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The West India Committee Circular



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Leading articles

The war in Ukraine

The impact of the war in Ukraine has already had a large effect on prices, ranging from fuel to food around the world, and the Caribbean is no exception, worsening pressures on supply chains that had emerged as a result of Covid.

Rising gas and oil prices led Juan Jose Daboub, the former Managing Director at the World Bank, to comment that most Caribbean Governments may need to increase their national budgets by at least 20% this year in order to compensate.

On 10th March, the Vice-Chancellor's Forum at the University of the West Indies discussed the economic effects of the Ukraine situation. Western sanctions on Russia could also prove problematic for at least one nation in the region; Cuba, already suffering economically after the difficulties of the last two years, normally expects around a quarter of its tourists to be from Russia, its single largest market. Thousands of Russian bookings have already been lost as the result of Russian airlines being no longer able to pass through the airspace of Western nations.

Caricom issued a statement on 24th February condemning the Russian incursion into Ukraine, and its recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and Independent states, saying that it *"represents a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine."* It further called on all parties to enter a dialogue to de-escalate hostilities and work towards a sustainable peace. The diplomatic missions of Britain, the US, the EU and Canada also issued their [own statement](#) condemning the Russian actions.

Many students of Caribbean origin were studying in Ukraine; however, in the early stages of the conflict, as they attempted to leave the country, they, along with students of African origin, were prevented from doing so by border guards in Poland, though white Ukrainians were welcomed. Several of these incidents were filmed and many of these students felt that their race was an issue.

In light of this situation, charitable individuals raised funds and offered support to Caribbean and African students attempting to leave Ukraine. The issue of the security of these students was discussed at the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting in early March.

Despite the initial statement by Caricom, regional divisions do exist. Nicaragua and Venezuela have supported Russia's actions, whilst long-time Russian ally Cuba, which has previously supported Russian policy in Eastern Europe, has neither supported nor condemned the invasion.

When it came to the UN vote to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, there was also a clear division between Caricom Member states, with Barbados, Belize, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines,

Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago all opting to abstain. Many of these nations did, however, condemn the Russian invasion. Cuba voted against the motion, whilst Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, and St. Lucia voted in favour.

French presidential elections

The French presidential race has taken place, with the incumbent Emmanuel Macron of the En Marche! Party securing the presidency for a second term. Approximately 500,000 people were eligible to vote in the election in the French West Indies.

When she visited the French department of Guadeloupe at the end of March, far-right candidate, Marine Le Pen, was met with violent protests, including an attempted assault by supporters of Guadeloupean independence. This did not, however, prevent her from doubling her rating.

Marine Le Pen's far-right rhetoric has traditionally been poorly received in France's territories in the Caribbean. Her spokesperson said that the incident was the result of far-left militants. Mr. Macron, also campaigning at the same time, said, that even though he does not agree with Ms. Le Pen's policies, he strongly condemned the attack on her.

However, the overwhelming favourite in the First Round in the French West Indies was far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon of the La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) movement. He polled Guadeloupe (56.16%), Martinique (53.10%), French Guiana (50.59%) and St. Martin (35.03%). Mr. Melenchon proved popular throughout the majority of the French Overseas Departments and territories.

Le Pen came in second place on Guadeloupe

(17.92%), French Guiana (17.66%) and St. Barthélemy (22.41%), whilst Macron took first in St. Barthélemy (23.81%) but second in Martinique (16.30%) and St. Martin (35.03%). Turnout during the first round was not high in the French West Indies, with 57.32% of voters abstaining in Martinique, 55.25% in Guadeloupe, 63.84% in French Guiana, 22.41% in St. Martin and 48.66% in St. Barthélemy. In comparison, only 26.31% of voters in mainland France abstained.

With Macron and Le Pen making it to the run-off vote, whereby the two highest scoring candidates from the First-Round battle it out to obtain a simple plurality, abstention in the French Caribbean lessened slightly but was still noticeably high, with 52.82% of voters on Guadeloupe opting to abstain. This was similarly repeated in St. Martin (66.88%), St. Barthélemy (43.43%) Martinique (54.55%) and French Guiana (61.1%).

