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What part do Commonwealth raw material and manufactured products coming from outside your country play in your life?

Here where I live in the Bahama Islands, we have no factories, no natural resources of coal, gold or uranium given to us by 'Mother Nature'. We live on flat sparsely wooded islands (the highest point in the archipelago being about four hundred feet above sea level), and we do not have enough space on our islands for many large farms. The few small ones, tended by natives, which do exist, cannot come a fiftieth of the way to supplying the islands with the meat, milk and vegetables which we need. In fact these small enterprises find it a task indeed to continue with the profits they are making

in the business.

Thus one can see immediately, that the Bahama Islands cannot manufacture any products locally because of the lack of factories; they cannot mine because in order to do this one must have natural resources, and they do not; although the largest larger three of the group have small forests, not enough lumber can be produced to meet the demand in the islands, much less the amount for export. They have no way of supplying the islands with food. Consequently, one can easily conclude that the Bahama Islands must bring in almost all they need - these islands must IMPORT.

But, you ask, how is this possible when the Bahama Islands do not export any goods to other countries either within the British Commonwealth or outside? Lots of countries import products which they themselves do not possess, or even which they do not have enough of, but to balance their accounts, they also export goods. Where then does the Bahamas' money come from? How do they manage?

These questions must, however, be posed and answered later on. First, I must show how this deficiency affects the lives of the people who live in these islands.

Let us take as our first example, canned goods. As we know, the Bahamas have nothing to can and even if they did, they have nothing with which to can, and nowhere to do so. Thus, all canned goods have to be imported. We must, of course, realize how necessary canned goods are to everyday life. Cream, seasonings, processed meats, are all very essential in order to live a comfortable life in today's world. The question now is, where do these goods come from? In answer to this, we find by looking at labels that this is mainly from the United States of America and Canada. Hormel, Swift, Carnation and Libby's are all well known brands here. This is so because these countries are the nearest who export considerably. The United States of America are our 'next door neighbours' so it is quite easy to obtain goods from them. Then many people prefer

the taste of one brand to that of another so that brand soon gets the majority. Also storekeepers sometimes find it rather hard to get their shipments of goods from Great Britain so these islands in time to keep up with the islands' demand. So they get them from the quickest source - the United States.

Therefore, in order ~~to~~ to encourage trade between Bahamian shopkeepers and exporters in Commonwealth countries the Government of the Bahamas lowers the import duty on goods coming in from Commonwealth countries especially that on goods from the mother country, Great Britain. The result is, about 7% on British imports, 12% on Canadian imports and a leap up to $27\frac{1}{2}\%$ import duty on goods from countries outside the Commonwealth. This helps considerably, but the above stated reasons for trading with the United States of America still exist. This causes a "push and pull" affair between Commonwealth countries and, not only the United States, but

also other foreign countries like Germany, France, Italy and Japan.

Secondly, let us take meats into consideration. One needs meat to balance the daily diet and also to supply the body with the essential vitamins and proteins available only in meats. But there are few farms in the Bahamas where meat can be obtained. There is some chicken, but again not in quantities necessary for feeding the islands' ever growing population. Besides, everyone would not want to eat chicken every day of their lives even if we had enough to satisfy the demand. Thus, all our ham, turkey, beef, pork chops and steaks must be imported from farms in other countries for Bahamian people to eat. Here again there is the same push and pull between trading countries both Commonwealth and foreign. The lowered duty on imports helps the former's trade, and nearness, sometimes even superior quality, helps the latter.

Canada, Great Britain, Venezuela, United States of America and Australia all send raw meat to the Bahamas, all

help to drain her of money which seems in no way to be replaced. But, there is that question again which must be put off a second time.

As our third topic, let us take transportation. This is one more necessary factor in the daily life of the people. Our islands are not big, — New Providence, the island on which I live, holds the capital city, and is only twenty one miles long and seven miles wide. It is not the largest however. But it is not very convenient and pleasant to have to walk several miles back and forth every day. It is not convenient to have to walk to buy groceries; walk to visit friends; walk to church services and whatever else one is obliged to do every day. Therefore, either a car, a motorcycle, or a bicycle is necessary. Again the Bahama Islands do not manufacture these and they must be imported.

