

The same forces are at work on the magistrates' bench. It is not uncommon to find that a "work-people's representative" on supplementary benefit appeals tribunals (nominated by local trades council federations) is the "hard man" of the tribunal. Anxious to prove his impartiality to other members, he may hunt out and stress the ambiguities or uncertainties of the statements made by working class appellants. It is not surprising that, from one viewpoint, such a member seems to be there more for the purpose of windowdressing than anything else. In the eyes of many working class appellants the member may really only serve to legitimise the actions of the tribunal, as the appointing authorities well know. (Universities have learnt the trick with students' representatives.) For that reason, government departments are as eager as anyone else to extend the representativeness of judicial and quasi-judicial bodies like tribunals.

The idea of selecting members from different "sides" raises some further questions anyway. The appointing authorities turn to established organisations which are accustomed to providing candidates for public employment. The CBI and the TUC, especially, suggest many names each year for part-time appointments. It used to be the practice of the TUC to ask its member unions to suggest nominees for industrial tribunals. Individual unions differed in the way they found nominations. Sometimes the TUC circular was simply sent around the branches. This resulted in a lower rank of nominees. But it was more common for the union executive to nominate its own full-time, or retiring full-time, officials. At least three quarters of the trades council nominees on supplementary benefit tribunals, a sample survey shows, are full-time officials, or branch and district committee officials. Over the last few years, the range of organisations consulted by authorities has widened, particularly because of the growth of consumer groups. But it is still true that people active within an organisation naturally get selected by it for appointment.

This leaves the bulk of the population nowhere at all when it comes to public appointments. And it may be foolish to assume that many people would want these jobs in any case. Nevertheless, so many anomalies exist in prestige, conditions of service, and financial and other rewards that we cannot be sure about this. Since 1968, a loss-of-earnings allowance has undoubtedly encouraged more wage earners to accept appointment as magistrates. But some middle class problems about being magistrates or tribunal and committee members remain. Magistrates are required to sit for a minimum of 26 days annually, or face retirement from the bench. Many find this is more time than they can take off.

Whatever the problems of magistrates, their services are at least rewarded with considerable public prestige. The letters "JP" after the name count for something. Tribunal members and others enjoy no such prestige. Many of them say that their membership is acknowledged only by fellow-members. Some are, however, compensated financially for their services. The daily fee for professional members of rent assessment panels has recently been increased to £25, and the chairmen get £27. The qualified chairmen of mental health review tribunals (who are called presidents) get £25, too. These are perhaps not large sums in the context of a professional man's earnings. Pay would have to be increased some way yet before it became a positive inducement to professional men to accept membership of a tribunal.

Members of the consumer committees receive

only expenses. What of the lay members of tribunals? Their pay differs markedly from one tribunal to another. That, in itself, raises questions. Lay members of mental health review tribunals get £10.50 a day; lay members of industrial tribunals get £13.65; and lay members of rent assessment panels get £15. Because rent tribunals (drawn from the assessment panels, to hear appeals about furnished premises) sit frequently but have relatively few members, pay is quite high. It averaged nearly £900 per member last year. Members of supplementary benefit appeal tribunals, on the other hand, receive only expenses, unless they are chairmen (who get £9.45 for half-day sittings). The average expenses claim per member per sitting last year was a mere £1.80.

There is a strong case for rewarding lay members of tribunals at the same rate, whatever body they happen to be serving on. There may be a case for rewarding them at the going rate for their professional colleagues. But if widespread revisions of remuneration are ever made (and it is becoming more likely), it will become a bit harder to maintain the idea of a lay, unpaid magistracy, giving up some of its time to provide a necessary public service. This is not because lay magistrates (or tribunal or other committee members, for that matter) have abandoned the old notions of amateur service. On the contrary, those notions are still expressed very firmly. But existing tendencies to centralise and reorganise both magistrates' courts and tribunals can only be strengthened by any thoroughgoing revision of even part of the existing structures.

