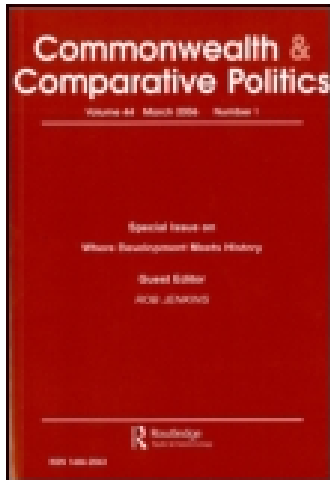


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Facilitator or hindrance to social change? The Westminster model and racial discrimination on the Jamaican labour market, 1944–1980

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Between 1944 and 1962, Jamaica witnessed a process of Westminsterisation. The Westminster model has the potential to bring about socio-economic change as its executive can move its policy agenda quickly through the legislature because it is created from a majority in the legislature's lower house. Yet it can also stifle change because of its lack of separation between the executive and legislative branches of government and other attributes. This article illustrates this duality of the Westminster model in the Caribbean through a case study of the attitudes of the Jamaican government towards racial discrimination on the labour market between 1944 and 1980.

Keywords: Westminster; Jamaica; racial discrimination; democratic socialism; Jamaicanisation; nationalisation

Introduction

The term 'Westminster model' has been invoked in many different ways. According to Rhodes and Weller (2009), it is used as

a historical description of institutional form; as a normative guide to constitutional design; as a rhetorical device used by partisan adversaries when justifying or criticizing actions, as in 'this is in line with Westminster practice' or 'this is not' and . . . as a list of putative attributes as a way of attempting to classify the system. (p. 1)

The 'putative attributes' most frequently mentioned are: concentration of executive power in one-party and a bare-majority cabinet; cabinet dominance;

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two-party system; bi-cameral legislature; majoritarian and disproportional system of elections; politically neutral and permanent civil service; constitutionalism; interest group pluralism; unitary and centralised governance; and a Central Bank controlled by the executive (De Smith, 1961; Lijphart, 1999; Rhodes & Weller, 2009). After 1944, Jamaica moved away from a Crown Colony constitutional model and gradually began to display many of the above-listed attributes. The first step in this process of Westminsterisation was the adoption of a new constitution in 1944 based on universal suffrage and providing for a Privy Council (dealing mainly with matters of defence), a nominated upper and elected lower chamber (the Legislative Council and House of Representatives), and an Executive Council. More legislative power rested with the House of Representatives than with the Legislative Council but the main instrument of policy was the Executive Council, which acted like a cabinet. Five members of the House were relegated to the Executive Council and allocated a particular area of administration, save for defence and local security. They, however, lacked real authority over their department, which was exercised by the permanent Secretariat, and had to share the power to make policy with the non-elected members of the Council, who formed the majority (Zeidenfelt, 1952; Ayearst, 1960).

The second step in the process of Westminsterisation came in 1953 when the ministers – eight by then – were given responsibility for policy decisions and the conduct of administration and personnel of their department, and one of them became Chief Minister. They were appointed and could also be removed by the governor on the advice of the leader of the majority party. Yet the governor still had reserve powers that he could use without approval of the Executive Council. Six years later, full internal self-government was instituted – one minister was made responsible for internal security – but the executive branch still lacked power over defence, foreign affairs and constitutional amendments (Ayearst, 1960). And the process of Westminsterisation was completed in 1962 when upon independence a new constitution was adopted that provided for: a governor-general representing the Queen; parliamentary sovereignty; a bi-cameral parliament consisting of an elected House of Representatives and a nominated Senate; executive power vested in a cabinet drawn from members of the lower house, headed by a prime minister and with full responsibility for defence and foreign affairs; a two-party system; the office of the leader of the opposition; and general elections every five years on a first-past-the post basis (Kelly, 1963).

The Westminster model was exported to Caribbean colonies in the post-war period because it was seen to offer the best system of government, combining government responsibility with democratic control through accountability and regular elections (see, for instance, Kumarasingham, 2013, pp. 581–582). And also because it was assumed that it would facilitate much-needed socio-

economic change because in a Westminster-style government the executive can move its agenda quickly through the legislature as it is created from a majority in the lower house. For many years following independence, it was claimed that the Westminster-style government largely explained why contrary to other parts of the Caribbean, the former British colonies had institutionalised democratic practices (see Dominguez, 1993; Griffin, 1993). More recently, however, it has been argued that the Caribbean variant of the Westminster model is more plagued than the original by its weaknesses – e.g. the power of parliament and lack of separation between the executive and legislative branches – and that this has hindered essential change, such as the adoption of methods to tackle drug crime (see Ryan, 1999; Sutton, 1999).

