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PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN A
CARIBBEAN FISHING VILLAGE: SAN PEDRO, BELIZE

Stanford University

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PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT
IN A CARIBBEAN FISHING VILLAGE: SAN PEDRO, BELIZE

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES
OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Edmund Tayloe Gordon

June 1981

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by

Edmund Tayloe Gordon

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

Theoretical Introduction

Walter Rostow, advisor to presidents and one of the principal architects of the Vietnamese War, formulated a theory of economic development in his work, Stages of Economic Growth, a Non-Communist Manifesto (1962), which became widely accepted in the developed Western World. In this theory he posited that all societies, in their economic dimensions, lie on a continuum which, if followed stage by stage, will lead all to the level of development enjoyed presently by the developed nations in the West. The second stage in this scheme marks a time in a country's development when it is transformed from a traditional society whose "structure is developed within limited production functions based on pre-Newtonian science and technology" to a society where preconditions for "take off" into development are created by the intrusions of more "advanced" societies (Rostow 1962:4,6). In other words traditional societies are thought by Rostow to be transformed and readied for "take off" by the influence and capital penetrations from the developed world which destroy traditionalism and simultaneously sow the seeds of development. This is the stage at which most of the developing world has been stalled for at least the last 200 years.

There are grave problems, with Rostow's formulations, which have been dealt with at length by any number of Third World and even Western social scientists. Simply put, metropolitan influences and intrusions

(those of western economic powers) already have a history ranging from one to several centuries in the Third World. They have not brought about significant economic development or even led to a "take off" into development in any of these Third World countries with the exception of Japan. As stated by these countries at the 1964 Geneva Conference on World Trade and Development (Cockcroft, et al. 1972) these external intrusions by more "advanced" societies, far from furthering Third World economic development, as Rostow and other metropolitan pundits claim, not only hindered their economic development but actually increased their underdevelopment. The economic history of Belize has been, in the main, a classic case of this type of colonial and neo-colonial intrusion and exploitation. Through most of its history forestry was the Belizean mono-industry. England, as the colonial power involved, extracted vast quantities of forestry raw materials without in any way developing the country or even using conservation methods to ensure sustained yields. As early as the turn of the century this industry declined significantly, plunging the country into deep and prolonged depression. By the 1950's the forestry industry had completed its slow death, victim of falling world prices and of the decimation of the resource through over-exploitation and the lack of conservation methods. Today Belize has evolved a number of other industries with which it hopes to begin to transform its economy. One of the most important of these new industries is the fishing industry. Organized around producing and marketing cooperatives, in the last fifteen years this industry has brought significant foreign revenues to the country and has raised the standard of living in the fishing villages.

The fishing industry in its present form is a relatively young industry which may only be going through a boom phase similar to that experienced by other extractive industries in the country's past. These boom phases have occurred during the period of time when the resource involved is relatively unexploited and hence plentiful and easily accessible. In these circumstances a metropolitan-orientated industry creates localized prosperity in the host country because of the high productivity of labor and high commodity prices in the early days of growth. The industry, however, ends up, as the Belizean forestry industry did, making no contribution to the long-term development of the host country. As the resource declines in abundance and accessibility, the normal state of net drain on the financial as well as material resources of the host country continues.

For countries such as Belize that are underdeveloped and interested in developing, it is essential to understand the process of past underdevelopment and to apply knowledge about the essential components of this process to the evaluation of current efforts at development. This is, in part, what this dissertation sets out to do as regards the Belizean fishing industry. The first step is to choose a theory of underdevelopment which will enable us to understand past underdevelopment as it occurred in Belize and to evaluate aspects of the country's present attempts at development.

In the endeavor to formulate a theory of the causes of, and to provide solutions to the ongoing problem of underdevelopment in the Third World, a number of different perspectives can and have been adopted. From my perspective, and what seems to be the perspective of most credible scholars, explanations which emanate from a neoclassical view of

economics (diffusion models, etc.,) such as Rostow's are inadequate. Rostow's formulation, for example, has numerous weaknesses. Baran and Hobsbawm (1973:45) comment on Rostow's Stages of Economic Growth: "The first and most serious (weakness) is that his theory of 'stages' actually tells us nothing except that there are stages It simply fails to specify any mechanism of evolution which links the different stages." Further, Rostow's stages seemingly have no basis in reality. They do not correspond at all to the past or present state of the underdeveloped nations they purport to model. Nor does Rostow see as a necessity, in the attempt to construct models for the development of underdeveloped nations, an investigation of the objective conditions which prevail in them. His theory draws strictly from the experiences of a very few of the world's now developed capitalist nations. These are only some of the myriad problems with the development theories of Rostow and other western economists of his persuasion.

The most persuasive points of view on development emanate from the Marxist tradition. Marx and orthodox Marxists of today (see Warren 1973) adopt a stage theory of development in the underdeveloped world which is not outwardly too different from that of neoclassical economists. According to their concepts the penetration of the precapitalist periphery by capitalism greatly accelerates the transformation of the indigenous precapitalist economies into capitalist ones. In Marx's words:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in an altered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions,

everlasting uncertainty, and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. The bourgeoisie . . . draw all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls It compels all nations, on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image. (Marx 1967:83,84)

Most neo-Marxists, following Baran (1968), adopt a different perspective. They see the world as divided into two fairly distinct but very much interrelated sectors. These sectors have been variously called: developed-underdeveloped, center-periphery, metropolis-satellite, etc. All agree that a major factor of the relationship between the two sectors is that "a certain proportion of economic surplus generated within one set of productive relationships [or sectors] is appropriated by more powerful factions of the ruling class at another level [or sector]" (Sternberg 1974:81). They further agree that this surplus extraction by the capitalist powers of the metropole leads not to the rapid development of the satellite nations but to their stagnation or even underdevelopment. Neo-Marxists separate into two schools, however, over the question of the precise mechanisms which cause this underdevelopment.

The first school characterized by Meillassoux (1972) and Dupre and Rey (1973), feels that the economies of satellite nations are seriously retarded by the extraction of surplus by the metropole largely because the capitalist sectors foster the maintenance of precapitalist modes of production in the satellites, presumably in order to maximize profits. Although not many theorists have taken this argument to its logical extreme, it ends up looking like this:

. . . underdevelopment is nothing more than backwardness, a retardation brought about by feudal, semi-feudal and precapitalist remnants . . . underdevelopment can be historically explained by the failure of the indigenous bourgeoisie to develop capitalism and incorporate . . . into the world capitalist system on a competitive footing. (Fernandez and Ocampo 1974:36)

The second group of underdevelopment thinkers is best illustrated by A. Gunder Frank. Frank believes that the capitalist organization of the metropole is keeping satellite areas of the world underdeveloped. However, he does not believe that the satellites are underdeveloped because precapitalist modes of production have been preserved. On the contrary, he is convinced that the satellite areas of the world, because they participate in a world capitalist economy, were thoroughly penetrated by capitalist modes of production from the earliest days of European colonization. Furthermore, dependency theorists following Frank come to the conclusion that the rise and persistence of underdevelopment is inherent in the extension of the world division of labor through capitalist expansion and that the development of underdevelopment is an indispensable condition for capitalist development itself. More clearly stated:

Accumulation of capital in the core depends, on the one hand, upon a process of original surplus creation in the periphery and surplus transfer to the core and, on the other hand, upon the imposition of a raw material-producing, export-dependent economy upon the periphery to fit the productive and consumptive requirements of the core. (Brenner 1977:29)

Each of these paradigms has an internal consistency that is hard to refute and it is, therefore, extremely hard to choose between them in selecting a model for studying the Belizean case. However, when applied to the actual historical Belizean situation, it becomes clear that only one of the formulations on the origins and mechanisms of underdevelopment, briefly outlined above, seems to fit the Belizean case. The orthodox Marxist position that the capitalist impact on an economy such

as Belize's would stimulate rapid economic transformation and development doesn't seem to fit at all. For example, in the timber industry which after the end of slavery could not be considered anything other than capitalist (it had a system of wage labor), none of the massive amounts of money made by Belizeans or Englishmen residing in the country were used to make major improvements to ensure the viability of the industry. Most owners were concerned only to make whatever money they could and get out. Further, none of the capital generated by the industry was used to capitalize other enterprises or even to create an infrastructure upon which other industries could be based. Not even the colonial government was interested enough in the future of capitalism in the economy to invest in it. In more recent times the same lack of interest by investors seems to be true of the fishing industry.

Inasmuch as the consequence of capitalist penetration in several sectors in Belize was, and is, the exhaustion of the target resource in association with almost no reinvestment or subsequent development, it is safe to say that, contrary to the assertions of orthodox Marxists, there was no rapid transformation of the economy or mushrooming of capitalist modes of production merely as a result of capitalist penetration. On the contrary, the facts indicate that in general the long-term results of capitalist penetration have been massive underdevelopment. This is, in fact, what the other two schools whose views are outlined above have predicted should be the result of this type of capitalist penetration in a satellite economy from the metropole. However, there are problems on other levels with both formulations.

The formulation associated with the names of Meillassoux and Dupre and Rey runs into problems because it attributes underdevelopment to

capitalist perpetuation of precapitalist modes of production. While this formulation may work in some areas of the world, although it is doubtful that it does, it definitely does not work in the case of Belize. Belize stands in contrast to its Central American neighbors where Indio modes of production persist whose categorization as capitalist or precapitalist has long been a subject of debate. In Belize there is no question (outside of its remote Indio regions) of the non-existence, lingering, articulated or otherwise, of precapitalist modes of production.

By the time the English and their slaves arrived in this area, the Spanish had effectively driven the native Mayan populations from the coast back to the jungle recesses of western Belize and the Peten region of Guatemala. The raison d'etre of the settlement and the entire history of Belize up to the last 30 years has, as mentioned, been the export of forestry products to the capitalist Western world. Defining capitalism as that system which is dominated by a mode of production in which a bourgeoisie as owners of the means of production and a proletariat as owners only of their own labor power exist in a dichotomous class relation between capital and wage labor (Giddens 1971:20), some theorists would contend that the Belizean slave mode of production is not to be considered a capitalist mode of production. Yet it is clear that the New World slave mode of production, which matured concomitantly with the capitalist mode of production in Europe, was part of the overall Capitalist World Economy in which the capitalist mode of production was the dominant but not the only mode of production operant. In this regard, as Mintz (1978:86-87) points out, one should not make the mistake of confusing noncapitalist modes of production with precapitalist modes. The

slave mode of production which existed in the forestry industry to the time of emancipation was a noncapitalist mode of production within the world capitalist social formation. It certainly was not precapitalist.

There can be no question that the wage labor system which took the slave mode's place constituted an example of a capitalist mode of production. No aspect of it, and only a very tiny sector of the rest of the Belizean economy, could have been considered to be precapitalist. The same is true of the fishing and other industries of today. So to say that the underdevelopment of Belize results from the retardation of economic transformation due to capitalist perpetuation of a precapitalist mode of production is to say nothing for the Belizean case.

Frank's formulations on dependency and the development of underdevelopment seem to make the most sense in the Belizean case, at least at first glance. His starting hypothesis that satellite areas are capitalist in nature and not precapitalist fits the Belizean case. His central thesis that the development of the metropole directly causes the underdevelopment of the periphery also seems to agree with the facts of the Belizean case. Surplus flows to the metropole from the peripheral area through unequal market relations. This results not only in a net drain on financial resources but also in a drain of material natural resources which in turn leaves the peripheral area in worse shape than it began. Potential resources are exhausted and very little remains to show for the capital penetration in terms of new infrastructure for productive capacity.

Though this dissertation accepts Frank's formulation as a framework for analysis of a situation of economic development/underdevelopment in Belize, his work also presents problems. Frank's conception of the World

Capitalist System within which both metropole and satellite sectors operate is that of a worldwide division of labor with links purely on the level of commodity exchange, and with no consideration of any sort, of the sphere of production. This creates some rather acute conceptual problems for those who attempt to use his theory. In the main, by using his formulations we can see that satellite areas are having their surpluses expropriated by metropolitan capitalists. However, we are at a loss to explain exactly why and how this happens in terms other than the obvious profit motive of those in whose interest the system operates. By excluding consideration of production from his analysis Frank leaves us with the basic questions with which we began. As the economist Leclau notes of Frank and those who follow his lead:

. . . by trying to situate the fundamental contradiction in the field of circulation rather than production [they] . . . can go no more than half way towards an explanation of why development generates underdevelopment. (Leclau 1971:32)

Leclau shows us the direction in which to proceed if we wish to answer the question of why metropolitan capitalists would want to expand to the periphery. He states that the motive force of capitalism is capital accumulation and sustained accumulation is achieved by

expansion, in any sector of the system of productive units in which either low technology or super-exploitation of labor makes it possible to counteract the depressive effect on the rate of profit of advanced industries . . . enterprises in the peripheral areas are in an ideal position to play this role. (Leclau 1971:36)

Marx, Lenin and others worked for many years on explaining the necessity of the capitalist mode of production to expand. Consequently, as Leclau's brief quote shows, the general mechanisms and motivations for that expansion are fairly well understood. What is not well understood is the precise forms which these expansions take, be they various forms

of capitalist modes, precapitalist modes or something in between. Even more importantly, what is not well understood and seems to have been very little investigated, largely because of the vast array of their forms, and the logistical problems of investigating each at the level of production, is the precise manner in which these new modes, these products of the capitalist expansion into the periphery are created, structured and operate in the process of underdevelopment. This dissertation hopes to make a contribution to understanding these processes and mechanisms.

Dissertation Objectives

We are now led to a precise formulation of the dissertation objectives. The primary objective is to gain an understanding of the past and present dynamic of the "development of underdevelopment" as it has manifested itself in the nation of Belize. Considerations of limited time and resources suggest avoiding the huge task of attempting this for the country as a whole. Also, a distinctive anthropological contribution should involve microanalysis in economic anthropology leaving macro-analysis and aggregated statistics to other disciplines. Therefore, the dissertation will focus on the playing out of these processes in the small village of San Pedro which is situated on an island off the coast of Belize. Analysis and description of the economic history of the village will form the basis for analysis, description and evaluation of the fishing industry which exists in the village today. Rather than to simply document the existence or nonexistence of the development of underdevelopment in the village's history, which entails analysis only on the level of exchange, analysis on the level of production will be undertaken so that the content of the dynamic can be revealed and understood. This will lead to some brief postulations as to the future

direction of the village economy and some suggestions for the attainment of real development.

Secondarily, the dissertation will attempt to make contributions to developmental theory. By looking at the how and why of the development of underdevelopment on the microcosmic level, we are able to bring analysis on the level of production to the theory of development of underdevelopment. This will help future workers in the field by making the development of underdevelopment an analytical tool rather than a purely descriptive one.

Finally, in the process of addressing the above objectives it is hoped that the dissertation will provide the people of San Pedro and Belize, as well as fellow academics, with an economic history and ethnographic description of the fishing village of San Pedro. This objective is just as important as the first two. Placing in written form the economic history that the San Pedranos were kind enough to spend their time relating to me is a small repayment for their efforts. I, therefore, ask those who are only interested in the theoretical import of the dissertation to understand if all of the descriptive detail does not seem warranted by the needs of the theoretical issues here addressed.

The Procedure

Chapter one provides the reader with a brief review of radical development models and their applicability to the case of Belize. The general structure and objectives of the dissertation are also laid out.

Chapter two contains a description of the nation of Belize. This chapter includes sections which assess Belize's political and economic structure and development, as well as the place of fishing in the economy. This serves to place San Pedro in national context as well as

to provide basic background material for the historical description of San Pedro's economy.

Chapter three contains a description of the physical environment and location of the village on San Pedro as well as a description of economic, political and general social structure and of the ethnic, racial, and class composition of the village. The information provides the reader with a knowledge of who the villagers are and how they live. This adds depth and perspective to the telling of their history.

Chapter four begins the central task of the dissertation. Here the economic history of the village is described. Two distinct economic phases distinguished by different forms of labor control and class structure are located and discussed in terms of the modes of production that characterize them.

Chapter five describes the process of the development of the present fishing mode of production in San Pedro. The next phase of the village's history and its transformation emerge from this description. The development of a fishermen's cooperative serves as the focus of this chapter as the single most important event in the village's recent history.

Chapter six deals with the present structure of the fishing mode of production, including sections on the reigning means and relations of production.

Chapter seven lays out the relation of the San Pedro fishing economy to the international economy. Where chapter six gives information pertinent to the manner in which the production process is structured within the development of underdevelopment, chapter seven is more concerned with how the dynamic manifests itself on the level of exchange.

Chapter eight sums up the economic history of San Pedro, brings out its most important features and illuminates what this exercise has told us about the dependency theory and development theory in general.

CHAPTER II

BELIZE: THE NATION

In attempting to describe the economic history and present economic structure of a small community it is essential that it be placed within the context, synchronic and diachronic, of the larger national structure within which it exists. Without this contextualization much of what one describes on the microlevel is unintelligible to the reader. This chapter then, familiarizes the reader with the country of Belize; its people, political and economic history and structure and the place of fishing in the national economy.

Through a description of its people the social history of Belize is laid out. This section allows the reader to gain a better understanding of the origin and demographic position in the national population of the different groups in San Pedro.

The political history of Belize is emphasized in this chapter because economic structures, which are the ultimate concern of the dissertation, must be considered within the context of the political structures which they have molded and been molded by. In the body of the work emphasis is placed on Belizean economic history and its impact on the village of San Pedro's economic history while detailed political descriptions have not been included. To make up for this a diachronic description of Belize's political structures is here given. In this way the reader may secure an understanding of the political context within which the village and national economies have unfolded.

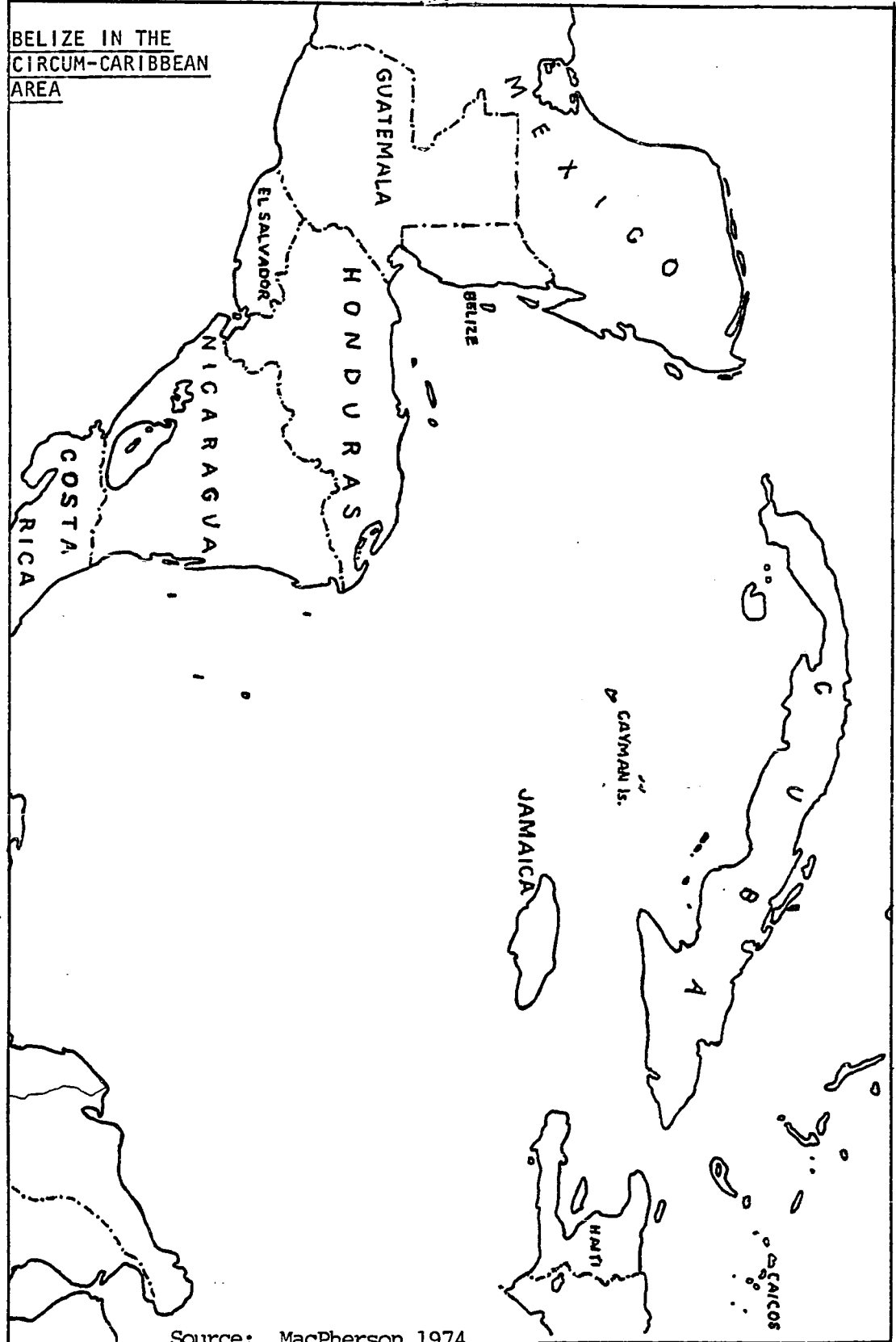
Description of Belize's economy emphasizing its present status is also included in the chapter. An adequate description of Belize's economic history is provided elsewhere in the work. The synchronic description places Belize and ultimately San Pedro, within the context of the World Capitalist System. The section on Belize's economy taken with the last section of the chapter on the place of fishing in that economy highlight the potential importance of fishing villages like San Pedro to the national economy and the manner in which they fit into it.

BELIZE

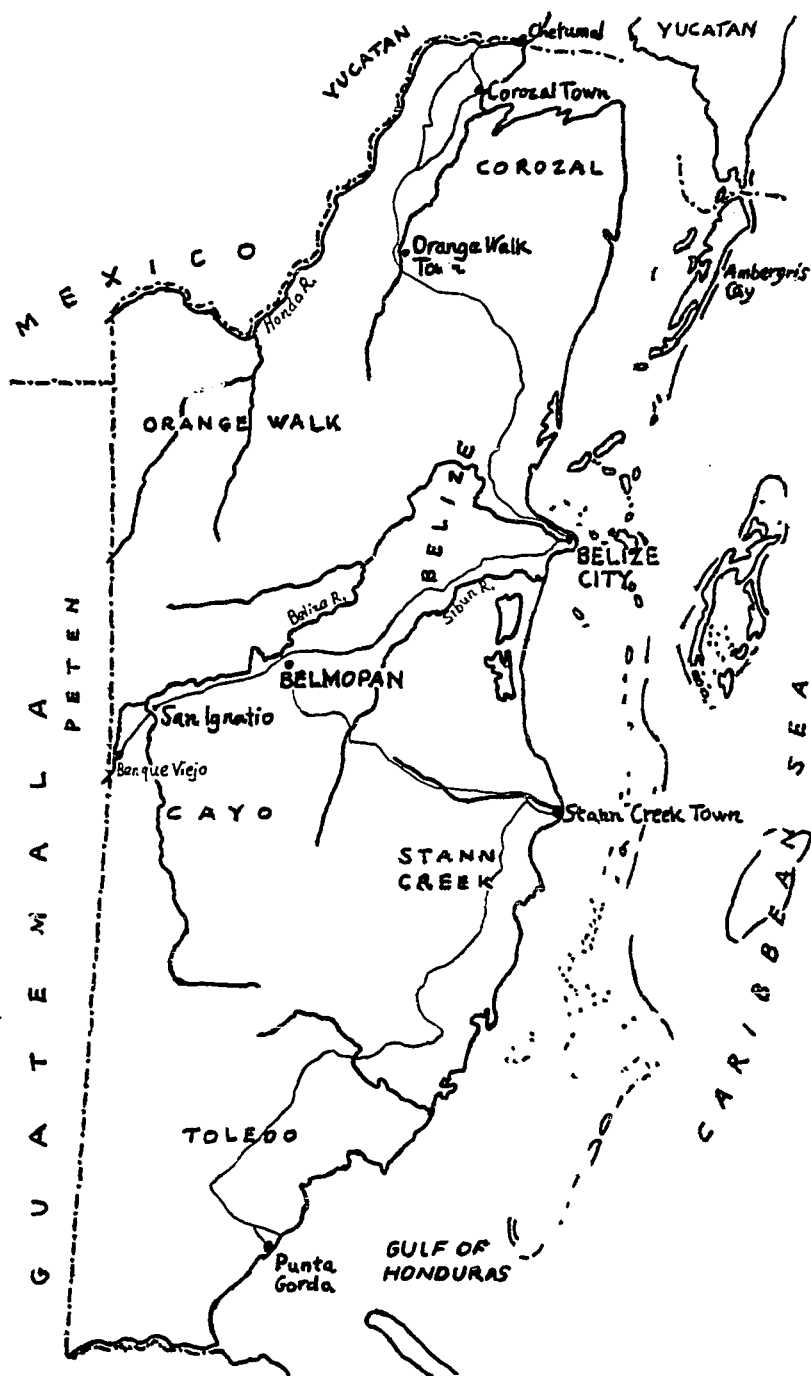
On the north west shore of the Caribbean Sea, bounded on the north by Mexico and to the west by Guatemala, lies the "emerging" nation of Belize. Belize is a relatively small country of 8,866 square miles, 174 miles at its longest and 68 miles across at its widest point. Only slightly larger than El Salvador, Belize is the second smallest country on the American continent. Its climate is sub-tropical to tropical.¹ Topographically Belize is very diverse. Off the Caribbean coast of the country lies the largest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere, with its associated coral atolls and small islands. The actual coast line is covered largely by mangrove swamp. The interior ranges from flat and dry in the north to mountainous and wet in the south. There are nineteen major rivers. These have been, until recently, the most important avenues of communication. Additionally, a number of fresh and saltwater lagoons dot the country.

Map 1

BELIZE IN THE
CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN
AREA



Map 2

BELIZE

Source: Grant 1976

POPULATION

The Maya

The original inhabitants of Belize were Maya Indians who, at the time of European penetration of the New World, occupied southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and the northern section of Honduras. Archeological evidence has revealed Mayan settlements in the Belize River Valley during the pre-classic period of Mayan cultural history. These scattered settlements spread along the river valley during classic times to form one continuous strip as the river became a major thoroughfare for trade, particularly in salt, between the Caribbean coastal settlements and the large population centers of the Peten. The Maya of Belize during this classic period erected major ceremonial centers of their own at such sites as Lubaantum, Xanantunich, and Altun Ha.

Seven hundred ninety A.D. marks the end of the classic Maya period and the beginning of the mysterious decline of that once great civilization. The decline of the Mayan civilization and eventual massive population loss in the Mayan southern lowlands had severe consequences for the Mayan populations of the Belize River Valley linked as they were economically, socially and religiously to the major centers in the Peten. Though drastically reduced in numbers, there seems to have been continual or at least sporadic occupation of settlements along the Belize River up to the time of European incursions into the area in the early 1600's. (Bolland 1977:17)

When the focus of Mayan civilization moved to the Yucatan area of present-day Mexico in post classic times, large concentrations of Mayan people were to be found in the northern sections of Belize. Here lay the capital of Chetumal, one of the Yucatan Mayan states. Half of this state

was located in what is now Belize, reaching as far south as a line from Guinea Grass to Northern River. Chetumal was a rich and commercially important state when the Spanish arrived in the mid 1500's. The subsequent Spanish conquest of the Yucatan destroyed it. The Spanish established political control over the portion of Chetumal located in present-day Mexico. The portion in what is today Belize was not under direct Spanish control and became an area of refuge for Maya escaping Spanish oppression.

As a consequence, in the early days of Spanish presence in the area there were Mayan peoples living throughout Belize. However, even though the Spanish never established a permanent settlement in Belize, constant harassment by missionaries and soldiers, coupled with the devastating effects of European diseases, seriously depleted the Mayan population. The English, who first arrived in Belize in the mid seventeenth century, found that the Maya had withdrawn from their settlements on the coast and were only to be encountered, if at all, in the interior of the country. Because the activities of the British for the first century of their occupation of Belize were confined largely to logwood cutting on the coast, they had little contact with the Maya who occupied the interior. However, when the English began penetrating the interior in search of mahogany, contact increased. At first relations were friendly, as the English were looking for mahogany to cut and were not interested in political and religious hegemony over the Maya. The Maya considered them to be allies against the hated Spanish. However, as the English increasingly encroached on Mayan milpa land with their mahogany cutting, resentment and hostilities began to emerge. Though the Maya resisted the advance of the English, the latter's superior fire power eventually

pushed the weaker people into the forests of the Peten and Yucatan. The Maya reentered Belize in the nineteenth century in response to pressures from the Caste Wars of the Yucatan and the harsh treatment and taxes imposed upon them in Guatamala (Dobson 1973:252). Today most groups of Mayan Indians are located in isolated western areas of the country and comprise only about 13 percent of the total Belizean population (Anon. 1978).

Africans and Europeans

Though the Spanish laid claim to the entire Central American area, they never, as mentioned above, effectively settled what is today Belize. Belize was hard for the Spanish to penetrate. It has a low, swampy and insect infested coast protected by a formidable barrier reef and was defended mightily by the indigenous Mayan population. Besides it had little to offer to the Spanish conquistadors or the settlers who followed them to the New World. Instead, it was left to the English to settle on the shores of the Bay of Honduras. Though the actual origins of the settlement are obscure, most sources credit one Captain Peter Wallace, a buccaneer from Tortuga, with establishing the first settlement at the mouth of the Belize River in or around 1638.

Whether or not it was actually Peter Wallace who originally settled Belize is of little importance. The first settlers seem to have been of the same general type as Wallace. The increased pressure put upon privateers by the Spanish around the middle of the seventeenth century culminated in the Treaty of Madrid in 1667. Part of this treaty called for the suppression of privateering by the English. The expulsion of the English buccaneers from Tortuga in 1639 combined with the aforementioned suppression of privateering forced many English buccaneers from a life of

raiding Spanish logwood ships. Instead they settled and cut logwood themselves along the coast of Campeche, the Mosquito coast and the Belize River, and neighboring creeks.

Thus the raison d'etre for the Belize settlement was the cutting, first, of logwood and then of mahogany. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the English cutters had begun to import Africans, mainly from Jamaica, as slaves to help them in their forestry work. As time went on, the logwood trade gradually died, and the colony relied on the export of mahogany for its existence. This industry required great amounts of manual labor which were largely supplied by black slaves who soon came to outnumber their white owners by a wide margin. The "Creole" offspring resulting from the large scale miscegenation of these two populations resulted in what is now the largest population group in Belize, comprising 30 percent of the total. These people are largely city dwellers (they form the vast majority of the population of Belize City), but some also live scattered through the Belizean countryside.

Garifuna

The Garifuna people, who today form the majority of the population of Dangriga and the Toledo District in the southern portion of Belize, entered Belize at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They are, for the most part, the descendents of runaway slaves who mingled and miscegenated with the Carib Indians of the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean, assimilating much of the culture of the latter. They were deported by the English, after an uprising on the island of St. Vincent, to Roatan off the coast of Honduras in 1797 and subsequently settled along the coast of the Bay of Honduras including Belize. Today they comprise about 11.4 percent of the total Belizean population.

Mestizos

Although the latest census, 1970, does not have a category which specifically enumerates the numbers of Mestizos in the Belizean population, Mestizos being included in the "mixed" category, it is clear from a breakdown of that category done by Brukdown Magazine (1979) that their population is now just below that of the "Creole" population, approximately 30 percent of the population. Large numbers of Mestizos started entering Belize at the time of the Caste Wars of the Yucatan in 1848. In the first ten years of the fighting and unrest caused by the war, large numbers of Mestizo and Mayan people fled to northern Belize. Today the two northern districts, Corosal and Orange Walk, are still predominantly Mestizo. The Mestizo population is the fastest growing in Belize today (the Creole population losing numbers each year due to migration to the United States), and it seems just a matter of time before they become the majority population in Belize.

Others

Though the four categories of peoples laid out above form the vast majority of the Belizean population, they by no means represent all the different types of people represented in the population. The remaining 6.3 percent are whites (mostly Mennonites), East Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, and Syrian/Lebanese.

The diversity of the Belizean population is such that it has been described by a number of researchers as a plural society similar to that existing in Guyana and distinct from the more or less homogeneous racial make up of some of its neighbors in the Caribbean and Central America.

The population of Belize at the last official census in 1970 was about 120,000. By 1975 the official estimate was 130,000. Today the

population is held to be between 130,000 and 140,000. Despite the growing emigration of its people to the United States, the population of Belize was still growing at an annual rate of about 3 percent until recently (Bolland 1977:5). In fact Belize's population has doubled since the end of the Second World War. Still, one of Belize's major problems is under population. As is the case in many Caribbean countries, many of its most talented and best educated citizens have left for the higher salaries and accelerated life style of the U.S. There was actually a decline in the population from 1972 through 1976. In 1976 alone, 6,000 people emigrated from the country (Anon. 1979).

Fully 54 percent of Belize's population resides in the seven largest towns of the country. This, combined with the fact that the population density is only fifteen per square mile, means that there is very little labor available for the agricultural work so necessary to the existence of an underdeveloped nation such as Belize.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The first phase of Belizean political development was dominated by the conflict between two European powers, Britain and Spain, concerning jurisdiction over what became British Honduras, and is, today, the country of Belize. After a series of armed confrontations, it was more or less agreed that the English could work the logwood stands of the area but that they could set up no permanent settlement nor any colonial constitution. As a result, the settlers of Belize were left to their own devices in terms of political structure. What emerged was a structure of Public Meeting which oversaw the affairs of the settlement and enforced laws set out by "the custom of the Bay." The members of the Public Meeting elected magistrates who served in both executive and judicial

capacities. Only white members of the community who met strict property qualifications were allowed to participate in the Public Meeting or to be magistrates. In 1798 the English defeated the Spanish in the Battle of St. George's Cay, and from then on the English were left alone to govern Belize.

The Public Meeting began to recede in power as the British government became more and more willing to take an active part in the governing of the settlement. Though the English had appointed a superintendent as early as 1786, the first one with any real power was appointed in 1796. From that time on, the superintendents made considerable inroads into the power of the magistrates and the Public Meeting. In 1819 the first Supreme Court was set up, and in 1831 the "free coloureds" were enfranchised through the intercession of the British government. By 1832 the superintendent had taken over the right to appoint the magistrates. In 1840 the laws of England were declared in force in the settlement and an executive council was set up to assist the superintendent.

With emancipation in 1834 the numbers of free blacks who were able to meet the property requirements for enfranchisement rose to the point that the white settler elite who had controlled the colony through the Public Meeting felt their power base threatened. Their solution was to disband the Public Meeting. In its place they created a legislative assembly, the majority of whose members were elected. These members were subject to a very high property qualification, and thus, in effect, only the elite of the settlement could serve. This marked the end of the first phase of Belizean political development, for it meant the beginning of direct British government control over the settlement. The

superintendent had great power in that he appointed some of the members to the legislative council and could abolish it at any time.

The shift of even more power to the British government was the product of two separate circumstances. For one, the 1850's mark the beginning of a depression in Belize brought about by lower prices for forestry goods on the world market as well as by the exhaustion of the area's forestry resources. In consequence many of the local elite ran into financial problems and ultimately bankruptcy. Their holdings were bought by a relatively few English firms; thus the power base of the elite class was eroded. At the same time this was happening, the "Guerra de Castas" broke out in the Yucatan. This brought in large numbers of Mestizo and Mayan refugees, who were a further threat to the political hegemony of the settler elite.

In response to this dual threat the English settlers pushed for colony status for Belize. This was granted in 1862. Further intensification of the war in the Yucatan and incursions by rebel Maya into Belize, which the settlers of the country had not the resources to contain, led the settlers to call for Crown Colony status. This concurred with British colonial policy of the day, and Belize became a Crown Colony in 1872. Status as a Crown Colony meant that the colony was completely controlled by the government in Britain. Parliament appointed a Governor-in-Council, and the council became an entirely nominated body, i.e., the governor chose the members. The elites were protected from a potentially hostile elected legislature.

In 1890 the citizens of Belize made an attempt to reverse the trend of increased British control. They asked for the institution of elected members on the council. This was rejected by the colonial office on the

explicit grounds that there were not enough whites in the colony, there being only 400 out of a population of 30,000.

In 1931 the British government made further grants and loans to the colony, much needed during these depression years and after destructive hurricanes, contingent on granting the governor reserve powers, i.e., veto power over some legislation. Having gained reserve powers for the governor, the British government was more disposed to grant election of some of the members of the council. However, the elected members were always in the minority on the council and further were elected by a very small percentage of the population.

The 1940's saw the florescence in Belize, as in the rest of the Caribbean, of new ideas; ideas such as civil rights, trade unionism, popular political participation, and even independence. This surge in nationalism occurred in the face of continued absolute British control of the running of the colony. In 1949 despite denials by government officials, the B.H. dollar was devalued. This devaluation set off a chain reaction of political revolt. Chief among these events was the creation of the Peoples Committee which subsequently led to the creation of what from that time has been the ruling political party, the P.U.P. (Peoples United Party).

Agitation, led chiefly by the P.U.P., resulted in the acquisition of universal adult suffrage by the people of Belize in 1954. This was the beginning of the last phase of Belizean political development, the governing of Belize by the people of Belize. In 1954 a quasi-ministerial form of government was set up with a legislative assembly. The executive council was still primarily not elected, and the governor still held reserve powers. The subsequent push for self government saw increased

conflict between Belizean and colonial power. In 1961 a full ministerial system of government was instituted. This time the executive consisted of elected officials with George Price, leader of the P.U.P., as the first minister. Internal self government was granted in 1964². The British-appointed governor remains responsible for external affairs and security but is in constant consultation in these matters with the elected government.

Internal self-rule was instituted with the expectation of early independence. Yet fifteen years later Belize still is not an independent nation. The major stumbling block to that independence has been the Guatamalan claim to Belize. The Guatamalans argue that Belize is a part of their country as a consequence of it originally being a Spanish colony and of supposed British noncompliance with the Anglo-Guatamalan Treaty of 1859. The legal issues are rather thorny with no side having a clear advantage in the resolution of the dispute. However, during the more than a century of dispute between England and Guatamala, a nation of people has emerged with fervent and valid aspirations to national independence. The economy will, inevitably, be affected by the attainment of complete sovereignty.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Until the 1950's the forestry industry dominated the economy of Belize. From the beginning of English settlement in the area until the 1770's, the major product exported was logwood to be used as a dye in the burgeoning clothing industry of Europe. Subsequently, mahogany became the most important product and remained so until as late as 1960. The heyday of mahogany production in the 1840's was largely the result of large scale railway coach construction in Britain. With the decline of

this production in the 1850's, the mahogany industry went into a prolonged and never reversed depression. It is a testimony to the sad state of the Belizean economy that this industry remained preeminent until recently. The economic hegemony of the forestry industry for close to 300 years gave rise to political, social and economic patterns, many of which continue to hamper the country's development (Bolland and Shoman 1977:117).

The development of agriculture has been particularly retarded by the economic dominance of the forestry industry. The scarcity of available labor has always been a problem in Belize. Recognizing this, the forestry industry did everything in its power to discourage the development of any other industry which might compete for laborers. This, combined with the fact that the major forestry interests were also the chief importers and merchants, meant that agriculture became a major target of the most powerful interests in the country.

This opposition to agriculture has taken varied forms. Through years of inculcation by owners and managers of the forestry industry, the people of Belize have been convinced that farming is a low status, unrewarding occupation. In consequence it is extremely difficult to convince present day Creole Belizeans that they should participate in agricultural pursuits even in the face of large-scale un- and under-employment. Further, the political domination of the forestry-merchant ruling class has made it very difficult for the government to take action which might stimulate agriculture in the country. A striking example of this has been the subversion by these forces of a recent government attempt at land reform by a progressive tax on idle land.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the development of a significant agricultural sector in Belize has been the monopolization of land by a small group of mostly foreigners. In this case the old forestry interests have been joined by a small but powerful plantation group in attempting to control the access of their labor force to agricultural land.

. . . the structure of land ownership in Belize exhibits gross inequalities . . . in 1971 only 3 percent of the land owners held 95 percent of the free hold land, while 91 percent of the land owners held a mere 2 percent. Moreover, all but one of the latifundistas who own estates of 10,000 acres or more, were foreigners. In fact, foreigners owned 93.4 percent of all private land holdings over one hundred acres in 1971 and over 90 percent of all freehold land in the country. (Bolland 1977:7)

Thirty-eight percent of the land area of Belize is cultivatable; only 10 percent of the cultivatable land is being utilized. In short the Belizean agricultural sector and thus its economy is being hamstrung by a small group of individuals and corporations.

Though severely hampered in the manner described above and still very much undeveloped, agriculture is today the dominant economic activity in the country accounting for 80 percent of foreign exchange earnings (Anon.1977:24). Sugar is now the principal Belizean product. Stimulated by the construction of two modern sugar refineries in the north of the country and dominated by activities of Tate and Lyle (Grant 1976:4), the sugar industry accounts for over 50 percent of the country's total domestic exports with a harvest of around 103,000 tons expected in 1980 (Anon.1980:10).

Citrus is the second most important crop raised in Belize for export. As with the sugar industry, it is dominated by a foreign company, Salada Foods of Canada. High prices for citrus on the world

market have stimulated the industry in recent years. Located largely in the Stann Creek valley of Central Belize, the area planted in citrus amounts to about ten thousand acres. Belize also exports considerable quantities of fish, lumber and bananas.

Besides its agricultural exports, Belize gains foreign exchange earnings from such diverse activities as light manufacturing (principally clothing), tourism (which accounted for an inflow of \$4.2 million in 1974) and a re-export trade with the portless neighboring state of Quintana Roo, Mexico (\$70 million of re-exported goods added to the Belize economy in 1979) (Anon.1980:9). Oil, though yet to be found in "commercially exploitable quantities" (whatever that means) remains a long-term possibility for the vitalization of the Belizean export economy, as Belize, at least theoretically, is included in the great Yucatan-Chiapas oil fields.

Agricultural production for the home market is lagging, though significant advances have been made in the past few years. Fifteen thousand tons of corn, 16 million pounds of rice and 2.75 million pounds of red kidney beans were produced in 1975 (Anon.1978). Increases in these production figures in recent years have made Belize all but self-sufficient in these important staples and a few other vegetables.

Belize also has a small number of light industries geared towards providing products for the domestic market. Mostly import substitution items; clothing, cigarettes, fertilizer, shoes, furniture, beer, recapped tires and wire products are produced (Anon.1980:19).

Despite the growing self-sufficiency in food and manufactures, Belize is still very much dependent on international trade to supply the needs of its people. Belize's major imports are food and machinery. In 1976

\$40 million worth of machinery and \$39 million worth of food were imported. Even with the increase in agricultural and other exports, the country, as with most Third World countries, has an unfavorable balance of trade with imports far exceeding the value of exports. This imbalance is to a large extent dependent upon the fluctuations in the international price of Belize's main export product, sugar. In 1974 when sugar prices sky rocketed, imports exceeded exports by \$14.5 million. Since then, with sugar prices dropping, the gap has increased so that by 1980 it was back up to \$63 million (Anon 1980:11).

The chronic trade imbalance is offset by foreign aid funds which come mostly from Great Britain, Canada and private organizations such as CARE. Also important are the large amount of money spent by the occupying British army and remittances sent to Belizeans by their relatives living in the United States. The value of remittances alone is said to amount to between \$5-\$10 million annually (Anon 1978). Of course, these sources cannot make up the total difference between exports and imports; this remains as debt owed by Belize to the Caribbean Development Bank and foreign governments and institutions. Belize's principal trade partners have traditionally been the United States and Great Britain. However, in recent years Britain's share has declined, and the slack has been picked up by Mexico, Jamaica and Canada. Belize became a member of CARIFTA (Caribbean Free Trade Association) in 1971 and was made a full member of CARICOM (Caribbean Common Market) with "less developed country" status when it was organized from CARIFTA in 1974³.

Belize's GDP was about \$130 million \$BZ for 1975. Per capita income was at about \$1,000 \$BZ and is more equitably distributed than is the case with most of its Central American neighbors. The national budget

for 1980 was \$138.5 million. Its recurrent side, \$58.5 million was financed by funds from within the country. Capital expenditure is financed by grants and loans from Great Britain and the Caribbean Development Bank. The public debt as of 1978 totaled just under \$30 million (Anon 1980:60). Service on that debt amounted to 1.4 percent of exports (Anon 1980:60) mostly from import duty and income tax.

As mentioned above the economic situation of Belize is typical of much of the third world. For close to 300 years, colonial Belize had been characterized by the classical syndrome of such colonized nations: a mono-economy based upon an extractive industry (forestry) controlled by metropolitan capital and its concomitant pattern of absentee landlordism, import dependence, satellite status and unequal market relations (Ashcroft 1973:62). Today, though the economy has expanded and diversified, there are still many problems. Land is still largely controlled by non-Belizeans. The economy is dominated by a single industry (sugar), the health of which is essential to the economic health of the country. It is dependent on large-scale imports of food and manufactured goods while exporting chiefly raw materials and agricultural products. Thus Belize maintains its satellite status and unequal market relations. Gross Domestic Product, especially considering the agricultural potential of the country, is depressingly small. Per capita income (\$450 U.S.) though higher than that of some nations, is only a small fraction of that of the developed nations of the world.

On the whole, then, Belize's economy can be characterized as small, dependent, weak and static. This does not mean, however, that there are not sectors of this economy which are vital and strong. It is within these sectors that the nucleus for the future development of the Belizean

economy lies. Of these sectors, exploitation of Belize's marine resources seems to be one of the most promising.

FISHING IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Within the last twenty years Belize has developed one of the most successful fisheries in the Caribbean area. Marine products are now the third largest source of foreign exchange for the country. This success can in large part be attributed to the establishment of strong producers' cooperatives as well as to the sky-rocketing prices of their major product, spiny lobster.

By organizing themselves into cooperatives, fisherman have been able to significantly increase their production and returns by processing, storing, marketing and exporting their catch rather than selling to foreign-owned fish houses which would otherwise perform these tasks. As a result, fishing villages with such cooperatives, have undergone a significant increase in standard of living and over-all vitality. The rest of the population has also benefited by being provided with increased quantities of marine products.

Four major products are produced by Belizean fishermen. These are spiny lobster (mainly Panulirus argus), conch (mainly Strombus gigas), scale fish (snapper, grouper, grunt, jack, mullet, parrot fish, etc.,) and shrimp.

Lobster is the chief money earner and the most important fishery accounting for 69.4 percent of the total value of fishery exports in 1978 at \$BZ \$3,795,000 (Belize Fishery Unit 1979). Ninety-five percent of the total lobster production is exported (Gibson 1978:132). The U.S. is the major market though some lobster are also sold in the neighboring republics, and recently some has gone to France.

At the present time the fishermen of Belize are organized into five fishermen's cooperatives. The cooperatives purchase and process lobster and the other marine products directly from their members. As well as directing local marketing, each secures its own export markets and negotiates its own prices. Most have established stable relationships with particular U.S. importing companies over the years. Each cooperative operates its own processing plant, cold storage and ice making facilities. Each cooperative has an elected governing body drawn from the member fishermen. Cooperative operations and fisheries activities are collectively overseen by the Belize Fishermen's Cooperative Association, a nine-member body elected from the cooperative's membership, a government fisheries unit and a Cooperatives Department (Gibson 1978:130).

Through the successful operation of the cooperatives, Belize's fishing industry has been able to play an increasingly important role in the nation's economy. Total production of fisheries products jumped from 400 metric tons worth \$471,000 U.S. in 1966 to 806mt. worth \$2,184,000 U.S. in 1976 (FAO 1977). Of this 1976 total \$1,975,000 U.S. came from the export of lobster tails (Gibson 1978:131). The dollar value of fishery exports is about 2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, a significant contribution.

However, compared to the level of agricultural exports, the export of marine products is small. Agricultural exports for 1976 amounted to \$14,860,000 U.S. which far over shadows the \$2.2 million U.S. from fishery products.

The fishing industry being largely export oriented does not have a significant impact on the country's per capita protein consumption.

Belizeans consumed 57.6gm/capita/day of protein in 1970-74 (FAO 1977a). This is an amount which is almost precisely one half of the amount consumed by the average American. Of this protein intake only 23.8gm comes from animal products (FAO 1977a), of which only 4.45gm is from marine products. A sad fact in a nation which produced 997.44mt of marine products in 1976, enough, if locally consumed, to provide every citizen with 22.8gm/capita/day of protein from the sea.

The Belizean fishing industry still has a long way to go before it can be considered of major significance to the Belizean economy. The fishing villages of the country, however, have been heavily influenced by the rapid growth of this industry and as such are of particular interest to the social scientists interested in economic development. A fishing village in the far northern portion of Belize, San Pedro, was chosen by the investigator to test out and to find answers to some of the development theories and problems discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

Notes: Chapter II

1. Coastal temperatures range from 50 degrees F. (35 degrees C.) to 100 degrees F. (38 degrees C.) with a mean average of 75 degrees F. in January, the coolest month, and 81 degrees F. in July, the warmest month. Humidity is generally high; Belize City has a yearly average of 88 percent. However, the effects of the heat and high humidity are to a large extent mitigated by the continuous flow of the easterly trade winds blowing in from the Caribbean.

