

Caribbean Nations Slow To Adopt Economic Integration

by Barbara Khol

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At a Jan. 23 meeting in Barbados, Kenneth Duncan, senior lecturer in government at the University of the West Indies, said he had detected no sense of urgency among regional governments "on any matter at all" concerning regional economic integration." A week previously, Shridath Ramphal, former Commonwealth secretary general, said, "We cannot face 1992 with the attitudes of 1962, when we began to chart our separatist paths as independent countries." Ramphal chairs the West Indian Commission, set up by Caribbean Community (Caricom) leaders in 1990 to evaluate Caricom's future as a common market arrangement. Caricom was established in 1973 to promote economic integration, and economic, political and cultural cooperation. The 13 member-nations are Jamaica (pop. 2.37 million), Trinidad and Tobago (1.2 million), Guyana (754,000), Barbados (260,000), the Bahamas (250,000), Belize (183,000), St. Lucia (148,000), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (115,000), Grenada (100,000), Antigua/Barbuda (83,000), Dominica (82,000), St. Christopher/Nevis (43,000), and Montserrat (15,000). Ramphal, a former foreign minister of Guyana, emphasized that only 5.6 million people are ruled by 13 sovereign governments. According to Ramphal, Caricom citizens "have become the most fragmented and over-governed people in the world." Next, Ramphal said the failure to implement regional decisions, such as the adoption of a common external tariff (CET) for non-Caricom goods, "calls into question our seriousness about integration." One year after the original deadline for CET implementation, Antigua/Barbuda, Belize, Montserrat, St. Christopher/Nevis, and St. Lucia have not yet done so. In mid-1991, the 13 agreed to implement mechanisms for facilitating the movement of Caricom nationals from one member-nation to another. Thus far, Grenada is the only government to have acted. Caricom nationals can now enter Grenada with identification cards, driver's licenses or health insurance cards. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 01/24/92)

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