

***Culture and Trade: The Perspective of a Developing Country
(Barbados) by P. Antonio Rudder 30.11.98***

Carifesta in 1981 signaled the emergence of creative culture in Barbados. It served to engender an explosion of endogenous community activity in every nook and cranny. Folk groups, calypsonians, calypso bands, dramatic groups, dancers and a range of technical personnel were all inspired and responded positively to the seeds sown by the dynamic artistes, from the Caribbean and South America, who literally invaded and took Barbados by storm during Carifesta 1981. In addition, Carifesta afforded Barbadian audiences critical and useful time to develop an appreciation for abstract culture.

It is therefore fitting, that we in Barbados, should use this opportunity to articulate our position on the importance of the relationship between culture and trade, as well as seek support for the implementation of measures to facilitate the free movement of artists and their products throughout the Caribbean region and Latin America.

Culture and its related industries are extensive and have become critical in providing alternative employment for a significant number of Barbadians, at a time when many of the traditional sources of employment are no longer available, or have simply dried up. In fact, the profile of cultural workers has changed radically and now includes persons who are well qualified and trained, who are cultural workers by choice and not by chance. However, because we recognize the economic potential of the cultural industries and the limitations of the Barbadian economy, it is imperative, if we are serious about providing economic opportunities for our cultural workers, that we seek to expand our market and become involved in the cultural industries, in national, regional and international terms, with particular emphasis on the notion of reciprocity.

In order to realize the full potential of this thrust, we must see our cultural products not merely as forms of cultural expression but as saleable and transferable commodities which

can and must be exploited to the benefit of the creators.

Additionally, we must recognize the full range of cultural products which provide avenues for self-employment and the creation of major economic activity, if high quality products are produced. Cultural products run the range, from books, records, art reproductions, photography, radio, television and cinema, to advertising.

From a Barbadian and Caribbean perspective, the major problems facing our cultural products have been piracy of sound recordings, lack of access to the major markets of North America and Europe, poor distribution in our target markets, including the Caribbean and hostile tariff barriers in some markets.

In a world preparing for globalization, it is imperative that we ensure that initiatives are undertaken to establish viable trading in cultural products between Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in those markets, in North America and Europe, which we have always thought of and targeted in our

mind's eye but could never find effective means to penetrate in any meaningful way.

When one considers the preamble to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, which states

"Desiring to reduce distortions and impediments to international trade, and taking into account the need to promote effective and adequate protection of intellectual property rights, and to ensure that measures and procedures to enforce intellectual property rights do not themselves become barriers to legitimate trade;"

It serves to remind all of us in Developing States that we must, like the Americans whose cultural products have penetrated and dominated in most areas of the cultural industries, take steps to serve and service those needs arising out of our rights to trade in our cultural goods and exploit the intellectual property rights which attach thereto.

Unfortunately, we have not always recognized the value of our cultural products and as a result have allowed our rights to be

exploited by others. In this regard, we must create awareness of the value of our cultural products /services and ensure that our governments work towards establishing the type regional and/or bilateral agreements to facilitate the development of vibrant trading in cultural products in this region.

In light of our seeming indifference and lethargy, one often wonders whether we are resigned to being consumers of products from North America? Commonsense (which I am told is not so common anymore) dictates that we should all be seeking to exploit those areas where our creative diversity and cultural uniqueness provide opportunities to develop niche markets for our cultural products.

However for the past 18-20 years a dangerous trend has been developing and has perhaps become so entrenched in the music business that we no longer pay attention and view it as the norm. The trend towards concentration -vertical and horizontal- and internationalization of the ownership of the means of production of cultural goods and services must be of

concern to all of us in developing economies. We must be particularly wary of the internationalization of the ownership of the means of production and distribution of cultural goods and services, because of the declining role of our artists in the production of cultural messages.

*The Majors (**the majors are the large international record companies, Polygram, EMI, Sony, Warner and BMG**) for example, control the music business to the extent that they have induced a trend towards standard consumer tastes in many markets, allowing them to influence the style and appearance of the cultural products offered to consumers around the world, who themselves, are also beginning to look alike. (Just note the way young people all over the world are dressing)*

We are certainly not in a position to influence the development of mass culture in that manner but we can use cooperative marketing and state assisted promotional tours by our top artistes to achieve our aims. I am suggesting that the resources of developing states, in this region, should be pooled

to facilitate the exposure and promotion of Caribbean artistes.

This thrust must be undertaken, to achieve some measure of balance in the profile of cultural products in our markets, as well as those markets, which are identified in developed countries, in order to combat the serious threat of marginalization.