Although Mr. Macron secured re-election, the first incumbent to do so for 20 years, Le Pen secured a majority of the votes cast throughout the whole of the French Caribbean: Guadeloupe (69.60%), St. Martin (55.75%), St. Barthélemy (54.73%), Martinique (60.87%), French Guiana (60.70%).

Le Pen's success in the Caribbean, and in the majority of other French Overseas territories, surprised many pundits and analysts. It has either been explained as a protest vote against Mr. Macron, who has never enjoyed high popularity in the Caribbean for reasons as varied as the French Central Government's response to Hurricane Irma in 2017 and the imposition of Vaccine mandates in the Pandemic, which resulted in violent protests as reported in previous editions of the West India Committee Circular.

Others, however, have argued that there was a genuine acceptance of Ms. Le Pen's cost of living message, with living standards in the French Overseas Territories tending to be much lower than those of mainland France.

The situation in the British Virgin Islands

There is currently a very delicate situation in the British Virgin Islands. Following a year-long inquiry that began in January 2021, the report by Sir Gary Hickinbottom was released on 4th April and can be read [here](#). The report highlighted high levels of corruption in the British Overseas Territory, alongside poor levels of good governance.

The report criticised the lack of transparency and respect for the rule of law in many areas of government, as well as discretionary decisions made by ministers who ignored criteria, or for which there were no criteria set in the first place. Such practices seem not only to have been allowed but encouraged by successive BVI Governments. The BVI's civil service was held to be under-trained, under-qualified, under-resourced and outdated, due to neglect by successive governors, with some notable exceptions at higher levels.

Stressing that he considers the situation to be so serious that it warrants the move, Sir Gary has recommended that there be a temporary, short suspension of parts of the Islands' constitution that are overseen by elected officials, allowing the Governor, and by extension the British Government, to assume executive power normally exercised by elected ministers for a period of at least two years. This would also necessitate the dissolution of the territory's House of Assembly for the period.

In this situation, Sir Gary further recommends that the Governor should create an Advisory

Council and utilise the noted experience and talent of senior public officials to assist him in addressing the issues facing the Islands' governance.

Sir Gary also advised that a Constitutional Review was essential but noted that, despite one being in the planning for some time, it had yet to take place. Sir Gary's final two recommendations were that a review of government decision-making powers be carried out, with the aim of replacing them with decisions made in accordance with the principles of good governance, and that an independent audit should take place into several areas of government decision-making and expenditure into which the Commission enquired.

Matters have been further complicated by Premier Andrew Fahie being charged with conspiracy to commit drug smuggling and conspiracy to commit money laundering by the US authorities. On 28th April, Mr. Fahie was arrested in Miami, Florida after a 'sting' operation by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). DEA agents pretended to represent the Mexican Sinaloa cartel and agreed with Mr. Fahie that they could smuggle cocaine through ports in the British Virgin Islands onto Puerto Rico, Miami and New York, in return for a payment of \$700,000 (£560,00).

Additionally, it is claimed that the DEA agent and Mr. Fahie also discussed setting up incidents in which money and low-quality drugs were to be found to make it look like Mr. Fahie's administration was combating crime in the territory. Oleanvine Maynard, the director of the BVI's Port Authority, was arrested alongside Mr. Fahie at the airport in Miami.

Mr. Fahie is quoted as telling the undercover

agent that, *“I have plenty of people, and I don’t sell them out to the British with their plans... they always want to capture people, but me I see what they are doing and I protect the people.”* He also allegedly claimed that he was underpaid by the British Government and that the latter had been trying for a number of years to remove him from office. Mr. Fahie denies the charges against him. Deputy Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatly will serve as acting Premier for the time being.

