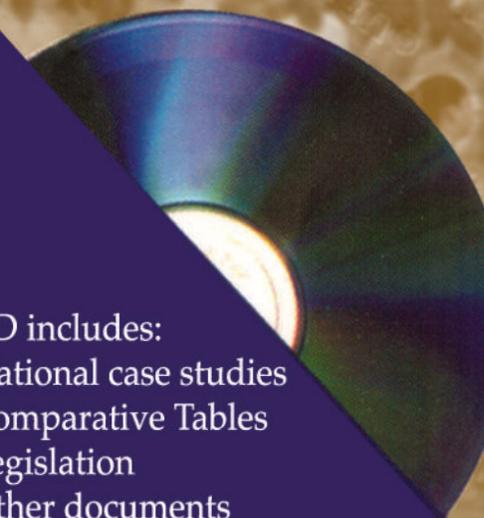


# FROM GRASSROOTS TO THE AIRWAVES

Paying for Political Parties and  
Campaigns in The Caribbean



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# FROM GRASSROOTS TO THE AIRWAVES:

## Paying for Political Parties and Campaigns in the Caribbean

OAS Inter-American Forum on Political Parties

Editors

Steven Griner  
Daniel Zovatto

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The overall objective of this study was to provide a comparative analysis of the 34 member states of the OAS, assessing not only the normative framework of political party and campaign financing, but also how legislation is actually put into practice. The specific themes addressed included Disclosure, Enforcement, Public and Private Financing, Access to the Media, and Gender. The study, to be published in three separate volumes, includes in-depth analysis of all the countries of the hemisphere.

Political leaders, academics, and civil society activists made up the team of national researchers. We believe that the diversity of these researchers provides a three-dimensional picture of political party and campaign financing, albeit at the risk of incorporating some personal opinion. Every effort has been made to provide a balanced, yet nuanced, view of this topic. Given the fluidity of political party reform in the region, some information may already be out of date upon publication of this report, an inherent hazard in a complex project such as this.

Numerous Caribbean experts contributed their time, expertise and knowledge of political parties in the Caribbean. First and foremost, we would like to thank Professor Selwyn Ryan of the University of the West Indies and Mr. Doug Payne for drafting the thematic chapters of this report. Professor Clyde Wilcox of Georgetown University reviewed each national report and thematic chapter and provided invaluable insights for this study.

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# Disclosure and Enforcement of Political Party and Campaign Financing in the CARICOM States

*Selwyn Ryan*

## I. Introduction

Elections in CARICOM States are privately funded. The system thus tends to favour established parties and incumbents with existing state control and/or established support amongst local and expatriate business communities. Caps on spending by candidates are absent or extremely low and are rarely respected. There is no ceiling on the funding parties can raise or spend and, with few exceptions, donors are not obliged to declare what they give, nor are parties obliged to declare what they receive. Most donors insist on confidentiality, in part because they fear that disclosure would invite victimization or charges of partiality.

Elections now cost a great deal. Most of the expenditure is on television, radio and newspaper advertisements; transportation to rallies; food and drink; and gifts or cash for voters. Funds are channelled to parties or individual candidates in cash donations or in kind. Many firms contribute to all legitimate parties, but have their preferred candidates or party. In recent years, financing has become more concentrated, a few individuals and firms contributing a disproportionate share of campaign funds.

Public attention has focussed on the issue of party financing in the last five years in some countries, but thus far there has been no sustained public demand for reform. Everywhere in the Caribbean, there is majority opposition to the public funding of political parties, largely because of the mistrust with which voters view politicians and parties and their unwillingness to burden the Treasury with the cost of maintaining them, whether during election campaigns or throughout the year.

## II. Disclosure, Accountability, and Enforcement

In countries where the law requires it, candidates, their agents, or parties file expenditure reports, which are published in the media. Little attention, however, is paid to these reports since most agree they do not reflect the realities of electoral spending. In general, in Caribbean States:

- Most campaign and day-to-day funding goes to the dominant parties. The fact that some of these parties are ethnically based and the prevalence of the first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system make it difficult for third parties to attract electoral support and concomitant funding. However, the example of the Trinidad and Tobago elections of 1986, which were won by a new coalition, suggests that where newer parties are capable of generating electoral support, funding is achievable. In Suriname and Guyana, the fact that elections are fought on the basis of proportional representation (PR) enables small parties to obtain more funding than is available in states operating a FPTP system.
- Election costs have increased significantly, especially in the last ten years. Everywhere in the region, elections have become more closely fought and campaigning methods increasingly “high-tech”. This has highlighted the political importance of financial resources and that of wealthy donors, both on-shore and offshore; it has tended to marginalise reform-oriented parties.
- Incumbents have a decided advantage in election campaigns because they have privileged access to financing in kind from firms in the state sector and those that depend on state contracts to ensure viability or increase profitability.
- There are no laws limiting institutional propaganda by the state or government during elections. As noted in chapter two of this report, however, the media are free and open to all parties able to pay for publicity.
- Disclosure levels are extremely low, often merely formal, and reports filed are widely disregarded. Demands for reform are often heard during and just after election campaigns, but are not sustained. Such monitoring as is done by civil society groups is cosmetic and intermittent. So far as can be determined, there has never been a case of a candidate or party being charged with an election funding offence and made to pay a penalty.
- Support for public financing of elections whether in pure or hybrid form is generally weak. Voters are sceptical about giving precious public resources to parties seen as insufficiently scrupulous and transparent; most doubt the regulatory or judicial capacity of the state to ensure accountability and enforce penalties for violations.

### III. An examination of the CARICOM countries

With the exception of Haiti and Suriname, CARICOM states are all Anglophone and continuing members of the British Commonwealth. Most electoral systems are based on the Westminster FPTP model. Largely due to their shared British political inheritance, campaign finance regimes in Anglophone CARICOM countries are broadly similar. The legal arrangements governing elections and election financing focus more on the activities of individual candidates than those of parties, which, in many states, lack definition as legal entities. They are codified in Representation of the People's Acts or Ordinances (RPA/RPO), which state how much candidates and their election agents are authorised to spend during an election, what they must disclose at the end of the process, and the penalties for infringements.

The country-by-country analysis that follows gives, in each case, a brief account of the party political framework, existing regulation of political financing, salient features of the current system of political financing, and impetus for change.

#### *Antigua and Barbuda*

Antigua became self-governing in 1967 and an independent state in 1981. Its population of 73,000 is mainly of African descent. Antigua's politics since 1967 have been largely dominated by the Antigua Labour Party. The ALP was defeated in 1971 by the Progressive Labour Movement, a break-away faction of the ALP. The ALP regained power in 1976 and held it until 2004 when it was ousted by the United Progressive Party. The comprehensive UPP victory (12-4) may have ended the ALP's political dominance.

There is no limit on the total amount that a party or a candidate is permitted to spend. There is also no provision for the public funding of parties, either directly or indirectly. There have been persistent allegations that money is a significant factor in electoral victory. The Commonwealth Observer Group to the General Elections in Antigua and Barbuda (1999) commented:

We understand that there are no regulations governing the limits on the amount that could be spent on campaigning by parties at either the constituency or national levels (sic), nor any method for ensuring the transparency or probity of political donations. We heard many allegations that the governing party had at its disposal considerable resources due to the active support of the foreign investors. We observed lavish spending by both parties on sophisticated campaign materials and events, which made the disparities in the resources available between the candidates all the more marked.<sup>1</sup>

The COG also noted accusations that, among other things, the governing party made use during the 1999 general elections of government funds to repair roads previously neglected; to embark on construction projects at election time, so as to provide jobs for supporters and would-be supporters; to waive import duties on cars and other equipment; and to sell government lands to young people at specially low prices. The government's response to the accusations was that "the timing of these initiatives was coincidental".

<sup>1</sup> The Commonwealth Observer Group to the General Elections in Antigua and Barbuda, Report of 9 March 1999.

To prevent possible future abuses, and in response to recommendations made by the COG, the Parliament in 2001 passed an amended Representation of the People Act that called for disclosure of contributions exceeding EC\$ 25,000 (US\$ 9,260), a prohibition of anonymous contributions exceeding EC\$ 5,000 (US\$ 1,850), authorised audits by the Elections Commission and sanctions for non-compliance.<sup>2</sup>

The revised Act stipulates that no political party shall accept monetary or other contributions exceeding five thousand dollars “unless it can identify the source of the money or other contribution to the Commission”. It is unclear whether the EC \$5,000 limit on anonymous contributions will apply to individuals or families and whether it is enforceable where political parties maintain offshore bank accounts. A sanction of EC \$2,000 (US\$740) a day pales in comparison to the potential amount of money raised in violation of the legislation and may not provide ample deterrence. Further, there is no indication as to what would trigger the sanction, or the time from which the offender would be liable to begin paying fines. It remains to be seen whether the legislation will be enforceable. Questions arising include: “will the Elections Commission have the capacity, in terms of staff and expertise, to trace funds and ensure that proper accounts are kept?” and “in the absence of judicial interpretation, who will decide what constitutes ‘any other forms of contribution’ in the Act?” The provision, though welcome, has only scratched the surface of a deep-rooted issue.

No one possesses reliable figures for election spending by either the governing party or the opposition party, nor by individuals. According to an election report published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Prime Minister Bird estimated that “the ALP was able to spend about US\$ 2 million on the campaign”. The CSIS report noted opposition estimates of ALP expenditure of US\$10 million, to finance a high-tech final rally and the mass distribution of imported hams, turkeys, and other give-aways. Even if one accepts Bird’s figure, this would mean that the ALP spent about \$30 per capita in its 1999 campaign. By comparison, in the 1996 US presidential election each party spent US\$ 60 million, or a little more than \$4 per capita.<sup>3</sup>

No one has proven that electoral contributions are derived from illegal activities, asset laundering, corruption, or drug trafficking, but many allege widespread corruption. In particular, these critics note the findings of the McIntyre Commission of Inquiry into the Medical Benefits Scheme that reveal manipulation by senior civil servants in the course of general elections in Antigua and Barbuda.<sup>4</sup>

## *The Bahamas*

The largely ethnically homogenous population of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas is around 276,000, stretched over several islands. It achieved independence in 1973, under the leadership of the Progressive Liberal Party, which governed from 1967 to 1992, when

<sup>2</sup> Antigua and Barbuda Official Gazette, Report of the Commonwealth Team, 6 May 1999. The list included five basic points: 1) every political party shall keep an account book into which shall be recorded monetary and in-kind contributions and donor name and information; 2) no political party shall accept contributions exceeding five thousand dollars unless it can identify the source; 3) every political party procuring the election of a candidate shall file a report of the contributions made by individuals and entities; 4) Every political party shall grant access to examine the records; and 5) the Commission shall impose a penalty of two thousand dollars a day for failing to comply with this section.

<sup>3</sup> Centre for Strategic and International Studies, “Elections in Antigua and Barbuda”, vol. X, no. 4.

<sup>4</sup> McIntyre Commission of Inquiry into the Medical Benefits Scheme.

it was ousted by the Free National Movement. The FNM was dislodged in 2002. The Bahamas is in effect a two-party state, as no other party has won a seat in Parliament since independence.

The principal piece of legislation governing general elections in The Bahamas is the Parliamentary Elections Act of 1992. This act contains no provisions covering campaign contributions and no other act authorises public funds for campaigns or political parties. The Parliamentary Act does prohibit “corrupt practices, bribery at elections, treating and exercise of undue influence with regard to voters’ preferences”. While not specifically covering elections, the Public Disclosure Act of 1977 ostensibly entails a modicum of disclosure and accountability regarding access to the media for candidates of the Lower House and the Senate and other non-elected public officials. The enforcement of these laws has been characterised as “problematic”, as there have been no recorded cases of prosecutions.

The financing of political campaigns in The Bahamas is considered an entirely private affair between party candidates and their contributors. No information or data exists to indicate that the practice of soliciting and receiving contributions affects the result of the elections. However, it may be surmised that, as in other countries of the Caribbean, although money does not ensure victory, lack of money will almost always ensure defeat. The demographic dispersion of The Bahamas makes elections particularly expensive, according to party leaders. The chairmen of the principal political parties in The Bahamas, the Progressive Liberal Party and the Free National Movement, estimate that campaign expenses in the general election of May 2002 totalled B\$ 5million (US\$ 5million) for each party. An example of some campaign costings provided by these party chairmen included rallies with professional musicians, fireworks and lighting whose total cost could exceed B\$ 60,000 (US\$ 60,000). Each party held approximately six such rallies during the last campaign period.

There is no reliable evidence to indicate that contributions to political parties come from illicit sources or activities, but those interviewed did not rule out this possibility.

## *Barbados*

Barbados gained full independence on November 30, 1966 under the leadership of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). Like other Caribbean nations, its population of 278,000 is largely of African descent. Politically Barbados has been a stable parliamentary democracy with the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and the DLP alternating in government since independence.

There are no substantive regulations on political party financing in Barbados. However, under the Parliament (Administration) Act 1989 (CAP. 10), parliament provides an annual subvention of BDS 300,000 (US\$ 148515), which is shared among the political parties that have a parliamentary presence. In addition, each constituency is entitled to an office and a stipend of BD \$750 (US\$ 370) as well as the provision of a constituency assistant accorded to each MP under Section 10 of the Parliamentary (Administration) Act.

Interviews with senior executive officials of the opposition DLP and the ruling BLP reveal contrasting fortunes and levels of capacity to attract party financing. However, neither representative of the two parties interviewed was willing to provide quantitative details regarding specific sources of finance outside that provided through parliament.

DLP officials disclosed that its major sources of funding include:

- The collection of party membership dues and donations, which constitute approximately five percent of total dues (the collection process being “rather inefficient”).
- Donations from various representatives of corporate Barbados and well-wishers. Such corporate donations are mostly forthcoming only during election periods.
- Corporate sponsors may pay for services on behalf of the political party, but this is also an infrequent luxury.
- The party also raises funding via commercial endeavors, predominantly through fundraising ventures at the party’s headquarters.

Discussions with a senior member of the BLP executive revealed the many financial advantages that may accrue to a ruling party with a large parliamentary presence. This is the case since, apart from monies granted to the party by parliament, a party is also able to obtain revenue from the tax-deductible contributions of MPs. Furthermore, Ministers of Government, most notably the Prime Minister are most capable of attracting funding. Such contributions are augmented by the comparatively greater corporate donations that are disbursed to the ruling party.

Funds allocated to the political parties by parliament are used predominantly to cover basic, day-to-day expenses such as the issuing of wages to party officials and clerical staff and payment of utilities expenses and general maintenance of party headquarters.

Campaign financing is largely unregulated and amounts and sources are generally shrouded in secrecy. The BLP cites its election party finances as having been largely obtained from “party well-wishers”, and monies raised by its MPS. Both BLP and DLP cited advertising as their single largest campaign cost, absorbing up 60-70 percent of party resources. No figure was given for the cost of an adequate election campaign, but BDS 1 million (US\$ 495050) was reported to be grossly inadequate to run a successful election campaign.

The only legal requirement of political parties relative to the election campaign is that under the Representation of the People Act CAP. 12 for election agents to make a statement of all payments made by the election agent regarding a candidate, together with all bills and receipts incurred by the candidate; the Act provides for no regulatory scrutiny and, according to the DLP senior official, while a report is sent to the Management Commission of Parliament after an election, this report is not audited. Parties frequently do not themselves maintain records of donations and prevailing habits discourage even intra-party financial disclosure.

The two main parties in their party manifestos for the May 2003 elections, as part of their Better Government disclosures, suggested that legislation be tabled regarding integrity and transparency in all forms of governance and public life. In June 2003, days after the general elections, a Joint Committee of Public Accounts was established by the Barbadian parliament whose main duty is to examine audited financial statements of government authorities. Any person found guilty of an offence is liable to a BDS 25,000 (US\$ 12375) fine or to imprisonment for a term of two years, or both. The Committee in its statute makes no remark regarding the transparency of campaign financing.

## *Belize*

Belize, with a population of 256,000, achieved its independence under the Peoples United Party (PUP), in 1981. Its most recent election, held in 2003, was won by the PUP, which took 26 of the 29 seats. The opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) won power in 1984 and 1993.

While political parties in Belize are internally well-organised there are no external or legal regulations. Political parties are not legally required to be registered entities or to adhere to any regulations. Campaign financing legislation simply does not exist.

Since 1998, campaigns have become more sophisticated and better organised, particularly general election campaigns. As a result, the cost of conducting an election, usually over a 30-day period, has spiralled. Assad Shoman, former Minister of Government, wrote recently that, where running a campaign in a constituency once cost approximately BZ\$ 50,000 (US \$25,000) and conducting a national campaign cost about BZ\$ 900,000 (US \$450,000), today constituencies easily require “hundreds of thousands of dollars each to run a campaign, and each Party spends millions of dollars nationally in the campaign.”<sup>5</sup> A representative from the opposition party confirmed Mr Shoman’s estimate. However, mounting a campaign in some constituencies costs substantially more than in others. Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing exactly how much money was spent on any given election.

Campaign contributions for both major political parties largely come from business establishments. “It is an open secret that individuals, business firms and other organisations make overt and covert contributions to political parties. However, this business of contributing to political parties is so far taboo. It cannot be discussed openly but we know it happens and in some quarters in a big way.”<sup>6</sup> The base of significant contributors is comparatively small (a few businesses and perhaps a score of private donors) and concentrated among the economic elite.

In Belize large donors make contributions to the political party, which in turn distributes that money amongst its candidates. While individual candidates may raise money independently for their own campaigns, such amounts are insignificant compared with the large donations received and distributed by the central powers within the party. In this distribution, women candidates are often slighted. The lack of financial resources available to women running for office was consistently cited as a reason why women were absent from political leadership.<sup>7</sup> There is currently one woman serving in the Legislature as an Area Representative.

The lack of legislation to regulate and monitor campaign contributions means that there are no hard data to indicate the real origin of monies used to finance campaigns in Belize. Many suspect that contributions are derived from illegal activities such as money laundering, corruption, and drug trafficking, but there is no concrete evidence to support these allegations.

No public information is available on the amounts spent by candidates, parties and other players in any election campaign. It is likewise impossible to determine the amount and relative proportion of contributions received in cash and kind. Political parties are under no legal obligation to release information on internal financial operations.

<sup>5</sup> Assad Shoman, “No Revolution, No Reform”, *Amandala* 13 July 2003, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> I. E. Sanchez, “Our Political Contract: Amendments and Additions”, *Second Annual Studies on Belize Conference: SPEAR Reports 4* (Belize City: SPEAR, 1990), p. 67-8.

<sup>7</sup> Adele Catzim and Michael Rosberg, *Women in Politics: Seeking Opportunities for Leadership* (Belize City: National Women’s Commission, 2001), p. 69.