Belize's most important climatic feature is its seasonal variation in rainfall. There are distinct wet and dry seasons, which vary in length and intensity between the northern and southern sectors of the country. In the north, the dry season usually lasts the four months between February and May. This section of the country usually averages only about 60 inches of rainfall per year and has a wet/dry tropical climate. In the southern sector of the country, the dry season often lasts only the month of March. Averaging 160 inches of rain a year, this portion of the country has a wet tropical or rainforest type climate.

Hurricanes occur mainly in the months of June through October and have been a constant feature of the Belizean climate, wreaking havoc along the country's low coastline.

2. Under the constitution adopted in 1964, Belize has a bicameral legislature with an eighteen-member elected house of representatives and an eight-member nominated senate. There is universal adult suffrage with eighteen year olds having received the vote in 1978.
3. CARICOM has had its problems of late and even though Belize seems ready to post its first trade surplus with the group, it may soon have to look elsewhere for common market type trading. The Central American Common Market is one such possibility.

CHAPTER III

AMBERGRIS CAY AND SAN PEDRO

The location of fieldwork for this dissertation was the small fishing village of San Pedro and the surrounding waters exploited by its fishermen. Geologically, this area off the north eastern coast of Belize, shares with the northern mainland section of the country an underlying broad limestone platform. The eastern portion of this platform is submerged under the shallow (one to two fathoms) Bahia de Chetumal. The eastern border of the Bahia is composed of a number of low sandy mangrove covered cays, chief of which is Ambergris Cay on which the village of San Pedro is located. These cays, which continue on down the length of the country, run parallel to the coastline ten to twenty-five miles off shore. Remnants of an old barrier reef, cays are composed mainly of coral limestone. Some are barren but most are covered with mangrove and coconut palms. The position and shape of these cays are constantly changing due to the heavy weather, especially hurricanes, common on the western shores of the Caribbean.

Just outside the line of cays (three-fourths to three miles across a shallow lagoon) and at the edge of the limestone platform lies a great barrier reef running north and south 400 miles from Cozumel off the Yucatan coast to the Sapodilla Cays in the Bay of Honduras. This reef is the second largest in the world and the largest in the Western Hemisphere.

Less than a mile from the barrier reef, (portions of which stand above the surface of the ocean at low tide) the sea bottom drops off to between 150-500 fathoms. This trench separates the barrier reef from two banks of offshore atolls. The first group is composed of Banco Chinchorro (which is in Mexican territory) and Turneffe Islands. These two lie approximately six miles from the barrier reef. The second group is made of Lighthouse Reef and Glover's Reef. They are approximately 30 miles from the main reef. The two sets of atolls run parallel to both the barrier reef and the coast of the mainland and are separated from each other by deep submarine trenches. Outside the farthestmost atoll, Lighthouse Reef, the ocean bottom drops off precipitously to the abyssal depths of the trans-Caribbean Bartlette trough.

The combination of warm, shallow bays and lagoons, mangrove fringed cays, great expanses of reef and abyssal depth characteristic of this area form ideal habitats for myriad species of marine life making the water of northern Belize one of the productive fisheries in the Caribbean Basin. It is this marine resource which has become the basis of the newly found prosperity in San Pedro.

AMBERGRIS CAY

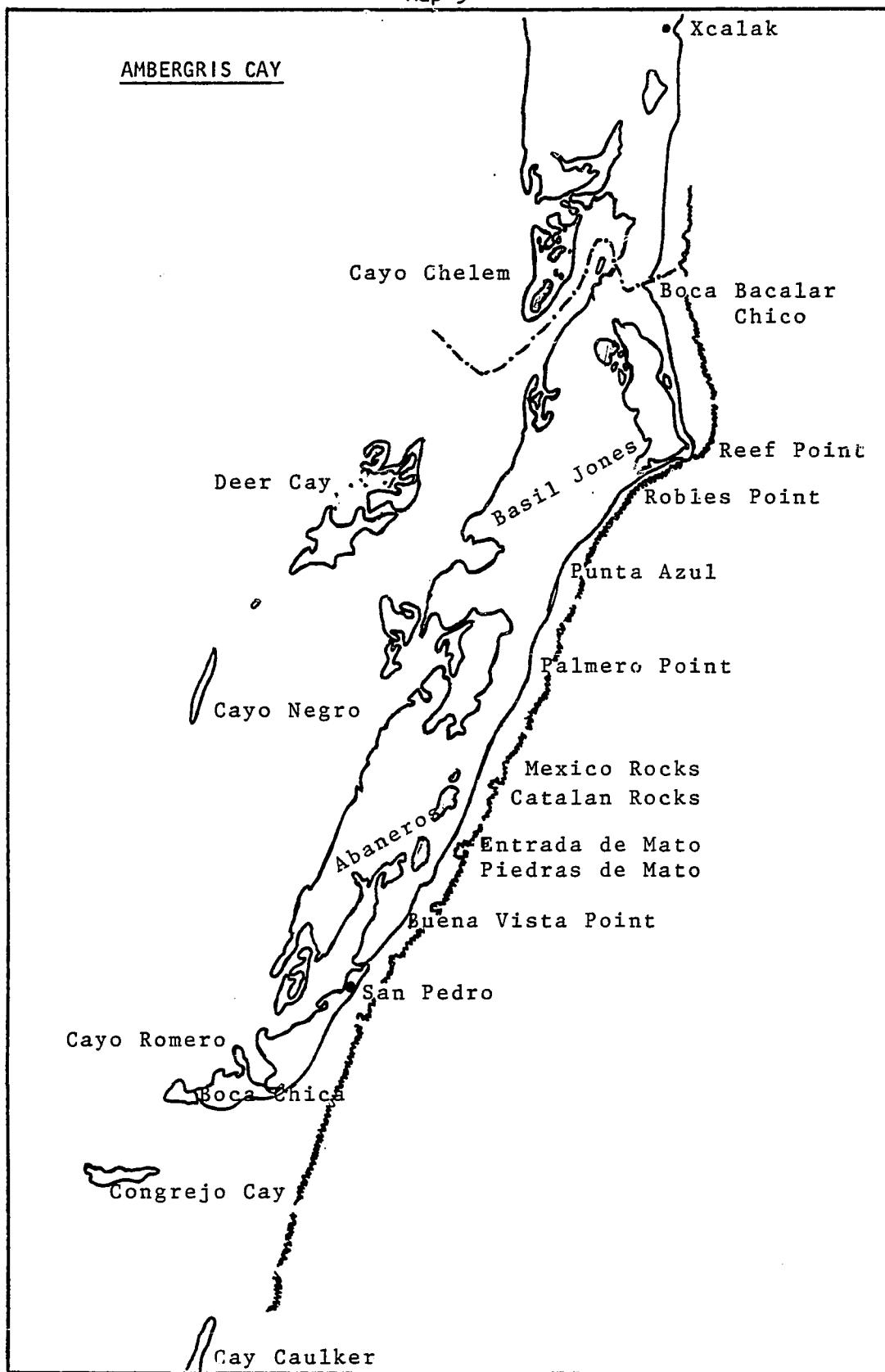
A mangrove cay with coconut covered seaward sand ridges, Ambergris Cay is the largest island on the Belizean coastal shelf (see Map 2). Stretching 25 miles southward from Boca Bacalar Chico, where it is separated from the rest of the Yucatan Peninsula and Mexico by a six-foot wide channel, it is just slightly smaller than the island of Barbados which covers 166 miles. Located on the eastern side of Bahia des Chetumal, Ambergris Cay is 14 miles from the mainland. The cay lies just inside the barrier reef an average of three-fourths mile across a

lagoon only one to two fathoms deep. Belize City is 36 miles to the southeast while Chetumal, capital of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo, lies 50 miles across the Bahia de Chetumal to the west.

Long and narrow, the island varies in width from four miles at the widest in the Basil Jones area to 100 yards near the southern tip. The Cay is actually a sand and mangrove spit accumulating southward over a solid rock core which is continuous with the main limestone structure of the rest of the Yucatan peninsula (Stoddart 1963:32). Moving north to south the cay can be divided into three sections. The first section is an unpopulated area of mangrove swamp, lagoon and tidally exposed sand extending for about three miles from the top of the island and the Mexican border.

The next section is called Basil Jones after one of the original English owners of the island. The Basil Jones area, at two to three miles wide, is the widest section of the island and extends five miles north to south. It is composed of a coconut covered seaward sand ridge which is backed by a raised portion of land grown over in palm thicket (Stoddart 1963:32). This area is the largest area on the cay suitable for agriculture with fertile land and adequate fresh water. The area is not now under cultivation or even populated. Today it is a thickly forested area abounding in wild life which includes deer, parrots, wild boar, boa constrictors and jaguar. There is evidence that the Basil Jones area was used extensively by the Maya in precolonial times. In the early nineteenth century a sea island cotton plantation was located there. Most importantly, the area was used by villagers from San Pedro for their milpas in their first 50 years of residence on the Cay.

Map 3



The third section of the island encompasses the remaining fourteen miles of its length. It consists of a coconut-planted seaward sand ridge 100 to 500 yards wide backed by a wide zone of mangroves sometimes with an intervening shallow lagoon. The ridge is the only dry part of this section of the cay, standing an average of three to five feet above sea level¹. The village of San Pedro, the site of the fieldwork, is located on the highest portion of this ridge twenty feet above sea level towards the southern tip of the island (see Map 3). This location is strategic. The best fishing grounds are located just to the south of the village on the reef and flats between Cay Caulker and Ambergris Cay. The village location also gives easy access to both the markets at Belize City to the south and those at Corozal and Chetumal to the west.

SAN PEDRO: PHYSICAL SETTING

San Pedro, the site of the fieldwork, is a village of exceptional physical beauty. Rows of pastel colored wooden houses stand on a dune of white coral sand. Across the lagoon of crystal clear waters, shimmering in a profusion of blues, waves break white on the barrier reef. A seemingly endless line of coconut palms flanks the village on either side and wave in the steady "trades" that push billowy clouds across a tropical sky of deep blue.

Behind the village lies laguna San Pedro, the largest on the island, whose blue expanse stretches off to the tip of Ambergris Cay six miles distant. San Pedro stands on the eastern shore of Ambergris Cay between the reef lagoon and Laguna San Pedro 200 to 300 yards wide and one-half mile long. The town was laid out by government surveyors and so the houses are set out in a regular fashion on sand streets.

In the last 25 years the village has expanded and changed drastically as a result of the success of the village's lobster fishing industry. Today the houses are wooden frame of the "West Indian Cottage" type. They are generally built on posts off the ground, above biting insects to facilitate air circulation and to be above the periodic flooding caused by hurricanes. In recent years, however, due to a shortage of housing caused by a recent village population boom and a lack of major hurricanes, many villagers have closed in the bottom of their houses to create extra living space. Most houses have been built by their owners or members of their immediate families out of native pine or Santa Maria brought in from the mainland. Roofing is generally "zinc" (galvanised iron) or recently "carton" (tar fiber imported from Mexico). Most houses have a verandah built onto the front to take advantage of the constant cooling sea breeze. The new affluence experienced in San Pedro (which will be discussed in depth later on) has created a number of changes in the housing of the village. Many, or even most, of the villagers now have gas stoves which have eliminated the need for separate cook houses mandatory when cooking was done with coconut husks in an oil can stove.

In consequence, most houses now have kitchen areas included in them though they may still have a separate cook house for baking needs. Similarly, the new affluence means that many villagers now also have running water and even indoor plumbing. This has eliminated the need for out houses and shower houses separate from the main house and has meant the inclusion of bathrooms in some houses.

The typical affluent villager's house is built almost right on the street with a verandah from which the occupants can look up and down its length. The house probably started out small, two or three rooms, and

then was added on to with successive additions until it filled the major portion of the small lot. Inside, the front door typically leads into a small living room off of which are the kitchen (if it does not occupy a closed off area under the house), two or three bedrooms and the bathroom. Under the house is used, if closed in, for a kitchen and other living purposes, if not, for the washing, general repairs and storage.

A poorer villager or young couple just starting out will have less imposing accommodations. These houses usually consist of only a verandah and two or three rooms, one of which will be a general dining and living area and the rest bedrooms. A small cooking house, an out house and probably a shower room may be placed at various locations on the lot. The lot would typically be located further toward the back (or lagoon side) of the village.

The very poorest villagers, usually the old or infirm, occupy small one-room dwellings built of wood on the ground with thatch roofs. This type of dwelling is a smaller version of the type of Mayan style house which used to be the rule in San Pedro as recently as 1955. There are only a very few of these left.

There are now 184 dwelling-houses in San Pedro which, given the limited area of the village and the small size of the house lots (50 by 50), means that the houses are very close together, sometimes with only a space of four to five feet between them. Nevertheless, many of the house lots in the village have garden areas. These are located principally in the rear two-thirds of the village as the crops in this area are shielded from the salt-bearing winds from off the sea which would otherwise kill them.

As San Pedranos are fisher people and not farmers, tree crops are favored for their gardens because of the relatively small amount of attention they need once planted. These tree crops include plantain and banana, papaya, coconut and "plum." Other crops grown include tomato, watermelon, gooseberry, yams, sugar cane and pineapple. A number of medicinal and culinary herbs are also grown. Pigs, ducks and chickens are raised for the table as well as dogs, cats and monkeys as pets.

Apart from dwellings San Pedro village has a number of other structures. These include seventeen small hotels in the village proper, a relatively new addition to the village. They are mostly to be found on the ocean shore of the eastern most north-south street. There are also eight bars interspersed throughout the town, four souvenir shops and five small restaurants. The town's food and other merchandise needs are met by fourteen small stores, among them several general foods stores, two bakeries, three fruit vendors, and a tortillary. Most of these are run out of the bottom floor of the owner's houses. Many of these businesses, particularly the tourist-related ones are very new, made possible by the village's new economic success.

San Pedro boasts a small police station complete with jail. A new post office has recently been built into one of the hotels. There is a community center which houses the new local high school. There is a park in the center of town with a cement basketball court surrounded by cement benches which serves as the social center of town. Towards the rear of the center of town is an open grassy area called the "plaza" where baseball and football (soccer) are played.

There are two churches in town. The majority of the villagers are Catholic and the Catholic church is located right at the center of the

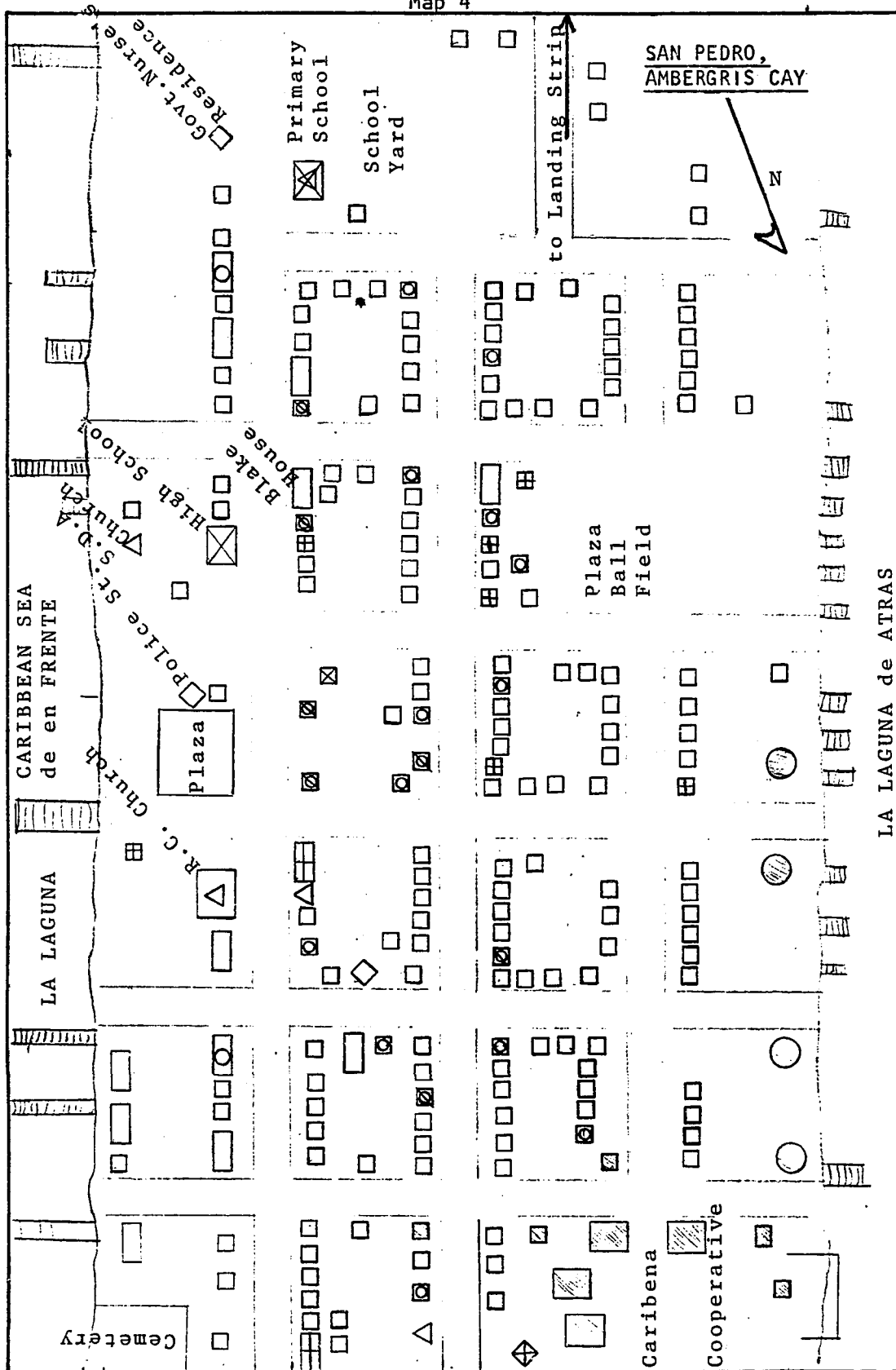
Map 4

SAN PEDRO, AMBERGRIS CAY

KEY

	.....	Hotel
	.....	Store
	.....	Other Business
	.....	Bar or Restaurant
	.....	Church Property
	.....	School
	.....	Electricity Plant
	.....	Dump
	.....	Pier
	.....	Government Owned Building
	.....	Cooperative Owned Building
	.....	House

Map 4



village. A huge cement monstrosity, it was begun but never completed due to a lack of funds. So it stands, its basic structure completed, but with no roof, doors or insides. The Seventh Day Adventist Church is a small wooden one-room affair on the beach. The large primary school building stands at the southern end of town. A concrete structure which serves as a hurricane shelter during bad weather, it is also used as a church for the bi-monthly Catholic services and other religious events.

There is an airport at the southern end of town which has recently been repaved by the government and is capable of handling small planes. The government has also begun work on rebuilding the municipal wharf which was destroyed in a hurricane five or six years ago. In the interim a short wooden structure has served the purpose. There are nine other wooden piers of varying sizes along the seaward shore of the village with a number of even smaller piers along the back lagoon shore.

Caribena Producers' Cooperative Ltd., the fishing cooperative which has contributed so much to the economic viability of the village, has its buildings at the northern end of town on land reclaimed from the back lagoon. Adjacent to this group of buildings is the town power plant run by the national government and containing three large generators.

Village refuse is deposited in a number of land fill areas at the back lagoon side of town. Periodically, refuse is burned and covered with sand to provide room for another house in the already crowded village.

THE PEOPLE OF SAN PEDRO

POPULATION

The village of San Pedro is growing quickly. Stoddart (1963) states that at the time of hurricane Hattie in 1961 the population of the

village was 300 persons. This is probably an underestimate; the correct figure being close to 500. By 1968 Reyes (1968), using more reliable methods of population assessment, found that the village contained 825 persons. During the time of my fieldwork from February 1977 to August 1979, the village contained approximately 1,200 persons, an increase of almost 400 persons in ten years. This rapid growth rate is a direct result of the equally spectacular economic growth of the village, which will be the subject of much of the remainder of this dissertation.

Despite the rapid growth rate, the age structure of the village has remained fairly stable. Reyes (1968) reported that 25 percent of the villagers were school-aged children five through fourteen years old, 9 percent were teenagers fifteen to twenty and that the remaining 66 percent of the population were either older than twenty or younger than five. At the time of my residence in the village approximately 22 percent of the population was school-aged, 17 percent age fifteen to twenty-five and 61 percent either above twenty-five or below five. Every indication is that the population will continue to grow as few people migrate and medical care continues to improve due to the recent economic success of the village. The rate of growth may be somewhat curtailed by the increased use of contraceptives evident in San Pedro, which also seems to go hand in hand with a people's increased economic well being.

VILLAGE ETHNICITY AND RACIAL IDENTITY

The racial and ethnic composition of San Pedro is very complex, so complex that at first glance it seems to defy precise classification. The question of ethnicity and racial identity is an important one, however, as much of the past and present class structure of the village is intimately tied to these factors. The 10 percent of the islanders who

are new arrivals (within the last ten years) do not present much of a problem. These are white Americans who have come to build hotels and retirement homes and Black Caribs (Garifuna) and Creoles who have come from mainland Belize to work in and on these hotels. It is the remaining 90 percent of the population, the real San Pedranos, who are problematic in a classificatory sense.

San Pedro has been considered by colonial historians to be an Indian village. For example the colonial apologist, Gregg, in referring to San Pedro states that ". . . here the people are mostly of Indian blood but consider themselves to be Mestizo" (Gregg 1968:133). This, however, is an over simplification which stems from an attempt by the author to picture San Pedranos as a passive and underdeveloped people (a stereotyped view of Indians) whose lot has been improved solely through government programs.

Racial Characteristics

Undeniably there is "Indian blood" in San Pedranos. The racial composition of the village is more accurately described though as being an admixture of four racial types: Mayan Indian, Mestizo², East Indian³ and Creole⁴. The result of this mixture is a predominately Mestizo phenotype. However, the population is so mixed that it is possible to find examples of phenotypes corresponding to these four racial types in a single family.

Race is most definitely a value-laden construct in San Pedro with foreign white (English and particularly American) as the most valued followed by Mestizo, Mayan, East Indian and Creole. Most San Pedranos will not easily admit that they are of Creole ancestry and in fact the Mayan and Mestizo portions of that ancestry do play a larger role in the

racial composition of the village. There are, however, San Pedranos who by phenotype alone would be considered by outside observers to be Creole or Indian. Most San Pedranos who do look Creole when asked about the racial background of their ancestors will attempt to pass off their blackness as being a product of East Indian ancestry. This is partially the case in some instances but when pushed on it most of these people will admit that they do have substantial Creole ancestry.

Race plays an important role in the strength of the ethnic boundaries drawn by San Pedranos. The ethnic boundaries drawn between San Pedranos as a Mestizo group and the country's Creole groups seem to be more distinct than that between the Mestizo and Mayan groups. This more distinct boundary is shown clearly in marriage relations. Families of young people considering marriage are very upset, in most cases, if the prospective spouse is Creole. There is much less problem if the person is Mayan. It is interesting to note in this regard that there is a tendency for San Pedrano men to be involved with Mayan women while San Pedrano women if they marry outside the village tend to marry whites (particularly North Americans these days) and Mestizos.

Ethnic Characteristics

Ethnically the people of San Pedro consider themselves to be Mestizo and are considered by other Mestizo and non-Mestizo groups in the country to be Mestizo.⁴ Given Barth's minimal definition of ethnic groups as ". . . categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves" (Barth 1969:10), Mestizo is the San Pedrano's ethnic identity.

This use of the term ethnic group, however useful as a theoretical construct, is not very informative when used, as it is here, not as a tool for demarking boundaries but as a descriptive category. For this

purpose a definition of ethnic group such as put forth by Stavenhagen would seem more appropriate.

By ethnic group we mean a social group whose members participate in the same culture, who may sometimes be characterized in biological or racial terms, who are conscious of belonging to such a group and who participate in a system of relations with other similar groups" (Stavenhagen 1968:32).

Applying these criteria, San Pedranos can be shown to belong to the Belizean Mestizo ethnic group, which is similar in all but a few aspects to Stavenhagen's (1968) "Ladinos" of southern Mexico and Guatemala.

As mentioned above, San Pedranos consciously identify themselves as Mestizo. In terms of relations with other similar groups, San Pedranos by economic and social necessity must have economic and political relations with the Creole ethnic group dominant in Belize City. However, their closest personal and familial relations are with Mestizos in Belize City and Corozal and the neighboring Mestizo fishing villages of Cay Caulker, Sarteneja and Xcalak (in Mexico). In terms of common racial identity, San Pedranos as Mestizos (even those phenotypically Creole) put emphasis on their common "whiteness" by calling to attention their Spanish heritage, possessing a white ideal of beauty, and denigrating other groups such as Indians and Creoles who are considered non-white. This even though they will admit that they are only partially white and most are clearly phenotypically non-white.

Culturally, San Pedranos share certain traits with other Belizean Mestizo groups. This is best evidenced in language. San Pedranos are native Spanish speakers, although almost all also speak Creole English (the language of Belizean Creoles) and some older villagers speak Mayan. San Pedranos also share with other Belizean Mestizos the Catholic

religion (as opposed to Protestant among Creoles), certain ethnic foods, dress codes, holidays and fiestas, game preferences etc.

Finally San Pedranos share a common socio-economic or class position with the rest of Belize's Mestizos. Part of colonial Belize's legacy to modern day Belize is a class structure in which differing ethnic groups are identified with certain class positions. These positions are the result of the institutionalization of the ascription of these positions to the ethnic groups which occupied them during the period of initial contact and structure construction in colonial times, and have persisted in the society to the present day. At the top are the country's whites and near-whites, English, American and Belizean white. These persons are the top businessmen and managers of foreign-owned enterprises. Next are the Creoles who are managers, merchants, civil servants and bureaucrats. Creoles who are lower class (and these constitute the majority of that category) used to work exclusively in forestry and are today largely urban lumpenproletariat. Mestizos who occupy the middle strata are generally petty bourgeois peasant and bourgeois farmers, small businessmen and entrepreneurs. The lowest position is held by the Maya who are an agricultural proletariat and/or subsistence agriculturalists traditionally. Many now, however, are bourgeois farmers in sugar. East Indians also tend to be either petty bourgeois peasant producers or agricultural proletarians though some in urban areas are merchants. They occupy a position similar to that of the Garifuna, below the Mestizos but higher than the Maya. The small numbers of East Indians in Belize make them somewhat marginal to this scheme.

In the past, as mentioned above, there has been some question as to whether San Pedro was an Indian village or not. Some of the present

residents call their village forefathers "those old Indians." This confusion stems at least in part from the fact that during much of the history of the village the villagers were agricultural proletariat and hence were structurally occupying a niche that the Maya once did and still do. Today, however, San Pedranos are bourgeois fishermen, cooperative members, storekeepers, small hotel owner-operators, etc. In other words they are in a class position similar to that occupied by their Mestizo brothers on the mainland.

San Pedranos then, though not all Mestizos in the biological sense of the word, share a common racial identity, culture and class position with Belizean Mestizos in general. San Pedro is a village of San Pedranos and San Pedranos are Mestizos; ask any San Pedrano. This becomes important when the class structure of the village is considered.

VILLAGE CLASS STRUCTURE

At first glance San Pedro seems a village of equals in which no one has much more than anyone else and in which power, such as it exists, seems to be only a product of social adeptness. Though there is today in the village none of the extreme differentiation between agricultural laborer and plantation owner that has existed in the past (this will be described in detail in later chapters) there are none-the-less, differences in the structural position and financial well-being of the villagers.

The top positions in San Pedro's class structure are occupied by persons and institutions which exist primarily outside the village confines. Because San Pedro is located within the larger Belizean and world economies, the village class structure includes members of the bourgeoisie from both these social formations. In particular San

Pedranos find themselves in relationships with both the commercial and financial bourgeoisie of Belize and the World Economic System. Locally this "great" bourgeoisie is represented by land owners who are largely North American though some are Belizean. North Americans own vacation homes the length of the cay. Most of the non-beach land on the cay is owned by a North American investment group which has used the land mostly for speculative purposes. The former owners of the majority of cay land, which they used as a coconut plantation, still own portions of the cay's beach front; this they are in the active process of selling off. This "great" bourgeoisie's members are the most respected members of the community when they are present. However, because they hire very little wage labor and because they are outside the every day social and economic structure of the village their very real power is not often directly felt by the villagers.

Within the village several families dominate economically and socially. These families are involved in all three of the village's major economic sectors. They also are families which, though there are exceptions, were able to operate as part of the bourgeoisie in at least one of these sectors during the period of the hegemony of the plantation economy which reigned until quite recently in the village. The three economic sectors which these families have been able to dominate as the bourgeoisie are the commercial sector, the up-and-coming tourism sector and the dominant fishing sector.

The commercial bourgeoisie in San Pedro presides over the village's businesses: stores, bars, movie theatre, liquor wholesalers, etc. Owning a store has been the traditional method in San Pedro of entering the village's bourgeoisie. Most of the leading families contain at least

one member who is operating in this business, often obtaining the sizeable capital necessary to undertake such an enterprise from other family members. There is a considerable markup in the stores of San Pedro over the price that items go for in Belize City. These markups seem to be quite arbitrary. Very few San Pedranos look for bargains while shopping. Most shop exclusively at the store of a relative or friend or, more importantly, at the store at which they can get credit. As a result, large amounts of money can and are made by the shopkeepers of the village. There are varying degrees of success associated with different stores. Usually the most successful enterprises are those run by the largest and most prominent village families who have the social and economic clout to pull in the customers.

The fishing industry is also headed by a segment of the bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie controls in general either the boats necessary for long-distance lobster fishing or large numbers of lobster traps used in local lobster fishing (both these fishing regimes will be discussed in later chapters). While fishing is the economic base of the community, in most cases not enough money can be made from it alone to catapult a bourgeois fisherman into the upper strata of bourgeois San Pedro. Instead, ownership of major means of production in the fishing industry usually gives one the necessary capital to start off into commercial capitalism or into the tourist industry. In a sense all fishermen, regardless of possession of means of production in the fishing industry, are bourgeois in San Pedro. This is the case because all, as members of the local fishing cooperative, own shares in that cooperative and, therefore, own some of the means of production in the fish processing process and, therefore,

extract surplus value from the labor of the workers in the cooperative-owned processing plant. This semi-bourgeois status is, however, not remunerative enough to lead to accumulation of sufficient capital to branch out outside the fishing industry.

The tourist industry bourgeoisie is the village's youngest and, in many ways, its most successful economic sector. Most who have gotten into the tourist industry have done so by either accumulating enough capital and/or collateral to raise the capital, from other bourgeois village activities or from North American sources, to build a hotel. There has been a boom in tourism in San Pedro in recent years and most hotels, no matter how small, have been very successful money earners for their owners. There is an extra added prestige in being a successful hotel owner associated with the owner's close identification with North Americans. The owners interact continuously with North Americans and even have some as close friends. Inasmuch as North Americans hold the dominant position in the village and international class structure, they are the most admired and copied persons by San Pedranos. Consequently, the hotel owner's positions are considered to be very desirable and are striven toward by most San Pedranos. This identification factor also makes work as wage earners in the hotel industry attractive to those villagers who do not have the capital for investment in this sector.

Besides the hotel owners, there are an increasing number of San Pedrano bourgeoisie who own houses or apartments which they rent to both tourists and other San Pedranos. In recent years a few villagers have capitalized on the rapid growth rate of the village and the resultant housing shortage as well as the burgeoning influx of tourists to the village by buying houses, mostly from older recently widowed women who

were not aware of the suddenly increased value of their property. These houses were then rented out at high rents.

There is a large petty bourgeois sector in San Pedro. These persons are petty bourgeois by virtue of the fact that they own their means of production but do not hire laborers and, therefore, do not extract surplus value in the production process. Included in this group are many of the village fishermen most of whom fish locally in their own boats and with their own equipment. There are also a fair number of former fisherman who now take tourists out fishing in their boats for a fee. The skilled laborers of San Pedro also fit into this group. Carpenters, masons, boatwrights and other self-employed craftsmen in the village own their own tools but are paid a wage for the work they do. There are any number of other petty bourgeois villagers who have small businesses ranging from running a jeep, hauling persons and anything else, to selling candy and snow cones from a street cart. Villagers in this category seldom accumulate anything above the immediate needs of their families and are considered to be common villagers.

San Pedro's proletariat also constitutes a large percentage of the villagers though less in number than the petty bourgeoisie. The proletariat in the fishing sector of the village economy is of two types. The true proletariat is composed of the workers for the cooperative. This group is made up mostly of women imported to San Pedro specifically to work in the cooperative processing plant. They occupy the lowest rung in the village social structure as their low class position is correlated with working working low status jobs that no one in the village will undertake, being women and sexual objects for the male villagers, being largely Mayan and, therefore, of low racial and ethnic status, and being

outsiders to the village. The second proletarian group in the fishing sector is composed of the crew members on the long-distance fishing boats. These men are not strictly proletarian, however, as they own portions of the means of production in the fishing activity. They, however, do not own the most important means of production in the long-distance fishery, the boats. By virtue of this lack of ownership they have surplus extracted from the return to their labor by a mechanism which will be discussed in later chapters. These fishermen/crew members comprise a large percentage of the young men of the village. Most village men at one time or another do this type of fishing, including those in the top families. The money earned from this activity, if judiciously managed, can sometimes be parlayed into a position in the village bourgeoisie.

In the commercial sector of the village economy San Pedranos do wage labor in all the commercial enterprises, though a great deal of this labor is performed by the family members of the owners.

The tourist sector now employs many San Pedranos, particularly women. Women work in the hotels as maids and cooks and in the larger ones as secretaries. The hotels also hire large numbers of skilled male laborers such as carpenters, electricians, masons and boat captains. Some San Pedranos work as handymen and caretakers for the North Americans with vacation houses on the Cay.

Many of the workers in the three village economic sectors occupy an intermediate or even high-level position in the village social structure. This is because they are young people just entering the village economic structure who will be temporarily occupying this class position. For example, most of the women involved will only work for a few years until

they are married and some of the members of this proletariat are members of bourgeois families whose businesses they will join in the future as part owners.

However, increasingly, especially in the tourist industry, workers are being hired from outside the village. This trend has increased markedly in the last few years as the high standard of living that San Pedranos have attained has pushed their wage expectations higher. Hotel owners in particular, in response have turned to hiring cooks, maids and handymen from other areas in Belize. Garifuna peoples from the southern portion of the country with low wage expectations have been particularly popular as employees with this bourgeoisie.

There is also a sector of the proletariat which has been brought from outside San Pedro to the village to work in constructing the many new tourist facilities and villager's homes that are now going up. These people are joined by workers from outside the village who are employed by the state in the electricity plant and on the government water and other projects.

This growing group of workers from outside the village join the cooperative workers in occupying the lowest positions in the village social structure. As with the cooperative workers this low position is the product of their low class position being correlated with being outsiders and with being largely of low-status ethnic and racial groups, in this case Garifuna and Creole.

Rounding out the class structure of San Pedro are persons who occupy an intermediary position in this structure. This includes teachers in both the state financed, church-run primary school and the private secondary school, the administrators of the cooperative and the non-owning

hotel managers. These workers all earn a wage but most are well paid (with the exception of the primary school teachers) and wield a large amount of economic, social and political power in the village. These people are respected members of the community and have a great deal of impact upon it as well as having a great deal of social and economic mobility.

To sum up, there is very definitely a class structure in San Pedro. At the top is the "great" land owning and outside commercial and financial bourgeoisie whose main sphere of activity is outside of San Pedro. This group is almost completely white and English-speaking and serves as a cultural model for the villagers. Next is the village bourgeoisie. Membership in this group generally presupposes membership in one of the village's leading families. This portion of the bourgeoisie controls most aspects of the three main sectors of the village economy. Members are predominantly Mestizo (generally of a phenotype closer to white than many of the other villagers) and native Spanish-speaking. In between this bourgeois group and the village proletariat lies the bulk of the village population. At the top of this intermediate group are the teachers and cooperative and hotel administrators. This group wields power in the village as well as being highly mobile into the bourgeois class. The bulk of the intermediate group is composed of what I have termed the village petty bourgeoisie: fishermen, tourist guides, skilled laborers, etc. This intermediate strata is largely Spanish-speaking and nominally Mestizo. However, in this Mestizo category are persons who phenotypically are any one of the four racial types which make up the villager's ancestry.

The proletariat class of San Pedro is composed of two sectors. The upper sector is largely San Pedrano, young, Spanish-speaking, Mestizo and upwardly mobile. The lower sector is composed of non-villagers who typically are not Mestizo or white, and who are either English- or Spanish-speaking.

While a class structure can be identified in San Pedro, it is not a static entity, and it is also hard to assign any one villager to a given position in it with any certainty. This is a consequence of several factors: the economic mobility possible in the village because of the relatively low differential in wealth between villagers of all classes; the fact that families cross-cut class lines; and the mixed nature of village personal employment such that one person may be playing a role characteristic of two opposing classes at the same time. While this is true for villagers, most non-villagers residing in the village have very little mobility at least in the short run. North Americans and wealthy Belizeans tend to maintain their top positions while the Mayan, Creole and Garifuna workers tend to maintain theirs at the bottom.

Notes: Chapter III

1. The water table lies about fifteen to seventeen feet below the surface and produces excellent drinking water (Stoddart 1963:33).

The water off of Ambergris Cay is shallow (one to three fathoms) on both the reef side and the bay side. Tides are less than two feet and water temperature ranges from about 80 to 86°F (Stoddart 1963:6).

Ambergris Cay being in the arid northern section of Belize gets only 50 to 60 inches of rain per annum (Stoddart 1963:5). June through December are considered to be the rainy months with sudden violent squalls being the norm, although several days of continuous rain are not unknown. March through May is the dry season. There is usually some rain activity during this time although there have been years when no rain at all has fallen, and the wells of San Pedro have run dry.

Although the temperature at Ambergris Cay is hot, usually between 80 to 89°F (Stoddart 1963: 5), it is almost never uncomfortably hot due to the easterly or "trade" winds which blow across its shores.

2. The historic mixture of Amerindian and Spanish peoples.
3. Peoples brought to Belize after the abolition of slavery to work on the sugar plantations from the Indian subcontinent.
4. The historic mixture of African and English peoples.
5. San Pedranos when asked what they are will tell you that they are San Pedrano. However, when asked what San Pedranos are, they will say Mestizo. The first identification is with the village.

CHAPTER IV

SAN PEDRO'S ECONOMIC HISTORY TO 1950

This chapter will study economic production in two phases of the village's history, focusing on how the structure of production evolved, not solely as a response to the dynamics of international capitalism, but out of structures of class internal to Belize. The emphasis thus falls at the level of production rather than at that of exchange, and it requires understanding in terms of transformations specific to the village.

PEASANT PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION: 1848 to 1890

In 1847 a peninsula-wide uprising of the Maya Indians of Yucatan, the Guerra de los Castas began. In May 1848 the town of Bacalar, just across the Beilizean border, in what is now Quintana Roo, fell to the rebel Maya. Among the whites, Mestizos, and Maya fleeing the fighting into northern Belize were the original San Pedranos. Between 1848 and 1849 the first permanent settlers of the village site of San Pedro arrived. Four original families evidently settled the site. Some say that these were families of fishermen who had made fishing camps on the island previously and who, following the fall of Bacalar moved their families there. Others maintain that the original settlers had been delivering provisions to other settlements on the Cay and moved there after fleeing Bacalar.

Within a very short time others joined the settlers from Bacalar, and the settlement soon became a village of about 30 houses and over 50 people. The structure and evolution of the economy of mainland Belize in this era make it possible to understand why the village of San Pedro was viable from its inception and why it was able to grow so rapidly from its beginnings as merely a small fishing camp.

In the 1820's, Belize had experienced greatly increased commerce as a result of the new independence of the Central American Republic from Spain. Independence opened up these areas to the sale of British manufactured goods. However, the new republics were unstable and British merchants were unwilling to set up operations in them. The merchants of Belize, which was relatively stable and nearby, stepped into the void and captured a large amount of the British trade with the area. This Belizean boom in commercial activity subsided, however, as the individual Republics became more stable and won official British recognition, and in some instances, agreements to trade.

As direct trade between Britain and the individual Republics became more advantageous than trade through Belize in the late 1840's and the 1850's, Belize's commercial activities entered a prolonged period of depression. Unfortunately for Belizean capitalists the onset of this depression coincided with the onset of depression in the mahogany industry as well (Bolland and Shoman 1977:71). There had been a high demand for mahogany, Belize's primary product, in the 1820's through the 1840's, in the building of European railway coaches. Mahogany exports from Belize had risen steadily during this period reaching a peak in 1846 at 13.7 million feet (Bolland 1977:120). However, prices were falling during this same period. In order to maintain income levels, Belizean

exporters exported at ever increasing volumes. This led to the cutting of immature trees and the exhaustion of the resource in many of the traditional areas of exploitation. As a consequence, trees were sought in increasingly inaccessible areas thereby raising production costs. At the same time the British reduced the duties charged on foreign timber imported into Britain as part of their overall change of policy from protection of colonial products through the use of preferential duties to a policy of free trade (Bolland and Shoman 1977:61). All these factors combined to produce the depression in the mahogany trade.

A number of consequences for the refugees of the Caste Wars in general and for the new San Pedranos in particular flowed from the depression. Before the onset of war, the area in and around Bacalar had been the major source of food stuffs to Belize. This source was particularly important because, for the purposes of securing its labor force the mahogany interests had managed, through legal and other means, to prohibit the development of agriculture in the settlement. The area around Bacalar had also become an important source of mahogany as the resource within the confines of the settlement had become exhausted. The outbreak of the Caste War disturbed both access to these timber lands and the flow of foodstuffs to Belize.

Within a short period of time the English were able to make commercial contacts with the rebel Maya and won concessions to cut mahogany in the areas under their control. Foodstuffs were another matter. After the Maya took control of the Bacalar area, it was depopulated and the traditional avenues through which foodstuffs from other areas of Yucatan had made their way to Belize were blocked. Other sources of foodstuffs had to be located immediately.

The solution was to allow the refugees from Bacalar, many of whom had been producing food stuffs for export to Belize before the war, to occupy land in the northern portion of the settlement to begin producing food again. This solution had a number of advantages for the English. Since there was a depression in the mahogany industry, mahogany producers, who were the only land owners of note in Belize, sought additional sources of revenue. Renting land to the refugees was such a source. Land whose forestry resources had been exploited from the beginning of the settlement's existence, and was consequently exhausted, was no longer of use for forestry. This land could now be turned to agriculture.

Secondly, the English did not deem the Mestizo and Mayan refugees to be well suited to forestry work, preferring African laborers for that purpose. Using the refugees to produce foodstuffs while having Africans undertake forestry work, resolved the conflict on the allocation of labor between these two economic sectors.

Finally, the presence of agriculturalists within the confines of the settlement meant an assured supply of foodstuffs without the uncertainty of political or military interference.

The settling of San Pedro was typical of that of the rest of northern Belize. The original San Pedranos had been peasant agriculturalists and fishermen headquartered in Bacalar and serving the Belizean market. When they moved to Ambergris Cay, they were charged a rent of \$2 per annum by a person or persons unknown¹ living behind the lagoon near Boca Chica at the southern end of the cay at Cocal Bibbens (sic). This rent, though paid by some villagers in kind, probably also further induced the villagers to produce for the mainland market though most were inclined to do so any way. There are indications that this rent was dropped after a

short period of time. Thus, from its earliest days San Pedro was a producer of fish and other foodstuffs for the mainland markets.

By 1851 the villagers had selected an alcalde (mayor) to lead them. He reported to the Superintendent of Belize in that year that he had received word from the government of Yucatan that a detachment of soldiers was being sent from the newly retaken Bacalar to claim Ambergris Cay for Mexico (Burdon 1935:150). Evidently, this threat was never carried through (Burdon 1935:156). It is significant that, in this communication, the village was already called San Pedro for Saint Peter, the patron saint of fishermen. This would seem to indicate that from the earliest times a main occupation of the villagers was fishing. The major fishing method of the mid nineteenth century was the use of seines in the lagoons behind the cay. Seines required a relatively large capital outlay to obtain the materials necessary for their construction, consequently many villagers could only fish at a level just above that of subsistence with hook and line.

Many or even most of the villagers engaged in other occupations besides fishing as well. Villagers made milpas (cut and burned agricultural lands) outside the confines of the village up the island at places called Habaneros and Basil Jones. Here aside from the usual subsistence crops (corn, beans, etc.,) they grew sugar cane from which a crude form of sugar "panatela or panella" was made. This sugar was sold at markets on the mainland.

The San Pedranos were not the only new arrivals to Belize who were growing sugar at the time. By the late 1850's the Mestizo and Mayan tenants around the Corozal area were producing on their ranchos, among other staple crops, enough sugar and rum to meet the needs of the Belize

settlement. Sugar cultivation was so successful that by 1857 a shipment was sent to Europe marking the first time in the history of the settlement that an export crop had been grown. The rancheros expanded sugar production quickly and by the early 1860's were exporting significant amounts of this product yearly (Bolland and Shoman 1977:84).

The success of these small sugar operations did not go unnoticed by the large land owners in Belize. The downturn in the mahogany industry had led to large-scale concentration of capital in it. As smaller land-owning mahogany cutters were forced to declare bankruptcy, a few large corporations bought their businesses. Landowning mahogany cutters in the settlement and metropolitan (British) capitalists had formed these corporations (Bolland and Shoman 1977:82). These new metropolitan directed corporations were much less parochial than the settlement's mahogany cutters had been. Considering the depressed state of other possibilities for investment, i.e. the mahogany industry and commercial activities, they were quick to make the necessary investments in order to use parts of their vast land holdings for the cultivation of sugar for export. They soon dominated the industry. Production increased rapidly; by 1866 1,336.496 pounds was exported (Archives of Belize in Bolland and Shoman 1977:84). Export of sugar, however, was never a threat to the hegemony of forestry in the settlement's economy.

One of the major problems that these newly developed plantations faced was lack of sufficient labor. The Creole (former slave) labor of in the settlement was still working mahogany. The only other available laborers were the new Mestizo and Mayan arrivals. As the new sugar estates expanded production, they put more and more of the small rancheros out of production reducing their Mayan and Mestizo proprietors

to a rural proletariat employed on the states that had destroyed them. This series of events, while unfortunate for many of Belize's recent immigrants, benefited San Pedro's economy. The increase in economic activity and the creation of an agricultural proletariat, at least partially dependent on the market for foodstuffs, increased demand for the food products that San Pedranos produced, particularly fish. As a result, fishing, important from the village's inception, soon became even more so.

From the proceeds of the sale of island-grown sugar on the mainland, San Pedranos were able to purchase cord for seines and turtle nets and other fishing paraphernalia. Villagers deployed their seines from large cayucos (dugout canoes). The fish they caught on extended fishing trips, was thrown into a vivero (live well), usually a small cayuco with holes cut into the bottom to keep water circulating over the fish. Cayucos dragged these viveros behind while actual fishing was underway and sometimes on the way to market if live fish were to be sold there. Both fishermen and mainland consumers preferred corned fish (split, salted and sun dried) because of its ability to keep during the long trip to market and after in an era of no other effective preserving methods. After catching them, the villagers brought fish back to the village for corning before taking them to market.

The trip to market was a major undertaking in the early days of San Pedro. The main markets were Belize City, Corozal and up the Rio Hondo to the logging camps and settlements of northern Belize and Quintana Roo. Most of the traffic went to Corozal. Fishermen would pole their dories laden with corned fish the entire distance of about 50 miles. The trip to town would take five to six days. The travelers ground corn and made

tortillas on the trip. Once in town they sold or bartered the fish and took provisions on board. The trip back against the prevailing winds was an even longer proposition. Somewhat later sails would be rigged on the cayucos to take advantage of the prevailing easterlies on the way to market. This shortened the trip but the cayucos still had to be poled the distance back home against the breeze.

The organization of the fishing industry at this time is a matter of speculation. My informants stated that a system of sharing, in which the proceeds from the boat's catch are divided up into shares equal to the number of fishermen in the boat plus one share for the boat owner, dates from the time of the first sailing dories. However, the origin may have predated sailing dories. The use of a seine which requires at least two men to operate and usually four or five, plus the size of the cayucos and the distance to be traveled by poling seems to indicate that fishing was a fairly complex cooperative effort. In all probability the share system began with the increased use of seines which replaced hook and line fishing as capital was accumulated. However, it may have been that boat and seine owners hired helpers or paid them less than an equal share of the profits. An indication of this possibility is that the two richest men on the island, at this early date, were fishermen who owned their own boats and seines.

Turtle fishing, for culinary purposes and to export the shell to Europe, was also important in early times. Turtle fishermen from the coast of Quintana Roo evidently moved to the village, because of its proximity to the market place, Belize City, and to the prolific turtling grounds. Most turtling was done with nets because the harpoon, the only other reasonable method of capture, damaged the valuable shell. Loads of

shell had to be taken to Belize City by cayuco, again in large poled cayucos or dories, some as large as 40 and 50 feet long.