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, the British minister with overall responsibility for the British Overseas Territories, made a [statement](#) concerning the British Virgin Islands and sent Amanda Milling, the Minister for Overseas Territories, to the territory to discuss the report’s finding, where she was met with protests. Milling said, *“It isn’t a question of whether something should be done, it is a question of what should be done, action is needed now to strengthen the foundations of the territory.”*

The Organisation of East Caribbean States (OECS) issued a statement saying, *“It is ill-advised to impose direct colonial rule and the history of such imposition in the Caribbean has never delivered the desired result. The OECS concurs with the elected representatives of the people of the BVI that abolition of parliament with direct rule from London represents a retrograde step in the evolution of the democratic process that is inconsistent with the United Nations proclamation of human rights to be free of colonial rule.”*

Dr. Wheatley has formed a new government of national unity, which he believes negates the need for direct rule by London, and will be creating a proposal for a new framework to tackle the challenges that the territory faces, as well as implementing some immediate reforms.

Royal visits to the Caribbean

The recent visits to the Caribbean by the British Royal Family as part of Queen Elizabeth’s Platinum Jubilee proved to be controversial and raised further questions about the Royal connection between the Caribbean and the British Monarchy, which remains the Head of State of several Caribbean Nations. Although there were many well-wishers who came to see the Royals, there were also many protesters demanding that Britain pays reparations for its role in the slave trade and colonialism.

Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge’s tour came under criticism in Jamaica, where they shook hands with well-wishers held behind a wire fence and rode in the back of an open-topped Landrover like Her Majesty did on her visit 60 years ago when the island was still a colony. They also encountered protesters in the Bahamas and Belize, the latter concerning a land dispute with a charity of which the Prince is patron. In the aftermath of the tour, Prince William acknowledged that many Caribbean nations may wish to become Republics in the future, and he is reported to have asked for a review so that future tours do not suffer from the same negative response.

Prince Edward and the Countess of Wessex, on their visit to Antigua, met with Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who, whilst stressing that whilst his nation has no immediate desire to become a republic, it nevertheless would become one at some point in the future. The Wessexes were also asked by the premier to use their *“diplomatic influence”* to push for reparations for slavery to Britain’s former colonies. Deputy Prime Minister Shawn Richards of St. Kitts and Nevis, another stop on the Wessexes’ tour also indicated that his nation would review their current constitutional arrangements with the Royal Family.

Notes of Interest

On 4th May, the United Nations expressed concern about the recruitment of children into gangs in Haiti. Gang violence in Haiti has been a problem for many years, with the issue worsening in recent years.

Antigua's sailing week was held between 30th April and 6th May. Results from the race can be found [here](#). This is the 53rd time the event has been held, welcoming over 80 teams from over 20 countries around the world.

In another sign of the increasing acceptance of cryptocurrencies in the Caribbean, a White paper published by the Office of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas has outlined a plan to allow Bahamians to pay their taxes with cryptocurrency. The Bahamas were the first country to implement a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), adopting the Sand Dollar in October 2020.

Three American tourists were found dead at the Sandals Emerald resort in Great Exuma, the Bahamas. Mrs. Robbie Philips 65 and Mr. Michael Philips 68 from Tennessee were found dead in their room at the resort on Friday 6th May. The Philips were travel agents and had posted a glowing review of the resort.

Mr. Vincent Chiarella 64 from Florida also fell ill and died. Mr. Chiarella's wife, Donnis, was taken to hospital in a serious condition, having woken up on the Friday morning to find her limbs paralysed, and her husband dead. Mrs. Chiarella raised the alarm by calling for help. Both couples had felt unwell the day before.

Whilst there has been no official confirmation or speculation as to the cause of death, several guests at the resort complained of a strong smell of insecticide and some other guests claim that a

leak of the refrigerant chemical Freon from the air conditioning system was to blame. Forensic teams have taken several samples, which are being tested for possible toxins by a laboratory in Philadelphia, USA.

The Saratoga Hotel in Havana, Cuba was due to open after being closed for two years due to the pandemic and renovations. However, on Tuesday 10th May, four days before the planned reopening, an explosion ripped through the hotel, killing over 40 people and causing severe damage to the historic building. The explosion is thought to have been the result of a gas tanker parked outside the hotel. First built in the 19th century in Havana's old town, the five-star Saratoga is one of Cuba's most exclusive hotels.