The issue of campaign financing, and the need for regulating legislation has received greater attention due to the political consciousness raised by the political reform process of the 1990s. The Political Reform Commission, which was comprised of representatives from both major political parties and various civil society organizations, deliberated on the issue of campaign finance reform. That deliberation reflected concerns about this issue expressed by people during the Commission's countrywide consultations. In its report the Commission noted that "campaign finance reform was a popular theme throughout the public consultations and several calls were made to the Commission to develop recommendations to regulate campaign contributions to political parties and political candidates."<sup>8</sup>

Despite this, political will has been lacking. In 1998 the PUP in its manifesto committed itself to enacting campaign-financing legislation "to ensure disclosure of financial contributions to political parties and candidates and to limit campaign expenditure."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, parliament has yet to pass any meaningful political party or campaign legislation. In the 2003 election, neither major political party committed itself to enacting campaign-financing legislation. The UDP did pledge to create a committee "to set and monitor standards for political campaigns to limit the influence of money in deciding the outcome of elections."<sup>10</sup> The major political parties have recognised the saliency of the issue of campaign financing with the electorate, but the status quo remains entrenched. With the high cost of running a campaign, the inability to access the media for free, the absence of public or joint financing systems, and the financial dominance of the two major parties, third parties and independent candidates have found it virtually impossible to mount credible campaigns, much less win an election or even a single seat.

## *Dominica*

Dominica, with a population of some 72,000 people, became independent in 1978. It is the least economically developed Anglophone CARICOM state. Competitive party elections first took place in 1957 when the Dominica Labour Party competed with the Peoples' National Movement. Neither party won and factional politics dominated until 1961, when the DLP won seven of the eleven seats then available. The DLP again won power in 1966 and held office until 1979, when it was replaced by the Dominica Freedom Party, which remained in power until 1995, when it gave way to the United Workers Party. Politics in Dominica has been factional and coalition arrangements are often negotiated to sustain governments when no party wins a majority of the 21 seats into which the legislature is divided.

Regulation of political parties and campaign financing is not currently practised in the Commonwealth of Dominica. No legislation exists to limit campaign expenses, require disclosure of funding sources, promote equitable visibility among candidates, increase the candidacy of women, or provide for the collection of data for policy interventions. Neither the Electoral Commission nor the Integrity in Public Office Act treats with disclosure of campaign financing and levels of expenditure. Disclosure is not a live political issue; debate on disclosure had never been initiated as part of an election campaign previous to 2000, and

<sup>8</sup> *Political Reform Commission, Final Report (Belmopan: Government Printer, January 2000)*, p. 114.

<sup>9</sup> *Manifesto of the People's United Party. Set Belize Free: Strike (Belize City: PUP, 1998)*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Manifesto of the United Democratic Party, Agenda 2003 (Belize City: UDP, 2003)*, p. 28.

did not extend beyond the campaign period. Respondents rejected the idea of public funds contributing to the viability of parties or campaigns, citing as reasons state poverty and the propensity for such a system to lead to corruption.<sup>11</sup> A government official assessed that, in a small polity like Dominica, regulations for resource distribution and prohibitions and limits on financing would present a burden on the state due to its lack of resources and capacity to ensure compliance and enforcement. The state “would be creating a minefield of abuses that would make a mockery of the policy”.

Corruption is a perennial topic for sensationalising political campaigns but not an allegation spurring any serious investigation. Illegal money is not suspected to be a source of campaign financing and the notion of legislation to monitor a party’s finances has failed to capture public interest. Such laws as exist pertain to the powers and duties of the Elections Office in effecting free and fair elections.

The system as it stands — in which no public funds are contributed to party upkeep — insulates the population from excessive opportunism: parties are not formed due to ease of access to public monies, state guarantees of resources, or any other privileges that impinge on the public purse. Each party bears its full opportunity cost. General and by-elections have always been called when constitutionally due and the phenomena of early or spot general elections have not ruffled political order in the country; surprises are few. Plans for financing the next campaign therefore begin as soon as election results are officially declared — parties being confident of their funding sources and in-kind assistance from their supporters.

Escalating costs associated with the new media dimension of campaigns<sup>12</sup> provoked a former candidate’s observation that, while money is easily spent during an election campaign, governments routinely struggle for two years thereafter to stabilise the economy. One party official, however, argued that setting limits on party financing and electoral campaigning could open up the possibility of external agents buying out an election: “A wealthy source could simply hijack a party”. Speculation about “hijack” may be associated with resource limitations for maintaining party vigour between elections. Money is simply not available for stimulating party activities such as membership drives, members’ education, branch organisation, and leadership training. Financing campaigns has become harder due to rising costs and the poor performance of the economy since the early 1990s.

The ratio of candidate expenditure to party expenditure is not direct. The party’s contribution to each candidate varies and depends on its assessment of what is required in each constituency. Additionally, individual candidates are expected to raise as much funding as they can. The aggregate total expenditure for all candidates thus exceeds the party total.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Pat Emmanuel, *Caricom Perspective*— January-June 1992.

<sup>12</sup> All parties agree that media campaigning is now their second highest electoral expense after transportation costs. See chapter two, p.7.

### Estimated Costs of Political Financing: Dominica

Year	Units	United Workers Party	United Workers Party	Dominica Labour Party	Dominica Labour Party	Freedom Party	Freedom Party
		US\$	ECS	US\$	ECS	US\$	ECS
1990	Candidate	18,726.59	50,000	37,453.18	100,000	74,906.37	200,000
	Party	561,797.75	1,500,000	224,719.10	600,000	337,531.84	1,000,000
1995	Candidate	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000
	Party	561,797.75	1,500,000	337,531.84	1,000,000	337,531.84	1,000,000
2000	Candidate	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000	18,726.59	50,000
	Party	1,123,595.50	3,000,000	561,797.75	1,500,000	224,719.10	600,000

Compiled by Cecilia Babb from estimated costs shared by informants. The researcher did not have access to party documentation.

The Dominica Labour Party, the oldest party, has a culture of individual candidates raising most of their campaign funds while the Party takes a loan from any commercial bank to cover basic budget lines. The campaign loan is usually guaranteed more on the personal standing of the party leader than the Council and is repaid from proceeds of diverse fund-raising efforts by the party up to the time of the next election.

Media sources hold that the quantum of campaign expenditure bears little resemblance to party results at the polls. The governing party may be thought to have an advantage in having access to and control of state resources, yet parties have been voted out of office. The Dominica United Workers Party was edged out of a second term in 2000 despite mounting what is considered the most lavish election campaign ever seen in Dominica.

The culture of privacy, reinforced by the absence of requirements for public disclosure, predisposes political parties to guard their financing information against the eventuality of it being made available to other parties. This precaution goes as far as not reporting to party branches, as changes in party membership may mean that information becomes public. Party officials and known contributors in the private sector were suspicious of the attempt to quantify the cost of an election and sought to keep this information private. The media was equally cautious about divulging information as to what a particular party had spent on advertising. Without access to records for comparing sources and destination of resources it is not possible to determine campaign costs accurately or conclusively.

Party informants and donors attested that the private sector tends to support all parties, apportioning larger donations to the party assessed as most likely to win. A private sector contributor to campaign financing did not find disclosure laws desirable. He was sure that they would effectively reduce private sector donations, donors being accustomed to a culture of privacy, but judged them unlikely to affect the in-kind assistance of the British Labour Party and the International Democrats Union, to which local parties are affiliated. These organisations provide flyers, streamers, publish manifestos and other printed matter to support the campaign of their affiliates. Their contributions are publicised via display of their logos alongside that of the party they assist. Dominicans resident abroad are members of these organisations and are often the lobby and conduit for such assistance.

## *Grenada*

Grenada's population of 102,000 is ethnically homogeneous and mainly of African descent. Several parties and mini parties have appeared on the Grenadian landscape, the most significant being the Grenadian National Party, the Grenada United Labour Party, the National Democratic Congress, the New Jewel Movement, the National Democratic Party, the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement, the Grenada Democratic Movement, and the New National Party. Alternations have been frequent and coalitions have often been necessary to enable governments to be formed. Grenada is the one country in the Anglophone Caribbean where a government has been overthrown first by revolution and subsequently as a result of military intervention by an external power.

The present political party and campaign financing regime in Grenada is private and characterized by an absence of any regulations or restrictions on the amount parties can raise or spend for electoral purposes. No new proposals are currently contemplated. There is no government funding, direct or indirect, and political parties and candidates are expected to raise their own campaign funds, which they do both locally and internationally from groups, individuals, and the private sector. Interviews suggested that the current system was perceived to create equitable conditions for candidates to the extent that they were free in open competition to raise and spend as much funding as they wished. However, these conditions also privilege parties and individuals with wider and more affluent support bases. Some interviewees hinted that money might also influence voters' choices.

Costs associated with political and electoral activities appear to have escalated significantly during the past ten to fifteen years, but no exact figures are available. There was some speculation by respondents that contributions from illegal sources do find their way into the Grenadian electoral system. However, no firm evidence was advanced. Information is inadequate to make any definitive statement regarding the impact of the type of financing used on the party system in particular and the political system in general. Estimating the cost of an election is virtually impossible as there is no obligation for parties or candidates to disclose such information and respondents were reluctant to divulge it.

The issue of political financing has never been a subject on the agenda of the government, the Parliament, or the political parties. Research uncovered only one pronouncement dealing with the disclosure of assets prior to an election and at the completion of a term in office. Few articles address the matter and it has not generated significant public concern. There is some support for legislation or regulation to govern political party campaign financing in Grenada, but views vary from individual to individual and organization to organization. There is also support for some form of indirect government funding, with appropriate conditions set for access to such funding, limiting its extent and the purposes for which it should be used. In interviews the ideas of limitations on expenditure by political parties and candidates; access to the media for campaign purposes; and public disclosure of political financing were positively received.

## *Guyana*

The republic of Guyana is situated on the northern coast of South America. Its population of approximately 750,000 is ethnically heterogeneous. Forty-eight percent and thirty-three percent respectively are of Indian and African provenance, while twelve percent are of mixed ethnicities. The remainder is of Amerindian, European, and Chinese descent. Guyana's two main political parties are the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), which represents the Indo-Guyanese population, and the Peoples National Congress (PNC), whose main caucus is the Afro-Guyanese population. A third small party, The United Force (TUF), represents the European, Amerindian, and some of the mixed elements. Another small party, the Working Peoples Alliance (WPA) draws most of its support from middle class intellectuals and dissident groups that have broken away from the ethnically-based mass parties.

Guyana achieved its political independence in 1966 under a coalition which, in 1964, brought together the Afro-dominated Peoples National Congress and The United Force. The PNC remained in office for twenty-eight years until 1992, when power was captured by the Indo-Caribbean dominated PPP. Given the ethnic balance, the PR electoral system, and the ethnic nature of political competition, the PPP is expected to remain in power unless power-sharing arrangements are put in place.

The laws relevant to the financing of political party campaigns are contained in Guyana's Representation of the People Act.<sup>13</sup> Article 120(1)-(5), amended in 1990, is the sole legal arrangement in place for disclosure of election expenses incurred by parties during a national election. Disclosures of donors and other sources of funding are required to be submitted by party agents on behalf of a political party to the Chief Elections Officer. These regulations are rarely if ever adhered to or enforced by the authorising officer. One possible reason could be that the legal limits on campaign financing are inadequate for current party needs. Many also attribute nonenforcement to the fact that the government electoral body is comprised of representatives of the major political players on a proportionality basis.

According to the law, elections expense returns should be submitted, accompanied by a declaration, not later than the 35<sup>th</sup> day after the declaration of the results of elections. Few participants are even aware of this requirement. Since there are no "disclosure of information" laws in Guyana and successive governments have exercised tight control over information, public access to information usually presents great difficulties.

Article 121 of the Act stipulates that the Chief Elections Officer should, as soon as possible after the receipt of each election expenses return and accompanied documents, arrange for a summary of these to be published in the official Gazette. Notice of the date, time and place of their availability for inspection by the public should also be published. For two years returns should be available for inspection, upon the payment of a small fee. Claimants have fourteen days after publication of the elections results to send their claims to candidates and/or party elections agents for outstanding campaign expenses. Yet there are no penalties for not adhering to the regulations and Section 122(1) even provides for the possibility of authorised excuses for failure to submit a return and declaration.

<sup>13</sup> Laws of Guyana, Representation of the People Act Cap 1:03, Part XIII titled "Election Expenses," Clauses 115(1)-121(2).

Since 1990, when laws pertaining to electoral expenses were revised,<sup>14</sup> parties' financial expenses have grown. Empirical evidence suggests that the limits contained in the revised 1990 elections expense laws are unrealistic given current economic realities. At the time the law was revised, the Guyana dollar was valued officially at G\$ 45:00 to US\$ 1:00. It has since been significantly devalued, trading at G\$ 200.00 to US\$ 1:00. There has been little debate about raising limits on electoral expenses to reflect this shift. The context of Guyana's low per capita GDP (approx. US\$ 800) makes exponential increases in party and electoral spending difficult to explain.

All political parties' working capital and campaign funds are raised privately. Private contributions to political parties usually take the form of monetary and other donations such as vehicles, computers, printing of manifestos and flyers, meals for campaign staff, etc. that vary in amount depending on the projected electoral fortunes of the party. In-kind donations may cover expenses such as travelling by air, river, land and paying wages of campaign workers. There are few formal restraints on the utilisation of state resources, machinery, and state-controlled print and electronic media for campaign purposes.

The major political parties do not reveal their campaign costs, but information informally provided suggests that amounts are in the region of US\$ 1-2 million with the incumbent having a considerable edge. Small parliamentary parties like GAP-WPA secured sums between US\$ 500 and US\$ 10,000 from transnational firms registered in the United States for the last national elections held in March 2001. Excessive expenditure attracts greater public attention than the source of the funds. Concern has been expressed about the vast sums expended on the electronic media campaign advertisements and on large rallies, at which thousands are entertained by popular singers, big bands, and dancers and given food and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

There is no evidence of corruption in relation to the general violation of the regulations; rather, the system does not realistically lend itself to being observed because of the structural flaws inherent in a conflict-of-interest situation. There are no incentives to adhere to the regulations. Indeed there are disincentives to do so, since such submissions could possibly be used to target and victimize party donors by the party that possesses a monopoly on state power. Such occurrences routinely take place against minority interest groups in the winner-take-all political system in force in the country.

The issue of political party and campaign financing is fleetingly addressed around the time of national elections, mainly by small political parties subject to the disadvantages the system spawns. From independence to 1992 Guyana had a history of flawed elections; reform initiatives have generally focused on ensuring free elections rather than issues surrounding political financing.

## *Haiti*

Gaining its independence in 1804, Haiti is the second oldest Republic in the Hemisphere and the world's only nation founded through a successful slave revolt. Though it was the first independent black republic, Haiti's political history is best characterized by political turmoil

<sup>14</sup> Act 24 of 1990.

and undemocratic, dictatorial regimes, notably that of Francois Duvalier ("Papa Doc") from 1957 to 1971 and that of his son Jean-Claude Duvalier ("Baby Doc") from 1971 to 1986. For 200 years, *coup d'états* have been the norm for regime change with only seven of Haiti's thirty-seven Heads of State completing their terms. In 1990, Jean Bertrand Aristide was elected president on his commitment to bring fundamental change to the Haitian poor. A military coup in 1991 forced President Aristide into exile until 1994 when a multinational force led by the US reinstated him to power. Rene Preval succeeded Aristide in 1995. Questionable elections for parliament and later for president, in which Aristide was re-elected with minimal opposition, created a political crisis that culminated with Aristide's departure from the country on February 29, 2004. According to the OAS Electoral Observation Report, there were nineteen active political parties and some thirty political organizations in late 1999. There are however more than sixty registered political parties, with new parties being formed regularly. Haiti is currently ruled by an interim government and a provisional electoral council has been installed to supervise elections expected in 2005.

Political debate in Haiti does not focus on political party financing, but instead revolves around security and the continuing national political crisis. While the Constitution mandates the creation of a Permanent Electoral Council that ostensibly would monitor the financing of political parties, circumstances have not permitted its establishment. Since 1990, three provisional electoral councils have been constituted to organise and supervise elections that were often called on an ad hoc basis outside of the timeline mandated by the Constitution. Likewise, there is no tradition of transparency regarding the utilisation of public funds. According to noted historian Leslie J. R. Péan, the State is perceived as being the private property of those who are in power and public funds are administered accordingly.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, article 281 of the 1987 Constitution of Haiti establishes partial public financing for campaign expenses incurred by political parties. Only parties that obtain ten percent of the overall national vote and a minimum of five percent of votes cast in a department are eligible. The 1986 law that regulates the functioning of political parties does not establish any mechanism, instance, or proceeding for the implementation of this constitutional obligation and no party has ever requested the public financing mentioned in the Constitution.<sup>16</sup>

Article 27 of the law establishes a limit of 100,000 gourdes (US\$ 2,500) on private contributions to parties. The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence must authorize contributions in excess of this limit, but the latter Ministry no longer exists as the armed forces were abolished in 1994. In reality, contributors often give simultaneously to many political parties and most wish to remain anonymous for fear of political retribution. Given the high concentration of wealth in the country, the number of important contributors is very limited and contributions no doubt exceed the established limit. The Tax Code of Haiti<sup>17</sup> establishes that donations to political parties are tax deductible, but no party has ever declared a single donation nor have any citizens deducted contributions from their taxable incomes. Thus, no political party leader has declared the amount of contributions received or the identity of the contributors. Moreover, no legal norm limits the expenses of political parties during electoral campaigns and no law compels parties to declare how much they spend.

<sup>15</sup> Leslie J. R. Péan, *Économie politique de Corruption de Saint Domingue à Haiti 1781-1870* (Haiti: Éditions Mémoire, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Décret réglementant de façon rationnelle le fonctionnement des Partis Politiques.

<sup>17</sup> Articles 24.13 and 24.129.

The Electoral Law requires candidates to pay a filing fee of between 125 gourdes (US\$ 3.13) and 750 gourdes (US\$ 18.75), depending on the position being contested. If the candidate is not from a political party, the filing fee increases tenfold. Conversely, the filing fee is lowered by two thirds for women candidates representing political parties. At least thirty percent of the candidates from the political party must be women in order to receive this discount.

Candidates cover the majority of their campaign expenses. Expenses are smaller in small, rural localities where people tend to have a closer relationship to the candidates and are more likely to provide services voluntarily and where the lack of television and radio stations limits campaign expenditure to posters of the candidates and public meetings and rallies. In the large cities, campaign costs are higher. Parties print thousands of posters, purchase radio and television spots, finance small community projects (sports teams, associations and development projects) and pay (and feed) campaign workers and party pollwatchers. A particularly important campaign expense in Haiti, especially for parliamentary candidates, is transportation to mobilize voters in a country with few passable roads.

Representative Wilnet Content presented a bill in parliament to regulate the functioning of political parties. The proposal would establish a minimum of 22,000 members to create a party, instead of the current 5,000. It would require that each party pay to the General Tax Authority ten gourdes for each registered member. If the party did not participate in an election, the party registration could be revoked. If the party received more than fifteen percent of the votes, public financing would be made available.

