The Social Effects of Tourism on a Small Caribbean State — the case of St. Vincent

David Harrison

In this paper Dr. Harrison, a lecturer in Sociology in the School of African and Asian Studies, University of Sussex, discusses some of the social effects of tourism on the society of St. Vincent, a small island in the Caribbean, which he visited for six months from 1974 until 1975. He had earlier carried out research in Trinidad, West Indies, focusing on village life, and later returned to the Caribbean for this study when he also visited Trinidad, Barbados, and Montserrat for comparative material. Harrison maintains that many of the questions that are prompted by the study of Vincentian tourism can be applied to other underdeveloped societies, and wishes to question the assumption that all tourism is harmful. He contends that econom c debates about the advantages and disadvantages of tourism are relatively straightforward when compared to discussions on the social effects, as in the case of the latter it could be discussed only from within agreed value-judgements.

I am a sociologist, but let me first mention some non-sociological treatments of tourism in the Third World. In my view, they normally fall into two categories: First, there are those people who consider tourism is harmful, either because of what it does to "traditional" cultures or because it has (allegedly) undesirable effects on the economy of the "receiving" society. It is frequently the case that opponents of tourism, deliberately or otherwise, fail to make the analytical distinction between social and economic effects.[1] However, sloppy thinking is not unknown among those who constitute the second category of participants in the "Is tourism harmful?" debate, and spokesmen for Third World government departments may, and sometimes do, lapse into euphoria when extolling the "modernising" benefits of tourism. Indeed, they tend to assume that such benefits automatically accompany even the slightest improvements in the balance of payments situation, which may or may not have been caused by an inflow of "the tourist dollar". Their optimism, to say the least, is encouraged by aid-giving agencies in the West and by Western-based economic consultants and planners. It is perhaps coincidental that the latter are often commissioned by the former to carry out feasibility studies in the underdeveloped world. It should also be said that there is a middle ground between these two extremes, and there are many who believe that tourism of some kind is both necessary and beneficial, but who, at the same time, propose various measures to "control the beast". For my part, I have no wish to become embroiled in debates over such general issues; indeed, it seems more sensible to examine specific tourism in specific societies, and to present conclusions based on empirical studies. This is not to say that value-judgements should be omitted from the argument, but rather to suggest that debate conducted with reference to values alone is likely to be singularly unproductive. In addition, I do not claim that decisions about tourist development can be made in an ideological vacuum; indeed, I am aware of the fact that it is virtually impossible to discuss tourist "development" without presupposing the prior existence, implicit or explicit, of a more general framework for economic and social development and that, undoubtedly, will owe much to the underlying values of the protagonists.

I regard it vital to situate any discussion of tourism, its advantages and disadvantages, within the context of the historical development of the society or region in question. Ultimately, decisions about tourism and interpretations of its social, effects, can only be made within an overall strategy, implicit or explicit, for societal development. Of necessity, this involves value-judgements, goals for the future, ideals, notions about where "we" want to go. Sociologists are no more qualified to formulate these goals or strategies than anyone else; however, they can present data obtained, through the use of different conceptual paradigms, from empirical studies, and thus provide additional inputs into the discussion. Case studies are one type of data, and in this paper I outline my findings on the social effects of tourism in St. Vincent, in the Caribbean. Clearly, St. Vincent is not Sri Lanka, and I studied tourism in the former, not the latter. However, it may be that there are sufficient similarities to prompt new questions, new research projects and new insights.

International Tourism, the Caribbean and St Vincent

Foreign travel is no longer the preserve of the few, and in recent years the growth of this "industry" has been phenomenal. From 1950 to 1970, international visitor arrivals increased from 25 million to 168 million, an average growth of more than ten per cent a year, and by now we are talking of something in the region of 200 million tourists a year. Most international travel is from one "developed" society to another, but the underdeveloped societies are obtaining an increasing share. In addition, ratios do not tell the entire story, as a glance at the Commonwealth Caribbean indicates: In 1965, almost one million tourists went to the area, which at that time had a population of about four million. In Barbados, tourism now competes with the sugar industry as the island's main source of foreign exchange and in 1974 more than 230,000 tourists visited that island, which has a

1. Strong opposition to tourism is expressed in L. Turner and J. Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery*, Constable, London, 1975, and in M. Wolfers, *Black Man's Burden Revisited*, Allison and Bushby, London, 1974.

population of 250,000 people. In that same year, little Montserrat, also in the eastern Caribbean, attracted more than its population of 12,000. One could also cite the instance of Bermuda, which has about nine times its population in tourist arrivals every year. The message is clear: international tourism is big business, and it is also one of the most startling ways of moving vast numbers of people from one area, usually that of their birth and their culture, to another.