A unified tribunals service is something that is widely advocated already, even if the basis of unification is differently understood. In part, the proposition comes from those who want to rationalise the legal element in tribunals. Not all tribunals have legal members. Emerging legal groups with a radical bent argue that this is no way to protect individual rights. In pointing especially at the entirely lay supplementary benefit tribunals, they are continuing the arguments put by the Franks committee 15 years ago. Legal aid is moving a little closer to the tribunal world, with the adoption of the £25 scheme of legal advice. More and more lawyers are becoming versed in "welfare law." The day of the lay chairman is certainly numbered.

Other reformers have efficiency in mind. They argue that tribunals should have unified staffs of clerks, and should be supervised actively from the top by, say, a revitalised Council on Tribunals. This they hope, would cut costs; ensure more consistency in decision-making; and regularise procedures. The council has itself long urged reorganising tribunals into "fewer and stronger" units. But it takes a more limited view of its own future role.

If the various moves are successful, the result will be to reduce the number of tribunals, and speed common selection and appointment procedure. Advertisement of vacancies, selection boards, and generally open recruitment, will follow. This result would be similar to that proposed for the lay magistracy. It would markedly influence the whole field of public appointments. Removing the anomalies that exist between similar bodies, and reducing secrecy, naturally commands widespread support. Is it time for one central body to publicise the available openings into public service and actively to recruit people? From that, could we develop a concern for the efficiency and calibre of all members? If interested, lay people really do have a part to play, the present patchwork system makes their involvement uncertain to say the least.

# Patois, education and Jamaica

John Kirkcaldy

Last week, MPs expressed worry about communication with immigrant children. Should teachers know Patois? Here is an account of Patois' Caribbean context.

"The woman had tall hair," wrote a Jamaican school-girl in an essay I had to mark recently. This is a good example of a problem that faces Jamaica not only in education but in general life. The reason why the student wrote "tall" instead of "long" was that she was using Patois. It is a mistake to say that English is the language of Jamaica. In fact, there are three—English, English-Patois and Patois. Patois is the everyday speech of Jamaica and is a rich mixture of old and new English, Spanish, French, African and a lot else besides. Added to this already exotic combination is a considerable portion of what can only be described as Jamaican.

Every Jamaican understands Patois, and many Jamaicans use it the whole time. English is the official language of the island and is used by the mass media, politicians, schools and the aspiring middle class. There are, however, very few Jamaicans whose speech is not affected to some degree by Patois. Controversy exists as to whether Patois should be classified as a language or a dialect. It is certainly more removed from standard English than any regional usage in England. To an Englishman newly arrived in Jamaica, it may appear that the inhabitants do in fact speak a different language. But if he listens very carefully and lives here for a time, he will begin to recognise some words and to realise what is taking place.

To illustrate all the differences between English and Patois would be impossible. It is now the subject of an increasing literature (notably, the authoritative *Jamaica Talk* by Frederick G. Cassidy), and there is even an English-Jamaican dictionary. Some examples will show a few of the variations. Jamaicans when talking vary their pitch of voice more and stress their words at different syllables than a person speaking standard English. This makes for the delightful Jamaican accent, a unique combination of drawling and sing-song. Pronunciation also differs considerably. For instance, Jamaicans often drop the letter "h" from the beginning of a word and put it in where it is "not." So, "thief" becomes "tief" and "eggs" becomes "heggs." Eliza Dolittle would have had a field day in Jamaica.

The grammar of Patois, according to Cassidy, constitutes "the most striking difference" between it and English, and is perhaps the best illustration of African influence on Jamaican speech patterns. For example, nouns do not show plurality; pronouns are completely different (any teacher soon becomes familiar with the phrase, "me ne noa"); and verbs have no passive tense ("de food buy," a student told me when organising a graduation dinner). Verbs, in particular, often go astray to English ears: "You had was to bring back along de key," a nightwatchman recently informed me.

Patois vocabulary often differs very greatly from English. Some of my own favourites are "puss-boots" (tennis shoes), "hurry-come-up-quick" (nou-

veau riche) and "facety" (rude). One habit that is very Jamaican is the doubling up of words for emphasis or effect, like "fenky-fenky" (fussy) and "buffro-buffro" (clumsy). No wonder, therefore that when Jamaicans "labrish" (gossip), they are often incomprehensible to the outsider.

