Adrian Fraser, *The 1935 Riots in St Vincent: From Riots to Adult Suffrage*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2016. xiii + 240 pp. (Paper US\$30.00)

The 1935 Riots in St Vincent serves as an extremely valuable contribution to the historiography of St. Vincent for the first half of the twentieth century as it amplifies the discussion on labor history raised briefly by O. Nigel Bolland in *On the March: Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean* (1995). It is presented essentially in two intricately connected parts—the first exploring the antecedents, the riots, and the immediate reaction up to about 1935, and the second showing how the agitation continued throughout the 1940s and led directly to the attainment of Adult Suffrage in 1951.

In his examination of the background to the riots, Adrian Fraser makes a distinction between the general causes and the “spark.” He discusses a range of factors, from race and class, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the material hardship of the working people which resulted from the slow pace of land reform, and the diseases and poor housing caused by the Great Depression. While he gives agricultural production levels, data on prices and wages would have helped him to arrive at a better estimate of the hardships endured by the laboring classes. Moreover, in analyzing the Depression, he could have shown how St. Vincent exports, commodity prices, and remittances were affected. And the point he makes about diseases and housing could have been strengthened by the inclusion of data on infant mortality, always a good gauge of the health of the laborers.

In his examination of the spark that set off the riot, Fraser cites the decision of the government to raise revenue via taxes on beer, spirits, tobacco, cigarettes, illuminating oil, and soap. This led to a crowd invasion of the St. Vincent courthouse, well illustrated on the front cover of the text. He suggests that the storming of the courthouse was prompted not only by the prospect of increased prices, but also by the insensitivity of the colonial government. In describing this courthouse invasion, he contrasts it with other Caribbean riots, arguing that the St. Vincent uprising was not connected with labor disputes on plantations, but rather was caused by government action. However, it must be noted that this does not negate the primacy of labor in the conflict.

In analyzing the nature of the riots, Fraser identifies many of the faces in the crowd, including “ringleaders” Martin Durham, Samuel Lewis, and Donald Peters. Having noted that many women took part in the storming of the courthouse, a greater attempt could have been made to explain their presence.

Fraser examines the immediate impact of the riots, paying attention to the arrests, the modes of censorship, and the state of emergency imposed to pre-

vent further attacks. He captures the West Indian reaction to the suppression measures employed, noting that the Trinidad-based Negro Welfare and Cultural Association demanded the arrest of the “murderers” of the workers (p. 64). The local reaction does not escape Fraser’s gaze, as he argues that the Methodist Church denounced the rioters and pledged its cooperation with the authorities. Others, including the Grenadian activist T.A. Marryshow demanded a commission of enquiry in light of the loss of life. Throughout the text, George McIntosh is identified as the principal leader, both before and after the riots. His trial in November 1935 commands center-stage in the narrative, as Fraser considers this a key part of the administration’s response. He was arrested on a charge of treason (on the grounds that he was largely responsible for the action of the masses), but the case was thrown out in the magistrate court because of a lack of evidence.

Fraser also examines the immediate and long-term repercussions of the riots and traces the political developments in St. Vincent up to the granting of Adult Suffrage. He argues that the riots changed the political momentum in St. Vincent and identifies postriot progress such as the establishment of a labor office and legislation supporting trade-union activity. His analysis conveys a clear picture of the political aspirants, as well as the parties and their campaigns. Particular attention is given to the 1951 general elections which produced new leaders such as E.T. Joshua and George Charles for the United Workers Peasants and Rate Payers Union. Fraser could have strengthened the point by providing the number of registered voters before 1951 to show the importance of Adult Suffrage to the laboring classes. Nevertheless, the book, well written and organized, fills an important gap in the historiography of St. Vincent from the perspective of the worker.

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