It is ironic that in the Caribbean, some governments are looking to tourism to supplement or replace sugar as a source of foreign currency. For much of their colonial history, sugar was the "*raison d'etre*" of the British West Indies — at least, as far as Britain was concerned. When their usefulness as suppliers of this crop declined, the "Mother Country" prepared to let its brood depart the nest, only to find them unwilling to do so. The West Indies Federation (1958 - 1962) was a failure, primarily because Britain attempted to impose political unity on countries it had previously, and quite deliberately, kept artificially apart. When the Federation collapsed some of its erstwhile members, notably Jamaica and Trinidad, immediately became independent, and they were soon followed by Barbados and Guyana. In 1967, as the world knows, even little Anguilla made its U.D.I., only to revert to colonial status in 1971, and more recently, in 1973, Grenada also became an independent nation. Most of the remaining territories, including St. Vincent, continue to be Associated States, responsible, at least in theory, for their internal affairs, but dependent on Britain for matters involving external affairs and defence. In fact, the economy of St. Vincent survives only with regular contributions of aid from Britain. Economic co-operation in the English-speaking Caribbean has also been slow to achieve. The Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) was formed in 1968, and five years later it was extended and became known as the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM). However, the small island-states, including St. Vincent, seem to have benefitted but little from this organisation, and such attempts to promote regional unity have not prevented talk of independence which, at least for St. Vincent, appears to be imminent.

St. Vincent is an island of 133 square miles, and its Government also administers the Vincentian Grenadines, which are part of a chain of even smaller islands stretching from St. Vincent to Grenada. The total population of St. Vincent is about 100,000 people, most of whom are black. More than half the population is under fifteen, about 21 per cent of the working population is unemployed, and at least 30 per cent of men in the 15 - 29 age group are unemployed. Underemployment is as great a problem as unemployment; for example, at the time of the 1970 census, only 45 per cent of the men in the working population had worked throughout the preceding twelve-month period.

The Vincentian economy relies mainly on bananas and arrowroot, both of which are subject to severe economic pressures. In 1968, export agriculture was 14.6 per cent of G.D.P., compared with 13.5 per cent for domestic agriculture, 16.1 per cent for distribution, and 18.7 per cent for Government. These figures, amounting to 62.9 per cent of G.D.P., indicate a top heavy economic structure. In 1969, hotels contributed 1.5 per cent to G.D.P.

For much of its history, St. Vincent can be described as a "plural society", as defined by M. G. Smith, following Furnivall.[2] A white minority, supported by external political and economic interests, dominated the remainder of the population, a situation reminiscent of slavery, which finally ended in the British West Indies in 1838. It might be argued that, at present, Vincentian social structure is changing; the white "plantocracy" remains, but in declining numbers. Its younger members, educated for the most part at private schools in the United Kingdom, frequently do not return. Some members of the former elite, faced with the decline of sugar, which was abandoned in the early 1960's, have entered commerce, joining the "coloureds", the "Syrians" and the "Portuguese". There is also a rising category of professionals, many of whom received legal training in the U.K. or North America. They tend to resent the status of the old plantocrats, and have taken over the leading political positions. However, members of all these sections of island society share the ideology of respectability, and on an island where individuals can be recognised from afar merely by the registration number of their car, informal mechanisms of social control are effective.

Most Vincentians are black, and most are unskilled. This section of the society provides most of the unemployed, and it is from this category that the most vociferous supporters of a small but radical "Black Power" movement are drawn, even though the leaders, who propagate a "vulgar" Marxist philosophy, are often middle class. Of course, there are also other divisions; between mainland and islands, between employed and unemployed, between old and young, between rural and urban, and between the social activities and culture of men and women. However, the outline is clear enough: St. Vincent is an agricultural society, with a strong peasant sector, which is 'underdeveloped" in every sense of the term. And it is against this backdrop that Vincentian tourism has to be examined.