Housing in the village at this time is described as typically Mayan. The site of the village was chosen among other reasons because it was close to thickets of palmetto, the basic construction material. The trunks of these palms were used for walls. They were placed vertically side by side, often covered with mud and white lime. The palmetto leaves were used as roof thatch. The houses built by their owner's family and friends were one room, oval or round, and sometimes quite large. They usually were windowless with one door and a floor of pounded coral sand.

In most other ways, the village, the people and their way of life was that of the Mayan half of their ancestry. Houses were set out in a patternless manner lacking the central plaza typical of villages more influenced by Spanish culture. Furniture consisted of hammocks, perhaps low stools and a matate for grinding corn, etc. Clothing for men was the short jacket-blouse and short baggy pants of the Yucatecan peasant with sandals or more usually bare feet. The language was Spanish and Mayan.

As time went on the village continued to expand. People still farmed ranchos with their attendant milpas, up and down the length of the island. They kept livestock such as cattle and pigs on the Cay and sold them on the island. One Guillermo Reyes was able to make enough money from his cattle and fishing to buy the neighboring island of Cay Caulker. A number of San Pedranos went with him to the cay and established a new village. Most of the fishing captains were in this group. Residents of the two villages subsequently fished together.

San Pedranos of this era thus were peasant fishermen producing for themselves and mainland markets. They in particular catered to the food

needs of the agricultural and forestry proletariat, created by the two dominant mainland industries of the day, mahogany cutting and plantation/haciendo sugar agriculture. From this activity they gained the cash for manufactured and other goods. They were also agriculturalists, both for their own subsistence needs and to a limited extent for the external market. San Pedranos of this time led a life of tranquility, relative comfort and comparative independence. This was not to last long, however, as economic forces operating on the mainland and beyond would soon combine to radically alter the basis of this existence.

THE PROLETARIANIZATION OF SAN PEDRO: 1890 to 1950

The sugar boom of the 1860's and 1870's in the northern portion of the Belize settlement was short lived. By the 1890's the peak sugar production of 2.5 million pounds of sugar in 1882 had fallen to around 200,000 pounds per year (Jones 1971:11). This decline in production was due to the world-wide depression of sugar prices, a result of competition from European beet sugar subsidized with governmental bounty. These conditions caused the closing of all the sugar plantations in the northern portion of Belize by the mid-1890's (Jones 1971:11). Competition from beet sugar had a similar effect on the sugar producing areas of the British West Indies.

The mahogany industry, while still alive and the most important economic activity in the Belizean settlement, remained in a state of depression relative to its halcyon days of the 1840's.

The failure of the sugar industry and the overall economic malaise of the settlement's economy had a deleterious effect on the economy of San Pedro. The conditions began the transformation of the majority of

San Pedranos from the semi-independent existence of peasant petty-commodity producers into the controlled existence of an agricultural and forestry proletariat in debt-peonage.

This process began slowly. With depression in the mainland sugar industry in the 1880's, demand for fish in the mainland markets was reduced. This came at a time when the number of fishermen was increasing as the population of Cay Caulker and San Pedro increased. Supply overtook demand, and price wars between fishermen competing to sell their surpluses emerged. In this situation, poorer people, basically those with the least capital investment in fishing, dropped out of that trade and turned to a number of other occupations to ensure access to the market goods they had come to depend on.

Logwood Cutting

Reyes (1968) states that around 1893, a group of San Pedranos had stopped fishing and turned to the cutting of tinta or logwood. This product obtained a good price at Belize (\$15 per ton), which for many provided earnings which were much better than they could have obtained fishing.

Logwood cutting became a major occupation in San Pedro. Logwood (Haematoxylum campechianum) is a shrub-like tree reaching to as much as 30 feet in height and 2 feet in diameter (Little 1974). As mentioned before this industry was the raison d'etre for the settling of Belize, though low prices and the lucrativeness of mahogany cutting had pushed it to a secondary position in the Belizean economy by the mid eighteenth century.

From boiling chips of the logwood heartwood, a dye, haematoxylin, was obtained. Through addition of mordants, black or bluish-black shades

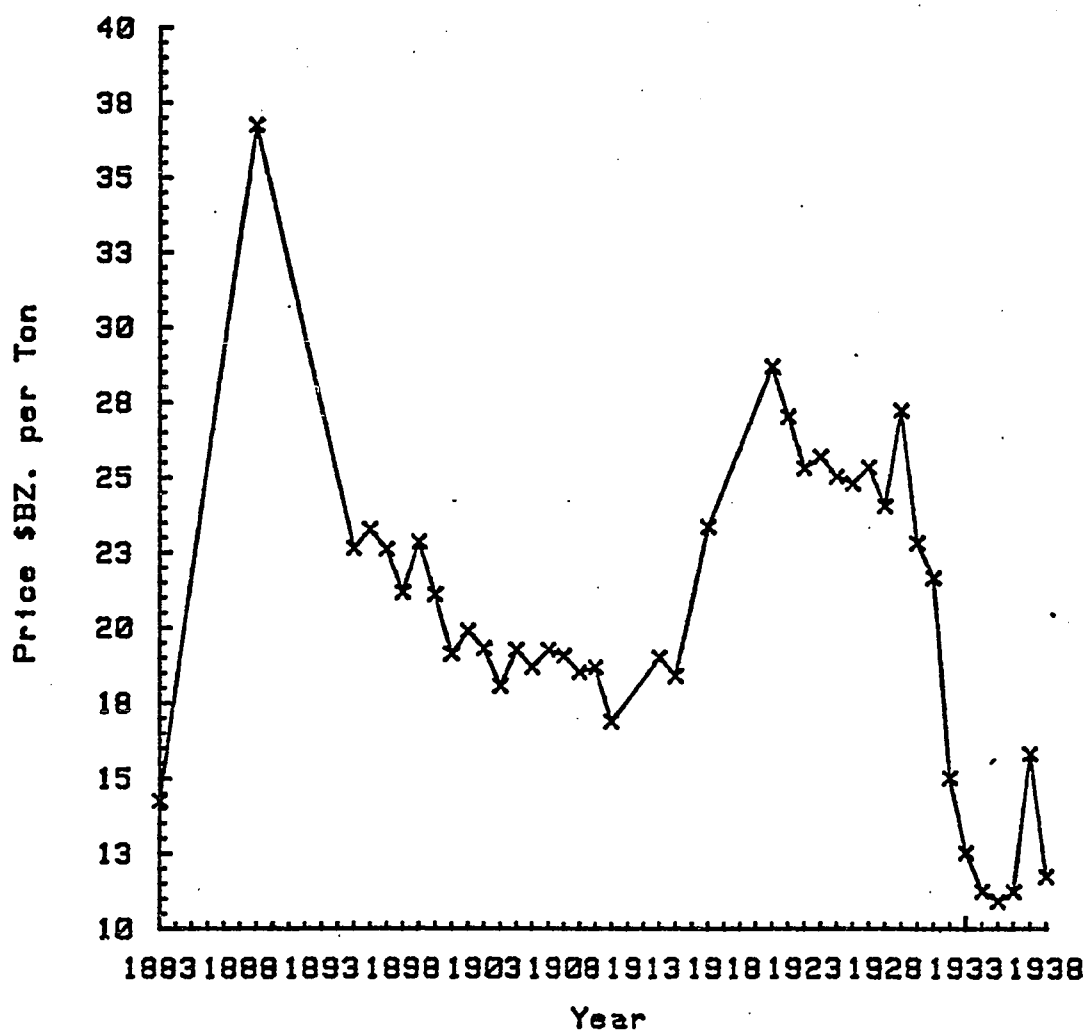
were produced. It was an extremely important dye in the early European wool industries and it became important again in the late nineteenth century especially in Germany where a dye industry sprang up before WWI (Colonial Annual Reports, British Honduras [Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H.] 1920).

As can be seen from Figure 1, logwood prices began to break out of their long slump in the 1880's going from \$14.24 per ton in 1883 to \$36.74 per ton six years later. Though the price of logwood never again reached this level, it still remained sufficiently high so that it was an attractive occupation for some San Pedranos until 1911.

Contractors came to the island and using the "advance" system, and a Belizean variation labeled by Bolland (1977) the "truck" system, contracted San Pedranos to exploit the extensive logwood thickets on the island and on that section of the mainland called Bulkhead directly opposite the southern portion of Ambergris Cay.

Logwood cutting was extremely hard work. The workers had to fell the trees and then cut them into lengths of about a yard each. They then had to carry the logs to the nearest water course where they were boated to a major collection site. Once at this site the cutter had to strip the bark and "sap" from over the heartwood. They had to do most of this work in wet conditions as logwood grows in swampy areas. Workers were under constant attack from insects, particularly "doctor flies" and mosquitoes. It can be appreciated that the work became that much harder as the focus of operations shifted from the cay to the mainland when the cay's logwood resource was used up. On the mainland, as the logwood was cut deeper and deeper in from the coast, the workers had to carry it on their backs that much farther to reach the collection points on the water.

Figure 1



EXPORT PRICE PER TON OF BELIZE LOGWOOD

Source: British Honduras Annual Report; Colonial Annual Report, British Honduras; Blue Book of British Honduras, various years

According to informants, the major contractors in the logwood trade were the agents of the Belize Estate and Produce Company, Ltd., the largest commercial concern in the country. The cutters received about \$15 per ton for their work. As can be seen from Figure 1, the Estate Company valued their wood at between \$20 and \$30 per ton and probably received more than that upon its arrival in the European markets. But this industry, too, declined.

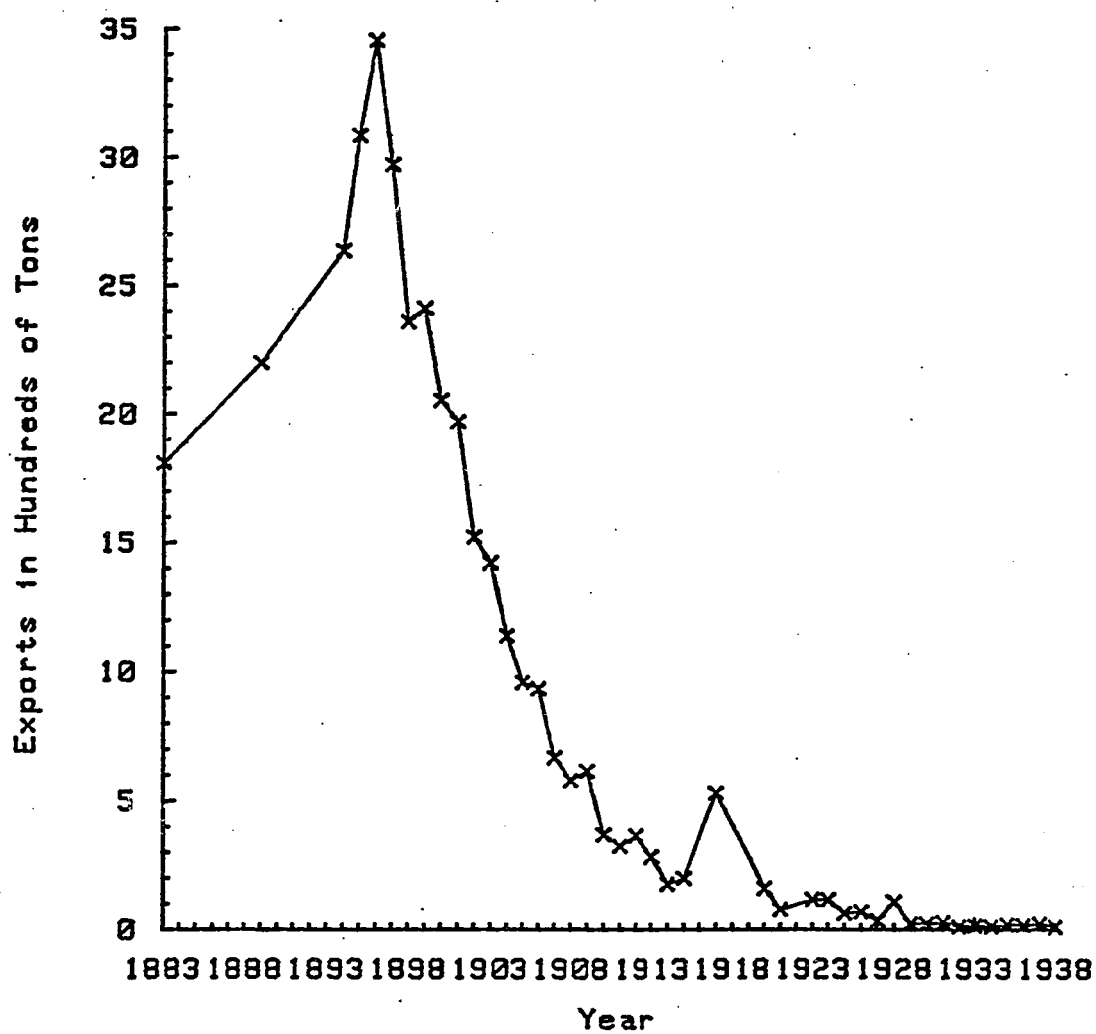
Three forces combined to bring about the end of the "tinta" industry in San Pedro. The first was the steady drop in prices and demand for the commodity in the late 1890's and 1900's. From a high of \$36.74 per ton in 1889 the price dropped to \$16.88 in 1911. Exports similarly dropped, as can be seen from Figure 2. In 1896, 34,539 tons of logwood were exported from the colony. By 1911 this figure had dropped to 3,231 tons. Contractors were no longer contracting as many laborers to cut the wood, and workers were no longer as interested in cutting it at the prices that could be obtained. External forces were, thus, an important factor in the decline.

Another problem was exhaustion of the resource. Informants state that by 1908 there were hardly any stands of the wood left in areas accessible to San Pedranos. By 1910 nobody on the island was any longer involved in the trade. The third reason for the end of logwood cutting by San Pedranos was the advent of the chicle and coconut industries which were begun in Belize in the 1890's and the 1900's respectively.

Primitive Accumulation: The Seizing of Ambergris Cay

The proletarianization process affecting San Pedranos, while initiated by the advent of logwood cutting, was accelerated and finally brought to fruition by the assumption of political and economic hegemony

Figure 2



EXPORTS OF LOGWOOD FROM BELIZE: 1883 TO 1938

Source: British Honduras Annual Report; Colonial Annual Report, British Honduras; Blue Book of British Honduras, various years

over the entire cay and the subsequent imposition of a plantation regime on the cay by a single employer, the Blake family. Sometime in the period between 1850 and 1890 the Blakes, a Belizean landowning family of some note, took ownership of the cay. The circumstances under which this was accomplished are not clear as several seemingly credible but different accounts can be heard in the village today. However, some general facts are agreed upon.

What seems to have occurred is that the Cay, originally owned by a man named Welsh by grant from the Superintendent of the colony, changed hands several times. The northern portion ended up in the hands of one person, an Englishman named Basil Jones. He either rented or sold his portion in the wide fertile northern part of the Cay to an American company intent on growing sea-island cotton. This operation ultimately failed and the Americans sold out. Then entered one Mr. James Blake.

The name James Blake shows up in many accounts of the history of Belize as the principal landowner in the area around Corozal and Lowry's Bight before the time of the Caste War. He is said to have allowed many of the refugees of that conflict to take up residence on his land. This led to the creation of the community of Corozal and probably the small village of Lowry's Bight. Blake soon became one of the first magistrates of Corozal (Burdon 1935; Jones 1971; Reed 1976; Bolland 1977).

Blake also was involved with the rebel Maya during the Caste War. He sold them guns and other goods in return for plundered items and rights to the exploitation of their forests. His relationship with the Indians was such that he was called on to help in the ransoming of prisoners of war when Bacalar was recaptured from Yucatecan forces by the rebel Indians in 1857. Unsuccessful, the affair culminated in the

killing of most of the prisoners, though Blake did manage to get most of the Englishmen set free who had been captured while doing business in the town set free (Reed 1976:170).

The Blake family claims that its members bought the entire Ambergris Cay for \$500 (Fuller 1955:25). Villagers maintain though, that the Blakes obtained only the Basil Jones section of the Cay. This they either bought from the aforementioned American company or, as most of the local stories go, traded property they had at Lowry's Bight for land on the Cay.

We do not know if the James Blake of Corozal fame was also the James Howel Blake who took control of Ambergris Cay for his family. They were probably father and son. This possibility gains credence from the fact that when the Blake family arrived to take actual control of the island and to set up residence, the family consisted of as Mrs. Androgena Blake (a Mestiza originally from Bacalar), Jim Blake who was a young adult and at least two young daughters. This, in all likelihood means that the Blakes made the move to San Pedro in the 1880's or '90's when the original James Blake who had been in the prime of life in the late 1840's was old and would soon die or had died already.

We know that, by 1870, the land in and around Corozal was no longer owned by the Blakes but by a John Carmichael (Bolland and Shoman 1977:82). The Blakes may have moved to San Pedro when they lost control of Corozal. This seems unlikely though because of the San Pedrano's freedom of access to land on the cay up to the 1890's.

What seems the most likely scenario for the Blake family's arrival on the cay is that up to the 1880's or '90's the family, which had once been involved in mahogany cutting, had probably presided over commercial

enterprises in Corozal and the remainder of the northern portion of the country. They may even have attempted to grow sugar on their remaining holdings in the Glory's Bight region. With the failure of the sugar industry in the 1880's and '90's, however, the family decided to shift their interests from the mainland to the cay, a portion of which they had acquired previously. The advantages of this move being that the cay (1) provided easier access to prolific chicle areas there and on the neighboring east coast of the Yucatan Peninsula to the north, (2) was perfect for the growing of coconuts, a comparatively new, promising plantation product and (3) it had its own potential labor force for such economic activities.

Whether or not this scenario is the correct one, it is in this period, the 1880's and '90's, that we find the first evidence of the Blakes' major involvement in the lives of San Pedranos. There can be no doubt that this interference was the direct result of economic conditions on the mainland and the aforementioned advantages of location on Ambergris Cay.

The Blakes, understanding what has been understood by all Belizean capitalists, that labor in the settlement was scarce and a supply needed to be assured, acted to do so. The first step in this process was the institution of rent for village house lots.¹ The San Pedranos had considered their village to be their own. The claiming of the village by the Blakes was an act which today is remembered with extreme bitterness. However, it was not this step alone which was to secure the bulk of the community as a wage force for the Blakes and their associates. Had conditions been favorable, the villagers would still have been able to fish and farm and sell some of the produce to secure the necessary money.

In the next step, the Blakes claimed the whole island, and thus alienated the San Pedranos from land they had previously utilized for slash and burn agriculture. This act of primitive accumulation meant that the villagers could no longer grow cash crops in order to use the returns for paying rent and taxes or to buy market goods.

More importantly though, the San Pedranos now also needed the cash necessary to buy the food and other subsistence goods which they had previously grown to supplement their fishing incomes on which alone they could not exist. The Blakes ultimately even restricted hunting and fishing around the shores of the cay. This act of primitive accumulation combined with the depressed situation of the San Pedrano's former markets on the mainland forced the bulk of the villagers to turn to wage labor to pay rent and to reproduce themselves.

The Blakes' maneuverings on Ambergris Cay should not be seen as an isolated case of high handedness. The assurance of labor sources by Belizean capitalists was a long-practiced art in the settlement, which had reached its zenith in the era immediately following the emancipation of the slaves by Imperial Act of the British Parliament in 1834. To keep the newly freed slaves from leaving the mahogany works and becoming an agricultural peasantry, a whole series of laws and practices were promulgated which would directly affect the newly arrived San Pedranos when they were needed as a labor force in the 1890's. These measures were similar to those taken elsewhere in the British Caribbean and to the "colonization" laws of Latin America of this time. The theoretical grounding for this type of action was found in the works of E.G. Wakefield.

The first of these actions were rulings by the British Colonial Office that there was to be no "unauthorized occupation of land" and that land grants which had previously been gratuitous were to be made only after a payment of one pound per acre (Bolland and Shoman 1977:119). This charge was high enough to keep most freed slaves and later Mayan and Mestizo refugees from being able to afford to acquire land even if there had been land available. By 1848 all of the accessible land particularly in the northern portion of the country was owned by large landowners or companies. This gives particular significance to the ruling on squatters.

There are numerous cases in the records of the dispossession of Maya, Garifuna and free Creole peoples from land on which they had squatted. In many cases these lands should legally have belonged to these people under the old Location Laws of the settlement which gave ownership to those effectively occupying land. These people lost their lands even though holdings occupied in such a manner before 1817 were legally validated by crown grant in that year and the validity of such titles was given "unequivocal official recognition" by the Laws in Force Act of 1855 (Bolland and Shoman 1977:133). The dispossession of the San Pedranos then, was probably legal and if not, there was enough precedent for this type of action for there to have been little recourse for the villagers.

As effective as alienation from land was, an even more powerful method for the assurance of a continuing source of labor was developed by the mahogany capitalists for their works and was adapted by the Blakes and their associates for use on Ambergris Cay. They utilized a system of debt-peonage operating by means of an "advance" system combined with the

"truck" system. This type of system was widely used to hold and exploit laborers throughout Latin America (See Wolf and Hansen 1972; Galeano 1973).

In the "advance" system laborers signed contracts to perform certain jobs and were paid wages in advance of the work to be done. From this the laborer was to buy tools and supplies to last the work period. In practice the workers usually spent this advance immediately either spreesing on liquor and other non-essentials or by paying off household debts, providing household supplies for the duration of his employment, etc. This meant that further supplies usually had to be bought by the laborers while on the job. Usually these were purchased directly from the employer's stores and were exorbitantly expensive. To purchase them, the laborer was forced to go further into debt to his employer. The "truck" system was simply a refinement of the "advance" system, the laborers being forced to take part of their advance and wages in kind from the employer's store. These goods again were exorbitantly priced and forced the laborer even deeper into debt.

Of these practices Bristow and Wright commenting in the late 1880's have said:

It is well known that a system has prevailed in the colony unchecked . . . of laborers being kept in debt by their employers for the purpose of securing a continuance of their labor, as such laborers consider themselves bound to serve until such a debt is extinguished. Advantage has been taken . . . to keep them in debt by either supplying them with goods or drink for the purpose and they thus become virtually enslaved for life. (in Bolland and Shoman 1977:155)

The "advance" and "truck" systems were supported by legal mechanisms promulgated to enforce contracts made between employers and employees. In 1852 an amendment to the Laws of the Settlement made it a crime, punishable by imprisonment for three months with hard labor, for an

employee to break a contract after receiving advances. These laws also allowed the offended employer among other things to apprehend the offending employee without warrant, and to forcibly bring him back to his place of employment (Bolland and Shoman 1977:122).

The "advance" and "truck" systems as integral parts of the relations of production of the Belize settlement's economic system at the time were introduced to the San Pedranos along with wage labor in the 1880's and lasted for close to 80 years². The actual form that these systems took, though structurally the same as described above, varied with the economic activities in which the San Pedranos were involved. The two most important of these activities were chicle gathering and, preeminently, coconut plantation agriculture. These industries presided over by the Blakes and their relatives would form the basis for the village's economy until the 1960's. The San Pedranos, once independent peasant petty-commodity producers were turned into a heavily exploited and desperately poor rural proletariat.

Chicle Tapping

As stated above, the collection of chicle first became an important source of income for San Pedranos in the 1890's as a more lucrative alternative to logwood cutting. Ambergris Cay contains a significant quantity of sapodilla trees (Achras zapotal) whose sap is bled and then heated to form chicle, the base of chewing gum. However, the industry did not really take off on the cay until after the turn of the century when areas of Quintana Roo opened up to outside exploitation.

In 1901 General Bravo of the Mexican army defeated the rebel Maya militarily and began opening up, through extremely harsh methods, the areas previously controlled by the Maya. This included the building of a

railroad from Vigia Chico on Bahia Ascencion to the former rebel Maya shrine town of Chan Santa Cruz. The government built port facilities at Vigia Chico and also at Xcalak, a town just north of Ambergris Cay as well as a railroad across the peninsula from Xcalak to La Aguada to facilitate the transport of goods to and from Ciudad Chetumal. Warehouses, a wireless station and industrial plants to make boats for the coast trade were also established in Xcalak (Villa Rojas 1945:29).

As the area to the north started to open up first contractors from Mexico, and then from Belize, and finally from within San Pedro itself, started hiring the villagers as chicleros. The largest chicle contractors in San Pedro at the time were the Alamillas. This family had come from Bacalar, as had the rest of the settlers, but seems to have been of a different class from the other villagers. When the Blakes arrived and took control of the cay, they made an alliance with the Alamillas, an alliance that was cemented by a series of marriages between the two families. Over the years the families were partners in most of the economic activities on the cay, and they shared political, economic and social hegemony over the island. The Blakes eventually gave or sold large portions of the land on the cay to the Alamillas.

One of the Alamilla brothers served as the Blake's business manager. Another Alamilla was made alcalde of the village, while a Blake was the justice of the peace, etc. Although the Alamillas had probably been involved in chicle contracting before their alliance with the Blakes, their ascendancy in this activity and their subsequent tie with the Blakes marks the solidification of the ruling class in San Pedro.

The San Pedranos were hired by local capitalists to bleed the sapodilla trees along the sparsely populated but tremendously productive

coast of Quintana Roo in Mexico as well as on the cay. In fact almost all chicle that was imported into Belize for re-export was the product of bleeding by Belizean workers. The increase in production from this source, with the defeat of the Maya is strikingly shown in Table 1. In 1901 there were no imports of chicle; by 1916 2,466,447 pounds were imported for the year. Prices also had increased dramatically. Companies exporting from Belize, mostly to the United States, received between \$.15 and \$.20 per pound for their produce in 1901; by 1916 they were getting between \$.30 and \$.40 per pound.

San Pedro, in a perfect position to exploit the newly opened chicle grounds, just a short hop up the coast by boat, and close to the Belize market place, a short sail down the coast, became something of a boom town. Boys as young as thirteen were being employed as chicleros. Men would take their entire families to the jungles of Quintana Roo for the six to eight months of the season. Informants estimate that as many as 250 persons from the village (which could not have contained more than 400 souls at the time), were away at the chicle camps during the height of the season.

In this early period when the sapodilla trees for the most part had not been bled or had only been bled a few times, production was high. A young boy could expect to get 600 to 800 pounds of chicle per season. A good experienced chiclero might collect 1,500 pounds during a season. At an average price of \$.10 per pound to the chicleros, this came out to \$150 per year, a considerable sum compared to the standard income before chicle production. However, as can be seen from Table 1, the exporters of chicle in Belize City were getting two to three times this amount for the product that they exported.

Table 1

PRICES AND EXPORTS OF CHICLE FROM BELIZE: 1895-1935

Year	Export Pounds	Price per Pound
1895	105,478	\$.33
1896	925,199	.10
1897	255,945	.20
1898	255,263	.14
1899	260,448	.13
1900	260,848	.13
1901	136,391	.18
1902	252,933	.15
1903	409,508	.18
1904	773,323	.22
1905	1,523,663	.20
1906	1,517,894	.22
1907	1,689,118	.28
1908	1,709,865	.31
1909	2,413,450	.34
1910	2,790,890	.34
1911	3,219,990	.30
1912	3,309,277	.27 - .29
1913	3,163,129	N.A.
1914	3,461,809	.33
1915	3,467,696	.36
1916	3,289,479	N.A.
1917	2,266,621	.39
1918	2,667,784	N.A.
1919	3,543,764	N.A.
1920	3,720,297	N.A.
1921	2,577,481	.51
1922	2,132,252	.50
1923	2,206,009	.47
1924	2,462,667	.49
1925	3,022,196	.48
1926	3,206,172	.47
1927	N.A.	.44
1928	3,103,798	.44
1929	3,714,018	.46
1930	4,094,415	.46
1931	2,279,677	N.A.
1932	1,029,473	.43
1933	1,189,154	.33
1934	1,716,366	.26
1935	1,312,328	.25

Source: British Honduras Annual Report; Colonial Annual Report,
British Honduras; and Blue Book of British Honduras, (various years)

The industry was organized in the following manner. A corporation or wealthy individual would capitalize the project for perhaps \$50,000. These persons were, in fact, usually acting at the behest of the American chewing gum cartel headed by the Wrigley Co. which provided the financing, especially in the later years of the industry (Grant 1976:68). The investors would then give the money to a contractor who would recruit chicleros in gangs of 25 to 30. The contractor would then take these chicleros to a camp previously set up in an area where the capitalist owned or had received a concession and license to bleed. As the "advance" system previously described was in operation, the chicleros would already have been advanced \$50 to \$100 with which their families were to be maintained while they were away and from which supplies and tools for the work process were to be purchased. As the advance was not enough for these purposes, once at the camp the men would buy provisions and equipment on credit and then scatter over the concession area in groups of three or four to do the actual bleeding.

Bleeding was carried out by making a series of interconnected diagonal slashes with a machete along the trunk of a sapodilla tree. The latex which ran out and down these gashes which were joined in a herring bone pattern was collected in a canvas bag which had been attached to the tree at the base of the slashes. Tapping was done in the late morning as the latex ran better when it was more humid. The workers collected the bags in the afternoon, and boiled the sap in a large iron cauldron after which they poured it into wooden molds or old kerosene tins and allowed it to harden into blocks. The chicleros returned to camp when they needed to drop off the blocks of chicle and to obtain new supplies also bought on credit (Edwards 1957:94-95).

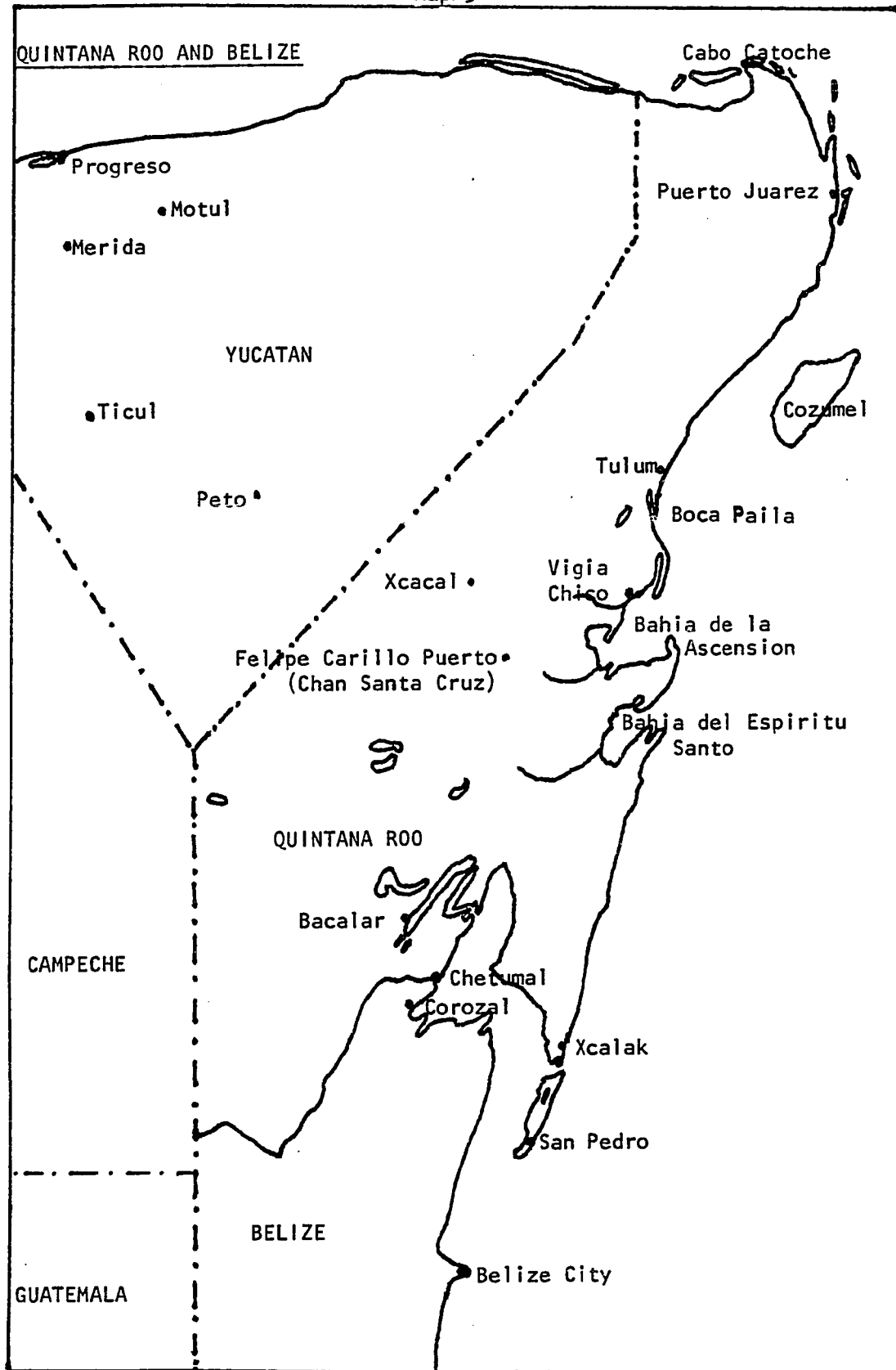
At the end of the six-to-eight month season³ the combined total of the money each man received as his advance, and what he bought on credit at the camp supply center was subtracted from the value of the amount of chicle he produced. The "truck" system in which chicleros were forced to buy supplies from the contractor's commissary in the field at high prices and on credit was also utilized to further exploit the workers. The use of the "truck" and "advance" systems was similar to the practices described by Bolland (1977) of the mahogany camps of nineteenth century Belize. It also had familiar consequences for the workers in the system, i.e., debt-peonage in which year after year the chicleros who could not pay off their debt of the previous year were forced to work for the same man and for the same prices the next year. This was particularly the case in the later years of the industry when trees were not so productive and prices were low. With the advent of the coconut industry in San Pedro, which will be discussed next, chicleros who came up short for the year were often impressed through the mechanism of their debt to work on the coconut plantations of the contractor who had originally hired them as chicleros. In order to enforce this legal debt system, a permanent policeman was stationed in the village around 1900 when chicle and coconut production (which had similar labor practices to chicle) were first being instituted. According to informants, the police were used on a number of occasions to evict villagers who were delinquent in their rent payments, to force payment or a return to work of laborers who were in debt, and on a few occasions, to force the removal of persons who had come to the village to do business of one sort or another without first going through the Blakes and Alamillas.

As time went on the chicleros of San Pedro had to range further and further to find sapodilla trees which were not exhausted. In 1912 the Mexican revolution overthrew the government of Mexico and the new regime decided to try to control the still unsubmissive Maya of the region with persuasion instead of force. The continued hostility of the Indians persuaded the new government to abandon the areas they held by force and move their seat of government from Chan Santa Cruz to Payo Obispo (Ciudad Chetumal). This action left the Maya in virtual control of the major portion of Quintana Roo.

In search of new chicle grounds the Belizean chicleros soon found that to operate in these new areas, they had to deal with the leaders of the rebel Maya. Blake and his family associates, the Alamillas, found themselves in a particularly advantageous position to do this, given Blake's father's association with the rebel Maya during the days of the Guerras de las Castas. One of the Alamillas made a contract with General Francisco May, the leader of the largest group of rebel Maya in Quintana Roo, to exploit sections of jungle on the mid to northern section of the coast. Other contractors were unable or unwilling to strike such a deal and the quantity of chicle coming to Belize from Mexico started a steady decline from 1915 onward. The gap was filled by exports from Guatemala.

Under these new arrangements San Pedranos could be found bleeding chicle up the coast of Quintana Roo as far as Playa del Carmen across from Cozumel. Stories are told of camps at Tulum, Boca Piala, Vigia Chico and on down the coast. By 1925 the forests were becoming exhausted and competition was increasing for the ever more scarce resource. This competition is evidenced by conflict between the rebel Maya leaders of Quintana Roo over control of various chicle areas. The Belizean

Map 5



chicleros found themselves caught in between. San Pedranos today tell stories of raids on their camps, loss of life and mass flight in the face of Indian attacks.

The height of Mayan exploitation of Quintana Roo's forests for chicle occurred in 1929. Some years before this, faced with increasing Indian hostility and progressive exhaustion of the area, those San Pedranos still working in the chicle industry moved their operations to the Bulkhead area of the coast opposite the Cay. Here they continued to bleed chicle in ever decreasing numbers until demand decreased radically and prices took a dramatic drop during the world depression of the 1930's. By this time coconut plantation agriculture had become the village's dominant economic activity.

Coconuts

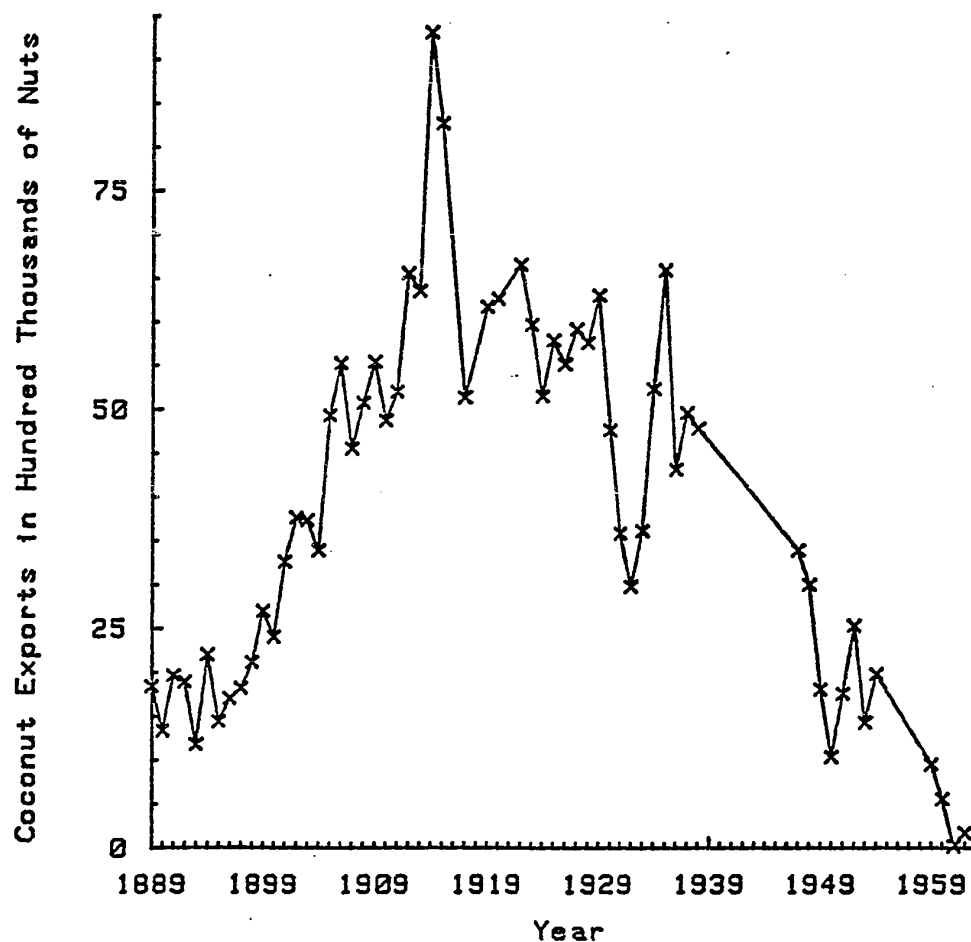
The early Spaniards brought coconut palms to the Yucatan peninsula by way of the West Indies. According to Edwards (1957:89) the trees did not appear along the Caribbean coast of the peninsula, however, until the latter part of the nineteenth century when they were planted on the cays by refugees of the Caste War. This observation is contradicted by the British Honduras Annual Report for 1847 (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1847), which states that the cays of Belize, in that year, were already covered with coconut as bush. Whatever the actual origin of coconut cultivation in Belize, it is clear that by the latter half of the nineteenth century an internal market for coconuts existed and was satisfied by domestically grown coconuts from the northern and Belize districts. At this time it must have been obvious to at least some capitalists in the Belizean settlement that coconuts had some potential as an export crop, especially if sold on the burgeoning U.S. market. The export of coconuts though,

did not begin in earnest until the end of the century. The problem was transportation of the product from Belize to these markets.

Fortunately for those interested in coconuts, there was a group of British settlers with political clout interested in growing bananas for the U.S. market. The development of this industry was also dependent on the establishment of regular communication with the U.S., in this case New Orleans, which was the port of entry for the Central American banana trade (Grant 1976:35). Belize did not have the commercial activity or the passenger traffic which would make the institution of regular freighter service economically feasible without government subsidy. To overcome this difficulty Lieutenant-Governor Burlee upon taking office in 1877 changed the mail route, which had previously been by way of Jamaica, to New Orleans thus justifying government subsidy of steamer service to that city (Grant 1976:35). With the advent of regular steamer service to the U.S., the stage was set for the production of bananas and coconuts for export to meet the demand for these products in the U.S. markets.

By the mid 1880's substantial quantities of coconuts were being exported (see Figure 3). In the five years between 1886 and 1891 an average of 1,651,933 whole coconuts were exported from Belize per year (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1892). Prices in these early years of coconut production were unstable, as they would continue to be throughout the history of coconut production in Belize. For example, prices took a precipitous plunge as early as 1894 (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1894). However, competition between the two major buyers of the late 1800's, Vaccaro Bros. and United Fruit (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1900), combined with overall international demand were able to keep prices high enough to continue the expansion of the industry in Belize. By 1905 the comment was made of Belize in the

Figure 3



EXPORTS OF COCONUTS FROM BELIZE: 1889 TO 1963

Source: British Honduras Annual Report; Colonial Annual Report, British Honduras; Blue Book of British Honduras, various years

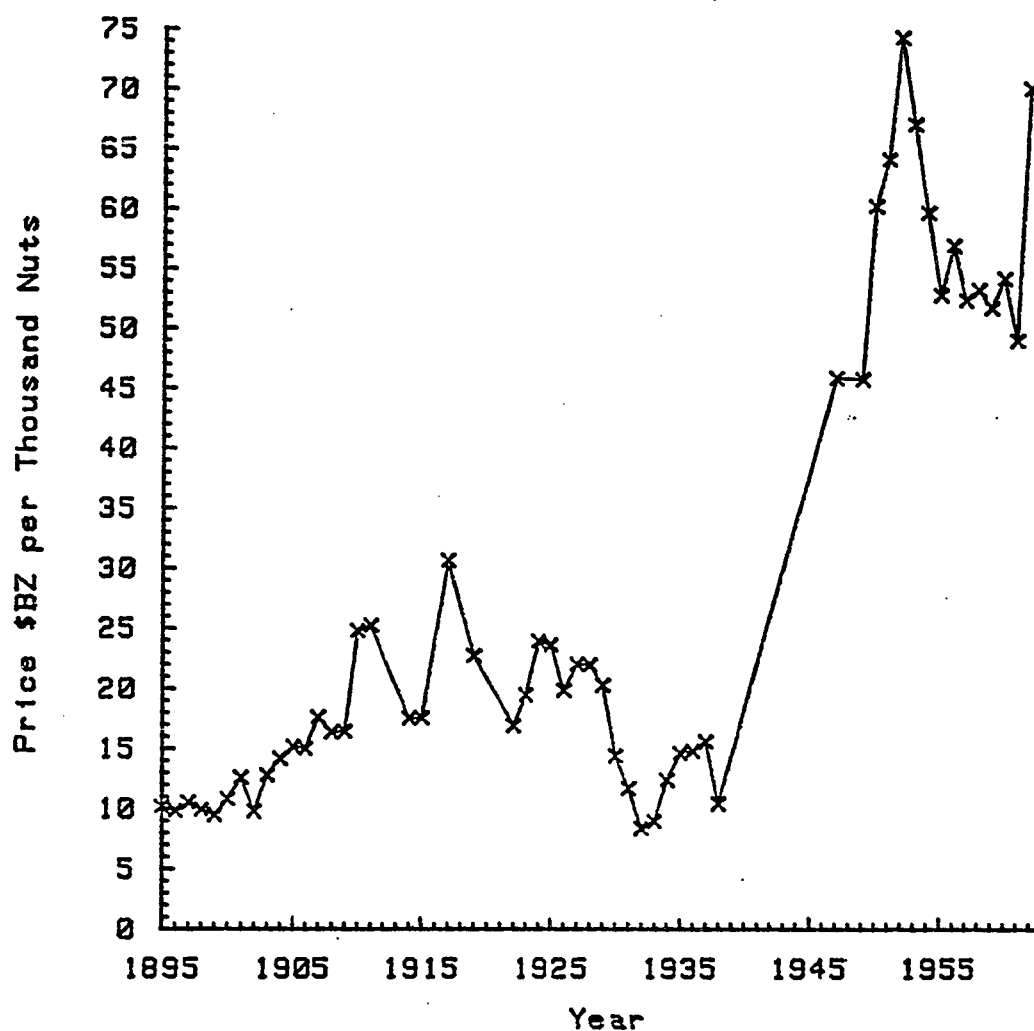
British Parliament that "nothing, perhaps exceeds the coconut in securing the financial stability of a colony" (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1906) and in 1908 the "coconut plantations continue to be very profitable" (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1908).

In the 25 years from 1886 to 1911 exports went from below one million to over five million nuts per year. During this period prices at Belize increased at an equally fast rate going from below \$10 per thousand to about \$25 per thousand (see Figure 4). Total production increased to a high of over nine million nuts in 1914 (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1915). The hurricane of 1916 destroyed many of the trees in the northern portion of the colony, including those on Ambergris Cay, reducing production to the five to six million nut level where it remained until the 1930's.

Prices continued to rise through the 1920's, though, according to the Annual Report of British Honduras of 1920, prices to growers were somewhat depressed by the lack of steamship competition. United Fruit Co., which had steamers leaving several times a month for New Orleans and other metropolitan ports, was the major freight line serving Belize at the time (Blue Book of British Honduras 1922, 1923). Lack of competition in steamers service meant that transportation cost could be pushed so high by United Fruit that most growers were forced to sell to local buyers who were the representatives principally of two U.S. companies, United Fruit Company and the Franklin Baker Co. (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1920).

By the 1920's coconut plantation agriculture had picked up where sugar plantation agriculture had left off in the 1890's. Coconuts were described in the Annual Report of 1927 as the principal agricultural crop

Figure 4



EXPORT PRICE FOR BELIZE COCONUTS: 1895 TO 1963

Source: British Honduras Annual Report; Colonial Annual Report, British Honduras; Blue Book of British Honduras, various years

of the colony. Some of the same capitalists were involved in coconut production as had been involved in sugar. The Belize Estate and Produce Co., Ltd. which had been the biggest sugar producer in Belize was, in 1920, the largest single holder of land in coconuts in the country (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1920).

The coconut industry on Ambergris Cay developed in the same manner as the industry in the rest of the colony. The Blakes and subsequently the Alamillas planted trees sometime in the 1880's or '90's. By 1900 excellent crops were being produced. The village of San Pedro, which had a population of 40 to 50 people in the late 1800's, grew quickly to about 300 to 400 in the early 1900's (Reyes 1968, Gonzalez 1978:8). This growth was a product of several factors. San Pedro had become the economic center and dormitory for the cay's large coconut industry. As such it attracted workers, their families, a few merchants, traders and tradesmen from mainland Belize and Mexico. Blake's appropriation of the cay's lands displaced people who were living, fishing and farming along the length of the cay. Most moved within the confines of the village.

The hurricane of 1916 seriously damaged the coconut plantations on the cay, though the village of San Pedro escaped serious damage. The coconut walks that were damaged were replanted immediately, and the industry continued to boom on the island through the 1920's.

The coconut industry was organized in a manner similar to that of the chicle industry. As in the chicle industry, metropolitan capitalist companies sent their buying agents to Belize. It is not clear whether or not these companies helped to capitalize the operations of Belizean capitalists in coconuts as the chewing gum companies had once done in the

chicle industry. They did, however, control the industry through their control of shipping and commodity prices.⁴

Most of the coconuts for export from Belize were produced on a few large plantations such as those on Ambergris Cay. Large amounts of capital were needed to begin a large-scale coconut enterprise. The initial investment for special lands, (coconuts grow best on the offshore cays), and the capital outlay for labor and for seedlings was considerable. Furthermore, since coconuts fruit in commercial quantities ten to thirteen years after being planted, there was a considerable lapse of time before any return could be realized on one's investment. As a consequence the bourgeoisie involved in coconuts had to be wealthy and powerful. In some cases (the Belize Estate Company is the prime example), these coconut enterprises were controlled by international corporations operating in Belize. They thus were absentee owners. More typically though these operations were, as in the case of the plantations on Ambergris Cay, capitalized and owned by the Belizean comprador bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie may or may not have been in residence on the plantation. In the case of Ambergris Cay the owners resided in San Pedro and so were intimately involved in the everyday operation on their enterprises. The Blakes and Alamillas were joined in coconut production on Ambergris Cay by the Parhams, a family of English origin who got into the business on the cay through marriage into the Blake family.