The Parliament of St. Kitts and Nevis has been dissolved in preparation for a general election to be held in the near future. On 10th May, Prime Minister Dr. Timothy Harris asked Governor-General Samuel Seaton to dissolve the Parliament with immediate effect, shortly after announcing the dismissal of several ministers from the National Unity Government that was re-elected in 2020.

Amongst the ministers who were dismissed were Lindsay Grant, Jonel Powell, Eric Evelyn, and Alexis Jeffers, as well Deputy Prime Minister Shawn Richards, who was attending a funeral overseas at the time, and Mark Brantley, the Premier of Nevis. Richards and Brantley are the heads of the People's Action Movement and the Concerned Citizens Movement respectively, who make up the coalition alongside Prime Minister Harris's People's Labour Party. A motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister's leadership had been submitted by six members of the government shortly before the announcement.

The Commonwealth Games are due to commence in Birmingham on 28th July. The Queen's Baton Relay has been passing through the Commonwealth nations and the British Overseas Territories of the Caribbean this May. These will be the 22nd Commonwealth Games, and the third to be held in England.

The West India Committee Report

West India Committee CEO, Mrs. Blondel Cluff, and Director of Research and Heritage, Mr. David Wells, visited Antigua in March at the invitation of the Mill Reef Club. Mrs. Cluff delivered a well-received lecture to the members of the club about the history and the current work of the Committee. We would like to thank the Members and Staff of the Mill Reef Club for their hospitality, and we hope to work closely with the Club in future on a variety of different endeavours.



Mrs. Cluff's lecture

Whilst in Antigua, Mrs. Cluff and Mr. Wells also presented the National Museum of Antigua and Barbuda with the banners that comprise The West Indian Soldier travelling exhibition. These were very well-received and the National Museum produced a video with Mrs. Cluff and Mr. Wells discussing the exhibition; this is now available through the Committee's [YouTube Channel](#).

Meeting Dr. Chris Waters at Nelson's



The exhibition at the National Museum Dockyard, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, raised the possibility of future collaboration between the Dockyard and the Committee, with the approach of the Dockyard's 300th anniversary and their current [8th March project](#), which aims to explore the lives of the many enslaved workers at the Dockyard. Copies of the Committee's latest book, *The West Indian Soldier: The British Army and the Caribbean*, were presented to the Dockyard.

Mrs. Cluff and Mr. Wells also visited the Antigua Defence Force to acquaint the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Telbert Benjamin, with the Committee's recent heritage work and present him with copies of *The West Indian Soldier*.



Mrs. Cluff and Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin

Finally, at the request of His Excellency Sir Rodney Williams, Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda and a trustee of the West India

Committee, the Committee hopes to contribute its expertise and networks to facilitate the creation of a new Museum in the grounds of Government House.

During the whole visit, Mr. Wells and Mrs. Cluff were keen to take as many photographs of the island as possible, with the aim of furthering and modernising the Committee's already extensive photographic collection; they took approximately 400 images during their stay, visiting sites such as Shirley Heights, downtown St. John's and various historic Churches around the island.



St. Peter's Anglican Church, Parham



Ruins at Shirley Heights



Clarence House at English Harbour

In addition to The West Indian Soldier travelling exhibition now being in the Caribbean, another copy is also on display in Britain. The exhibition was put on view at the Chiltern Open Air Museum at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire on the weekend on the 7th and 8th of May, where it was well-received, and the Committee's Mr. Wells, a long-time volunteer at the Museum, was on hand to answer any questions that visitors had about the exhibition and the work of the Committee.



The exhibition at the Chiltern Open Air Museum The exhibition is now on loan to the [Staffordshire Regiment Museum](#), where it will remain until September. The exhibition will travel to the Cardiff Castle Museum later in the year.

Caribbean Cookery

Jamaican Beef Patties

This classic Jamaican recipe represents the creole culture of the Caribbean and is heavily influenced by Cornish pasties, but with a distinct Caribbean twist from Indian and African influences, most notably in the pastry.