The use of Patois still has a stigma in Jamaica, and it is easy to understand why this has happened. Patois was the language of the slaves on the plantations. English was the tongue of the master class, and an essential thing to possess for those who aspired to social betterment. A similar pattern occurred right throughout the Caribbean. Lady Nugent, a famous Jamaican diarist and wife of an 18th century governor, describes the efforts of the brown middle classes to master English and makes a typical comment: "Many of the ladies, who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English, with an indolent drawing out of their words, that is very tiresome and disgusting."

To be able to speak and write good English is almost obligatory for self-advancement in Jamaica today. Mervyn Alleyne, in a study of the Jamaican language situation, commented: "Persons without standard English skills are doomed to almost complete and blind submission to decisions made from above." Many West Indians would go further and argue that, by creating this inferiority between the Patois of the local island and the language of the colonising power, the Caribbean denies its culture. Psychologically, they would say, a Patois-speaker thinks of himself as an inferior person. The most articulate proponent of this viewpoint was Frantz Fanon, who was born on the French island of Martinique. In his book, *Black Skin White Masks*, he states that "every colonised people—in other words, every people in whose souls an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with

## Cuss-cuss

Gwan gal yuh fava teggereg.  
Ah wey yuh gwine goh do?  
Yuh an yuh boogooyagga fren  
Dem tink me fraid o' yuh?  
Goh wey, yuh fava heng-pong-nail,  
Is me yuh fe trace?  
Me is jus de one fi teck me han  
An leggo pon yuh face.

(Go on girl you look a bitch,  
What are you going to do?  
You and your low-grade friends  
They think I am afraid of you?  
Go away, you look bedraggled,  
Are you looking for me?  
I might just lift my hand  
And hit you on the face.)  
from 'Jamaica Labrish' by Louise Bennett



John Kirkcaldy teaches at Happy Grove School, Portland, Jamaica



the language of the civilising nation."

Education and upbringing in the West Indies has tended to reinforce these feelings. Children are often taught not to use Patois and to look down on those who do. The curriculum of schools tended in the past to be orientated towards Britain and away from the West Indies. It is still possible to meet older Jamaicans who can recite long lists of English kings and can tell you all about Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, but know comparatively little of their own region. Much of this has changed. Independence and new ideas have produced a new orientation towards Jamaica and the West Indies. Many of the West Indies' new crop of writers who have emerged since the second world war (like the Naipaul brothers, George Lamming and Roger Mais), often use their native dialects to great effect. Entertainers in Jamaica, like Louise Bennett and Rany Williams, use Patois as an important part of their work. Things have changed enough for a local margarine company to sponsor a daily quarter-of-an-hour Patois comedy on the radio.

Yet this feeling of inferiority remains. I have attended a staff meeting in a Jamaican secondary school where the staff were warned to stop all use of patois in the school. It was the very same school that tried an English version of the well-known Jamaican folk song, *Dis a long time, gal, me nebber see you*. Though schoolbooks now have some pieces of Patois prose and poems in them, all students have to answer questions on them in English. Any teacher in Jamaica must have had a feeling of unease as he finished his lesson in English and listened to his pupils leaving the class speaking Patois.

A major problem in an educational reappraisal of Patois in Jamaica is that so many of the country's teachers are expatriates, particularly at the secondary level. Even given a desire to learn Patois, this makes its use as a teaching medium very difficult. Jamaica, like so many developing countries, is trying to reform its educational structure but this aspect is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. (More Jamaican teachers are an essential priority for any real advancement.) I have been in Jamaica as an English expatriate for several years and, although very interested, still on occasions have difficulty in understanding Patois. Most expatriates learn some Patois—if only for the very poor reason that it is impossible to keep any kind of order in a classroom without it; but nearly all of them think it impossible to use in teaching.

Though there are difficulties, particularly for an expatriate, I believe that Patois should have more of a place in Jamaican education. If this were done,

**Ebery man hang him bonkra wha' him han' can ketch.**  
(Every man hangs his basket where his hand can reach.)

**Sharp 'pur mek mauger harse cut capoose.**  
(Sharp spurs make a thin horse cut capers.—ie, poverty sharpens the wits.)

**Maggot use fe lib befo' darg get sore yeye.**  
(Maggots used to live before the dog got sore eyes—ie, one can go on doing as one has done hitherto.)

