



Remembering An Architect of Integration

Late Prime Minister of Barbados, Professor the Right Honourable Owen Arthur, was an infectious no-nonsense person who had a reputation for reading everything placed before him, and therefore an unmatched ability to ensure that whatever technical advice he received was factual and accurate. This alone may have separated him from many other leaders and was a key characteristic that allowed him, like the previous generation of integrationists, to reflect incisively on the gaps in the integration project in the context of the changing world economy, and to lead in conceiving a refreshed vision for CARICOM. The late Prime Minister thought in structural functionalist terms and was at the forefront in the revision of the Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

The conception of the CDF commenced with the creation of the CARICOM quasi-cabinet in 1999 when Barbados, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Arthur, took the portfolio as Lead Head of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). This placed the Prime Minister in the driving seat to ensure the Treaty of Chaguaramas was updated to include a mechanism to address more than just the correction of trade imbalances but also the response to the wider threats of globalization for CARICOM. The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) Unit was subsequently established in Barbados in 2002, to provide the technical and administrative support required to maintain the momentum for implementation.

One key modification of the 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas was the recognition that the Less Developed Countries of CARICOM (LDCs) would require more than trade remedies to survive. They also required technical and financial assistance to restructure their economies to better utilize their most valuable resource – labour, and to properly develop and exploit their competitive advantage. This was reflected in the difficult negotiations of Protocol 8 reflected as Chapter Seven of the Revised Treaty, in which the CARICOM Development Fund was embedded.

With the completion of the Treaty revision process, the then Prime Minister as far back as 2005 determined that he would convene a convocation of experts within CARICOM to examine the integration movement from all its angles and make actionable recommendations to galvanise implementation. He started from the premise that there was enough intellectual and experiential capital within CARICOM to do so. He started with a small group of friends and colleagues - Professors Girvan, Brewster, Thomas and Bourne, to conceive and plan this assembly. Four High Level Symposiums on key aspects of the CSME project followed – but that was not enough. Prime Minister Arthur required wider consultation and set clear goals for the convocation idea and ensured that, after two grueling days in 2009, all the discussions were captured and distilled into a cohesive strategy to advance the CSME. There was one inescapable conclusion that “*there remained broad support for the CSME*”, but there was also great fear that it was not fully understood how it would work and what it would mean for ordinary individuals.

Prime Minister Arthur who was an expert on the Revised Treaty, and knew its framers well, requested the CARICOM CSME Unit to focus *inter alia* on the operationalisation of Chapter Seven in 2005 which committed Member States to support the provision of technical and financial

support to countries regions and sectors that would suffer clear disadvantages from the introduction of measures to implement the CSME. Chapter Seven was used as the fulcrum to galvanise the commitment of the LDCs for the implementation of the CSME. This great statesman championed the key members, the MDCs and the then Chairman of the OECS to make a public declaration of commitment to the CSME, as well as to the establishment of the CDF as a key mechanism to bind the requisite commitment to the CSME project. This public commitment was then used to encourage development partners to increase support to the CSME project. This was no small feat, and its culmination underscored PM Arthur's fervent commitment to and passion for the success of the CSME.

There was resistance at every corner to be overcome, and PM Arthur, like a great musical conductor treated to each at the appropriate time and place. There were objections based on:

- historical antecedent - the failure of the Federation and its seemingly historical deterministic foreboding for all future integration efforts;
- politics - the unwillingness to yield recently hard fought and won national sovereignty; and
- fear of the unknown - the dislocation of national incentives to foreign interests and private investment, following the required dismantling of barriers to the freedom of movement, as well as the 'likelihood' of rising unemployment and the anticipated asymmetrical distribution of the gains and costs of integration within the CSME.

The list was never ending, but Prime Minister Arthur, while addressing vexing national issues within Barbados, tackled the regional problems with panache and forged ahead with the CSME agenda. He committed to and got the support of several of his colleague Heads of Government to allow him to visit their countries to address their cabinets as well as their parliamentary opposition independently, and to hold town hall meetings to explain to ordinary people what the CSME meant and how elements of the institutional apparatus, like the CDF, would assist them to adjust to the changes required by integration. PM Arthur with his wit, guile and common touch in several of these countries allayed many fears of integration, while simultaneously helping local leaders to honour their commitment to take responsibility for the introduction of the CSME. There was no stupid question at these PM Arthur outreaches in the countries, and everyone enjoyed interacting with this Prime Minister from another island talking to them in familiar terms about their own problems. His success in this endeavour culminated in Jamaica with the public launch of the commitment to the CSME by all Member states in 2006 and the work began in earnest in creating the institutional structures of the CSME; a key element of which was the CDF.

PM Arthur was loyal and committed to any idea he championed. This was seen in his interest and willingness to support the CDF after overseeing its establishment while he held political office. In its nascent days with changed political administrations and an increasingly challenging global environment, the energy for the CDF among some Member States had begun to wane. PM Arthur was requested and immediately agreed to undertake a review of the institution on behalf of the Heads of Government, and was able to demonstrate, with his well-researched technical reasoning and passion, that there was a pressing need for the institution and that it was acting through to its mandate. He followed this up with production of an initial workprogramme for the CDF, identifying for each Member State a prioritized list of actions along with indicative costings, which to this day serves as an invaluable resource in guiding the formulation of the institution's development programmes.

PM Arthur was a true champion of integration and a lifelong friend to the CDF. He was the kind of friend that not only advised but got down in the trenches and worked shoulder to shoulder bringing his vision, vast knowledge, extensive network and special insight to ensure conversion of the dream to an idea, and the idea to an institution that positively touches people's lives.

The Board, management and staff of the CDF will miss this dear friend, advocate and champion. May his soul have eternal rest and rise in glory. May his immediate family, relatives and close friends take comfort in the knowledge that their sacrifices over the years, in moulding and sharing with us this life of unstinting service in the person of Professor the Right Honourable Owen Arthur, have led to the enhancement of the lives of people across the Caribbean Community, and have left a legacy in the establishment and operationalization of institutions like the CARICOM Development Fund, and by extension helped build the framework for successful deeper integration of the Caribbean region and its people.



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