While these families directly ran their enterprises, they also set up an infra-structure of control for their operations. Managers were hired to oversee the operations in various sections of the Cay. These people had a relatively high standard of living and were considered a cut above the rest of the villagers. Under them were captains who worked on

a permanent basis for monthly wages slightly higher than those of the actual laborers (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1929, 1930, 1931). The captains oversaw the completion of specific tasks by laborers in an area. These men, hired as they were for a period of time and paid wages, were subject to traditional forms of the "advance" and "truck" systems. Consequently, while a rung above the common plantation laborers, they were entangled in the same web of debt to the owners.

The actual plantation workers were usually hired as required and paid by the task performed although sometimes, when there was a specific long-term task to be accomplished, they were hired for longer periods of time and paid a wage as the captains were. Each of the three large estates on Ambergris Cay had from 30 to 50 men working them at any one time and a number of women if copra was being made or trees planted. Tasks performed by workers varied with the stage at which the plantation was and the time of year. In the initial stage of creating a coconut walk, the land had to be cleared, holes dug, seaweed gathered (for fertilizer) and the seedlings planted. Each of these tasks was a separate operation and managers hired workers for each as they were needed. Workers were paid for their work according to the number of task units they completed. For example, workers would be paid a set amount to clear a "task" (25 square yards) of land, or to plant a certain number of seedlings.

Once a walk had been established and was bearing fruit, some of the tasks changed. Workers would still be hired to clear "tasks" of land to keep secondary growth down in the walk. They were also hired to pick, peel (strip the husk off) and deliver the coconuts to a bodega (storage shed) at the water front from where they were shipped to Belize. When

copra was made, the managers hired workers to crack, shred and put out to dry a certain number of coconuts.

Whatever the task, labor in the cocals (coconut walks) was hard. Work began at six and ended twelve hours later six days a week. Insects were a constant problem. To combat the mosquitos and sandflies, workers had to wear nets over their faces and clothing that covered their entire bodies even though the climate in the area is hot and humid. When copra was made, the workers, usually women, began cracking and shredding the nuts at 2 a.m. The workers put the shredded coconut out to dry at first light. Managers did not consider the job completed until the copra was dry and taken in sometime late in the day.

The workers lived in San Pedro. Some of the cocals were close enough so that villagers could work them in the day and retire to their homes in the village at night. Most walks, however, were a distance up or down the cay. Owners erected houses for the workers to sleep and cook in at various places in their walks. Workers, and often their families, would take provisions from the village and work for one or two weeks in the cocal before returning to the village.

The "advance" and "truck" systems were very much a part of the structure of the relations of production on the coconut plantations on Ambergris Cay. Workers took one or two weeks' provisions to the cocal. Often they bought these provisions by obtaining a cash advance from their employer but more usually by obtaining an advance in credit at the owner's commissary in San Pedro. These advances had to be paid back on the worker's return to the village. If he could not pay, the worker was forced to go back to the cocal to work off his debt at which point he would need more provisions and the circle of debt would continue.

The "truck" system, as it was practiced on Ambergris Cay, was even more insidious. From early in the history of coconut production on the cay the Alamillas and Blakes operated a commissary (store). The owners gave workers advances and paid for their work in coupons printed by them. The coupons were in denominations of \$.01, \$.05, \$.10, \$.25, \$.50 and \$1. Only \$.10 of every dollar's worth of coupons could be converted to cash. The coupons had to be spent at the commissary as they were not accepted any where else. Needless to say the prices at the commissary did not represent the best bargains to be found. The commissary and coupon form of payment served to increase the debt of the workers and further enrich the ruling families of San Pedro.

The Blakes and Alamillas used their positions and the "truck" system in both the chicle and coconut industries to exploit their workers' attachment to alcohol. It was common practice when labor was needed for one of the bosses to sit the worker down in his commissary and give him a few drinks or a bottle:

They start you, you don't want to drink but its your boss and they say 'take one drink' and then 'take some more' then you buy a bottle [and] spend one week's pay. Then you have to make a contract with advance, they give you the money for advance, then you drink again when you go [to work] your money is gone . . . if you're in debt you have to sign to go again and again (J. Alamilla, field notes).

Many San Pedranos did not have to be forced to drink. As is the case today, many of the men say they enjoyed it in the past. Heavy drinking (or the use of narcotic drugs) is associated with people of all sorts, of course, but it is particularly a trait of many who are poor, exploited, and whose culture has been devalued by others such as was the case with San Pedranos. It is easy to see then how San Pedranos could get into debt and be forced to work as a product of their drinking.

Blake and Alamilla, however, were taking no chances on this account. To make sure that people's propensity towards alcohol consumption would ensure a steady supply of labor, the bosses would not allow the use of the coupons they issued as wage payments for the purchase of alcohol. This meant that the \$.10 out of every coupon dollar that workers could receive in cash was the only money they could use to buy alcohol. As a result workers were forced to go deep into debt to acquire enough coupons so that they would have the cash necessary to support their proclivity for drinking.

The "advance" and "truck" systems, as practiced on the cay, were legitimized by the laws of the colony as outlined in a previous section. Again, they were enforced by the police who were stationed in San Pedro, undoubtedly, primarily for this purpose.

Wages paid coconut workers were low and villagers, other than the ruling families, their retainers and a few independent fishermen and merchants, were poor. Informants vary in their reports as to the wages paid during the early 1900's. Tasks seem to have been organized so that they would require one day's work for completion though it was not unusual for a worker to complete several of these tasks in a day. Wages seem to have ranged from \$.25 to \$.75 per day. Workers were paid \$.50 to "chop a task" and \$.50 to pick, peel and deliver 500 coconuts. Monthly wages in the early 1900's varied a great deal but were in the range of \$12 plus rations of eight pounds of flour and four pounds of pork. For the 500 coconuts Blake paid his workers \$.50 to gather and husk; he received as much as \$80 when he delivered them to Belize in one of his three sailing boats.

Low wages paid to coconut workers were partially offset by the low level of consumer prices. Informants have told me that between \$1 and \$1.50 was needed per week per person for a "provision." However, this provision included only very basic food and related items. A typical provision might contain corn, flour, rice, beans, cigarettes (locally produced), coffee and perhaps a small can of tomatoes. Fish and sometimes pork were the basic meat items. Fresh vegetables were very rare. As can be seen, however, food was cheap. The workers' diet was not what would be considered a luxury one nor was there much variety. It was sufficient to maintain the labor force and little else.

Living conditions were little better. The one-or two-bedroom houses were the same type as those that the villagers had constructed 50 years earlier, described previously in this chapter. Due to poverty, home furnishings remained simple. There were no chairs, perhaps a few homemade stools and no beds. Most people slept on crocus bags (used for sacking coconuts) on the floor; a few had hammocks. Cooking was done over an open hearth using coconut husks or firewood in a separate shed (Gonzalez 1978:8). Clothing also remained the same as described earlier, unchanged in over 50 years. All in all, it was a hard and poor life.

Some further indication of the poverty of San Pedro during this particular epoch in its history is given by the fact that an epidemic of dysentery was reported to have swept the village in 1912 (B.H. Ann. Rpt. 1913). This disease is usually associated in its epidemic form with crowded living conditions, poor sanitation and poverty. Under normal conditions, island or seaside communities are usually among the healthiest.

The coconut boom in Belize lasted through the 1920's. Hurricanes in 1916 and 1920 were the only problems that the industry seemed to have. However, the first 30 years of the twentieth century turned out to be the peak years for the industry. In the 1930's the great world depression caused a slump in prices and demand for agricultural products. The coconut industry in Belize suffered as did the entire Belizean economy. Prices for coconuts became extremely low on the world market (see Figure 4). From \$22 in 1928 the price paid at Belize City for 1,000 coconuts dropped to a little over \$8 in 1932. The owners of the coconut plantations cut wages and only paid to have their coconuts gathered. The walks were neglected. As prices slipped below production costs, the walks were not even cleaned, and pests and diseases spread unchecked (Blue Book B.H. 1933; Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1954). A major hurricane in 1931 did a great deal of damage to many of the coconut walks in Belize but due to the depressed state of the industry little replanting was done. Ambergris Cay, however, seems to have escaped serious damage to its walks from this storm.

Many San Pedranos were put out of work by these changes of event and had to search for other types of work. Since Belize and the world in general were in a state of depression, there were not many labor alternatives outside the cay. So San Pedranos were forced to fall back on subsistence fishing combined with irregular periodic wage labor on the coconut plantations. Times were even harder in the village during this period.

During the Second World War the coconut industry in Belize revived as prices reached record levels. However, the coconut industry in San Pedro was disastrously affected by the hurricane of 1942. In this

hurricane, the sea crossed the cay, destroyed all but six of the houses in the village (Blake's mansion stood) and totally destroyed many of the coconut walks on the cay. After the hurricane in 1942 San Pedro was rapidly depopulated. Reyes (1968) estimates that at the time of the hurricane there were 400 people living in San Pedro. He also states that 100 of these villagers were killed in the hurricane. My informants never mentioned this latter fact. However, all were in agreement that after 1942 the population of the village plummeted. The great majority of the villagers had either died or left. After the hurricane there was some work as some of the cocals were being replanted to take advantage of the rising prices of coconuts on the international market (see Figure 4) and as the remaining walks had to be attended to. There was, however, not enough work to keep most of the San Pedranos employed. The economic revival in the rest of the world that came with the war drew the villagers away from their village and many were finally free to go as they were not needed by the Blakes and Alamillas.

Some paid debts to their landlords by selling "rubber" that "dropped on the beach", a chance bonanza. These were large sheets of latex of unknown origin that washed ashore on the cay. The villagers collected these and sold them in Belize City for \$20 to \$30 a piece. With this money many were able to buy tickets to distant destinations in search of jobs. Some fought with the United Kingdom in the war or joined one or another merchant marine. Some were contracted to go to Panama and the United States as laborers. They paid their own passage but were guaranteed jobs when they arrived. Others went to Mexico to work on the coconut plantations that covered the coast of Quintana Roo at that time and to work in the coconut processing industry centered at Xcalak. The

The industry was booming in Mexico due to higher prices on the international markets. Others went to all parts of Belize looking for work, principally Corozal, Belize City, and Sarteneja. At this time, also, the first of the village fishermen began fishing for lobsters (Panularus argus) to sell to American buyers who had come in search of them, another significant unexpected event.

Nineteen forty-two then is the beginning of the end of the coconut regime which had held the villagers in its grip for more than 50 years. Plantation coconut agriculture would linger on Ambergris Cay for almost another 20 years but with ever decreasing vigor and decreasing control over the lives of the San Pedranos. Hurricanes, prolonged drought, diseases, pests, rising costs of living (which made increased wages a necessity), uncertain markets, unstable prices, lack of technological innovation, inadequate transportation facilities to major international markets and a lack of labor all combined to make coconut production for export less and less attractive to large producers in Belize and those on the cay in particular in the 1940's and '50's (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1949, 1950, 1954, 1957).

The final blow to the hegemony of coconut plantation agriculture on Ambergris Cay was dealt in 1955 when hurricane Janet hit the northern portion of the cay.

(There was) 100 percent damage in the northern section of Ambergris Cay and (it) was particularly hard on those whose unaided rehabilitation efforts following the 1942 hurricane were just about to bear fruit (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1951:31).

Though two of the major holders on Ambergris Cay replanted coconut the next year, their power was basically destroyed.

The hurricane of 1955 hit the coast of Quintana Roo particularly hard, also totally destroying Xcalak, killing many people and destroying

the coconut industry there. Many of the San Pedranos who had left the village after the 1942 hurricane to go to work in this area returned and, no longer obligated to work coconuts, took up lobster fishing.

As the coconut industry on Ambergris Cay died, living conditions in San Pedro changed. Until 1950 living conditions had remained unchanged from the early 1900's. Informants who first came to San Pedro in the early 1950's say they were shocked at how backward and exploited the village and villagers were, even then. One described San Pedro as being the most backward and isolated community in Belize at the time other than some of the isolated Indian villages.

The coconut walks on the cay were finally totally abandoned in the mid '60's⁵. The villagers are well aware of the differences between the old economic structure and the new ones. They describe San Pedro during the time of coconuts and the Blake's and Alamilla's hegemony in terms such as these.

"Blake treated us like animals, he would scold you like a child."

"They (the Blakes and Alamillas) had the people of San Pedro just like slaves. There was slavery right here in San Pedro."

"Blake had the old people living in fear."

"Blake took people's wives. If you didn't like it you couldn't get work and he raised your rent."

These things only changed when the Blakes and Alamillas no longer had any use for the villager's labor, when their land had become more valuable for speculative purposes than for raising coconuts and when there were other economic opportunities for the San Pedranos which could lift them at least partially out of the poverty and exploitation they had suffered for 70 years.

SECONDARY ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES: 1890 TO 1950

While coconut plantation agriculture was the dominant mode of production in San Pedro during this period, it was not the only economic activity in which villagers were involved. A significant number of villagers owned small cocals of their own. These cocals were anywhere from five to ten acres and produced up to 5,000 coconuts per month.

Villagers obtained their cocals directly from the Blakes and Alamillas. Most informants maintain that in the early years the original Mrs. Blake who had been abandoned or widowed by the James Blake who had originally procured the cay, was remarried to a Mexican, (some informants claim that it was her daughter who married this man). At any rate, it seems certain that the new husband was an alcoholic who took to selling off pieces of the Blake's holdings to support his habit. Most people, who were in a position to buy land at the time, did not feel that the title would hold up if it were challenged and therefore did not buy. However, those that took the chance found out that the titles were legally valid. In later years as coconut production became less and less profitable the Blakes and Alamillas directly sold their walks in small parcels to villagers and outsiders who could afford them. Though it would seem that this was not in the interest of Blake and Alamilla, they still profited handsomely by serving as middlemen for the sale of the coconuts from these small producers. They bought the coconuts from them at a low price and sold them in Belize for considerably more. According to one informant if Blake bought 1,000 coconuts for \$30, he would sell them in Belize for \$50, having only to absorb a small shipping cost.

While some of the small producers had sufficient acres in coconuts to make a living solely from this activity, most either also did wage

labor on the big plantations or participated in some other economic activity such as trading or fishing.

The hurricane of 1942 severely hurt small producers and many were forced to abandon or even sell out their walks immediately after it. When the government redistributed the village plots in the 1950's, they also sold some of the coconut walks that had been previously owned by the big landowners, to the villagers. There was a slight revival of small-scale production on these lands and on those which were still owned from before the hurricane. However, production was reduced to a mere trickle with the introduction of lobster fishing and the fishermen's cooperative in the 1950's and 1960's. In the late 1960's and the 1970's when relatively large numbers of American tourists began coming to San Pedro, a market developed for these cocals, which were on and behind the beach, as lots for vacation homes. By 1980 all of these small holdings had been sold to outsiders for this and for speculative purposes.

Along side petty-bourgeois coconut production, fishing remained an important economic activity in San Pedro during this entire period. It was fallen back upon when the coconut industry stumbled due to economic problems and hurricanes but still remained the major economic activity of some San Pedranos even when the coconut industry was healthy.

During the early 1900's there was a falling off of the fishing activities of the villagers as they became involved in logwood, chicle and coconut production activities. Fishing techniques at this time were similar to those in the pre-proletarianization stage of the village's development as described above. San Pedrano fishermen continued to rely on cayucos (produced in Stann Creek), although these were larger in size during this period and were increasingly sail driven. Botalons, Mexican

double-ended sailing boats of frame construction, may also have been used at this time (Craig 1966:56). The use of nets and seines constructed by the fishermen remained characteristics of San Pedrano fishing methods.

The fish were marketed as before, fresh to Belize City and corned to Corozal and up the River Hondo.⁶ A goodly portion of the catch was also sold in San Pedro for domestic consumption and to merchants who then sold it on the mainland to buyers in Mexico, Guatamala and Honduras.

Lobster and conch in this period were usually only caught incidentally or when nothing else was available.

The late 1920's and the 1930's were a time of increasing petty bourgeoisie fishing activity, a mode which would dominate the village economy in the 1950's and not level off until the 1970's. The end of participation in the logwood and chicle industries by San Pedranos coupled with hard times in the coconut industry during the 1930's forced many villagers to revert to fishing activities. Technological innovation also helped to stimulate the industry on the Cay.

In or around 1930 a villager whose father owned a small cocal, happening to glance at a newspaper saw the design for a heart weir. Feeling that it could perhaps work, he and a friend purchased some chicken wire from Belize City and proceeded to set up a "tramp." The other villagers thought they were crazy but were soon converted by the results. The traps took advantage of the fact that snapper (Lutjanidae), grunts (Pomadasyidae) and other diurnal reef fish actually feed nocturnally in the mangroves on the cays adjacent to the reefs. Cruising along the cay's coasts at night searching for food they were and are caught in great numbers in these heart weirs. The use of "tramps" greatly increased the quantities of fish which could be caught by fishermen.

They also increased the number of people who could fish part time. If one could afford the initial investment then all that was required after the "tramp" was set up was that one take the fish out once a day or once every two days. It was not so intensive an activity as seining or hand lining for fish although these methods were still widely practiced.

The second technological innovation to be adopted by the fishermen of the cay was actually introduced in Belize in 1911. This was the Belizean sailing smack. Of conventional frame construction the sailing smack was introduced to Cay Caulker by a villager who had spent several years in Cuba and had brought the design back with him to Belize (Craig 1966:56). Besides its frame construction which made it possible for fishermen on Cay Caulker, and eventually San Pedro, to produce their own, and its superior stability and handling in the sea conditions of the cays, these smacks incorporated a live well into the hull of the boat which made it much easier to transport the catch to market alive and gave it a much greater carrying capacity than other boat types.

These innovations, the opening up of another market at Payo Obisbo (Ciudad Chetumal), the continued morbidity of the coconut industry on Ambergris Cay, the overall economic and demographic malaise of San Pedro, and the beginnings of lobster fishing for sale to American exporters resulted, in the late 1940's, in the return of San Pedro to the status of a fishing village. This was the case even though the coconut industry and the hegemony of the coconut capitalists was not yet dead.

The majority of the scale fish were at this time caught in "tramps." Most were then taken to Belize City in the smacks although the markets in Corozal and Payo Obisbo were also supplied. The trip to Belize City now took only a day or a day and a half. Once in Belize the smacks had to be

anchored outside of the river mouth as fresh water would kill the fish in the live well. At 3 a.m. the fishermen took a dory into the market to purchase a booth and would begin cleaning and selling the fish at about 4 or 5 a.m. By 11 or 12 a.m. the fishermen would be selling their remaining catch at half price or less because the fish, now all dead, would not last through the day and must all be sold or dumped.

Prices were low; at the best of times fish were going for \$.20 to \$.30 for a snapper a foot and a half long. Competition from other fishermen was stiff. It was these conditions, and others which will be discussed in the next chapter, which led directly to the formation of a fishermen's cooperative in the early 1960's.

Besides scale fish fishing and in the final days of coconut hegemony, lobster fishing (which will be discussed in the next chapter), San Pedranos were also involved in turtle fishing for the export of shell, alligator hunting, for the export of skins and Rosette spoonbill hunting, for the export of feathers. All these products were sold to buyers from the U.S. and England who came to Belize for this purpose.

San Pedranos during this period of coconut hegemony migrated to other areas of Belize in small numbers to work in mahogany and on the remaining rancheros in the Corozal district. The pay for these jobs was roughly equivalent to that which could be earned by working on the coconut plantations though mahogany work at times was higher.

Because San Pedro was the center of a large coconut concern and of a modest fishing industry, it was also the focus of a certain amount of other economic activity. Small-scale merchants moved into the village in the early 1900's and thereafter to take advantage of opportunities there. A few small stores were set up which, though never really competing with

the large commissaries of the Blakes and Alamillas, nevertheless allowed their owners to become relatively well off. A few villagers and outsiders also were able to make modest sums of money as traders. These people traded mostly food and some manufactured goods between Belize City, and later Chetumal and San Pedro and the rich coconut areas of Xcalak and north.

Finally the economic activity in the village was sufficient to support a number of people involved in service industries. These included women who did tailoring or rolled cigarettes, ships carpenters for repairing and making fishing vessels, teachers for the small school, etc.

The period from the initial permanent settlement of the site of San Pedro in 1848 to the end of the coconut regime with the revitalization of the fishing industry was marked by the emergence of two distinct phases in the economic development of the village and its relationship to the outside world. These phases, though they included a multitude of economic activities, were characterized by the dominance of two distinct forms of labor control.

The first phase, which lasted roughly from 1848 to 1890, in which fishing for the mainland market was the most frequent economic activity, was dominated by a peasant petty-commodity production form of labor control.

The second stage, while no where near so monolithic as the first in as much as it included economic activities which utilized proletarianized labor (coconut, logwood and chicle production) as well as activities which were essentially peasant production (fishing and small-scale coconut production), was, nevertheless, dominated by a debt-indenture form of labor control. The third phase, which developed from the seeds of

the first phase which had remained alive but dormant during the second phase, will now be considered.

Notes: Chapter IV

1. There is some evidence that Blake upon claiming the Cay in the 1850's imposed plot rents on the settlers to defray the costs of his land taxes (Reyes 1968) and that rents were merely raised in the 1880's and '90's.
2. The process of proletarianization of San Pedranos during the closing days of the nineteenth century exhibited forms of labor and land control which were by no means confined to Belize. All through Latin America and the Caribbean the need to secure cheap labor led capitalists to the same solutions. A particularly harsh form of this type of labor control was being employed in northern Yucatan on the henequen plantations in this period. Here both Mayan and Yaqui Indian laborers, were held, by debt systems similar to that in San Pedro, in virtual slavery (Galeano 1973:135).
3. Most chicle is tapped during the rainy season when the sap runs most profusely. The actual tapping is done by making a series of diagonal overlapping cuts down the trunk of the tree leading to a canvas bag at the base of the cuts. The sap drains into the bag, is collected by the chiclero and heated in large cauldrons until the right consistency and then poured into rectangular wooden molds and stamped with the personal insignia of the chiclero. These are then brought to the base camp where they are packed out by mule team.
4. The large coconut growers of Ambergris Cay attempted to circumvent this control by shipping coconuts to the U.S. by themselves. Parham (mentioned later in the text) was the first to attempt this as early as 1928 (Caribbean Yearbook 1928) for a short time. The Blakes starting in around 1935 exported coconuts up until 1966. This was one of the reasons for their continued success while all around, in the later days of the Belizean coconut business, were failing.
5. Blake sent a shipment of coconuts to the U.S. worth \$14,063 \$BZ in 1966 (Carib. Yrbk. 1967).
6. Corned fish was a staple in the diets of wood cutters and chicleros of the interior of Belize and Quintana Roo (Fuller 1955:4).

CHAPTER V

LOBSTER: THE BEGINNINGS OF AN INDUSTRY

This chapter will describe the third epoch of San Pedro's economic history and the transformation into the fourth. The initial portion of the chapter is a narrative description of the growth of the fishing industry of Belize and San Pedro. This description emphasizes the impact of the metropole and its agents on this development. It is important that we reiterate here that while the interaction of San Pedro's economy with the forces of international capitalism influences the structure and content of the village economy there are other equally important influences. In the case of this third era it was the demise of the class structure associated with plantation agriculture and the rise from its ashes of the previously dominated petty bourgeois submode of production in phase two which played an important role in the emergence and subsequent structure of the dominant petty bourgeois lobster fishing mode of production in San Pedro described in this chapter.

The final portion of the chapter returns to a description on the level of production of this era three and details the emergence of fishermen's cooperatives in Belize generally, and in San Pedro in particular. The reader should take particular note of the class struggle involved in the cooperative formation and its significance for the remainder of San Pedro's history.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOBSTER INDUSTRY IN BELIZE AND SAN PEDRO

Before 1920 spiny lobster (Panularus argus) was considered by Belizean fishermen to be trash fish. Like conch, it was usually eaten only by the poor and then only rarely. Since there was very little domestic demand for the product and effective methods of capture were not available, it was not fished. In 1921, however, a Captain R.E Foote, a Canadian, introduced the traditional lobster "pot" used in the maritime Provinces of Canada for the capture of Belize's lobsters (Craig 1966:91). Foote, who was a representative of the Canadian Franklin Baker Company, one of the major coconut buyers of the time, (Vega 1979:1), set up a small canning operation on a barge located near the south end of Water Cay. Shallow wells provided the water for steam cooking the tails in a boiler fired by mangrove wood (Craig 1966:91). Craig (1966:91) claims that a dozen women were employed processing lobster caught in traps which Foote had taught Creole fishermen based in Belize to make.

In 1925 Foote moved his operation to Baldwin's Bogue to be near more prolific lobster grounds. While in this location Foote began to run into problems. Creole fishermen whom he paid \$.01 per pound for lobster tails (Craig 1966:91) were aware of the high prices lobster brought on luxury markets such as Spanish Honduras (Thompson 1944:9). This led to almost continual labor unrest on the part of the lobster fishermen. The Annual Report of British Honduras of 1927 and 1928 both mention the labor unrest and push for higher pay in the lobster industry. Thompson (1944:9) also mentions that fishermen were only willing to fish lobster until they reached a maximum earning that they had set for themselves. For these reasons a steady supply of lobster could not be guaranteed to the cannery (Craig 1966, Smith and Gathman 1948, Thompson 1944). These problems were

partially solved in 1931 when the hurricane of that year completely demolished the cannery.

Foote acquired another barge and cannery in 1932 and set it up in the bay on the lee side of Cay Caulker. He then trained fishermen of Cay Caulker to supply the needed lobsters. At the height of operation 25 women were employed processing the catch made by a dozen smacks fishing lobster (Craig 1966:92). The depression which hit the United States in the 1930's proved to be the downfall of Foote's operation. By 1935 the cannery had closed down, victim of an uncertain market in the U.S. (Craig 1966:92).

Foote's operation left a major imprint on fishing in Belize. The lobster trap which he introduced is still used today, though with some modifications. Thompson (1944) and Craig (1966) both maintain that Foote also first introduced the heart weir to Belizean fishermen though my informants dispute this. Finally, Foote introduced the fishermen of Belize to the processing and export of marine products and the potential markets for lobster tails, lessons that they learned well and would put into practice in the future.

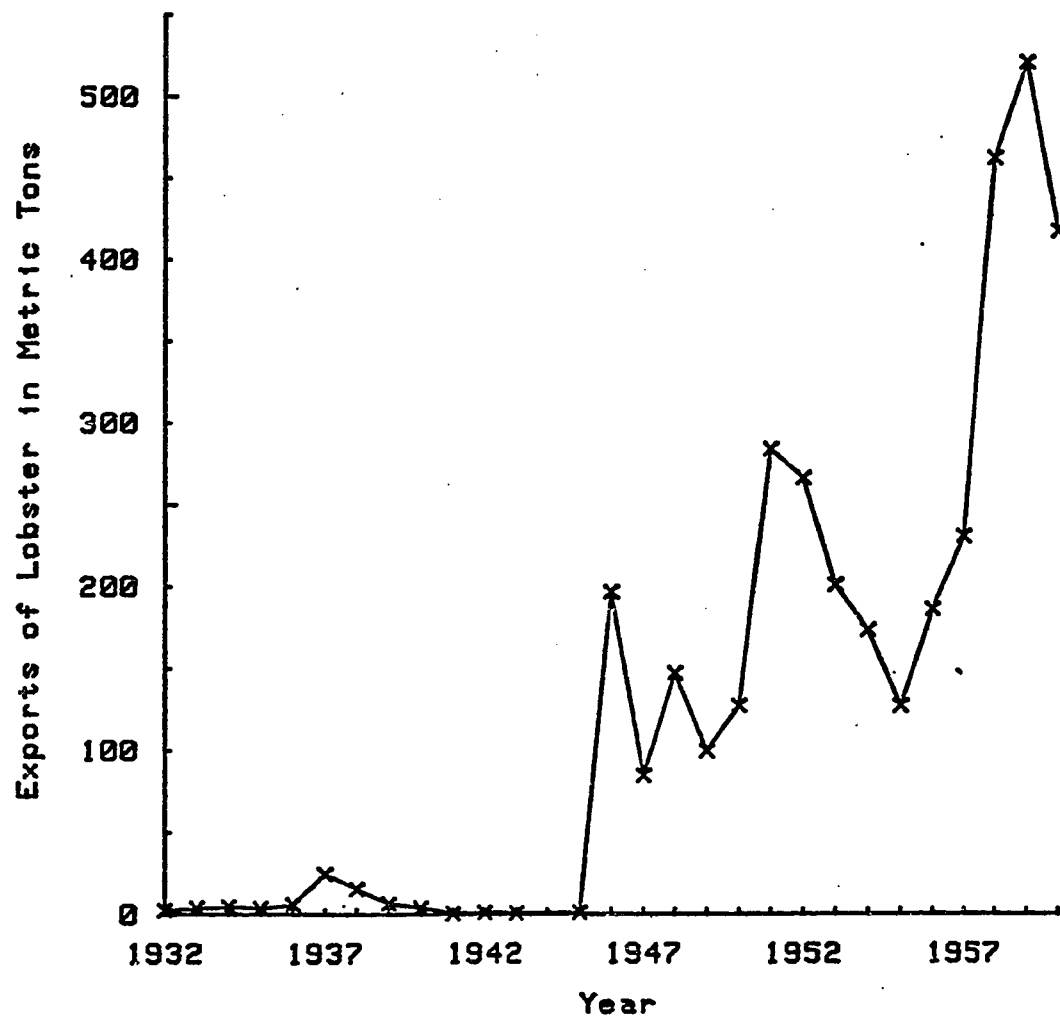
Foote was not the only outsider with an interest in the potential of Belize for lobster production in this early period. Mr. Stibbs, an American, set up what Vega (1979:1) calls the first lobster cannery in Belize City in 1924. Stibbs introduced the bully net to fishermen of Cay Caulker as a more efficient method of catching lobster than the usual method of placing a seine around a rock and then scaring the lobster into the net with a stick. Stibbs bought his lobster from these fishermen and brought them to Belize by "smack", i.e. sailing boats with a live well

(Vega 1979:1). This operation was not successful due to marketing problems and folded within a year or so.

In 1934 the first freezer boat began to cruise Belizean waters picking up lobster tails from fishermen in various parts of the country and taking them directly to Miami (Vega 1979:2). The American owner, a Mr. Coogan, paid only one and one-half cents per pound for whole lobster and consequently had problems with supply. This, combined with marketing problems caused by the depression, led to the demise of the operation.

Lobster fishing in Belize "took off" after these halting initial starts, in the late 1940's with the end of the war and the upturn in the U.S. economy. By 1948 it was reported that two motor vessels equipped with deep freezers and a flying boat were catching and purchasing lobsters and other fish for export to the U.S. (Col. Ann. Rpt., B.H. 1948). In 1946 a Captain Walters had brought to Belize the M.V. Lucy, a refrigerator vessel equipped to freeze and hold fish at temperatures below 0°F. After some initial difficulties in securing a regular supply of lobster, Walters was able to gain a regular one by visiting various fishing villages on the coast, particularly Placentia and Cay Caulker (Vega 1979, Smith and Gathman 1948). Walters paid about \$.11 per pound for tails. As Figure 5 shows, his operation marks the beginning of relatively large-scale export of lobster from Belize (Smith and Gathman 1948). At this same time another freezer vessel, the M.V. Betty Jean, also began to work Belizean waters for lobster by collecting the product of native fishermen. This operation paid between \$.10 and \$.15 per pound for lobster tails and \$.05 for whole lobster and shipped them to New Orleans (Smith and Gathman 1948:5). The flying boat, the Catalina, based at Cay Caulker, made regular trips flying 4,000 pounds of lobster to Miami.

Figure 5



EXPORTS OF LOBSTER FROM BELIZE: 1932 TO 1960

Source: Idyll 1961:5

By the early 1950's the export of lobster tails from Belize had become an established industry. Recognizing the advances the industry was making, the colonial government had installed export duties on marine products in 1949, and in 1950 appointed a fisheries officer for the colony (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1949, 1950). The Bilnor Co. (later B.H. Seafoods Ltd.) owned by an American, John Bilik, and a Belizean, Guy Nord, began buying lobster from Cay Caulker fishermen in early 1950. This company paid fishermen \$.07 per pound for whole lobster which was the highest price offered up to this time (Vega 1979:2). Another company, Caribbean Queen Seafoods, was formed at about this same time. My informants claim that an American, Ernest Busker, operated this company and later sold out to two Belizeans, Alfonso Gutierrez and George Alamilla (of the family which controlled the coconut industry in San Pedro). Vega (1979:2) asserts, however, that these three men jointly formed Caribbean Queen Seafoods. Whatever its origins Caribbean Queen Seafoods operated three motor vessels which bought lobster from fishermen at about \$.10 per pound whole. Fishermen were also hired to come on board each evening to process the lobster which had been purchased. They were paid approximately \$7 for an evening's work which began at 3 p.m. and ended at 9 or 10 p.m.

The two companies, B.H. Seafoods Ltd. and Caribbean Queen Seafoods, began to compete with each other driving up the price paid for tails. San Pedro informants claim that Alamilla and Gutierrez paid as high as \$.16 per pound for lobster tails. At this point another American, Durano, entered the scene. He was a lobster buyer who utilized a freezer of another American to store his purchases. As a way of avoiding the growing price war between the companies operating at the time and of

ensuring himself a steady supply of lobster tails, he suggested to his producers that a fishermen's cooperative be set up (Vega 1979). Father Ganey (a Jesuit priest), who was the inspiration behind Belize's credit union movement and nascent cooperative movement, was invited to speak to the fishermen of Cay Caulker about the formation of a cooperative. The fishermen were, however, not convinced so the first attempt at cooperative organization of fishermen failed.

The owners of B.H. Seafoods Ltd. and Caribbean Queen Seafoods had other ideas on how to lessen the competition for lobsters. They decided to merge the two companies and operate with a monopoly on the export of lobster from Belize. This plan ran into a snag, however, when the government after consulting the fishermen of Cay Caulker refused to grant a concession for a monopoly (Vega 1979:2). The issue was resolved when another company, Colony Club Fisheries, formed in 1950 with Harrison Courtenay (later "Sir") and an extremely influential lawyer, businessman and politician as director, took over operation of both B.H. Seafoods Ltd. and Caribbean Queen Seafoods (Vega 1979:3). During this period Blake and Alamilla operated a small company based in San Pedro which hired fishermen to fish from the company's boats with company pots. The product was flown live to Guatemala (Fuller 1955:20).

Colony Club's monopoly position was not to last, however. Two Americans, Jim Bouloy and Ed Devorak, formed Del Caribe Fisheries Ltd. to buy Belizean lobster sometime in the early '50's. This company competed with Colony Club Fisheries for awhile until Devorak acquired the latter sometime after 1954. At this point the Belizean lobster industry which had been rather tumultuous with companies being established and dissolved, price wars and takeovers, settled down. Devorak's two companies

were the only ones assigned export quotas. Under these monopoly conditions he was able to set his own prices. There was no recourse for the fishermen, if they wanted to produce for the export market other than to sell to one of the two companies controlled by Devorak.

The lobster industry in these early days was organized in a fashion which was similar in many ways to the extractive industries which had come before it in Belize. American buyers came to Belize looking for lobster and established the industry. They were the principal buyers in conjunction with some of the Belizean comprador bourgeoisie and controlled the sale of the product on the American market. Americans provided at least one half of the capital invested in the industry (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1952).

In the late 1950's and early '60's many fishermen, especially those in the villages that dove for lobster, principally San Pedro and Placentia, were hired to dive for lobster from boats owned by the major companies. Devorak in particular hired San Pedranos to dive off his boats. Most fishermen in Belize, however, fished from their own boats selling what they produced to the buyers. Fishermen initially used their own dories and those few who had them used their smacks to fish lobsters. However, as time went on and the lobster resources near the fishing villages dried up, a fisherman who wanted to do well in the industry needed a bigger boat and other equipment. From the earliest times buyers had provided fishermen with the capital to buy equipment. Now the lobster buyers made cash advances to the fishermen to finance the considerable costs of acquiring smacks, engines, ice boxes and other equipment. These sizable advances were paid back by deductions the buyer made from the proceeds from lobster sold to him by the fisherman. This procedure

served to tie the fishermen to the buyer for a period of time. An indication of how prevalent this move was to acquire buyer-financed smacks and dryboats (same as smacks but with an ice box rather than a live well in the hold) is given by statistics in the Colonial Annual Report, British Honduras (1946, 1952, 1957).

In 1946 there were a total of 125 dories and smacks operating in Belize. In 1952 the report states that 400 full-time fishermen, 225 of whom fished lobster, operated 200 boats. By 1957, the total number of full-time fishermen had not changed, although the number of men involved with lobster had increased slightly to 250. The biggest change was the increase in the number of boats (from 700 to 400) and the appearance of 200 "new" part-time fishermen.

The lobsters were processed and frozen for export in Belize City in freezer plants of which there were two as early as 1953 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1953). Workers from the Belize City population were hired to process the lobster. Men earned \$14 to \$17 for a 50 to 60 hour week while women earned \$.20 to \$.30 per hour (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1959-61). Exporting was by government license only, and as we have seen above, was ultimately controlled by one man, Ed Devorak. The government had implemented an export limit of 800,000 pound of tails per year by 1961 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1959-61) which was upped to 900,000 pounds in 1962 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1962-63) in an effort to conserve the resource. As can be seen from Figure 5 this had been exceeded in the previous decade with exports reaching a peak in 1959 of 1.5 million pounds (Idyll 1961:5).

Petty Bourgeois Lobster Production in San Pedro

Fishermen of San Pedro got a late start in the lobster industry as compared to fishermen in the rest of the country. This was probably due

to a number of factors. Many San Pedranos were tied into the cultivation of coconuts, as described above. San Pedro was farther from the areas where buyers were operating, thus its fishermen were not approached by buyers when they could get an adequate supply elsewhere. Also, at first, San Pedrano fishermen's lack of familiarity with efficient methods for capturing lobster kept them from being able to produce large quantities. San Pedranos say that their real entrance into the lobster industry began with selling lobster to the freezer vessel Betty Jean at \$.05 a pound in the mid 1940's. San Pedranos also produced for the sea plane Catalina at \$.07 a pound whole. During this period lobsters were caught locally within a day's journey of the village. Lobsters were very plentiful. San Pedranos say that during the winter storms called "northers" lobster would "run" or migrate in such quantities that they would turn the shallows red with their antennae above water and with some even being forced up on shore. Fishing within a mile of the village, 300 to 400 lobster could be taken on one trip and 1,000 to 2,000 lobster a week was commonplace. By the mid 1950's the lobster resource directly in front of the village had been fully exploited and the lobster fishermen of San Pedro were concentrating their efforts on a large area still within a day's travel to and from the village. This area was bounded on the north by the southern tip of Ambergris Cay, on the south by the northern tip of Cay Caulker, on the east by the barrier reef and on the west by Cayo Congrejo. By this time the lobster industry of northern Belize was centered on San Pedro which produced the majority of the lobster exported from the country (Fuller 1955:20).

Lobster were caught by either of three methods. Many were taken in the "fish tramps" (heart weirs). Others were taken out of small dories

with a variation on the bully net¹. A "looking glass" which was a wooden box open on one side and with a glass pane on the other was placed on top of the water so that the fisherman could see below the surface. He then used a long stick with a wire lasso at the end to capture the lobster. This lasso was later replaced by a hook which was used to gaff the lobster. This was the method used by San Pedro fishermen working on the reef where pots were not practical. It was also the method preferred by the fishermen of Belize City and south who generally had to travel long distances to get to good lobster grounds. It was modified in later years and utilized extensively by San Pedrano fishermen when it became necessary for them to do long-distance lobster fishing.

Through the mid-1950's, however, the method of lobster fishing most used by San Pedrano fishermen was trapping in lobster pots or tambos (Fuller 1955:58). The lobster pot (nasa) was the same as the pot which had been introduced to Belize by Cpt. Foote and was then modified by the fishermen of Cay Caulker. The tambo was constructed of an empty oil can with one end opened and then crushed in at the middle, and with holes punched in the sides and bottom. It was fished in the same way a pot was, i.e. placed on the bottom and allowed to sit for several days collecting lobster and then emptied (Fuller 1955:61).

When the lobster were caught, they were placed in a small krall (an enclosure built in the water of either wire or palmetto trunks stuck in the sand side by side) or into a deposito (large wooden slat box, staked in the shallow water). Here they were kept until such time as they were taken by sail boat to Cay Caulker to be picked up by seaplane or freezer vessels. Later in the mid '50's they were picked up by a freezer boat and taken to Belize City. Lobster were transported by San Pedranos in

wet crocus bags (same as were used to transport coconuts). At Cay Caulker, if they were sold to the Betty Jean, they were taken directly on board if the boat was there. The fishermen were paid and the lobster were processed and frozen. If the boat was not there, the lobsters were placed in a large krall with the catch of other fishermen, after having been weighed, to await pickup on the return of the vessel. If they were to be taken away by plane, the lobsters were delivered to a large krall at Cay Caulker or San Pedro where they were weighed and awaited the return of the Catalina. The Catalina when it arrived loaded up the lobster and then returned to Miami. No money was paid the fishermen until the latest load was sold in the U.S. and the plane returned. The Catalina only operated for part of a year, and when it left the last time with a load and didn't come back, the fishermen were unable to collect for their lobster at all. San Pedranos then sold to Caribbean Queen Seafoods. They report that they originally received \$.10 per pound for whole lobster from this company. This was increased to \$.16 per pound for tails from Alamilla and Gutierrez. This was also the price that they received from Devorak's two companies that they sold to through the major portion of the 1950's.

As the lobster industry expanded, San Pedranos who had moved to other areas during the early 1940's moved back to San Pedro to participate in it. With increasing pressure on the resource resulting from an increase in the number of people fishing, quantities of lobster in the immediate vicinity of the village got harder and harder to find. This forced changes in technological aspects of the San Pedranos' fishing effort. Firstly, while the combination of looking glass and long hook sticks had been effective for capturing lobster on the reef when they

were plentiful, this method was not very successful when lobster were more scarce. The hook sticks could not reach under rocks where the majority of the lobsters were hidden. San Pedrano fishermen tried to overcome this problem by skindiving for the lobster. At first they used no mask or fins and were fairly successful. The only problem was that they could only dive for a certain period of time before their eyes got too irritated from the salty sea water to continue. Fortunately, at this point an American arrived in the village and introduced the fishermen to masks and fins. Subsequently, an American company sent consignments of masks and fins to the San Pedranos.

As the local supplies of lobster were reduced and the number of fishermen increased, San Pedranos, as well as fishermen throughout the country, found they had to move farther afield to secure sizable quantities of lobster. This meant taking trips of from five to eleven days or more. It was impractical for fishermen to take large numbers of pots these long distances; there was not enough room on the small boats. Therefore, the pots could not be tended regularly so far from the village. Also there was no way of protecting them from poachers, and a large part of the new fishing grounds were reef areas where pots were not practical anyway. For these reasons, San Pedro fishermen who fished long-distance switched to the diving method of securing their catch. This method and long-distance lobster fishing in general became a hallmark of San Pedrano fishermen, distinguishing them from neighboring fishermen, particularly those from Cay Caulker who used pots to secure their lobsters.

The second technological change, also caused by the switch to long-distance fishing, was in the type of boat used. As the San Pedrano

fishermen moved farther afield to secure their lobster, especially since they had to sail beyond the protection of the reef to reach the atolls beyond, they found that they needed larger boats than the cayucos and small sailing boats they had previously found adequate. Before 1955 there were only two boats sailing out of San Pedro to fish which were over twenty feet in length. By the mid-1960's practically all the sailing boats involved in long-distance fishing were over twenty feet. Some were constructed to lengths over 30 feet, as fishermen attempted to maximize speed, carrying capacity and safety for these long-distance trips. These larger boats were used to carry cayucos out of which the crewmen dove for the lobster. Some of the new boats were built as smacks so that the lobster could be transported to market live even after several days of fishing. Most were purchased through loans from the buyers thus tying many of San Pedro's fishermen into yet another system of debt.

By using these larger boats San Pedrano fishermen were able to expand significantly their area of operation. They fished extensively, and illegally, at Chinchorro, an atoll north of Ambergris Cay in Mexican waters. They also fished on the northern end of the Turneffe atoll and at the Light House Reef atoll. At these atolls the fishermen of San Pedro hit a gold mine (see Map 6). Lobster were plentiful and big. Informants state that tails of four to six pounds were not unusual and that none were less than two pounds whereas today it is rare to get a tail of over two pounds. A trip of four days was all that was needed to secure 2,000 pounds of lobster tail. Today even 1,000 pounds from a ten-day trip is very rare.

San Pedrano fishermen gradually ceased to fish for the whole lobster. Buyers were only interested in the tails. The fishermen realized that if they could bring back the tails alone, rather than the whole lobster, their boats would have room to carry more saleable produce and each trip would be more profitable. Live wells had been unsatisfactory because the smack had to be immobilized for much of the time while fishing was being done. The water did not circulate and lobsters died, spoiled, and were commercially of no value. As the industry advanced in Belize, ice plants were built in conjunction with freezer and processing facilities for lobster and other seafood. With the resultant availability of ice in Belize City where fishermen had to go to sell their catch, the problem of transporting tails to market was solved by replacing the live wells in the smacks with ice boxes. The result was the "dry boat"². The first to be utilized by San Pedrano fishermen was built in Sarteneja in 1956 and was operated by one of the leading merchants in the village today. From that point on, dry boats began to replace smacks to the point where smacks were no longer utilized in the village.

The economy of San Pedro then focused on lobster production in the 1940's and '50's. In this, the third phase of village history, fishermen owned their own means of production although often they were in debt to the buyers for these items. They were thus petty bourgeois³ and exploited by a segment of the bourgeoisie often representing foreign capital who financed their operations and who bought their produce. The industry in these days was characterized by very low technology involving small boats and simple traps. As it began to expand more capital had to be expended, particularly to buy the larger boats necessary to participate in long-distance fishing. Labor also became more cooperative on

these boats. From this a new bourgeois segment began to emerge from the mass of petty bourgeois fishermen. This would become important in the next period of the village's history.

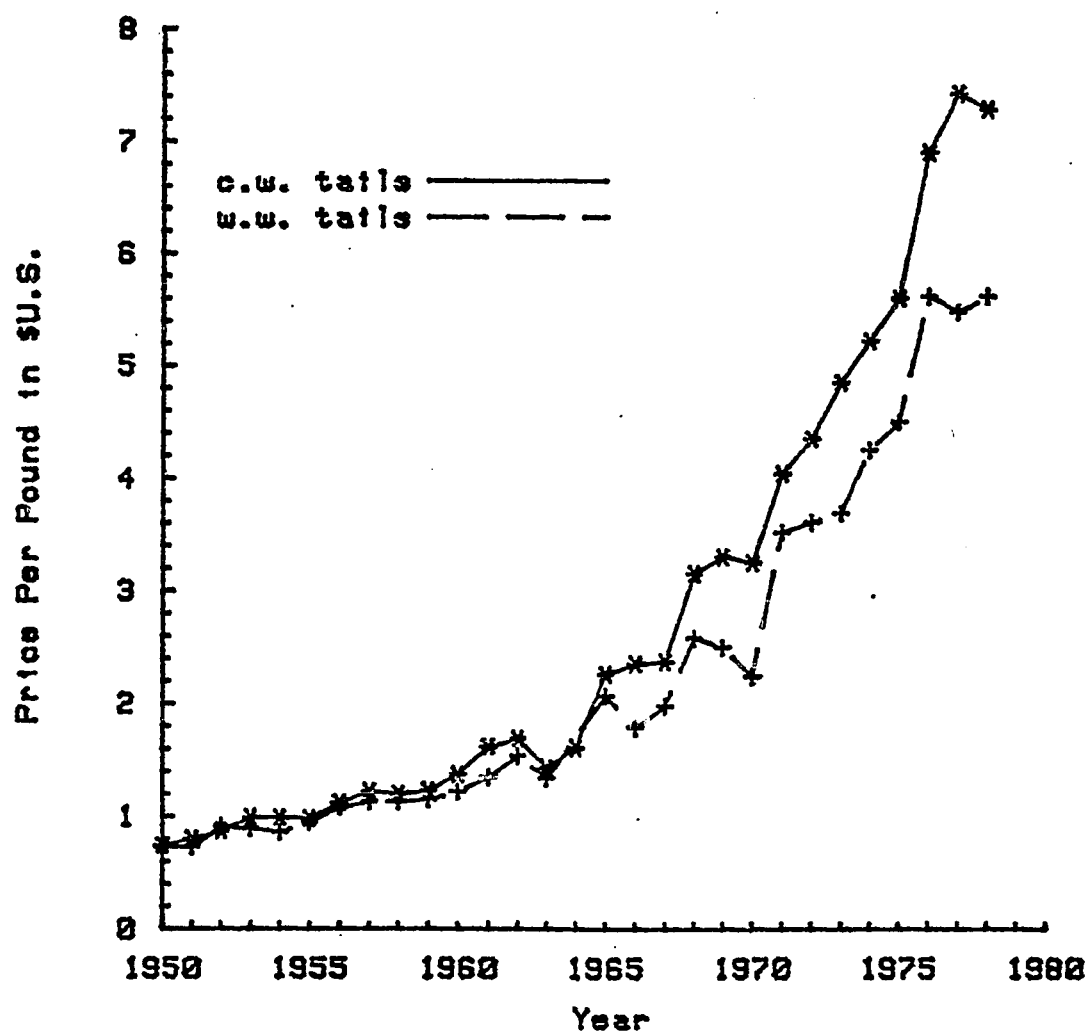
The lobster industry in San Pedro during the 1940's and 1950's mirrored that of the lobster industry in the rest of Belize in terms of organization, development, and the major players involved so that by 1960 it also suffered from some of the same problems which were to lead to the formation of fishermen's cooperatives, first in Cay Caulker, and then in the rest of Belize's fishing communities.

