



THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE CIRCULAR

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE. ESTAB: CIRCA A.D. 1735

WINTER 2021

PUBLISHED EVERY QUARTER



The West India Committee Circular



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Leading articles

New Lottery Role for WIC CEO

Oliver Dowden, Minister for Culture, Media and Sport has [appointed](#) Mrs Blondel Cluff as the new Chair of The National Lottery Community Fund. Mrs Cluff has served as Chair for the National Lottery Heritage Fund's London and South Committee and its predecessor, the Heritage Lottery Fund, for the past six years. Mr Dowden said Mrs Cluff's; "*extensive background in charity and community work means she is ideally placed to ensure Lottery funding helps us build back stronger from the pandemic and reflects the needs of people right across the UK.*" Mrs Cluff will remain as CEO of the West India Committee.

The Covid situation in the Caribbean

The ongoing pandemic continues to take its toll on the tourism industry of the Caribbean. Of recent concern for tourism officials throughout the region are the increasing number of countries that require those entering their territory to present a negative Covid test from within a certain time-frame of departure; this includes several European countries and recently the United States of America. The latter is of particular concern, as Caribbean

tourism has had to rely more on American tourists, who have been banned from other destinations due to the progress of the virus in the USA. Thus, officials in the Caribbean have been working to improve their testing capacity. Due to restrictions in global travel in the current situation, the Caribbean tourism industry is also of considerable importance to many non-West Indian airlines, such as American Airlines and Delta. As of 3rd February, the French Government has extended the closure of its borders in continental Europe to its territories in the Caribbean. This includes Guadeloupe, St. Barts, St. Martin and Martinique. This has been met with consternation in these territories, who were hoping that they would be able to attract tourists who were prohibited from going skiing in the current conditions. The new restrictions have resulted in a large number of cancellations and many in the industries relating to tourism, including hotels, restaurants and car rentals, now fear for their businesses' continued survival. The Presidents of St. Barts and French St. Martin have written to the French government to request that the restrictions be lifted.

The pandemic and its accompanying restrictions have also produced unforeseen consequences, not all of them negative. Jamaica has seen the production of illegal marijuana fall. The illicit production of the narcotic had already suffered from damage caused by hurricanes last year, as well as an ongoing drought, but the curfew in effect, at 18:00 in the evening, in effect on Jamaica has prevented criminals from going out to tend their crops at night, which is apparently vital to production. Whilst the illegal producers have had their operations impacted, the Jamaican government insists there is no problem with the legal supply of Marijuana, restricted to medical purposes and for Rastafarian adherents' religious practices.

With tourism restricted, many islands are attempting to attract longer term visitors, through the introduction of long term, remote workers' visas, pioneered by Barbados last year. Recently Montserrat has begun the 'Montserrat Remote Workers Stamp' programme, offering year-long visas to remote workers. The stamp costs \$500 for individuals and \$750 for families with up to three members, with a \$250 charge for additional members. Applicants must be able to prove that they are in full-time employment, have an annual income of \$70,000 and have health insurance coverage.

Although the economies of the Caribbean managed to recover relatively well from the initial grip of the pandemic in early 2020, the pandemic's surge at the end of the year has caused further issues. The International Monetary Fund projects that, owing to extensive economic damage, the Caribbean and Latin America will not return to pre-pandemic levels of output until 2023, with GDP per Capita only managing to recover by 2025

Now that Covid vaccines are starting to be approved by medical bodies around the world, the nations of the Caribbean are working to secure their own supplies. Cuba, which prides itself on its healthcare, has offered to vaccinate all tourists who visit the island. Smaller nations, however, are in a worse position, as was outlined in an address to the Organization of American States by Sir Ronald Sanders, the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, pointed out that, *"Unlike developed countries, our central banks cannot print money to provide relief and stimulus. We need vaccines to inoculate our people and provide some level of immunity. Yet, all that we have been able to secure is small numbers that will not immunise more than 10 per cent of our populations."* Sir Ronald called for a more equitable distribution

of vaccines globally, so that smaller and poorer nations are not left behind. There is also concern about what mutant variants of the virus will mean for the region, with St. Lucia detecting, at the end of January, five cases of the more infectious variant originating in the UK.