This article will assess whether the adoption of the Westminster model in Jamaica acted as a facilitator of or hindrance to socio-economic change. It will do this through a case study of the ways in which the Jamaican government dealt with race and colour discrimination on the labour market from the adoption of a new constitution in 1944 until the demise of democratic socialism in 1980. To set the context, the first part of this article summarises the extent and nature of racial discrimination on the labour market from around 1918 till 1980, focussing mainly on the civil service, the police force and banks. The second part assesses whether the aforementioned attributes of the Westminster model aided or hindered the process of creating a more equitable labour market in terms of race and colour. It needs to be stressed that the Westminster model is ‘an ideal type not necessarily in existence in Westminster itself’ (Payne, 1993, p. 60). It is used in this part as an analytical device, focussing on the workings and power of Westminster institutions, such as the executive and civil service but also paying attention to the actions of other actors, including pressure groups, local authorities and international organisations. And the third and final part draws some conclusions and brings the story up to the present.

Race and colour on the labour market, 1918–1980

Before the Second World War, nearly all non-specialist posts in the civil service, such as clerks and typists, were held by Jamaicans. Because of the entry requirements and recruitment procedure most were white or light-skinned¹ Jamaicans (Table 1). To enter the service required first of all a secondary-school degree. It was not easy for African Jamaicans, especially those who were lower class and invariably dark-skinned, to meet this requirement as secondary schools charged high fees and there were few scholarships available. Entry into the civil service required furthermore a recommendation from a notable member of society, such as a member of the Legislative Council. It was generally known that these mostly white and light-skinned Jamaicans tended to recommend their own children or those of relatives and friends (see, for instance, ‘New rules’,

Table 1. Racial make-up of public service officials, 1943.

Racial category	%
White	27.5
Coloured	55.9
Black	16.1
East Indian	0.5

Note: Jamaica Central Bureau of Statistics (1943). Original census categories.

1932, p. 12; 'Competitive examination', 1936, p. 3). And from 1939, there was also a third requirement: a civil service exam, which included a general intelligence test and oral exam. This requirement also disadvantaged the mostly dark-skinned, lower class boys and girls as they were unable to pay for classes to prepare them for the exam and also lacked the social capital to impress the all-white expat exam board (see, for instance, 'New rules', 1939, p. 20).

Not only entry into but also promotion within the civil service was not easy for African Jamaicans before the Second World War. Promotions were handled by the colonial secretariat but heads of department could exert influence. Furthermore, promotion criteria were not well defined so that in some cases decisions were based on seniority but in others it was on official qualifications or superior merit (see, for instance, 'Matters under review', 1924, p. 3; 'Civil Service committee proposals', 1939, p. 1). Hence, there were government departments such as the colonial secretariat that employed none or only few dark-skinned Jamaicans (Mills, 1994, p. 59).

As for senior and specialist posts, such as head of department or resident magistrate, these required a university degree or several years' experience as senior clerk in a government department or agency, which explains why these posts were invariably held by white expatriates. There were few university scholarships available and mostly allocated to white and near-white boys and girls. And it took nearly 20 years for an assistant to become chief clerk, largely because expatriate heads generally did not mentor junior local staff and give them tasks allowing them to get promoted to a higher rank. A few African Jamaicans held senior and specialist posts in the pre-war period but only temporarily, such as Hector Josephs, Jamaica's first black barrister and K.C., who acted as attorney-general from 1914 to 1916 and again in 1919 (Lumsden, 1995).

In the years immediately after the Second World War, entry requirements for the civil service remained the same but more African Jamaicans entered, including at higher ranks, and found it easier to get promoted. This was first of all facilitated by the expansion of social welfare services in the wake of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act that necessitated the formation of new government departments and agencies. Second, a greater

availability of scholarships for secondary and tertiary education and the new rule that if two candidates were equally qualified preference should be given to the local candidate. And third, a more transparent promotion procedure was adopted, following the establishment of a promotions committee that included representation from the Civil Service Association (West India Royal Commission, 1944–1945, p. 60).

These improvements, however, did not completely remove race and colour prejudice in the civil service. At times heads of department, who until the adoption of the ministerial system in 1953 were mostly all white, interfered in promotion procedures to ensure that more junior whites were promoted over more senior African Jamaicans ('Meeting Civil Service Association with Governor', 1950). And many also did not hesitate to pressure the governor into appointing white expatriates to senior posts. For example, in 1952 the Englishman John McLagan was appointed as collector general over the African-Jamaican H. V. Lewis, the deputy and acting collector general. The fact that Lewis had rendered more than satisfactory service and that McLagan had been brought out of retirement does much to support the claim made by several People's National Party (PNP) politicians at the time that Lewis and other high-ranking African-Jamaican civil servants were passed over for promotion 'because of their colour' ('Call in House', 1952, p. 7).