## *Jamaica*

Jamaica, an island with a population of approximately 2.5m, achieved its independence in 1962. Its population is ethnically homogenous and its party system reflects this. Since becoming independent, Jamaica has been governed by two political parties: the Jamaica Labour Party and the Peoples National Party. The parties traditionally alternated in power after two terms, a pattern that has recently changed. The PNP returned to office in 1992 and won an unprecedented fourth term in 2002.

Jamaican's Representation of the Peoples Act requires candidates, rather than political parties, to disclose the amounts they receive or spend. Each candidate is required to account for election-related income and expenditure within six weeks of election day. There is a JS 3 million (approximately US\$ 50,000) limit on expenditure. There is no system in place, however, for inspecting or auditing candidates' returns. Expenditure limits are thus largely unenforced and disregarded. Moreover, parties do not insist that candidates obey the law. Some candidates even declare that they spent nothing, and that the party met all their expenses. Lacking juridical definition, political parties are not required to indicate funding sources or amounts spent. There are no significant requirements for distribution of resources, nor prohibitions and limits on financing. This situation contributes to a degree of inequity and unfairness of competition among parties and candidates running for office. Those with access to resources enjoy a distinct, though not necessarily decisive, electoral advantage. The financing regime facilitates undue influence by sections of the private sector, legitimate and illicit, undermines the integrity of the public procurement system, and brings the wider political system into disrepute.

There has been a significant increase in the costs associated with political and electoral activities, due mainly to a marked decline in volunteer political activism and a substantial increase in media campaign costs. There is a concentration of major donors, and recipients of significant donations are confined to the candidates and leadership of the two major parties, which have alternated in office over the past fifty years. While no one has been convicted or even charged with receiving illegal campaign contributions, many of those interviewed for this study believe that proceeds from illicit drug money find their way into election campaigns, probably through individual candidates rather than the national parties. The misappropriation of public monies for electoral purposes is not, seemingly, so widely practised as is the manipulation of public sector projects (and advertisements) for political advantage.

It is very difficult, but not impossible, to determine the cost of an election. In the absence of hard data, it is estimated that distribution in cash exceeds financing in kind. The former, in the October 2002 elections, is estimated to have cost each of the major parties approximately J\$ 360 million (more than US\$ 6 million), much of which would have been spent on media access and mass mobilisation.

### *St. Kitts and Nevis*

St. Kitts-Nevis has a population of around 50,000, mostly of African descent. There have only been two changes of government since self-government was achieved in 1957. The dominant political party in St. Vincent-Nevis was the St. Kitts-Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP), which governed between 1957 and 1980, when it was defeated by a coalition of the People's Action Movement (PAM) and the Nevis Reformation Party. The SKNLP returned to power in 1995 and has since held power. The St. Kitts-Nevis electorate is divided into eleven constituencies, eight on the island of St. Kitts and three in Nevis.

In 1995, the Commonwealth Observer Group praised the colourful and good-natured style of political campaigning in the country, but noted in its report "that in respect of the campaign there are no provisions in the law which limit financial expenditure by political parties."<sup>18</sup> The lack of provision in the matter of campaign finance stems from the fact that the existing legislation dates back as far as 1983, at which time there was no public pressure for restraints on campaign financing. The law has not been updated or amended since.

Since there is no legislative requirement for disclosure of contributions, it is impossible to quantify the amount received by the parties. The governing party has an inherent advantage over the opposition parties, since the government authorities hold the levers of power. In addition to contributions, parties receive help from distinguished visiting platform speakers from fellow Caribbean countries, Canada, or Britain. Political parties in Canada and Great Britain have provided technical assistance to parties in St. Kitts.

Because there is no legislative provision for disclosure, neither the governing party nor the Opposition publicises the nature and extent of contributions received before, during or after elections. Campaign financing in St. Kitts and Nevis is shrouded in secrecy. This is as true at a general election as it is at the Island Elections for the Nevis Administration or for a

<sup>18</sup> The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group. General Elections in St. Kitts and Nevis, July 3, 1995, p.12.

Referendum being held in Nevis concerning secession. It would therefore be a matter of speculation and sheer guesswork to try to assess the identity of contributors; whether contribution is in cash or in kind; the quantum of such contribution; or the total cost of an election.

Interviews in St. Kitts and Nevis suggested that the issue of election financing has a low profile with party members and contributors. There continues to be little community pressure for electoral reform, including provision for campaign finance constraints. Members of the public and electoral officials acknowledge that no amount of legislation will prevent finance in cash reaching both Government and Opposition Parties and their candidates. The political leader of the PAM however has been requesting electoral reform, even though the existing legislation was promulgated while his party was in office. While there does not appear to be any objection by the Government to political party or campaign-financing reform, the issue does not have high priority.

### *St. Lucia*

The island of St. Lucia, independent since 1979, has a population of approximately 152,500. Like the other states of the Eastern Caribbean, its population is ethnically homogeneous and mainly of African descent. Party politics were established in 1951, when the St. Lucia Labour Party came to power. There have since been three changes of government. In 1964 the United Workers Party captured power. The SLP regained power in 1979, ceding again to the UWP in 1982. The UWP remained in office until 1997, when it was again defeated by the SLP, which was re-elected in 2002. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, Guyana and Suriname excepted, elections are on a FPTP basis.

St. Lucia has no tradition of public funding for political candidates or political parties, nor is there any specific legislation governing the use and sourcing of political money for general party purposes or for electioneering. The only subvention by the state is connected to parliamentarians/constituency representatives, who receive an equal amount of money from the state to maintain constituency branches, a practice instituted by the St. Lucia Labour Party. Until 2003, party financing in St. Lucia practically lacked any legal control by the state. There are no prohibitions on financial contributions, whether by foreign governments, agents of governments, private individuals, or the corporate community. There are no constraints on political candidates and agents of political parties in raising and spending political money except insofar as the 1999 Money Laundering (Prevention) Acts provide some scope for the authorities to seek the cooperation of financial institutions in monitoring and detecting possible attempts to launder monies.<sup>19</sup>

The only piece of legislature relating to the need for politicians to disclose is the Integrity in Public Life Act of 2002. The Act itself does not make reference to politicians, but under Part III requires a person in public life,<sup>20</sup> including all elected and non-elected members of parliament, to file a declaration of income, assets, and liabilities at the end of every financial

<sup>19</sup> See the Money Laundering (Prevention) Act, 1999. Government of St. Lucia.

<sup>20</sup> See Integrity in Public Life Act of 2002, First Schedule (section 2) for a definition and identification of who constitutes "a person in public life".

year with the Independent Integrity Commission (the Commission is not subject to the control or direction of any person or authority).<sup>21</sup>

For the purpose of general elections both political parties organize a finance committee that is charged with the sole responsibility of raising funds explicitly for the election process. Such funds are generally kept separate from party funds. While these finance committees are partly drawn from the executive branch of the parties, and are generally kept separate from the political leader of the party, the leader is normally kept abreast of financial matters including fundraising activities, contributions, and donors, and can potentially play an important role in, for example, advising the finance committee on the desirability of accepting questionable funds.

An important element in party financing in St. Lucia is the level of party membership. Traditionally, party members contribute to the financing of the party's day-to-day operations as well as to the election campaign. However, both parties remain relatively weak; neither has well-established branches and official party membership is no higher than 2000 members. In the case of the United Workers Party, party members are expected to pay a monthly nominal fee of EC\$ 1.00 (US\$ 0.37), while the monthly contribution to the SLP is EC\$ 5.00 (US\$ 1.85). Even if contributions are paid, the sums raised cannot realistically be expected to meet the day-to-day cost of the party or an election campaign. Public office holders also contribute financially to the party's central office. The SLP receives monthly contributions from all party parliamentarians in the two-house legislature: thus all elected SLP members of the parliament as well as government-appointed senators contribute between EC\$ 150.00 - EC\$ 250.00 (US\$ 55 to US\$ 93) to the financing of the party.

However, domestic private sector sources, including offshore firms such as Corporate St. Lucia, and private individuals are the principal source of political party income. Both political parties admit that they are the beneficiaries of large sums of money from the business community in St. Lucia and that the extent of the financing depends to a large extent on the health of the economy and the perception by companies and individuals of the electoral chances of the party. Funds available to opposition political parties are generally limited, as businessmen are somewhat fearful of victimization. Many contributions are anonymous, known primarily to the finance committees of the party, and not reported to its general membership. Nonetheless, there are several individuals who are routinely acknowledged publicly and privately by social and political commentators as well as party officials. These individuals are also perceived by the general public as having tremendous political and economic influence in the country.

International agencies are also customary sources of party funds. In particular, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy provides small funding to both political parties, primarily for capacity-building purposes including training, some technical assistance, and political polls prior to elections. In addition, the United Workers Party (UWP) has source funds from the International Democrat Union, a European organization to which the party is affiliated through the Caribbean Democratic Union, an umbrella organization of right-of-centre political parties in the region. The IDU, through the CDU, provides assistance in the form of seminars for politicians and party workers on adequate preparation for campaigning.

<sup>21</sup> Integrity in Public Life, Part II, provision 8, Saint Lucia No. 4 of 2002.

These involve exchanges of information on campaign technology, fund-raising techniques, opinion polling, advertising, and campaign arrangements.

Neither party support, donor contributions, nor candidates' personal finance suffices to meet the growing expenses of mounting an effective election campaign. Both political parties admit that, given the high cost of election campaigns in particular, candidates have either mortgaged personal property or borrowed from financial institutions. It is customary for members of political parties and candidates to receive donations from private individuals, including from illicit sources, that may not be accounted for in estimated election costs. However the official position of the political parties is that drug money is not acceptable to the party, although they acknowledge that, like foreign financial support, this matter is difficult to control.<sup>22</sup>

While some deny that the size of the election war chest determines the result, the evidence strongly suggests that a party's capacity to raise funds is an important variable affecting its electoral success. This inevitably affects the ability of newer political parties to mount an effective campaign.

There is a growing tendency to de-emphasize the nightly community meeting in favour of door-to-door canvassing, advertising, television campaigning (especially the political broadcast), recruitment of North American and regional public relations firms to assist in electioneering, and huge rallies that require tremendous logistical execution, particularly in transporting large numbers of people across the island. Traditional forms of electioneering, including public election meetings and poster campaigns also remain important, particularly in rural areas. Political parties routinely depend on contributions in kind in the form of the provision of vehicles for transporting party supporters to central locations. Parties and rallies constitute an estimated twenty percent of total expenses, while media advertising accounts for between thirty and thirty-five percent.

Actual election costs are incalculable. Given the tendency for election funding to be directly channeled to candidates and to include the personal contributions made by candidates themselves, party expenditure does not reflect actual campaign costs. While some political parties claim that the 2001 elections cost their party under EC\$ 2,000,000 (US\$ 740,740), this is a very conservative estimate.

The rising cost of managing and staging an election means that candidates who had largely relied on their own resources, are now increasingly turning to their party for financial assistance. The Prime Minister regards this as an unhappy trend. Largely for this reason, some politicians are considering the desirability of some form of direct state sponsorship of the political parties. The SLP has considered the introduction of legislation to govern campaign financing, although this has not been seriously discussed at a high level.

Interviews uncovered little evidence of political will to undertake reform with respect to the financing of political parties. Neither political party is averse to some form of regulation; however, the issue is not high on party agendas, nor has it received much media attention. Political elites in St. Lucia, while recognizing the need for greater transparency, point to a number of problems that may hinder the effectiveness and desirability of disclosure laws:

<sup>22</sup> In 1997, the St. Lucia Labour Party, for instance, issued a clear statement of principle prohibiting the acceptance of monies from drug dealers.

1. The small size of the country, which may lead to victimization of donors
2. Donors' reluctance to have their names published
3. Antiquated methods of collecting political monies in St. Lucia, whether intra-party funds or from non-party contributors
4. Difficulty in regulating, given the manner in which funds are received and multiple recipients
5. The level of dependency and patronage in the community
6. The largely uncoordinated approach (in spite of finance committees) and therefore uncoordinated expenditure of the political parties and candidates.

### *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a population of approximately 112,400 persons, mainly of African descent. Party politics was established in 1954, when the Peoples' Political Party came to power. The PPP held power until 1967 when it was ousted by the St. Vincent Labour Party, which held power — with a two year interregnum — until 1984. It ceded to the National Democratic Party, which held office until 2002, when it was replaced by the Unity Labour Party. The electorate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is divided into thirteen constituencies.

Two legal instruments govern the election of candidates to the House of Assembly in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. One is the Constitution, the United Kingdom S.I. 1979, No. 916; the other is the Representation of the People Act, 1982. Neither makes provision for the formation and functioning of political parties: both set out clear regulations stating the qualification for the election of candidates to the House of Assembly in the case of the Constitution, and, in the case of the RPA, the rules governing the conduct of elections. As is the case in many Caribbean countries, political parties in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are not legal entities. Thus, they are not legally bound to disclose their funding sources. In response to questions about funding, parties from time to time have found it morally or politically expedient to provide a limited accounting. There is, however, no legal requirement or systematised process for doing so.

A few years ago, measures were introduced to allow each party in parliament to receive a monthly subvention from the Consolidated Fund. Aside from this, parties depend on contributions received from business owners and other individuals and contributions from members. Confidentiality is guarded with the highest priority at the highest level of the party rank. There are no limits upon campaign contribution at the candidate or party level.

Campaigning for elections is a very costly exercise in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the cost continues to skyrocket. Candidates and their parties are finding the prospects daunting. Most believe that the greater the amount of money available to a party and its candidate, the better their chance of winning the elections.

During the current Constitutional Review exercise, some have suggested that a revised constitution should include provisions to have political parties disclose and account for all monies they receive and spend.

## *Suriname*

Suriname, with a population of some 405,000 inhabitants, achieved its independence in 1975. Suriname has an unusually large number of political parties: there are some 40 of them on the register. The main parties are the National Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, the Reform Program Party, the Party for Revival and Democracy, the Democratic Alternative, the Social Democratic Party, the Vooruitstrevende Hervormings Partij and the Kaum Tani Persatuan Indonesia. Combinations of parties are usually formed to contest elections.

Unlike in the Anglophone Caribbean, there exists in Suriname a decree which seeks to regulate campaign financing. Enacted in 1987, the decree provides that “the governing board and in particular the Treasurer and the auditing committee should publish each year a report or balance of revenues and expenditures of the political organizations in the *Advertentieblad van de Republiek Suriname* (*Gazette of the Republic of Suriname*)” and in at least one of the Surinamese dailies. Political parties are also obliged to record this rule in their statutes.

An examination of the statements filed by political parties, especially those that entered the elections of 1996 and that of 2000, revealed that, other than in election years, political parties do not normally adhere to this disclosure obligation. For instance, during the general elections of 1996 only two parties disclosed accounts for the previous years. The parties that did not disclose were not disbarred from participating in the 1996 elections. All opposition parties in the election of 2000 disclosed their accounts. Only one of the parties that belonged to the defending government disclosed its accounts. Those parties that did not publish financial statements were not debarred from registering and participating in the elections of 2000.

One or two months before elections are held, political parties publish figures on their revenues and expenditures, although the figures disclosed are highly aggregated and provide little detail on individual contributors and the nature of the expenditures. Furthermore, political parties in Suriname do not continuously keep their books up to date. To “play catch-up” before a particular election, political parties might publish figures for four or five consecutive years in one public announcement.

One of the major reasons for the failure to comply with the spirit if not the letter of the law is the absence of any controlling mechanism or entity to which annual reports of political parties should be submitted. Likewise, there is no sanction to act as a deterrent.

## *Trinidad and Tobago*

Trinidad and Tobago is a small parliamentary republic, which gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. It has a population of some 1.3 million and an electorate of some 800,000 voters who have gone to the polls on ten occasions since independence was achieved. The year 1956 witnessed the introduction of disciplined party politics with the formation of the Peoples National Movement. There have been four electoral turnovers since independence.

Most of the laws and regulations for the financing of elections in Trinidad and Tobago are contained in the Representation of the Peoples Ordinance (RPO) which was enacted in 1961. The rules have subsequently been modified; the latest amendment was made in 2000,

but changes were minor and related mainly to the amount of money that candidates or their agents were allowed to spend. The rules dictate that candidates or their agents are legally allowed to spend only TT\$ 50,000 (approx. US\$ 8,000).<sup>23</sup>

Candidates or their agents can receive gifts and other contributions for the conduct and management of elections up to a statutory limit of TT \$5,000 (US\$ 800) for general elections. Candidates are also allowed personal expenses, not exceeding TT\$ 5,000, incurred in connection with the elections. The Ordinance prohibits the incurring of expenses through the promotion and advertisement of the candidate by persons other than the candidate, the election agent, or persons authorised by the election agent. The rules, further, require that financial claims against a candidate or his agent must be submitted within 21 days after the election result is declared, and must be paid within 35 days. Candidates or their agents must also transmit to the Chief Elections Officer a statement of all payments made, together with bills and receipts, within 21 days after the day on which the results of the election are declared.

The returns and declarations are retained by the chief officer and are open to public inspection, on payment of a fee, for a period of two years. The penalties for failure to comply or for knowingly making a false declaration are severe, though not in monetary terms. Failure to file is deemed an “illegal practice” which is punishable by a fine of TT\$ 1,5000 (US\$ 250) and imprisonment for six months. The penalty for knowingly making a false declaration, which is deemed a “corrupt practice”, is punishable by the same fine and imprisonment.

Most agree that these caps bear little relation to what candidates or parties actually spend. When the rules were first enacted, independent candidates were still the norm and party politics not yet entrenched. While there was always a plethora of parties in Trinidad and Tobago, these were small and chiefly comprised the personal followings of one or two notables. The birth of the PNM brought into being other political formations which sought to match it organisationally. By 1996, independent candidates were the exception and parties the rule. The Representation of the People’s Ordinance, however, has not been altered to recognise the existence of parties, and spending and contribution limits for them do not exist.<sup>24</sup>

In the immediate post-independence era, parties in Trinidad received financial and other kinds of support from party membership dues, union contributions, and donations from minority group merchant trading elites who were seeking to establish themselves as invisible power brokers controlling party leaders. Party supporters also did a great deal of house-to-house campaign work on a voluntary basis. As in many other countries of the Caribbean, the island-circling motorcade or the whistle-stop railway tour were essential features of the old style “rum, roti and sardine” campaigns.<sup>25</sup>

Today, political campaigns in Trinidad and Tobago are capital-intensive and market-oriented. Funds are needed to pay media elites, PR experts, spin doctors, and pollsters, many of whom are imported from the US and the UK at high costs. Campaigning is largely

<sup>23</sup> *The particular provision of the RPO reads as follows: “No sum shall be paid and no expenses shall be incurred by a candidate at an election or by his election agent on account of or in respect of the conduct or management of an election in excess of the amount of fifty thousand (TT \$50,000.00) dollars in the case of a Parliamentary Election or twenty-five thousand (TT\$25,000.00) in the case of a Municipal Council or Regional council Election.”*

<sup>24</sup> Michael Pinto-Duschinsky makes the valid point that spending limits on candidates make sense in first-past-the-post elections but not in elections where candidates are elected as part of a list. Under the list system, voting is for parties and not candidates. Political Financing in the Commonwealth, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Selwyn Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

an “air war”, fought via the media, especially newspapers, radio and television. While “ground wars” are still fought by a political infantry, that infantry is now largely a mercenary rather than a volunteer army. Many underclass voters also expect to be, and are, paid to cast their ballots. Many will not turn out to meetings or vote unless they are given a T-shirt. Party officials estimate that candidates each spend approximately TT\$ 100,000 (US\$ 16,000) instead of the TT\$ 50,000 (US\$ 8,000) that is allowed and that parties together spend approximately TT\$ 25 million (US \$4 million).