It is unknown how vaccine scepticism is affecting the region; it is noted that take-up or intention to have a vaccine appears to be significantly lower amongst the West Indian and wider BAME population in Britain and elsewhere. A 2018 study placed Haiti as one of the most sceptical nations in the region concerning vaccines, with 20% of the population believing that vaccines are unsafe. Whilst there are no more recent studies on the subject, it nevertheless appears that scepticism is growing and in some countries, such as Jamaica, is quite high. In the UK, Black Conservative and Labour MPs joined together to make a [video](#) encouraging people to take the vaccine.

Notes of Interest

The Cayman Islands' Law Reform Commission has begun to draft a discussion paper on aspects of the British Overseas' Territory's legal code which need to be addressed. This involves analysing some older parts of the code and identifying where the language used needs to be updated, or where there any sections of law which might run contrary to the Caymanian Bill of Rights. The Law Reform Commission was founded in 2005 and, in recent years, its work has resulted in the decriminalisation of suicide in the territory.

The Bahamas Petroleum Company has finished drilling at its exploratory well in Bahamian waters, 90 miles to the east of Andros Island, concluding that, although oil had been found, there are no commercially exploitable reserves. Shares in the company tumbled by 69% when

the news was announced on 8th February. The well will be permanently plugged. The company does have oilfields in Trinidad.

There are signs of increased volcanic activity in the eastern Caribbean, with dormant volcanoes becoming active once more. This prompted alerts to be issued in December in St. Vincent, Montserrat and the Grenadines. This activity has resulted in the emission of volcanic gasses and earth tremors, with residents advised that they may be instructed to evacuate at short notice. In Martinique, Mount Pelee, which last erupted in 1932, has become active again. La Soufriere, has formed a new volcanic dome caused by lava reaching the surface and has also been releasing gases and ash.

Political turmoil continues in Haiti, with disagreements over when President Jovenal Moïse's term of office ends. Whilst his opponents insist that his term came to an end on the 7th February this year, Moïse insists that his term continues until February next year. Following the suspension of legislative elections in 2019, the President has been ruling by decree for over a year. Protests have taken place throughout the country, and the protestors have clashed with police, who have responded with tear gas.

Moïse has accused his opponents of launching an attempted coup and also attempting to assassinate him. Over twenty people have been arrested in relation to this alleged coup, with the police saying they have seized weapons and money during the arrests. Amongst the arrested are a Supreme Court judge, who was favoured as a potential interim president, and a senior police official. Another Supreme Court Judge has been nominated as transitional president but neither Moïse or anyone in the international community has recognised this.

The Jamaican government have given notice that the ban on conch harvesting will be lifted on 1st April, after a two-year prohibition. Mr Floyd Green, the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, warned would-be conch poachers that a licence was required. The Jamaican government has set aside \$83 million to support the reopening of the industry, although it is thought that it will still take the conch fishing industry many years to recover.

Cuban Labour Minister, Marta Elena Feito, has announced a major reform to the country's economic system, by allowing private businesses to operate in most sectors of the economy. Cuba's communist system has had the majority of the economy reserved for the state, but continuing reforms in recent years continue to open the economy to other players. The reforms will permit business to engage in over 2,000 authorised activities, as opposed to the previous restriction of 127, with 124, still unnamed, activities reserved for the state. Cuba was placed back on the USA's list of terrorist sponsors in January, as one of President Trump's last acts in office. President Biden has said he wishes for closer relations with Cuba, but it remains to be seen how this will be achieved.

In January, Augustus 'Gus' Jaspert, the outgoing governor of the British Virgin Islands, issued a [Facebook video post](#), in which were raised issues of corruption throughout the territory, dating back several years; this included misusing funds, silencing those who attempt to raise concerns and interfering with the Justice system. Amongst the charges of corruption are £5 million spent on an airline that did not exist, almost £1 million spent on the building of a short wall around a school and the channelling of funds reserved for families struggling during the current pandemic to the allies of local

politicians. The Government also stands accused of hindering enquires into these allegations and deliberately delaying reforms to the legal system. Other accusations include political interference in public appointments and corruption in government procurement. There are also claims of a ‘climate of fear’ in the public sector, and that organised crime appears to be infiltrating the territory. A Commission of Inquiry, overseen by British High Court Judge, Sir Gary Hickinbottom, will now examine these allegations and is expected to report around the middle of this year. This inquiry is being carried out with the full support of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab commenting that, “*a consistent and deeply troubling array of concerns have been put to the governor by local institutions and the community*” and that the UK has “*a constitutional and moral duty to protect the interests of the people of BVI - we cannot ignore such serious allegations.*”

