The Legacy of the Dalhousie University Ocean Studies Programme (DOSP) in the Caribbean

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Introduction

This essay addresses the contribution of the Dalhousie University Ocean Studies Programme (DOSP) to fisheries and ocean management in the Caribbean. DOSP was unique in its focus on ocean management and on fostering a multidisciplinary approach. Douglas Johnston, Edgar Gold, and others championed this approach in anticipation of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (LOS Convention) and its impact on ocean management problems of developing countries, in particular, the management of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). The small islands in the Eastern Caribbean, now Member States of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), presented a special case, and DOSP conducted seminal work with these islands in the early 1980s. This work impacted heavily on future developments, not only in the Eastern Caribbean but in the entire Caribbean Sea. This essay traces the DOSP influence and, in some cases, lack of it, on initiatives by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of Caribbean

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1 DOSP was terminated in 1988 when it was combined with the Canadian Maritime Transportation Centre (CMTC) to become the International Institute for Transportation and Ocean Policy Studies (IITOPS). After a few years, IITOPS changed into the Oceans Institute of Canada (OIC). This merged with Elizabeth Mann Borgese’s Dalhousie University–based International Ocean Institute (IOIC) and became the International Ocean Institute of Canada (IOIC). Much of the traditional DOSP/IITOPS/OIC work has reverted back to the Dalhousie Law School under its Marine and Environmental Law Institute established in 2002/03. IOI has provided annual training courses in ocean management to students from many countries, including the Caribbean. To this day, ex-DOSP personnel continue to be involved with developments in the marine area in the Caribbean, mainly under the auspices of CIDA programmes and projects.
States (ACS) and to current initiatives to establish a management regime for this sea.

DOSP’s interest in the Caribbean Sea sprang from the problems of maritime boundary delimitation that would emanate from the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III). Because of the many island States in the Caribbean Sea and their proximity to each other, it was recognized that delimitation would be both difficult and costly, and that these States might have difficulties managing their EEZs. The LOS Convention would provide sovereign rights over extended marine space for these islands, but would also impose more responsibilities on States. With funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), DOSP initiated studies for some of the States in the Eastern Caribbean, namely all members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), dealing with delimitation and ocean management issues. These constituted seminal work for the entire Commonwealth Caribbean Region.

The DOSP studies in the 1980s left a legacy that has implications for recent developments for the Caribbean Sea, such as the international recognition in 2006 of the Caribbean Sea as a special area for sustainable development and the greater economic integration of Caribbean and Central American States. These developments have resulted in initiatives to establish a fisheries and oceans management regime for the Caribbean Sea and have highlighted the importance of maritime boundary delimitation in the Caribbean. These developments can be traced back to the DOSP studies and to the participation of many ex-DOSP personnel (DOSPIES) in their strategy and formulation. This study therefore examines the DOSP legacy in the Caribbean and covers the following aspects: 1) the DOSP seminal studies in the Eastern Caribbean; 2) DOSP’s influence on CIDA’s involvement with regional initiatives in the Caribbean; and 3) the implications of DOSP initiatives for the current management regime of the Caribbean Sea.

Seminal DOSP Studies in the Eastern Caribbean

During 1980/81, DOSP carried out its first study in the Windward Islands on a sub-contractual basis to the Foundation Reshaping the International Order (RIO) of the Netherlands, but funded by CIDA. In 1981, a draft