After the adoption of the ministerial system, the civil service was reorganised leading to three classes: clerical, administrative (staff working closely with the ministries) and executive. To enter the new executive class, which offered the greatest promotion opportunities, required a Higher School Certificate but members from the clerical class, who did not possess such a certificate, could be promoted to this class if they had been in the service for at least five years and passed a special exam. That 25 per cent of positions in this new class were reserved for members of the clerical grade facilitated the promotion of lower class and invariably dark-skinned Jamaicans ('House debate', 1955, p. 5). Further speeding up the process of the 'blackening' of senior posts in the civil service in the years leading up to independence (Table 2) was the establishment of a staff training centre in 1957 that offered courses and scholarships for a degree in public administration. But nominations for these were made by senior officials and hence subject to favouritism.² Also until independence, the most important positions – finance and security – were held by white expatriates (see, for instance, 'Governor's statement', 1957, p. 17).

Independence and further bureaucratisation meant that the government sector expanded at a rapid rate in the 1960s. But throughout this decade, the civil service struggled to recruit and retain staff, especially technical experts and highly qualified administrative staff, due to higher wages offered in the private sector; the declining prestige of the civil service; a 'brain drain' – many highly educated Jamaicans migrated abroad during this decade; and

Table 2. Administrative and executive officers in government service, 1960.

Racial category	%
Africans	45.7
Afro-Europeans	31.7
Europeans	9.8
East Indians and Afro-East Indian	3.4
Chinese and Afro-Chinese	0.7
Others	8.7

Note: Jamaica Central Bureau of Statistics (1963). Original census categories used.

failure of the educational system to keep step with the needs of an expanding economy. This struggle to recruit meant that race and colour prejudices became less prominent in hiring and promotion but it also allowed for the continued use of white expatriates in professional and technical positions, such as governor of the Bank of Jamaica. A new staff training centre was set up in 1969, which along with scholarships sponsored by various international organisations had to end this reliance on expatriates (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 1969). These training opportunities, however, focussed mainly on the higher echelons of the service so that promotion of those in the clerical grade and who were invariably darker was slower than those in the other two classes. Because nominations for training and promotion were made by immediate supervisors based on confidential reports, there was still the opportunity for favouritism to affect promotion. However as the service became increasingly populated after independence by the 'grass roots', including at the more senior level, the favouritism shown by supervisors was less based on colour than other factors, such as school tie or increasingly party affiliation (Jones, 1981).

The 'blackening' of senior posts occurred later in the police force than the civil service. It was not until 1942 before African Jamaicans were finally appointed as sub-inspectors.³ Until independence (Table 3), the most senior posts were held by expatriates. Only in 1962 was a Jamaican appointed as police commissioner. That he was light-skinned is unsurprising as promotion to various ranks prior to independence was based on an examination that included a general knowledge test and an oral element. This disadvantaged men from within the ranks, who were mostly lower class and dark-skinned as entry into the force until the late 1950s required no more than a basic education ('Report of the Commission', 1951). Also the dark-skinned African Jamaicans who passed these exams were more likely than their white or light-skinned counterparts to be given the least desirable positions in 'the country' (see, for instance, 'Ex-Police Sergeant', 1951, p. 11).

Table 3. Top positions in the Jamaican police force, 1951.

Origin	Number
UK	15
Jamaica	14
Other Caribbean	4
Ireland	2
Other	3

Note: Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Police Force, p. 37.

After independence various attempts were made to accelerate the promotion of promising policemen to replace expatriates, such as the establishment of an officers' cadet school in 1967 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1967). As a result, by the late 1960s there were only two white officers left. One of them, a Jamaican by birth, was promoted to police commissioner in 1971. Rumours circulated that he was only promoted because of a still strong belief that a white officer would not serve under a black officer ('You can quote me', 1971, p. 14). Two years later, however, he was replaced by Basil Robinson, the first dark-skinned police commissioner ('Robinson appointed police chief', 1973, p. 1). Also in the case of the police, it seems that favouritism affected promotion in the decades following independence. Under the 1962 constitution, a Police Service Commission was set up that handled promotions and selected staff for the cadet school and scholarships to study abroad. They based their decision largely on confidential reports submitted by supervisors. It was argued that these reports were far from impartial and by the late 1970s open accusations were made that party-affiliation influenced the Commission's decisions (see, for instance, 'Policemen warned', 1979, p. 24).

As for racial discrimination in the private sector, this was not only more common but also more overt than in the public sector.⁴ Before the war, there was (Table 4) a clear race and colour hierarchy in shops and offices: whites and near whites were employed as supervisors and managers; below them were light-skinned African Jamaicans engaged in the more client-facing work and dark-skinned African Jamaicans were firmly placed at the bottom doing the most menial work. This hierarchy was facilitated by educational requirements – even a job as a sales assistant in the 1930s required a secondary-school degree – as well as adverts that specified white or light skin. Before the war, none of the banks, which were all foreign-owned, employed African Jamaicans as clerks.

