



Alister McIntyre

THE CARIBBEAN AND THE WIDER WORLD

Commentaries on My Life and Career



Sir Alister McIntyre is a distinguished international figure and academic. He studied at the London School of Economics (LSE) and Oxford University and taught at the University of the West Indies (UWI), where he was latterly Vice-Chancellor. He has served in a variety of high-profile roles in UN agencies and in Caribbean regional government. He has been awarded the Order of the Caribbean Community (OCC), conferred by the CARICOM Heads of Government; the Order of Distinction and the Order of Merit conferred by the government of Jamaica; and the Cacique Crown of Honour from the government of Guyana. In 1992 he was knighted by the Queen. He has also received the Chancellor's Medal for Excellence at the UWI, as well as honorary doctorates from the Universities of the West Indies, Toronto in Canada, and Sheffield in the UK.

'In the realm of international development and the economic integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, no practising economist has commanded more respect over the past fifty years from politicians and policy makers than Sir Alister. His story is unmissable.'

**Prof. The Hon Bishnodat Persaud, former Director
of Economic Affairs, Commonwealth Secretariat**

'In this honest and wonderfully engaging account of his incredibly varied career of service to the international community and his beloved Caribbean, Sir Alister shares his origins, motivations, key friendships, triumphs and disappointments. A truly inspiring read.'

**Gerry Helleiner, Distinguished Research Fellow,
Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto**

'The Caribbean and the Wider World is arguably the most significant aspect of Sir Alister's legacy to contemporary and future Caribbean society. It documents the lived experience of one of the principal architects of the post-independence Caribbean – its ideology, its institutions and its place in the globalized world. Sir Alister's autobiography abounds with energy and optimism. Readers will be inspired by the continuing relevance of the values and ideas that motivated him as a committed regionalist. The book gives a concrete demonstration of what can be achieved by a Caribbean leader, conceptualizer and a brilliant defender of Caribbean integration who had a commitment to public service, a conviction that regionalism was the only option to save the Caribbean from marginalization in the global environment, and an acceptance of a development agenda based on trade, strategic production and appropriate human resources development. Caribbean leaders, academics, technocrats and students of my generation are deeply indebted to Sir Alister for his profound impact on our individual and collective consciousness, and I recommend this book as an indispensable tool in the realization of Sir Alister's vision in the future.'

Prof. Sir Kenneth Hall, former Governor-General of Jamaica

The Caribbean and the Wider World provides important insights and perspectives on several of the major regional and international issues which demanded attention by the countries in the region, during the last four decades of the twentieth century. The book is an excellent resource for students, educators, and policy makers, as well as persons holding a general interest in the Caribbean and its development. Readers of the book will find an authentic account of the life and career of a virtuoso who was involved in the search for solutions of regional issues, within the framework of the global landscape. The book also reflects Sir Alister's concurrent commitment to assist the peoples and institutions at the national level, so as to resolve pressing problems of a strictly internal focus. The episodes that deal with the author's contribution to university education further reveal the scale and complexity of his seminal influence on the spread of knowledge in the region during a long and distinguished career. The intellectual genius of Alister McIntyre, expertly sharpened on the whetstone of unparalleled experience, has generated this brilliant book that should attract a very wide readership within the Caribbean and the wider world.'

P.J. Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica

'Having worked with him in UNCTAD and later observed his dedication and commitment to development in the Global South, it is heartening to peruse Alister McIntyre's reflections and analyses. Sometimes regions and individuals punch above their weight in world politics. These pages provide privileged access to the private life and public career of an extraordinary Caribbean and exemplary global citizen.'

**Professor Thomas G. Weiss, The Graduate Center,
The City University of New York**

'I am very pleased to endorse this excellent biography of my dear friend Alister McIntyre, which pays testimony to an exceptional career and a life full of commitment and great contributions to knowledge, academic life, the development of Caribbean countries and the construction of a better international community. This book describes an exceptional academic career, mostly in Great Britain, as well as a preponderant role in the construction of an independent Caribbean. Alister's extraordinary faith in the idea of regional integration took shape in his participation in CARIFTA, then in CARICOM and in his multiple cooperation interventions in most of the Caribbean countries, highlighting his role as a leader committed to the destiny of his region. Alister is, without any doubt, among the great men and women that built the Caribbean, strengthening an exemplary democracy, trying to overcome the limitations of its insularity and proving exemplary in the defense of human rights.'