There are several ways in which funds are secured and channelled to political parties and candidates in Trinidad and Tobago.

- Social fundraisers are organised by candidates or party groups. These take the form of dinners, parties, or some other type of social activity. These build loyalty as they raise money, but the amounts earned are not substantial.
- In election years, major businesses routinely budget and allocate sums of money to all significant political parties. Much of the giving is justified as prudential practice. One wants access to whichever party wins.<sup>26</sup> The evidence indicates that the party in government is generally given more than the opposition.
- Businesses usually have their preferred parties, candidates, or political elites, and privilege one group more than the other, though many family-owned businesses split their support between major parties. Businesses are also known to adopt or sponsor particular candidates.
- Transfers may be effected in cash, by cheque, or as payment for services, such as advertising, transport, T-shirts, food or some other commodity. Indirect funding is tax deductible. Provisions in kind also allow some of the expenses to stay within the firm or the business group.
- State or state-owned corporations and statutory bodies normally provide jobs, services (advertising, transport, food, muscle) rather than cash donations to the governing party or designated individuals or firms.<sup>27</sup>
- “Community leaders” who control inner city spaces (garrisons) and other quasi-urban constituencies provide muscle and “ballot fodder” for candidates and parties, which in turn allocate lucrative contracts to manage unemployment relief or other social programmes that have the potential to mobilise voters. The state in effect thus indirectly pays for the election campaign of the ruling party.
- Some parties insist that corporate donations be made directly to the party and insist on giving receipts and deposit slips to donors. Many businesses or individuals, however, make donations directly to the party leader or his nominee or “bagman” and no attempt is made to formalise the transaction or insist on accountability. In both parties, the party treasurer receives only a fraction of the money donated during an election campaign.

<sup>26</sup> The President of the Chamber of Commerce (Trinidad) opined that “not everybody who puts money into a party is looking for favours. It’s part of the process. How else will the parties put ads in the papers and get their message across? Most contributors don’t have improper motives.” (Trinidad Guardian, October 7, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Following the 2002 Trinidad elections, the Attorney General balked at paying a bill of US\$ 90,000 to an advertising firm for the production of documentary material and an ad campaign entitled “Let the People Decide”. The Attorney General described the actions of her UNC predecessor as an “abuse of power and a misuse of state funds” (Newsday, October 31, 2002). Both parties, however, use state resources to fund election activities.

This was confirmed by the former Treasurer of the Trinidad United National Congress (UNC).<sup>28</sup>

The Political Leader of the PNM also indicated his concern about the fact that many persons solicit money in the name of the party, and that the funds are not used for the purposes for which they were given.

- Party leaders also make fundraising trips to cities in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom and parts of the region where there are significant diaspora groups. Much of the funding raised is never accounted for. Expenses incurred for hotels and travel are said to be high and thus reduce the net benefit available for exercise.
- Substantial donations are allegedly made to political parties and candidates from illicit sources. It is difficult, however, to quantify the magnitude of financing provided by these sources.

In an attempt to deal with the problem of political “gifts” to public officials, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago enacted Integrity Legislation in 1987 and in 2000, which required public officials to declare their assets to an Integrity Commission. Failure to do so or the making of a false declaration was made punishable by a fine of TT\$ 25,000 (US\$ 4,000) or two years in prison. The legislation was amended in 2000 to widen the net to include the spouses and children (under eighteen) of public officials, including all ministers and parliamentarians and to increase the penalties for infringements to TT\$ 250,000 (US\$ 40,000) and ten years in prison.

The legislation also contains a Code of Conduct which enjoins parliamentarians and other public officials to refrain from giving preferential treatment to any group or individual (cronism) and from using office to advance their family’s personal or financial interest (nepotism). If found guilty, the official is merely reported to the regulatory Commission that superintends his activities (e.g. the Public or Judicial Services Commissions). While this is anti-corruption legislation and not legislation governing campaign finance, it is intended to approach problems associated with political financing from another direction.

<sup>28</sup> According to the former treasurer, “the only money I had to work with during that campaign (2000) was TT\$4m and TT\$200,000 I raised.... Persons were opening private accounts with the party’s money and were using it at their whim and fancy” (Trinidad Mirror, November 1, 2002).

## Political Party and Campaign Financing in the Caribbean

Country	Disclosure	By Party	By Candidate	Contribution Limits	Spending Limits	Public Funding	Media Limits
Antigua and Barbuda	Yes, not enforced	No	Yes	No, anonymous contributions	No	No	No
Bahamas	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Barbados	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes, limited to candidates	Yes	Partially on TV and Radio
Belize	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Dominica	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Grenada	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Guyana	Yes, not enforced	No	Yes	No	Yes, not enforced	No	No
Haiti	No	No	No	Yes, not enforced	No	No	No
Jamaica	Yes, not enforced	No	Yes	No	Yes, not enforced	No	No
St. Kitts and Nevis	No	No	No	No	No	No*	No
St. Lucia	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Suriname	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes, limited to candidates, not enforced	No	No

\* There is no public funding other than that parties are allowed to bring in vehicles and some other election related materials without paying customs duties.

## IV. Spending Limits and Public Funding

The Carter Center based Council of former Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Americas has come out unequivocally in support of public funding of political parties and election campaigns in the hemisphere. As the Council declared:

Mixed funding systems with a substantial public component are recommended. Public funds should be provided as a substitute for or a complement to private donations at all phases of the political process. Public funding for ongoing party activities and campaigns should be allocated by a mix of proportional rules and flat subsidies to all parties that meet reasonable thresholds. Large donations should be limited; small donations that the average citizen can afford should be encouraged, perhaps by offering tax credits.<sup>29</sup>

Public funding of election campaigns cannot, however, be meaningfully discussed without reference to spending limits. These, in turn, raise questions that illustrate key points of contention in the debate on the merits of stricter regulation of political financing in CARICOM states.

Those who argue for spending limits argue that the current system of minimal regulation and enforcement potentially undermines the democratic process, rendering it vulnerable to abuse by powerful and entrenched interests. Limits would prevent the wealthy from dominating and unfairly determining electoral and policy outcomes. In this view, limits should be imposed upon political contributions from, for example, interest and advocacy groups; major companies; and wealthy individual investors. Additionally, in the interests of transparency, groups or individuals whose expenditure exceeds a certain amount should be required to disclose their contributions.

Those opposed to limits argue that they themselves constitute an infringement of democratic freedoms. Democracy requires freedom of information and informed choice. It means that individuals should be free to act either unilaterally or to pool their resources to bring their views and concerns to the attention of the electorate. If they are restricted in any way in their freedom to do so, the electoral process may not be properly free and fair. They would prefer that no limits be imposed on what parties, candidates, or third parties spend.

These contradictory positions were recently debated in the context of a Canadian Supreme Court ruling. The Court, in a six-to-three decision, adjudged that limits on what third parties might spend “preclude the voices of the wealthy from dominating the political discourse thereby allowing more voices to be heard”. Speaking for the minority, the Chief Justice argued that the consequence of the ruling would be that the voices of citizen interest groups would be virtually muffled because “the only space left in the marketplace of ideas is for political parties and their candidates”. The majority, however, countered that this situation need not result, as third party spending limits apply only to election campaigns, and interest groups are otherwise free to spend as much as they wish.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Financing Democracy in the Americas: Political Parties, Campaigns, and Elections*. The Carter Center. August 2003, pp. 59-60.

<sup>30</sup> See *National Post*, Wednesday May 19, 2004. Also the *Toronto Star* May 18, 2004.

The theoretical debate about spending limits raises further, practical questions. Should limits apply to parties, candidates, and third parties or only to parties and candidates? If limits are imposed only on what parties or candidates spend, is it not likely that parties and candidates will circumvent the limits imposed on them by speaking and acting through third parties, as Political Action Groups have done in the United States? If limits are placed upon what third parties can spend, is it not possible that citizen groups wishing to intervene to combat the influence of major parties or their candidates, or in favour of small parties, could be constrained in what they do by the limits, especially if these are too low? In sum, could limits not inadvertently contrive to preserve power in the hands of incumbents?

Other questions also arise. If limits are imposed, should they be applied only after election day is officially set, or all year round? What would obtain in jurisdictions where election dates are fixed constitutionally or where campaigning is a year round activity?

These questions are not easy to answer satisfactorily; there exists no system that all parties and the electorate trust unequivocally. They illustrate the complex issues surrounding campaign finance reform and indicate that such reform cannot be seriously and properly undertaken unless in the context of a wider constitutional reform exercise. This holds whether elections are privately or publicly financed or where hybrid systems are in place.

## V. Two Caribbean Proposals for Reform of Political Financing and Introduction of Public Funding

While widespread concern has been expressed about the consequences of the present formulae for party funding, few serious proposals for change have as yet been forthcoming. Only in Jamaica and in Trinidad and Tobago has the issue been put on the agenda.

In Trinidad and Tobago, a signature campaign was launched in 2002 by a civil society grouping calling itself the Constitutional Reform Forum, which has, as one of the five items in its “Citizens’ Agenda for Constitutional Reform Report”, a far-reaching proposal for campaign finance reform. The proposal calls for increased disclosure requirements for contributions to parties that exceed TTS 500 (US \$80); a prohibition on foreign contributions (except from Trinidadians living abroad); and independent audits of party books. Unique among other proposals in the Caribbean, the Citizens’ Agenda also calls for public financing of parties, to increase equity and transparency, and for significant contributors to be prohibited from receiving state contracts or ministerial positions with the power to award such contracts.<sup>31</sup>

In 2001, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through its Attorney General, convened the Law Reform Commission that prepared a *Preliminary Report on Political Parties and the Law (2001)*. The Commission recommended:

- (1) That a system of registration of political parties be adopted in principle;
- (2) That there be consultation with national stakeholders, including the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the Trinidad and Tobago League of Concerned Citizens, to determine the criteria for registration, the statutory limitations on election

<sup>31</sup> Constitutional Reform Forum. *Citizens’ Agenda for Constitutional Report, Trinidad and Tobago, 2001*.

- expenditure, and the obligations on political parties to disclose their accounts and submit their returns for public inspection;
- (3) That the Canadian model be considered as a prototype for Trinidad and Tobago;
  - (4) That the United Kingdom Registration of Political Parties Act be considered, with respect to the prohibition on broadcasting by a party which is not registered under the Act.

The report was circulated to members of parliament for comment, but none was forthcoming.

In Jamaica, independent Senator Trevor Munroe introduced a motion in the Upper House in May 2002 calling for the appointment of a national commission to consider regulation and funding of political parties. The Senate unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the government to set up a broad-based national commission to hold public hearings, examine and make recommendations on “appropriate legislation, including provisions for regulating and publicly funding political parties and election campaigns”. The government affirmed its intention to do so in January 2003, but to date no action has been taken. Both in the Senate debate and in the media discussion surrounding the issue, a consensus emerged on the need for some regime for the regulation of political parties and campaigns. Indications were that the debate, when it does develop, will focus on questions related to the extent of the regulation of parties; the degree of disclosure; the sources of campaign contributions; the forms and basis of public funding; the institutional framework for receiving and auditing party accounts; the possible extent of limits on campaign expenditure; and mechanisms for the enforcement of sanctions.

In November 2003, a bi-partisan committee was established to consider the desirability and feasibility of introducing public financing. The initiative came from the political leader of the Jamaica Labour Party, Mr. Edward Seaga, who expressed concerns about the role of “tainted money” not only in national and local elections, but also in intra-party elections. Seaga indicated that he was moving to embrace state funding to prevent the political process from being overwhelmed by money from tainted sources.<sup>32</sup> He suggested that state funding was not a perfect solution, but might be a way of nipping in the bud an emergent problem.

Another initiative with respect to public financing, not of elections but of activity undertaken by MPs, was suggested by the Parliamentary Salaries Committee in its report of November 12, 2003. The PSC recommended, *inter alia*, that emoluments for parliamentarians should be considered as having three separate components: parliamentary compensation, parliamentary expense reimbursements, and constituency expenses. The PSC also recommended that the state should provide a constituency office for all MPs, and that the allowances payable to MPs for the operation of such an office should be increased. Further, it recommended that MPs should be obliged to declare publicly their major assets and all their sources of income and benefits.

<sup>32</sup> *Jamaica Observer*, November 14, 2003.

## VI. Conclusions

Proposals for public funding of campaigns, whether in pure or hybrid form, have encountered lukewarm responses wherever they have been seriously debated in the Anglophone Caribbean. The majority, who oppose public funding, are concerned about the state using scarce resources, which they believe should be devoted to relieving poverty and meeting other basic needs, to fund political parties, especially those regarded as ethically challenged. They also argue that Caribbean states do not have the technical and administrative capacity to audit and regulate the use of such funds, which, they fear, would in practice be employed for questionable activities and personal gain. It is also feared that ruling parties would capture and manipulate these regulatory bodies and make them their milch cows. This anxiety runs particularly deep in political cultures where trust, transparency, and law enforcement are not the norm, and where elites exploit the state and treat its rules with impunity.

Questions also arise regarding the technical operation of systems intended to regulate political financing. What will be the penalty for infringement or non-compliance with the rules of public financing? Will errant candidates and/or parties be decertified or required to forfeit seats in the legislature, pay fines, forfeit funding, or the right to stand in future elections? Will violators be imprisoned? Who will identify violators? Does one depend on rival parties to lodge complaints or on whistle blowers? What if parties conspire to defraud the system by not laying complaints against one another? Then, too, who will bear the costs of litigation?

There are also issues concerning the timeliness of disclosures and whether funds should be allocated in advance of elections, or whether only part should be given up-front, with the rest paid on submission of agreed expenses after elections are concluded. If funds are given prior to elections, might it not encourage the proliferation of political entrepreneurs who regard entry into the political ring as a business venture that has few risks? If expenses are reimbursed, might this penalize those who cannot raise up-front political venture capital? Might it also penalize those who do not have name or brand recognition?

Those who oppose public funding typically believe that it would not meet its declared democratic goals, and that it would increase, rather than decrease, the total funds spent. It would also likely increase the funds that are not officially reported since parties would still, seeking comparative advantage — especially in close contests — solicit extra funding. The arrangement might also serve to fragment parties or to bureaucratize them excessively. There is a danger that lawyers and political practitioners remain forever one step ahead of attempts to regulate their operations and that campaign financing reform becomes a perpetual exercise. Opponents of change may also dispute the imputation that money determines electoral and policy outcomes in the Caribbean. In many Caribbean states, there has been a history of regular party turnovers, suggesting that money is not all that matters.<sup>33</sup> It is also the case that many constituencies are not electorally competitive, and barring a major electoral swing, no amount of money or media exposure would change outcomes. (Money might, however,

<sup>33</sup> *The recent election outcome in Antigua probably illustrates the point. While big money backed the then ruling Antigua Labour Party, there was a shift of some of the funding which previously went to the ALP to the Opposition United Progressive Party. It is also the consensus that radio was far more effective than TV in the election campaign.*

talk loudly in swing or competitive constituencies, especially those in which face-to-face canvassing is problematic).<sup>34</sup> Many of the questions surrounding reform remain unanswerable. Does greater access to television privilege parties that enjoy such access? Does money flow to candidates seen as likely to win or does it cause candidates to win? More importantly, can campaign finance reform by itself change anything without reform being enacted in other critical areas?

Proponents of reform insist that, these difficulties notwithstanding, Caribbean states must review their laws in respect of the operations of party and campaign finance. As we have seen, there are few laws that recognize parties or regulate or limit the manner in which, and the extent to which they are funded by either the private or public sector. Such rules as exist are outdated in important respects: they fail to recognize that parties are now as important, and often more important, recipients of political financing than candidates; and low limits on candidates' spending bear no relation to the modern reality of what is spent and how much is required to contest an election, particularly in competitive constituencies. Disclosure and enforcement regimes are cosmetic and ritualistic, honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The agencies to which candidates and parties are required to report are passive and somnolent and generally lack the capacity or the will to monitor such returns as are filed and challenge claims where they seem implausible. As the Carter Centre appropriately advises, "there must be assurances of timely justice and an end to impunity in abuses of political financing. The enforcement of political financing laws and regulations requires the existence of independent oversight authorities and an effective system of sanctions to end impunity".<sup>35</sup>

Although demand for public funding is not strong in the Anglophone Caribbean, pressure is building within civil society for reform of the campaign finance regime. While there is no single formula for political financing of campaigns that will solve the problems that now beset election campaigns in the region, it may well be that an OAS or a CARICOM initiative, possibly involving the provision of model legislation that regulates media policy, what donors are allowed to do, how much parties are allowed to spend, what they must disclose and to whom, and what meaningful penalties would be imposed for non-disclosure, might serve to stimulate debate throughout the region, which would in turn empower and enable watchdog groups in civil society or elements belonging to minority parties to place reform firmly on the political agenda.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Pinto-Duschinsky has argued that "the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that old-fashioned, face-to-face politicking costs more than the new mass marketing, media heavy approach". Whether this is so or not depends on the nature of the constituency, both in terms of its size and its demographic and geographical character. See Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, *Financial Democracy in the Americas* (Atlanta: The Carter Centre, 2003), p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 59.

# Political Financing: Access of Political Parties to the Media<sup>36</sup>

*Douglas W. Payne*

## I. Introduction

Despite a few disturbing trends over the last few years, the media in the English-speaking Caribbean and in Suriname are freer and under less threat than in any other subregion of the developing world. In its end-of-the-year statement for 2003, the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (ACM) expressed concern about the inclination among some governments to criminalize the “spreading of false news”, as in St. Lucia, or to legislate media codes of conduct, which has been mooted in Grenada. ACM President Wesley Gibbings stated, “We believe there exists a basis for anxiety in some territories where official policy has recently tended to offer prescriptions that have the potential to undermine the right to publish opinions and information not always in conformity with official or popular views”. Nonetheless, in his overall assessment, Gibbings said, “the functioning of the free press generally obtains in most instances”.