The West India Committee Report

Our project, in partnership with the National Army Museum, The West Indian Soldier, continues despite ongoing restrictions. By the end of March, the Committee will have finished producing online materials detailing the historic relationship between the Caribbean and the British Army, including information on the wars that the British Army fought in the West Indies, what life was like for the soldiers that were stationed there, as well as the contributions of West Indians to the British Army from the seventeenth century to the present day. A book on the subject will be published within a few months. The exhibition at the National Army Museum will open later this year, the date being subject to the ongoing Covid restrictions.

In December, the West India Committee participated in UNESCO’s 2020 International

Conference of NGOs, concerning “*Envisioning a better and sustainable future: a new paradigm for civil society.*” For the first time, the conference was held online over the course of three days, with the West India Committee’s Envoy to UNESCO, Mr. Philip Cluff, representing the charity during proceedings. The conference is the forum in which UNESCO’s official NGO partners meet to review the state of cooperation with the organisation, with representatives of Member States, foundations and other bodies attending as observers. As an NGO in official partnership with UNESCO, the West India Committee was given the opportunity to vote on various matters, including the elections of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee. The charity was also able to contribute to the future direction of UNESCO through a detailed questionnaire on its strategy, programmes and budget, which was submitted prior to the conference.

The West India Committee’s work with the Government as part of the Cross-Government Windrush Working Group concerning the Windrush scheme continues, but has already had a noted effect. In December, the compensation scheme was altered so that the minimum amount awarded under the Impact on Life category was raised to £10,000. This is paid out as an early preliminary payment, when someone applying can demonstrate that there has been an impact on their life under the terms of the scheme. By the end of January, this meant that over £8,000,000, had been paid in compensation with half of that figure being awarded from 15th December. Other changes included raising the maximum payment award to £100,000 from £10,000, although it can be higher in exceptional circumstances. A £500,000 community group fund has also been created to raise awareness of the Windrush Scheme and the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

Caribbean Cookery

Marinated Chicken with Coconut Rice

This delicious dish draws inspiration from all over the Caribbean and is both hearty and filling. Due to the use of a marinade, the recipe does take some time to do and thus some planning ahead is required. In addition to the Coconut Rice you may want also accompany the dish with peas or French beans.



Ingredients

5 tablespoons Caster sugar
5 small chicken breasts

Green Marinade

2 spring onions
2 teaspoons chopped thyme
2 tablespoons chopped coriander leaves
1-2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
2-3 garlic cloves
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 lime, juiced and zested
A few drops of Angostura bitters
A few drops of tabasco sauce or sriracha
Pinch of salt
Good sprinkling of pepper

Coconut Peas and Rice

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large onion chopped
Pinch of salt
2-3 cloves garlic - minced

1 level teaspoon chopped thyme
1 teaspoon ground allspice
500g basmati rice
1 tin coconut milk
600ml vegetable stock
A few drops of tabasco sauce or sriracha sauce
1 tin kidney beans - drained

Instructions

Chicken and Marinade

To make the marinade, pulse all the ingredients in a food processor until finely chopped. Put the chicken in a dish and then pour the marinade over the chicken, making sure to coat all sides. Cover the dish with clingfilm and leave in the fridge for at least 5 hours, but preferably overnight.