St. Vincent Tourism

The performance of St. Vincent's tourist industry, once regarded with high hopes by several development agencies, including the British Development Division in the Caribbean, has disappointed many people. However, it has still grown considerably. In 1960, air and sea arrivals amounted to 3,197, whereas by 1974 the figure was 20,822, the highest ever for the island. But 1975 was a bad year for Vincentian tourism: World inflation and, perhaps, a bad reputation of the island as "host", led to a decline in the number of air and sea arrivals

2. For Smith's most recent statement of this approach, cf. his *Corporations and Society*, Duckworth, 1974. Previous formulations are criticised in M. Cross (Ed.), *Race*, Vol. XII, No. 4, April, 1971 (Special Issue on Race and Pluralism).

to 16,574 — the worst figures since 1969. In 1976, there was a slight recovery to 17,953, but it should be clear that by international standards, St. Vincent's tourist industry is very much an 'also-ran.' Nevertheless, it is because tourism has not "developed" in St. Vincent to the same extent as, for example, the Barbadian tourist industry, that it is easier to study its social effects. In my view, these are of several distinct types:

(1) The introduction of new formal organisations;
(2) The simultaneous blurring and exacerbation of class conflict;
(3) The reinforcement of stereotypes which were present under colonialism but which have now taken on added significance;
(4) The periodic appearance of "flashpoints of tension" which reveal conflicts among Vincentians and between Vincentian and tourist;
(5) Finally, and more generally, the continuance of dependence relationships, at psychological and economic levels.

Clearly, it is not possible to discuss all of these issues at length. However, I can try to clarify what I mean by them, and I should then like to focus on the "flashpoints of tension" in more detail.

New Formal Organisations

The introduction and development of a tourist industry has ramifications for several existing social institutions, including the police and immigration departments, the judiciary, trading and commercial organisations, not to mention other sectors of the economy, for example, the construction industry, which has direct and indirect links with tourism. However, in St. Vincent the Tourist Board and the Hotel Association were formed specifically to promote the new industry and the interests of those involved in it. Consequently, they can be regarded as new arrivals on the social "scene".

The St. Vincent Tourist Board is appointed by the Government and includes representatives of commercial organisations and other interest groups. Hoteliers, apartment owners, taxi drivers, the Chamber of Commerce, retailers and airline representatives are members of the Board, which also includes a churchman. The list of members is impressive, but in fact, the Board has no real power; it is simply an advisory body to give its collective opinion to the Minister of Home Affairs and Tourism. Membership is seen by observers and by Vincentians as a reward for services rendered to members of the Government, and it is noteworthy that when there is a change in government, the composition of the Board is also changed. Board members receive fringe benefits and the status of sitting on an official body. Only the Chairman of the Board obtains direct remuneration. However, the duties are commensurate with the rewards: the Board meets infrequently — in my experience, perhaps once every three months — and it has little impact on the organisation of tourism in St. Vincent. In practice, most decisions are made by the Chairman, with little or no reference to other Board members.

