

FOREWORD

An interesting set of circumstances appear to have driven two groups of scientists in Trinidad to pursue the inauguration of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences.

One group came from a sub-committee of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, another group represented the young and vibrant Trinidad and Tobago Scientific Association born in 1983. both groups were encouraged in their efforts by Dr. Dennis Irvine, the first UNESCO adviser for science and technology in the Caribbean sub-region, who helped them to keep a regional perspective, despite the weak links existing among scientists located in the scattered territories of the Caribbean. The two groups of scientists formed themselves into a single Steering Committee to set up the proposed Academy.

Within Caribbean countries, as elsewhere in the world, it is recognised that the level and extent of activities in Science and Technology are determined mainly by people (decision-makers) who are often non-scientists. Even though science and technology are crucial to social and economic progress, there often exists a large communication gap between the scientists and the non-scientists. It was the desire to bridge this communication gap which generated the idea to form the Caribbean Academy of Sciences. In addition, recent advances in science and technology have made it imperative for governmental as well as private sector agencies to acquire quick and reliable responses to several important issues and problems impacting on modern-day living conditions. So it was felt that Caribbean scientists working together at the level of a prestigious academy could give useful advice to national and regional organizations on issues of scientific and technological importance to the countries of the Caribbean.

By 1987 October, the Steering Committee had been formed, including members of the two original groups of scientists and also representatives from other scientific disciplines resident in Trinidad.

This Steering Committee took charge of all the preparations leading to the inauguration ceremonies for the Caribbean Academy of Sciences. Its membership included:

Professor Ramsey Saunders, Faculty of Natural Sciences, U.W.I.
(Convenor)

Dr. Desmond Ali, President, Trinidad and Tobago Scientific
Association

Dr. Roman Antozewski, Faculty of Natural Sciences, U.W.I.

Dr. Julian Duncan, Faculty of Agriculture, U.W.I.

Dr. Dennis Irvine, UNESCO

Professor Norris Melville, Faculty of Medical Sciences, U.W.I.

Dr. Harold Ramkissoon, Faculty of Natural Sciences, U.W.I.

Dr. Compton Seaforth, Faculty of Natural Sciences, U.W.I. and
Trinidad and Tobago Scientific Association

Dr. Winston Suite, Faculty of Engineering

One of the first action taken by the Steering Committee was to produce a draft Constitution for the proposed Academy. Efforts were taken also to inform professional groups of Scientists throughout the world about the work of the Steering Committee. Contacts were made with the associations for the promotion of engineering, medicine, agriculture and the natural sciences in the region, and, with the national and international academies of sciences, such as the Third World Academy of Sciences, overseas.

It is significant that, at the first meeting of the Standing Committee of the Commonwealth (Caricom) Caribbean Ministers of Science and Technology held in Trinidad on 9th and 10th March, 1988, Ministers endorsed the setting up of a Caribbean Academy of Sciences and agreed to provide support to ensure the success of the Academy.

The Steering Committee decided that the Caribbean Academy of Sciences should be inaugurated at an international seminar at the Central Bank auditorium in Port of Spain on 16th and 17th May, 1988, and, that the theme for discussion at the seminar should be "Science, Development and Society". Many of the world's leading academies and foundations pledged their support of this regional initiative.

The proceedings at the seminar have been recorded in the contents of this publication.

The seminar itself was an enormous success. One of the important decisions taken by the participants was to form an Interim Executive committee, consisting of the members of the original Steering Committee together with a number of scientists who normally reside elsewhere in the Caribbean region. This new Committee was given the task of making all preparations to hold the first annual general meeting of the Caribbean Academy of Sciences as soon as possible.

It was agreed that this special publication of the academy should be dedicated to the early pioneering scientists in the region, whose work should be better appreciated and should serve to inspire our own efforts at this time.

The establishment of an academy of scientists is a unique event in any society, and, we should like to thank all who sponsored and supported our efforts leading up to the inauguration of the Academy. We thank especially the Carnegie Foundation of U.S.A. and the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine for providing the basis for all our efforts.