have known about Anguilla for some time and are capable of talking with great knowledge about its political and economic problems. They all had strong attachments to the island.

In addition to the critical political situation of the island, there is also a medical problem. The last full-time doctor the island had left about a year ago this coming Easter. He has not been replaced, and only temporary doctors have been hired. It seems that soon the island will have to do without anyone since the last replacement, an osteopath, is about to leave.

All this however, did not prevent the islanders from having a very

gay Christmas all the same. The island was green--and that was something to be thankful about. It rained a little bit almost every night, a blessing for an island which is dry most of the year. Picnics were held by the sea, and the children had a long vacation from the cramped school building in which they are taught. The teachers were happy for this too.

On Christmas day, things were very quiet for the most part. People made their formal visits, but it is a religious day, not one for "jumping up" in a big way. The festivities of Boxing Day are more lively, and it was on the day following Christmas that the Anguillians had their parties, dances and song-fests. There was even a parade or two down the long, gravel roads where the leader was a man dressed up as a demon, followed by young people singing and dancing to a steel band in a small truck at the rear. And while all this was going on, Chairman Ronald Webster was wondering how the island was going to fare during the very crucial weeks ahead.

Yours,

Frank M. Donald

Frank McDonald

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Map on Page 1- Courtesy of Leward Islands Air Taxi (L.I.A.T.).