In recent years there have been occasional reports of physical attacks or intimidation against media practitioners in the region, such as the assault against a journalist in Dominica in March 2003 and a handful of other attacks or threats against journalists in Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago since 2001. There also continues to be a tendency for governments to use state-owned media to their political advantage, an ongoing and longstanding phenomenon. For the most part, however, journalists and independent media

<sup>36</sup> *The primary sources are the reports and matrices provided by researchers contracted in each of the countries by the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. Additional sources include the Association of Caribbean Media Workers (Trinidad), Reporters Without Frontiers (Paris), the Committee to Protect Journalists (New York), the International Press Institute (Vienna), the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices by the US Department of State, and news reports by international and Caribbean regional media.*

outlets in the English-speaking Caribbean and Suriname are free to carry out their work without interference or fear for their safety. Moreover, in each country most political voices are able to be heard; as television and radio have continued to expand, opinion polling has become more prevalent, and news coverage in both the broadcast and print media has generally become more open and sophisticated. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of call-in and talk shows in the broadcast media that has given greater voice to ordinary citizens and extended the debate on national issues.

Within this relatively free climate the media, particularly the broadcast media, have become increasingly important in Caribbean politics over the last decade and a half, especially during election campaigns. Generally in the region, access to the media for political advertising is governed by the marketplace. And, with airtime and newspaper space available to those who can afford to pay the going rates, use of the media has demanded ever larger percentages of political party and campaign budgets. Only in a handful of countries are political parties and candidates granted even a modicum of no-cost access to the media during campaign periods. This allotted airtime and print space is dwarfed by the amounts purchased during the media wars that now seem to dominate election campaigns in many countries, with additional and substantial resources spent by a number of political parties on media consultants from as far away as the US and the UK.

Still, traditional forms of ground-war politicking and electoral competition remain important, including rallies, motorcades, stumping, canvassing, posters and giveaways. All of these continue to be effective at the constituency and community level and in most countries remain vital for individual candidates, while media efforts tend to focus on selling political parties or party leaders to national audiences, particularly through television and radio.

The issue of access to the media, and the fact that political advertising is primarily a question of acquiring the resources necessary to purchase airtime and print space, has not prompted a great deal of public debate or concern in the region. Indeed, as noted in chapter one, the issue of political financing in general has a low profile. As lavish spending in the media by political parties has become common, there is speculation during campaign periods about the sources of funding, legitimate and illicit, and the actual amounts being spent. But given a lack of disclosure laws in the region and lack of popular demand for greater transparency in political funding, there has been little research, either by scholars or journalists themselves, on the intersection of media and money in Caribbean politics.

## II. An Examination of the CARICOM Countries

### *Antigua and Barbuda*

Electoral reforms implemented in 2001 called for political parties and candidates to have equal access to the country's media during election campaigns. But the rules and procedures necessary to carry out the policy were not established by the time of the elections on 23 March 2004. Still, these were the first elections in Antigua and Barbuda during which the opposition was able to promote its views through its own radio stations and, while the government remained in control of television broadcasting, citizens for the first time were able to hear extensively from both sides on their radios.

There are two daily newspapers, one weekly newspaper and a few other smaller publications, all privately owned. One of the daily newspapers, *The Observer*, and the weekly *Outlet*, were relatively free to express their often intense criticism of the former government of Prime Minister Lester Bird.

The only television station is government-owned through the Antigua and Barbuda Broadcasting Service (ABS) and was consistently exploited by the former government for its own political purposes and to the detriment of the opposition. One radio station is government-owned. In 2001, the Observer radio station, the first independent broadcast medium in the country, went on the air following an extended legal battle with the Bird government that had tried to prevent it. In mid June 2003, the opposition and now ruling United Progressive Party (UPP) started its own Crusader radio station, using the same name as its party newspaper. Access to the Internet is not restricted.

Amendments to the electoral law in 2001 led to the creation of a five-member Electoral Commission. Among other responsibilities, the Commission was authorized, upon the calling of elections, to consult with all electronic and print media in the country to draw up a timetable for political parties and candidates to have access to electronic and print outlets to promote their views and platforms. To carry out this process, the Commission was to have established rules to govern the use of the media during the election campaign and required media owners to provide time and space equitably among parties and candidates. However, no such rules were established in time for the 23 March 2004 elections and during the campaign the media remained polarized between pro-government and pro-opposition outlets. Meanwhile, despite the increasing importance of the media, substantial funds were spent by the two main political parties in March on traditional forms of campaigning such as rallies<sup>37</sup> and motorcades.

Prior to the March elections, Baldwin Spencer, then leader of the opposition, sued the government to demand that ABS televise his weekly address to the nation. A settlement was reached in February whereby Spencer would be allowed two half-hour slots twice a week on ABS. During the campaign, there were reports in the *Antigua Sun*, a daily owned by Allen Stanford, the largest foreign investor in Antigua and Barbuda, that political consultants for Prime Minister Bird's party were in the ABS television newsroom on a daily basis to vet the nightly news program prior to broadcast. Spencer has vowed that under his government ABS would provide more balanced news coverage and more equal access.

## *Bahamas*

Access to the state-owned media by political parties and candidates must be purchased, and the amount of time available for purchase for political broadcasts is limited under the terms of the official Broadcasting Rules, which are overseen by a three-member Electoral Broadcasting Council. Such terms and limits do not apply to privately owned media. While the importance and cost of using media for political purposes has increased, substantial amounts of campaign funds are still spent on more traditional activities such as rallies that now feature expensive offerings such as professional entertainment.

There is one television station, which is state-owned, one state-owned radio station, and at least five privately owned radio stations. There are at least three daily newspapers and

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 4.

several weekly newspapers, all privately owned and providing diverse viewpoints. The state-run broadcasting media also offer a variety of views, but the opposition claims that its views and activities do not receive the same level of coverage as the government's. Access to the Internet is not restricted.

The Broadcasting Rules instituted in 1992 regulate political broadcasts and advertisements in the state-owned media as follows:

During the official campaign period, between the dissolution of parliament and Election Day, each political party can purchase six fifteen-minute programs of airtime on television and six fifteen-minute programs on radio for the purpose of airing political broadcasts that feature candidates for election or reelection to parliament, or senators. The text of any program must be submitted to television and radio station managers for approval forty-eight hours in advance of broadcast. There are similar time allowances for candidates running in by-elections.

Also during the campaign period, a political party or independent candidate may purchase time for airing electoral advertisements, with a maximum of six ads per day on both television and radio for political parties, and a maximum of two per day on television and radio for independent candidates. Television and radio ads must be no longer than thirty seconds and must be made in the voice of either a candidate or a member of the staff of the broadcasting station. The content of all television ads must be submitted to television station managers for approval seventy-two hours in advance of broadcast, and forty-eight hours in advance in the case of radio ads.

Outside campaign periods, the governing party or coalition can purchase during any calendar year four fifteen-minute slots on television and the same on radio, while a party in opposition can purchase two fifteen-minute slots on both television and radio if it has at least one-third of the seats in parliament, or one fifteen-minute slot on both television and radio if it has less than one-third of the seats. A political party at any time in any year can purchase up to thirty-five hours of television time and the same amount of radio time for the purpose of broadcasting not more than three party conventions or meetings.

## *Barbados*

Political party access to the media during an election period is governed by the General Elections (Allocation of Broadcast Time) Regulations, 1990. According to Section 4 (2) of the Regulations, the political party which commanded the support of the majority of the membership of the House of Assembly immediately prior to the last dissolution of Parliament is allotted two broadcasts of not more than fifteen minutes and a third and final broadcast of not more than thirty minutes. Moreover, under Section 6, the political party that commanded this majority is entitled to have the first and last election broadcast. The opposition party is allowed one broadcast of not more than fifteen minutes and a second, final broadcast of not more than thirty minutes.

Under Section 10 of the Regulations, each party is allowed a maximum number of radio advertisements (in relation to each radio station) calculated on the basis of five advertisements for each candidate, which are to be no more than thirty seconds in duration. Each party is allowed a maximum number of television advertisements (in relation to each TV station)

calculated on the basis of three advertisements for each candidate, which are to be no longer than 60 seconds in duration.

The ability of each political party to attract financing has impacted on its ability to exploit media access. As noted in chapter one, advertising constitutes the single largest portion of party expenditure in an election campaign and plays a critical role. The comparative disadvantage of the Democratic Labour Party in attracting adequate funding to run a substantial election campaign has been cited as a principal reason for its inability to take full advantage of broadcast time allocations during the General Election of May 2003. A representative of the Barbados Labour Party spoke of the high cost of advertising, but was unwilling to give details.

## *Belize*

There are no state-run media and no laws that allocate time or guarantee equal access in the privately owned media to political parties or candidates, nor do the electoral authorities, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, have any authority in this regard. Generally, access to the media is governed by free enterprise — airtime and newspaper space are available to those who can afford to pay the going rates.

There are about ten privately owned weekly newspapers, two of them owned by the country's main political parties, and all are generally free to criticize the government without fear of reprisal. There are two privately owned television stations that produce local news and feature programming, and ten privately owned radio stations that promote free political debate through popular call-in programs. The Belize Broadcasting Authority has the authority to preview media broadcasts and delete defamatory or libelous material from political programs, but has not exercised this right in years. Internet access is unrestricted.

During election campaigns, the deep political polarization in the country is reflected in the media, with party-owned newspapers leading the way and the various other media outlets leaning in one direction or the other. Political ads saturate television and radio broadcasts in a rambunctious free-for-all that occasionally results in libel suits.

As political parties and candidates are under no legal obligation to account for how campaign funds are spent, there is no available data indicating how much money is spent on use of the media. Media operators say that there is no difference in the advertising rates offered to the political parties, and the rates do appear to be relatively uniform and competitive. The media profits more during political campaigns than at any other time.

At the same time, it is widely believed that media owners often make in-kind contributions to favored political parties and candidates, and the media are viewed with great cynicism by the general public. Third parties and independent candidates remain at a disadvantage because they do not have sufficient resources either to compete with the two main parties in the media market or to produce advertisements or programs of good technical quality. There are no laws or regulations that would limit a ruling party's use of government resources to purchase airtime or advertising space.

Mudslinging is prevalent in political advertising, and media outlets often add on disclaimers saying they are not responsible for a program's content. The publication of opinion surveys or broadcast of debates between candidates, however, is not an issue as polls and debates are not part of Belize's political culture.

## *Dominica*

There are no laws, regulations or bodies that limit, control, or guarantee access to the media by political parties or electoral candidates, and the government makes no financial or in-kind contributions to enhance access. Access to the Internet is not restricted. Media access, like other aspects of political campaigning, is regulated only by the market. The amount of newspaper space and airtime a party or candidate can utilize is determined by the ability to pay or negotiate credit with the various media outlets. Political parties in Dominica, as in other Caribbean island states, can normally afford to spend on media publicity only during election campaigns.

All of Dominica's political parties say that use of the media—including television, radio, newspapers and printed matter such as manifestos—is now their second highest expenditure during election campaigns, accounting for an estimated quarter to a third of campaign budgets. But traditional forms of campaigning remain very important and the highest expenditure is on transportation, including motorcades, which accounts for between a third and half of campaign budgets, with the cost of rallies and public meetings coming in third.

But there are no disclosure laws and the political parties and the media outlets are reluctant to provide any records that would provide a clearer picture of how specifically funds were acquired and spent on media or other aspects of political campaigns.<sup>38</sup> Greater transparency in political financing seems unlikely in the future as there is little or no popular demand for it and because of the general view that no party or candidate is at a disadvantage under the current system.

Dominica has two television stations, four radio stations and three weekly newspapers, all privately owned. The national radio station is a statutory, state-owned corporation. Ruling parties make more use of the national radio station than other media, apparently because they can obtain easier credit terms than opposition parties. All political parties receive coverage from the various media outlets, while talk shows in the broadcast media provide additional opportunities for exposure. The tendency of one of the radio stations to favor any political party that is not in government ensures a diversity of opinion both during and between political campaigns. Opinion polls are covered in the media but are not common in Dominica and are generally considered to be unscientific and unreliable.

There is little disparity in rates for purchasing advertising space in newspapers or for acquiring airtime in the broadcast media, and parties and candidates usually buy from outlets based on perceived value. Advertisements are locally produced, meaning that all parties and candidates have access to the same levels of technology and competence, again limited only by the ability to pay. Media outlets, in turn, like private corporations, reserve the right to review and reject advertisements or programs based on libel concerns, moral standards, or other criteria that could have a bearing on the company's profits or reputation. Name-calling and personal attacks are therefore far more common at public meetings and rallies than in the media.

By law, all parliamentarians should have equal access to the Government Information Service (GIS), which produces programs for airing in the broadcast media. Opposition leaders

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 1, p.10.

complain, however, that equal access is not always guaranteed. Still, the governing party must pay for airtime to have its programs broadcast and at least one observer in Dominica said that people generally shunned government programs in favor of popular entertainment, meaning the opposition was not at any real disadvantage with regard to the GIS.

## *Grenada*

There are no laws or bodies that regulate or guarantee access to the media by political parties or electoral candidates, and the government makes no financial or in-kind contributions to enhance media access. Media access, like other aspects of political campaigning, is regulated only by the marketplace. The amount of newspaper space and airtime a party or candidate can utilize is determined by the ability to pay the going rates or to negotiate credit with the various media outlets. Some political parties say the rates are excessive but nonetheless believe that intensive media outreach is necessary for election campaigns to be effective. On occasion, privately owned media outlets have provided free time or space to favored parties or candidates, or given access at reduced rates. There are no restrictions on access to the Internet.

There are three independently owned weekly newspapers that favor different political lines and, taken together, provide an outlet for all points of view. They routinely publish columns expressing the views of the government and the opposition. There are up to ten radio stations and at least three television stations, all independently owned. The main radio station and the principal television station are part of the Grenadian Broadcasting Network (GBN), which since 1998 has been majority-owned and operated by the privately held Caribbean Communications Network of Trinidad and Tobago, with the government of Grenada as a minority owner. Coverage of the political opposition's views and activities, as well as criticism of the government, are regularly aired on all broadcast media.

The importance of the media during election campaigns, particularly television and radio, has increased greatly since the mid-1990s. The ruling party saturated the broadcast media with paid advertisements during the 1999 and 2003 elections and bought a great amount of space in the newspapers as well. The opposition also advertised in the media, but apparently had fewer funds at its disposal. Because there are no disclosure laws, parties do not have to make public their campaign expenditures. Nonetheless, while use of the media has increased, it is evident that the parties and candidates continue to devote substantial resources, time, and energy to traditional forms of campaigning, particularly rallies, motorcades and assorted giveaways.

Although there are no overt attempts to curtail media freedom, some outlets operate carefully to avoid slander and libel suits, which are sometimes filed against journalists. In 2001 the government advocated for legislation establishing a media code of conduct, with provisions possibly similar to those in the legislation regarding the media passed in St. Lucia in November 2003. It subsequently appeared to back away from the proposal, but the draft of the so-called Media Policy remains on the table.

In late 2003, the government came to an agreement with the opposition to establish at some point a joint committee to consult with the local media regarding access to the media by both government and the opposition and the possibility of live coverage of parliament.

It was also agreed that discussions would begin on giving the opposition formal input into the operations of the Government Information Service (GIS).

That accord, however, remained on hold amid a heated dispute between the government and opposition that began in May 2004 over alleged corruption and threats against the media for its reporting of the allegations, including the brief detention by police of a Grenadian correspondent for the Cayman Islands-based Caribbean Net News and threats to charge him with criminal libel.

## *Guyana*

There are no laws that govern or guarantee access to the media by political parties or electoral candidates, and the government makes no financial or in-kind contributions to enhance media access. Expenditure on political advertising is therefore a question of affordability—the amount of airtime and newspaper space a party or candidate can use is determined by the ability to pay the going rates.

The two principal daily newspapers are the privately owned *Stabroek News* and the government owned *Guyana Chronicle*, which displays a clear anti-opposition bias in its news coverage and editorial policy. There is also a wide range of weekly publications published by political parties, religious groups and other organizations.

The government owns and operates the country's sole radio station and, in response to private interests wanting to establish new stations, has said that there is no legislation in place to govern the allocation of frequencies. Despite a similar lack of legislation to govern television frequencies, there are twelve privately owned television stations that freely criticize the government. In addition, there is state-run television, formerly Guyana Television (GTV), now the National Communications Network (NCN) following the recent merger of GTV with the state-owned Guyana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). According to opposition leaders, both state-run radio and television exhibit a clear political bias in favor of the government. In recent years, the government by executive order has temporarily suspended private television broadcasting licenses on at least three occasions for what it claimed was irresponsible journalism. Access to the Internet is not restricted.

Since the early 1990s, political use of the media, and particularly the broadcast media, has increased steadily and substantially, to the point where during the last national elections in 2001, the public was inundated with political advertisements in every medium. The ruling party in 2001 hired a Trinidadian advertising firm to develop a media strategy and produce campaign ads. Use of the broadcast media increased during the last two weeks of the campaign, particularly the purchase of radio time as parties apparently heightened their focus on the interior of the country, where there is little access to television and newspapers.

Despite a voluntary Media Code of Conduct calling for balanced and objective reporting, the broadcast media during the 2001 elections were highly polarized between the clearly pro-government, state-run television and radio stations, and a number of intensely anti-government, talk-show-driven television stations, with obvious excesses committed on both sides. Some privately owned television stations sought a degree of balance by voluntarily offering a certain amount of free airtime for discussion programs in which the contesting political parties could state their policy positions.

In 2003, in response to continuing criticism that the legal and regulatory environment for broadcast media is weak, and following negotiations with the main opposition party, the government proposed new media legislation that would create a broadcasting authority to issue licenses and supervise broadcast operations. Journalist groups said there was potential for abuse and undermining of free expression if such a body were established. The draft broadcasting bill was rejected by the opposition because, among other things, it did not include a previously agreed provision that the new law would guarantee access to state-owned media based on a political party's level of representation in parliament.

## *Jamaica*

There are no laws that restrict or regulate access to the media by political parties and candidates, and use of the media for political purposes is contingent only on the ability to purchase airtime and advertising space at market rates. Access to the Internet is not restricted. At the same time, there are no laws that limit or prohibit the dissemination of political propaganda by the government during election campaigns. During the 2002 campaign, various agencies used state resources to promote government programmes in the private media.

Fifteen years ago there was one television station and two radio stations, all government owned, and one privately owned newspaper. Today, there are three television stations, more than a dozen radio stations, two major daily newspapers and a number of weekly and monthly publications, all privately owned. In recent years there has been no evidence of government interference in the privately owned media and public vigilance against such intervention remains strong.

News coverage is based on the editorial judgment of the individual media outlets. Reporting may be influenced by the political bias of individual members of the media, but the intense competition that exists among the various outlets and the general expectation of objective reporting among advertisers and consumers of news programs mitigate against slanted coverage.

Originally, political party activities were decentralized, communications were rudimentary, and the focus was on individual candidates in local communities. Today, Jamaica's two main political parties are highly centralized bureaucracies that depend heavily on the use of modern mass communication, with ever-increasing use of the broadcast media during election campaigns and rising use of cable television and the Internet. Nonetheless, along with use of the media, parties and candidates continue to spend substantial sums on transportation, employment of campaign workers, and the staging of rallies.