**Cry-cry pickney nebber hab right.**  
(Those who are always complaining are seldom listened to.)

**Me lub pickney, but me no nyam wid dem.**  
(I love children, but I do not eat with them—ie, familiarity breeds contempt.)

some Jamaican Patois proverbs

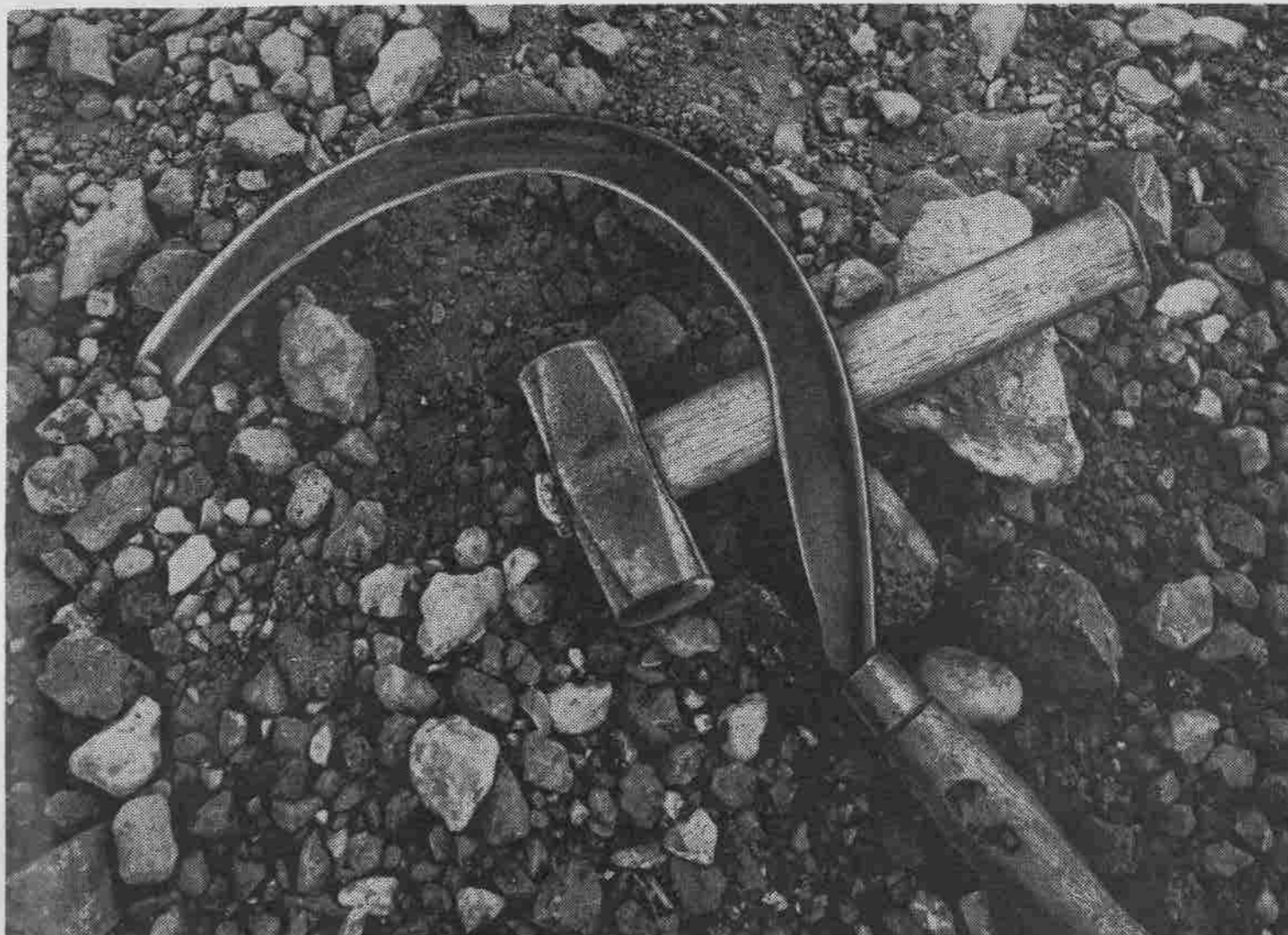
schools could help Jamaica rid herself of this cultural imbalance. I do not believe that it would be either feasible or desirable to replace English entirely by Patois. The thought of changing and re-writing all the textbooks is itself enough to prevent the idea, but Patois could complement and broaden pupils' horizons if properly handled. Teaching fifth form English, I had students write their own plays and then act or tape them. Most of their plays were in Patois, and the writing was often of a higher standard than when the student had previously written in English. I noticed that once students got confidence in their ability to put words on paper, then their writing improved in all directions. When teaching modern West Indian history, I used Louise Bennett's poems, which proved a great help. A friend of mine used calypsoes to illustrate themes of modern living for civics classes.