**Enrique V. Iglesias, Former Executive Secretary,
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the
Caribbean (ECLAC); Former Minister of Foreign Relations of the
Republic of Uruguay; Former President of the Interamerican
Development Bank; First Iberoamerican Secretary General**

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Alister McIntyre

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This book is dedicated to the late William Demas, a stalwart Caribbean scholar and public servant.

He was my colleague and very good friend.

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It goes without saying that I am particularly indebted to Dr Lester Crook, editor at I.B.Tauris, who guided me throughout the preparation of this book and made invaluable suggestions for its improvement. I am also indebted to the other members of the I.B.Tauris publishing staff for their contributions and to those persons at Saxon Graphics, in particular Mr Dave Wright, who were especially helpful.

Preface

My purpose in writing this book is to illustrate how a young person with very modest means could overcome the obstacles in the way of his own personal development, particularly in securing a higher education and developing a professional career. Those two pathways converged to provide me with very many opportunities for personal satisfaction in the career that I chose in pursuit of Caribbean and global development.

The opening chapters of the book contain reflections on my early life growing up in Grenada; the compulsion that I experienced for securing a higher education; the knowledge that I accumulated about the working world that, in the end, made me more humble in dealing with people and situations; and the period during which I secured my higher education and the satisfaction and frustrations which arose out of that. During this period, I began receiving important exposure to the rationale for, and the advantages to be derived from, West Indian economic integration.

On the whole, my period in pursuit of higher education in Britain, and the opportunities for strengthening my academic capacities that became available in the United States, served to make me more focused and confident about the contributions I could endeavour to make, particularly to the English-speaking Caribbean. It also alerted me to avoid prescriptions and assessments that were not sufficiently founded on reliable information, to judge issues on their merits and to guard against relying on unsubstantiated assumptions.

PREFACE

As the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean moved into independence during the 1960s, they had to contend with a series of public issues that materially affected their opportunities for economic development.

At a more general level, they needed to respond to a network of economic and financial institutions, starting with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These two institutions had been set up after World War II to implement the decisions taken at the Bretton Woods Conference that established ground rules for the conduct of international payments, and to complement the decision to establish an open system of multilateral trade. The work of these two institutions was reinforced by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which provided for the freeing of international trade in goods and services, apart from exceptions that conformed to specified criteria.

The first two independent Caribbean countries, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, set a pattern that in subsequent years was followed by other Caribbean countries. In effect, by membership of these international institutions, the English-speaking Caribbean had established rules and procedures that, with some exceptions, were virtually common to all of them. This was later to make it possible for them to establish special arrangements among themselves for the integration of their trade. In other words, paradoxically as it might appear to many, the decision at independence to join the World Bank and IMF on the terms established turned out to be one of the first building blocks towards the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) and the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM).

Like other developing countries, the Commonwealth Caribbean experienced the shortcomings and constraints of the global system of trade, aid and finance. This was further underlined by their growing acquaintance, over the years, with the economic work being undertaken by the United Nations and, in certain respects, by leading personalities in the international academic community. Most influential was the work of the Argentine economist, Raoul Prebisch. He made an important mark on the thinking of senior officials in the United Nations about the problems of international

PREFACE

trade and development in the newly independent developing countries. As his work gathered increasing international attention and support, it became the foundation for reform of the international arrangements applicable to developing countries for their trade and payments.

Prebisch's work became increasingly the foundation for discussion within the United Nations about how to proceed with the issue of reform. This led to a decision by the United Nations General Assembly to convene a conference on international trade and development which took place in 1964. At that meeting, the decision was taken to establish the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) of which Dr Prebisch became the first secretary-general.