Ingredients

Pastry

25g Self-Raising Flour
1 heaped teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
10g margarine
Pinch of salt
Water

Filling

Cooking oil
500g minced beef
1 diced medium onion
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon allspice
2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 tablespoons mixed herbs
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

A few drops of tabasco sauce
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
200 ml beef broth
40g panko breadcrumbs
1 beaten egg for glazing

Method

Pastry

Preheat your oven to 200 degrees C. In a large bowl, combine the flour, curry powder, turmeric and salt. Rub the margarine into the mixture until it resembles coarse crumbs. Add water and stir it in until the mixture forms a ball. Wrap the dough in cling film and refrigerate whilst you are making the filling.

Filling

Sauté the diced onion in cooking oil until it is soft and then add the minced garlic. Stir in the minced beef and add the curry powder, turmeric, salt and pepper. Cook until the beef is brown, stirring constantly. Then add the beef broth, Worcester sauce, tabasco sauce and breadcrumbs and allow to simmer until liquid is absorbed. Then remove the mixture from the heat and allow to cool.

Taking the pastry out of the fridge, remove the cling film and roll it out. Cut the pastry around a small bowl to make 4 circles. Spoon the beef mixture into one half of each pastry circle, leaving a small border on the edge. Brush around the circumference with the beaten egg, taking care to save some of the mixture for later and then fold over and press edges together, making a half circle. Use a fork to seal the edges and then brush each patty with the remaining beaten egg.

Finally, bake in your preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until golden brown and serve whilst still hot.

100 Years ago

The West India Committee reported in April 1922 on the complete totals for the Census of the previous year, which showed that in April 1921 there were 1,734,972 people living in the British West Indies, an increase since the 1,688,494 of the 1911 census. With the population of British Guiana and British Honduras added, this resulted in a total of 2,077,980 in 1922.

British Guiana's population was noted for remaining essentially stationary since the previous census, despite schemes designed to encourage immigrants to the country. The population of Barbados had, however, declined, in line with encouraging emigration from the island, which had been considered overpopulated.

The Trinidadian Government had granted the Agricultural College use of a building at St. Augustine, Trinidad, to convert into classrooms, laboratories and offices to serve as temporary accommodation for the College and the Imperial Department of Agriculture.

The Committee wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking for provision to be made for the reduction of duties on Spirits in an upcoming finance bill, blaming excessively high duties for a fall in the amount of rum being drunk. However, the Treasury replied that it was not possible to reduce the duties on Spirits from the West Indies without doing the same at home. The Committee had hoped there would be a general reduction in the duties.

The Colonial Hotel in Nassau, the Bahamas, was destroyed by a fire at the end of March. The cause was unclear, but it was discovered at 5:35 in the morning in the hotel's laundry. The fire spread to the surrounding buildings, which the fire brigade was largely able to save.

The West India Committee secured a concession from the Board of Trade to admit certain goods into Britain from the West Indies at a preferential rate.

There were several promising reports from the Trinidad Oilfields, with over 500 barrels a day being produced.

The Committee library received copies of *The Life of Enos Nuttall, Archbishop of the West Indies; A History of the Bahamas House of Assembly* and *The Civil Law of British Guiana*.

The Budget Statement by Sir Robert Horne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 1st May announced that there would be reductions in the duties on tea, coffee and cocoa, but an expected decrease in the sugar duty was not announced.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies appointed a committee to determine if any changes to the currency systems of the West Indian Colonies were necessary or desirable.

It was decided that a financial expert be sent to Jamaica to report on the island's finances.

The people of St. Vincent, Bequia and the Northern Grenadines offered a wedding gift of a table made of local woods to Princess Mary.

The West India Committee released a new Map of the West Indies at a scale of 1:3,500,000 and was 48 by 37 inches in length.

The first report of the Baby-saving League of St. Kitts, founded 29th January 1921, claimed that, although no statistics were yet available, the League had noticeably managed to reduce child mortality on the island through opening creches and dispensing advice to mothers.

It was announced that a British Empire Exhibition would be held in Wembley Park in 1924.