After the Second World War (Table 5), it became easier for dark-skinned Jamaicans to get jobs in shops and offices. This was, as in the public sector, the result of employment growth. For example, the number of commercial banks increased from 28 in 1950 to 112 by 1968. Yet these establishments

Table 4. Racial profile of shops, 1943.

Racial category	Shop assistants %	Shop managers %
Black	36.0	14.8
Coloured	38.0	33.3
White	2.8	25.0
Chinese	16.0	18.3
East Indian	2.3	1.8
Syrian	4.9	6.8

Note: Jamaica Central Bureau of Statistics (1943). Original census categories.

still had a colour hierarchy as dark-skinned Jamaicans struggled to make their way to the top. This was most noticeable in commercial banks, airlines, hotels, bauxite and other foreign-owned companies. These establishments only began to employ African Jamaicans as clerks in the 1950s and when they did so, they first recruited very light-skinned African Jamaicans (see, for instance, Monteith, 2008). It was not until after independence that African Jamaicans were appointed to senior positions in banks and other foreign-owned companies, largely as a result of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP)'s Jamaicanisation policy that led many companies to set up training schemes for junior Jamaican staff (Seaga, 2010, p. 194). The first Jamaicans selected for these schemes and thus promoted were mostly white, Chinese or very light-skinned. It took until the late 1970s before dark-skinned Jamaicans moved into senior posts in these firms. This was first of all facilitated by the increased migration of highly skilled Jamaicans to North America, attracted by higher wages and better working conditions abroad but also disillusioned with the PNP's management of the economy and its move to the left (Kaufman, 1985, pp. 121–123). And second, by the PNP's nationalisation policy, which will be discussed in detail in the next section alongside the aforementioned JLP's Jamaicanisation policy.

Table 5. Racial profile of shops, 1960.

Racial category	Shop assistants %	Shop managers %
African	55.4	35.9
European	1.2	6.1
East Indian and Afro-East Indian	5.3	2.7
Chinese and Afro-Chinese	14.3	7.2
Afro-European	18.6	32.4
Other	5.2	15.7

Note: Jamaica Central Bureau of Statistics (1963). Original census categories.

The Westminster model as facilitator or hindrance

Race and colour discrimination on the labour market, then, diminished after the Second World War as a result of various factors, including employment growth, outmigration, and the Jamaicanisation and nationalisation policies adopted after independence by the two main parties, which were to a greater or lesser degree informed by particular ideas and values. This section considers the extent to which the Westminster model facilitated the adoption and implementation of the Jamaicanisation and nationalisation policies and examines more generally whether the main attributes of this ideal type, which started to appear from 1944 onwards, made it easier or more difficult for the government to create a more equal labour market.

The Jamaicanisation policy of the JLP and the PNP's nationalisation policy owed much to the two key attributes of the Westminster model: concentration of executive power in one party and dominance of the cabinet. During the period under consideration these attributes were particularly pronounced in Jamaica because a very high proportion of members of the lower house – one-third in the 1960s and one-fourth in the 1970s – were also members of the cabinet. This made the legislative branch less critical of and independent from the executive branch and enabled the majority party to implement radical change. The JLP started its Jamaicanisation policy in the mid-1960s. It first of all encouraged foreign-owned companies – through both moral suasion and tax incentives – to offer a portion of shares to Jamaicans and appoint locals onto their Boards of Directors (Kaufman, 1985, p. 39). This was accompanied by a change in the Foreign Nationals and Commonwealth Citizens (Employment) Act (1964), which required non-Jamaicans, including Commonwealth citizens, to obtain a work permit. Permits were only issued if there was no qualified Jamaican available and for the time it would take to train a local, with a maximum of five years.

The Jamaicanisation policy also included, as mentioned earlier, appeals to foreign-owned businesses to employ more Jamaicans and set up training schemes for junior Jamaican staff. And in 1968, an Accountancy Act was passed that had to ensure that Jamaicans could enter the profession under 'terms no less advantageous than is available to their foreign counterparts' ('House passes', 1968, p. 22). Jamaicanisation was a means to mark Jamaica's independence and reflect its nationalist pride. Yet the policy was also a response to increasing and more overt calls made by the media and civil society organisations that banks and other foreign-owned companies should employ more dark-skinned Jamaicans as well as the PNP's growing demand for a larger domestic share of the ownership of the national economy (Kaufman, 1985).