As in other Caribbean countries, the amounts spent on political advertising are difficult to ascertain because of the absence of reporting requirements. Radio is the most widely used medium because it is the most cost-effective and because of its deeper penetration in the population. Television is the most expensive medium but generally considered essential because of its visual impact. An estimate by one analyst put spending on all media advertising by each of the two main political parties during the final 2-3 months of the 2002 campaign at J\$ 80-100 million (between US\$ 1.23 and US \$1.54 million). Another analyst estimated that together the two parties spent more than J\$ 15 million (about US \$231,000) for print ads in just the two main daily newspapers.

Although all media are privately owned, the government does make a minimal contribution to media access during election campaigns. The government-run Jamaica Information Service (JIS) is regularly allocated airtime by the various broadcast media, as stipulated under their broadcasting licenses. Prior to the October 2002 elections, the JIS allotted part of its airtime for use by the four participating political parties: a fifteen-minute slot on both television and radio for each party – a pittance compared to the amount of airtime purchased by the two main parties during the course of the campaign.

The two main political parties have ratified a Political Code of Conduct that calls upon party representatives and candidates not to make inflammatory, slanderous, or malicious statements. The Code is policed by the recently established office of the Political Ombudsman. Generally, media advertisements and broadcasts by the political parties have only infrequently violated that section of the Code, and when that has happened the parties have been persuaded to rectify such breaches.

### *St. Kitts-Nevis*

There are no laws or bodies that regulate or guarantee access to the media by political parties or electoral candidates. Existing electoral law dates back to independence in 1983 and has not been updated since. Use of the media for political reasons has increased in recent years, particularly in the broadcast media during election campaigns. Still, traditional forms of campaigning remain important, especially public meetings held by the political parties.

The ruling party makes extensive use of the government owned media, including the country's single television station. The government-owned radio station was recently privatized (though the government still appoints three of five board members) and the opposition now appears to have greater access to respond to government pronouncements, despite the lack of any statutory guarantees or oversight. There are also several other privately owned radio stations. Political parties must pay for airtime in the private media and print space in newspapers at the prevailing rates. The government does not restrict access to the Internet.

Since mid-2003 the main opposition party, with an eye toward parliamentary elections due by Spring 2005, has been advocating for a package of electoral reforms that would include guarantees for greater and more equal access to the broadcast media.

There is one daily newspaper published Monday through Friday that provides a forum for all political voices, and at least four independent weeklies. In addition, each of the two main political parties publishes a weekly or biweekly newspaper. The independent publications freely and regularly criticize the government.

All broadcast media emanating from St. Kitts can be received on Nevis and some of the publications published on St. Kitts are also available. Nevis itself has a number of independent radio stations and a few weekly publications, providing channels for all political points of view, particularly during elections for the Nevis Island Assembly and, on occasion, referenda regarding the status of Nevis in the two-island federation.

### *St. Lucia*

Political advertising in the media, particularly in television and radio, continues to gain in importance. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, recent elections have been dominated by

media coverage of the campaigns and the increasing use of broadcast advertising. Political parties say the costs are onerous but necessary to carry out effective campaigns.

There are no laws that regulate spending on media advertising, either for the purchase of airtime or space in newspapers, so political parties and candidates are limited only by their ability to pay the going rates. The best estimates are that political parties spend at least 30-35 percent of their resources on advertising in the media, with the high cost of purchasing television time weighing the most heavily on party budgets. Also increasingly costly is the employment of professional media consultants and 'spin doctors', especially during election campaigns.<sup>39</sup>

There are three television stations, two privately owned and one owned by the government, and up to five radio stations, all privately owned except for one owned in part by the government. There are five privately owned weekly or biweekly newspapers. There are no restrictions on the publication of opinion polls and no restrictions on use of the Internet.

Opposition parties complain that the ruling party makes unfair use of the Government Information Service (GIS) and the recently established, government-owned National Television Network (NTN), both of which are overseen by the Department of Information Service (DIS). To the degree that this is true, it is balanced somewhat by the provision of a small amount of free airtime on the partially government owned Radio St. Lucia during election campaigns. Still, the ruling party remains at an advantage as the time allotted is based on a political party's relative strength in parliament. During the last elections in 2001, for example, Radio St. Lucia gave one fifteen-minute and one twenty-minute slot to the ruling party, one twenty-minute slot to the official opposition party, one ten-minute slot to any other party that had nominated candidates, and a five-minute slot to independent candidates.

The DIS has the authority to bar from government-owned media any political advertising that it deems to be against St. Lucian law, racially discriminatory, obscene or inflammatory. Meanwhile, between elections, Radio St. Lucia provides time to the government for a weekly program without giving equal time to the opposition.

In addition to paid advertising, the country's newspaper and broadcast media provide wide and varied channels for political opinion and coverage of political activities. The newspapers, two of them owned by political players, tend to be slanted one way or another, while the current ruling party alleges that the two private television stations are biased against it.

Since the mid-1990s there has been a proliferation of talk and call-in shows on television and radio that have given a voice to ordinary citizens and extended the debate on national issues. But this has also resulted in what local analysts call "vulgarism" on the part of some journalists and program hosts, which has moved politicians, particularly within the ruling party, to push for new media regulations.

In November 2003, parliament passed a controversial Criminal Code that includes a section on 'spreading false news.' It states that anyone who publishes a statement he or she knows is false, or that causes or is likely to cause injury to a public interest, may be imprisoned for up to two years. Until the passage of this legislation, private media owners were relatively

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter, p.21.

free to publish or broadcast whatever they wished and codes of conduct issued by electoral authorities and religious groups during political campaigns tended to be disregarded. The new legislation was roundly criticized by press freedom advocates throughout the Caribbean and elsewhere. It remains to be seen what effect the new code will have on the media in St. Lucia.

### *St. Vincent and the Grenadines*

Beginning with the national elections in 1998, the importance of the broadcast media as part of the political landscape has increased substantially. There are no laws or bodies that govern or guarantee access to the media and most political advertising in the media must be paid for at the prevailing rates.

There are three weekly newspapers and a number of smaller publications that appear less frequently. All are privately owned and taken together provide channels for most political points of view. Some newspapers regularly and voluntarily provide space to political parties to publish columns for free. Faced with continuing criticism that government advertising was sometimes withheld from those publications whose stance toward it was more critical, the current government recently adopted a policy of distributing advertising revenue equally among the principal newspapers.

The sole television station on St. Vincent is privately owned, operated without government interference, and generally provides balanced news coverage. There are seven radio stations, all but one privately owned. Access to the Internet is not restricted. The state-owned radio station and the television station are required by law to provide two hours per week to the government's Agency for Public Information (API) to report on government activities. One of the two main political parties runs a daily two-hour program, Monday through Friday, on one of the private radio stations and pays for the broadcast time.

At the time of the 1994 elections, radio was owned solely by the state and the principal station generally reflected the line of the government. The granting of a number of FM licenses led to the creation of radio call-in and talk shows that extended political debate to opposing voices and ordinary citizens and became a daily mainstay, particularly during the 1998 and 2001 elections. Since 1998, the two main political parties have spent heavily on media consultants and political advertising in both the print and broadcast media, adding substantially to the overall costs of election campaigning. Nonetheless, traditional forms of campaigning such as mass rallies featuring high-priced entertainers from around the Caribbean, posters, and the distribution of political party hats and T-shirts continue to play an important role.

### *Suriname*

There are few laws or regulations that limit, control, or govern access to the media by political parties or electoral candidates. Access to the Internet is also unrestricted. The public strongly embraces the idea of free media as stated in Article 19 of the 1987 Constitution: "Everyone has the right to make public his thoughts or feelings and to express his opinion through the printed press or other means of communication, subject to the responsibility of all as set forth in the law". Although government officials occasionally try to pressure media outlets that produce critical stories, any sustained attempt to interfere in media operations

would produce a public outcry. This sensitivity to the possibility of censorship stems in large part from the experience of having lived under military rule (1980-1987) marked by violent crackdowns against freedom of expression. During the most recent national elections in May 2000, a European Union Media Monitoring Team concluded that there was no infringement of freedom of expression, journalistic coverage of the campaign was generally objective, and the state-owned media exhibited no favoritism.

There are three daily newspapers, two weekly newspapers, about two dozen radio stations, two of them government-owned, and thirteen television stations, two of them also government-owned. Parties and candidates are able to utilize the privately owned media to the extent that they are able to pay for airtime and advertising space and will adhere to rules regarding decency and other concerns as established by media outlets. The government broadcast media have a self-imposed rule against selling airtime to political parties. The only cost-free access to media is a single program, aired solely by the two government television stations during election campaigns, in which each participating party is allocated about five minutes.

The extent to which political parties utilize the media is related to the ethnic and linguistic complexity of a society and a political culture that continues to be very much based on patronage. The country's ethnic makeup is as follows: East Indians (about 36 percent); Afro-Creoles, descendents of slaves (thirty-one percent); Indonesians, principally Javanese (fifteen percent); Bush Negros, or Maroons, descendents of escaped slaves (ten percent); Amerindians, the original inhabitants (two and a half percent); Chinese (two percent); Europeans (one and a half percent); and others, mainly Sephardic Jews and Syrians (two percent). While the national language is Dutch, many Surinamers generally conduct themselves in their own languages — for example, Hindi and Javanese.

Ethnicity continues to be a defining element of Surinamese politics and the nation's traditional political parties, organized on an ethnic basis, continue to dominate. In the 2000 elections, newer multi-ethnic parties made extensive use of media advertising, while the old parties generally stayed with traditional forms of campaigning such as rallies and public meetings, spending only minimal amounts on media. In the end, the new parties gained little ground.

This unusual situation reflects the fact that carrying out a media-driven campaign is difficult because the broadcast media reflect the fragmented society they serve, with most radio and television stations targeting specific groups in specific languages. To reach out to all voters through the broadcast media is therefore complicated and costly. Another reason is that advertising in the print media is expensive and not cost-effective because of limited circulation and distribution. A study conducted by Dr. John Krishnadath in February 2003 showed that 50.3 percent of voters believed the best way to reach the electorate was through public meetings and rallies, 21.6 percent said through personal contact by politicians, 11.4 percent said through television, 6.6 percent said through radio, 6.5 percent said through newspapers and 3.5 percent said through other channels such as family and friends. One of the conclusions of the study was that the high preference for direct-contact campaigning was rooted in people's desire to benefit from party patronage, to be part of the party machine.

Still, there continues to be a slow but steady increase in the role played by the media in politics. For example, politicians are becoming media owners. As of 2003, two radio stations

were owned by chairmen of political parties and at least another five by ranking officials of other parties. In response to live, partisan programming on these stations, other outlets have created live call-in programs. This new media trend, coupled with the detailed opinion polling of the Institute for Development Oriented Studies (IDOS) whose results are duly reported in the media, has served to amplify the voices of ordinary citizens in the country's political discussions.

### *Trinidad and Tobago*

There are no laws, regulations or bodies that limit, control, or guarantee access to the media by political parties or candidates, and the state-owned broadcast media provide only a minimal amount of free airtime. Political activity is privately funded and much, if not most, of the funding provided for election campaigning is spent on television, radio, and newspaper advertising. There are no laws that regulate campaigning in the media, and political advertising is limited only by the ability of the political party or candidate to pay the going rates for airtime and newspaper space, and by the standards of public decency as determined and imposed by the media outlets themselves. There is no regulation of media advertising content by the state and access to the Internet is unrestricted.

There are three daily newspapers, all privately owned, several weekly publications, two television stations, one of them state-owned through the National Broadcasting Network (NBN), and more than a dozen radio stations, including one owned by the NBN. The NBN and the privately owned broadcast media operate in similar ways with regard to selling airtime, with both requiring payment up-front and rates determined by the marketplace.

The only cost-free political advertising is provided by the NBN, which during election campaigns allots a ten-minute television spot and a ten-minute radio spot to each political party that fields candidates for at least one-third of the seats in parliament, with the NBN determining the time of broadcast. This pales in comparison with the enormous amounts of airtime and advertising space purchased by political parties and candidates, as election campaigning has become a media war fought through television, radio and newspapers. As part of this battle, substantial amounts of money are now used to hire media consultants and pollsters, many of them coming from the US and UK and charging steep fees.

When in opposition, political parties accuse the party in power of exploiting the NBN to its advantage. Though there is some evidence of unbalanced or unfair news coverage of political activities, the bias, to the extent that it exists, is subtle. Plans by the current government of Prime Minister Patrick Manning to privatize NBN were shelved because the costs of severance for employees were considered prohibitive.

In an ethnically bipolar society divided between Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians, many of the privately owned radio stations cater to specific groups, particularly through call-in and talk shows. Supporters of the East Indian-based United National Congress (UNC) believe that the establishment of a pro-Indo-Trinidadian radio station in 1993 was at least partly responsible for the UNC's electoral victory in 1995. While such radio programming allows for a diversity of views on national issues and gives voice to ordinary citizens, there were concerns that some shows serve to deepen ethnic divisions and incite racial violence. In May 2004, the government warned broadcasters that it would no longer tolerate ethnic

divisiveness on the air and was moving forward with legislation against it, prompting expressions of concern among some in the media about inordinate government controls.

Traditional forms of electoral competition, or “ground wars,” including motorcades, rallies and the old-style “rum, roti and sardine” giveaways, still play an important political role. But the cadres that carry out the street level campaigning and canvassing now constitute a mercenary army, expecting to be paid rather than working out of loyalty to a political party or candidate.

**FIGURE 1: MEDIA OWNERSHIP IN THE CARIBBEAN**

Country	Television	Radio	Printed Press	Internet Access
Antigua and Barbuda	State	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Bahamas	State	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Belize	Private	Private	Private/Political Party	Unrestricted
Dominica	Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Grenada	State/Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Guyana	State/Private	State	State, Private/Political Party	Unrestricted
Jamaica	Private	Private	Private	Unrestricted
St. Kitts and Nevis	State	Private	Private/Political Party	Unrestricted
St. Lucia	State/Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Suriname	State/Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted
Trinidad and Tobago	State/Private	State/Private	Private	Unrestricted

**FIGURE 2: MEDIA ACCESS IN THE CARIBBEAN**

Country	Regulation	Regulatory Body	Free Access	Paid Access	In-Kind Access
Antigua and Barbuda	Pending	Electoral Commission	No	Yes	No
Bahamas	Yes	Electoral Broadcasting Council	No	Yes	No
Belize	No	No	No	Yes	No
Dominica	No	No	No	Yes	No
Grenada	No	No	No	Yes	No
Guyana	No	No	No	Yes	No
Jamaica	No	No	No	Yes	No
St. Kitts and Nevis	No	No	No	Yes	No
St. Lucia	No	No	Minimal	Yes	No
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	No	No	Minimal	Yes	No
Suriname	Minimal	No	Minimal	Yes	No
Trinidad and Tobago	No	No	Minimal	Yes	No

### III. Looking Ahead

Generally free and open media are one of the principal reasons why democracy among CARICOM nations has proved to be more effective and durable than in any other subregion in the developing world. Still, the parliamentary democracies of Caricom continue to be buffeted by the demands of the global economy, the drug and money-laundering networks that thrive within it, population pressures, and a growing lack of confidence among citizens in the abilities of politicians to address these problems. The result has been mounting stress on democratic systems and the institutions upon which they rest, including the media.

Most media outlets in the Caricom countries, both the established mainstays and the newer entries, have striven to keep up with the changing global and political climate. They have worked in different ways to enhance their roles not only in reporting and questioning the behavior of governments and opposition parties, but also in acting as social agents and in providing channels through which ordinary citizens in between elections can have a say in how they are governed.

This has caused heightened tension between the media and the political class, particularly political parties in power who find themselves — their record and actions — the focus of ever greater media attention, whether through traditional channels such as newspapers or newer forms such as talk and call-in shows in the broadcast media. Greater media scrutiny has, in turn, led to more intense use of libel laws and other pressures upon the media by governments, including threats of legislation that criminalizes vaguely worded offences such as ‘spreading false news’. This situation casts a pall and raises the spectre of increasing self-censorship at a time when more light needs to be shed on the political landscape, not less.

The relatively regulation-free, market-driven media environment in the region also has a downside. The voices of those without resources tend to be heard less; traditional political forces remain entrenched; and those actors who might be better equipped or could offer viable alternatives for responding to the new challenges are often left on the sidelines.

Lack of regulation also comes at the cost of transparency with regard to the substantial and untracked flows of political funding. This is an ever more important concern given the increasing penetration in the region of assorted swindlers, offshore hustlers, high-tech buccaneers and powerful criminal organizations that seek political leverage and challenge more traditional multinational enterprises for influence, posing a threat to the sovereignty of small nations.

At the same time, the issue of the relationship between new media forms and ethnic tension, and the question of whether there should be free or subsidized access to media to create a more level playing field, are increasingly resonant in the region. In most of the countries under review here, these questions are being addressed, with varying degrees of resolve and interest, in the ongoing constitutional reform process, as was discussed at the conference on “Constitutional Reform in the Caribbean” organized by the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy in coordination with the UNDP in Barbados in January 2002 as part of the OAS “Democratic Forum Series’.

As political parties in the region, in power and in opposition, address the challenge of strengthening democracy in the Caribbean, they would do well to consider the recommendations of that conference with regard to the media: the creation of new media

programming, including citizen referenda conducted through the broadcast media, that promotes civic education and discussion on issues such as constitutional reform and ensures that citizen voices are regularly heard in the halls of government; the strengthening of laws guaranteeing access to information from official sources; and more democratic use of new technologies, particularly computers and the Internet. The degree to which the Caribbean democracies can strengthen themselves through constitutional reform, and the role of political parties and the media in advancing the process, will be telling for the rest of the world.

One recommendation for a follow-up exercise would be a survey of media outlets themselves — from state-run print and broadcast media and traditional private outlets, to the newer media forms such as talk and call-in shows and internet communication — including owners, journalists, editors, producers, broadcast personnel and hosts, and Internet operators. How do they conduct themselves during election campaigns and why? How do they operate in between elections and during times of political crisis? How do they finance themselves and how does this and the trend toward greater media concentration affect independence and objectivity? Do they believe in providing free access to political actors or do they prefer a market-based approach, or a combination of the two? Do they feel threatened in any way by governments or other elements because of their reporting or programming? Do they see a social role for the media and, if so, how can it be carried out? How do they address the issue of media and ethnic tension in bipolar or multipolar societies? And, more generally, how do they see themselves operating in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world?



# Political Party Financing and Women's Political Participation in the Caribbean

*Cynthia Barrow-Giles*

## I. The Gender Gap in Caribbean Politics

*The Zenith of a woman's ambition in life should be to be a loving mother and a pleasing wife for thus they are by nature intended not as overlords or slaves but to man subjected to join with him in love and connubial unity in generating humanity.*

A central issue to emerge in gender discourse on political participation and politics, is the struggle for women's equality and one critical measure is the global representation of women in national parliaments. Notwithstanding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, varied forms of discrimination remain, including political. In 1979, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. In 1985 the U.N. adopted the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, which highlights actions to achieve gender equality by the year 2000, including the full observance to the rights of women and the elimination of both de jure and de facto discrimination. Moreover, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) called on governments to take every measure to reduce the gender inequality in the political, public and private sectors by the year 2005, setting a target goal of 30 percent of key decision making positions to be occupied by women in these three sectors. The CPA resolution asserted that this percentage constituted a critical mass to influence attitudes and behaviours toward gender.