The Development of Fishermen's Cooperatives in Belize and San Pedro

By the late 1950's it was becoming evident to Belizean lobster fishermen, and in particular the fishermen of Cay Caulker who had been in the industry the longest and were the most involved in it and therefore the most aware of what was going on, that the proceeds of the industry were not being distributed with equity. A lot of lobster was being taken out of Belize and sold in the U.S. at high prices. They recognized that the buyers were getting rich off the trade but that the fishermen were not. The price they were receiving for lobster sold to the two companies had remained stagnant over several years even though the price was rising on the international markets (see Figure 6). They recognized that this was a consequence of the export monopoly held by Devorak. For these reasons the fishermen of Cay Caulker decided that a cooperative would be a good idea.

The idea of cooperative activity was not a new one in Belize and the techniques for the establishment of a cooperative were not hard to come by. Starting in 1943 there had been a strong credit union movement that had been developed by the Jesuit mission serving Belize and in particular

Figure 6



WHOLESALE PRICES FOR SPINY LOBSTER TAILS

Source: Quick Frozen Foods 1950-1965, Shellfish Situation and Outlook 1965-1973 and Shellfish Market Review and Outlook 1974-1978

by Father Ganey who as indicated above is known in Belize as the "Father" of the credit union and cooperative movements in the country. Father Ganey, who was so instrumental in the Belize Cooperative movement did not participate in the actual setting up of Belize's fisheries cooperatives, however. He was reassigned to work in cooperative organization in the South Pacific before their inception. By 1958, 38 credit unions were in existence some of which were highly successful. There were also three consumer cooperatives, one housing cooperative and sixteen agricultural producers' cooperatives. The latter were only moderately successful, however, due largely to the problem of the limited domestic market for their produce, a problem which would not be shared by the nascent fishermen's cooperatives. The Department of Cooperatives and Credit Unions regularly conducted training courses in cooperative formation. As mentioned above, there had been an attempt in the early '50's to form a cooperative among the fishermen of Cay Caulker. Cay Caulker had an active credit union already well established by 1958 with 30 members and share capital of \$3,608.60 (Department of Cooperatives [Dpt. Coop.] 1958). The fishermen of Cay Caulker area, then, were not taking an unprecedented step when they met with their area representative, Louis Sylvester, and asked him to put them in touch with the registrar of cooperatives, Henry Usher, to advise them as to what they needed to do to form a cooperative. By 1959 after meetings with Usher and careful planning, 39 fishermen of Cay Caulker came together and created a proposed cooperative which in the "clubbing and saving process" had share capital of \$662 (Dpt. Coop. 1959). At this point they applied to the colonial government for an export quota for lobster (Vega 1979:3)⁴.

All this came at a time when Belizean politics were in a state of turmoil. There was a strong nationalistic independence movement building in the country which was being strongly resisted by the English colonial government (Grant 1976). In these conditions representative Sylvester, a Belizean nationalist, was more than willing to help set up cooperatives and, as we have seen, he sided with the Cay Caulker fishermen in their attempt. In contrast, the colonial government, which had a stake in maintaining the status quo, resisted this move by the fishermen to be free of the exploitation of foreign companies. Saying that the fishermen were not yet able to manage their own businesses and had not yet been registered as a cooperative, the government denied the fishermen an export quota (Vega 1979:3). At the urging of nationalist members of government the fishermen threatened to demonstrate to demand higher prices for their produce and for the right of their cooperative to export lobster (Vega 1979:3).

Things came to a head in 1960. It was announced on the radio by the Customs Department that on July 15 of that year the lobster season would open with purchasing to commence on the following day. However, the two purchasing companies Del Caribe Industries and Colony Club Fisheries, announced also by radio, that though they would begin buying from most of the country's fishermen on July 16, they would not buy from the fishermen of Cay Caulker and San Pedro until July 17. This last announcement was made on the night of the 14th and was, therefore, missed by the fishermen of these villages. As a consequence when these fishermen finally found out the next day that they were not to deliver until the 17th, many had already caught quantities of lobster. This put them in a quandary as

they had no storage facilities and much of their catch would go bad if they waited the two days to the 17th to deliver.

Under these circumstances the fishermen of Cay Caulker, working through their new unregistered cooperative, decided to take their lobster to Belize City on the 16th and to try to sell it to one of the two companies. They went to Del Caribe Industries with their catch on the afternoon of that day and negotiated with Devorak, who refused at first to accept their catch but at 2 a.m. the next morning relented and agreed to pay \$.16 per pound for whole lobsters (Vega 1979:4). This was a rather hollow victory as by the time the lobster was bought it was July 17 and the price was the previously arranged one.

Devorak accepted five shipments of lobster from the Cay Caulker Cooperative on these terms. However, when the fishermen arrived with the sixth shipment, he informed the members of the nascent cooperative that he would be reducing the price paid to the fishermen by \$.01 per pound, stating that he needed to do so in order to pay his agent at Cay Caulker a commission. This was unacceptable to the fishermen. They approached Colony Club Fisheries (which, as will be remembered was also owned by Devorak) to see if they could get a better price. Colony Club's offer was two cents less than that of Del Caribe (Vega 1979:3). This clearly was unacceptable to the fishermen and they decided to boycott the two Devorak-owned companies.

The boycott presented new problems for the fishermen. They had to find a place to store the shipment of lobster which they had just brought to sell to Del Caribe. A place had to be found quickly or the lobster would spoil and have to be discarded. If the boycott were to last for any length of time, the lack of a market for their produce would be a

severe hardship for the fishermen. They were not in a favorable bargaining position because it was the beginning of the lobster season and the lobster were plentiful during this time of year. More importantly, however, the fishermen had used up the money they had earned from the previous season and were dependent on the proceeds from the new season's catch to maintain themselves and their families. It was important that these problems, particularly the last, be addressed. If they were not, it was likely that the fishermen's organization that had been so painstakingly pieced together and the boycott would both be abandoned by the fishermen as they individually did what was necessary to ensure the welfare of their families.

The first problem was solved when the fishermen found an American, Butcher Scott, who had a cold-storage facility in Belize City and agreed to let them store their lobster there (Vega 1979:4) until such time as they secured an export quota or Del Caribe came up with a better price for their tails. However, they had a long wait since Del Caribe was getting sufficient lobster from fishermen in the southern sectors of the country. Also the company had allegedly hedged its bets by paying off some members of the colonial government to assure that the fishermen's cooperative would not get an export quota.

The problems caused by the length of the boycott were solved by making an arrangement with Butcher Scott. The cooperative asked him to lend money to them against the value of the lobster stored in his freezer. This he refused to do because the cooperative was unregistered. He did, however, agree to lend money to each individual fisherman on the lobster stored and on additional deliveries valued at between \$.16 and \$.18 per pound of whole lobster (Vega 1979:5). Through this arrangement

the fishermen were able to continue producing lobster and to maintain their families while simultaneously continuing the boycott.

Eventually pressure put on the companies and the government through the boycott, threatened demonstrations, and nationalistic agitation broke down the government's position. A Canadian expert came to Belize to give a seminar on cooperative formation. Delegates from the Cay Caulker cooperative were invited to attend. During the course of the seminar these delegates were able to discuss with the Canadian the particular case of the Cay Caulker fishermen's cooperative. Subsequently, the Canadian recommended to the government that the cooperative be registered and it was. At the same time an export quota was granted and the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative was born. In late 1960 this organization exported the 40,000 pounds of lobster held in cold storage for them by Scott and thus the members were released from their debt to him (Vega 1979:4). At the time of its registration Northern Fishermen's Cooperative had a membership of 44 fishermen with share capital of \$1,504. During their first year of operation, they exported 158,678 pounds of tails worth \$26,735 or about \$.17 per pound (Dpt. Coop. 1960).

Through the 1961-62 season the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative continued to export through Scott's company, Bayman Fisheries, (Vega 1979:5) using the cooperative's export quota which had been increased to 200,000 pounds (Dpt. Coop. 1961). Bayman Fisheries' price to the cooperative also increased with the fishermen receiving \$.22 per pound plus a \$.06 rebate at the end of the season (Dpt. Coop. 1961). Exports from the cooperative fell, however, during this year due to a 20 percent reduction in the scale of operations as a result of hurricane Hattie. Though the hurricane destroyed much of their equipment and boats, the fishermen of

Cay Caulker with the help of the cooperative were able to regain their pre-hurricane productive level by the beginning of the 1962-63 season (Dpt. Coop. 1961). However, at this point Bayman Fisheries dropped its prices for lobster tails.

Northern Fishermen's Cooperative looked for another buyer. The officials contracted to sell to another American company, Metropolitan Shrimp Exchange (Vega 1979:5). This evidently was a company that did not operate in Belize for the Annual Report of the Department of Cooperatives and Credit Unions for 1962 states, without mentioning a specific name, that the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative had entered into an arrangement with an overseas buyer. This was a first for Belizean fishermen. The cooperative also saw the utility of processing its own produce. For this reason the cooperative entered into a contract with this same company through which it received an advance of capital to build a freezer plant in return for a certain percentage of the value of the lobster tails sold to the company. The freezer plant, completed in August of 1962, was built in Belize City because the fishermen of Cay Caulker had traditionally delivered their catch there. This would have serious implications for the home village of Cay Caulker in ensuing years. When the plant was completed, the members, through the cooperative, began processing, packing and exporting tails independently (Vega 1979:5). This enabled the members to further increase the price that their product commanded. By 1964 the cooperative was taking advantage of the continuing upward swing of prices for lobster tails on the American market by arranging to market the tails through a sales agent in the United States on a commission basis and was no longer trying itself to selling at set prices to one company (Dpt. Coop. 1964). (See Figure 6).

The fishermen of Cay Caulker had broken the ice, and it was not long before other groups of fishermen attempted to establish cooperatives of their own. In June of 1962 the fishermen of Placentia registered their cooperative with the government (Dpt. Coop. 1962). This initial organization was shortlived as the fishermen of Placentia were not able to get a permanent organization going until 1967. In 1963 the fishermen of San Pedro became the second group to form a permanent fishermen's cooperative. In many ways this was a logical progression. San Pedro is physically very close to Cay Caulker; about six miles away (see Map 3). Cay Caulker was created by migrants from San Pedro, and, therefore, many San Pedranos have relatives in Cay Caulker. In the early days of the lobster industry San Pedranos market their catch through Cay Caulker so that the lobster industries of the two villages were closely tied. (It will be remembered that the immediate cause of the boycott of Devorak's companies had been the delay in receiving and the lowering of the price paid for the catch of the fishermen of both villages.) For these reasons the fishermen of San Pedro were in close contact with the fishermen of Cay Caulker, intimately acquainted with the process of the formation of the new cooperative there, and very much aware of the advantages being reaped by its new members. The people of San Pedro also had direct experience with organizing for cooperative activity through their credit union which was large for the size of the community, with 157 members in 1961, and for a time quite active (Dpt. Coop. 1961).

The fishermen of San Pedro had two basic problems which they thought that a cooperative would be able to solve. The first problem was basically the same as that which had caused the fishermen of Cay Caulker to form their cooperative, the problem of low prices for their lobster

tails. The lobster fishermen of San Pedro dealt basically with the same buying companies and received the same prices as had the fishermen of Cay Caulker. After the formation of the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative, the American-owned local buyers began to raise the price they paid the fishermen recognizing that continued low prices would just encourage other fishermen to form cooperatives. However, these higher company prices still were not as high as those the new cooperative was paying its fishermen for their product. Further the fishermen of San Pedro became aware that the wholesale prices for lobsters on the U.S. market were much higher than the prices they were receiving.

The second problem was one which had not been as serious for the Cay Caulker fishermen as it was for those of San Pedro. Unlike the fishermen of Cay Caulker most of whom were exclusively involved in the lobster industry, many San Pedrano fishermen were involved in scale fish fishing. As noted previously, San Pedranos were the major users of fish tramps (heart weirs) in the country. With these, both lobster and great quantities of fish were being caught. As more San Pedranos returned to the village to take part in the fishing industry, more traps were put up and more fish caught. The problem was that there was not a sufficient domestic market to absorb all these fish and, with the glut, fish prices were extremely low. One of the original organizers of the San Pedro cooperative, Octavio Alamilla, relates a story which seems to be typical of this time. Having emptied his traps, Tavo took a full load of fish to market in Corozal in his smack. Reaching Corozal he found a line of smacks all trying to sell fish. There was no room for him even to dock. As he waited, the fish in the live well in his hold began to die because they could not tolerate the fresh water in the harbor. On this trip he

ended up selling only three dollar's worth of fish and dumping the rest. On his next trip, he ran into similar problems managing to sell only nine dollar's worth of fish. One solution to a glutted market was to find a new one. However, the only viable new markets were outside the country. Those outside markets that could be reached by individual fishermen, i.e. Chetumal and Honduras (desiring mostly dried fish) were already being serviced. They were not the answer. The fishermen realized they would have to look farther afield for markets. They focused on the U.S., the traditional market for Belizean exports but they realized that individual fishermen could not hope to export their products such a distance. They hoped, however, that through their own cooperative they would be able to do so.

Under these circumstances, sometime in late 1961, four San Pedrano fishermen decided that they would either start a cooperative in San Pedro or, if unsuccessful, join the Northern Fishermen's Cooperative. The process of organization began. Every man in San Pedro was contacted individually. Many were not initially convinced that a cooperative would be a good thing for them. Having been fishermen fishing alone or with family members, or working as wage laborers on the coconut plantations, they were suspicious of collective responsibility for their well being. They did not trust each other, feeling that they would in one way or the other be taken advantage of, or stolen from. For some, this distrust was so strong that they did not join the cooperative until three years after its inception. Eventually, however, twenty men did agree to join, and they collectively sent a letter to the Department of Cooperatives in Belize City saying that they wanted to start a cooperative. The department sent out a man to have a meeting with the people to tell them what

needed to be done to get their cooperative registered. Local tradition has it that the meeting, however, never came about because Devorak, who as we will remember had the only privately-held export quota, had his agent in the village distribute free rum and the fishermen got too drunk to participate in the meeting. This set the cooperative formation process back but it did not stop it.

A meeting was finally held at Blake House, once the seat and symbol of the oppression of San Pedranos, it now became the locale and vehicle of their economic liberation. At this meeting in 1962 the proposed cooperative was organized and persons were selected to begin selling shares. To join the cooperative an individual had to purchase a share. These were sold at \$60 a piece, \$5 down and \$.50 for an "expense book" in which record would be kept of expenses and deliveries by the fishermen to the cooperative. The remaining sum would be paid in installments. The money was needed for administrative costs and to have capital to pay the fishermen for their catch as they brought it in. After eight months, \$1,800 had been collected. During this period meetings were held frequently and regularly to deal with the myriad organizational details which had to be taken care of before the cooperative could be registered. Peter Hancock, an American engineer who had emigrated to Ambergris Cay in the 1950's and who ran a coconut walk, helped the nascent cooperative immeasurably in these formative days as well as after its registration. He served as adviser, wrote the necessary letters to the officials who spoke and wrote English (San Pedranos being native Spanish-speakers felt more comfortable having him do this), drafted the by-laws of the organization, attended meetings with government ministers and officials, etc. He was described by informants as being the "right hand of the cooperative."

Many fishermen joined the cooperative because they respected this man who so firmly believed in it.

Finally in March of 1963, 50 members of San Pedro's proposed cooperative had their organization registered with the government as Caribena Producers Cooperative Ltd. The early years were hard. To get working capital members of the new cooperative used their property and land as collateral to obtain a bank loan. Devorak and his companies remained a problem. As one member put it, "They'd take our men out and get them drunk and give them a hundred dollars and say 'fish for me, don't fish for the cooperative', but once our men got the idea of the cooperative deep inside them, they were loyal." (Alan Forman in Eberle 1977:30).

The cooperative initially approached Apolono Alamilla (of San Pedro's ruling family who was also dabbling in marine products) about buying their lobster. He refused them. However, the Caribbean Queen Company which had either been revived or had never ceased to exist as reported by Vega (1979) agreed to purchase the lobster and to export it using the cooperative's quota. Every Saturday a boat was sent to San Pedro with ice. It would deliver the ice to the fishermen and collect the lobster that had been sold to the cooperative. The lobster was then taken to Belize City, processed and exported by Caribbean Queen. Lobster was received by the cooperative from its members on the beach in front of the village. A receipt was given to each fisherman which was then redeemed at the small cooperative office under a villager's house.

Some of the cooperative members, however, elected to deliver their catch directly to the Caribbean Queen Co. in Belize City as they had been used to doing before the advent of the cooperative. These fishermen were

thus paid in Belize City. Some informants report that many of them spent their money there on alcohol and women bringing little of it back to the village with them. The San Pedranos had also learned from the example of Northern Fishermen's Cooperative that they could get better prices for their lobster tails if they processed, packed and exported them themselves. The cooperative asked Caribbean Queen if it could put up the money for the necessary machinery for a freezer plant. The company agreed to do so but only if the plant were built in Belize City. This was unacceptable to the cooperative members so they stopped doing business with the Caribbean Queen Company. Caribena then began selling lobster to a company headed by Apolono Alamilla who, by now, was willing to deal with the cooperative.

During this same period in 1963 there was an attempt to organize a Federal Sea Products Marketing Cooperative. This would have joined all three fishermen's cooperatives in existence at the time into one national fishermen's cooperative. The plan was to expand Northern's freezer plant to be able to accommodate the product of all three groups of fishermen. This would have enabled the unified organization to undertake all processing, marketing and supply services. The concept was originally accepted by all involved. However, the two new societies eventually withdrew "due to the influence of their (the Federal Sea Products Marketing Cooperative's) competitors in the private sector" (Dpt. Coop. 1964). After this attempt failed, the members of Caribena started constructing their own plant. Working for half salary the members cleared a site and started to erect some of the buildings that would be necessary. They also approached Alamilla, to whom they had been selling for almost a year, about putting up the money to buy the necessary

equipment. Alamilla agreed to do so but he, too, insisted that the plant be built in Belize City. This idea still remained unacceptable to the San Pedranos.

Through 1964 Caribena continued selling through local exporters. The difference in the price between what the fishermen who fished for Northern, which sold processed tails through an agent in the U.S., and what the fishermen who fished for Caribena, which sold unprocessed tails to a local exporter, were getting for their product had by this time become glaring. Northern Fishermen's Cooperative sold their tails in the U.S. for \$2.10 per pound while Caribena Producers Cooperative sold their tails locally for \$1.04 per pound (Dpt. Coop. 1964). Because they sold locally for a fixed price Caribena could not take advantage of the rising price of lobster tails on the U.S. market.

On the bright side, Caribena began handling conch and scale fish (Dpt. Coop. 1964) which pushed up the price of these commodities thus materially helping both those fishermen who specialized in these commodities as well as lobster fishermen who used these products to tide themselves over the government mandated four-month closed season on lobster. Additionally, Caribena had the largest membership of any fishermen's cooperative with its 152 members (Dpt. Coop. 1964).

Sometime in 1964 or early 1965 Jim Blake (scion of San Pedro's "ruling family") brought one Adam Smith to San Pedro. Smith was an American based in Miami who operated a big meat packing company in Honduras and also a small lobster business in the Bay Islands (Eberle 1977:30). Supposedly Smith could not get enough lobster from the Bay Islands to fill his boats for their trips to Miami so he was interested in filling out his loads in Belize (Alan Forman in Eberle 1977:30).

Smith, besides his interest in lobster, started a shrimping business in Belize. Since Smith's primary interest was to get enough lobster in his boats to make running them profitable, he was not particularly interested in getting into the production or processing side of the lobster industry in Belize. This made him a perfect match for the San Pedranos who were trying to make an arrangement with a buyer who would allow them to handle those aspects of the operation themselves. Caribena told Smith that if he wanted their lobster he would have to help them obtain the equipment for processing and packing it,. Smith was shown the cooperative's records and the proposed plant site and he decided to put up the capital for the project.

Smith signed a five-year contract with Caribena in which he agreed to supply them with the equipment they needed: generators, compressors, refrigeration equipment, building materials, etc., to begin processing their own product in exchange for a percentage (20 percent) of the value of the cooperative's lobster which was to be exclusively sold to his company. Smith guaranteed that if the plant were not completed by the start of the 1965-1966 lobster season he would send one of his processing boats for them to use. The freezer plant did open in July of 1965. However, Caribena had a hard time getting a license from the government to operate the new facility. The government did not want to grant the license because they were afraid that if the freezer failed, a mechanic could not be got out to fix it before the product spoiled. Nevertheless this problem was worked out and operation began. The cooperative was granted two export quotas, the second when the first was filled. The two combined amounted to 179,312 pounds of lobster (Caribena 1966). By October 1965 the new plant was not only serving the cooperative's needs

but was also providing refrigeration and electrical service for the entire village (Caribena 1967). The provision of these services to the village was part of a diversification policy unique among fishermen's cooperatives of this time. By the 1966-67 season almost one half of the cooperative's profits derived from trading of products and services other than lobster tails (Caribena 1967).

Smith paid \$.75 to \$.90 for lobster he bought from the cooperative (Caribena 1969). In late 1966 after two seasons of working under this agreement the fishermen found, through the offers of other buyers and by obtaining a copy of the "Green Sheet" (a listing of wholesale prices at New York's Fulton Market), that they were not getting as good a price from Smith for their product as they were entitled to. Bad feelings were growing among the members who felt they were being cheated. The cooperative hired a lawyer to see what could be done to get the contract changed. Ultimately Smith, stating that he did not want to work with people who did not want to work with him, offered to let the cooperative buy out the rest of the contract, which it did. Subsequently, the cooperative signed a two-year contract with Del-Sea Inc. beginning in the 1967-1968 season. With this company the price paid for lobster reflected the increases in lobster prices on the U.S. market.

With the success of Northern and Caribena fishermen's cooperatives both the new nationalist and internally ruled national government and the fishermen of the country saw the utility of these organizations. However, in an attempt to keep their cooperatives of manageable size, the two new cooperatives were forced to deny membership in the mid 1960's to over 100 fishermen mostly in Belize City (Vega 1979:6). These fishermen, motivated by the example set by the two cooperatives and the government's

refusal to grant export quotas to individual fishermen, banded together and registered themselves as the National Fisheries Company headquartered in Belize City and began packing and processing. Government then decided that only cooperatives would be granted export quotas. The company was liquidated and reregistered as National Fishermen Producer's Cooperative (Vega 1979:6). National is now the nation's largest fishermen's cooperative. Its operations are still based in Belize City. Following the example of fishermen in other parts of the country the Placentia Producers' Cooperative Society Ltd. and Sarteneja Fishermen's Cooperative Society Ltd. were chartered in 1976 and 1968 respectively (Gibson 1977:131). Both these cooperatives operate freezer plants in their own villages. There have been several other attempts at forming fishermen's cooperatives but these have been abortive, especially in the southern portion of the country. Most recently, two cooperatives have been set up in Dangriga and Baranco. It is, however, too early to know whether these attempts will be successful.

Impact of the Cooperatives

The impact on the Belizean fishing industry of the country's fisheries cooperatives has been large. In the early 1960's when the first cooperatives were organized, there were approximately 600 fishermen full and part time operating in Belize. By the mid 1970's there were 800 full time fishermen and 300 part time (Richards 1979:133). Obviously Belizeans were being drawn to the occupation of fishing. Another index of the large increase in fishing effort is the tremendous rise in the total Belizean catch. In 1955 well before the inception of Belizean cooperatives, FAO (1966:20) reported a national catch of all species of 500 metric tons. By 1960 this figure had risen to 900 metric tons (FAO

1966:21). In 1974, total catch had more than doubled to 1924 metric tons (FAO 1978:260). The reason for this increase in manpower and output in the fishing industry was of course the increased amount of money to be made in it, especially by exporting the product. The amounts of marine products exported from Belize increased about three times between 1956 and 1979 from 375,230 pounds (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1958) to 1,177,384 pounds (Belize Fisheries Unit 1980) respectively. During this same period foreign exchange earned from this product increased 41 times, rising from \$BZ \$191,635⁶ in 1957 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1958) to \$BZ \$563,700 in 1965, and then jumping to \$BZ \$7,938,390 in 1979 (Belize Fisheries Unit 1980).

Topping the list of these exports was lobster. While the poundage exported from the country has not risen much since the mid-1950's the price received for this product has. This is due to a combination of steadily increasing prices on the international market and the Belizean cooperatives' ability to negotiate for a fair price for their product. This is shown by the following figures. In 1950, 125,915 pounds of lobster was exported yielding \$BZ \$19,321 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1951). By 1960, lobster fishing was in full swing but the first cooperative had yet to be formed. In this year 363,720 pounds of lobster was exported returning \$BZ \$276,127 (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1962-63) or about \$.76 per pound. In 1979, after about twenty years of cooperative activity in fishing in Belize the lobster export had only increased to 443,274 pounds. The revenue from this export, however, was now \$BZ \$5,984,199 (Belize Fisheries Unit 1980) or about \$BZ \$13.50 per pound. Clearly with the advent of cooperatives fishing has come a long way from a subsistence

and internal market production activity to being the third largest source of foreign exchange for the country.

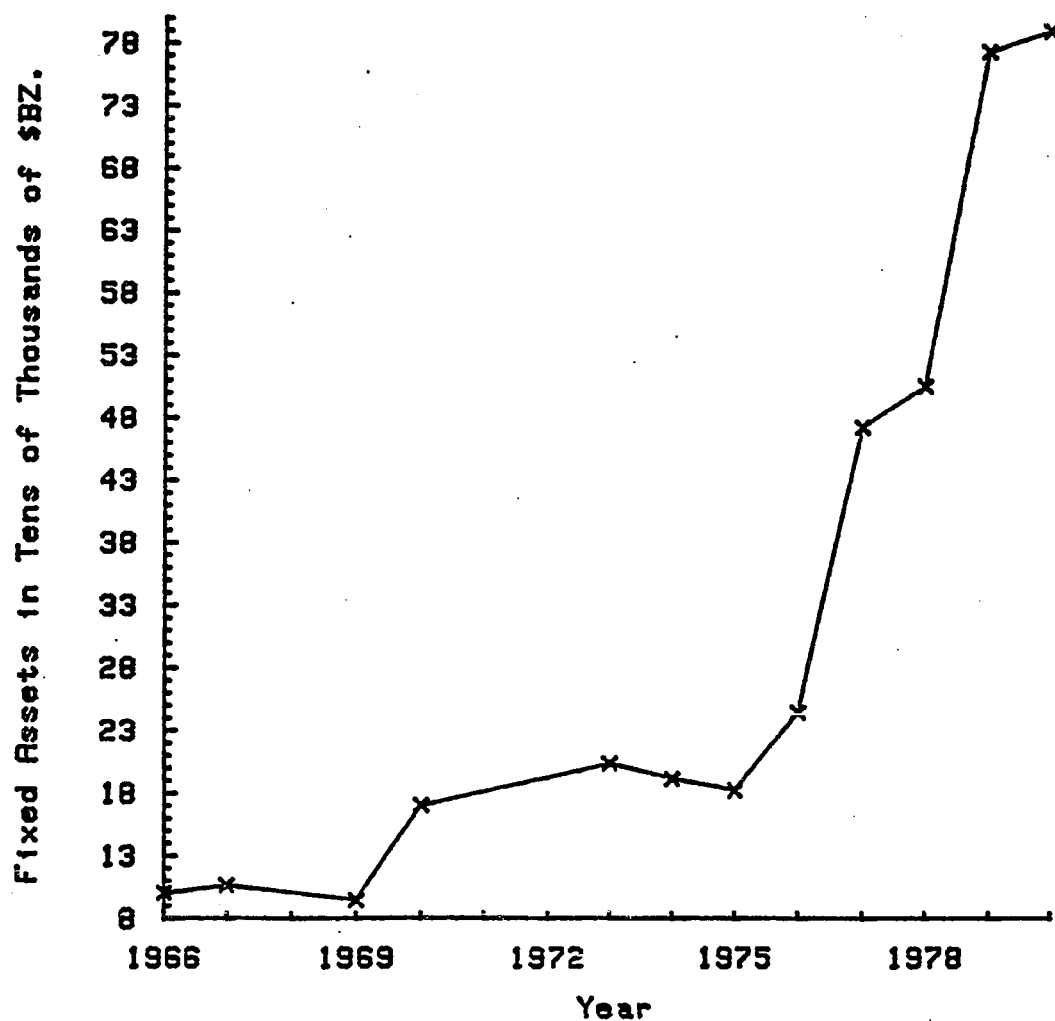
As might be imagined, the impact of the cooperative on San Pedro was as large as anywhere else in Belize. This was especially the case since Caribena's headquarters and processing facilities were located in San Pedro. From its 50 or so original members in 1963 Caribena grew quickly so that by 1980 it could boast 165 producing members and 209 members in all⁷. This growth in membership occurred principally in the first five years of operation so that by 1967 the cooperative had 131 producing members and 168 members over all. Despite the relatively slow rate of increase in membership over the last decade, the cooperative's production of marine products has increased especially in scale fish production. Here the cooperative has found markets for this product enabling fishermen to fully exploit the scale fish resource. Shrimp has in recent years been added to the list of marine products handled by Caribena. This resource which brought \$BZ \$322,047 to the cooperative in 1980 (Caribena 1980), would not have been possible for San Pedrano fishermen to exploit without the cooperative to help finance the expensive vessels and nets needed. The production picture of other products, however, has not been as rosy as that for scale fish and shrimp. Conch, which was of negligible importance in the beginning years of Caribena's activities became a product of importance in the late '60's and early '70's. In recent years, however, conch production has dropped precipitously as a consequence of resource depletion. The lobster resource, though not yet experiencing the same trouble as conch, has shown signs of possible over-exploitation. Production of this product over the last fifteen years has

remained relatively stable. Further increases in production are not to be expected.

While production figures have, over all, shown a moderate but steady increase during the years of Caribena's operation, the cooperative's financial advances have been spectacular. Caribena started operations in 1963 with no fixed assets. By 1965 it had fixed assets of \$BZ \$250.25. This figure jumped to \$BZ \$100,183.48 with the purchasing of materials for a freezer plant in 1966 (Caribena 1966). By 1980 Caribena's fixed assets were valued at \$BZ \$780,898.78 (see Figure 7). Total assets similarly increased. Total assets of \$BZ \$198,444.77 in 1966 (Caribena 1966) grew to \$BZ \$972,005.55 in 1980 (Caribena 1980). Likewise sales have increased remarkably, increasing over tenfold from \$BZ \$275,682.31 in 1966 to \$BZ \$,189,174.93 in 1980 (see Figure 8). Because increases in revenues from sales are largely redistributed to the fishermen members of the cooperative, the cooperative's net profits have remained stable over the years. In 1966 net profit was \$BZ \$127,862.78 and in 1980 \$BZ \$124,602.00. Returns to fishermen have increased dramatically. In 1966 producing members received a total of \$BZ \$157,899.96 for their produce. In the ensuing fifteen years this return to fishermen for their labor was increased seventeen times to \$BZ \$2,672,461.39. These figures do not include rebates on produce and dividends on shares held in the cooperative by fishermen that further increase the amounts of money paid yearly to fishermen.

The bulk of the responsibility for the financial success of the cooperative and its ability to increase the returns to its fishermen members so greatly rested with Caribena's ability to negotiate ever increasing prices for its lobster tails principally (this product brought

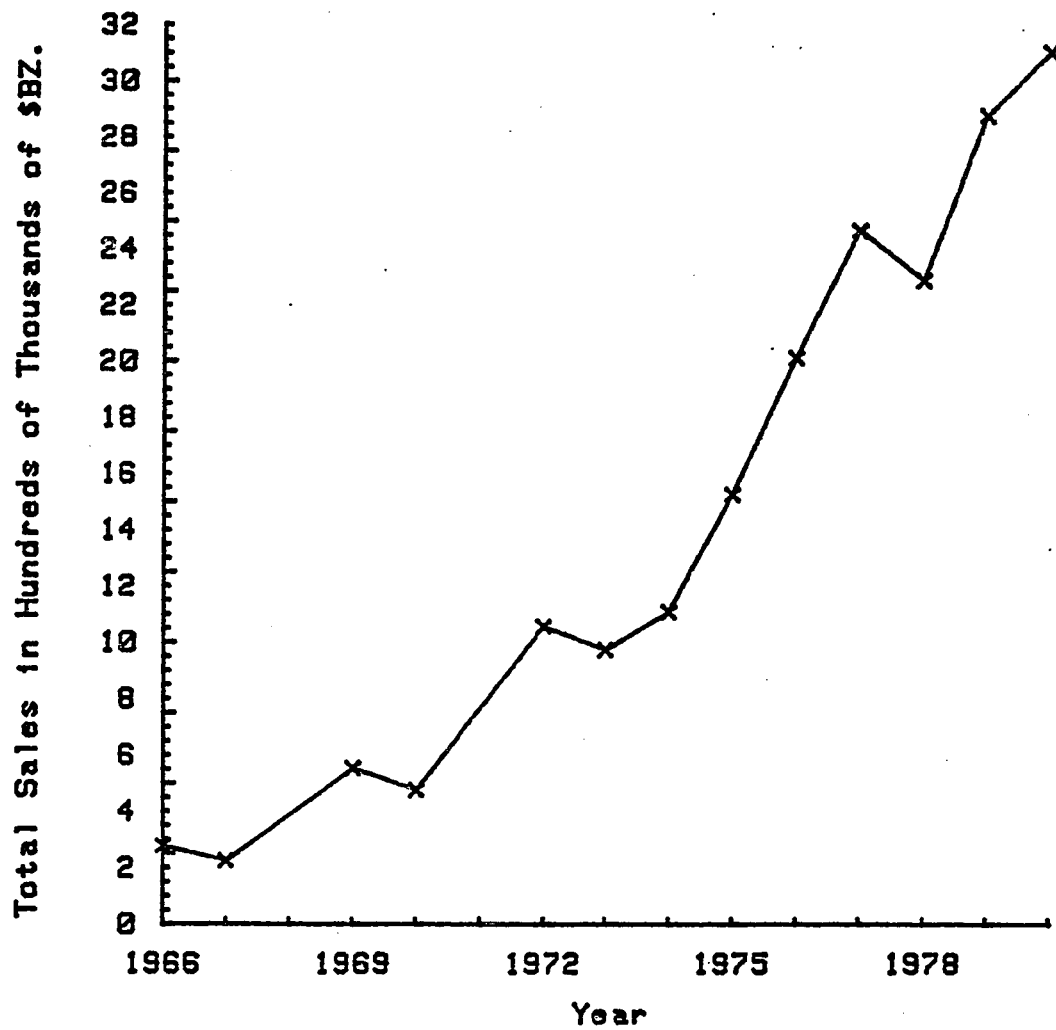
Figure 7



CARIBENA FIXED ASSETS: 1966 TO 1980

Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

Figure 8



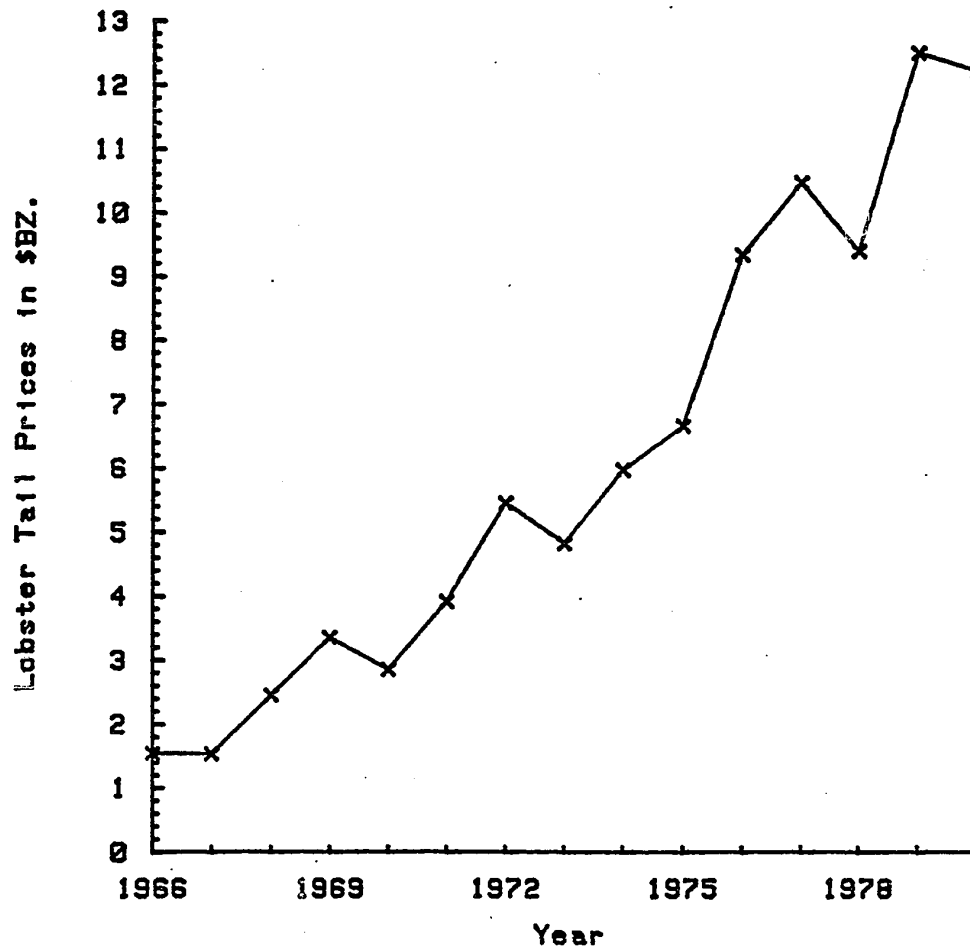
CARIBENA TOTAL SALES: 1966 TO 1980

Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

in \$BZ \$1,668,742.78 in 1980) and to a lesser extent for other products. As mentioned above, prices per pound of lobster tail were at around \$.16 in 1960. By 1966 Caribena had already been able to increase the price paid to it for lobster tail to \$1.54; over the years this price increased by a factor of 78 when compared to its 1960 price, to \$12.48 in 1979 (see Figure 9). This spectacular increase is somewhat misleading, however, for a number of reasons. Prices for lobster and other products exported to the U.S. market are negotiated with reference to the going wholesale price on that market in U.S. dollars. The Belize dollar before 1976 was pegged to the British pound. In 1976 the Belize dollar was revalued and pegged to the U.S. dollar. This revaluation has meant that prices received for produce in recent years have been much inflated when compared to those received before revaluation. A more accurate reflection of the increase in prices received by Caribena for its lobster tails is garnered by converting them first to U.S. dollars and then comparing. Using this method we see that the increases in Prices received have still been substantial, increasing from U.S. \$.12 before the cooperative in 1960 to U.S. \$1.08 in 1966 and up to U.S. \$6.10 in 1979, an increase of over 55 times during the course of Caribena's operation (see Figure 10).

The magnitude of the increases of prices paid to Caribena and ultimately to its fishermen members has also been diluted by inflation which, while a world wide phenomenon, has been particularly acute in San Pedro to and from which everything must be transported by boat and handled manually. The severity of this inflation can be gauged somewhat by a comparison of some prices charged for the everyday food products used by villagers in 1962⁸ (Col. Ann. Rpt. B.H. 1962-1963) and 1977. During these fifteen years prices for bread went from \$.15 per loaf to

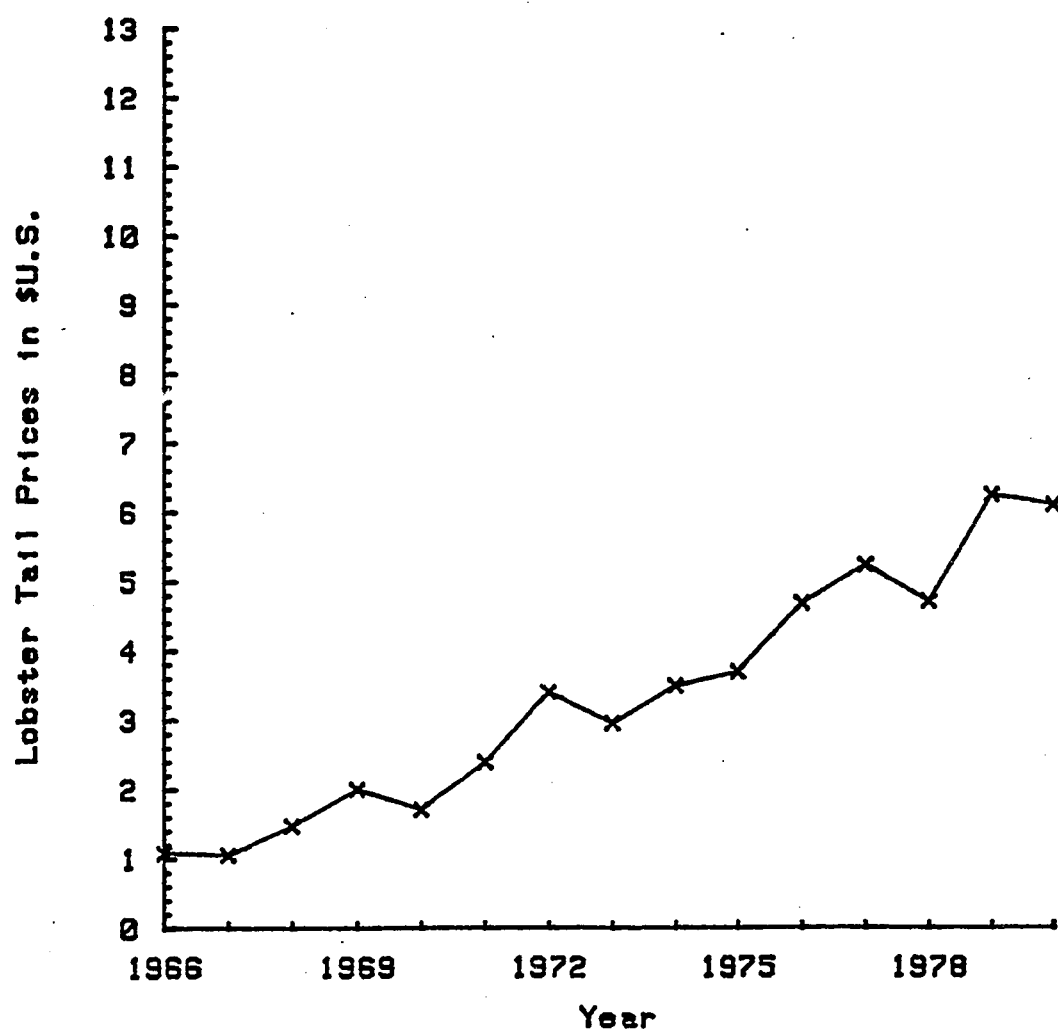
Figure 9



PRICE RECEIVED BY CARIBENA FOR LOBSTER IN \$BZ: 1966 TO 1980

Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

Figure 10



PRICE RECEIVED BY CARIBENA FOR LOBSTER IN \$US: 1966 TO 1980

From the analysis of data in Caribena Annual Report, various years

\$.70, the cost of a pound of beef from \$.50 to \$2.00, chicken from \$.67 to \$1.08, eggs from \$1.00 a dozen to \$2.20, onions from \$.15 a pound to \$.50, and beer from \$.45 a pint to \$1.28. Inflation is also evident in the increase in the cost of securing the means of production for fishermen. In 1955 a 24-foot sailing boat such as is now used for long-distance fishing cost about \$BZ \$1,000 to have built new. By 1968, only a few years after the cooperative began operation, the cost of building a similar boat had increased by about a factor of two to between \$BZ \$2,000 and \$2,500. In 1978 a boat valued at \$BZ \$2,100 in 1968 was sold for \$5,000 and a boat built new to order cost between \$8,000 and \$10,000. Similarly a fish "trampa" which cost \$75 in materials to construct cost \$500 in materials in 1978. Clearly inflation has cut into the increased return to labor that the cooperative has afforded the fishermen of San Pedro. However, the cost of living in San Pedro has only increased by a factor of approximately seven since the early 1960's while the price of lobster tails received by the San Pedranos increased by a factor of over fifty during this same period of time. San Pedrano fishermen are, therefore, in a much stronger financial position than they were before the creation of the cooperative.

The success of the cooperative and the fact that its headquarters and processing facilities are located in the village thus keeping the maximum amount of money circulating through village hands has led to a substantial increase in the over all standard of living of the villagers. San Pedro, which due to the devastation of a hurricane and the extreme depression of the coconut industry in the early 1940's was poverty stricken and being abandoned by its residents, was by 1980 one of the more affluent communities in Belize. In 1955 San Pedro was a community

of 400 residents, with no electricity (save the small generator run by Blake for his own use), no cars, only two stores, many thatched roofed Maya hybrid type houses, only one outboard or inboard boat motor (Blake's), kerosene lamps, and cooking done over stone coconut husk fired hearths. By the late 1970's San Pedro boasted over 1,200 inhabitants, electricity in every home, 14 cars, 14 stores of various descriptions, 4 fishing trawlers, 173 outboard and inboard motors, running water including toilets in many houses, propane gas stoves in most houses, two medical clinics, T.V. sets, telephones, etc. In terms of diet in 1954 San Pedranos lived on fish and lobster, biscuit, tortillas, rice, sweet potatoes and fruit when available. Fresh vegetables and canned foods were either unavailable or too expensive (Fuller 1955:20). Today San Pedranos eat a variety of meats, processed foods and fresh fruits and vegetables. Most significantly San Pedranos will tell a questioner that to a person their lives are very much fuller materially than even ten years ago and will attribute it to the advent of the fishermen's cooperative.

In the last decade tourism has also begin to play a significant role in the material well-being of the village. This growth in tourism would not have been possible, however, without the cooperative that established the infra-structure and provided some of the capital with which tourist facilities were built and initially run. Earnings from the activities of the fishermen and their cooperative have also created a boom in commercial capitalism. As mentioned above, there are now many more stores and other entrepreneurial activities than there used to be in the village. Some of the capital to start these businesses came directly from fishermen who invested their earnings in them. Much or most of it came from

fishermen spending their earnings on food and consumer items offered in these growing commercial enterprises. This boom in the village economy enabled entrepreneurs starting with almost no inventory and a minimal investment to build enterprises in just a short while.

The cooperative itself has invested much of its earnings back into its operation, increasing rapidly its facilities and the scope of services it is able to offer its members and the community. And, as we have seen, the fishermen themselves reinvested their earnings to some extent in fishing, mainly enlarging the range of their operations by purchasing skiffs and outboard motors for their boats.

Despite the investment of portions of the capital generated by the activities of San Pedrano fishermen and their cooperative back into productive sectors of the village economy, there is still a problem in the village of under-capitalization.

As might be expected in a situation where a group of people have been poor and owned very little in the way of material goods, as the San Pedranos' income increased they increased their expenditures on consumer items. Rather than investing in factors of production most San Pedranos understandably, sank their earnings into building bigger and better houses, household appliances, imported food stuffs and all the other items pointed to earlier as signs of the villager's new affluence.

The relatively small productive investment by the village's fishermen is beginning to have an impact on the village economy. The fishing industry is the most affected. The resources in areas exploited by San Pedrano fishermen have reached their productive capacity. In order for the industry to expand it must branch out into other areas, long-distance deep sea fishing and aquaculture are two possibilities which have been

pushed by the cooperative as viable expansion alternatives. However, despite constant propagandizing over the last decade of its fishermen by the cooperative very little if any investment by individual or groups of fishermen has been made in the fishing industry other than those which have served to maintain it in its present position. The cooperative itself has and is trying to use some of the capital it controls to expand the industry. It has attempted a deep-sea fishing venture which was unsuccessful and has an aquaculture program in the planning stages. It is doubtful, however, given the structure of the cooperative, whether it can, without the morale and financial support of its fishermen members, keep the fishing industry in the village from stagnating.

Fishermen have been much more willing to invest in the tourist industry. Here too, though, the impact of local capital has not been all that it could be. The majority of the capital invested in tourism on Ambergris Cay was and is U.S. capital. As a result much of the control of the industry is in the hands of U.S. citizens. The major increases in building of tourist facilities occurring today is the result of U.S. investment through villagers. New dependency relations are being established.

Clearly while the formation of Caribena Producers' Cooperative Ltd. has had a large and positive impact on the village, the potential impact has been somewhat diluted by the understandable propensity of villagers to place raising their material standard of living and consumption of consumer items over capital investment in the village's industries. While understandable, this attitude may also retard the continuation of the economic advances made by the villagers over the last two decades or

even shift the control of the village's economy out of their hands. More will be said about this trend in the concluding chapter.

