Harper, Donald.
Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very happy to be here this evening among so many of my friends and countrymen. It is now twenty-three years since I left Trinidad for the first time, and nine years since I was last here. It is good to be back home again, better still to have this opportunity of speaking to you. As you know, I am a doctor of medicine. I concentrate on diseases of the ear, nose and throat. My specialty is tonsils, not politics. I can therefore make no pontifical pronouncements on the political or economic situation, and I shall not try to do so. My aim this evening is a very simple one. It is to tell you, as best as I can, something about the West Indian community in the United States, what they are thinking and doing about the West Indies, and, above all, how, though, for the most part, they are loyal American citizens, they have not forgotten their homeland, their relatives and their compatriots.

The West Indian Islands are today in the sphere of influence...
of the United States. This is the most decisive change which the
war has produced in the lives of the people of the West Indies.

There are several evidences of this fact: in the military field,
the naval and aerial bases leased to the United States; politically,
the establishment of the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission;
economically, the many thousands of West Indian workers who have
gone to work in United States farms and factories; culturally,
the comparatively large numbers of British West Indian students
who have in the past two years entered colleges and universities
in the United States.

Mutual knowledge and good relations thus become of great
importance to the two areas, despite their differences in size,
population and importance. West Indians need to know more of
the regional organization of the western hemisphere to which
they belong geographically. The United States must seek to
understand and respect the different cultural traditions of the
West Indies.

In the past the traffic between the two areas was a one-way
traffic. West Indians wished to escape from the blind alley
which constituted their existence at home, and to get the economic, political and cultural opportunities and advantages which were offered by the United States. The United States, on the other hand, still had living space and was open to immigrants. That period is now over. The world depression and the restriction of immigration to the United States closed this avenue of escape for many West Indians. The war has reopened the traffic, and made it a two-way traffic. American troops have moved into the islands in war, and it is hoped that American tourists will be attracted in the years to come. West Indian workers and students have gone up to the United States during the war, and it is hoped that some will continue to do so now that the war is over.

In this situation a very special responsibility rests upon the West Indian abroad—the United States citizen of West Indian birth. He must appoint himself the protector and friend of West Indians in the United States, be they workers or students. He must see to it that they are made to feel at home and that their
rights are respected. But, more than this, the United States citizen of West Indian birth has the right, in fact the duty, to make himself the mediator between the two peoples. He must, at one and the same time, interpret the West Indies and West Indians to the people of the United States, and, by regular trips back home, interpret the United States and the Americans to the people of the West Indies. This is the task that I have always set myself.

When I left Trinidad for New York in 1922, I was like the many other West Indians who preceded me and those who followed me. I had had the usual education which those who could afford it gave their children, except that I had a spell at both Q.R.C. and St. Mary's. Whether I got thereby the best of both worlds or merely fell between two stools, I must leave it to others to judge. After college, I went, rather unusually, to the Experimental Station, where I specialized in the grafting of mangoes. With this equipment, I passed to my father's estate. It was the end of the great cocoa age. I remember, as so many others
here no doubt do, how I worked for four years, without salary, only to find at the end that we had earned not one shilling in profit.

Then came the crash, a crash which was felt in virtually every home in Trinidad and in many other parts of the West Indies. The bottom fell out of the cocoa market. I knew then and was personally convinced that this was the end of my agricultural career. So did my father, whose undying devotion, love, affection and duty to his family and society was a deciding factor in shaping my destinies.

A typical West Indian, he sent me abroad, to study something which no one could take away, as he put it. That, in his view, meant medicine or dentistry. It meant as much to hundreds of other middle class fathers in the West Indies, and if it meant more, it meant law. Nothing else constituted a profession or independence.

Medicine, dentistry and law were then, as they still are today, the trinity of West Indian professions. Sociology, agriculture, economics, even teaching would have been laughed at in those days, and today we can still count our experts in those fields on the fingers of our hands. The West Indies need such experts today, but our boys and girls abroad still study medicine, dentistry and law. It is
very easy to be critical. But what chance has a colored West Indian today of rising to the highest position in the agricultural department? What position could a West Indian get in commerce higher than a salesman or junior clerk in one of the big establishments? Many of you here will no doubt remember the time, not so long ago, when a West Indian, no matter how highly trained, could not get a job at Q.R.C. This same man would be a dean or a professor in an American university.

