

**Caribbean History**  
**May – June 2011**

**Question 3**

**Theme 2: Caribbean Economy and Slavery**

- (a) (i) Identify TWO Caribbean territories which produced tobacco and TWO Caribbean territories which produced logwood in the 1600s.  
(4 marks)
- (b) (ii) Explain THREE reasons for the changeover from the production of tobacco to sugar in the 1600s.  
(9 marks)
- (c) (iii) Examine THREE economic effects of the changeover from tobacco to sugar.  
(12 marks)

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a) (i) Two Caribbean territories which produced tobacco were :

- a) Barbados
- b) Dominica

(ii) Two Caribbean territories which produced logwood were :

- a) Belize
- b) Guyana

b) In the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in the main cashcrop of the British West-Indies, and to a lesser extent the French, from tobacco to sugar. There were many reasons for this revolutionary change most of which became clear at about 1640. The change was result of a decline in tobacco prices, a new market for sugar in Europe and the presence of the element of chance.

Primarily, there was a decline in the price of tobacco. This was due to competition from other sources such as Virginia. The excess planting of tobacco for such a long period of time led to soil exhaustion in the Caribbean. Hence the yield of crop was less and low in quality. Virginia, however, being located in North America where vast acres of land was available, could produce the crop in quantity and quality superior to that of the West-Indies. Ironically, there was also a variety of the crop hailing from a West-Indian island itself, Trinidad, ~~which~~ whose competition caused prices to drop.

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Competition also came from the Dutch trade. With all this west-Indian tobacco prices dropped as did their exports. In 1628 the island of Barbados only exported about 100 000 <sup>lbs</sup> ~~pounds~~ of this crop to Europe while Virginia sold 500 000 <sup>lbs</sup>. Tobacco was not profitable anymore ~~Additionally~~ and a change was needed.

In addition, there developed a market for sugar in Europe. Prior to sugar, honey had been used as a sweetener. However, this was rare and becoming scarce and was thus very expensive. It was about this time that England gained control of East India and colonized other Eastern Mediterranean countries from which they obtained a lot of <sup>tea</sup> spices and with more tea came more need for a cheaper sweetener and thus, a rise in the demand for sugar.

Furthermore, ~~chance~~ <sup>chance</sup> played an important part in the change. It was ~~by~~ fortunate that the west-Indies was so well adapted for the cultivation of sugar cane from which sugar is made. This normally grows in tropical or sub-tropical climates like that of the Caribbean. It was also fortunate that the Caribbean was so ideally located a trans-atlantic trade would provide sugar much faster than having to import it from the east. ~~or~~ However, the most fortunate yet was the fact that there was a war going on between the Dutch and Portuguese between 1624-1654.

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It was due to this war that the West-Indies gained a lot of expertise on cultivating sugar. In ~~15~~ 1643, when the Dutch were ~~at~~ winning, they sent <sup>50</sup> Portuguese war prisoners to the islands as slaves. Though these people were freed as it was unlawful to enslave Christians, there were still 50 persons with the knowledge of growing sugarcane on the island. When the Portuguese ~~had~~ the upper hand, the Dutch fled to the ~~#~~ islands as refugees, also taking their expertise with them.

There were many reasons as to why the sugar revolution occurred. It resulted from a decline in tobacco prices and a rise in demand for sugar. Also, it could not have occurred without a bit of luck.

a) The change from tobacco to sugar as a cash crop brought about so many changes that it can only be described as revolutionary. Include in these changes was its effect on the economy. There was an effect on the price of land, imports and profit drainage.

To begin with, the changeover affected the price of land. During the cultivation of tobacco as a cash crop not much land was used. The land was large enough that a planter could control all production himself. However, these small land-

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holdings were not sufficient for the mass cultivation of sugar cane and large estates were introduced. Of course, these estates would not go for the same price of the small farms as they consisted of more acres. ~~the~~ Not only did the quantity of the land increase, but so did the individual price itself. Before the change an acre of land in the island of Barbados sold roughly at 3 pounds. ~~By about~~ After the change, land sold for about 30 pounds per acre.

Additionally, there was an increase in the money spent on imports. The large-scale cultivation of sugar was very costly. Technology was needed, labour was needed. Money had to be spent on gadgets like the boilers for the boiling houses in the plantation and the construction of the mills. The labour force also had to be imported (West-African slaves); it did not take one or two men to cultivate a plantation. It took large masses to do this and money had to be spent on food for these masses. In an island such as Barbados which underwent ~~the~~ the change in a matter of 10 years (1640-1650), by 1660 they were a ~~fully~~ <sup>fully</sup> developed sugar island. They put all their time and energy and space into this crop and thus ~~sub~~istence farming was not done. Hence, Barbados became heavily reliant on food

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imports from North America.

Lastly, the change brought about profit drainage. It was the sugar plantation which introduced the concept of absenteeism. This is when the planter leaves his plantation to <sup>be run by</sup> an attorney and returns to his mother country, living off the profits of his establishment in the New World. ~~The~~ Hence, as absenteeism became popular, more of the profits made from the plantations went to Europe with the planters.

Overall, the change affected the New World in many ways. Economically, ~~it~~ there was an increase in the price of land, imports and profit drainage.

### Comments

This question tested the candidates' knowledge of the changeover to sugar production in the 1600s and the economic effects of the changeover.

### **Statement on overall quality**

The quality of this answer was very good so a mark at the upper end of the mark range was awarded.

### **Knowledge and Comprehension**

In all three sections this candidate displayed a good range of knowledge and understanding of the question. There was also a good explanation of the reasons for the change over from tobacco to sugar and a sufficient explanation of the economic effects of the changeover to warrant a top mark.

### **Use of Knowledge**

In sections [b] and [c] the candidate dealt with core issues and the interpretation was very good. The candidate was particularly strong in the depth of analysis and again earned a mark at the upper end of the mark range.

### **Enquiry and Communication**

The candidate made good use of the information required to properly structure the response. At least three effects of the economic transformation were well developed with supporting details. A mark at the upper end of the scale was awarded. The information in the candidate's answer was presented correctly and clearly communicated. Spelling punctuation and grammar were in most cases acceptable. This response met the requirement for a mark at the upper end of the scale.