In the case of the Commonwealth Caribbean many of the structural obstacles to women's participation in politics have long been eliminated. Women have acquired the right to participate in the political system since the advent of universal adult suffrage. Yet for the most part politics, and certainly national decision making, continue to be dominated by males. The phenomenon of women in politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean is still a comparative rarity.

While women have been involved in politics for an exceptionally long time, to a large extent a relatively small number of party posts and very few elective or appointive offices have been available to them. This represents a paradox in politics given the fact that women constitute more than 50 percent of the population in all Commonwealth Caribbean countries. So that while they represent a strong political group by virtue of their numbers, women nonetheless reflect fundamental representational weakness, given the small number who sit in national parliaments whether in the elected legislative assemblies or the national senate.

This marginality is a function both of supply and demand - in other words, not only are their barriers to women's participation, but the pool of eligible women candidates is also limited. Miki Caul therefore argues "the severe under-representation of one-half of the population not only limits the diversity of parliaments but also contradicts one of the central tenets of representational democracy."<sup>40</sup>

Evidence from the Commonwealth Caribbean suggests two critical factors, however, that should augur well for female political participation and which should lead to a reduction in the existing gap in the gender participation at the highest levels in national decision making regionally. Firstly, girls' and women's access to education seems to be equal to that of males. An equally important development is that female educational achievement surpasses that of males at all levels. In a 2002 publication on the political volitions of males and females with respect to the Barbados-OECS Initiative, Barrow-Giles and Cuffie made the cautious conclusion that "The socio-demographic feature, education, does have significant influence on the political volitions of both men and women and that it is an important composite feature in determining attitudes."<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, the educational progress of women has yet to translate into political representation.

The small pool of women available for national politics is a function of a number of structural impediments, including:

1. *Socialisation*. Of particular concern are women's experiences of motherhood and care giving which ultimately serve to crystallise the views on social roles of the sexes. These differences cut across sexes, professions and social classes and the calypsonian verse above is indicative of this universal acceptance. In Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, certain cultural beliefs also prove to be burdensome to women's political involvement.

<sup>40</sup> Miki Caul, *Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Political Parties*, *Party Politics Volume 5 No.1, 1999*, pp. 79-98.

<sup>41</sup> The 2002 publication was based on a national survey of 1183 persons conducted in Barbados between November 1998 and June 1999. See Cynthia Barrow-Giles and Joan Cuffie, "Gender, Education and Political Volitions of Barbadians: Perceptions Towards Regional Integration with Special Reference to the Barbados-OECS Initiative." In *The Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 36.2 2002, pp. 243-266.

2. *Economics.* In the Commonwealth Caribbean many women have never occupied the single traditional role of care provider. Rather, they face the challenge of juggling careers and domestic responsibilities. Nearly fifty percent of the households in the Caribbean are headed by female single parents, while fewer females are employed in the work force than males.

The decline in the traditional base of the economy in the Windward Islands, as depicted by the decline of the banana industry, have placed both men and women in economic and social jeopardy. Since the early 1990s women have to take on the additional burden of supporting displaced men leaving little room to devote to elective politics. Cecilia Green concludes this development "serves to exacerbate problems for women in the Caribbean, especially heads of households who must now support their families and a growing number of unemployed males. At the same time women continue to be plagued by unemployment rates that are more than double those of men (171)."

3. *Politics.* Political parties have not addressed the challenges facing women in politics. They provide little or no special assistance, financial or otherwise, to entice them into the political arena. As will be discussed, political parties do not view greater inclusion of women as necessary to winning elections and do not actively seek or promote them as candidates. While membership is difficult to estimate, it is generally believed that fewer women than men belong to parties. Since membership is a key ingredient for selection, women will remain at the margins of the selection process. In the Caribbean there is the tendency to naturalise male domination especially of the political process.

In order to address their political under representation, women have created a host of non-governmental organisations to represent the political interest of their membership. The number of these NGOs in the region has grown dramatically and has provided several women the opportunity to participate in electoral politics. The 2004 successful election of a woman candidate in Antigua and Barbuda, for example, owes much to swing to the opposition political party as it does to the NGO calling itself the Professional Organisation for Women in Antigua and Barbuda (POWA). Since the late 1990s POWA has been extremely active in not only promoting women's issues, educating the public on a wide range of issues but also in challenging government. This may have had the effect of encouraging women candidates for elections in that country. Similarly, women's organisations in other parts of the Caribbean are contributing to the increased activity of women and in promoting their greater political visibility.

The multiplication of women's organisations has also led to some overly generalized conclusions, however. Foremost is the notion that women constitute a homogeneous group and they have yet to achieve this potential. Barriteau argues that "possessing a de jure (her emphasis) right to vote and to stand for elections has not produced a de facto (her emphasis) inclusion and representation of women at all levels in Caribbean political systems. It has not transcended national government structures to be a common feature at the level of local government. Women in the Commonwealth Caribbean continue to experience a combination of subsystemic material and ideological barriers that thwart their full participation in the practices of governance nationally and at the community level (Barriteau 1998:6)."

Statistics support this assertion. Since the advent of universal adult suffrage in 1951 in the Caribbean less than 10 percent of the candidates contesting general elections were women and fewer have won parliamentary seats.<sup>42</sup>

## II. Shifting the Burden of Securing Adequate Representation to Political Parties.

If women's under-representation is to be effectively addressed, affirmative action deliberately designed to increase women's presence in national parliaments must be taken. The political institution to undertake that task is the political party. This can be effectively achieved through its recruitment process and determination of constituency representation. A major strategy to affect the increased number of women holding public office, and which has achieved a measure of success in some Latin American countries, is the policy of gender quotas or targets.

As early as the 1970s, political parties in industrialised democracies first accepted the view that there was a need to increase women's representation in decision making. A critical strategy to advance that goal on the part of the political party was to adopt gender goals and quotas (Calk: 1999). The 1980s saw increased use of that strategy. Throughout the 1980s, political parties in Western democracies turned increasingly to this strategy which resulted in the increased presence of women in national parliaments. Nonetheless in the Caribbean there is considerable resistance and reluctance to implementing any direct strategy that would imply quotas.

It is clear that within the last ten years political parties across the region have become more sensitive to the issue of women's representation. Unfortunately, one of the major hindrances to this is that the political condition necessary to galvanise political parties in that direction is lacking in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The fact is that where electoral data are available, there is little evidence to suggest that a gender gap exists in terms of support for the political parties. Women have not emerged in the Caribbean as a single and distinctive electoral bloc that has to be courted, appeased and won by the dominant political parties. Thus, political parties are not compelled to dramatically adjust their political strategies to appeal to the female voter.

If ideological change does provide the basis for enhancing women's representation nationally, it does not necessarily guarantee a change in women's socio-political and economic status. The Westminster model under which most of the countries of the Caribbean Community exist does not provide the opportunity for Parliamentary representatives to oppose, in any substantial way, the policies and programmes offered by the party leadership in government.

Arguably, in the last decade of the twentieth century, political parties across the region have made some effort to secure greater participation by women in both their executive politics and national representation. In the case of national representation, more female candidates are being selected as constituency representatives to contest general elections for the lower house in the national parliaments. Secondly, women are also increasingly being

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Emmanuel's 1991 study provides the best known single source of data on the electoral candidacy of women in the Commonwealth Caribbean. See Patrick Emmanuel's *Elections and Party Systems in the Commonwealth Caribbean 1944-1991*. St. Michael: Caribbean Development Research Services.

appointed to the nominated house of parliament. So that, while nationally the presence of women is increasing, there are inter-party variations both at the national and regional level. Overall however, the pattern of party support for women in terms of their selection as candidates varied over time, with Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica outperforming the other countries.

It must be noted, however, that the increased, though small, number of women to enter electoral politics did not immediately translate into a parliamentary presence up to 1991. As Table 2 amply demonstrates, less than one third of the women who participated in electoral politics were able to score electoral victories. Undoubtedly, regionally, the best electoral performances of women have taken place in Jamaica. However, we must be mindful of the fact that the 1983 snap elections in Jamaica perhaps contributed to the excellent performance of women in that year and indeed provided the best opportunity for the Jamaica Labour Party to select women as constituency representatives. In December 1983, the Seaga led administration called a snap election, giving the PNP only two days in which to select and nominate sixty candidates for the general elections. The People's National Party decided not to contest the general elections and the JLP took all sixty (60) of the parliamentary seats. In only six constituencies did the JLP candidate compete with independent candidates. The other fifty-four of the parliamentary seats were won by default by the party.<sup>43</sup> Five (5) of the female candidates contesting on behalf of the JLP were unopposed, while the other three candidates won handsomely against independent candidates (Emmanuel, 1991).

The most successful women candidates from 1944 to 1991 (see table 2) have emerged in the five countries of Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. In Dominica, Eugenia Charles who is the region's most successful female candidate, easily won five consecutive elections having first experienced electoral defeat in her first venture at the hands of newcomer Patrick John who represented the still powerful Dominica Labour Party. She was later to become Dominica's first and only female Prime Minister as well as the first female Prime Minister throughout the entire Caribbean Community. This major feat required Dame Eugenia Charles to not only obtain the support of her constituency but to obtain solid party support in a traditionally male dominated institution.

In the Eastern Caribbean, the other two formidable female candidates between 1957 and 1974 were Cynthia Gairy and Ivy Joshua of Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines respectively, having won a combined total of eleven (11) elections. However, in comparison to Eugenia Charles, both Gairy and Joshua undoubtedly achieved political success partly as a result of the fact that in both cases they were the wives of the two dominant, widely supported and admired political figures in their countries.

<sup>43</sup> Carl Stone, *Politics Versus Economics: The 1989 Elections in Jamaica*. Heinemann Publishers (Caribbean Limited, Kingston, 1989). Stone also contends that the PNP boycotted the elections as a result of the failure of the government to undertake electoral reform particularly with respect to the voters registration list.

**TABLE 1**  
**GENERAL ELECTIONS AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE**  
**ELECTED HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT 1944-1991**

Country	Year of Election	# Women Contesting Elections	Election Result
Antigua and Barbuda	1980	2	2 defeats
	1984	1	1 defeat
	1989	1	1 defeat
Barbados	1951	1	1 victory
	1956	1	1 victory
	1961	2	2 defeats
	1971	2	1 defeat, 1 victory
	1976	5 (1 Independent)	4 defeats, 1 victory
	1981	3	2 defeats, 1 victory
	1986	3	2 defeats, 1 victory
	1991	11	10 defeats, 1 victory
Dominica	1957	1 (Independent)	1 defeat
	1961	2	2 defeats
	1966	3 (1 Independent)	2 defeats, 1 victory
	1970	2	2 defeats
	1975	1	1 victory
	1980	4	2 victories, 2 defeats
	1985	4	2 victories, 2 defeats
	1990	8	3 victories, 5 defeats
Grenada	1954	1 (Independent)	1 defeat
	1957	3	3 defeats
	1961	1	1 victory
	1962	2	1 defeat, 1 victory
	1967	1	1 victory
	1972	3	3 victories
	1976	2	1 victory, 1 defeat
	1984	5	3 defeats, 2 victories
	1990	5	3 defeats, 2 victories
Jamaica	1944	2 (1 Independent)	2 defeats
	1949	5 (3 Independents)	4 defeats, 1 victory
	1955	2	1 defeat, 1 victory
	1959	2	1 defeat, 1 victory
	1962	3 (1 Independent)	2 defeats, 1 victory
	1967	5	3 defeats, 2 victories
	1972	5	3 defeats, 2 victories
	1976	7	2 defeats, 5 victories
	1980	13 (3 Independents)	7 defeats, 6 victories
	1983	8	8 victories
	1989	15 (1 Independent)	12 defeats, 3 victories

St. Kitts-Nevis	1971	1	1 defeat
	1980	1	1 defeat
	1984	1	1 victory
	1989	1	1 victory
St. Lucia	1961	1	1 defeat
	1964	1	1 defeat
	1974	1	1 victory
	1979	2	2 defeats
	1982	2	2 defeats
	1987	2	2 defeats
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1957	1	1 victory
	1961	1	1 victory
	1966	1	1 victory
	1967	1	1 victory
	1972	1	1 victory
	1974	1	1 victory
	1979	2	2 defeats
	1984	2	2 defeats
	1989	4	2 defeats, 2 victories
Trinidad and Tobago	1950	2 (1 Independent)	2 defeats
	1956	4 (2 Independents)	4 defeats
	1961	4	4 defeats
	1966	7	6 defeats, 1 victory
	1971	3	2 defeats, 1 victory
	1976	29 (1 Independent)	26 defeats, 3 victories
	1981	18	12 defeats, 6 victories
	1986	20	14 defeats, 6 victories
	1991	27	23 defeats, 4 victories
<b>Total Number of Candidates, Victories and Defeats</b>		<b>288</b>	<b>Defeats = 197 Victories = 91</b>

Extracted from Patrick A. M. Emmanuel, *Elections and Party Systems in the Commonwealth Caribbean 1944-1991*, CADRES, Bridgetown, 1992.

**TABLE 2**  
**ELECTED FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN SELECTED CARIBBEAN**  
**COMMUNITY COUNTRIES: 1944-1991.**

Country	# Contesting the General Elections	# of Successful Women	% Success
Antigua and Barbuda (1980-1989)	4	0	0 %
Barbados (1951-1991)	28	7 (Billie Miller, former Deputy prime Minister recorded 3 successes)	25%
Dominica (1957-1990)	25	9 (Eugenia Charles, former Prime Minister of Dominica, recorded 5 of these successes)	36%
Grenada (1954-1990)	23	11 (Cynthia Gairy, wife of Eric Gairy, former Prime Minister, recorded 5 wins)	47.82%
Jamaica (1944-1989)	67	32 (Enid Bennett won six consecutive elections, Leon Rose 3, Portia Simpson 3)	47.76%
St. Kitts-Nevis (1971-1989)	4	2	50.0%
St. Lucia (1961-1987)	9	1	11.11%
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1957-1989)	14	8 (6 of the electoral successes were recorded to Ivy Joshua, wife of former Chief Minister and Premier)	57.14%
Trinidad and Tobago (1950 -1991)	114	21 (Muriel Donowa-McDavidson won in four consecutive elections, Pamela Nicholson 3,)	18.42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>31.59%</b>

Extracted from Patrick A. M. Emmanuel, *Elections and Party Systems in the Commonwealth Caribbean 1944-1991*, CADRES, Bridgetown, 1992.

Billie Miller of Barbados and Enid Barrett are Barbados' and undoubtedly Jamaica's most successful female parliamentarians. While Barrett contested and won six (6) consecutive elections from 1967- 1989, Miller only lost one of the four general elections that she contested between 1976 and 1991 on behalf of the country's oldest remaining political party. Since 1991 Miller has gone on to win all three of the general elections in Barbados. Like Eugenia Charles she did not ride on the coat tails of a politically powerful husband.

For the first time in the electoral history of Antigua and Barbuda, a female candidate, Jacqui Quinn-Leandro representing the UPP, recorded a major victory against her male ALP

competitor in the March 2003 General Elections. Grenada too experienced major success for women, with NNP female candidates securing all five of the parliamentary seats which they contested. The NNP defeated its political opponents by securing all fifteen seats in that election. The 1999 general elections in Grenada therefore, once again, provided a powerful statement to the fact that female candidate fare well in a context of landslide victories to political parties.

In St. Lucia, with respect to the 'gender gap' in electoral politics, particularly in regards to political candidacy, the 1997 general elections are most striking. The elections from 1951-1992 revealed that only five (5) women contested elections either as Independents or party candidates and only one woman actually won a seat to parliament - a twenty percent success rate over the entire period, representing a mere 3 percent of the parliamentary seats.<sup>44</sup> Clearly, while the election of Heraldine Rock had "broken the ice," it was not until the 1997 elections that the political candidacy of women gained new prominence as both political parties attempted to mobilise around both women and youth issues.

In terms of women's political candidacy for the May 1997 elections, three women, or 7.32 percent of the candidate, were nominated by the two major political parties, while a fourth contested as an independent candidate. Two of the party nominated female candidates were appointed by the SLP and one by the UWP. Two of the women candidates, i.e., Menissa M. Rambally, age 21, a business woman and the successor to her father,<sup>45</sup> and Sarah Flood, a 28-year-old lawyer, representatives of the SLP, won their parliamentary seats (12% of the total parliamentary seats). The victory of Sarah Flood itself was remarkable for several reasons. For one, she was a first timer. Secondly, she was contesting in a constituency that had been totally dominated by the UWP. Thirdly, she was coming against the newly elected Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Vaughan Lewis.<sup>46</sup> It is however very clear that in the case of Sarah Flood her victory was related to the national swing against the UWP generally and to the opposition by many St. Lucians to the manner in which Lewis himself had come to power. Menissa Rambally, the youngest ever candidate in St. Lucia, clearly benefitted electorally from the sympathy vote generated by the untimely death of her father. She was also able to capitalise on her youth in an election's campaign that successfully focused on that segment of the population. The election of these two female candidates both in the 1997 and 2001 elections transformed the St. Lucia lower House of parliament from a virtual 'all boys camp' to a more gender integrated elected parliament.

<sup>44</sup> A.M. Patrick Emmanuel (1992). "Elections and party Systems." 66-67.

<sup>45</sup> Menissa Rambally's appointment followed the untimely unexpected death of her father weeks before the election.

<sup>46</sup> Vaughan Lewis had been selected by the then Prime Minister John Comptom as his successor. In order to facilitate his entry into parliament, the long standing Central Castries Member of Parliament John Mallet had been persuaded by Mr. Comptom to retire from active politics. Vaughan Lewis then contested the open seat, against long time politician George Odum, which he won in 1996. One year later he was defeated by Sarah Flood.