In sum, the effects of the fishermen's cooperative on San Pedro have been large, especially in its effect on the village standard of living. The most significant impact of the cooperative on San Pedro, however, has been the transformation of its class structure. The cooperative allowed the fishermen of San Pedro to control their industry at least until the point of the export of their products to the metropole. All the fishermen were now owners of at least part of the means of production in processing. This not only raised their standard of living but to a certain degree gave them a new class status and a new autonomy that had not been possible for the majority of San Pedranos to this point in history.

Notes: Chapter V

1. A bully net is a small net on the end of a long pole which is placed around the lobster and hauled in.
2. A dry boat is the same wooden hulled gaff rigged sailing boat as a smack but with an ice box situated amid ship instead of a live well.
3. In speaking of San Pedrano fishermen as petty bourgeois we break somewhat from the conventional notion of petty bourgeoisie. This group is generally understood to occupy an intermediate position in an advanced capitalist social formation between proletariat and bourgeoisie. San Pedro, at this time, still contained a bourgeoisie in the form of the remnants of the plantation aristocracy as well as a proletariat in the form of the few remaining coconut workers and those fishermen who did piece work in lobster fishing for Blake and Devorak. As a consequence, what I have called petty bourgeois fishermen did operate in an intermediary position between a village proletariat and bourgeoisie. It should also not be forgotten that village class structure cannot be separated from the national class structure which was strongly differentiated between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Further justification for terming these fishermen petty bourgeois was their intermediate position vis a vis the means and relations of production. They owned their means of production and, therefore, could not be considered proletariat but did not hire wage labor and, therefore, could not be considered bourgeois. Finally these fishermen represented a transitional stage between proletariat (most of them had recently been plantation workers) and bourgeoisie (this status many would soon attain as well be discussed in the next chapter). There is, therefore, good reason to call these fishermen petty bourgeois though they do not fit the category as we conventionally view it.
4. Much of the description of the formation of Belizean fishermen's cooperatives is based on Vegas's (1979) excellent summary of this process. The rest is culled from interviews made during the author's field work in San Pedro.
5. FAO catch statistics for Belize seem to be perpetually high and so should be taken with a grain of salt. Since they are all uniformly high the error runs in one direction and they are, therefore, appropriate for comparative use.
6. All dollar figures are stated in \$BZ unless otherwise specified.
7. Members who have retired or have stopped fishing to take up other occupations remain members due to the fact that they own shares in the cooperative and still participate in its activities and can take advantage of its privileges. They are, however, listed in the cooperative records as nonproducing members.
8. 1962 prices are for Belize City and, so, are probably \$.02 to \$.05 lower than those in San Pedro at this time.

CHAPTER VI

THE FISHING ECONOMY OF CONTEMPORARY SAN PEDRO

This chapter describes the fishing portion of San Pedro's present economy. In the first part of the chapter, the discussion concerns the means of production in fishing, where fishermen fish, their technology and how it is employed. The second section of the chapter deals with the relations of production in village fishing. The relations of production below and at the level of the cooperative are outlined with an eye towards analyzing access to and ownership of, the means of production in fishing. In the final portion of the chapter elements of the analysis of the means and relations of production just completed are employed render the argument plausible that the majority of the fishermen and cooperative members of San Pedro are bourgeois.

FISHING PRACTICE AND TECHNOLOGY: THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

San Pedrano fishermen procure marine products in two ways. These are: local fishing inside the reef in which the fisherman leaves the village in the morning and returns that same evening, and, long-distance fishing, in general outside the barrier reef in which the fishermen leave the village for more than a day. Long-distance fishing is economically the most important to the cooperative because the most valuable product, lobster tails, are caught predominantly on these trips. Sixty to seventy percent of all lobster, and approximately fifty percent of all conch, along with sizeable amounts of scale fish are taken in the long-distance

fishery. San Pedranos turned to long-distance fishing in the late 1950's, when the supply of lobster began to dwindle in the traditional areas of exploitation near the village. This forced fishermen to expand their operations beyond the barrier reef where they found ample supplies of lobster in the offshore atolls. Long-distance fishing has been practiced now for about twenty years. As a result, the resource in these areas has diminished to about the level of fishing areas near the village. Lobster catch per unit effort statistics, though highly variable, are about the same for long-distance and local fishing areas¹ (see Table 2). Conch, not exploited for as long a time in the long-distance areas has a higher catch per unit effort than in local areas, though, again the results vary considerably from year to year (see Table 3).

Long-distance Fishing

Long-distance fishing by San Pedrano fishermen is concentrated in four major areas of the waters off the Belizean coast. The Turneffe atoll, approximately 25 miles, or a half to a day's sail from San Pedro, was the first long-distance area along with the Chinchorro atoll to the north in Mexican waters, that San Pedro lobster fishermen exploited. In the early 1960's Mexican authorities blocked San Pedro fishermen from fishing at Banco Chinchorro, and as the lobster stocks at Turneffe began to show the effects of exploitation, fishermen began to fish in and around Half Moon Cay in the Lighthouse Reef atoll. This atoll is about 55 miles from San Pedro as the crow flies, or about a day to a day and a half sail. As time went on San Pedrano lobster fishermen moved farther and farther afield searching for good lobster grounds. Glover's Reef, the third of Belize's off shore atolls, is fished extensively today though about 70 miles on a strait line from San Pedro and a day and a

Table 2

LOBSTER EFFORT AND PRODUCTIVITY: 1972 - 1975

Area	Effort (days)	Productivity (cpue)*
Long Distance Fishing Areas		
Turneffe Atoll	1239.9	39.8
Lighthouse Reef	923.5	51.2
Glover's Reef	1641.5	45.4
Down South	1266.5	42.5
Local Fishing Areas		
Less than 6 mi. N.	215.8	34.0
More than 6 mi. N.	129.15	42.1
Less than 6 mi. S.	422.95	42.2
More than 6 mi. S.	276.2	62.3
E. or W.	68.5	32.8

* catch per unit effort

From analysis of the records of Caribena Producers' Cooperative, Ltd.

Table 3

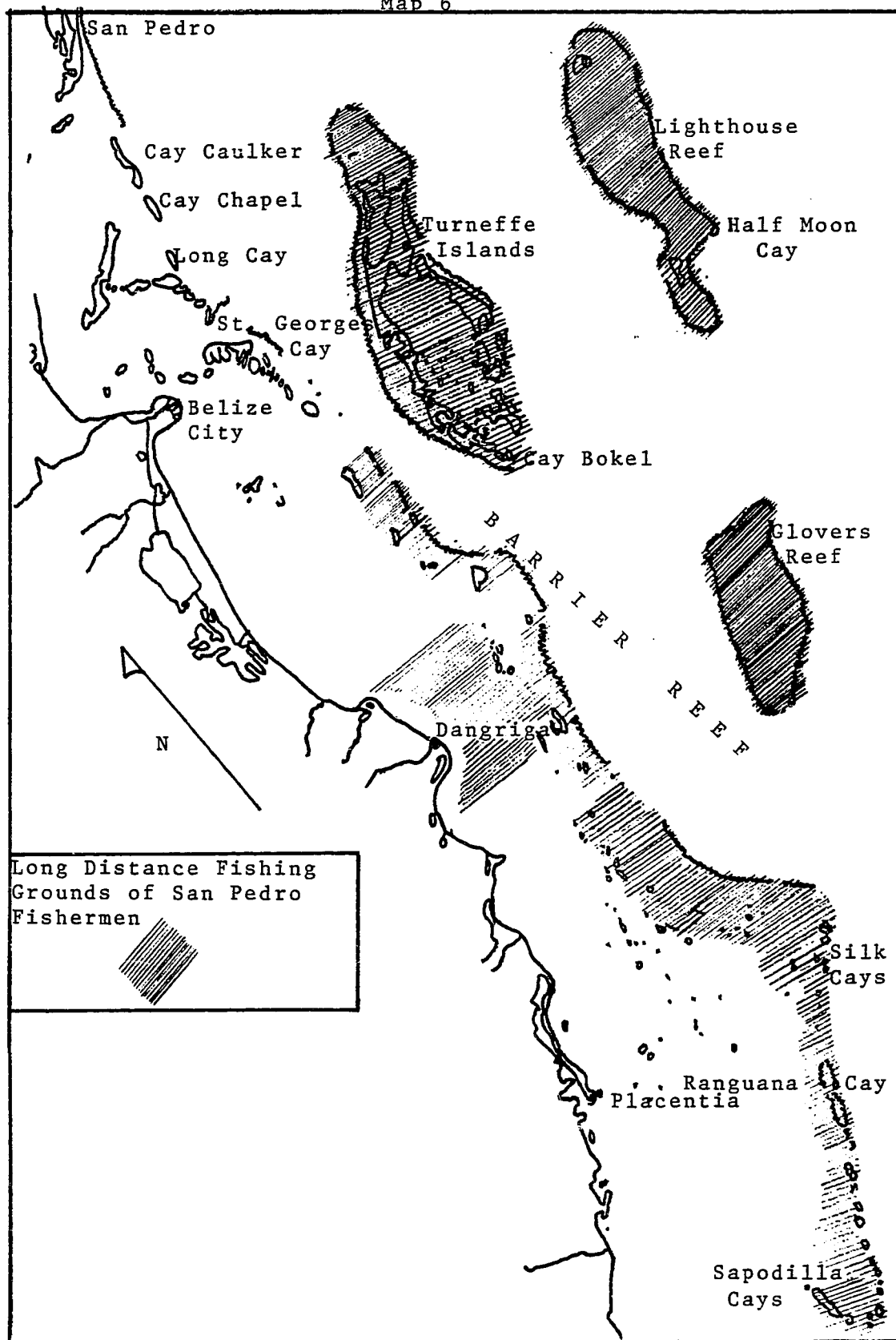
CONCH EFFORT AND PRODUCTIVITY: 1972 - 1975

Area	Effort (days)	Productivity (cpue)*
Long Distance Areas		
Turneffe Atoll	263.3	118.1
Lighthouse Reef	1015.5	173.3
Glover's Reef	308.5	105
Down South	237	72.3
Local Fishing Areas		
Less than 6 mi. N.	246.6	80.4
More than 6 mi. N.	115.8	86
Less than 6 mi. S.	1005.4	97.7
More than 6 mi. S.	166.1	134.5
E. or W.	11.8	66.3

* catch per unit effort

From analysis of the records of Caribena Producers' Cooperative, Ltd.

Map 6



half to two day's sail away. The last major area of long-distance fishing is designated by fishermen as "Down South." This is an area which extends all along the barrier reef south of San Pedro but which usually refers to fishing which takes place in an area which includes the southern half of the reef to the Sapodilla Cays 124 miles from San Pedro and beyond to reefs end at Hunter Cay a three- or four-day journey.

These four areas of long-distance fishing, Turneffe Reef atoll, Lighthouse Reef atoll, Glover's Reef atoll, and the southern reef areas—in essence the entire set of offshore formations along the entire length of the Belizean coast—have since the late 1960's been regularly visited and exploited by San Pedro fishermen. These areas differ in the amount of total fishing effort expended upon them each year as well as in their relative productivity as can be seen in Table 2. During the three fishing seasons between 1972 and 1975, Glover's Reef received the most lobster fishing effort by a wide margin. The "Down South" and Turneffe areas followed with almost equal effort. "Half Moon Cay" (the Lighthouse Reef area) was a distant fourth in this respect with a little more than half the effort expended at Glover's Reef. In terms of productivity of this effort, during this same period of time, the Half Moon Cay area, though the least fished had by far the highest catch per unit effort level followed by the Glover's Reef, "Down South," and the Turneffe areas in that order.

Conch is fished much less intensively in the long-distance areas than is lobster (see Table 3). The effort expended on conch in the Half Moon area is comparable to that spent on lobster in these long-distance areas. However, the conch effort at Half Moon Cay is three times that expended on conch in any of the other long-distance areas which are about equal in

conch effort. Half Moon Cay is far and away the most productive long-distance conch ground followed by Turneffe and Glover's Reef which are about equal and then "Down South" where productivity is poor.

Long-distance fishing reaches its peak in late July and August of every year. This is the period directly after the closed season on lobster fishing which lasts from April 15 to July 15. After peaking in August, fishing effort slowly declines through March and then ceases altogether when the lobster season closes in April. There is an annual hiatus in fishing of all sorts for about a month around Christmas when fishermen spend time with their families and also make fast money guiding tourists on fishing expeditions. Up until recently fishermen maintained that they started out the long-distance lobster fishing season fishing the areas closest to home and ended the season in the farther-most areas. Today this seems to no longer be the case as the near areas have become less productive. Fishermen regularly now head for Glover's Reef at the very beginning of the season to be certain that they are able to capitalize on the comparative abundance of lobster there early in the season. Conch fishing in the long-distance areas is concentrated mostly during the time when there is a moratorium on lobster fishing.

Only one type of boat is used today in long-distance fishing. This is the dry boat. The dry boat is essentially the same as the Belizean smack mentioned earlier. The difference is that, today, live wells are no longer built into the fishermen's sailing boats. Instead ice boxes have been added which hold ice to preserve the lobster or other product as it is caught. The dry boats used for long-distance fishing are gaff-rigged 18-to 34-foot sailing boats which use 25 to 40 horse power outboard engines for auxiliary power. They used to be built in San

Pedro by a resident boatwright; today, however, they are constructed in Cay Caulker, Belize City or Sarteneja and purchased by San Pedro's fishermen. They are constructed of native materials, mostly mahogany, cedar and pine. Boats are pulled from the water twice a year in San Pedro to be scraped, repaired, recaulked and otherwise serviced. As mentioned above the price for these boats has increased dramatically over the last 20 to 30 years to about \$10,000 a piece today. During the 1979-1980 season 22 dry boats participated in long-distance fishing from San Pedro. This number has increased from the 18 which were involved in this type of fishing during most of the 1970's. The top boat during this season produced 7336 pounds of lobster during 14 trips to various of the long-distance areas. The most trips made by any boat was 15, the least 8. The boat with the least production during this season fished 1,600 pounds in nine trips.

Long-distance trips usually last from eight to twelve days though occasionally a boat will stay out for as long as a month, being serviced by other boats which will take its catch to the village and bring back provisions and ice. Life on these small boats is cramped. Three to five fishermen crew the boats all of whom bring along a small, six-foot cayuco which is stored on deck. Also stored on deck are 50-gallon barrels of gasoline for the engines, and drinking water as well as tanks of propane for the small stove which is in the tiny aft cabin. Some of the crew sleep on deck, but most, fearing ghosts or other spirits in the night, sleep either packed in the aft cabin or in the bow. A large ice box is placed amidship filled with well over 1,500 pounds of block and shell ice to preserve the lobster or other products after they are caught. All boats carry a battery-powered radio to forewarn fishermen of hurricanes

or other bad weather, a constant problem for fishermen in Belizean waters. A compass is generally carried now-a-days, as well, for navigation between the various atolls. Most captains could successfully navigate the waters of Belize without one, however.

All crew members chip in to purchase a "provision" of food for each trip. The crew often purchases the food in Belize City on the way to one or the other of the fishing areas so as to avoid the high prices in San Pedro. The provision, which usually costs around \$70, consists of, among other things, wheat and corn flour for tortillas and biscuits, eggs, coffee, rice, sugar, canned milk, salt, butter, bread, fresh fruit and other edibles. Fish caught during the trip is a main staple. Crew members do the cooking in rotation on the small propane stove. Many crews utilize rum, beer and other consciousness-altering substances during the trips to ease the monotony of the voyage and take the edge off the grueling nature of the work.

Fishermen fish almost entirely by diving. Each fisherman on the boat brings his own fishing outfit which includes a mask, fins, hook stick (a large gaff-like hook attached to a thin three-to four-foot pole) and cayuco. Today this outfit, including cayuco (which is, in many cases, inherited), would cost a fisherman between \$100 and \$200. As a dry boat approaches a portion of the reef on the atoll where the captain plans to fish, two of the fishermen with their cayucos are let off to begin fishing. The boat then proceeds a mile or so down the reef and anchors. The two remaining fishermen begin fishing from their dories working their way down the reef away from the boat in a direction away from the first two fishermen. The first fishermen fish towards the anchored boat, and when they reach it, weigh anchor and move on to where

the second set have worked to pick them up and start the process over again. Lobster fishing is done in water from 3 to 60 feet deep. The fishermen cruise the surface of the water searching for lobster which are usually hidden in the coral rocks below. All that can be seen of the lobster are their two antennae which protrude from under the coral. Fishermen have to have sharp eyes and experience to be able to pick these out through 30 or more feet of water. Once a lobster is located the fisherman dives down to where it is, sticks his hook stock sideways between the lobster's legs and then pulls forward while turning the stick hook side up thereby hooking the lobster in the underside of the thorax region. The fisherman then swims to the surface and deposits the lobster in his cayuco which he has been dragging behind him on a long rope. While the fisherman is searching for lobster, he takes the opportunity to capture any conch he may see. For this reason most lobster trips also contain a fair amount of conch in the catch as well. Some fishermen also carry spear guns or "shooters" (a spear propelled by surgical tubing attached to a hollow piece of wood or bamboo) in their dories so that if they come across any good-size fish these may be taken as well.

The fishing that goes on on these long-distance trips is grueling. A typical day starts at dawn with a coffee and biscuit breakfast. Fishermen are often in the water fishing by seven or eight in the morning. They fish until noon when they eat a major meal, usually fish, rice, and whatever else is available. After a brief siesta it's back into the water at about two to fish until dark. This regime usually means about ten hours of fishing time per day. When one realizes that these fishermen are swimming ten hours a day, diving regularly to depths

of 30 feet and more in water and weather which is often chilly (particularly in the winter months), one gets some idea of the amounts of energy expended and the wear and tear on the fishermen's bodies. There are very few fishermen in San Pedro today who participate in long-distance fishing after the age of 35. This is because of the toll fishing takes on the fishermen. By 30 or 35 they are no longer able to take the punishment. Many of the men in town who dove for years for their living, today have chronic ear and lung problems and have been prohibited by doctors from participating in this type of fishing ever again. In this situation, if they have managed their money wisely, they may open a small hotel, and/or work for the cooperative or, increasingly, guide tourists from the hotels. Most, however, turn to fishing locally to make their livelihoods. Long-distance fishing, then, is the domain of young men 16 to 35, though some are older and some are younger. Local fishing is the province of boys and older men.

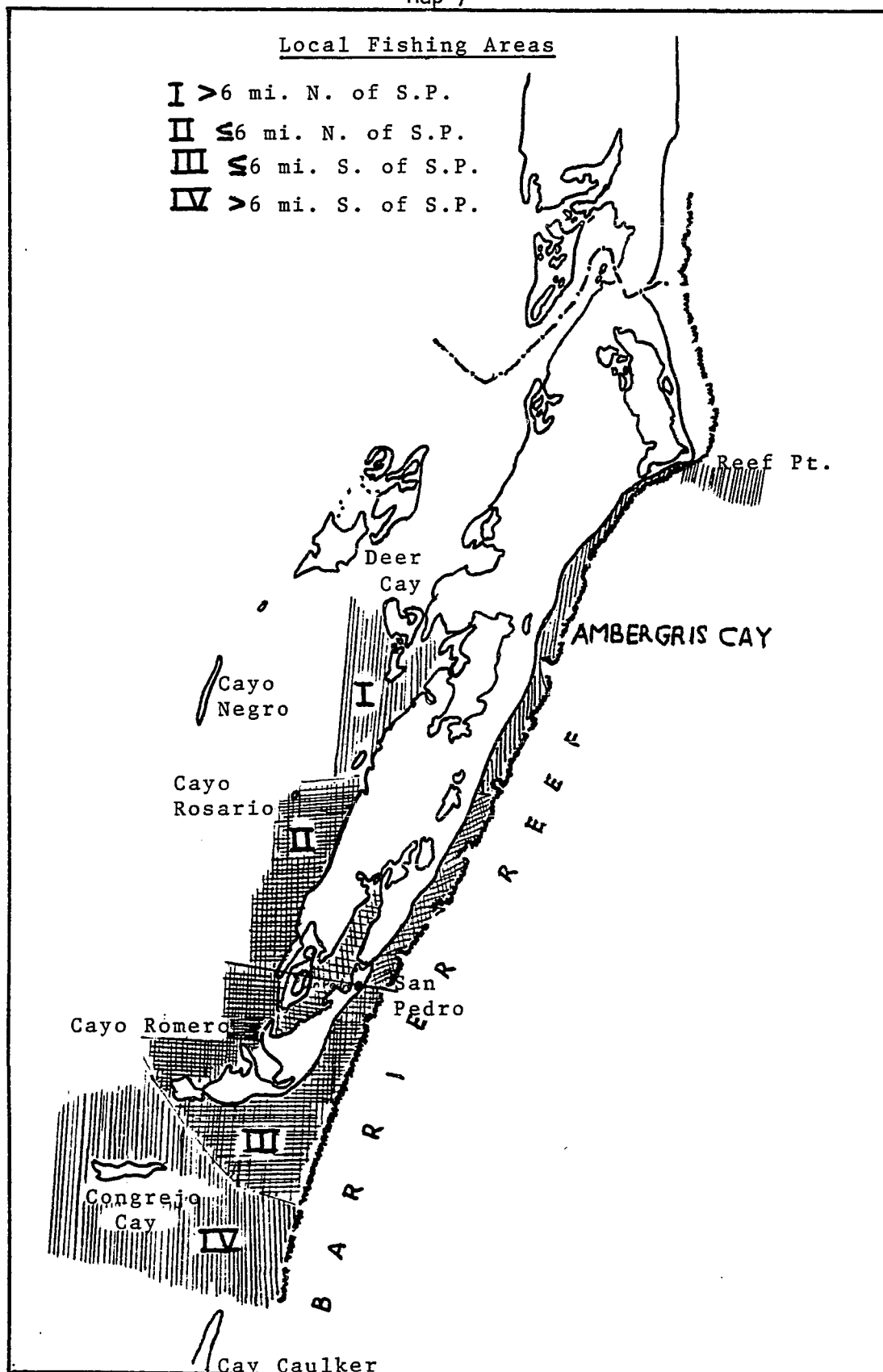
Local Fishing

Local fishing is responsible for about 50 percent of the conch catch, 30 percent of the lobster catch and most of the scalefish catch. The local fishing grounds are broken down into five different areas. Three of these areas are adjacent to the village itself. Fishermen can reach them with little or no equipment. As such almost everyone in the village fishes them at one time or another and they are the training grounds for young fishermen. They include 1) the area within six miles north of the village on the east and west side of the cay, 2) the area within six miles south of the village and 3) the area directly east and west of the village. The two remaining fishing areas in the local fishing grounds are more than six miles distant but less than a day's

travel from the village. The one to the north has its northern limit at about Rocky Point at the north of the Cay. The area to the south has its southern boundary at about the pass between Cay Caulker and Cay Chapel. The local areas which receive by far the most fishing effort are the two areas to the south of the village. These are the traditional village fishing grounds. They also are greater in expanse than the fishing grounds to the north which are restricted largely to the narrow eastern lagoon area (directly behind the reef). (See Map 7). In the three seasons between 1972 and 1975, 52 percent of all local fishing trips were made to the area within six miles south of San Pedro. During this same period 22 percent of all local trips were made to the area farther than six miles south of the village, 18 percent were made to the area within six miles north of the village while only 5 and 3 percent of the local trips were made to the areas more than six miles north of the village and the area directly east and west of the village respectively.

In general the monthly pattern of fishing effort in the local areas mirrors that of the long-distance area. Fishing effort is high in July at the beginning of the lobster season increases in August to the yearly peak in that month and September. From this point effort steadily decreases to December when due to the holidays it hits a low in the season's effort to that point. In January and February, effort increases somewhat only to drop in March. In April with the end of the lobster season and the advent of windy weather and rough sea conditions, fishing effort drops off to almost nothing. Effort then begins to build again in May and June in preparation for the opening of the next lobster season in July.

Map 7



Productivity varies markedly over the various local areas. Yield in local lobster fishing is at its greatest in the area more than six miles south of the village. Conch productivity is also much greater in the areas more than six miles out of the village than in the other areas. Scale-fish yield differs from that of lobster and conch in that it is led by the area less than six miles north of the village.

Unlike long-distance fishing in which only one fishing method and one boat type are used, local fishing employs a number of both. Diving, however, remains the predominant method of fishing especially for conch and lobster. The only area in which it is not the predominant method of fishing these two products is that more than six miles south of San Pedro, traditionally a lobster trap area. The equipment used for diving is essentially the same as that described for long-distance fishing except that in the local fishing areas a spear-gun or "shooter" is more likely to be utilized to take both lobster and scale fish. Added to the actual diving equipment is the equipment used by the fishermen while on the fishing grounds or upon initially returning to San Pedro to partially process their product. Knives are used to gut the scale fish caught and to tail the lobsters. A hammer and screwdriver are used to take the meat out of any conch caught. This is done by first knocking a hole in the shell at its top near the first row of spirals with the hammer. The screwdriver is then inserted in this hole and the tendon holding the conch in its shell is severed allowing the fisherman to dig out the animal from the shell with the screwdriver.

Fishermen use a number of different boat types when diving locally. In the 1974-1975 fishing season 61 percent of all local trips, in which diving was the fishing method, utilized cayucos (dories). The cayuco is

a dugout canoe adopted originally from the Amerindians of the Mesquito coast. It is generally poled, paddled or equipped with a small outboard motor of from six to twenty-five horse power. Today commercial fishing dories are all equipped with engines of this sort. As opposed to the small cayucos used in long-distance fishing, the ones used for local fishing are anywhere from ten to twenty-five feet long. They are taken out daily by a crew of one or two fishermen to a pre-determined area and dragged behind the fishermen as they dive in the area. They are particularly suited to diving for conch because they can be dragged along while diving over thelassia (sea grass) beds and also are of construction heavy enough to withstand the banging and weight of the conch shells as they are thrown in the boat. Most cayucos are constructed of either mahogany or cedar from single logs. They are generally built in the southern portion of the country where ample big trees and the most skilled craftsmen are available.

Skiffs are the other vessel type San Pedro fishermen use when diving on the local fishing grounds. The skiff is a fairly new addition to fishing equipment in San Pedro. Skiffs have only become practicable in the years since the large scale use of out-board motors by San Pedrano fishermen. Records of the Belize Fisheries Unit record eight skiffs in use by San Pedrano fishermen in 1968. By 1979 there were 82 skiffs in operation in the village. Many of these boats are utilized for guiding tourists. Many, however, are also employed for fishing purposes. They are more practical for lobster diving than for conch because they give the lobster fisherman the added speed necessary to reach widely dispersed good lobstering spots on the reef that he might otherwise be unable to reach in a day's fishing with a comparatively slow cayuco. A

skiff, however, is not durable enough for continued use as a conch boat. Nor is a skiff easily towed behind a swimming conch fisherman. Skiffs are built by two or three boatwrights in San Pedro. They are "V" hulled wood frame constructed and planked resembling the familiar speed boat seen in the United States. They range from 10 to 16 feet in length and are propelled by one or two outboard motors which range in power from six to fifty horse power.

The use of lobster traps is another method of fishing utilized in the local fishing areas. Lobster, of course, are the main products caught by this fishing method though quantities of conch and scale fish are also taken by trap fishermen. San Pedro fishermen take about 30 percent of all lobster in traps. In 1979 San Pedrano fishermen were fishing 5,866 traps. Fishermen place traps almost exclusively in the vast thelassia beds to the south of the village. They are fished about equally in the two areas south of the village and account for about 50 percent of the fishing activity in the area more than six miles south of the village.

The traps are made of mahogany shorts nailed together to form a trapezoidal frame. Fresh water pimento slats are then nailed to the frame on the sides and bottom (Craig:1966:92). Fishermen do not bait the traps. They place them in the grass beds inside the reef tract with no float or any other location marker. They find them by triangulation using prominent shore features to locate key traps. The fishermen haul the traps using a long pole with two metal tines on the end (Craig 1966:93) or a long hook stick. Two hundred traps is about average for a single fisherman, though there are today a number of fishermen who have

considerably more. The lobster fisherman in San Pedro who regularly delivers the most lobster to the cooperative is a trap fisherman.

Lobster trap fishing is most often done out of skiffs. In 1975 skiffs made 90 percent of all excursions to tend traps. The preference for the use of skiffs by trap fishermen is traceable to the fact that skiffs are more stable than cayucos and, therefore, are easier to stand in while hauling up the traps. Skiffs being faster, make tending of a large number of traps much easier than dories or dry boats do. When skiffs are not used for this purpose cayucos invariably are.

Fish "tramps" constitute the major method utilized for the capture of scale fish locally. They are constructed of poles (usually mangrove which are resistant to the effects of salt water), placed in the shallow water leading from the cay out into the water in a design that resembles a heart with a tail stemming from its indented side and leading to the shore. Chicken wire is then wired to the poles so that the tail forms a barrier to fish as they swim down the coast and leads them into the heart part of the "tramp." From here they cannot escape due to the funnel shape of the entrance. Fishermen use small seines—usually operated by two men—to encircle the fish in the "tramp" and remove them. Besides fish, turtles and lobsters are often also caught in these "tramps." Most "tramps" are found on the western side of the cay though, there are also a considerable number in the eastern lagoon. They are located almost exclusively in the areas six miles north and the six miles south of the village. In 1975, 68 percent of the trips made to tend "tramps" were made in dories. This was the case because "tramps" are generally close to the village so there is little need for the extra speed that a skiff could provide and because skiffs cannot carry as easily the large weight

of fish that is sometimes taken from these traps. In years gone by it was not unusual for a "tramp" to contain over a thousand pounds of fish. Today one is more likely to find around a hundred pounds in the trap and at times none at all.

As will be remembered, in the original days of the formation of San Pedro its fishermen mainly used seines to make their catches. This is, today, a dying art, though, a few fishermen still practice it. In fact the fisherman who annually harvests the largest quantities of scale fish relies on his seines to provide much of that catch. Seines are used in either of three main ways. They are used occasionally as beach seines in which one end of the seine is firmly attached to a tree or other object on the beach and the other end taken out into the lagoon by a boat and then brought back to shore farther down the beach. The remainder of the net is then hauled in and the fish in it removed. Seines are also used exclusively out of a boat. In this operation a school of fish, often mullet, is located and the seine skillfully placed around it and then hauled in. Seines are also used as modified gill nets. In this method they are left in an appropriate area floating between bouys in hopes that fish will entangle themselves as they attempt to pass through. The methods of using the seines and the places and times in and at which they can be utilized are known only to a few of the older fishermen. It is not a skill which younger fishermen seem to be particularly eager to learn. The same is true for the tedious task of manufacturing a seine which can take months and even years. It seems that this type of fishing is on the way to extinction in San Pedro. Cast nets (round nets about six to ten feet in diameter thrown over schools of small fish) are more often used. These nets are the principal way in which bait fish for the

hook and line fishing that still goes on mostly in the reef passes are secured. The acquisition of bait fish is also very important to those fishermen who make their living as tourist guides.

No matter what the method utilized by fishermen operating on the local fishing grounds, their routine is basically the same. (In fact most local fishermen utilize a combination of the above methods and boats in their fishing efforts.) Most local fishermen arise early, six or seven o'clock, do some chores around the house and then head to the cooperative building for gasoline for their boat engines, ice for their coolers and other supplies. By eight or nine most are on their way to whatever fishing ground they have chosen for the day. They usually spend from four to eight hours fishing, returning in the mid-afternoon. They then clean their catch take it to the cooperative to be weighed and processed and return home for lunch. While the amount of produce that a fisherman can obtain in this manner is generally much below that possible by fishing in the long-distance areas, it is a much less stressful life. Local fishing is very much less demanding physically with only about five hours spent actually in the water as opposed to ten a day on long-distance trips. If diving is done, it is to comparatively shallow depths. For this reason, as noted above, local fishing is the domain of the older fisherman.

Other Types of Fishing

Shrimp, in the recent past, has become an important product of the Caribena cooperative. Four shrimp trawlers between 43 and 58 feet in length operate out of San Pedro. These trawlers have a captain and a crew of two or three who are paid ten cents for every pound of shrimp caught. (This system of crew payment is unique to shrimping). The

trawlers spend a week out at a time fishing at night off the central coast of Belize behind the reef in an area opposite the mouth of Stann Creek. These shrimp boats were generally purchased by individuals through loans made available by the cooperative. Each was paid back in a matter of about three years. Shrimp trawlers average between 2,000 and 3,000 pounds of shrimp per trip.

A significant amount of fish is produced in San Pedro in what can only be termed recreational fishing. Children, particularly young boys, spend much of their spare time fishing. They fish using any number of methods, mostly diving and hook and line. During certain times of the year when there are runs of fish these boys can be found on the village piers fishing at all hours of the night and the early morning. Older men and women also spend a fair amount of time fishing recreationally. For many couples the only occasion on which they spend significant amounts of time together alone is when they go out fishing in a boat in the evening or spend a night fishing from one of the piers.

A lot of fish is also produced by fishermen who guide tourists. Much of the fish that tourists catch under the supervision of these fishermen is not something they are in a position to use. The fish is, consequently, left with the guide who markets it at the cooperative as he would fish he caught himself. Some of the fishermen also pursue marine products for which there is no market at the cooperative but which make up part of the diet of the villagers. These products include shark, manatee (which is harpooned in the mangroves and salt lagoons of the mainland) and turtle (either harpooned or caught in the "tramps").

The means and relations of production involved in the fishing activities described above merit closer examination. They are considered in the next section of this chapters.

RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION IN THE SAN PEDRO FISHING ECONOMY

Sub-cooperative Relations of Production

Access to the most basic component of the means of production, the marine resource utilized by San Pedrano fishermen, is open in the conventional meaning of the term "open access." It is certainly more "open" than in the day of the Blake's and Alamillas's hegemony on the Cay in which, as mentioned above, these families attempted to restrict fishermen's rights to utilize fishing grounds around Ambergris Cay. Today there are no areas within the territorial waters of Belize where San Pedrano fishermen are restricted, by law or by property rights, from fishing. We mentioned earlier, however, that San Pedranos used to fish in Mexican waters and that this practice had been ended by the Mexican authorities.

There are restrictions in access to some of the country's fishing grounds which have the force of custom. To the inhabitants of the various fishing villages of the country is usually reserved the exclusive right to fish the traditionally fished local waters of their village. For this reason it is unusual to find fishermen other than San Pedranos fishing in the areas that I have designated above as being the local fishing grounds. It is extremely rare to find fishermen from other villages in the area within six miles north or south of the village. San Pedrano fishermen likewise respect the local fishing grounds of the country's other fishing villages.

Despite the fact that everyone in the country of Belize supposedly has equal freedom of access to its marine resources, there are other ways in which freedom of access is curtailed. It would be all but impossible for a person with little financial resources and no base in one of the country's fishing villages to gain access to the country's marine resources, particularly to the long-distance resource. Gaining access to these areas presupposes either the ability to own a boat to get there or the opportunity to serve on someone else's. Persons from outside the fishing communities seldom are afforded the opportunity to serve on the fishing boats. Even if one had the resources to purchase a boat, he would be unable to sell his produce anywhere but to one of the cooperatives. He would be hard pressed to do this if he were not a cooperative member which, in most cases, is not an option if one is not a member of a village in which a cooperative is based. In other words while, strictly speaking, the marine resources of Belize are open to all its people, in practice only a relatively small percentage of the population has total access to it. Even within the fishing communities themselves there are some people who have neither the economic nor the social capital necessary for total access. These persons are usually newcomers to the village or those who for some other reason are not fully integrated into the community.

On a smaller scale there are certain rights to particular areas in the local fishery usually associated with trap placement. Beach traps, ("trampas") are usually placed in the same place year after year. The place where the trap is placed becomes associated with the owner of the trap and other fishermen respect that person's right to exploit that area. These "trampa" positions are often inherited and stay in the

family which originally established them for years. Lobster trap placement is less strict or enduring in terms of right to the use of the area in which they are placed than are beach traps. However, once a fisherman has laid his traps down he usually has exclusive access to that area through at least the season in which they are set. Some fishermen set their traps in the same area year after year and, therefore, are at least associated with these areas though they have no claim to them as they might in the "trampa" fishery. In both the lobster trap fisheries and the beach trap fisheries, while the right of the owner of the apparatus to the area in which it is placed and its product is seldom disputed, there is a lot of poaching of product already caught in them. For this reason the lobster pots are not marked with bouys, making them harder for potential poachers to find, and the "trampas" are often booby trapped (with boards with protruding nails).

Access to and ownership of basic fishing equipment is unrestricted in San Pedro. Almost every adult male, rich or poor, fisherman or not, owns most of the basic village fishing equipment, i.e. a mask, fins and a "shooter," speargun or hook stick. These items are comparatively cheap and readily available which accounts in large part for the adoption of the skin-diving fishing method in the village. Until very recently it was possible to be a fisherman, though not a very successful one, with even less equipment. For example, one could fish conch with just a pair of underwear, wading in the shallow water thallassia beds and picking conch with one's bare hands or one could take some cast-off fishing line or net cord, buy a few hooks for less than a dollar, and using a piece of conch offal as bait, catch numbers of fish. In recent years the decline of resources in readily accessible spots has made this type of fishing

activity much harder. It is still the case, however, that it does not take much capital expenditure to break into the bottom level of fishing activities.

In general the fishermen of San Pedro start their fishing careers as boys with no fishing equipment who improvise using the cast-offs of their elders. As they get older their fathers or other adult relatives (uncles both maternal and paternal, brothers, grandfathers both maternal and paternal) take an interest in the boy's development as a fisherman and teach fishing techniques as well as providing fishing equipment, most of it already used and from the stock of the benefactor. Playing with his friends and sharpening his fishing skills, the young fisherman is often able to earn a fair amount of money by selling his produce to the cooperative through his father or other relative. This money is often used to purchase additional equipment from the cooperative store. Usually by the time he has reached the age at which he will be undertaking commercial fishing trips--about thirteen or fourteen--the neophyte has amassed a considerable quantity of fishing equipment through the above-described mechanisms, through inheritance or sometimes through a loan from the cooperative.

The more extensive equipment necessary for lobster trap and beach trap fishing is hard to come by. There are very few young fishermen involved in this type of fishing unless they have inherited the equipment. The trap fisheries are usually reserved for the older fishermen who are more able to make the capital investment necessary and who cannot take part in the long-distance fisheries where diving is involved. The capital necessary for these types of enterprises is amassed in a number of ways. Some fishermen, after a career of long-distance diving, have

managed to amass some accrued capital in the form of bank accounts, boats, etc. This is then used to get the fishermen started in the trap fisheries. Loans are also available for this purpose from the cooperative. As most of these fishermen are older and established, they have no trouble getting up the collateral, such as their house, etc., to obtain a loan. Also, they usually have had a long association with the cooperative and are established in the community which make them good risks for a loan as far as the cooperative is concerned. If the original capital for trap fishing can be accumulated, fishermen usually have little problems in making the enterprise pay for itself and maintaining their families. Beach traps are cheaper and easier to swing financially than the large number of lobster traps needed to make a lobster operation successful. For this reason there are more villagers involved in beach trap fishing than in lobster trap fishing, and the trap lobster fishermen are generally better off financially than most other village local fishermen.

Ownership of a boat is a "must" if a fisherman is to achieve any type of success as a fisherman in San Pedro. By success I mean providing a livelihood for himself and his family. Without access to a boat a young fisherman might be able to feed himself for a while off what he could catch from the shore or by swimming out to the reef. For all practical purposes, though, to support himself a fisherman must gain access to a boat. Many young fishermen start off their careers fishing from the boats of their relatives and friends. If they do this, however, they are at a disadvantage because not only does the owner of the boat make all the decisions as to when they will go fishing, whether the young fisherman will be able to go this trip, where they are to fish, how

long, with what equipment, etc., the ownership of the boat also entitles the owner to a full share of what is caught by the fishermen utilizing it especially in the long-distance fishery. For example, under certain circumstances if two fishermen go fishing locally in a boat owned by one of them, the fishermen will pool their catch and divide the proceeds from it three ways. One portion to each fisherman and the third portion to the fisherman who owns the boat.

Boats for local fishing are fairly easy to come by. Cayucos, the work horses of the fishing industry, are the easiest type of boat to obtain. They are very durable and last for long periods of time (sometimes over 100 years). As such they are the only type of boat, and one of the only types of fishing equipment, that is regularly inherited in San Pedro. They are also relatively inexpensive and can be purchased in a used condition with a loan from one's parents, with small sums of saved money, or with a small short-term loan from the cooperative. They also do not have to be expensive to run. They can be equipped and operated fairly well with a home-made sail or can be efficiently poled. As it only takes a small motor to propel a cayuco, a saving over other boat types can be made here as well. Cayucos are also the boats that are most loaned in San Pedro. Many times adults moving up in the world economically will buy bigger, faster boats and, therefore, use their cayucos less. In these instances they often lend the dories to younger family members, friends and in-laws, for considerable periods of time. Finally, a significant number of cayucos are found yearly by the villagers thrown up on the beaches around Ambergris Cay by storms and winds. Cayucos can take the punishment of long days at sea without sinking and can make it across the reef without breaking up. These windfall dories evidently

come from the south of the country or beyond and are often the first boat a boy will own or that a father gives a son.

Skiffs, on the other hand, are harder to come by than dories. They are not as durable and are a recent addition to the San Pedro fisherman's repertoire of boats. Therefore, there is little tradition of their being included in inheritances. Further, they are expensive to build and maintain. They are, however, very attractive to all the fishermen because of their speed and maneuverability. Therefore, many fishermen take out loans from the cooperative to purchase these vessels. Some have them built new to their specifications in Belize City, Cay Caulker or San Pedro. In recent years there has been a mushrooming in the number of skiffs in the village. Many fishermen, particularly those who are also involved in tourist guiding, own more than one. However, while it can be said that almost every adult fisherman in the village owns a cayuco, fewer own skiffs because of their high price and the fact that they are not as utilitarian.

By far the biggest expense that a fisherman can undertake is the purchase of a vessel for the long-distance or shrimp fisheries. The dry boats utilized in long-distance fishing are seldom inherited these days though there is constant discussion, and sometimes surprise, as they are sold off by the older fishermen instead of being saved for their sons. The rapid increase in the value of the dry boats over the years coupled with their limited life span has prompted many fishermen to sell them when they have completed their active fishing careers in order to use the capital to enter into other projects.

Many children of fishermen are not interested in fishing or are pursuing their educations and delaying their entrance into a fishing

career. Consequently, their fathers would rather sell than hold onto their boats (after their retirements at a relatively young age), until their sons are ready to start fishing during which time the boat probably will have deteriorated. Almost no one in the village has enough liquid assets to be able to buy a dry boat without taking out a loan to do so. This, as mentioned above, is generally done through the cooperative and is easy enough for a cooperative member who has a decent past history of credit dealings with the cooperative and is a known commodity. Most buyers of dry boats are fairly young, in their 20's or early 30's, married and already involved in long-distance fishing as crew members, often on the boats they are buying. Because of the expense of buying a boat and the limited number of boats that are available, relatively few fishermen are dry boat owners. As mentioned above, only 22 of these boats operated out of San Pedro in 1980. Boat owners who also captain their own boats, if they are hard working, can usually pay off their boats in two or three years from the boat's share of the yearly take. This can be done, though, only if the boat needs no major repair work during this time, which it usually does. Being a boat captain is a fairly prestigious position, though with the advent in recent years of methods of accumulating wealth other than fishing, it is not nearly so prestigious as it used to be.

Most owners of dry boats also sail their boats as captains. Some, these days, however, prefer to leave the sailing to others and so appoint a captain to take over the boat. This captain is usually a close relative, or more rarely, a friend who has sailed on the boat as a crew member in the past. There are two women who own dry boats in the village at this time. These were inherited by them.

Shrimp trawlers are very expensive, over \$45,000 U.S. each. To purchase a shrimper a loan must be floated. This is done through the cooperative which helps the buyer obtain the loan from the Development Finance Corporation, a loan organ of the Belizean government. The loan is administered by the cooperative. There are four shrimp boats operating out of San Pedro today. Every one of them was originally imported to Belize from the United States by a single San Pedrano fisherman and then sold after a few years to other San Pedranos. Shrimp fishing is a fairly lucrative operation and since the crew receives a salary rather than a cut of the catch, the owners are able to pay off their debts within a short space of time, about two years. The few shrimp boat owners, because of the money they can make and their control of fairly high level technology, are held in some esteem in the community.

Motors which are used on every type of boat in San Pedro are another expensive part of the means of production. While fishing can be undertaken without an engine, it is hard to reach the more prolific grounds without one, and as a matter of prestige few fishermen are willing to ride in boats that are not equipped with an engine that will get them where they want to go in good time. Therefore, almost without exception every fisherman with a boat has an engine. Engines of all sizes cost more than \$2,000 and are, therefore, financed from loans in many instances. Motors are a fairly new introduction to the repertoire of San Pedro fishermen. In 1968 sixteen outboard motors and three inboard motors were in use in San Pedro (Belize Fisheries Unit 1968). By 1979 there were a total of 167 outboards and 6 inboards in use in the village (many of these outboards are used in the tourist trade). Because of their newness on the scene, motors are not an item of inheritance in general. Some are

sold between fishermen but most are bought new from the cooperative store or in Belize City. There is a good deal of prestige involved in having a fast boat in San Pedro. This is increasingly associated with having a big motor for one's boat. At this point the biggest motors are those on the skiffs of tourist guides.

Nets are individually owned by fishermen. Though some are bought already made, they are very expensive in this form, over \$1,500 being required for a large (300-foot) seine. Most fishermen, therefore, make their own, significantly reducing their costs. Seines are inherited, and most men who have not made their own have gotten them in this manner.

All other factors of production are purchased from the cooperative by fishermen. These include gas and oil for their engines, as well as sodium and ice to preserve their lobster tails and other supplies. In general, then, the fishermen own the basic means of production needed to fish. With the exception of the shrimp boats, there are no fishermen who are proletarianized, that is, who fish without owning some of the means of production necessary to do so and who earn a wage. There are significant differences, however, between fishermen in the ownership of key factors of production, most importantly boats. While, in 1979, 109 of the 165 fishermen owned boats, only 22 owned the dry boats necessary to undertake long-distance fishing trips, economically the most important fishing activity. Therefore, many of the fishermen have to crew on boats owned by other fishermen. This had consequences in terms of the return to labor that these crewmen/fishermen were able to realize and also for control over the actual fishing activity.

The basic factor in sub-cooperative relations of production, then, is boat ownership. On the local level boat ownership is not so large a

factor as in long-distance fishing. A much higher percentage of local fishermen own and operate boats than long-distance fishermen. In the local areas a boat owner will make his daily trips by himself or with another fisherman. This other fisherman will more than likely be a close relative (son or brother) or a close friend who also owns a boat. In the case of the close relative, the proceeds from the fishing trip will accrue to the older man if he is the head of a household they both live in. If they don't live in the same household, relatives will generally share equally what is caught no matter who owns the boat. Friends who fish together, both of whom own boats, will generally trade off going in each other's boat and, therefore, share whatever is caught each day equally. Some local fishing trips are organized such that the owner of the boat gets a boat's share of the catch as well as his own, but it is safe to say that, in general, local fishermen who fish together share the catch equally or donate the entire proceeds to the household funds.

Long-distance fishing is a much more structured undertaking than the local fishing efforts. More money is put into the boats, there are more crew members involved, trips are complex and dangerous with increased chance of boat loss, much more product is caught, more important decisions must be made, and perhaps most importantly, there is a much higher percentage of nonfamily members in the crew. For these reasons and others, boat owners, especially those who captain their own boats on long-distance trips, have a degree of authority not seen on local trips; and they take the boat's share from the total catch of the crew as well as an individual share.

As mentioned above, most boat owners are their own captains. Those who do not fish appoint captains who are their relatives and exercise the

owner's authority by proxy. Captains have a fair amount of power on the long-distance trips. Most, however, temper this authority by consulting with the crew members on most decisions and by delegating the authority over specialized tasks during the trip. Captains have the final say in the trip's destinations, times of departure and arrival, navigation and ship's course, fishing ground to be exploited, product to be fished, method of fishing, trip duration, disposition of the catch, and, importantly, crew composition.

The decision over disposition of catch is an increasingly important one. Many fishermen, particularly if fishing in the southern portion of Belize, elect to take their lobster catch to Honduras for sale rather than back to Caribena. This is done even though the price they receive there is less in the long run than they would have gotten at the cooperative (although due to the cooperative's method of payment, they will get more money immediately for their catch). The major reason for selling in Honduras is to avoid paying income tax to the Belizean government. This turns out to be of considerably more value to a captain than to the rest of the crew because commanding two shares of each catch, he receives twice as much for each load sold as any other crew member. This places him any times in a higher tax bracket than his crew members. Thus captains save more by selling in Honduras illegally. Captains also have less stake in the health of the cooperative because as boat captains they can reach other markets with their catch. This individual crew members without access to a dry boat, cannot do.