The St. Vincent Hotel Association is more interesting. It was formed by an expatriate hotelier in 1968, and in 1975, sixteen of the State's thirty-one hotels and guest houses were members. Although the Association exists to encourage co-operation among its members, and to further the interests of St. Vincent's tourism, it is, in fact, a far from united body, which is dominated by the larger and more costly establishments. At this stage, it is necessary to point out that there are no international hotels in St. Vincent, and that by international standards, all hotels in the State are extremely small. There are twelve hotels owned by expatriates, with a total of 397 beds, which is almost exactly the number of beds provided by the nineteen locally-owned hotels and guest houses. In effect, the foreign-owned hotels take over the market when daily rates amounted to $30.00 per day per person in 1975. In other words, the larger the hotel, the more expensive its rates are likely to be and the more likely it is to be foreign-owned. It should occasion no surprise to discover that the expatriate — local division is marked among members of the Hotel Association. Of the fifteen non-members, ten are locally-owned establishments, mainly small guest houses, whilst of the five expatriate-owned non-members, two — the most expensive — are situated in the Grenadines. In general, local hoteliers feel that the Association ignores the interests of small establishments, which charge relatively low rates and tend to cater for the West Indian tourist market; instead, they claim, it panders to those hoteliers (normally expatriate) who direct their attention to the North American and Western European markets. In my view, there is some truth in the accusation, but it is also the case that the expatriate members of the Association were the most regular attenders of meetings and the most insistently articulate. For their part, foreign hoteliers assert that Vincentians are inefficient and that, when on advertising trips abroad, which are paid for by the Association, they tend to promote their own hotels rather than those of the entire State. In addition, they also claim that "locals" use unfair means to obtain guests, for example, by bribing taxi drivers who collect passengers at the airport. In my viw, there was also some justification in these charges. However, it is a moot point as to whether or not the payment of a small sum to a taxi driver for recommending an hotel constitutes bribery rather than a reasonable perquisite for services rendered. Clearly, expatriates and locals are operating with very different criteria. More important, however, is the assumption that the Hotel Association should be able to cater satisfactorily for the interests of both these groups even though, as I shall suggest below, tourists from the West Indies differ in many respects from white tourists from North America and Western Europe. Interestingly enough, the only issue on which all members of the Association were united (during my visit to St. Vincent) involved their opposition to a Government decision to impose a one per cent turnover tax on hotels. Ironically, this decision was made on the basis of recommendations from an expatriate expert employed by the British Ministry of Overseas Development.

It should also be mentioned that whilst I was in St. Vincent, relations between the Tourist Board chairman and the Hotel Association were extremely bad. This, in part, was a reflection of the "local" - expatriate divide, as the latter considered that the former, with easier access to the Chairman of the Board and, indeed, to the Minister of Home Affairs and Tourism, acted to bias the authorities against the Association.

It is clearly the case that the development of a tourist industry not only has ramifications for pre-existing social organisations, but also results in the development of new formal organisations. The PARTICULAR social effects will depend on a variety of factors. In St. Vincent, for example, it is impossible to understand the resentment felt by some Vincentians towards white hoteliers without taking into account the colonial background of the State and, indeed, its present dependent relationship with the United Kingdom. In little Montserrat, another tiny island in the Eastern Caribbean, which retains the status of a Crown Colony, the development of residential tourism has led to great changes in the nature and the internal structures of formal organisations, some of which have been considerably adapted by the newcomers, and others of which have actually been founded by them. As a result, Montserrat now has a Property Owners Association, a Rotary Club, Golf Club, a National Trust, and a local branch of the Red Cross. In addition, the Montserrat Yacht Club has virtually become an expatriate preserve, as have various restaurants and bars. In St. Vincent, residential tourists are rare.

Class Conflict

In my view, in this context it would be a pointless exercise to indulge in a discussion as to whether or not there are "social classes" in St. Vincent and, if their existence could be demonstrated, it would be equally pointless to engage in debate over definitions. This is NOT to say that I regard such questions as unimportant, but merely to suggest that they should be dealt with in a more theoretical framework. However, for present purposes I am *assuming* that, until recently, St. Vincent evidenced all the characteristics of a "plural society" and, furthermore, I am assuming that there continues to be different sections of the population with different economic interests which, by and large, are accompanied by cultural differences. Indeed, earlier in this article I suggested the broad outline of these divisions, and it seems reasonable to relate these divisions to social classes.

The old "plantocracy" of St. Vincent, insofar as it still exists, keeps a low profile. However, there are indications that, in general, it is in favour of tourism. One or two families have transferred land from agricultural uses (albeit inefficient) to tourist-related activities, for example, a golf club and cabanas, and the "Vincentian", the island's weekly newspaper, which tends to reflect the views of the establishment, and which has some members of the plantocracy on its Board, consistently emphasises the value of tourism to the State's economy. A similar stance is taken by supporters and members of the St. Vincent Labour Party (which, at present, is effectively the only coherent political party in the State, and which forms the present Government). However, the Government is also conscious of radical opposition to tourism, and tempers its advocacy of the industry with the warning that tourists should respect the islanders' culture, and do nothing to offend. The fact that there is a possible contradiction in the Government's attitude tends to be ignored, but its ambivalence is evident in the actions of its representatives, as I indicate below.