The 1964 Employment Act was presented both as a means to reduce unemployment – it was estimated that 4000 jobs carried out by expatriates could

easily be done by locals – and to rectify ‘social and economic inequalities’ (‘Senate approves’, 1964, p. 17). When the bill was first presented the Jamaican Chamber of Commerce objected and proposed amendments, some of which were incorporated into the final reading, including that work permits should be issued to the employee rather than the employer and additional categories of exemption. To further illustrate that in Jamaica at this time, multiple interest groups were able to exert pressure in an uncoordinated and competitive manner – another marker of the Westminster model – various hotels appealed to the minister responsible for the implementation of the Act. Many were successful and thus able to continue to use expatriates in executive roles. This was possible because post-independent Jamaica, as many other Westminster countries, lacked oversight committees to scrutinise public officials and ensure transparency and accountability (Barrow-Giles, 2010, p. 5; Kumarasingham, 2013, p. 593). There was a work permits committee made up of people from different ministries to assist the minister but he was not bound by their advice. In theory, appeal was possible, allowing an employer or applicant to provide new evidence, but the minister did not have to explain why he upheld or overturned a decision (Da Costa, 1973).

Furthermore, while many foreign-owned companies did set up training schemes for locals, this method of Jamaicanisation failed to live up to its full potential because the government did not try to exert influence over the selection of candidates for these schemes. It did not ask the companies for an annual return of their schemes broken down by race and colour let alone offer tax incentives or use other methods to persuade them to select candidates irrespective of race or colour. As a result, although more Jamaicans entered the executive ranks of these companies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they continued to have a distinct colour hierarchy. For example, in 1967 Citizens and Southern National Bank became the first locally controlled commercial bank and was renamed the Jamaican Citizens Bank. In 1971, it completed its process of Jamaicanisation by appointing its first Jamaican general manager: Arthur Chai-Onn. The Chinese-Jamaican Chai-Onn, a Yale and Harvard graduate, had been one of the few lucky employees of the bank allowed to attend banking seminars and other courses with Citizens and Southern Bank in the USA. And in the same year, Nova Scotia Bank appointed Charles Henriques as its first Jamaican manager, a naturalised white Jamaican, who had spent several years at overseas branches of the bank before becoming manager of the Kingston branch (‘New manager’, 1971, p. 2; Seaga, 2010, p. 193).

The Jamaicanisation policy also did little to end the ‘shadism’ on the labour market because the JLP government was reluctant to investigate claims of discriminatory hiring practices by foreign-owned companies. PNP member Wills Isaacs, for instance, asked in a House of Representatives debate in 1968 for a statement from government regarding an advert for Air Jamaica – in which the

government had a large stake – which asked for airhostesses with ‘good complexion and good hair’, i.e. light-skinned women. The Minister of Trade and Industry refused to do so because Isaacs had ‘not tabled a formal motion’ and this should have been addressed to the Minister of Communications and Work (‘Raises question’, 1968, p. 11). This case illustrates that the elaborate set of practices and procedures for conducting parliamentary business and rules of debate, an attribute of the Westminster model that is supposed to act as a useful check upon the power of the executive (Gamble, 1990, p. 407), can also conveniently be used by the executive to silence opposition.

The PNP regarded Jamaicanisation as a ‘cosmetic change’ and was convinced that only nationalisation – through joint or direct ownership of businesses between the government and private investors – could create a ‘more just and equitable society’ (Kaufman, 1985, p. 78). So although the process of Jamaicanisation continued after the PNP assumed government in 1972, the party also began to nationalise various sectors of the economy: the bauxite industry, cement production, a telephone company, a radio station and newspaper, and some banks (Kaufman, 1985, p. 73). In 1977, the government purchased all shares of Barclays Bank, the second largest foreign-owned bank, and turned it into the National Commercial Bank (Kaufman, 1985, p. 146).

The take-over of Barclays was facilitated by the fact that the Bank of Jamaica was not independent of the executive.⁵ The colour profile of the new bank’s employees, in particular its executive staff, suggests that concentration of executive power in one party and dominance of the cabinet can do much to bring about social change. Within six months, all expatriates had left and Donald Banks, one of the first African Jamaicans employed by Barclays, was made managing director (‘Banks to be joint managing director’, 1977, p. 2). Various other senior posts were soon filled by African Jamaicans and not just those, like Banks, who were light-skinned. The new bank also soon embarked on a recruitment drive, which further ‘darkened’ its employee profile (‘Bank posts’, 1978, p. 17).

But concentration of executive power in one party and dominance of the cabinet can also stifle socio-economic change as it enables a government to ignore demands for change made by the opposition, civil society organisations and international bodies. For instance, in August 1963 to coincide with ‘The March on Washington’, a march was held in Kingston that passed a resolution forwarded to the prime minister and demanding that staff in certain commercial and industrial firms employ at least 50 per cent of ‘people of black complexion’ (‘Local march’, 1963, p. 1). Bustamante, however, ignored this demand and also the recommendation made by a UN commission in 1965 that Jamaica adopt a system of career advancement in the civil service based on merit (‘Civil Service’, 1965, p. 22).