**Table 3**  
**General Elections and Gender Representation in the Elected House of Parliament 1992-2004 in Selected Caribbean Countries Selected Years**

Country	Party	Election Year	Female Candidates	Female Victories	Male Candidates	Male Victories
Antigua & Barbuda	ALP	1999	0	-	15	12
	UPP		0	-	15	3
	ALP	2004	1	0	15	4
	UPP		1	1	15	11
	BPMC		0	-	1	
	BPM		0	-	1	**
Barbados	BLP	1994	5	3	23	16
	DLP		2	0	26	8
	NDP		1	0	24	1
	Indep.		2	0	10	0
	BLP	1999	3	3	25	23
	DLP		1	0	27	2
	Indep.		-	-	2	0
	BLP	2003	5	4	25	19
	DLP		4	0	26	7
	Indep					
Dominica	DFP	1995	4	0	17	5
	DLP		3	0	17	5
	UWP		3	3	17	8
	DFP	2000	0	-	12	2
	DLP		3	1	18	9
	UWP		5	2	15	7
Grenada	NNP	1995	3	2	11	6
	NDC		2	1	13	4
	GULP		0	-	15	2
	Others		5	0	23	0
	NNP	1999	5	5	10	10
	NDC		2	0	10	0
	GULP/UL		1	0	8	0
	MBPM		2	0	2	0
	Others					
	NNP	2003	7	3	8	5
	NDC		3	1	12	6
	GULP		0	1	13	0
	Indep.		1	0	1	0
	Others		2	0	16	0
Others						
St. Lucia	UWP	1992	0	0	17	11
	SLP		0	0	17	6
	PLP		0	0	1	0
	UWP	1997	1	0	16	1
	SLP		2	2	15	14
	UWP	2001*	3	0	11	3
	SLP		2	2	15	12
	NAU		1	0	2	0

St. Vincent & the Grenadines	SVLP	1994	0	-	9	2
	NDP		2	2	13	10
	NNU		0	-	6	1
	Indep.		0	-	3	0
	NDP	1998	0	-	15	8
	ULP		1	1	14	6
	PWP		0	-	1	0
	NDP	2001	1	0	14	3
	ULP		2	2	13	10
	PPM		2	0	9	0
Trinidad & Tobago	PNM	1995	3	2	33	15
	NAR		4	1	14	1
	UNC		5	2	29	15
	Others		9	0	13	0
	PNM	2000	10	3	26	13
	UNC		7	1	27	18
	NAR		-	-	2	1
	Others		1	0	2	0
	Indeps	-	-	4	0	
	PNM	2001	9	4	27	14
	UNC		11	2	25	16
	Others		5	0	32	0
	PNM	2002	10	6	26	14
	UNC		8	2	26	14
	Others		5	0	24	0
Indep.	-		-	2	0	

Compiled from Reports on General Election in the Respective countries 1992-2004.

\* (The 2001 General Elections in St. Lucia were marked by a record 5 political parties contesting the elections. However, consideration is only given to three of the 5 political parties. The remaining two were quite irrelevant and in any case cannot be considered as any genuine political parties or indeed political grouping).

\*\* The Barbuda election resulted in a deadlock and required a re-election.

### III. Gender and Political Representation in Guyana and Suriname: Special Cases

As noted above, Guyana is the only English speaking Caribbean country that is not defined by the first- past- the- post system. Unlike the other Caribbean Community Countries, Guyana operates under the Proportional Representational system of voting. Secondly, owing largely to the perception of voter irregularities and electoral corruption generally, general election results in Guyana were not analysed in any meaningful way prior to the electoral reform process of the 1990s. Like Guyana, Suriname also operates under a proportional list electoral system.

Caul (1999) contends that the electoral system that a country adopts is an integral component in explaining women's national political representation. According to him, party list systems tend to produce more women in parliament than plurality systems as these parties

add women to their list in order to broaden their balance and to bring greater gender balance to their ticket. Furthermore, it is argued that the risk involved in having a female as a sole candidate in a first-past-the-post electoral race is considerably reduced when a female is part of a group which occurs in an electoral system based on a party list system. If that proposition hold true, then both the republics of Guyana and Suriname should have more female candidates and therefore more female elected candidates than the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean. As we have attempted to show however, electoral systems can only be one of the intervening variables, as such, issues as party ideology, ethnicity etc., play a critical role in women's political candidacy.

Suriname presents an important departure from the rest of the Caribbean Community states in terms of political party financing. Unlike the other states where candidates are permitted to raise private money for themselves, in Suriname, fund raising for elections is centrally organised by the various political parties and personal fund raising to an individual candidate violates the rules of conduct of the political party. Female candidates in Suriname, therefore, are in fact not adversely impacted by the need to raise large sums of money as they appear to be in several Commonwealth Caribbean States.

Political parties in Suriname, do not only discourage personal fund raising but also disapprove of individual campaigning. It is the political party that takes on the responsibility of soliciting votes for their candidates for the purpose of national elections. Thus, the situation in Suriname appears to offer female candidates an excellent prospect of representing the political party with the possibility of representing the nation in the national parliament. Yet the evidence presented in table 4 shows that few women find themselves in such a situation.

**Table 4**  
**Parliamentary Representatives by Gender: Guyana and Suriname.**  
**Selected Years**

Country	Year	Political Party	Female	Male	Total
Suriname	2000	New front for Development & Democracy (NF)	2	31	33
		Millenium Combination (MC)	3	7	10
		Others	1	7	8
		Total	6*	45*	51
Guyana	1992	People's Prograssive Party/Civic	3	25	28
		People's National Congress	7	16	23
		Working People's Alliance	0	2	2
		United Force	0	1	1
		Total	10	44	54

Extracted from election results compiled by EUOU. See <http://www.bramley.demon.co.uk/suriname/results.html>.  
The gender results may also not be accurate based on the nature of reporting.

## IV. Gender, Political Financing and Political Representation

How do women and for that matter appear on the party's nomination list for election purposes? In the contemporary Caribbean, political parties have made a determined effort to democratise the process of party selection. Historically, the nomination of the candidates was done primarily by the leadership of the party which itself was dominated by a 'maximum' political leader. In keeping with the democratisation trend, parties across the region have generally instituted measures/procedures that should guide the nomination process. For example the St. Lucia Labour Party in St. Lucia has an established policy that at least six months to one year before the general elections all interested persons, including the political leader must face a 'run-off' or a primary at the constituency level. In order to be considered as a candidate representing the political party, all interested individuals must first satisfy the party that they are registered members (Joseph: Barrow-Giles 2004). No person who has formerly satisfied the basis criteria for contestation can be debarred from participating in a run-off. Women therefore should have an equal opportunity at that level to enter the political fray.

However, the St. Lucia Labour Party has instituted one important check and balance in the process which in a sense can significantly reduce the selectorate of the nomination process. While the constituency approach attempts to widen the base of the selectorate to include all dues paying members of the party, the party leadership has insisted that prior to submitting their names to the constituency Chairman, that all interested persons must meet with the party leadership.

The 'run-off' requirement is the first step in achieving the ultimate nomination of the party to contest a general election. Unlike the national elections, this phase in the nomination and election process does not require too much financial outlay. The political party does not provide any financial support during this phase and the individual candidates are expected to raise all the necessary funds. Fortunately for the Candidates in the region, given the relatively small sizes of the constituency branches there is a tremendous reliance on face to face, door to door campaigning. On average, in the Eastern Caribbean for example, the formal constituency branch membership does not exceed five hundred persons. This then is the least costly phase of the process of winning the party's nomination for the candidates as the central party does not provide any financial support for the candidate. It is not that persons do not engage in some of the vote buying that often occurs at national elections, nor for that matter, does it imply that the 'rum-shop' politics does not take place, or that transportation does not incur a cost to the candidate, but at this stage of the process, candidates can generally swing a nomination without too much expense being incurred. There is however, the unstated but sometimes obvious support of the party's executive for specific candidates, which can either serve as a springboard to winning the nomination or boomerang on the candidate. The party's endorsement of a candidate is not always in the best interest of the individual.

Women like men have to face such primaries, and in a context where there is a general view that women should not engage in electoral politics this may be a formidable task. However, several women have successfully defeated men in such 'run-offs' to achieve the party's nomination. In other countries some women have not had to face primaries. This is in fact the case in St. Lucia where, the two successful female candidates in both the 1997

and 2001 General elections, Menissa Rambally, and Sarah Flood-Beaubreau, of the St. Lucia labour Party, did not have to contest a run-off.<sup>47</sup>

In terms of national elections, political party financing across the Caribbean is almost entirely private. State sponsorship of the electoral activities of political parties for national elections is related only to the sponsorship of scrutineers and agents and some financial support is given indirectly to political parties in the form of funding of constituency offices for all elected parliamentarians. Where the later practice prevails as it does in Barbados and St. Lucia for example, the government does not transfer any financial assistance to the extra parliamentary party. According to Munroe (2003), it is precisely because of domination of party financing by private sources in Jamaica, that female would-be political aspirants find themselves in a situation where they are unable to compete successfully with their male counterparts. Two assumptions underlay this position. One is that women are unable or unwilling to raise political money and the other is that private sector and individual donors are reluctant to give funds to women.

The evidence suggests that there is a rather mixed picture in the Caribbean. On the one hand, some female candidates argue that they can more easily obtain financial contribution from private sources than political parties, and that in the absence of such donations they would in fact have a difficult time in actually meeting the minimum requirements to mount an election's campaign. Others argue that private donations are difficult to source because of the reluctance of the private sectors firms to give money to female candidates, preferring instead to invest in male candidates.

Beyond the issue of gender however, the perception of the ability of the political party to mount a successful election campaign is also a critical component of the ability of the party and its candidates to win an election. Opposition political parties across the region typically find themselves in a difficult position. So that both all opposition candidates, especially in a context where the ruling party seems to have consolidated its hold, routinely face major difficulty in raising funds for both routine party activities and for electioneering.

In general however, the determination of the degree of financial support that the individual candidate officially receives from the party's financial committees depends on a number of factors. These include geographical considerations, strongholds, incumbency, desirability of the candidate. There is therefore a certain inbuilt bias toward incumbents, and candidates representing districts that are important to the political party for instance. For the most part precisely because male candidates are still considered to be more 'political' than female candidates, women are discriminated against as they are not considered as valuable political resources capable of winning elections.

Moreover, many women do not necessarily present themselves for electoral politics. This is related to the domestic and care giving concerns of women which often preclude them from public endeavours. The demands of domestic responsibility and oftentimes being the sole breadwinner in the Caribbean for the most part do not provide an environment that is conducive to women being able to devote the time to party and election functions.

<sup>47</sup> In the 2001 General elections Sarah Flood-Beaubreau was challenged by Peterson Francis. However days before the 'run-off' Mr. Francis pulled out of the race for the nomination of the Central Castries constituency.

In terms of the incumbency factor, it is argued that incumbents and candidates who have either contested previous elections and opposition parliamentarians have a greater capacity to raise funds privately as they have already established some credibility in the community. Generally, political parties offer some assistance to the younger, less experienced candidates. However, women find themselves unable to compete with their male counterparts precisely because of the traditional dominance of electoral politics by males. For one thing, as the data presented above have shown, few women are incumbents in the region. Secondly, unless like Menissa Rambally of St. Lucia for instance they inherit a constituency that historically have been dominated by the political party, or are financially able to support their electoral needs, many would be female candidates are deterred from involving themselves electorally. This is partly because of their inability to raise large sums of money that is necessary to contest, and perhaps, win an election in the Caribbean today. Undine Whittaker of the Democratic labour Party of Barbados,<sup>48</sup> noted that from her perspective at the party level, "... women can be disadvantaged because of the perception of politics being a man's domain. Women generally always have to do more, be more convincing to get assistance" (Whittaker: Brathwaite 2004).

Equity considerations, notwithstanding protestations to the contrary, seem not to be given high priority by the political parties in their determination of the needs of the candidates who have been selected to contest general elections on behalf of the parties. Inequality, that is, imbalances between parties and among candidates in terms of the distribution of the party's resources whether in kind or cash, is therefore rife. Nicole Daize a member of the short-lived PPM, and Glenis Roberts of the NDC, explained that there is a definite tendency on the part of political parties in both St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada, to favour male politicians and that as a general rule women are given minimum assistance. Daize further stated that financing and electioneering is largely "A dog eat dog show" (Daize: Davis 2004). Clearly this view is not upheld throughout the Caribbean and stands in stark reality to the view expressed by a female political candidate in Dominica who explained that the United Workers Party provided her with 30 to 70 percent of her campaign funds for the three elections she contested and won on behalf of the party.<sup>49</sup> In Barbados, Treasurer of the Barbados labour Party, Tyrone Barker, also suggested that while the party allocates funds on the basis of perceived need, there is some equity in the distribution of funds. He further noted that candidates are expected to raise money privately and that the female candidates have been "able to do a lot on their own" (Barker: Brathwaite 2004). Ann David-Antoine a 2003 failed female NNP candidate in Grenada, is of the view that there is no discrimination against female candidates by the political parties but that both men and women lack sufficient financial resources to wage a successful election's campaign (David-Antoine: Sandy 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Undine Whittaker has served as Vice \_President of the Democratic Labour Party of Barbados and she has also represented the party electorally.

<sup>49</sup> This information was obtained from C. K. Babb of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC).

## V. Conclusions

We cannot conclude with any degree of certainty that access to political money is the overriding consideration in the inability of a candidate and political parties to win an election. However, what we can say is that women face more obstacles than men in seeking political office. One such obstacle is their lack of access to political money. This is critical especially in a context where women have traditionally not been the business owners and are primarily care givers. Lacking independent sources of income, women generally have to either rely upon the party machinery or raise funds themselves. It is therefore not surprising that some of the region's most successful female politicians in more recent times have been professionals, engaging in such services as the legal profession or business. In the last decade women have become more politically active, while at the same time many women have had to deal with the difficulties of structural adjustments making it more difficult for them to devote themselves to the time-consuming activity of electoral and party politics. Yet across the Caribbean, we see that women constitute the backbone of the political party. That position however, have seemingly not translated into a greater presence in national politics.

# From Grassroots to the Airwaves: Paying for Political Parties and Campaigns in the Caribbean

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Most political leaders interviewed for this study agreed that campaign costs were increasing; paradoxically, though, no one could say with any exactitude how much campaigns cost. Simple observation suggests growing “Americanization” of campaigns: increased reliance on media advertising, foreign consultants to mould the message and high tech rallies, all with concomitant high prices. Where estimates were given, they ranged from US\$2 million (Antigua and Barbuda) to US\$6 million (Jamaica) per party per campaign. The researchers of this study place a number of qualifications on these figures, however. Estimates vary depending on their source: official parties tend to provide lower estimates, while opposition parties and civil society organisations assume higher expenditures. Most did not even venture a guess.

Media publicity appears to be of growing importance, but many political leaders confess that they invest in this medium “just in case” and not because they view it as crucial to electoral victory. With small populations, single-member districts and first-past-the-post, winner-take-all systems, politicians have not abandoned the tried and tested “rum, roti and sardines” campaign described in chapter one. Personal patronage plays a big role in campaigns, probably more so than in the other subregions of the hemisphere. Indeed, according to a recent poll conducted in Suriname, nearly seventy-two percent of citizens surveyed believed that the best way to reach the electorate in their country was through public meetings, rallies, and personal contact with the politicians.

Patronage on the “rum and roti” level makes estimating campaign costs difficult; the lack of disclosure makes quantifying these costs impossible. Only four of the fourteen countries in this study have any type of legislation on the books requiring disclosure of campaign expenditures. Even in this handful of countries, required disclosure is limited to expenditure from public funds and, in practice, disclosure is rarely enforced. In most countries of the Caribbean, expenses for candidates and parties are considered separate and if one is regulated, it is the candidate. Parties, generally lacking legal definition, are subject to very few controls. Some candidates, to access unregulated party funds, have even declared that they personally have spent no funds whatever.

Similarly, and perhaps more worryingly, contributions are not regulated. Only four CARICOM countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) have anything on the books requiring disclosure of contributions, and even in these four countries, most admit that the regulation is not enforced. Interviews in one country revealed that the political leaders “were not even aware” of the disclosure requirement.

Contributors insist on confidentiality, arguing that they could be victimised if their party is voted out of office. Interviews and research undertaken for this study indicate, however, that most contributing individuals and firms give simultaneously to competing candidates or parties. Most of those interviewed believed that the number of contributors has decreased in the last five years. As campaigns become more expensive, individual contributions are becoming bigger and individual contributors more influential.

While suspicions still remain among contributors and parties about increased disclosure requirements, reform in this area appears further along than other campaign or political party financing regulation. The pressure for increased regulation has originated from outside the political party structures, usually from civil society organisations, but parties in Trinidad, Jamaica and Suriname have passed meaningful legislation in this regard. Balanced enforcement of this legislation, however, remains to be seen.

Most concede that there is little public support for public financing of political parties or campaigns. This lack of support emanates from negative public perceptions both of political parties and the state. On the one hand, parties are viewed as too corrupt to merit funding from scarce resources. On the other, the state is perceived as too weak (*vis a vis* the parties) to ensure equitable distribution and disclosure of these funds. Although direct public funding is a generally unpopular option, an equitable allocation of free airtime on state-owned media could potentially constitute an important in-kind contribution to political parties; Jamaica, St. Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad already provide some free time on state-owned media, albeit minuscule in comparison to the total amount purchased on the free market.

Political party and campaign financing reform efforts seem particularly ephemeral in the Caribbean. A funding scandal can be a cause celebre for an opposition party, but when that party comes to power it hesitates to change the familiar rules of the game. Even ruling political parties advocate reform during election time, but the issue is given low priority once the campaign fervour has died. Where legislation does try to limit campaign expenditures, limits fail to reflect the economic realities of mounting a modern campaign. Legislation in Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica — the only countries that have attempted to limit campaign expenditures — do not take into account these increasing costs, or a devaluing currency. Candidates who abided by such restrictive figures would not be competitive in most constituencies. Likewise, sanctions levied for violations are also quite low, making it more cost-effective to violate the

law than to abide by it. In most cases, enforcement of campaign financing legislation is practically non-existent, rendering the risk of penalty for violators close to zero.

Political party regulation, in finance and otherwise, is complicated by the absence of a juridical definition of parties. The constitutions of the Caribbean do not define political parties and there is little legislation regulating them. Indeed, few countries have legal requirements for registering as a political party. There are few laws that recognise parties or regulate or limit the manner in which, and the extent to which, they are funded by either the private or public sector. (Suriname is the exception.) To the extent that they do exist, limits apply to candidates, who easily obviate them through their political parties. Many constitutional reform commissions comprised of members outside of political party structures have advocated for a juridical definition of political parties and greater disclosure requirements. Examples include Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

As noted by Doug Payne, the media in the Caribbean are freer and under less threat than in any other subregion of the developing world. Primarily through the advent of talk radio, voices of virtually all shades within the political spectrum are heard. Yet, in each of the 14 Caribbean countries studied, the market determines access to the media and political parties are spending more for it. Radio, as noted in Chapter II, is utilised most, while television is the most expensive and used to a lesser degree. By some estimates, media expenditures account for between a quarter and a third of total campaign expenditures. An interesting model with regard to ensuring equal access to the media is The Bahamas. While no free space is provided to political parties, an Electoral Broadcasting Council ensures implementation of broadcasting rules for state-run media. In some other countries, equal access to the media is on the books, but seldom enforced.

It is sometimes said of political financing in the Caribbean, “if you can’t pay, you can’t play”. The extent to which money influences electoral and policy outcomes in CARICOM states is difficult to gauge accurately. However, current absences and deficiencies in the regulation of political financing sustain uneven and badly lit playing fields, increasing the likelihood and minimising the penalties for cheating. Campaign finance regulation, including equal access to the media, can ensure that whoever desires to play is provided with a fair chance to win.