And, yet, whilst we can sympathize with the point of view of the West Indian parents, it must be admitted that it is wrong. Men cannot always wait for opportunities. It is sometimes their duty to create them. Public opinion in the West Indies today will not complacently tolerate the passing over of qualified West Indians for outsiders. Moreover, we need to stress the desirability of children making their own choice, and of their basing the choice of a vocation on the needs of the society rather than on the social standing the vocation confers. I remember a very revealing incident years ago in Tobago, where a headmaster friend of mine kept scolding a very nice lad who
simply could not learn Latin. Hence, in the headmaster's view, the boy was a dunce. Yet this same boy took me to his room later to hear the B.B.C. news on a radio he had constructed himself. I have often wondered since whether the dunce cap was on the right head.

With the blessings of my mother whose teachings of tolerance, courtesy, respect for others, and the relative value of things we speak of as a sense of humor, and to fear God and respect the natural moral rights of man made her a monument of purity, of simplicity, motherhood and love, I left Trinidad on the first of June 1922 and arrived in New York on the tenth of June, to study medicine.

Like so many other West Indians in the United States, I followed the traditional American practice and worked my way through school. I thereby learned to forget the stigma attached to manual labor in the West Indies. I realized, also, how unfair were all the criticisms I used to hear in the West Indies about the laziness of our people. The thousands of West Indians who
worked during the war in the United States have proved to our critics what our students had already demonstrated,—that, given an incentive to work, decent wages, nutritive food, and the opportunity of improving our position in life, we West Indians are as efficient and as willing as any group of workers anywhere in the world.

I began my studies at Howard University in that tense atmosphere which followed the race riots after the last war and which gave birth to the Garvey movement. I ended my internship at Freedmen's Hospital in the year of the great depression. Thus, depression drove me out of Trinidad into a profession, and depression ushered me over the threshold of my profession.

In those seven years of prosperity, an essential part of my education was the evidence that I saw with my own eyes as to the efforts the American Negro was making, despite his handicaps to give dignity to his race.

My first and greatest example is that of a former teacher of mine, Professor Ernest E. Just of Howard University. Profes-
Sor Just was one of the most brilliant and original experimental biologists of the present century, and his book, *The Biology of the Cell Surface*, has won universal acclaim. Let me describe to you briefly, and in the simplest possible language, the main ideas propounded by Dr. Just.

His special field was cytology, which is the study of the cell. The cell is the smallest bit of protoplasm capable of independent existence. It consists of two components, the nucleus and the cytoplasm. The cytoplasm is further divided into two parts, the ectoplasm and the endoplasm. The ectoplasm, standing between the inner substance of the protoplasmic system and the outside world, reacts first to the environmental stimuli, and conditions the responses of the whole system, thus portraying self regulation and self differentiation.

Life, according to Dr. Just, is a harmonious organization of events, the resultant of a communion of structures and reaction. As a means of demonstration, he would take us to the laboratory to point out under the microscope the developmental pro-
cess of the transparent egg of the mackerel.

1. The first stage of this developmental drama is the coming together of the male and female germ cells.

2. Loss of individuality of the cells which become co-partners in the process.

3. Opacity of the new form cell.

4. One then follows the origin and formation of the nerve tube from which the brain and spinal cord emerge.

One looks as through an open window on the mystery of life, wondering at the heart beat, first uncertain and then with definite rhythmic contraction, the bright red blood moving in jerks with each beat of the heart, the first spasmodic muscular twitch, the appearance of the purple black eye pigment, the definite form of the fish, the color of the skin, which would give the markings that make the adult mackerel one of the most beautiful creatures of the ocean.

The whole process of development takes 72 hours in the laboratory, as compared with 8 in the normal habitat.
Dr. Just's reputation was not only national but international, and he was earnestly entreated by the great Russian biologist, Koltzov, to remain in Russia. Ernest Just died at the comparatively early age of 57, a victim, in my view, of a frustration which you and I will readily understand—he was a Negro, and he lived in a society which elevated color above merit. It was for this reason that Just spent most of the last years of his life in virtual exile in Europe. Howard University, with its natural emphasis on undergraduate teaching, was too small for his talents, while white society would not abandon its prejudices and give him the well-equipped laboratory which would have afforded him the scope and the influence his talents deserved. So it will always be until in Trinidad and in the United States and in China and in all parts of the world the ulcer of racial prejudice is removed.

Another great Negro name in the field of science is that of George Washington Carver, long associated with that other great center of Negro education, Tuskegee Institute. It was
my good fortune to hear Dr. Carver lecture on several occasions.

Carver spent his life in experiments in crop diversification for service to the lowliest farmer. From the humble peanut he extracted a multiplicity of products, oils, paints, etc. I have often thought how much our West Indian islands need such a man, to remind us that export crops are not the only crops worthy of our attention. Carver's death, a few years ago, was mourned as a national loss.