Among the insights emanating from the deliberations and work of UNCTAD was enhanced interest in economic integration among developing countries. This contributed towards the resurrection of the notion of integration among the countries that first established the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

As will later be discussed, the growth of interest in the development of international trade and payments along lines favouring economic development lit a spark in the minds of several Caribbean intellectuals who, as the text will indicate, contributed to creating a technical basis for Caribbean integration. My own espousal of the case is contained in two articles and papers that I wrote and published during the mid-1960s: 'Aspects of Development and Trade' (*UN Economic Bulletin for Latin America*) and 'Decolonization and Trade Policy in the West Indies' (First Conference of Caribbean Scholars, 1964). These were intended to join the earlier work of fellow economist and Caribbean integrationist, William Demas, known as 'Willie' to many of his friends and colleagues. The work that we both did on integration and development laid the basis for continuing intellectual collaboration with Willie that I enjoyed for the remainder of his life.

At a wider level, Caribbean economic integration became the leitmotif for the work of both of us in the succeeding years. In fact, Lloyd Best – a close colleague and Research Fellow at the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) – was not far off the mark

when, in a public lecture, he described Demas and me as belonging to, and leading, a West Indian political party!

This constituted the philosophical platform from which I tried to contribute to the advancement of the economic integration process and the development of supportive institutions, of which the University of the West Indies (UWI) was and is the most important. It also gave a *raison d'être* for the work that I have done over my life for individual Caribbean countries – the public activities in which I engaged at different times throughout the region, but especially in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago where I lived, are described in this book. However, my stance had always been that, coming from the UWI and later from the CARICOM secretariat, I had a fundamental obligation to make myself available to all the countries in the region where I had the relevant skills and experience to contribute to particular issues of problem-solving.

Without going too much ahead of my text, I leave to others to assess the outcome of all of these mostly hurried attempts at problem-solving. In this connection, I would like to use this opportunity to thank those governments and institutions that have honoured me for my work. Despite the frustrations that arose, in the end I was a more rounded individual for having undertaken the assignments and the opportunities they gave me to broaden my perspective and increase my knowledge of the world.

I tell friends that over my career I have been privileged to visit 81 countries – or perhaps I should say airports in 81 countries! But whatever the particular experiences, they certainly served to widen my vision and make me a more perceptive and understanding person.

In ending the account of my life and career, my thoughts inescapably extend to the future. I find this an exciting venture, although at this stage I can only make very preliminary suggestions about some of the principal tasks that might become apparent. However, I hope that they will provide sufficient food for thought for readers who, in the end, will be better placed than I am to take those brief reflections further into concrete discussion of the specific possibilities that lie ahead. In that endeavour, I wish them every good fortune. I look forward to hearing more in the future about the subjects involved.

PREFACE

In putting together these preliminary paragraphs, my thoughts turn naturally to the persons who provided me with valuable support and assistance in completing this manuscript. I single out for special mention Ms Rosalie O'Meally, who has been of outstanding support to me at every stage of the book. I cannot speak too highly about the indispensable support that she has provided and I thank her sincerely for it.

My wife, Marjorie, has been at every stage, an indispensable ally and an invaluable source of friendship, encouragement, and wise counsel. I take this opportunity also to mention my four children – Arnold, Andrew, Helga and Nicholas – who have been sources of encouragement and support at every stage of the work.

Other members of my family, especially my brother, Dunbar, deserve acknowledgement because of the consistent interest they have displayed throughout the preparation of this text.

I underline the role that members of my family have played throughout my career by including a few photographs of them, along with others illustrative of personalities and events which have significance at different times in my career.

SECTION 1



BUILDING CAPACITY

1

Growing up in Grenada

I was born in 1932. At that time, Grenada was a British colony, a part of the British Empire, and accordingly functioned in the manner then being followed by other British colonial territories in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Our family lived in a town called Gouyave, which was principally known for its fishing. My father had grown up there.

Most of the information on my ancestral roots came from my cousin Hope Stewart, née McIntyre, whom I met in Jamaica in 1988. She was very familiar with a number of interesting family details. For example, she sent me a photograph that she had obtained in Scotland of a person named Alister McIntyre. She pointed out that my name was rarely spelt 'Alister'. On that and subsequent occasions, she continued trying to interest me in the McIntyre family history. Eventually I agreed that she should acquaint me with all the information that she had.

