



CSME AT WORK

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YOUTHFUL VISION: THE IMPACT OF THE CSME ON THE YOUNG BARBADIAN

This is a time of monumental significance in the life of the CARICOM region, as it brings into existence the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. The CSME will represent the most comprehensive exercise in economic repositioning ever undertaken in the Caribbean, and is intended to prepare the countries of the region to participate in a new and competitive economy. Although the Barbadian youth are often encouraged to seek out new ideas and opportunities, in the case of the CSME it appears as though too many do not seem to care enough to learn about the CSME and its implications for them. This perturbing *laissez-faire* attitude is displayed when young persons faced with the question "What is it with you? Is it ignorance or apathy?" give the even more

frustrating response of "I don't know and I don't care." Unfortunately, this pervading attitude could thwart the region's effort in attaining the full benefits of a Single Market and Economy.

There are a host of opportunities for young people who are aware of the implications of CSME and who are eager enough to grasp them. Unfortunately, isolation is one of the dominant sentiments of the majority of young Barbadians and they see the important issues of CSME as being presented on a pedestal that is accessible only by those who are older and in positions of political, economic, social and even educational power.

Events such as a CSME awareness day themed "CSME-Getting To Know Our Neighbours A Little Better", held by the Christ Church Foundation School and "Caribbean Synergy" pageant, hosted by The St. Michael's School, display that many young people are still eager to discover more about the CSME, to the extent that they are not waiting to be given information, but are being proactive and seeking out relevant knowledge and presenting it through mediums that are appealing to their generation. Both of these events were held in early 2006, and in April 2006, Prime Minister of Barbados, The Right Honourable Owen Arthur, launched a CSME multimedia package, consisting of a workbook and short film on DVD and video cassette detailing the evolution of the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas to the CSME. This technologically innovative tool will be used by teachers at the primary level to further develop their lesson plans about Caribbean integration and the CSME.

One Barbadian based in Vermont, posited that the CSME could produce a heightened cultural awareness and the formation of a more concrete Caribbean culture. Ideally, there could be a decrease of insularity and xenophobia as countries recognize a common history and feel a greater sense of kinship. While this view is typical of someone fortunate enough to have travelled and explored various cultures, the Barbadian who has spent all of his/her years on this island would oppose this view, simply based on his reality of never being challenged to consider beyond the geographical boundaries of this island.

The reality is, as the leaders of the region seek to create an egalitarian society where all the CARICOM territories are on equal standing, some believe that this political and economic utopia will undoubtedly encounter several obstacles which should be dealt with in the early. One cannot emphasise enough the importance of educating the youth and equipping them with the tools required to make the CSME a reality and a legacy for future generations. If every generation can systematically unlock the potential that is available in the region, then the youth of Barbados and all the Caribbean countries can wholeheartedly embrace the CSME. The sky is the limit-or in our case-the sea, sand and sun are the limits! ■

Images from St. Michael's School Caribbean Synergy Pageant