In general, most professionals, whether working on their own account or in the government bureaucracy, tend to favour tourism. However, they, too, are ambivalent. Although some of their clients are foreigners who wish to purchase land in the territory, many of them encountered racism in North America and Europe, and wish to avoid its repetition in St. Vincent. In principle, they may support tourism, but in fact they studiously avoid contact with white tourists. Their ambivalence is not shared by members of the commercial class, including retailers and hoteliers, who, quite clearly, gain considerably from the tourist industry. Indeed, most black Vincentians, who constitute the vast majority of the island's population, appear to be in favour of tourism. It should be evident that there is considerable agreement across class boundaries over the value of tourism: the member of the Government who wishes to better the balance of payments, the lawyer or accountant who counts tourists among his clients, and who may, indeed, feel strongly attached to their culture, and the shopowner or hotelier who stands to increase profitability all have an interest (real or imagined) in the tourist industry. They are joined by the youth who makes coconut ashtrays, or bead necklaces, and the taxi driver, who receives a (relatively) handsome reward for taking tourists on a two-hour drive around the island's beauty spots, not to mention the waiter and the domestic servant, both of whom see their future in the tourist industry.

There are also people, in most classes, opposed to tourism, and once again this blurs the boundaries between classes. There are some professionals, for example, teachers, who feel that (white) tourism perpetuates servile attitudes and a dependence on colonial powers, and their message is also expressed, at a rather different and less sophisticated level, by teenagers on street corners, who abuse white passers-by. It should also be said that there are members of the Civil Service who, faced with glaring inequalities in their society, have considerable respect for the "Black Power" critique, to which I shall return, below. Those opposed to tourism are not mollified by the fervent, and sometimes violent competition which is displayed for the tourist dollar. It is not unknown for taxi drivers at the airport to fight for the right to carry the next fare while the tourist waits — usually in a state of shock — for the issue to be resolved. In addition, there is something sad in the sight of the long queues of young handicraft sellers who wait on the shore for the cruise ship tourists to buy their wares. However, it is also the case that the successful teenager can make more money

in a "good" season than most of his peers earn over a year, even supposing that they can actually find a job. Furthermore, it is often the case that white tourists DO offend Vincentians who, like other West Indians, have strong ideas on the subject of respectability. The local barber who complained bitterly to me about a young white woman who went shopping in her bikini was not atypical, and neither, for that matter, was the young woman. In those circumstances, it is easy to understand why many young men are but the latest in a long tradition in the Caribbean to find special status in the possession of a white girl friend.

It should be evident that the growth of St. Vincent's tourist industry has not had clear-cut effects on the relations of social classes. However, it has, most definitely, served to reinforce pre-existing racial stereotypes, themselves a legacy of the classical colonial period.

Racial Stereotypes

It is no accident that most tourists who visit St. Vincent are both wealthy (relative to the average Vincentian) and white. Indeed, for most Vincentians, tourists are DEFINED by their whiteness and wealth. People who live in the United Kingdom and, by extension, any other white society, are expected to have money. In the words of an old, West Indian rhyme:

> *England is a pleasant place*
> *For those both rich and high,*
> *But England is a cruel place*
> *For poor folk such as I.*

The sight of a middle-aged white couple, loaded with cameras and other trappings of the consumer society, does little to dispel the image. Compared with most Vincentians, they ARE wealthy, even if they have saved for many years to take their Caribbean holiday, and white, hotel tourists are the vast majority of tourist arrivals. However, there are exceptions, and it is highly significant that black tourists from other parts of the Caribbean are NOT regarded by most Vincentians as tourists and, indeed, they are not even referred to in this way; instead, they are termed VISITORS. This simple fact should serve as a warning to those who wish to oppose ANY kind of tourism, for it is crystal clear that the black West Indian who visits St. Vincent is able to merge into the physical and cultural environment in the same way — I am led to believe — as the Indian national visiting Sri Lanka. In fact, it is important to note that this kind of blanket opposition to all tourism is, in itself, stereotypical, and one of the foremost social effects of the industry. This is not to claim that there is no accuracy in the stereotype; indeed, it is instructive to examine the following "Black Power" critique of Vincentian tourism:

1. Tourists offend public morals with impunity;
2. Vincentians try to imitate expenditure patterns of tourists, and thus minimise the importance of their own culture;
3. Many tourists are arrogant and ignore the feelings of Vincentians;
4. In catering for tourists, Vincentians lose their self-respect;
5. Through its advertising programme, the St. Vincent Tourist Board creates a false picture of St. Vincent, and then complains if local people do not conform to it. The Board expects Vincentians to smile and have their pictures taken, even when they are living in poverty and have little to smile about;
6. Much of the money brought into the country by tourists soon leaves in the form of profits, or to pay for imported goods;
7. The people who benefit most from tourism are those in the commercial class, and not the average Vincentians; and finally;
8. The Vincentian Government should not waste valuable school time teaching pupils the value of the tourist industry when there are far more important lessons for school children to learn.

I am not unsympathetic to the above critique, but it is necessary to point out that the first five objections are made from a specific moral standpoint and, as such, can be neither proved nor disproved. Objections six and seven are economic arguments, with which I agree, by and large, and the final objection is essentially an implied critique of the Vincentian Government's plans for socio-economic development. I should add, perhaps, that I found no evidence to suggest that tourists to St. Vincent introduced or encouraged prostitution and that I heard of only one instance of a homosexual tourist forming a liaison with a Vincentian man. According to information from police sources, some tourists brought addictive drugs to the State but, the police claimed, most of these tourists were from other parts of the Caribbean! I have no doubt that in other, more "developed" tourist centres, such abuses — if, indeed, they are so defined — are common, but they were not rife in St. Vincent.

It is important to assess the accuracy of racial stereotypes, but a more vital issue is involved: The fact remains that, correct or otherwise, racial stereotypes in St. Vincent and throughout the Caribbean are strongly embedded in folk consciousness, and many West Indians continue to equate straight hair and light complexions with "good" features. Tourism is not responsible for the introduction of such iniquitous notions but it undoubtedly serves to perpetuate them. Policy-makers and others must decide if all tourism, or all white tourism, should be banned or controlled as part of their attempt to eradicate such perceptions. And the answer to that question may, indeed, run counter to the arguments of many economists.

Social Interaction and "Flashpoints of Tension"

So far, I have noted the social effects of tourism in St. Vincent without reference to social interaction. However, it should be obvious to everyone that one of the most important social effects of tourism is to give people from different social, and perhaps cultural backgrounds the opportunity to interact. Indeed, it is frequently argued that tourism is a "bridge-builder" across international boundaries. In the case of St. Vincent, and on the basis of my study, this argument carries little weight. It should be stated at the outset that, like Vincentians, tourists to the State are not members of a homogeneous category, and I have already distinguished between black tourists from other parts of the Caribbean and white tourists from the United States and Western

Europe. In 1976, of all air arrivals, those from other parts of the Caribbean amounted to 41 per cent, and of the remainder, 39 per cent were from North America, 7 per cent were from the United Kingdom, and 13 per cent were from "other places", mainly in Western Europe. In that year, there were 848 yachting tourists, who stayed in the State for, at most, three or four days, and 13,887 cruise ship tourists, whose experience of St. Vincent was limited to a two-hour taxi ride, a quick visit to a beachside hotel for drinks, a stroll through Kingstown, the capital, and the return journey by launch to their ship. It should be clear that there are considerable differences among tourists in terms of their country of origin and the nature of their vacation, and such differences merit careful consideration. However, several generalisations can be made: First, most stop-over visitors to St. Vincent are hotel tourists and during their vacation there is minimal interaction between them and Vincentians. They meet the manager of their hotel, who may or may not be locally-born, and his staff, and occasionally form tenuous links with them. They talk to the waiters and the maids and, in exceptional circumstances, may even visit their homes, but in general, their closest links are with one another. On their rare visits to Kingstown, which is not a particularly "scenic" city, they are shielded from everyday Vincentian life by the taxi in which they are travelling.