Another important aspect of the captain's power which emanates from his control of his boat is his role in picking a crew. Crew members are, first, immediate family members. If a man owns a boat and has sons of

fishing age, unless there has been some sort of family split, the sons will fish with the father. Other immediate family members such as brothers, uncles, etc., both affinal and consanguineal, are to be found on the boats. If there are not enough close relatives to round out the crew, close friends of the captain or other crew members may be invited to join. These friends usually live in the same section of the village as the owner. In practice most crews are composed of friends as well as family members. Crew composition is highly mobile between seasons with alliances being formed and broken as relations within families and between families and friends change. Crew composition does, however, tend to remain fairly stable over the course of each season. The captain has the final say in the decision as to who will crew the boat. A problem with a boat's cap-tain can mean that a crew member will no longer be welcome on the boat. A bad reputation with a number of captains may mean that a fisherman will be unable to find a position on any boat in the long-distance fleet. Not having a social or kin relationship with any captains, as is the case with new comers to the village, will also mean that the chances of crewing on a dry boat will be slim.²

The most important of the captain's prerogatives is, of course, the boat's share of the catch which he appropriates. Often in the first few years after a boat is purchased the entire boat's share will go to paying off the loan taken out to buy it. A portion of the boat's share must also go to refurbishing the boat twice yearly. When the boat is in particularly bad shape the whole boat's share will sometimes go to these repairs. In the main, the major portion of the boat's share is pocketed by the captain giving him twice as much return for his labor as the rest of the crew. In the long-distance fishery, in essence, a wage is paid

crew members. It is a designated percentage of the total catch which turns out to be less than the percentage of the labor each crew member has applied to the production process. Since the crew collectively receives less than the value of the product they have labored to produce, we can say that the difference between the value of the product (minus the cost and upkeep of the boat) and the remuneration of the labor necessary to produce it is surplus.³ This surplus is appropriated by the boat owners.

The case of the shrimp boat captains is much more straight forward than that of the dry boat captains. The shrimp boat captain owns the entire means of production and pays his crew a salary which is a set amount on every pound of shrimp caught. He, therefore, collects surplus value in the form of the difference between what he pays his crew and what it costs him to buy and keep up his boat.

In sum, the fishermen of San Pedro occupy mixed class positions. The local fishermen are basically petty bourgeois owning their means of production but hiring no employees and providing the labor for their operations by themselves. The crew members in the long-distance fishery are proletarianized because surplus value from their labor is being appropriated, but not totally so, because they own certain important factors of production. The boat captains are bourgeois because they have invested capital and reap a return to that capital by expropriating the surplus of their crew members. The bourgeois nature of all the San Pedrano fishermen becomes clear when we investigate the operation of the cooperative and the means and relations of production which operate in the processing and marketing of the fishermen's products.

The Caribena Producers' Cooperative

As will be remembered, the Caribena producers' cooperative was formed in 1963 principally to enable the fishermen of San Pedro to sell their product at a reasonable price. Over the years the cooperative has retained, as one of its primary interests, the securing of markets and the maximum prices possible in these markets for its fishermen members. The cooperative has also branched out into two other fields. It has taken over the task of processing the fishermen's catch before sale and has provided the fishermen with easy access to certain of their essential means of production. Before investigating cooperative activities in each of these sectors, let us first turn to a description of the cooperative's structure.

All Caribena cooperative's members are owners of the cooperative inasmuch as each owns at least one share of cooperative stock, and many have invested a considerable sum in these stocks. They collectively have the final say over the form, direction and content of the cooperative's activities. The members meet several times during the year as issues arise which require their attention. There is also an annual general meeting held at the end of the lobster season. At this meeting the events and progress of the year are reported upon and new officers elected to the cooperative's Committee of Management. Each member of the cooperative holds one vote at these meetings and motions, suggestions, complaints, etc., are taken from the membership at large. The cooperative is headed by an unsalaried seven-member committee of management, a significant portion of whom are not active fishermen, though all are cooperative members. These committeemen are selected for one or two-year terms depending upon the number of votes they garner at the cooperative's

annual membership meeting. The committee is constituted as a general policy-making group which meets periodically throughout the year.

The actual day-to-day running of the cooperative is in the hands of the cooperative manager and his staff, the major administrative officers of which are the accountant/secretary, the refrigeration technician and the plant manager. These salaried positions have in recent years been held exclusively by villagers. The top two positions carry a good amount of prestige in the village and are held by villagers with levels of educational achievement above the norm in San Pedro. The manager has a great deal of power in the cooperative and hence in the community as a whole. It is also a position which can lead to a large amount of economic self-aggrandizement as power associated with the position allows the holder a good deal of latitude in both legal and illegal dealing within the village economy.

Rounding out the administrative wing of the cooperative is what is called the Office Staff. This staff includes three secretaries, an assistant refrigeration technician, two "plant" workers, a mechanic, two watchmen, a gasoline sales clerk, and a "stores" clerk. These positions are also salaried and held by villagers.

The cooperative's physical facilities have grown rapidly in number and sophistication over the years of its existence. In the early years of the cooperative its physical plant was placed on the lagoon side of San Pedro behind the north section of the village. The site was built up from mangrove swamp by dredging for sand in the front of the village. The original structures were built as a cooperative effort by the villagers. Later additions have been contracted out to villagers and outsiders as the physical plant expanded. By 1979 the cooperative

included the following structures and machinery in its physical plant: a small wooden frame house for the watchmen; a large two-story wooden and block building housing, on the top floor, the administrative offices and the cooperative store, and on the bottom floor, a warehouse; a large two-story cement house which is the barracks for workers in the processing plant and has warehouse space; a large one-story building which houses the processing plant and which is composed of two blast freezers, one chill room, three cold-storage rooms (capacity 180,000 pounds), and a block ice machine; an open building which houses the cooperative's three electric generators (now decommissioned as the cooperative presently relies on power from the village electricity board); a large fully enclosed cement water cistern for collecting rain water used in ice making (capacity 150,000 gallons); a cement block ice house which contains a shell ice machine; a wooden gasoline sales clerk shelter; and, by the lagoon wharf, a filleting facility. In Belize City the cooperative owns a building in which it has warehouse space and a fish store.

With this administrative structure and these facilities, the cooperative undertakes its three major roles. Its primary role is in purchasing product from its members and selling it in various markets. This is done in the following manner. Fishermen bring their produce to the cooperative at the end of any fishing trip. Here it is received by plant workers, weighed and classified by product type and class. The weights and type are recorded on a receipt which is then taken to the administrative office where the fisherman collects his first payment on that produce. The amount of and type of produce is recorded in the office for each fisherman, as he brings in his catch throughout the season, and kept on file.

The cooperative sells what it has bought from its fishermen members on two markets, the domestic and the international. It sells most of its domestic produce in San Pedro to the people and to hotels for tourist consumption. Product sold to the hotels is exempt from government domestic price controls so the cooperative makes more per pound of produce sold in San Pedro than it does on produce sold in its other domestic market, its store in Belize City. In Belize City the majority of product sold is scale fish. All prices of product sold are controlled by the government, a fact which is much resented by the cooperative and its members.

The great majority of the cooperative's produce, however, is sold abroad, particularly the high-priced products like shrimp, lobster and conch. Here Caribena has a few buyers that it has dealt with over a number of years. Throughout the year the cooperative considers bids for its product from varying sources and may end up selling to a number of brokers and distributors principally in the United States. Generally, though, early in the season the cooperative will accept a bid from one of its traditional buyers and sell the bulk of any one product to them. In recent years the cooperative has widened its market to include Europe, in particular France. Caribena is also looking to Japan as a possible market for some of its products.

Once a market has been found the cooperative is responsible for all expenses to the point of delivery to its buyer. This means that the cooperative must foot the bill for processing, tariffs, export duties, freight charges, insurance, and handling fees. The product is sent

frozen from San Pedro to Belize City to be warehoused in the cooperative's facility there. From here it is sent, usually by air freight, to Miami and thence, if necessary, on to New York.

From the revenues earned from the sales of marine and other products, the cooperative deducts its expenses. The initial expense is in the buying of the product from the fishermen. This initial purchase is financed from the cooperative's reserve fund or from a bank loan. As the product is sold by the cooperative, the loan, if one was needed, is repaid, and the costs of processing, shipping, etc., are covered. At the end of the lobster season when all the product has been sold, the fishermen receive a "second payment." This "second payment" makes up the difference between what the fishermen were initially paid for their produce and what the cooperative was able to sell it for minus expenses. In the "second payment" the fishermen receive a set amount on every pound of produce each has sold to the cooperative. Each product type pays a "second payment" according to its relative value per pound. This "second payment" allows the cooperative to pay the fishermen for their produce without having to have a huge capital reserve to tide it over from the time it buys the product from the fisherman to the time it sells it to its buyers. Often times, particularly in the case of lobster, the "second payment" is many times the amount per pound that was originally paid the fishermen.

What is left from what is received by the cooperative from its sales after the initial purchase of the product from the fishermen, the "second payment," and all other expenses is the net profit for the year. This net profit, which over the last few years has been in the vicinity on \$BZ \$150,000, is divided up as follows: 25 percent of the net profit goes

to the statutory reserve fund and 5 percent of the net profit left after the deduction for the reserve fund goes to the education fund. Every year the management committee makes a recommendation as to whether or not a sum should be deducted from the net profit for the pension fund. This deduction is subject to approval by the membership. The remainder of the net profit is distributed to the members of the cooperative in the following forms. Member's share capital is increased or capitalized annually based on each member's production for the current year. A dividend is also usually paid on shares owned by the members. In 1980 it was 6 percent. Finally a rebate is allocated with each producing member receiving a certain amount per pound of produce he produced with the various types of produce paying more or less relative to their market value. As can be seen the cooperative redistributes most of what it takes in from what it sells to its members. Enough is kept to finance the purchases of product during the next season, to provide some loan services to the members and to provide the constant capital necessary for the cooperative's operation.

The second important role that the cooperative plays is processing the product brought in by the fishermen so that it will earn a better price on the market. The cooperative has machinery that helps in the processing process. However, the majority of the work is done manually by a group of ten to fifteen young women. In the past these jobs were held by women from San Pedro. The work is hard, messy and not well paid, and as the standard of living rose in San Pedro, with the success of the cooperative, San Pedranos became uninterested in taking these jobs. The resultant labor problem was solved by importing women from Benque Viejo del Carmen, a Mayan town on the extreme western border of Belize. These

women are mainly Mayan, though a few Garifuna women, as well, have worked in the processing plant. The women are all young, between about fifteen and twenty-one. They were paid, in 1978, \$.60 per hour and room and board in a barracks-like room underneath a villager's house. More recently they have been moved to a cooperative-owned building with a little more space and given a slight raise in salary, though they now have to buy their own food. These women work a ten-hour day, seven to twelve and one to six, six days a week. They are paid time and a half for over time, which is mandatory when large amounts of product are received, sometimes working until 1 or 2 a.m.

The product is received by the cooperative in a semiprocessed form from the fishermen. Lobster are tailed and veined, conch are shelled and skinned, fish are gutted and what is bought as fish fillet is filleted by them. The cooperative grades, cleans, further processes, packs, weighs and freezes these products in boxes from 5 to 50 pounds in weight. They ship the products to the United States in these boxes where it is sold.

The third role that the cooperative plays is its function in assuring access to essential means of production for the fishermen members. Gasoline is sold at the cooperative as is oil. This is essential to the fishermen most of whom use motors in their fishing as there is no other outlet for either of these two products in the village. Fishing supplies are also made available to the fishermen through the cooperative store which stocks every thing that might be needed by a fisherman. This includes outboard motors, parts for these motors, paint and other repair materials for boats, cord for making nets, hooks, line, rope, sail cloth, etc.

The cooperative also provides loans, large and small, to its members, much of it to buy fishing equipment. As mentioned above most of the large boats, dry boats and shrimpers are purchased through loans from the cooperative. Motors are also bought in this fashion as well as nets, materials for traps and other supplies. The loans are low interest and are on terms very favorable for the fishermen. Loans can also be taken out from the cooperative for other things such as houses, buying or building hotels, school education etc. Many young fishermen who drink up the money made from their last fishing trip take out small loans to provision themselves for their next trip. As mentioned above, these loans are financed either by the cooperative from its loan fund or by the Development Finance Corporation through the cooperative.

Besides these three major roles that the cooperative plays, it also is very active in attempting to make fishing and processing more efficient and profitable for its members and in pushing the fishermen to diversify their fishing efforts. Using its education fund the organization has sent a number of its officers to the United States and Canada for training courses in refrigeration, plant supervision, quality control, etc. The cooperative has also invited several experts in various fields to visit and advise the cooperative staff and the fishermen. Fishermen have been sent abroad to study navigation, fishing techniques and other technical matters. The cooperative as mentioned in the previous chapter has been very active in supporting the initiation of the successful shrimp fishery, and more recently of deep sea fishing ventures (which unfortunately to date have not been very successful). They are today working on the feasibility of mariculture (sea farming) in the area around the cay. The cooperative has also had its fingers in political

dealings. As a group, Belize's cooperatives are the fishermen's main lobbying force in the national government. They have been able to institute a closed season on conch (which is probably too late to save this stock at least for the near future). They also are actively lobbying the government to raise the price ceilings on all marine products sold domestically, which they feel are excessively low.

Cooperative Relations of Production: Bourgeois Fishermen

The fishing mode of production in San Pedro is characterized by mixed forms of labor control. Sectors of the industry are fairly straight forward in this regard. The processing workers at the cooperative are an industrial proletariat that sells its labor, is alienated from the basic means of production and from whose return on labor surplus value is extracted. Inasmuch as they extract surplus value from the value of what they are processing, workers produce and own the means of production for the processing process, Caribena Cooperative Ltd. is a capitalist enterprise. The cooperative then practices forms of labor control which are consistent with those of a capitalist enterprise, at least in its role as a processor of fish. Fishermen, as cooperative members, are owners and directors of the cooperative through mechanisms described above. In terms of the processing of marine products, then, they are bourgeois. They own the processing means of production and are the beneficiaries of the surplus value extracted from the cooperative workers in the processing production process (in the form of dividends, rebates and "second payments"). At the same time that we assert that the fishermen of San Pedro occupy a position of the bourgeoisie in the processing production process, it must also be admitted that individually they do not possess the prerogatives that normally are associated with

persons in this position. For example, individual fishermen do not control the use of or disposition of the means of production in the processing process, nor do they control the place and price at which the resultant product is ultimately sold. In the harvesting production process which was examined earlier in this chapter, fishermen are both proletariat and bourgeoisie (usually both) depending upon the type of fishing that they do and whether or not they own a boat.

The fishermen of San Pedro then emerged 35 years ago from a position where most were members of an agricultural proletariat working the coconut plantations, or petty commodity production fishermen and have, through the influence of market forces exterior to Belize, become bourgeoisie fishermen and cooperative members, owners and operators. This change in the Belizean class structure has also meant a significant change in the standard of living for the San Pedranos.

The question remains, however, whether or not this change in the class position of San Pedranos within the Belizean class structure also means that the village of San Pedro and its residents have been able to change their position within, and vis a vis, the World Capitalist System. We have already seen that previous changes in the methods of labor control in San Pedro and the class positions of San Pedranos has not changed this situation much. When San Pedranos were petty commodity producers producing fish and other staple items for the sugar plantations and logging camps of nineteenth century Belize, their livelihoods depended not upon the health of their village economy or even the Belizean economy but upon the health of the international economy and upon the demand for Belizean primary goods on the world market. Similarly, as proletarian chicleros in the early twentieth century, San

Pedranos' material well-being did not depend upon the economic vitality of their village or upon the demand for chicle within Belize. Here again it depended upon the vicissitudes of the international economy.

For many, as they contemplate the undeniable success of the fishing economy in San Pedro and, particularly of the cooperative organization, they believe that the problems of previous productive modes have disappeared and more importantly that the fate which met these previous modes, degeneration and ultimate dissolution is not a possibility. Before this can be said, however, one must look carefully at what the relationship between the San Pedro fishing mode of production and the international economy is. This we will undertake next.

Notes: Chapter VI

The description and analysis of Caribena Cooperative structure and activities is based upon participant-observation and examination of archives and records through the courtesy of officials of the organization.

1. Travel time to and from the long-distance grounds are included in these calculations. One can, therefore, assume that lobster are probably somewhat more abundant in the long-distance areas than in the local areas.
2. On the other hand captains may have trouble finding crew members if they become too autocratic and demanding of their crews. There are some captains in San Pedro with whom fishermen will only crew if they cannot find another boat because of the captain's demanding reputation. Some of these captains are among the most successful, and, therefore, the potential crew members give up sizeable amounts of income to avoid uncomfortable conditions.
3. I am tempted to call this surplus, surplus value because the crew members can be considered proletarians inasmuch as they receive a piece wage. However, the crew members occupy a position which has both petty bourgeois and bourgeois characteristics (they own means of production, etc.,) and, therefore, it is probably more correct to call this surplus, surplus.

CHAPTER VII
THE RELATIONSHIP OF SAN PEDRO'S FISHING ECONOMY
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY

GENERATION OF THE ECONOMY: DEMAND AND MARKETS

From what has been described in Chapter V above as to the origins of the present-day fishing economy in Belize, and in San Pedro in particular, it should be clear that the impetus for the development of the industry, on its present scale and in the form it has taken over the past thirty years, stemmed not from within the country but from the United States. It was pointed out that the innovators in the lobster industry were mostly North Americans and that the market for the lobster upon which the then developing industry was based was in the U.S. Although, the fishermen of Belize, their government and certain of the Jesuit clergy showed bravery, intelligence and foresight in creating the fishermen's cooperatives to process and sell the fishermen's produce, it was North American buyers' willingness to buy from these cooperatives which made them viable. It was they, too, who ultimately put up the capital necessary for the purchase of essential equipment which assured the success of the cooperatives. In other words, without North American markets, technology and capital the present-day fishing industry of Belize and San Pedro would not have been generated in its present form.

In the same manner that the present-day San Pedrano fishing economy was not self-generated, it is not autonomous to San Pedro or even to

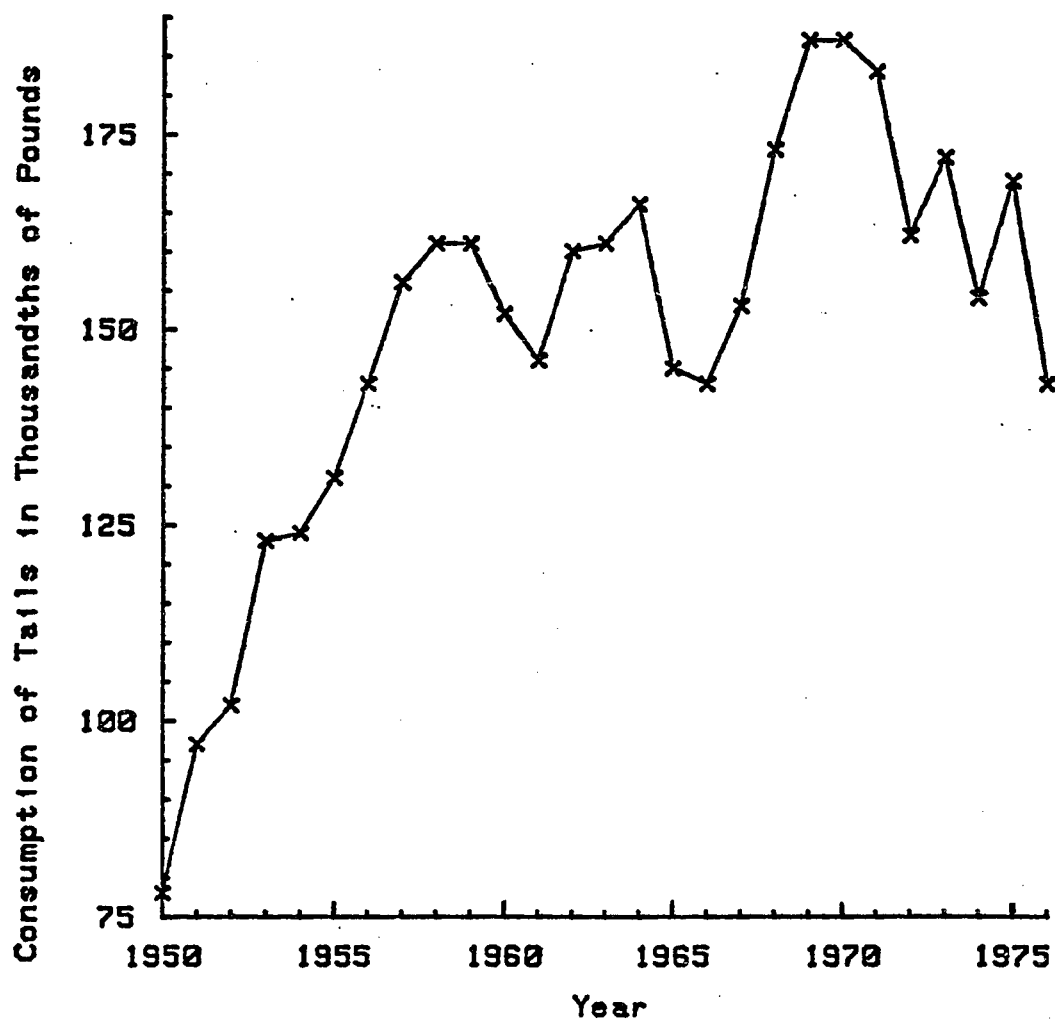
Belize in its exchange aspects and can, in no way, be considered self-perpetuating. Only 5 percent of all lobster produced in Belize remains in the country. The rest is exported almost exclusively to the U.S. (Gibson 1978:132). In 1979 Caribena Cooperative sold only 6 percent of the lobster it produced on the Belize market. Seventy-five percent of its lobster was exported and the remaining 17 percent of the lobster production was sold in San Pedro, mostly for consumption by North American tourists in the village hotels. In 1978, 90 percent of all the lobster produced by Caribena was exported. Similarly, in 1979, 87 percent of total conch production and 63 percent of total shrimp production was exported by Caribena. The only Caribena product that was predominantly consumed in Belize was scale fish. In this instance, the cooperatives are forced by the government to sell a significant amount of fish on the domestic market in order to receive an export quota for lobster. The price of fish on the international market is also not high enough to justify the expense of exporting this product, other than expensive fillet. If it were higher, it too would be sent out of the country in large quantities. Since lobster accounts for the major portion of the Caribena Cooperative Society's total income (52 percent in 1980) and lobster, shrimp and conch account for the overwhelming majority of this income (70 percent in 1980), the importance of the export of these products to the cooperative becomes apparent. With this large dependence by the cooperative on the export of its product to the U.S., the San Pedro mode of production can in no way be considered to be autonomous. Further, if one were to consider the effect that the cessation of these exports would have on the revenues of the cooperative, especially since the cooperative maintains that it sells scale fish

domestically at a loss (a loss made up by revenues from the export of lobster), one realizes that Caribena Cooperative's operation in Belize could not be self-perpetuating.

To understand more fully the mechanisms which made possible the establishment of the Belize lobster industry and its continued dependence upon the U.S. market, a brief look at the U.S. economy is necessary. In particular the U.S. economy during the nascent period of Belize's present fishing economy and its relationship to the demand for Belizean fishery products, particularly spiny lobster, the leading product of the Belize fishing industry and its raison d'etre, will be investigated.

Fredrick Bell and Richard Fullenbaum are two fisheries economists who have developed a bioeconomic model which they applied to the North American lobster industry. In their analysis they postulate the obvious, that consumer demand for a fishery product is the driving force behind the expansion of a fishery (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2). In the period from 1950 to 1969 (a period of strong expansion in the Belizean fishing industry) U.S. per capita consumption of all lobsters increased from 0.585 pounds to 0.999 pounds (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2) (see Figure 11). The increased consumption, approximately 2.4 percent per year, was primarily of imported lobster tails (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2). Through statistical analysis Fullenbaum and Bell (1974) found that the determinants of this rise in lobster consumption were a) the exvessel¹ price of lobster products relative to the general price level in the U.S. economy and b) real per capita disposable personal income (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2). According to the statistical equation worked out by these researchers, a 10 percent rise in exvessel lobster prices converts to a 4 percent decrease in per capita lobster consumption. However, a

Figure 11



U.S. PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION OF LOBSTER TAILS: 1950 TO 1976

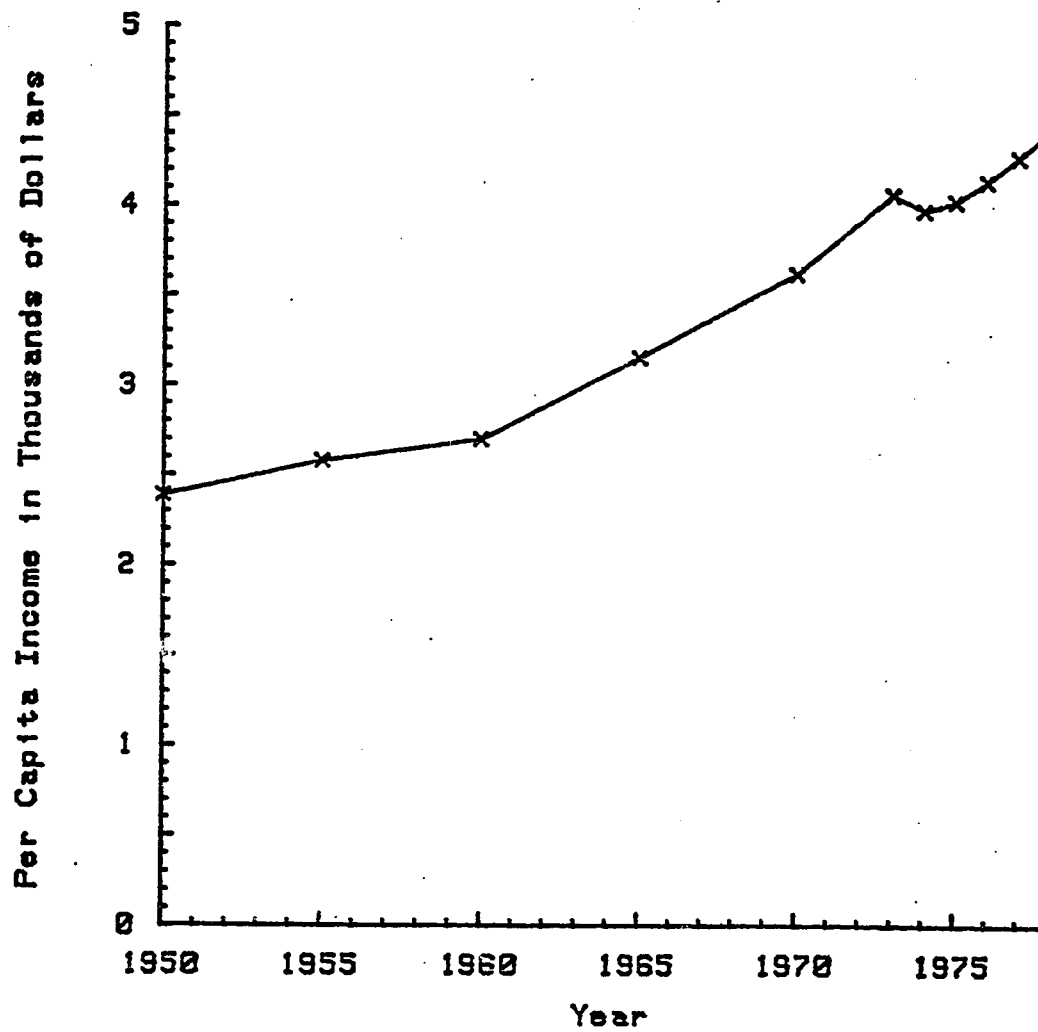
Source: Shellfish Situation and Outlook 1969 and Shellfish Market Review and Outlook 1977

10 percent increase in per capita income increases U.S. per capita consumption of lobster by 15 percent (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2). "The consumer demand analysis for lobsters indicated that despite rising lobster prices, per capita consumption (of all lobster) increased owing to the rise in standard of living (see Figure 12). This provided a strong economic incentive to expand the domestic lobster fisheries." (Bell and Fullenbaum 1973:2).

Not only did this strong demand provide incentive to expand domestic lobster fisheries but it provided incentive to go outside the U.S. in search of cheap sources of lobster product. In the 1950's lobster fishermen in the U.S. were getting \$.35 to \$.50 per pound (U.S. Bureau of Census 1975:560) for their lobster. Fishermen in Belize during this same period were getting \$.08 per pound for whole lobster from American companies operating in the country. Obviously it was to the advantage of American importers to import cheap lobster from Belize to sell on the American market.

A further consideration is the fact that by the mid 1950's the total supplies of northern lobster (U.S. domestic production and imports from Canada) had reached a point where they no longer were increasing year to year. Even though deep-water lobster trapping was introduced in the 1960's in New England, the reduction in U.S. inshore catch and in Canadian production combined to keep northern lobster supplies, though fluctuating from year to year, at a static level (see Figure 13). Since demand was rising as per capita income continued to increase throughout this period (see Figures 12 and 14), the incentive to import Belizean and other foreign lobsters grew even stronger.

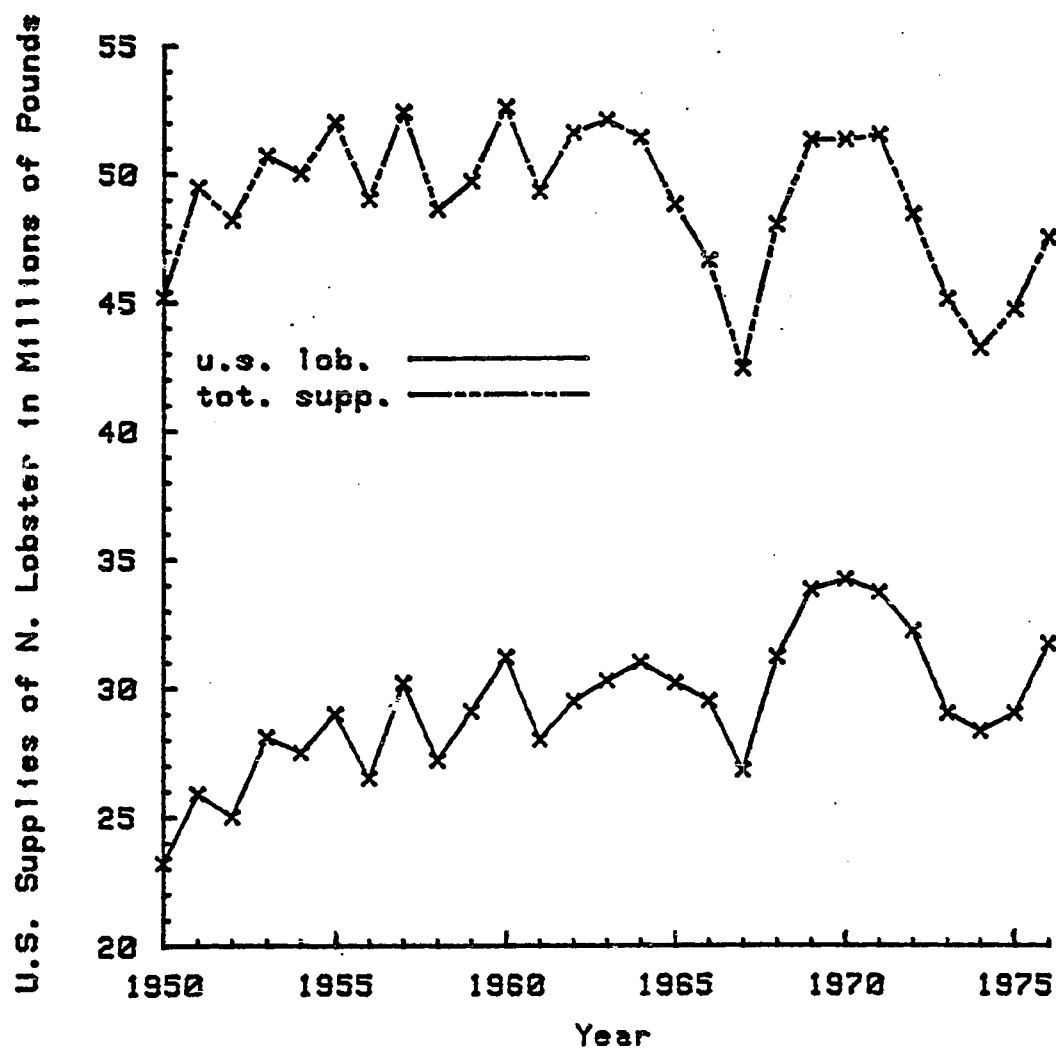
Figure 12



U.S. PER CAPITA INCOME IN CONSTANT (1972) DOLLARS

Source: Bureau of the Census 1979

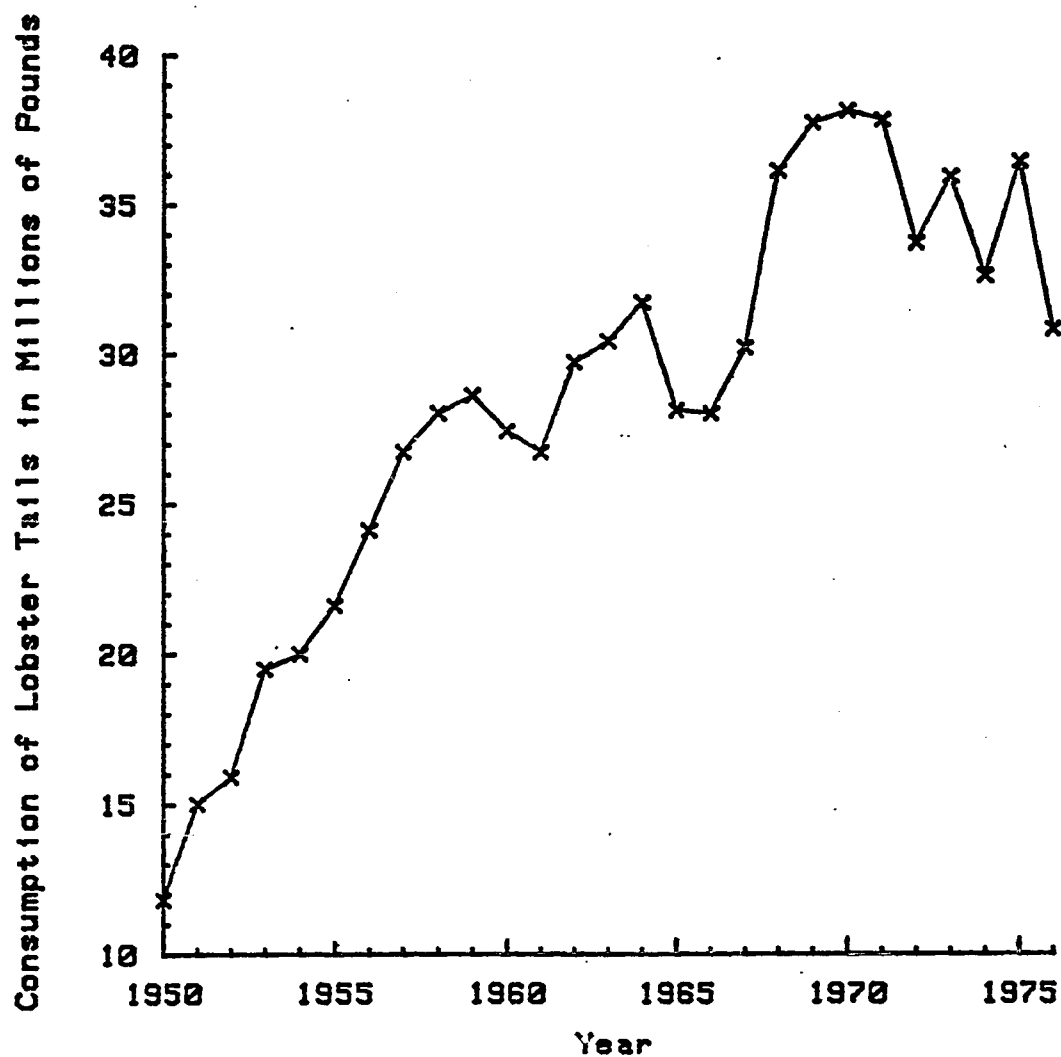
Figure 13



U.S SUPPLIES OF NORTHERN LOBSTER: 1950 TO 1976

Source: Shellfish Market Review and Outlook 1977, 1978 and Historical Statistics of the United States 1975

Figure 14



TOTAL U.S. CONSUMPTION OF LOBSTER TAILS: 1950 TO 1976

Source: Shellfish Situation and Outlook 1969 and Shellfish Market Review and Outlook 1977

This partially explains the fact that the American companies in Belize were unwilling to easily let go of their operations as the fishermen's cooperatives were being organized. It also explains why there were Americans ready to do business with the cooperatives once they were established.

Other factors besides rising per capita income and static supplies of the lobster of first choice, northern Lobster, added to the demand for foreign lobster tails. These include the large-scale advances in frozen-food technology both in processing food and in American homes in the 1950's which made frozen lobster tails a feasible consumer item. New seafood markets also opened up in the Mid-West after W.W.II. Other factors such as the rise in the habit of eating out due to the increase of working women in the U.S. economy affected lobster tail consumption as 80-90 percent of the product is institutionally consumed in the United States. Finally, demand in the U.S. for lobster tails and other luxury seafood items, while facilitated by the above-mentioned factors, was created by massive amounts of advertising and publicity by processors, wholesalers and retailers. The South African Rock Lobster Association was particularly active in this regard (Russell 1961:130). A look at frozen-food industry and consumer-oriented publications of the 1950's and 1960's show them to be full of advertisements touting the benefits of frozen seafood and in particular frozen imported lobster tails.

As a result of all these factors U.S. spiny lobster consumption skyrocketed in the 1950's and 1960's (see Figure 14). The Belizean lobster industry, and the remainder of the fishing industry along with it, was created to meet this demand for lobster products on the North American market. Continued demand for luxury seafoods in the U.S.

through the 1960's and 1970's assured that the Belizean fishing industry which had been created with an orientation to export its products would continue to do so. With time, other luxury seafood items were added to the lobster exports. Conch, red snapper and grouper fillets and shrimp by the 1970's were being exported to the U.S. in large quantities.

Though the boom period of the 1960's had ended in the U.S., there was still sufficient demand for as much of these products as could be produced by Belizean fishermen. With the cessation of spectacular yearly increases in the standard of living in the U.S. in the 1970's the prices for Belizean seafoods have not climbed nearly so fast. Still the Belizean cooperatives are willing to sell in them. In truth the cooperatives including Caribena are structured such that they can do little else.

To reiterate, the spiny lobster industry in Belize was initiated not by Belizeans but by Americans. It was sustained not by any market in Belize but by a huge demand for a luxury product in the U.S. Today, even though the domestic portion of this industry is now controlled by Belizeans, the major market is still the U.S., not Belize. As a result, Belizeans have very little control over their own industry. If Americans were to suffer a depression or sever trade relations with Belize, where would Belize's market for lobster come from? Who would employ the fishermen? More importantly production for an internal market stimulates production in the rest of the economy, whereas production for foreign exchange usually means capital will leave the country for unavailable consumer items.

The factors described above as being characteristic of the relationship between the Belizean fishing industry and its international markets

are the same as those specified by Andre Gunder Frank as characteristic of "underdeveloped" development. In his words it is a development which "is constantly conditioned by relationships of dependence upon the metropolis . . . a satellite development, which is not autonomous to the region, self-generating, or self-perpetuating." (Cockcroft et al. 1972:xi). This has its potential dangers by itself. But to make matters worse, there is evidence that, despite the almost twenty years of activity, the Belizean cooperatives are still unable to obtain a price equal to that of comparable fishermen in the U.S. for their produce.

In 1960 when the first Belizean cooperative came into existence it received \$.13 per pound for its lobster tails; the wholesale price in the U.S. at the time was \$1.22. Since this time the cooperatives have made tremendous strides in the prices they have been able to sell their product for on the American market (see Figures 9 and 10). Much of this increase in price, though, has been the result of large increases in the wholesale prices of lobster tails in the U.S. (see Figure 6). That Belizean fishermen have been able to participate at all in these price increases is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of their cooperatives. However, a better index of their success in representing their members in marketing matters is to be found in a comparison of marketing margins.

COMPARISON OF MARKETING MARGINS

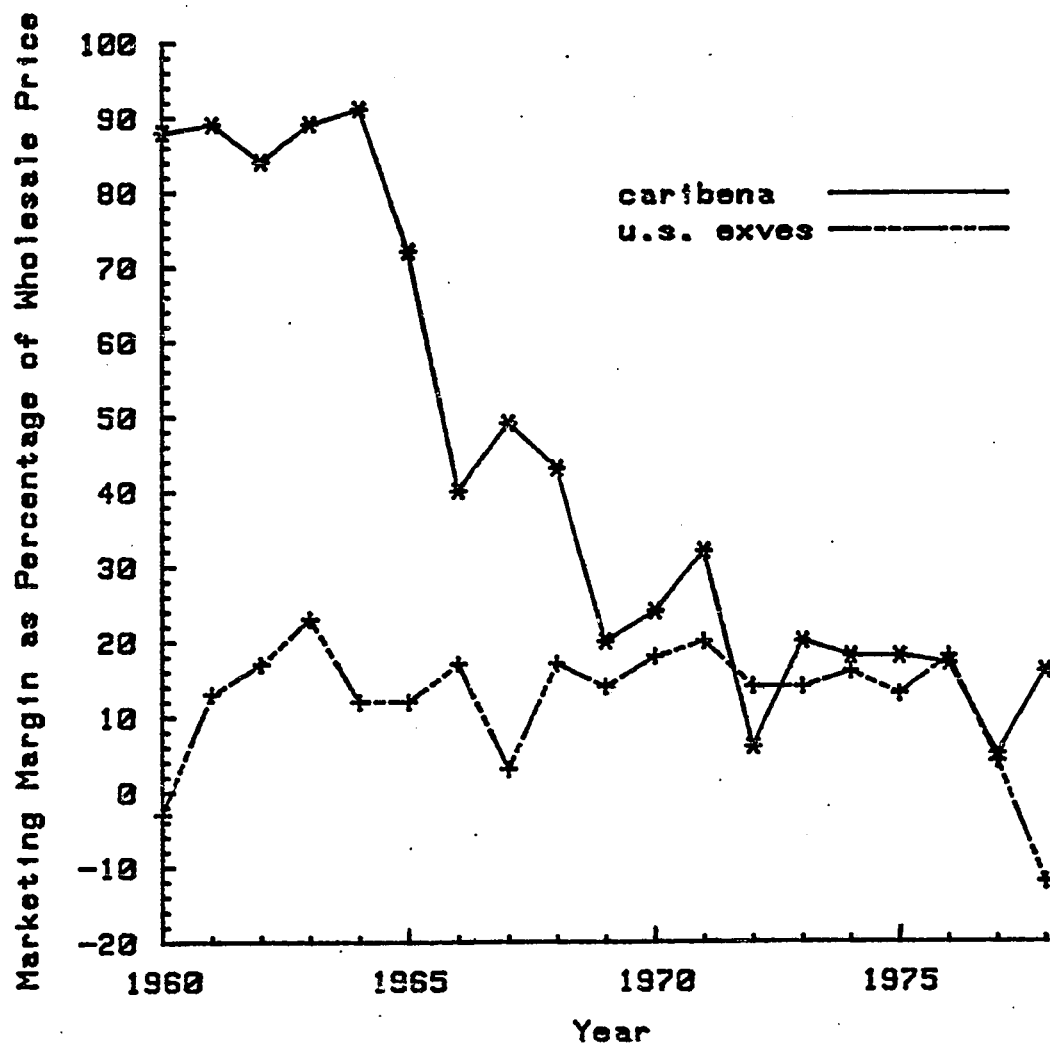
The wholesale price for spiny lobster tails on N.Y.'s Fulton market from 1962 to 1978 was compared to the exvessel price for spiny Lobster produced in the U.S. by U.S. fishermen and to the price received by Caribena Producers' Cooperative for the same product. The difference between the wholesale price and the two other prices was computed. These

two differences or marketing margins were then each made into a percentage of the wholesale price. For example, if the wholesale price for warm-water spiny lobsters was \$1.79, as was the case in 1966, and the exvessel price to American fishermen was \$1.48, as it was in 1966, the marketing margin would be \$.31 and the marketing percentage would be 17.3 percent because \$.31 is 17.3 percent of \$1.79.

The marketing percentages for U.S. spiny lobster and for Caribena spiny lobster were then graphed. The results are in Figure 15. As can be seen Caribena has made big strides in narrowing the gap between the comparatively low percentage for the U.S. product and the once extremely high percentage for the Belizean product. The Caribena percentage of 40 percent in 1966 had been reduced to 16 percent by 1978, comparable to the percentages for U.S. lobster. From this we can see that the Caribena cooperative has made considerable strides towards improving its members' competitive position vis a vis the American market.

The situation is not all that rosy, however. First it must be noted that even though the cooperative has improved its position it still does not command marketing percentages which are equal to those of American fishermen. This, even though Caribena pays all transportation costs to the U.S. markets. More importantly the cooperative has taken over the processing and handling of the lobster tails and all other products sent to the U.S. American fishermen do not do this. They sell to fish processing houses which perform these tasks. In other words Caribena and its fishermen operate on two, exvessel and processing, of the four levels: exvessel (harvesting), processing, wholesaling and retailing of product production and circulation. The cooperative, though it produces on these two levels, receives a price comparable to or less than that received by

Figure 15



MARKETING PERCENTAGES FOR CARIBENA AND U.S. EXVESSEL PRICES:
1960 TO 1978

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce 1974 and Caribena Annual Report,
various years

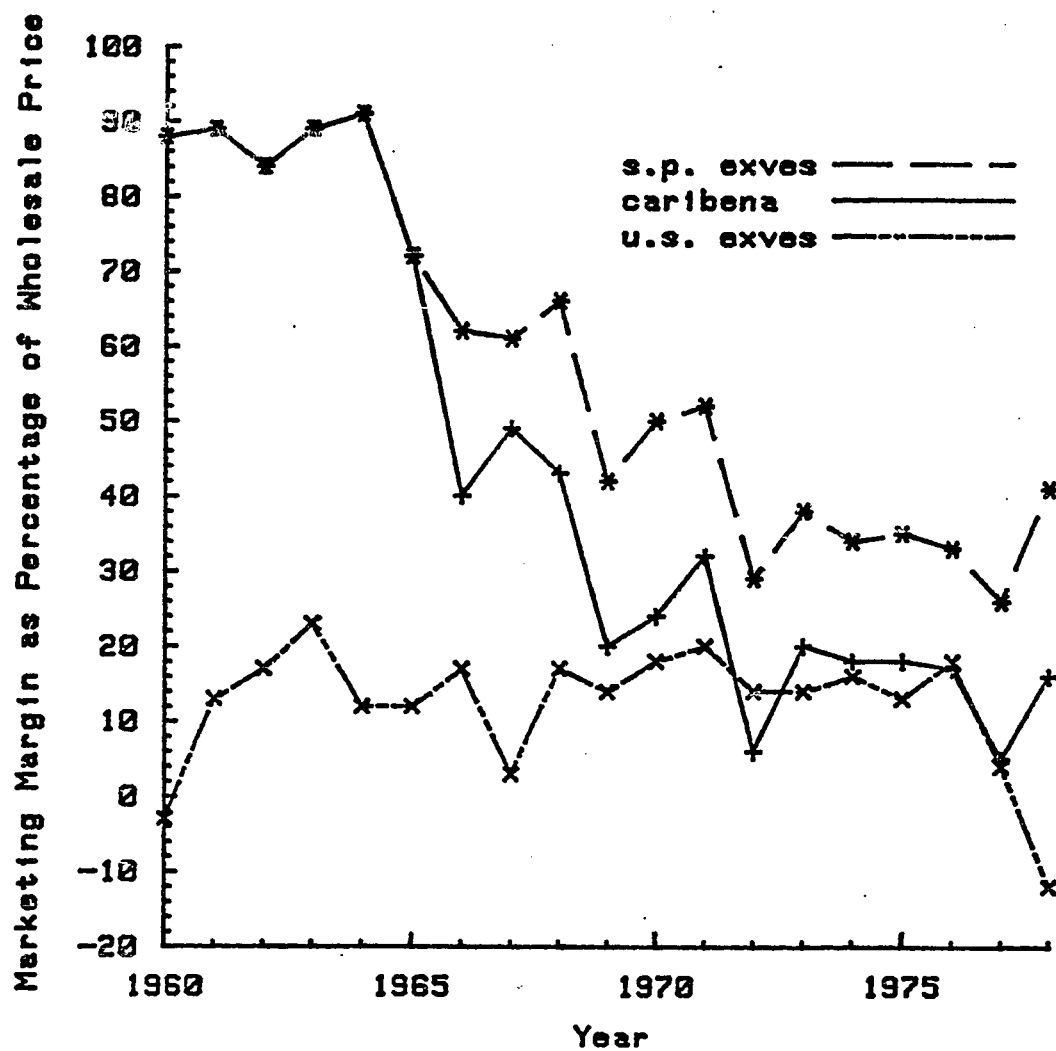
U.S. fishermen who have only taken the product through the exvessel level. This even though the cooperative pays all costs to delivery in the hands of the wholesaler. Consequently, after processing and other costs are taken into account, the actual exvessel price received by the fishermen of San Pedro is much below that of the U.S. spiny lobster fishermen.