Quote statistics of international market share of majors for 1992: Report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission/the supply of recorded music

This brings into sharp focus the question of freedom of movement of musicians, craftsperson and artists around the Caribbean region. It is unfortunate, though perhaps indicative of the nature and impact of regional jealousies and insecurity that cultural workers from North America, their cultural products and services are known to have had easier access into regional markets than indigenous cultural workers, their products or services.

These issues, as well as the disincentives inherent in the enforcement of insensitive customs and immigration regulations that still exist in some domestic markets, must be

addressed. Enlightened approaches will surely recognize the need to facilitate efficient movement of product throughout the Caribbean region, as well as Latin America which is an area we in the Caribbean must target for our cultural products. (Give example of problem faced by Barbadian producers)

With respect to the visual Arts, I think it is safe to say that the majority of artists appreciate the economic importance of cultural industries. As a result they do not see the concept of cultural industries as negation of the status of their works or a substitution of commercial values for aesthetic ones. This paradigm shift in thinking has been driven largely by the emergence of more aggressive competition for scarce funding, an increase in the number of professional artists and a growing sense of independence among artists who have begun to recognise their own potential to generate sustainable income.

It is this sense of self and willingness to compete which is exhibited by our cultural workers that will allow us to take on the challenge of globalization, seeing it as just another hurdle

in the process of development. I say this not to trivialize the issue of globalization but to emphasize the fact that small states will have to dig deep into their creativity and resilience if they are to survive the onslaught of economic colonization. I certainly support the view articulated by J. Mohan Rao that a major objection to globalization "is that globally integrated markets cannot be expected to produce symmetric gains for both weak and strong economies." In fact, when I consider the complexity of the music trade in international markets and the difficulties we face in convincing entrepreneurs and governments to invest in this dynamic industry, I am forcibly reminded that the playing field is not level.

Since we in Barbados have no developed film or multimedia industries, Music represents for us, and I suspect most of the countries in the Caribbean region, the first line of attack on international markets. Music is what I like to call a multidimensional product. It can be bought and sold as a record or CD, published as sheet music or provided as a service by performing musicians. It can also be traded as

intellectual property, affording the rights owners residual income over fifty or even seventy-five years depending on length of copyright in a given jurisdiction. Barbados, as far as I am aware, is signatory to all the important Intellectual Property Conventions. The Berne Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the Rome Convention and Phonograms Convention. It is therefore fitting that we take the initiative to ensure our artists benefit from the protection, which these conventions should afford in our quest to collect their royalties from around the world.

Lester C Thurow writing in the Harvard Business review speaks about the Centrality of Intellectual Property Rights and I quote" with the advent of the information revolution-or the third industrial revolution (call it what you will) skill and knowledge have become the only source of sustainable long-term competitive advantage. Intellectual property lies at the center of the modern company's success or failure."

The question of culture and trade must therefore take into consideration the role of the collection agencies and their ability to efficiently collect royalties and disburse to rights owners. At this point I wish to stress that the economic potential of intellectual property represents the new frontier and we must research and assist our entrepreneurs in the exploitation of these new challenges.

In Barbados, the emergence of the Barbados Agency for Musical Culture Inc. (BAMCI) and now the Barbados Association of Authors and Publishers (BACAP) has brought the management of intellectual property to the fore. This process has created enormous tension and the difficulties that have surfaced have resulted in a significant number of Barbadians being forced to grasp and perhaps appreciate the reasons why intellectual property rights issues can become contentious. However, if we are to trade and conduct business in intellectual property the collection agencies will always have a critical role to play.

~~Tangentially~~, if all of us are to reap the benefits of having our music played and used in other markets, there must be sub-publishing agreements in place with publishers or reciprocity agreements with other collection agencies, which will allow us to benefit from the use of the music. The administration of rights will emerge as the key issue in the development of the music business for all players, major and minor, because of the expanding capability of technology to manipulate and the need for intellectual property rights owners to maintain control of their property rights. What must be interesting for us is the availability of the technology and the facility it offers to small players to become active participants in the global marketplace.

Music Business International's World Report estimate world sales will be in the region of 60 billion in the year 2001, we must be prepared to take our share of that pie.

To achieve our goal we must ensure that:

- *There is a harmonization of customs and immigration regulations in the Caribbean region;*
- *The free movement of cultural workers throughout the Caribbean region becomes a reality;*
- *Countries in the Caribbean update and harmonize their copyright legislation;*
- *The collective administration of copyright is managed by a regional collection agency or national agencies with a central coordinating mechanism;*
- *An economic study be conducted to determine the current contribution of the cultural industries to Caribbean economies and to project possible outcomes if proper systems of support are implemented;*
- *There must be strategic intervention and support for initiatives undertaken by entrepreneurs to trade and develop markets for cultural products and services;*
- *Training must be implemented to equip cultural workers with the tools to function and appreciate the intricacies of trading in cultural goods and services.*