Secondly, the experience of cruise ship tourists is even more limited. They exchange words with the taxi driver and the barman, and perhaps with a shop-keeper or two, and then return to their floating hotel. Few bridges are built to link them with the Vincentians; indeed, the latter are merely examples of "local colour" to be photographed — perhaps reluctantly — and then immortalised in the family album.

Thirdly, young tourists, whether visiting the State on yachts or "drifting" from one locally-owned guest house to another, are likely to be more adventurous. They enter the poorer parts of the town and go out of their way to mix with Vincentians and, paradoxically, they are thus more likely to experience hostility, to misunderstand local culture, and to become disillusioned. One young Canadian man, in his easly twenties, arrived in St. Vincent with every intention of "meeting the locals". At first, he booked in at a dockside guest house, only to be frightened out of his wits by the suspicious (and allegedly hostile) reception he received from the local "limers" (young men in groups at street corners). He eventually gravitated to one of the most exclusive hotels, where he found a moredocile type of Vincentian with whom he could be "chummy". In another instance, a young Canadian nurse, upset at being hissed in the street, failed to realise that, in the street-corner society of the Caribbean, hissing is a means of attracting the attention of a passer-by. I am also reminded of two young Englishmen, who spent several days attempting to find a suitable spot on which to to pitch their tent, with the intention of then sunbathing and swimming in the nude for the remainder of their vacation. Respectable Vincentian society was discouraging, but eventually they were accommodated in Mustique, an island in the Vincentian Grenadines made famous by the visits of Princess Margaret and exclusively geared to luxury tourism.

Disillusionment on the part of young white tourists is not always the result of misunderstanding. There IS anti-white feeling in St. Vincent and throughout the Caribbean. Resentment of past and present wrongs inflicted by metropolitan society cannot easily be directed against the governments concerned, whereas white tourists are readily available as scapegoats. Unwittingly offensive behaviour on their part merely compounds a situation which is already fraught with difficulty.

Where interaction between Vincentian and white tourist does occur, unpleasant situations may develop. They need not be frequent or, on the face of it, particularly important, but when they occur they rapidly become known, not only throughout St. Vincent, but also in the "sending" societies. For the sociologist these incidents — which I refer to as "flashpoints of tension" — represent the tip of an iceberg, revealing tensions and conflicts which might not otherwise be apparent. They deserve careful analysis by anyone interested in the social effects of tourism, as the following example indicates.

The Entertainers

In St. Vincent, there are relatively few "tourist" facilities, for example, only two, small, white sand beaches, and a limited number of hotel bars, restaurants and dance halls. Indeed, most social occasions are held at hotels, and this clearly creates difficulties about WHO is to be admitted apart, that is, from the hotel guests. In addition, the occasions serve to bring together tourist and member of "host" society, with results that are not always predictable.

One evening during the tourist season, which runs from December until the beginning of May, a steelband was entertaining guests and other patrons at a small, beachside hotel. The players ("panmen") had come to an arrangement with the white manager, who had agreed to pay for their uniforms and for some of their equipment. For the first part of the evening, a good time was had by all: The hotel bar was doing well, and many of the hundred or so people present were dancing. And then a Sweidsh tourist, who was taping the music of the band, attempted to photograph them with a cine-camera. Immediately, one of the panmen grabbed the camera, and refused to return it to the tourist until the band received $100 (U.S.). The tourist refused, and reported the matter to the manager, who told the panman to return the camera at once. He was supported by his wife, who added that if he continued to keep the camera, he could be accused of theft. The panman, supported by some of his fellow instrumentalists, remained obdurate and, when the hotel manager told him to return the film or cease playing, took the latter course of action. Within minutes, the entire band was in the process of dismantling its equipment. As this was going on, a local white, a member of a long-established Vincentian family, remonstrated with the bandsmen and

suggested that their action was ill-advised. He, in turn, was abused as a "honky" (a derogatory term for whites) and told that he had no place in St. Vincent, and should leave. Angered, he replied that his family had lived in St. Vincent since the middle of the eighteenth century The situation appeared to be worsening, and the police were called.