As I was finishing my studies at the Howard University School of Medicine, one of the greatest living names in the world of science was being graduated as a doctor of medicine from McGill University. That man was Charles R. Drew, who, as Head of the Department of Surgery of the Howard University School of Medicine, is, I am proud to say, my senior colleague. Drew, with his colleague, John Scudder, organized the blood plasma project which has played such a tremendous role in the present war. In 1940 Dr. Drew received a telegram from a former instructor, John Beattie, Director of the Transfusion Service of the Royal Air Force, requesting 5,000 ampoules of dried plasma for transfu-
sion work immediately, followed by an equal quantity in three to four weeks. Thus was born the Blood Plasma Project. For medical supervisor of this project, the Medical Board of Control unanimously selected Dr. Drew, who was readily released by Howard University. The caption with the portrait of Dr. Drew in the National Museum in Washington describes what first Britain, then the United Nations owe to this distinguished Negro. The caption reads: "Charles R. Drew, surgeon and scientist. A brother of mankind and a lover of freedom and truth. He labored industriously from 1938-1940 on the problems of blood preservation in the Department of Surgery at the Presbyterian Hospital, New York.

He was recalled from Washington to act as medical supervisor of the Blood Plasma for Britain. He was appointed the Director of the first American Red Cross Blood Plasma Bank at the Presbyterian Hospital. The success of this trial bank made possible the great undertaking of the American Red Cross in furnishing plasma for the Armed Forces of the United States."

Just, Carver and Drew--these are three names of which even
a people with a long and ancient history would be proud. It will be a great satisfaction to you to know that in this field of scientific achievement, a West Indian, one of us, is entitled to no mean place. I refer to my colleague, compatriot and friend, Arnold H. Maloney, Head of the Department of Pharmacology at Howard University. In 1931, Maloney, in collaboration with Dr. Tatum of the University of Wisconsin, made an original contribution to Pharmacology by his study of the antidotal aspects of certain drugs. His outstanding work was done on the use of an insignificant drug, picrotoxin, in barbiturate poisoning.

In his own field, Maloney is today an acknowledged authority.

Perhaps I should tell you now something about the West Indian community in the United States. In popularity, first place goes to Hazel Scott. Then comes the rest of the musical company, Belle Rosette and her West Indian dances, and the Calypsonians led by Houdini, who have done so much to popularize our distinctive folk songs in the United States. In athletics the name of Phil Edwards has been second only to that of Jesse Owens. For the rest the West Indians in the United States are
doctors and dentists, teachers and preachers, attorneys and
judges, real estate men and small merchants. There are sizable
West Indian communities in many of the large cities--New York,

It is clear from this list of professions that the West
Indian is a serious competitor of the Negro middle class in the
United States. As a result there has been in the past consider-
able friction between the two groups. In this respect the West
Indian immigrant has fared like other immigrants from other coun-
tries. To the Negroes in the United States he is a "monkey chaser",
a term of derision which West Indians have learned first to toler-
ate and then to ignore. The feeling was given expression in a
ditty popular in the thirties, particularly in Harlem:

When monkey chaser die,
Don't need no undertaker,

Just throw him in de Harlem River,
He'll float back to Jamaica.

Relations today have improved considerably. In my opinion
three factors are responsible for this. In the first place, not
only did many West Indians become American citizens, but they also married Americans, and so gave birth to a large group of second-generation West Indians, who have helped to ease the tension of the first generation. It is interesting to note that many West Indian parents, Jamaicans in particular, send their children back home to West Indian schools.

In the second place, West Indians have played a significant part in the labor movement in the United States. This has helped to bring together the two groups on the workers' level, and thus has reduced the significance of competition on the professional level.

Thirdly, and most important, West Indians and Americans have been victims of the same racial prejudices, and so have had to struggle together. Americans used to think that West Indians took advantage of their British origin to cross the color line. Occasionally, that was true, and still is. But, for the most part, West Indians in the United States have not claimed special privileges, and have identified themselves with the American Negro by taking
American citizenship. In this cooperation of the two peoples the influence of Marcus Garvey was decisive. I well remember hearing that dynamic leader as he spoke to us at Howard, and later when he addressed his mass meetings in New York. Garvey exercised enormous influence in America. His program was the most absurd program conceivable, that thirteen million Negroes should leave America and go to Africa. And yet it was a program which appealed instinctively to the Negro people. The fact that Garvey was a West Indian, that so many of his chief deputies were West Indians, accomplished a great deal in improving conditions between Negro Americans and Negro West Indians.