To illustrate this, the marketing percentages for exvessel prices paid Caribena's fishermen were computed by combining all of the payments made to the fishermen by the cooperative including first payment, second payment, rebates and capitalization of shares. The resultant figure overestimates the true exvessel payment because it includes the portion of the profits from the processing process distributed to each member. The exvessel price was then subtracted from the wholesale price and then made into a percentage of the wholesale price.

In comparing the San Pedro fishermen's marketing percentage to that of the U.S. fishermen it is found that there is still a huge gap between the margins commanded by American fishermen and those commanded by Belizean fishermen, though this gap has narrowed in recent years. The San Pedro exvessel marketing percentage was 62 percent in 1966 compared to the 17.3 percent for the U.S. fishermen and 41 percent in 1978 compared to 0 percent for the U.S. fishermen (see Figure 16). It should be further remembered that San Pedro fishermen are only able to receive the exvessel price that they do through the employment of cheap labor in the processing phase. Labor is one of the major processing costs accounting for two-fifths of the processor's price to wholesalers in the U.S.

When the fact of large differentials between the marketing percentage of Belizean exvessel and U.S. exvessel are combined with the

Figure 16



MARKETING PERCENTAGES FOR CARIBENA, SAN PEDRO EXVESSEL AND
U.S. EXVESSEL: 1960 TO 1978

Source: U.S. Department Commerce 1974 and Caribena Annual Report,
various years

differences in wholesale prices accorded cold-water tails² (products of non-Third World countries) and warm-water tails (products of Third World countries) (see Figure 6), an idea of the subordinate position of the Belizean fisherman can be attained. It must further be noted that because prices received for product have always been lower in Belize, capitalization of the lobster industry is significantly lower in Belize than in the U.S. Consequently, the return per unit effort is lower in Belize than in the U.S. Even if Belizean fishermen did have capital to invest in technological innovations, Belize produces none of these types of goods and, therefore, Belizean fishermen must invest proportionally more to attain them.

To sum up the position of the San Pedrano lobster fisherman; his product, warm-water lobster tails, is valued less highly on the wholesale market than are comparable tails from places like South Africa; the exvessel price that he receives is significantly less than that received by his American counterparts; and because of the first two factors and the fact that Belize is not an industrial nation, the lobster industry is undercapitalized and underdeveloped technologically yielding a lower return per unit effort than is found in the U.S. industry.

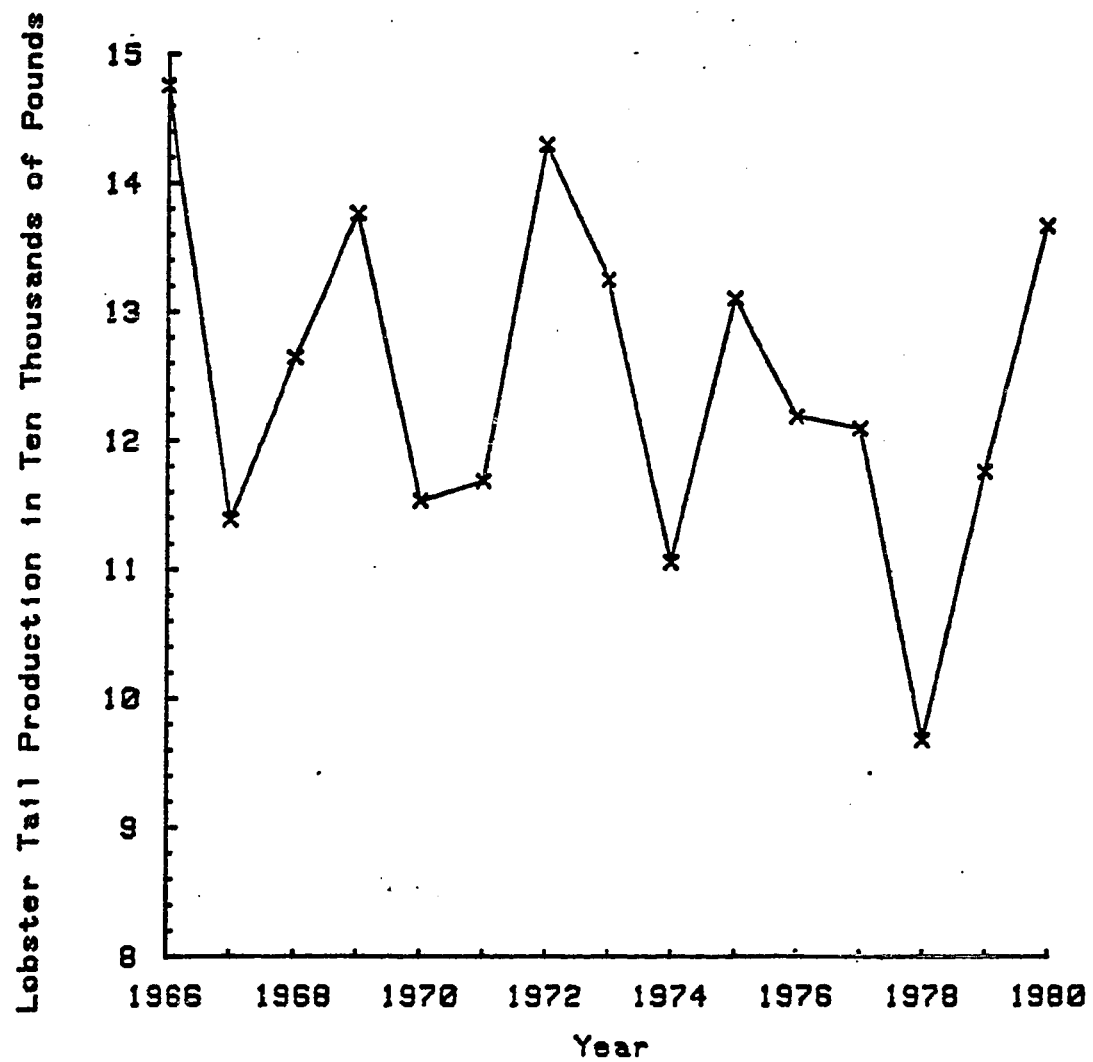
These facts combined with the characteristic "underdeveloped" nature of the Belizean fishing industry leads one to wonder whether what appears to have been a process of release from the cycle of boom and bust in the fishing villages of Belize and in San Pedro in particular is not just a high point in this ongoing cycle. None can deny, however, that there has been substantial progress in San Pedro during this most recent period. The question is where will this progress lead? To real development or a slide back into poverty.

THE RESOURCE

One of the usual characteristics of a dependent satellite economy, that of the progressive over-exploitation and eventual exhaustion of the raw material resource exported to the metropole, has so far not been discussed in relation to San Pedro's fishing economy. It has been noted previously that in the past Belize has been the victim of just such resource exhaustion. The Belizean forestry industry is the outstanding example of this. San Pedranos have been affected by exhaustion of a number of resources, for example chicle, turtles, rosette spoonbills (feathers were exported), alligators (hides were exported). The question to be asked, then, is: "Has the present village fishing industry managed to protect the resources on which it is based or have the same mechanisms of resource destruction, so evident in the past, continued to today?"

The all-important lobster resource of Belize has been heavily exploited now for 25 years. The yearly national catch of this commodity has been reduced significantly from its high in the late 1950's and early 1960's. However, the high catches in this period were probably due to the fact that a nearly virgin stock was being exploited. In the last twenty years lobster landings have been fairly stable (see Figure 17). At various times fishermen have become concerned that perhaps the stock was failing when for one or two consecutive years the lobster catches were poor. The Belize Fisheries Unit has kept overall catch statistics for a number of years for lobster. They maintain that the stock is not in danger of over-exploitation and that fluctuations in yearly catch occur regularly in a three and one-half year cycle and are nothing to worry about.

Figure 17



CARIBENA PRODUCTION OF LOBSTER TAILS: 1966 TO 1980

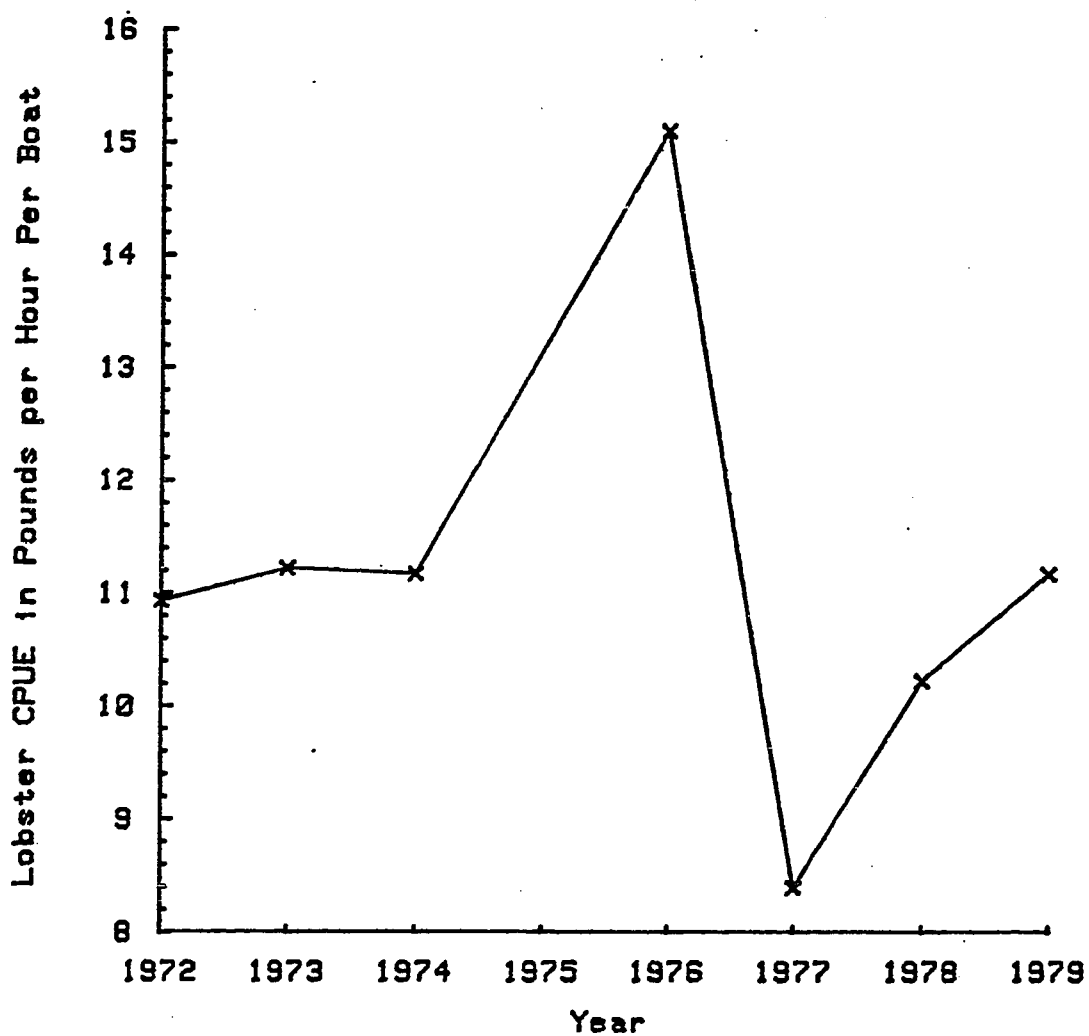
Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

Catch per unit effort statistics worked out from the catch records of San Pedro fishermen tend to bear out the claim that the lobster resource is not threatened. As can be seen from Figure 18, the return in pounds of lobster to each day of effort expended by San Pedrano fishermen has remained fairly stable over the last seven years (the only ones in which adequate statistics for making these calculations were available).

The apparent continued health of the Belizean lobster resource is most likely a consequence of governmental regulation of exploitation of the resource aimed at its conservation. Since the 1950's the Belize government has enforced size limits (3.5 inch cape length), a four-month closed season on lobster fishing and national export quotas geared to keeping lobster catches at or below the maximum sustainable yield of the resource. These regulations became particularly effective with the advent of a nationalistic government set on protecting its resources and the inception of the fishermen's cooperatives equally interested in preserving resources in the early 1960's.

The conch resource has not been so fortunate as the lobster resource. Conch has been exploited and exported in large quantities for a much shorter period of time than has lobster. Yet this resource in recent years has suffered from over-exploitation to the point of resource exhaustion. The over-all catch of conch by San Pedrano fishermen has decreased rapidly from its high in the mid 1970's (see Figure 19). The catch per unit effort statistics are even more demonstrative of the difficulties being experienced in this fishery (see Figure 20). A steady decline in the catch per unit effort for conch took place from 1972 to 1978 showing that fishermen spent more time fishing while bringing back less for their efforts during that entire period, a sure

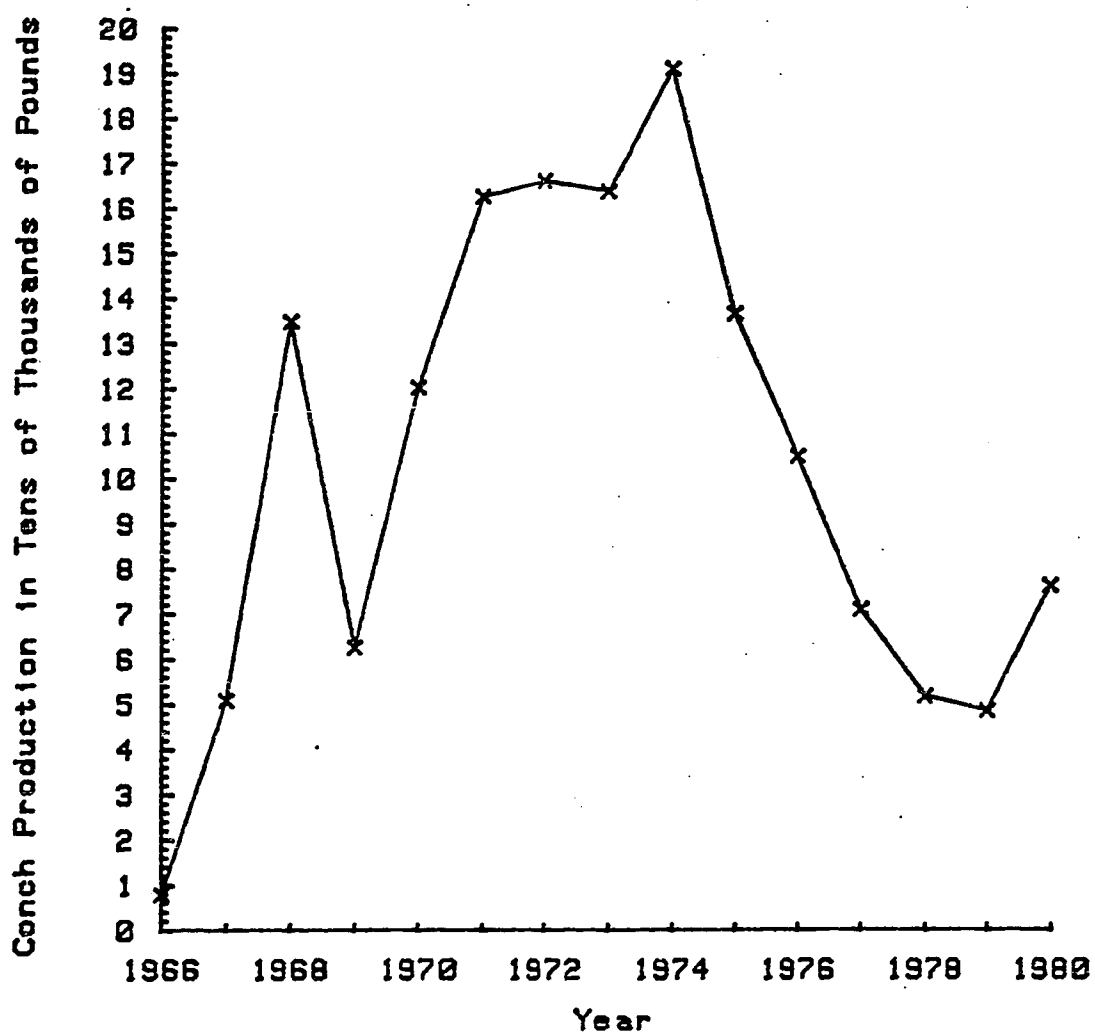
Figure 18



CARIBENA LOBSTER CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT: 1972 TO 1979

From analysis of the records of Caribena Producers' Cooperative, Ltd.

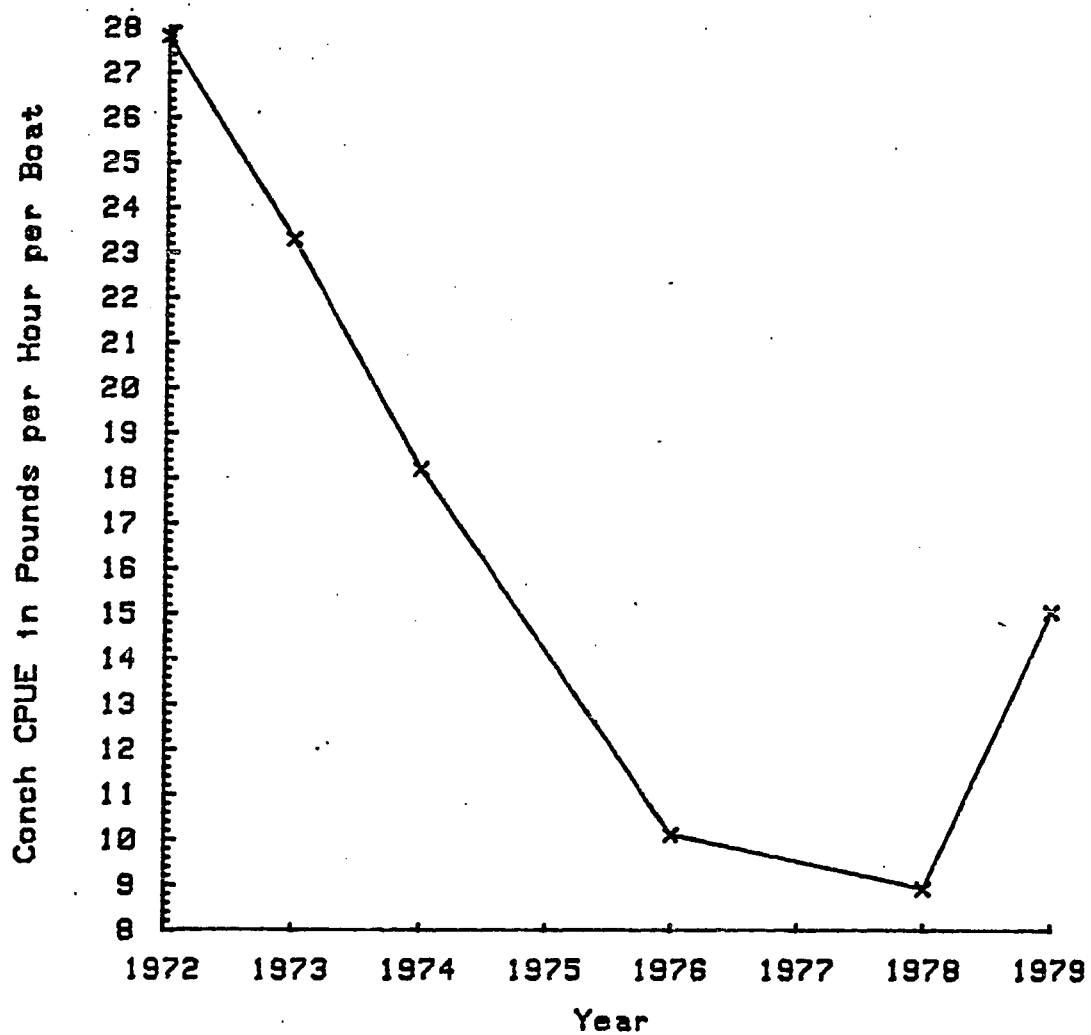
Figure 19



CARIBENA PRODUCTION OF CONCH: 1966 TO 1980

Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

Figure 20



CARIBENA CONCH CATCH PER UNIT EFFORT: 1972 TO 1979

Source: Caribena Annual Report, various years

sign of a resource in trouble. The cause of the rapid decline of the conch fishery has been lack of regulation. There was no management whatsoever of this resource until the 1979 season when a closed season on conch fishing was instituted. The resource immediately responded to this closed season. In 1979 both the total catch of conch made by San Pedrano fishermen and the catch per unit effort increased significantly. It remains to be seen whether or not the resource will recover enough to bring it back to the level of productivity it once enjoyed.

San Pedro's fishery resource remains relatively healthy after many years of heavy use. As should be evident from the conch situation, however, there is the everpresent danger that should management of the fisheries resources of Belize for any reason fail, the resources could very easily be exhausted. The value of local control of the resource as opposed to control by outsiders who care little about the future of a satellite's resources is evidenced by the continued viability, particularly, of the lobster stock in contraposition to the ravages experienced by Belize's natural resources in the past.

Notes: Chapter VII

1. Exvessel is the price received by the fishermen at the dock.
2. Cold-water lobster tails include tails from South Africa, Australia and New England. The rationale for their higher wholesale price is generally that they have firmer, whiter flesh. There is also prestige attached to the name South African lobster tails among consumers probably due to the massive advertising campaign undertaken by the South Africans in the 1950's and '60's. Chefs I have interviewed generally report that there is little difference between the two products with some even preferring the warm-water tails because of their richer taste.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOUR REGIMES OF SAN PEDRO: DEVELOPMENT, UNDERDEVELOPMENT?

It was stated in the introduction to this dissertation that the economic history of San Pedro could probably be best understood within the context of the theory of the "development of underdevelopment" as formulated by Andre Gunder Frank and others. This paradigm was selected because, having discarded the progressivist development theories of neoclassical economists such as Rostow, Frank's formulations seemed to fit the Belizean case better than those of other radical thinkers in this area. More specifically, Marxist evolutionary stage theory fails in the Belizean case where the penetration of capital has not meant large scale bourgeois development. Frank's postulation of this continued lack of development as "underdevelopment," a consequence of capital penetration of the satellite resulting in the extraction of surplus from the satellite by the metropole on so grand a scale that development in the satellite becomes an impossibility, seems to fit the Belizean case. Frank's theory also comes closer to the facts of the Belizean case than the theories of those who claim that the lack of development in the satellites is a result of the maintenance of precapitalist modes of production in these areas by capital attempting to maximize profits. In Belize truly precapitalist modes have not existed for centuries—not since it was the domain of Amerindian societies.

Though Frank's development of underdevelopment theory has features that recommend it for understanding the economic history of San Pedro and

its relationship to the world economy, as noted in the introduction, it does have its problems. As stated succinctly by Brenner (1977:91), Frank and similar theorists:

. . . locate the sources of both development and underdevelopment in an abstract process of capitalist expansion; . . . [and fail] to specify the particular, historically developed, class structures through which these processes actually worked themselves out and through which their fundamental character was actually determined.

Recognizing this weakness and the importance of making an analysis on the level of production in attempting to discover the mechanisms by which a dynamic such as the development of underdevelopment operates, I have written an economic history of San Pedro emphasizing the changing class relationships in the community. In this manner I have hoped to make a contribution both to the understanding of San Pedro's economic history and to general developmental theory.

When I undertook the analysis of San Pedro's economic history, I assumed that what would result would be a reaffirmation of the basic tenets of Frank's development of underdevelopment thesis but with the addition, from one microcosmic example, of an understanding of the class structures through which this dynamic is played out. This however, has not turned out to be fully the case. While some of Frank's postulations have been substantiated in the analysis, others have been shown to need significant modification to account adequately for what has occurred in San Pedro over the last 133 years.

The analysis of San Pedro's economic history reveals the existence of four distinct economic phases. Each is associated with a different type of labor control, and each finds the majority of the San Pedranos occupying a different position in village, national and international relations of production.

The first phase is one in which San Pedranos, having established the village of San Pedro on Ambergris Cay, began producing fish for consumption in the logging camps and on the sugar plantation of the interior. While "hooked into" the national economy in this fashion, they also fished and did milpa agriculture for their own subsistence. While the market relations of the villagers were important to them, their subsistence activities meant that they did not have to depend on the market for their existence. The village did, however, become increasingly market-oriented during this period. Characterization of San Pedranos in this phase of their economic history is somewhat problematic. Wolf (1966) gives a minimal definition of peasants: rural small-scale producers who, while involved in producing surpluses which are transferred to a dominant group, are heads of households which are economic units. In this sense, San Pedranos of this era were peasants. Inasmuch as San Pedranos of the time, owning their means of production, were producing commodities (mostly fish) for exchange on a market and yet at the same time commodity production had not become generalized in the village, we can speak of the villagers as petty commodity producers (Mandel 1976:29). Combining the two activities during the first forty or so years of its existence San Pedro was a village of peasant petty commodity producers.

This mode of peasant petty commodity production cannot be considered pre capitalist because it came into existence as a consequence of capital penetration of Belize and was articulated to the capitalist mode of production through the market. On the other hand, up to this point there had been no capital penetration of the village itself. Because of the enclave (localized) nature of capital penetration of Belize at the time,

these specific villagers were in control of their own means of production. They further controlled all aspects of the production and circulation process of the goods they produced and sold. In other words they controlled all four levels of production and circulation from producer to consumer of their commodity (fish); production/harvest, processing, wholesale and retail.

In the second phase of San Pedro's economic history there was a transformation of the village economy from peasant petty commodity production to capitalist agriculture. A number of factors precipitated this transformation. The sugar and mahogany industries which had been the major markets for San Pedro's peasant produce declined. This pushed San Pedranos, who were partially dependent upon the Belizean market economy, to participate as laborers in the chicle and logwood industries that were emerging in the colonial economy at the time. Complete and irreversible capitalist penetration of the village was accomplished, however, by an act of primitive accumulation in the classical sense. This was the seizure of the lands of Ambergris Cay by a family of the Belizean bourgeoisie elite. This appropriation of lands divorced the peasant San Pedranos from their means of production, thus forcing them into the position of an agricultural proletariat on the plantations of the new agricultural bourgeoisie. They lacked control of the means of production and sold their labor for a wage and thus were a proletariat. However, labor in plantation San Pedro was not totally free and mobile. It was tied to its ruling bourgeoisie by systems of debt and paternalism and was further exploited by a monopoly on the commercial sector of the village economy by this same local bourgeoisie. As an agricultural proletariat, the villagers were unable to control any of the levels of

production/circulation of the commodity they produced. This was all in the hands of the local bourgeoisie.

Some few of the most successful of the peasant fishermen were able to stave off proletarianization by remaining fishermen. However, the days of petty commodity production had ended forever. These few fishermen became petty bourgeois, for they could no longer count on cultivation of the land to help provide their subsistence and were therefore totally dependent upon market relations for their reproduction. As natural disaster, flagging prices and demand, and international depression weakened the plantation economy of San Pedro, more villagers were able to join the petty bourgeoisie ranks. Many did part-time fishing when there was as a lull in the labor requirements of the plantations. Others were able to acquire enough capital through various means to purchase small cash crop holdings. The struggle of the entire agricultural proletariat of San Pedro to become petty bourgeois would reach fruition in the next phase of the economic history of the village.

The third phase was one in which petty bourgeois production dominated. The majority of San Pedranos now owned their means of production and were dependent upon the market for their subsistence but at the same time did not hire any labor nor capitalize their enterprises appreciably. This petty bourgeois mode grew from the seeds, and in the mold, of the petty bourgeois submode which existed during the time of the hegemony of agricultural capitalism in the village. It was able to gain ascendancy as a result of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the previous mode. This proletariat was able to gain the upper hand and transform itself into a petty bourgeoisie as a consequence of the weakening of the agricultural bourgeoisie. As mentioned above, natural

disaster, bad markets and international depression played havoc with the plantation economy. The San Pedro proletariat took advantage of the weakened state of the plantation mode to free itself from subservience to it, many of the villagers actually abandoning the cay.

At this precise juncture capital in the form of the lobster industry penetrated Belize. This capital was not strong enough to monopolize the means of production. Technology for capture was fairly simple and the sea, as opposed to the land, could not be privately controlled. As a result, the means of production at the harvesting level was left in most cases to the fishermen. Instead capital, in this case mostly foreign, took control of the means of production in processing. It should be remembered, however, that foreign capital financed much of the initial harvesting means of production ultimately controlled by the fishermen. Through control on the processing level and in the circulation of the petty bourgeois fisherman's product, the bourgeoisie in this industry were able to keep prices paid to the fisherman low enough so that they could not become a full-fledged bourgeois stratum. The final few years of the dominance of petty bourgeois production in San Pedro were marked by increased struggle between this transitional class and the foreign capitalists who dominated it. This struggle, in the end, resulted in the transformation once again of the San Pedro economy.

In the fourth and final phase of San Pedro's economic history a significant number of the villagers were able to become members of the bourgeoisie. This was brought about by the completion of the class struggle previously mentioned. The fishermen in conjunction with two powerful forces, the church and ultimately the new nationalist state, were able to break the monopoly of foreign capital over the means of

production in the processing of the fishermen's product and to assume this monopoly themselves through the creation of a cooperative. This meant that of the four levels of product production and circulation the San Pedranos now controlled two, harvesting and processing. These are the only levels which occur in Belize. The assumption of control over the processing level (which includes marketing internationally) had the effect of lifting all fishermen to the level of bourgeoisie, at least with respect to this production level. The result was a large increase in the village standard of living and a diversification of the village economy. However, the evolution of the fishing economy has enabled only some of the fishermen to become bourgeois at the harvesting level through the ownership of boats in the long-distance fishery. Most fishermen are reduced to a semi-proletariat in this kind of fishery or remain petty bourgeoisie in the local fishery. The harvesting bourgeoisie has been able to invest capital, garnered from surplus extracted at the harvesting and processing production levels, into the commercial and tourist sectors of the village economy. This has led to the strengthening of their bourgeois positions and to the swelling of the ranks of the proletariat in the village since wage laborers are hired in these sectors.

At present, San Pedro is in a period of transition as the remnants of the previous petty bourgeois phase linger. Barring unforeseen outside intrusions, and these are the rule rather than the exception, the village, as tourism gains ascendancy in the economy and fishing perhaps becomes an industry involving higher technology and longer-distance travel, is moving towards a strict division between proletariat and bourgeoisie with the petty bourgeoisie disappearing.

Having outlined the economic history of San Pedro, a deeper understanding can be facilitated by highlighting its most significant features. This is done within the context of dependency theory, examining its ability to illuminate these features so that we may also draw some conclusions as to the contributions that can be made to dependency theory by class analysis.

Frank and other dependency theorists describe underdevelopment as development which ". . . is constantly conditioned by relationships of dependence upon the metropolis. . . . [it] is a satellite development which is not autonomous to the region, self-generating, or self-perpetuating" (Cockcroft, et al. 1972:xi). By this definition San Pedro's economy throughout its history has been "underdeveloped."

Every major economic activity in San Pedro's history has, in some way, served the needs of the metropole. Even before capital penetration of the village, peasant San Pedranos were providing staple goods for plantation modes directly linked to metropolitan markets and capital. In the subsequent three phases of its history, logwood, chicle, coconuts, and marine products were produced in San Pedro to meet the demand of metropolitan markets. This production has been under the control, one way or another, of international capital. Even in the last phase where villagers are fully in control of the levels of production/circulation which take place within Belize, we have shown that the type of relationship that exists between the villagers and the metropole is a dependent one characteristic of an underdeveloped economy.

Fitting San Pedro into this metropolis-satellite schema is valuable for a number of reasons. It allows us to understand the structural position of San Pedro vis a vis the developed world. Different phases in

the economic history of the village can be correlated with metropolitan demand for different products and even with transformations in metropolitan capitalism (though this has not been dealt with in this work). Finally, partial explanations of why San Pedro has failed to attain the developmental level achieved by economic units in the metropole can be tendered. There is, however, much about the economic history of San Pedro that would have been missed had we merely concentrated upon its dependent status. Going beyond a search for the presence of the development of underdevelopment in San Pedro to an investigation of the changing class structures in the history of the village has captured much more of the true nature of this history.

It should be clear from the analysis done in this dissertation that there has been a great deal of movement in the San Pedro economy from its inception to today. In its most general terms, the basic relationship with the metropole has remained the same; little else in the village economy has done so, however. San Pedro's basic industries have changed. Foods, general technology, standard of living, housing, clothing types have all changed under changing economic conditions. Most importantly, San Pedranos started out as peasant petty commodity producers, and then became an agricultural proletariat with no control over the means of production and no control of any level of the production/ circulation of their product. Today, however, a large number of villagers are bourgeois. Many control large portions of the means of production in the fishing economy. Villagers control two levels of the production/ circulation of their product. Some investments are being made by villagers in their economy, specifically the cooperative and the tourist sectors.

Though dependency theorists admit transformations in the class structures of dependent economies, their emphasis is upon the continuity of the relationship of dependency and hence underdevelopment. Because the indexes of dependency are to be found at the level of exchange, they displace class relations from the center of their analyses though they pay lip service to it. For these reasons, Frank and those who follow his line of reasoning miss or minimize the importance of the types of economic movements and transformations, described above for San Pedro, which are the product of class struggle within local economic systems. The existence of these movements is clearly discernable in the case of San Pedro when a class analysis is applied to village history.

Having located these movements and transformations in San Pedro's economic history, the question of their significance and classification arises. Dependency theorists insist that economic transformations must produce an economy which is internally balanced, autonomous, self-sufficient, self-generating and self-perpetuating in order to be considered as having achieved "real" development. As none of the various phases of San Pedro's history, with the possible exception of the first, can claim to embody these characteristics, each and every phase of village history would be considered by Frank and other dependency theorists, to be an example of the development of underdevelopment. There are problems, however, with Frank's definition of development. The definition is one of an "idealized development." It is based upon the development process of the advanced capitalist states but is ". . . combined with a much more ambiguous concept--perhaps the development of the productive forces . . ." (Phillips 1977:11). The result is an ideal type of "normal" capitalist development which "does not correspond to the actual

process of development in most of the advanced capitalist countries" (Phillips 1977:11) not to mention the underdeveloped ones. Even if this ideal type of development did approximate the process in the advanced capitalist countries, as Phillips (1977:19) comments:

It seems obvious that the development of capitalism on a world scale could not take the form of development experienced by, for example, Britain. The tendency towards internationalism alone, which has transformed the role of the nation state from that which it played in the 18th and 19th centuries would make this impossible.

Development theorists, then, have formulated a definition of development which it is impossible for the so called underdeveloped or even most of the developed nations to satisfy, at least by capitalist means. This prevents movements in an economy which might legitimately be capitalist development from being considered so. In the case of San Pedro, the villages's transformations outlined above, and in particular the movements in the last phase of village history, must be considered capitalist development. Not considering it to be so denies the large structural transformations and disregards 130 years of class struggle and the final triumph of San Pedranos over the hegemony of extra village capital in the village mode of production.

According to Frank, real economic development in the periphery occurs when its ties to the metropole are the weakest (Cockcroft et al. 1972:xiii). Similarly he claims that changes "...in economic and class structures...[in the periphery] have occurred as a result of periodic changes in the forms of colonial dependence" (Frank 1972:13). In other words, from Frank's point of view, all significant movements in the economies of the peripheries are the results of the influence or lack of it of the metropole. This is borne out to a certain extent in San Pedro. Many of the significant transformations of class structure have occurred

as a result of changes and fluctuations in the demand for the products of the village. For example, the transformation from phase one to phase two of the village economy, from petty commodity production to proletarianized agricultural labor, was brought about by metropolitan demand for logwood, chicle and coconuts. On the other hand this transformation would not have taken the form it did were it not for the class structure and attendant legal system existent in Belize at the time. It is not the case, however, that economic development occurred in San Pedro when the village's ties to the metropole were at their weakest. Frank points to the weakest points of metropolitan control of the periphery as the periods during the two world wars and the depression years. The economy of San Pedro reached its lowest point during the Second World War. The clearest instance of economic development occurred in San Pedro in the early 1960's with the founding of the fishermen's cooperative. This was a time of close ties between the economy of the village and the metropole.

The point of all this is that while it is correct to say that the metropole has had an impact on the economic transformations of San Pedro, the existing class structures, legal system, class struggles and climatic catastrophies in the village and Belize have also had an important role to play in the timing and nature of the transformations that have taken place.

We have found that there has indeed been capitalist development in San Pedro during its history and that this development is a product of both influences from the metropole and from within the local class structure.

The development in San Pedro was characterized by the progressive evolution of production in the fishing industry. The result was

progressive change in the objective living condition of the villagers and control of the villagers over their own lives. This development does not reach the goals of "real development" defined by dependency theorists as "structural transformation of the economy, society, polity and culture of the satellite that permits the self-generating and self-perpetuating use and development of the people's potential" (Cockcroft et al. 1972:xi). The development which occurred in San Pedro, though, is a big step toward these final development goals. It can be argued that a step in the direction of true development is development.

According to Frank's determinations the only type of development which occurs in a dependent satellite is the development of underdevelopment, and that is the basis of its remaining dependent. San Pedro, in the last phase of its economic history, while still exhibiting characteristics of dependence is moving towards a true state of development. From discussion earlier in this section we understand that this development came about as a product of class struggle, fortuitous market conditions and other factors. What needs to be explained here is why development on the scale it has occurred in phase four did not take place in any of the other phases of village history. If the extraction of surplus from the local economy which is symptomatic of a dependent relationship with the metropole is not the mechanism by which development towards "real development" is prevented, then what is? In San Pedro development did not occur until the most recent phase of the village's history because of the class structures which existed in the village economy until this time. For example in the third phase of the village's history San Pedranos as petty bourgeois fishermen were in a particular exploitative class relationship with the bourgeoisie which bought and processed their

produce and with the commercial bourgeoisie which controlled the markets on which they bought the goods with which they reproduced themselves and their families. The Belizean and American processing bourgeoisie which purchased the product of the fishermen gave them very little for what they produced and in many cases held them in debt for the capital necessary to purchase the means of production in the fishery. Payments were kept low to maximize the profits of this bourgeoisie and because there was no industrial bourgeoisie which might benefit by increasing the buying power of the petty bourgeois fishermen. Most of the profits of the processing bourgeoisie were consumed in expenditures on luxury items or exported to the metropole. None was reinvested in San Pedro, a place of very little interest to this group of people. The low prices for produce received by the fishermen allowed them no surplus over their reproduction needs to invest in the village infrastructure either. The Belizean commercial bourgeoisie which was the recipient of the moneys made by the fishermen was primarily located in Belize City where the fishermen were paid for their produce. Thus the San Pedro fishermen enriched the Belize City bourgeoisie who also were not interested in investing in San Pedro. The situation changed only when the class structures of the third phase were changed as a precondition of entering the fourth phase in the village's history. Villagers in this phase gained control of the fish processing process and of the commercial activities of their community and were able, therefore, to reinvest in their village and its productive processes and, thereby, to develop.

Taking the significance of the determinant nature of local class structures in the lack of development in San Pedro one step further, it becomes clear that the overall dependent character of the village economy

has as much to do with village and national class structures as it does with the dominance of the needs of the metropole. As Brenner (1977) points out, there is no reason why production for export should necessarily lead to underdevelopment. In support of this contention, he points to the development of the Middle Atlantic colonies of the United States as an example of an area which developed rapidly with just such an export dependent economy. Brenner in this same article, elaborates an argument in which he proposes that the development of underdevelopment in the Caribbean slave economies was based not on the demands of the metropolitan economies alone, as dependency theorists assert, but on the class structures of these slave economies as well. This same argument applies to the economic history of San Pedro. The best example of this is found in phase two of the village's history.

In phase two, San Pedranos were an agricultural proletariat but a proletariat that, because of the "advance" and "truck" systems of debt indenture and paternalistic relations with the bourgeoisie, was not free in the sense that it could freely sell its labor on an open market. The bourgeoisie in this system had the dual luxury of having a labor force which it could compel to work at reduced cost of labor and at the same time a labor force whose subsistence was not their responsibility in times when its labor was not needed. This system, as mentioned in the body of the thesis, was utilized throughout Belize at this time. In this type of system the demand for capital and labor goods is limited by the low wages paid the semi-free labor force. This severely limits the extent of the local market. The demand for luxury goods for the ruling class is high. This demand, though, is satisfied by industrial production in the core where it can be organized to serve all satellite elites.

As a result capital which might otherwise have been used to increase the productive capacity of the local system is expended on the luxury products of the metropole. In Belize the lack of worker mobility combined with the fact of an extremely low population operated to militate against the development of a free labor force for industrial development even if a market for the products of such a sector could have been found.

The development of underdevelopment at this time in Belize was rooted in the contemporary class structure which was based on the exploitation of semi-free labor. This created

. . . a sharp disjuncture between the requirements for the development of the productive forces [productivity of labor] and the structure of profitability of the economy as a whole. On the one hand, this class structure determined a general antagonism between the demands of profit making and the development of the productive forces in the fields subject to world market demand, by discouraging the advance of fixed capital and undermining the development of skill, since production was based on . . . [in this case, semi-free] labor (while low payments to labor power encouraged the adoption of labour saving techniques) (Brenner 1977:85).

On the other hand the remainder of the Belizean economy at the time suffered from a lack of profitability because it was forced to serve as a reservoir of cheap labor. This meant that no capital was invested in the economy, not even in agriculture, to provide for subsistence to the plantation or logging sectors, as a means of keeping labor and potential labor from being drawn away from the export-oriented sectors. Part of the subsistence of the export sector was provided by a small peasant sector in the northern portion of the country which was held in servitude to the export bourgeoisie by rent structures. The presence of this peasant sector posed barriers to development by ". . . making difficult the application of fixed capital and the rise of cooperative labor, as well as, more generally, the full emergence of labour power as a

commodity" (Brenner 1977:85). As a result no sectors other than the export sector, a small peasant sector, and a small commercial sector, arose during this period eliminating the possibility of autonomous or self-sufficient development in the sense that it exists in the developed Western world. Certainly no development of this type took place in San Pedro at this time which was completely dominated by the hegemony of a plantation economy that demanded complete access to its labor force and would tolerate no competition for labor.

Before we proceed to summarize the findings of this dissertation, let us state succinctly what the investigation of San Pedro's economic history has revealed about development theory and particularly Frank's version of it. Frank is correct on the macro level. The development of underdevelopment and resultant dependency on the metropole does exist in Belize and specifically in San Pedro. This dynamic has had major implications for the village as we have seen in the preceeding account. Frank also is at least partially correct when he asserts the influence of the metropole on the creation and structuring of class structures in the satellite to serve the extractive purposes of the metropole and further in influencing the transformation of these structures.

However, because Frank does not carry out micro-analysis, or any investigation which strays far from the level of exchange, he misses the content of the interaction of classes at this level. These class structures and struggles determine to a large extent, as Brenner (1977) points out, whether the development of underdevelopment will take place or whether true development will emerge from the interaction of the satellite and metropole. Because in most cases, in the periphery, underdevelopment is primarily the result of these class struggles, and because

these struggles are never investigated by him, Frank assumes that the resultant underdevelopment is the product of metropolitan influences alone.

Frank's concentration on the macro level and the exchange levels misses also the mechanisms by which satellite modes are created and structured, operate and transform. These are important questions if these economies are to be understood in order that they may be changed to become more egalitarian, something which Frank claims to regard as essential.

Finally, Frank's definition of development is inadequate because it causes us to miss the examples of capitalist development that do exist in the satellites. At the same time, because it is based on a notion of idealized capitalist development, Frank's concept of development unintentionally, but nevertheless logically, leads to the conclusion that if just the right type of capitalist development could be found, it would obviate the necessity for socialist development. This contradicts his own value system.

Frank has "a good handle" on the workings of the international capitalist system on the market level. His type of analysis is invaluable in securing a complete understanding of how the world economy works. What he and others have failed to add to this analysis, however, is a notion of how this system actually works. This can only be done by investigating the world economic system at the production level. It is hoped that this study of San Pedro will help to fill in some of the blanks by illuminating some of the processes as they operate in one local situation.

We can now summarize the major salient features of San Pedro's economic history in theoretical terms. First, San Pedro's economy, throughout its history, has been a dependent economy. Development of the village economy has always had as one of its major features the development of underdevelopment. The economy of the village today, even though it has provided the villagers with the highest standard of living and the most autonomy over their own lives in village history, still shares with the economy of the past, in its darkest hour of poverty and subjugation, the fact of dependency. This underdeveloped and dependent status means for the villagers: that they will never obtain the true value of their product from the metropole (surplus will be continually extracted); as their economy is oriented to the metropole so will be their political and social structures, culture and ideology; and should the relationship with the metropole ever falter due to falling demand, international war, or other factors beyond their control, there will be an immediate and total crash of the village economy.

Second, San Pedro's dependent status, while through history related to the demands of metropolitan markets, is the direct result of the class structures which have existed in the village and more importantly within the nation of Belize itself.

Third, San Pedro's economic history has not been static. It contains a never ending progression of movements and transformations. These movements have been the products of many different phenomena: international warfare, world depression, local natural disasters, plant disease, the demands of the metropole, national politics, local class struggle and structure. These movements and transformations account for the rich variety in the economic history of the village. There has been

more change in San Pedro in 130 years than in 2000 years in some similar satellite communities.

Fourth, though over the years there has been much movement in the village economy, during most of the history of this movement there has been no development in the sense that the villagers controlled that development and reaped any appreciable benefits from it. This lack of development was the product of the class structures of the village throughout its history. When some of the manifestations of these structures were recognized by the San Pedranos, though, they did not comprehend the full or underlying meaning of them, they struggled against the perceived inequities and won a victory institutionalized in a successful cooperative society.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, this class struggle which the San Pedranos won led to the first development in the village's history in the sense that it placed control of the village economy in the hands of the villagers, and the first steps towards what Frank calls "real" development were made. The formation of Caribena Producers Cooperative in which village fishermen came together to further their class interests was the major contributor to the development of the village. It should not be forgotten, however, that this development has taken place within the context of a dependent economy. This is, at one and the same time, evidence of the importance of class struggle in achieving development despite dependency as well as a warning of the precarious position of the nascent development. "Booms" have visited San Pedro before (eg. logwood). Though they did not lead to significant development, they are similar to today's in that the present "boom" created by the soaring international prices of lobster and other marine products would be almost

as drastically affected as those in the past by "bust" conditions. This would be true even though there has been some diversification of the village economy recently in the form of tourism that would ease the effects of a "bust" in the market for marine products.

The validity of the recent nascent development should not, however, be called into question by the fact of its coincidence with dependence on export to the metropole. This coincidence is the case all through the developed world. For example, a highly industrialized and developed nation like Japan is almost totally dependent on sale of manufactured goods to other metropolises, and faces crises when pressured by the United States to restrict exports.

In conclusion, if San Pedranos want to continue the economic development characteristic of their village over the last twenty years, the lessons of the past must be grasped. The small amount of development that the villagers have attained has been the product of class struggle. When development on the local level has not occurred in the past, this has been the case because of the class structures which existed in the village. The village reached its present state of development through the banding together of its inhabitants to defend their class interests through the institution of their cooperative. The cooperative which once totally dominated the village economy is now being challenged in its hegemony by other sectors of the village economy, especially tourism. These other sectors are organized along dichotomous class lines and are not nearly so egalitarian in structure as the cooperative was in its early days. The cooperative and the fishing sector in general have also come, in recent years, to be less egalitarian, as the petty bourgeois

disintegrates and differentiates under the pressure of capital into a bourgeoisie and a proletariat.

Under these conditions of increasing class dichotomization and, of necessity, class conflict, San Pedro may be able to develop within the framework of a dominant national capitalist system for some years to come. This may not turn out to be the case, however. As capital increases in the village, it will tend to become concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, relative to the size of the rest of the community. This process is already at work. The concentration of capital will no doubt lead, in Belize's underdeveloped economy, to the same mechanism which plagued the village economy in previous phases. Capital will be exported by the elite from the village to Belize City, and ultimately to the metropole, in search of a more cosmopolitan environment, luxury goods, and eventually more and better profit opportunities. This will deprive the village of the capital needed for its continued development.

Even if capitalist development does continue, movement towards the goals of "real" development is unlikely to. Already the number of villagers who own their means of production and whose economic autonomy and standard of living are assured is being outweighed by the number of people who do not own their means of production and who therefore must sell their labor and yield up their surplus value. Continuation of this trend will mean that, yes, some San Pedranos will be "free," but that the majority of their fellow villagers will not be because of their class positions.

The cooperative was a good first step in equitable growth but it was only a first step. If it is to continue, the cooperation and egalitarian ethic which fostered the creation of the cooperative must be maintained

and expanded upon not abandoned as seems to be the trend today in the village. Otherwise the village will be forced to relive its history of privilege for some and misery for most.

To fully assure the continuation of development in San Pedro, the system of dependency on the metropole that perpetuates the development of underdevelopment must be halted. Here I agree with Andre Gunder Frank when he asserts that the

. . . the causes . . . [of underdevelopment] lie in the capitalist system itself, and the only remedy against the causes, as well as the symptoms, of underdevelopment, is the revolutionary destruction of bourgeois capitalism and its replacement by socialist development (Frank 1972:136).

In the long run, one Belizean village cannot achieve socialism within a capitalist nation. How the nation disengages is a complex problem. San Pedranos have developed a model for development at the local level within the capitalist system, but this can only take them so far.

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