One of the most effective ideas I have witnessed was when pupils taped their interviews with interesting people, both parties speaking naturally. One of the best of these was an old woman describing what her grandmother had told her about being a slave. Another very good one was an old man reminiscing about Kingston, the country's capital, before it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1907. At that time, he told students, their school was nothing more than a field.

For an expatriate I found the fears of using Patois in class more imaginary than real. Once I made clear my obvious limitations, a situation was created where we could both learn. Once I had shown that I was interested, most of my students were only too anxious to explain anything that I was unable to understand. A reverse situation occurred when a fifth form read the play, *The Long, The Short and The Tall* by Willis Hall, which uses British regional dialects. A Jamaican trying to read with a Welsh accent is not to be missed but it did bring home to the class that most Englishmen do not talk like the BBC news. Some would argue that by using Patois in the classroom, one is slowing the learning process; but I find that the reverse is usually true. A teacher I know, who teaches Jamaican geography, often asks his class the Patois names of the various places that they learn about. He finds that they remember both names better.

Patois is itself in danger in Jamaica. Rising living standards, better communication, and the increased use of films, radio and television, have meant that Jamaicans are increasingly in contact with standard English. Jamaicans have also migrated all over the world, and this has had its effect on Patois. Jamaican radio recently ran a series called *The University of Brixton*, which showed how misunderstandings could develop through language difficulties between the migrants and the English. Patois is also a problem in the English school system. As the 1967 PEP report on immigrants showed, the majority of West Indians living in England are Jamaican. Any visitor to Brixton will hear both the broadest cockney and Patois being spoken. The high percentage of West Indian children in "difficult" or ESN classes may reflect the difficulty in communication. An important need is either for more Jamaican immigrant teachers or teachers who understand Patois.

But, for Jamaica, it would be nothing less than a national tragedy if the use of Patois diminished or became extinct. Nothing is quite as Jamaican as Patois, and nothing better illustrates Jamaica in all its aspects both past and present. Education must help Jamaica rid itself of this linguistic inferiority complex, and so be an example to other countries in a similar situation.



# The Quiet Revolution.

In the world's political arena these apparently innocent tools can symbolise violent and often bloody upheaval.

To us, however, they act as a practical accompaniment to a very different kind of struggle. A radical yet peaceful attack on some of the unhappy statistics of the Third World—a Quiet Revolution.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America 80,000 people die each and every day through hunger.

Oxfam's aim is to help the poorest in these countries overcome their agonising problems. To help them help themselves.

They're discovering how to grow more food, how to protect themselves against malnutrition and disease and how to acquire the basic skills their countries so urgently need.

For instance, in Africa the farmers of Upper Volta barely scratched a living from the land with hand hoes. It was heart and backbreaking work.

By buying 100 pairs of oxen we are helping them make revolutionary changes in their way of life.

In Guatemala we've helped poverty-stricken farmers increase yields of maize by up to six times

through the introduction of different agricultural methods.

These projects and many more were possible because of contributions of both time and money from people like yourself.

Anything will help.

For instance, 10p has bought a chick for a poultry farm in Africa. £1 has purchased rice seed for an acre of land in India.

Such is the nature of this revolution, one which urgently needs your support.

**OXFAM**   
Quiet Revolutionaries

Please tick the box where appropriate and send to Room 28 Oxfam, Oxford.

I would like to know how I can help Oxfam in my own area.

I enclose the sum of £ \_\_\_\_\_ as my contribution to the Quiet Revolution.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_