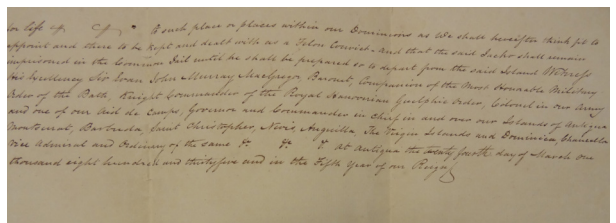
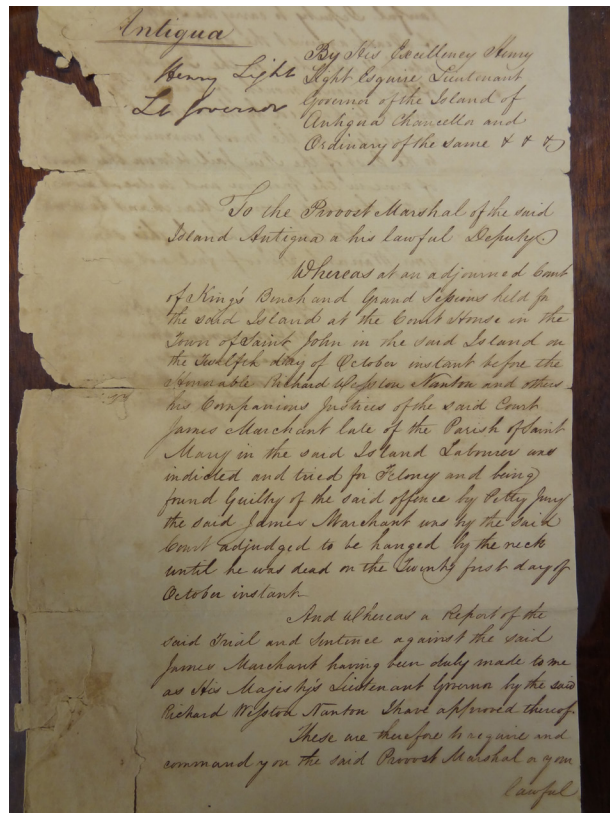
Mr. Edward Wood's report of his visit to the British West Indies and British Guiana was published and presented to Parliament. Much of the report was dedicated to constitutional issues in the West Indies, reflecting an increasing desire for more representative government. Mr. Wood proposed creating an elective system in the Windward Isles and Trinidad and Tobago, whilst also giving the people of Jamaica and British Guiana a greater say in the affairs of their nations. The West India Committee supported his recommendations.

The Report also contained a section relating to economic problems facing the West Indies, namely the difficulties facing the sugar industry. Mr. Wood recommended an increase in the preference given to Imperial goods from one sixth to one third, a position that had been advocated by the West India Committee for some time. He also highlighted the need for better communications between the different West Indian Islands, as well as with Britain, and the necessity of improving both education and public health and sanitation, especially in British Guiana. Many of the issues that Mr. Wood addressed had been brought to his attention by the West India Committee before his departure.

From the Library

The Committee has recently repossessed some of its collection that has been on deposit at the Museum of London. Amongst this material are papers circa 1835, outlining matters of justice in Antigua, including death sentences authorised by the then Lieutenant Governor Henry Light to convicted criminals James Marchant and

John Parker. These men had been found guilty in trials at the Court House in St. John's, now home to the National Museum of Antigua and Barbuda. It is unclear exactly the crimes for which these men were convicted, although one seems to have been as the result of burglary. Also of note is the 1835 commutation of a death sentence of a man named Jacko. As this appears to be the only name that the man concerned had, it seems reasonable to assume that he was a former slave, freed by the emancipation proclamation the previous year. His exact crime is not specified but the court took "pity" on him and opted to commute this sentence to transportation, effectively lifelong exile from the island.



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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Please only give us your telephone number/e-mail address if you are happy for us to contact you this way with updates about how your gifts are helping and how you can donate and help in other ways.

I enclose a cheque made payable to 'The West India Committee' of £



Gift Aid allows us to claim back 25p of tax for every £1 you give

I am a UK taxpayer and I would like The West India Committee to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made, as well as any future donations, until I notify them otherwise (please tick).

I understand that if I pay less income / capital gains tax than the amount of gift aid claimed on all my donations in the tax year in which they are received, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please remember to let us know of any changes to your tax status including changes to your name or address or if you need to cancel this agreement