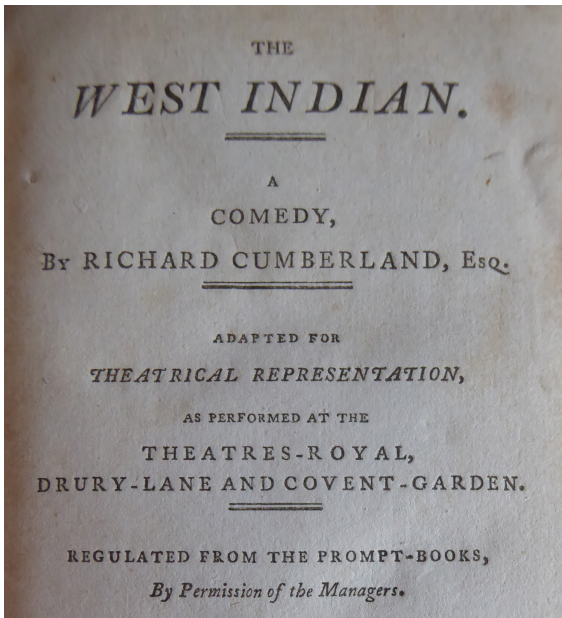
When ready, scrape any excess marinade from the chicken, but keep the liquid. Take a large, heavy-based pan and put it on medium heat. Scatter the sugar in the pan and melt it until it turns a dark caramel colour. Then add the chicken, turning it until all sides are coated with the caramel. Pour the excess marinade kept earlier over the chicken, stir and turn down the heat. Put a lid on the pan and let it simmer for about 45 minutes until the chicken is tender.

Coconut rice

Using a saucepan, sauté the chopped onion in the olive oil until softened and then add the garlic, allspice and thyme, stirring for one minute. Then stir in the rice and salt and then add the tin of coconut milk, a few drops of tabasco/sriracha sauce and the vegetable stock. Boil and reduce to a simmer. Simmer until the rice is cooked and has absorbed all the liquid. Then add the kidney beans to warm through. You can also use Green Pigeon Peas instead of Kidney Beans.

When both are ready, serve hot.

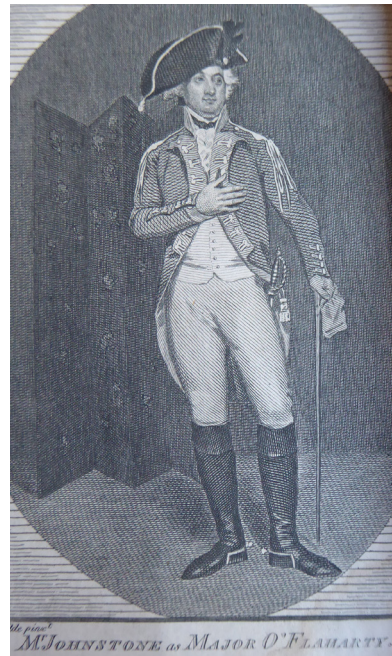
From the Library



This quarter we will be examining the only play script currently in the West India Committee collection, *The West Indian* by Richard Cumberland, published in 1792. However, the original was staged over twenty years previously at the Drury Lane Theatre, opening on 19th January 1771 for an initial run of 28 nights, and later at the Covent Garden Theatre. It proved to be very popular and was performed not only in London but throughout Britain and Ireland and in the then North American colonies and the Caribbean, whilst it was translated into other languages for performances in continental Europe. Its popularity continued to endure into the early nineteenth century.

West Indians featured amongst the stock characters of eighteenth-century literature and, as a result, shared much with their real-life counterparts living in Britain, namely a reputation for ostentation and extreme wealth. However, Cumberland's play attempts to dispel the then existing prejudice against those who lived in the Caribbean and presents young Belcour, the titular West Indian, favourably

in comparison to many other examples of young, rich West Indians of the time. The character proved popular, being deemed to be benevolent, amiable and of high spirits yet still prone to his 'tropical impulses', a fact that he regrets. However, some contemporary critics accused him of being a copy of characters from other plays. Aside from Belcour, particularly notable amongst its cast of characters is Major O'Flaherty, an Irishman, who proved so popular with audiences that Cumberland brought him back for a later play, *The Natural Son*. Whilst relying on some Irish stereotypes of the time, he is also shown to be both loyal and courageous.



The basic plot of this comedy is that Belcour's father, Stockwell, who has not acknowledged his son, will judge Belcour's behaviour when the latter arrives in London to see if he is worthy of recognition as his father's son. There also is an element of romance in the plot, with Belcour attempting to win the hand of Louisa Dudley, whilst the threat of robbery, as Mr. and Mrs. Fulmer try to steal Belcour's diamonds, adds intrigue to the play.

THE WEST INDIA COMMITTEE

The West India Committee is a UK registered charity that works to improve the welfare of the people of the Caribbean and the societies in which they live and work, both domestically and globally. Please complete this form by hand and post it to The West India Committee, Suite 53, 4 Whitehall Court, Westminster, London, SW1A 2EL.

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