One of the persons at the dance was a black, Vincentian guest house owner, and he was infuriated by the attitude of the panmen. He telephoned the Minister of Home Affairs and Tourism, informed him of the "damage" that was being done to the good name of the State's tourist industry, and asked him to come to the hotel. Subsequently, the Minister arrived, and his main aim was to cool what had become a very difficult situation. He informed the band that the tourist should have asked their permission before taking photographs, anp persuaded the young man to return the camera. He also told the manager of the hotel that he had been wrong to stop the band playing: They had been hired to do so, but posing for photographs was no part of their contract. The party broke up without violence, but few were satisfied with its outcome.

Many people considered that the incident reflected badly on the young panmen and the Minister. All the hoteliers and guest house owners, irrespective of the size of their establishment or their race, felt that the "Black Power" movement was wrecking the island's tourist potential, and that the Government should act against it. Several expatriate hoteliers claimed that they were trying to bring money into the country, and the Government was actively working against them in supporting young radicals. Some Vincentian hoteliers pointed out that the young men had only been able to work at the hotel because there were tourists present, and yet they were killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Indeed, several of the panmen later dissociated themselves from the stance of their colleagues. In the days following the incident, most Vincentians, young or old, were very critical of the panmen's action in taking the camera.

Some people, including many of the panmen, defended the action. One young man, aged about seventeen, told me that the tourist had tried to take photographs, which he would then have exhibited for profit in his own country. He asserted that he had heard many stories of films in which Vincentian entertainers appeared, without remuneration, and which were being shown in the United States.

It should be clear that the incident detailed above can be analysed from a number of different perspectives. In my view, it provides an indication of the ambiguity of Government support for tourism, it demonstrates how expatriates and Vincentians joined together to protect a common interest, and it also reveals some deep-rooted divisions within Vincentian society. Other factors, too, could be mentioned: the influence of the "Black Power" critique of tourism, the awarenes: on the part of host AND tourist that they could be exploited, and underlying resentment against members of the old "plantocracy". A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this article, but enough has been said, I think, to demonstrate the importance of "flash-points of tension", both for the actors who participate and for the sociologists who observe.

Psychological and Economic Dependence

I have attempted to describe some of the social effects of tourism in St. Vincent not because I consider that they will, of necessity, be discovered elsewhere, but because it is simply impossible to discuss the social effects of tourism in a vacuum. The attitude of the panmen, of their critics and, indeed, of many tourists who visit St. Vincent, cannot be understood without reference to the colonial history of the region. Whether politicians, international aid agencies, and economic planners and consultants like it or not, the facts of colonialism and the resulting "white bias" in West Indian societies, have helped to form existing attitudes — favourable or otherwise — of West Indians towards white tourists. In addition, continuing reports of racism in metropolitan societies merely add fuel to the flames.

St. Vincent is still dependent on British aid for its economic solvency. Its bananas are sold on the British market, and its arrowroot is sold primarily to North America. Britain continues to be responsible for external affairs and defence. It is frequently argued that political dependence accompanies economic dependence and, although one might wish to dispute details, there is ample evidence to support this view. And new flags and national anthems do not, in themselves, transform the situation, a lesson which has been learned but slowly by independent Caribbean states. In addition, regional co-operation continues to be a hazardous enterprise. But the problems of the English-speaking Caribbean are not unique, and arguments will continue about the degree to which ANY nation in the modern world is independent.

Many of the questions that are prompted by the study of Vincentian tourism can be applied to other underdeveloped societies. What is meant by "development"? What model of development is to be followed? Is outside assistance to be sought in the attempt to increase the material standard of living? How important are improvements in the balance of payments and Gross National Products if they are achieved only at the cost of "self respect"? And WHO defines "self-respect" and such terms as "traditional culture"?

Questions about tourism can be answered only within more general frameworks, but certainly, I should wish to question the assumption that all tourism is harmful. Economic debates about the advantages and disadvantages of tourism are relatively straightforward when compared to discussions on the social effects. These can be discussed only from within agreed value judgements, and no sociologist can legislate on such matters. However, it may be that the above account of St. Vincent's tourist industry will clarify issues which are relevant to other societies, and to other types of tourism. It will have been of some value if, along the line, it has brought about a re-examination of traditional stereotypes, both of "tourist" and of "host".