As Hope recounted, there were three young Scottish McIntyres who were anxious to seek their fortune abroad. Initially, all of them came to Jamaica to work as engineers in the sugar industry. One of them remained in Jamaica; of the other two, one went on to Latin America, and the other, my paternal great-grandfather, left Jamaica for the Eastern Caribbean. He initially went to Dominica, seemed to have started a family there, but eventually was attracted to Grenada and accordingly became my ancestor.

The McIntyres of Gouyave became a leading family there.

My grandfather, Meredith McIntyre, was one of three brothers and was something of a wanderer. He married, had six boys, of whom my father was the youngest, then left his entire family in Gouyave and went travelling the world. Five of his sons were later to follow him. Originally, he went to Brazil, but it is unclear for how long he stayed there as there are some scraps of information that indicate that he had also gone to other countries such as Argentina. He left the responsibility for my father's education to his two brothers and, from all accounts, never again communicated with his wife. As far as my father was concerned, he was left to grow up with his mother and an aunt who lived with them.

My father's name was actually Meredith Adelbert McIntyre but he disliked the name, so everyone called him 'Merry' McIntyre. He continued the tradition of naming a son Meredith and I disliked it as well and never used it, but kept the tradition.

My father was not well provided for and had to struggle very hard. His uncles put him to work in the family firm, the largest pharmacy in Gouyave, at a very early age. He barely completed the equivalent of what would now be entry-level into secondary school, and decided that the one thing he could do was pharmacy, because the pharmacist in the family firm was willing to teach him. In those days, to qualify as a registered pharmacist you went into the capital, St Georges, to take an exam set by the government. He went and did it when he was 18 and passed very well, which attracted great attention. When his two uncles heard of this they persuaded the Governor to declare that he was ineligible to receive a licence because he was not yet 21 years old.

My father was furious. He had to wait, and considerable animosity developed between his uncles and himself. He turned his attention to planning in detail how he would organize himself after he became 21 and received his licence to practise as a pharmacist. His aunt, who had become his confidante and had some resources of her own, helped him to start his own business.

He decided to go into wholesale pharmacy. This allowed him to develop a cadre of retailers who could provide customers with

small quantities of the drugs and pharmaceuticals provided by my father, the wholesale pharmacist, on a credit basis. This business venture was a great success. Apart from the pharmacy, in the 1920s and early 1930s he became a businessman, selling both groceries and dry goods to retail customers. Then he opened a petrol station, and owned a car that he rented out for weddings and similar occasions.

In 1928 he married my mother and built a huge house, right on the sea. Downstairs he had his business. We lived upstairs and my sisters, my brother and I grew up in a very nice atmosphere. Our home had amenities that were not generally available to other families in Gouyave, or perhaps in other parts of Grenada.

In the course of the 1930s my family had a series of negative experiences. The first was the untimely death of my second sister Marcelle, who was eight years old when she was diagnosed with meningitis. In making the diagnosis, the doctors had not held out any hope for her survival, and in fact she died within a week. We were all highly traumatized, and this was compounded by the onset of the Great Depression, which hit Grenada very badly. Grenada's economy was largely dependent on the export of cocoa and nutmegs – minor crops largely grown by the peasant farmers who were the mainstay of my father's business.

In order to attract business away from his uncles, my father had developed his business by giving credit to the smaller shops patronized by the peasant farmers. When they crashed, as a result of the Depression, he also crashed because they could not pay him. Eventually, he had to declare bankruptcy, and the most hurtful thing, from his point of view, was that he had to seek employment.

Our father informed us that he was losing his business and we would have to move to St Georges so that he could find a job. We said: 'But Daddy, why are we going to Town? We're happy here.'

It was really quite a crisis in my family because in Gouyave we were very comfortable by the standards of those days. We had a large house. We had electricity, which very few people had. We had hot water, hot showers and all the rest of it.

It so happened that the owner of the largest pharmacy in St Georges, Mr Mitchell, had just died, so his wife asked my father

whether he would come and work with her as the pharmacist. He accepted the offer and accordingly, in 1939, an unhappy family moved to the capital city of St Georges, which then had a population of about 5,000, representing about a quarter of the total population of Grenada.