Cars — imported from Great Britain, the United States of America, Germany, France and Japan. What does this

show us? It shows us that the majority of countries from which we import cars are outside the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Motorcycles - imported chiefly from the United States; a small percentage from anywhere else. I suppose that motor scooters can be dealt with with here, if so, then we also bring Germany, France and Italy into the picture.

Bicycles - in this manufactured product Great Britain stands alone. Superior quality, performance and compactness take the upper hand, and gives Britain almost a monopoly on bicycles over the United States. There are about ten American bicycles in the whole Bahamas. But the era of motors is around. More and more people today are buying automobiles and other motor assisted vehicles while less and less people are buying machines which are propelled by man-power - bicycles. But here I can mention one mode of transportation which the Bahamians

themselves manufacture in the real sense of the word (out of imported wood, of course), however, solely for use in the Bahamas, and not used so much by Bahamians as much as by the people who visit our islands. They are surreys, or locally, horse and carriages. It is not very often that one will see a Bahamian riding in one of these carriages. Those are almost strictly for the tourists, who love to ride around the streets and see the islands in these horse-drawn carriages. There is though quite a distinct advantage in sightseeing this way. The carriages move slowly and allow the visitors more time to look at the many things of interest in our streets. It is also perhaps a welcome change from the cars, buses and trains, to which, no doubt, the tourists are used.

Another means is the Bahamian made dray. These too are horse-drawn, but used not for transporting people, but such things as boxed products - heavy goods. These are sometimes seen outside

shop doors loading or unloading their burden. But these, like bicycles, are gradually decreasing in number as motor vehicles come more into use. Trucks are so much faster and hold so much more than drays. So we can use this as another example to show how very poor these islands are in local products.

Fourth, take another essential commodity - clothing. Again, the the Bahamas does not manufacture this. Consequently it is another import.

Still the same few countries :- the United States and Britain for women's and men's apparel ; United States, Britain and Italy for shoes, socks and stockings.

Even those who wish to deal with Bahamian tailors, dressmakers or milliners, must first acquire imported material.

For our next topic, I suggest that we remember children. Where there are small children, there must be something to play with. Toys. For these we turn to Japan, Germany, Britain and again the United States of America. For the

happy life of all children these are essential. A child would feel left out, unloved if for his birthday gifts as one would give an adult. He needs toys.

Lastly, let us look at what is needed for our homes in general. Furniture, utensils, paints, building material, cutlery, glassware, stores, gasoline for our cars, oil for our engines, butter, flour and so many other things which we want and need. All these must come from other countries' factories, other places' natural resources. All are imported.

We can thus see just how much raw material and manufactured products imported from other countries affect us and what part they play in our lives in the Bahama Islands where we make nothing for ourselves as do larger countries. There is but one factor, one natural aspect, of which we can be proud. We have a natural summer climate all year round, a beautiful blue sea and sandy beaches ranging in colour from white to pink among the islands. We have the type

of climate which attracts tourists from all over the world to the Bahamas. This answers the question which arose earlier - how does the Bahamas pay out money in importing goods when they do not receive any by exporting goods? The tourist industry is the mainstay of the Bahamas' revenue and here is where we get our money. We receive it from the very same countries to whom we so quickly pay it out. We give the United States a lot of our money, but, as the majority of tourists are Americans, we get a lot back from them.

Thus, this is the Bahama Islands' "natural resource", this is our gift from nature which many countries do not enjoy. Though ~~that~~ ^{they} have what we do not, that is raw materials and manufactured products (and snow), we have what they do not, a wonderful climate, clear sea and sand. But there is still another thing of which we are proud - our duty as British subjects, the place which we share with many other larger countries

in the Commonwealth. Long live the
Queen, long live the British
Commonwealth of Nations!