Only under the PNP government was the UN proposal taken forward. In 1973, it gave a newly created Ministry of Public Service – which had to select and train staff and improve organisational structures and procedures – along with the Public Service Commission (PSC) – the body set up in 1953 that handled appointments and promotions in the civil service – the task of designing a new system of career advancement in the civil service. Two years later, the rules for promotion were changed and only merit counted, based on a combination of annual evaluative reports written by supervisors and an interview with the PSC. But even more than this, civil servants were outraged by the PNP government’s attempt to politicise the bureaucracy, i.e. trying to make senior officers support new policies. Interviews by the PSC, which was supposed to be neutral as none of its members could hold public office, increasingly came to centre on questions of how the candidate conceptualised the policies of the government relating to his/her field. This was perceived by civil service staff as a means to keep those who did not support the PNP out of senior posts. In fact in February 1977, the PSC resigned en bloc six months before their term ran out because of perceived pressure from the government (Stephens and Stephens, 1986). And in 1979, rumours circulated that personnel in the Ministry of Labour and Employment discriminated in the selection of overseas farm workers so that those who were recommended by MPs or constituency caretakers were prioritised (‘Gallimore complains of discrimination’, 1979, p. 13). So under the Manley government and to a lesser extent also the JLP government, the civil service was not a permanent, politically neutral civil service, a key tenet of the Westminster model that is to act as a check upon a powerful executive.

As early as 1944, Jamaica had adopted one of the main features of the Westminster model: a two-party system (Table 6). At times, however, minor parties contested the election as in 1962 when the People’s Political Party (PPP) took part. This short-lived black nationalist party was set up in 1960 by the barrister Millard Johnson, who had been involved in the Marxist People’s Freedom Movement, and drew in various people disillusioned with both the ‘brown man’s’ PNP and the JLP, including Rose Leon, former chairwoman of the

Table 6. Results of the House of Representatives election, 1944.

Party	Total votes polled	%
JLP	144,661	41.4
Independent candidates	104,814	30.0
PNP	82,029	23.0
Jamaica Democratic Party	14,123	4.1
All other parties	3500	1.0

Note: Zeidenfelt (1952), p. 530.

JLP (Gannon, 1976). It did not hesitate to condemn colour discrimination on the labour market and proposed far-reaching reforms, such as 'strict colour ratios' for banks and other commercial firms in Kingston ('The People's Political Party', 1961, p. 18; Special Branch for the Local Intelligence Committee, 1961). Yet the two-party system was by then so firmly engrained that it polled less than 3 per cent of the votes.

Before independence neither of the two main parties made such drastic proposals as the PPP's to create a more equitable labour market. It could be argued that this was facilitated by the two-party system as it tends to lead parties to moderation and 'centre hugging' in an attempt to attract as many voters as possible. In fact, by the 1959 elections there was little to distinguish the parties' platforms (Munroe, 1972). Yet it is also possible that the parties refrained from making drastic proposals to reduce race and colour discrimination on the labour market so as not to jeopardise the ongoing process of decolonisation, as is suggested by the debate surrounding the appointment of the retired Englishman McLaglan over the African-Jamaican H. V. Lewis as collector general in 1952. For instance, the JLP – the governing party at the time – fiercely criticised the PNP for accusing the governor of not promoting Jamaicans and told it to be grateful for 'the steps that this government has taken in promoting Jamaicans to high office' ('Call in House', 1952, p. 7).

A two-party system can bestow many advantages, including political stability as it tends to discourage minor radical parties. But it also means that the minority party is condemned to the role of opposition. The minority party can be quite substantial if a first-past-the-post system is in place (Table 7). In Jamaica, the opposition fiercely criticised and even demonised the party in power. This trend already started long before independence as the McLaglan case illustrates and increased thereafter. For example, in 1974 the PNP set up an accelerated promotion scheme for the police force. A year later newspapers reported that this had allowed the dark-skinned Oliver Grandison and Errol Gentles to become inspectors within just eighteen months ('Rapid promotions', 1975, p. 3). This success story and also PNP attempts to make the civil service a more equal employer by setting up a promotions system based on merit were overshadowed by claims made by the opposition that the Police Service Commission and PSC were marked by political favouritism and that a new method of appointment should be adopted for these commissions (see, for instance, 'Govt. rejects Opposition proposals', 1979, p. 1). Yet the JLP failed to make any constructive proposals during its time in opposition to ensure that the colour profile of both the police force and civil service mirrored more closely that of the population at large, such as changing educational requirements.

Another disadvantage of a two-party system is that the opposition party tends to make huge promises during elections to bring about change but

Table 7. The majoritarian and disproportional system of elections in Jamaica, 1955–1980.