What a change from our large roomy home! We felt cramped. I had to share a room with my brother for the first time, and then the five children of my maternal aunts also moved in with us about that same time. Three of our cousins – Eugene, Clifford and Tracy Murray – had recently been orphaned, and the other two stayed because they were the children of my aunt, who was a single mother. My mother was extraordinary: her biological children could never detect that she had any preference for them. She was warm, caring, magnanimous and imbued with strong Christian beliefs.

My father stayed at Mitchell's Pharmacy for the early war years, but he was anxious to return to self-employment. The opportunity presented itself because of the critical shortage of imported products during the war. He started up his own business again and experienced a short period of relative prosperity as there was a high level of demand in the mid to late 1940s for locally produced pharmaceuticals that had previously been imported from outside sources, principally from Canada.

However, shortly after the end of the war, the British government decided on a liberalization effort as a way of compensating Canada for its exceptional support during the war. It focused on traditional products from Canada to the West Indies, of which pharmaceutical products were one of the principal items. The immediate implication of this was that the import substitutes that my father had been producing were unable to compete with the flood of products from Canada. Within a comparatively short space of time my father's business once again began to fail because of external forces over which he had no control. Accordingly, from the late 1940s until his untimely death in 1952, my father had to contend with an extremely small business based on producing a greatly reduced range of products.

When I reflect on those things today, the person most affected was my father, who became very withdrawn. He really had very

little to do with us. He showed parental interest in the things that mattered, like our schoolwork, but the personal empathy was very limited, except that he took me with him to the cinema every Sunday night, in the days when people dressed to go to the cinema. Occasionally, he also took me to the races with him. I think he was overwhelmed by the number of children and just could not cope with it.

In the relatively cramped accommodations that were available, he kept reassuring the four of us that he was going to find somewhere better for us to live. His first shot at it was not very successful. He moved us to another house that was no better than the house in which we were living at the time. In a certain sense it was worse, because it was on the fringe of what was then a lower-income area. On the fringe, but still we sensed that there was a change in our quality of life, and subsequently my mother went looking and found a very nice house to rent, which we moved into and stayed there for most of my youth until just before my father died.

It was during my Sunday afternoon outings with my father to the Empire Theatre that I became aware of how different the living conditions in the Caribbean were from those that I saw represented in the movies as the standards of living principally in the United States and Europe. I became acutely aware that for the majority of people life in Grenada and, by extension, the Caribbean was sharply different from the standard of living enjoyed by the numerically small upper classes of the region. This sharpened my awareness of the need for economic and social change to bring about significant improvements in the standards of living of the population as a whole.

My mother was a great reader. I think most of my values were shaped by her. Even as a child, I read voraciously to the point where I had read all of the books in the children's library, and there was only one library on the island for children. They had to take a decision whether they would allow me access to the adult library. Of course, it went to the board and they were basically negative and said that adult books should be checked before I had access to them. I had some limited access after the text had been scrutinized. I was often in the library and sought books from the adult section.

When the librarian was not about, I read anything I wanted. So it did not matter anyway.

The information available to my family about my mother's ancestors indicate that they were originally from Martinique, French Antilles. I was told that her great-grandmother's family name was 'Chateau', and that her family had received a grant of land from Napoleon when he visited Grenada with his French Antillean wife, Josephine. My great-grandmother bequeathed most of her land and other assets to members of her family, including my grandmother, and the family lived on the produce of their land, principally nutmegs, cocoa and vegetables.

She married my grandfather, 'Tommy' Robertson, and he lived on her assets all his life. He was regarded as a kind of unofficial mayor of the little village of Birchgrove. My mother used to joke that as the first automobile arrived in the village, her father went out with loudspeakers and said: 'I have just been informed by telephone that an automobile is on its way to Birchgrove. All children indoors. All adults on the side of the road.'

I remember my grandfather very well. He also was a great reader. Whenever he came to see us, he always questioned us on things like the rules of syntax and how to spell various words. He was a gentleman. At 83, he decided to remarry, which my mother and the rest of his family considered to be unusual and teased him accordingly.

