

The silent revolution - A book festival (2006)

by

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There have been intermittent publications of books by Vincentian authors over the years, notably, 'Pioneers In Nation-Building' by Sir Rupert John; 'Caribbean Life and Culture' by Sir Fred Phillips; the first of them, 'A Star to Steer by', courtesy the venerable Captain Hugh Mulzac, and the last before the flood, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves' "Politics of Our Caribbean Civilization".

They were precious few, and spaced far between. All of a sudden, Vincentians are moving into publications which threaten within a few years to swell into a flood. In 2006, I can think of "six of the best" that now adorn our libraries and are driving the evolving political citizens to reach for new heights, in varying walks of life.

I follow the tradition of always starting off an event in prayer. In this regard, Errol Daisley, who now resides in Trinidad and Tobago, has thrown down a challenge to our religious world in his first book, 'The Right Hand of God', followed by a second which deepens and reinforces the thoughts expressed in the first.

Father Mark Da Silva, unlike Errol Daisley who is a surveyor-engineer by profession, happens to be a priest of the Roman Catholic faith. But he is a man of many parts, and he seizes on our environment, which is God's own gift to us, to launch his sermon. He has a co-author in Dianna Wilson, of 'The Natural History of Mustique'. Like Adam and Eve, figuratively, they wander through paradise, that is Mustique, to pronounce and marvel at their findings.

Marcia Harold-Hinds was a foundation member of our Flambeau Group, who wrote for us one or two articles on religion, a teacher's life, and general philosophy. Forty years down the road, she has turned to Love Poems, as if to lighten the mood that produced the epic poem on Chatoyer, our first National Hero. What should be normally the lighter stuff turns out in fact to be profound in parts, itself betrayed by the very title 'Roses and Thorns', as if they do not necessarily go together. The book itself was described by one reviewer as "a rich mosaic of experiences culled from life itself...the wild abandon and brashness of youth and the pain of loss and loneliness... poetry as the expression of the human condition." Savouring the bitter-sweet of it, all.

We come next to the brilliant work of yet another Flambeau-associate, Karl John, who presented 'Land Reform in Small Island Developing States: A case study on St. Vincent, West Indies: 1890-2000'. In Karl's synopsis, it has been noted that "In St. Vincent, the demise of the plantation and the emergence of an independent peasantry are attributable, to a significant degree, to public policy formulated and implemented over a period of 100 years. "The work pays particular attention to the motives for the policies and strategies adopted for land reform, critically evaluates the planning and implementation of related programs and projects and assesses the role of prevailing economic, social and political forces in both limiting and enabling their success."

Karl's is a fine piece of work borne along by excellent writing which also characterizes Sir James Mitchell's 'Beyond The Islands' which shared a like comment from Dr. Adrian Fraser. 'Beyond the Islands' is a comprehensive work, charting the course of the political life of Sir James Mitchell – encompassing 35 years. It was an interesting period that witnessed the advent of Statehood, the arrival of Independence, and the planning of various regional groupings thereafter. Naturally, being autobiographical, it painted if not a glowing account of Sir James' stewardship, at least a very sympathetic version of some events which possibly could have been subjected to other interpretations. Strangely, it also marked the high point in Land Reform which remained the brightest star in Sir James' firmament. 'Ottley Hall', on the other hand, cast a shadow which is yet to dissipate. Presently, there is an official enquiry which supposedly hangs fire and to which the Government has injected an element of the theatrical, but it is believed that it will eventually go out, like a damp squib. I am committed to doing a full-scale review of this classical work, so more, much more, later.

The final publication to appear in 2006 were Volumes 1 and 2 of the 'Flambeau' articles which were well received and are already finding their secured place in the Society. Volume 3 will appear around August this year. A feature would be biographical sketches of five stalwart contributors to the literature who have since passed on, and who deserve to be remembered. They are: Danny Williams, Eddie Griffith, Alphonso Roberts, Joyce Peters-McKenzie and Kerwyn Morris.

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