Election % seats	Winning party % votes	Winning party % seats	Losing party % votes	Losing party
1955 PNP	56	51	44	39
1959 PNP	64	55	36	44
1962 JLP	58	50	42	49
1967 JLP	62	51	38	49
1972 PNP	70	56	30	44
1976 PNP	78	57	23	43
1980 JLP	85	59	15	41

Note: Stephens and Stephens (1986), p. 376, Table a.1.

once in power quickly loses the impetus for change. The PNP, for instance, which had fiercely condemned the JLP in 1952 for supporting the appointment of an Englishman as collector general had as its 1955 election slogan ‘time for a change’, demanding amongst others full internal self-government and ‘equality before the law of all men’ (PNP, 1955). Yet after it won the election, it refrained like the JLP from undertaking action to address the race and colour discrimination practised by foreign-owned companies, even though it was demanded by some of its own politicians. Referring specifically to banks, H. R. Wallace said in a House of Representatives debate in April 1961 that ‘in Kingston today many places came into existence because of the great upsurge and economic development that had taken place over the years yet dark-skinned persons only held jobs such as porters’ (‘Government program criticized’, 1961, p. 24). That both the JLP and PNP in the years leading up to independence did not propose drastic action to force banks and other foreign-owned companies to be less discriminatory in their hiring and promotion practices should not just be seen in light of the general reluctance of Westminster governments to interfere in the private sector and the aforementioned tendency to moderation in two-party systems but also the process of decolonisation and above-all the economic development of the island at the time, which relied heavily on foreign investment. In fact, the PNP fully acknowledged this in its 1955 election manifesto:

We pledge the fullest support and the maintenance and improvement of all schemes and laws designed to attract foreign capital to Jamaica for investment in local industry. We guarantee to maintain the utmost faith in our relations with foreign investors and to give them security and protection in all proper ways. (PNP, 1955, p. 12)

And after assuming power in 1955, the PNP adopted a range of tax incentives and other measures to attract direct foreign investment in mining, hotel construction, manufacturing and indirect investment in terms of loans to the public and private sectors. The foreign-owned commercial banks were important in this process. They had traditionally been at the centre of the capital market but in the 1950s they changed from being net exporters of capital to instruments through which foreign funds were channelled into the Jamaican economy. They then started to supply not just the commercial sector with necessary capital but also the slowly developing manufacturing sector. Reliance on foreign investment continued after independence. In fact, between 1951 and 1968 foreign investment provided about 35 per cent of net investment (Jefferson, 1972). This largely explains why the JLP government used ‘moral suasion’ rather than legislation to get foreign companies to set up training schemes and also why some of these firms were able to get work permits for positions that could easily have been carried out by locals.

The perceived need for foreign investment also does much to explain why in the 1950s the two parties did not support demands from parish councils to get more dark-skinned Jamaicans employed and promoted in foreign-owned companies. It was greatly facilitated by the fact that under the Westminster model central government dominates local government. During the 1950s, various parish councils passed resolutions to end discrimination by foreign-owned companies, in particular banks and airlines. In April 1950, for example, the PNP Mayor of Kingston proposed a resolution ‘urging banks to employ qualified black men and women’, which was overwhelmingly accepted (‘Shade bar’, 1950, p. 1). As the banks refused to comply, he proposed in 1953 an even stronger resolution – banks should employ ‘a fair proportion of dark-skinned citizens’ – which was also passed (‘Mayor for CoC’, 1953, p. 6). As mentioned, neither the JLP nor PNP government made similar demands, and they also refused to support parish councils in their attempts to get more dark-skinned Jamaicans employed in foreign-owned companies. For example, in 1956 the St James council passed a resolution that the Minister of Communications and Work and Chief Minister – Norman Manley – be asked to investigate the failure of airlines in Montego Bay to hire ‘coloured persons’ as clerical staff (‘Colour bar’, 1956, p. 20). Yet the Minister told the Council that they should take up the matter locally (‘Airline asking’, 1957, p. 14).

Jamaica and other former British Caribbean colonies deviate from the Westminster model in that they have written constitutions.⁶ Jamaica’s 1962 constitution included freedom from discrimination on various grounds, including race and colour. Anyone who felt discriminated against including employees could apply to the Supreme Court. This deviation from the Westminster model could have reduced the degree of race and colour discrimination on

the labour market but it failed to do so because it was very expensive to apply to the Supreme Court and matters such as racial discrimination on the labour market were not likely to qualify for legal aid. In fact, in the 1960s and 1970s nobody appealed to the Supreme Court for discrimination on the grounds of race and colour whether on the labour market or in other instances.⁷ So this marked deviation from the Westminster model facilitated social change only in theory.