On becoming a student of economics

My first school was an Anglican primary school in Gouyave. Mr Miller, the headmaster, had the equivalent of a private class within the class to which all boys of our age belonged. The smaller group was essentially middle-class children like my brother and myself. We were attracted to the larger group where the boys seemed to be having a lot of fun. Accordingly, the other boys and myself in our smaller group spent a lot of time in the larger class because of the sporting and other relationships that we built up.

By the time we moved to St Georges, my brother Dunbar and I were able to settle easily into the primary school run by the

Methodists – the St George’s Methodist School. I was eight years old at the time.

The headmaster, Mr Samuel Graham, showed an interest in me straight away. He took me under his wing and began special classes for me in Latin, Mathematics and French. Mr Graham was really responsible for laying my educational foundation because he dealt with me personally. Every Thursday I had to go to his home where he gave me special classes. He said: ‘You must now sit the entrance exam to get into the grammar school’, which was then the only boys’ secondary school on the island. When I was nine, he made me sit this exam. Normally, you sat at eleven and then went on to the grammar school. I sat it and my father became very worried because he heard that I was doing very well and might in fact get into the school immediately. He disagreed initially, saying that I was too young to be in a class with much older boys. Mr Graham responded by saying he would keep me for a year to do more mathematics, which would give me advanced standing when I went to the secondary school, which they did. When I eventually went to the Grenada Boys Secondary School (GBSS), I was placed in the advanced form of 3A as against the entry level form of 1.

As for my relationship with Mr Graham, he stayed in touch with me for several years. In the meantime, however, he himself changed profession; unknown to most people in Grenada, he had been quietly studying law. Eventually he went off to London to ‘eat his dinners’ at one of the Inns of Court and returned to Grenada as a qualified barrister. Subsequently, he entered the government legal service and began a career progression in law that eventually ended with his becoming the Chief Justice of the Windward Islands and Sir Samuel Graham, knighted by the Queen. Altogether, Sir Samuel had a distinguished career, also serving for a time in a legal capacity in Belize.

Here I was then at the GBSS. The big problem about it, however, was that I was the youngest child in the class and they all thought of me as a little boy, a bit of a nuisance. What was worse, I was coming first in the class, which did not endear me to my colleagues at all. So I found myself in Form 3 with the big boys. They knew all sorts of things and really gave me a warm time. I was ten and they

were thirteen. But I started being tall and gangly so I sort of got into this group; my nickname became Bean, because they said my head was shaped like a bean. Actually, it was the best-looking boy who called me that because he was jealous. We were competing for the favours of a girl who said she preferred me, but he persuaded her otherwise.

Sometimes I think that I never really mixed with children of my own age. Once you get into a higher class like that, what you want to do is get into the group and so, as we moved up the school, I just moved with them. I was always the youngest among my contemporaries.

The school leaving examination in those days was the Cambridge Senior School Certificate. In the year I was due to take it I developed malaria and was at home for six months. In spite of initial resistance, however, I sat the examination and passed, not very well, but I passed and moved up to the sixth form. I was thirteen; the other boys were three years older.

I was moved up to a sixth form that in those days offered the equivalent of today's A levels (the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination, or CAPE). They were just then developing the Cambridge Higher School Certificate Programme. Some of the top schools in Trinidad offered it; in Jamaica, there were two schools, I think, that offered it then. In later years, when I told some Jamaican friends in London that I had passed it, they were surprised that Grenada had the Higher Schools Certificate at the time.

I got into the sixth form and was annoyed that they did not make me a prefect. I was forgetting that I was only thirteen in the sixth form. I thought that since I was a fully fledged sixth former and quite responsible, I should be made a prefect. The headmaster squashed my dreams, saying: 'How can we make you a prefect? You're just thirteen. For goodness sake! Who would listen to you?'

I said 'Is that so, sir?' And you know what? I decided that I had had enough of school.

Actually, when I came to the sixth form I had great difficulty in deciding which subjects I should do. I was more inclined towards the arts than the sciences. I liked mathematics and loved history very