West Indians in the United States have formed their own organizations for making themselves heard on the subject of the future of the West Indies. Adolphe Roberts, a white Jamaican and well-known historian, together with Rev. Elthelred Brown, founded the Jamaican Progressive League back in 1936 to demand self-government for Jamaica. They have wholeheartedly supported Manley and the
People's National Party. Dr. Petioni of Trinidad has been the moving spirit in the West Indies National Council, which sent a delegation to the Havana Conference in 1940 and another to the recent San Francisco Conference. They have consistently demanded the end of imperialism and the West Indians' right to self-government. One of the prominent men in this organization was W. A. Domingo, the victim of the celebrated case in Jamaica when he was interned on his return. Attorney Morris of British Guiana has founded the American-West Indian Association of Caribbean Affairs, which has published a charter of ten points for the West Indies.

Boston has a powerful group of Jamaicans organized as the Jamaican Associates, Inc., which even runs a newspaper of its own. The West Indian students at Howard have recently organized a Caribbean Society, and it is appropriate to refer here to the British West Indian Society of McGill University in Canada. Chicago in the past had a West Indian association which broke up because of internal quarrels. But Attorney Bindley Cyrus, a Barbadian boy who just missed the scholarship won by Dr. C. B. Clarke, the well-known physician in England, is one of the nationally known West Indians.
Cyrus has made himself a one-man committee to expose the lamentable living conditions of the West Indian workers in Chicago; he has just toured the West Indies on a mission for America's leading Negro newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*, and he is taking the lead at the moment in plans to bring together all the various West Indians' organizations into a general conference to deal with West Indian problems. Here, too, I might refer to a conference held two years ago at Howard University on *The Economic Future of the Caribbean*. The West Indian viewpoint was presented by Adolphe Roberts, Dr. Augustin Petion, Herman Osborn, and Dr. Eric Williams.

It was significant that these West Indian spokesmen were all unanimously opposed to any question of an international trusteeship of the West Indies, and refused to compromise on the demand for self-government.

West Indian education has conformed so strictly to the traditional pattern—medicine, dentistry, law—that two names in the field of the social sciences deserve especial emphasis. The first is that of a classmate of mine, C. L. R. James, whom I was never
able to beat in high jump. James' book on The Black Jacobins, the story of the famous slave revolution in Haiti, is nothing short of a masterpiece. His other work, World Revolution, has been widely acclaimed as a contribution to world history during the period between the two world wars.

The second name is that of a younger man, Dr. Eric Williams, who, after a distinguished career at Oxford, joined the faculty of Howard University, and is up to now the only West Indian associated with the Angl-American Caribbean Commission. Williams' first book, The Negro in the Caribbean, has circulated widely in the United States, and its frank criticisms have done much to improve knowledge of our islands among both Negroes and whites in that country. His more recent book, Capitalism and Slavery, has received the highest praise in many papers and periodicals, both white and Negro. As an example, let me quote the influential New York Herald Tribune of February 4, 1945: "Mr. Williams' monograph is one of the most learned, most penetrating and most significant that has appeared in this field of history. It would be cause for
gratification if he would turn his attention to the Economics
of American abolitionism". I am glad to be able to say, however,
from personal knowledge, that Dr. Williams feels that there is
still an enormous amount of work to be done in the West Indian
field. I am sure you all agree with him.

There is another West Indian scholar in the United States
today who deserves mention. I say West Indian, though in reality
he comes from Bermuda. I am told that technically Bermuda is not
in the West Indies. Maybe so. I can only say that, in the United
States, the average Bermudian is proud to regard himself as a West
Indian, and we are equally happy to welcome them into our fold.

The scholar I am referring to is Dr. Charles Eaton Burch, Head of
the Department of English at Howard University for some twenty
years. Dr. Burch is an acknowledged authority on the great English
novelist, Daniel Defoe. In the past few years he has written no
fewer than seventeen scientific papers on Defoe, in some of the
most highly esteemed journals in England and the United States,
establishing Defoe's indisputable claim to the authorship of
several pamphlets. Dr. Burch richly deserves the tribute recently paid to him when he received special mention in the introductory section of the bibliography on Defoe in the Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, published by Cambridge University Press in 1940.

The visit of Norman Washington Manley to the United States last October is a landmark in the history of the West Indian community in the United States. Manley was presented at public meetings in New York, Washington and Boston. He addressed the students and faculty at Howard University and was honored by a luncheon at the University given under the auspices of the Law School. He spoke over the West Indian Radio Newspaper in Washington to the West Indian people. His visit was important for many reasons.