Conclusion and epilogue

So while race and colour discrimination on the labour market did decline after 1944, the foregoing section has indicated that much more could have been achieved if the JLP and PNP governments had gone further, such as asking foreign-owned companies to provide annual returns of their staff broken down by place of birth or race and ethnicity. That they did not do so should be seen in light of various factors, most notably their perceived need for foreign investment and before 1962 also their fear that the process of decolonisation could be harmed if they made demands for greater representation of locals in the administration or if they were seen to be too dirigiste. Some of the features of the Westminster model compounded these factors to limit change. The foregoing in particular has singled out interest group pluralism and the two-party and the first-past-the-post systems. It has been shown that elite interest groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and major hotels on the north coast could make their voices better heard than those of popular interest groups like those that marched in Kingston in August 1963, and were thus able to largely uphold the status quo regarding employment practices in the private sector. And while the two-party system has meant that the political order in Jamaica has been fairly stable since 1944, it has also encouraged moderation and opposition for opposition's sake so that when in opposition both the JLP and PNP put forward few constructive proposals to bring about fairer hiring and promotion practices.

But the period under consideration has also witnessed some drastic attempts to bring about socio-economic change that related to the composition of the labour market, most notably the Jamaicanisation and nationalisation policies but also the PNP's adoption in 1975 of a system of career advancement in the civil service based on merit. These were driven by various factors besides economics, including independence and the need to mark this; pressure exerted on government by the media and other groups to encourage foreign-owned companies to employ more dark-skinned Jamaicans; and, especially in the case of the PNP, ideology. Concentration of executive power in one party and dominance of the cabinet – two major features of the Westminster model – did much to enable the JLP and PNP governments to first propose and later implement their policies.

This case study, then, has reinforced the claim made in much of the existing literature that there are attributes of the Westminster model that can stifle change as well as those that can facilitate but it has highlighted that their ability to do so depends upon the socio-economic and cultural context, which of course differs across time and place. This case study, for instance, has pointed not just to economics but also to such social and cultural factors as the development of civil society organisations in the 1950s, nationalist fervour in the 1960s, and the PNP's socialist ideology in the 1970s. Since 1980, Jamaica has witnessed many socio-economic and cultural changes, which have in various ways contributed to one of the very few changes in its system of government since independence: the replacement of the bill of rights included in the 1962 constitution with a charter of fundamental rights and freedoms. The charter, which was adopted in 2011, theoretically offers more protection against discrimination on the grounds of race and colour because it refers to discrimination by both public and private actors.⁸

The charter was invoked by the Public Defender in a case that is but one illustration that although it has significantly diminished since the Second World War, race and colour discrimination is still a feature of the Jamaican labour market. In September 2011, Portia Simpson Miller, the Leader of the Opposition, called on the JLP government to investigate reports that many firms had asked the HEART trust, the government's skills training and certification centre, not to send them trainees, who were 'of dark complexion' (*Gleaner*, 2011). Contrary to the decades before and after independence, the ruling party honoured this request and ordered the Public Defender to conduct an investigation. The HEART trust did not comply with the Public Defender's request to provide names of companies that had made requests for light-skinned trainees ('HEART not responding', 2011, p. A11) and even issued a statement that an internal investigation had revealed that no requests were ever received from employers for light-skinned trainees. Yet there was ample evidence that it was especially employers in the hotel sector who had made such requests and which led the Public Defender to invoke the charter and claim that these employers had acted unconstitutionally ('Witter on warpath', 2011, p. A10).

Notes

1. The terms 'light-skinned' and 'dark-skinned' are used here rather than the contemporary terms 'coloured' and 'brown' and 'black'.
2. Even African-Jamaican senior staff did so and many were also, like the white expats before them, reluctant to give juniors – who were usually darker – tasks that would allow them to get promoted (Mills, 1994, p. 70).
3. Until 1922, a rule was in place that only those of 'European descent' could be appointed to the rank of sub-inspector and above. That it took until 1943 before

the first African Jamaicans were promoted to this rank was because of the promotion criteria: having been a sergeant major for at least two years and a pass in an exam, which included besides knowledge of police duties also British history and geography. This made it very difficult for men from within the ranks and who were invariably dark skinned to occupy higher ranks in the force.

4. The public sector is generally a fairer employer than the private sector because it is better regulated, with more transparent procedures for recruitment and promotion, etc.
5. The Minister of Finance appoints members of the Board of Governors, can make requests, etc.
6. It can be argued, however, that this is less a deviation from than a variation on the Westminster model. Although the Westminster system does not require a written constitution, it is marked by constitutionalism in that political change has to be based on precedents and needs to follow clear rules and procedures. Such rules and procedures are in place for changing the written constitutions in the Caribbean, which in most places have changed little since independence (Payne, 1993, pp. 58–59).
7. Only one case was brought to the Supreme Court under this provision during the period under discussion but not on the grounds of race. That even five years after this case had started, it had not even begun to address the substantive issues, may also explain why nobody brought any cases of racial discrimination to the Supreme Court before 1980.
8. It has been pointed out that state parties have interpreted their obligations under the charter too narrowly to offer full protection against discrimination on the various grounds listed in the charter. A recent test case on the grounds of sexuality also suggests that in practice the charter does not offer sufficient protection against discrimination (Wheatle, 2013).

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