

The Carib Territory Today

by Garnet Joseph

The Carib Territory is situated on the North East coast of Dominica and covers an area of 5.5 square miles. In this area, given to the Caribs by the British Government on the recommendations of Governor Hesketh Belle, reside the last surviving descendants of the Karifuna People, who inhabited the Lesser Antilles at the coming of the first Europeans.



The opening up of the Carib Territory led to major improvements in agriculture. The area is now one of the most productive areas on the island. Bananas, coconuts, copra, passionfruit and root crops are abundantly produced by Carib farmers.

The present Carib population is approximately 3,500. They are represented in parliament by a representative (elected along party line) and in the Territory by a Chief and six councilors who are elected by the people every five years. The retention of a Chief is one of the cultural patterns that has survived to this day.

Many visitors to the Carib Territory are terribly

disappointed in that they expect the people to be living in their traditional ways. However, the Carib people lost most of their traditional way of life during colonization. Basket weaving and boat making are two of the few aspects of their culture that have survived.

There has been rapid integration of the Carib people into mainstream Dominican life. As the world moves into the twenty-first century, the Carib world is under relentless pressure to give up the last vestiges of their culture. The most crucial threat to the survival of the people as a race is their land. The Carib Territory is quite unique in that the land is communally owned. This is the only area in the entire

Caribbean with such status. As with other indigenous people, the land keeps the people together as a family, but the advocates of "MODERN DEVELOPMENT" are calling for privatization of Carib lands.

There is a great call for the preservation of culture, the Carib people should be taken into consideration also as this call is being made.

There is the need for progressive thinking within the Carib Territory itself. The Carib Council should come up with proposals that will fully harness and utilize the full potential and resources of the Territory for the development of the Territory in conjunction with Government and NGO's working in the area. The Carib people have always been a proactive people, therefore they should initiate their own development in the future.