In the first place, he explained fully, dispassionately, and with a restraint that was highly commended by all who heard him, the aims and program of the People's National Party. Secondly, he emphasized the necessity of federation and of the popular parties in the West Indies meeting to formulate a common platform and to
mobilize public opinion in support of federation. Thirdly, West Indians irrespective of origin flocked to hear him and to support him. His first and most successful public appearance in New York was sponsored jointly by the Jamaican Progressive League and the West Indian National Council. Finally, and not the least important consequence, Manley's visit stimulated, as nothing before had ever done, the interest of the American Negro in the West Indies.

In New York Manley spoke at the Abyssianian Baptist Church, of which the Negro Congressman, Clayton Powell, husband of Hazel Scott, is pastor. Powell's paper, The People's Voice, and the Chicago Defender, featured Manley prominently in their columns. And Dr. Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University, in a statement which will never be forgotten by those who heard it, wished Mr. Manley all success in what he called his significant work for self-government, and stressed that what Manley was doing was of importance not only to Jamaica and the West Indies, but to colored people all over the world.

You may be interested in knowing what ideas these organiza-
tions of West Indians in the United States have expressed about the future of the West Indies. For, Democrats or Republicans, they still think about the West Indies.

First and foremost, they demand the abolition of imperialism, full self-government for the West Indies without any intermediate stage of international trusteeship. West Indians in the United States, have, in the main, done well, and helped to keep up the high standards set by West Indian students in England. The West Indies are full of men who can, as the advertisement reads of a famous beer in America, hold their heads high in any company.

We can staff all our departments ourselves. As for trusting to the masses of the people to vote according to their own interests, no one who has lived for twenty years in the United States, as I have and come into contact with scores of individuals of different nationalities who all fit into the democratic pattern of the country, can have any doubts as to the ability of the West Indian people to govern themselves.

The second demand of West Indians in the United States is for
the federation of the West Indies. In the great continent of America, West Indian insularity breaks down. The average American has no time for differentiating between little islands whose population often does not exceed the population of an American parish. Whether you come from Jamaica or Barbados, you just come from "the islands". Whilst many island groups retain their benevolent associations for self-help and mutual aid, large West Indian groupings in the United States cut across insular boundaries. By being thrown together we have learned that our problems are similar, we have the same aspirations and are thinking of the same solutions.

West Indians in the United States demand, in the third place, West Indian representation on all international and national commissions planning the future of the West Indies. In 1942, shortly after the Anglo-American Caribbean Commission was established, a representative deputation of West Indians met with the American Chairman of the Commission and emphasized the necessity of West Indian representation on the Commission. This point has been repeatedly stressed on subsequent occasions, and will be stressed until the object has been achieved. West Indians in the United
States will not take seriously any commission for West Indians or their welfare which does not include West Indians, not in a subordinate position, where they carry out policies decided by others, but in a position where they share responsibility for the formulation of policies.

In the fourth place, West Indians in the United States favor greater cooperation and contact between Negroes of the West Indies and Negroes of the United States. West Indians have much to learn from the United States with regard to organization and efforts to help themselves. West Indians need to know more of groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and such groups need to know more of West Indians. In this connection it is very gratifying to West Indians, educated in the United States, to see the increasing number of West Indians who are teach- ing and studying in American universities and colleges. It is our hope that, when the West Indian University is established, it will be possible for Americans in their turn to come down here to study.

With regard to this university, West Indians in the United States,
with their American education, advocate the wider, more democratic concept of education familiar in the United States rather than the more restricted, aristocratic British concept. But, whilst we emphasize the need for closer relations between the West Indies and the United States, we are entirely opposed to any introduction of the racial prejudices of the United States into these islands.

I hope I have said enough, Ladies and Gentlemen, to convince you that, whilst the average West Indian in the United States is not a politician or a student of interracial affairs, yet we are not content to make our individual way in life in forgetfulness of the folks here at home. Our friends in the United States very often ask us whether, as American citizens, we would not prefer the West Indies to be taken over by the United States. Most of us answer no, we want government of West Indians, for West Indians, by West Indians. Whatever we emigrants abroad can do to bring this about, you can rest assured, we shall do it.
There's not a green spot on this wide peopled earth,
So dear to the heart as the land of our birth;
'Tis the home of our childhood! the beautiful spot,
Which memory retains when all else is forgot;

May the Blessing of God

Ever hallow the sod,

And its valleys and hills by brave freemen be trod.