

Measures taken by Various Groups to Improve Social and Economic Conditions

Introduction:

The Trade Unions were not the only organizations that helped to improve the terrible social and economic conditions that existed. There were also other groups such as:

(a) Friendly Societies:

They offered various social services such as help with burial and sickness. Antigua was famous for these. There were quite a number of them. One example is the Daily Meal Society. As its name suggests it provided meals free of cost to those who could not afford them.

(b) Religious Groups

You are already aware of the giant role that the Church played in helping to provide **education** in this period. They were also instrumental in providing recreational facilities and wholesome activities for young people. Among these are:

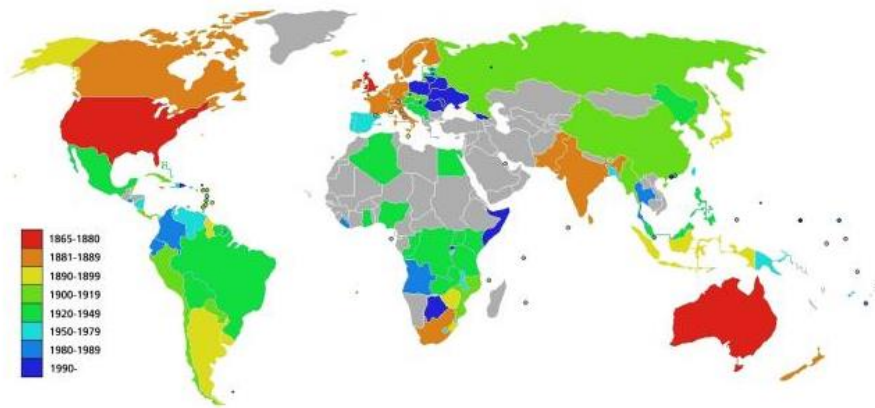
(i) Girl Guides

(ii) Boys Scouts

(iii) Picnics and concerts

(iv) Camps and retreats

(v) The **Salvation Army** is a most renowned religious institution. They are among the first group to provide a place of safety and learning for the blind. They also operated hostels that provided relief for the destitute and infirmed.



Map showing when the Salvation Army started up in countries across the world.

Much of the Caribbean is green; 1900- 1919. Jamaica is Orange 1881 -1889

(vi) Trinidad and British Guiana have a large East Indian population. The Hindu society in these two Colonies opened two organizations that offered free lodging and food for more than 250 persons each day. (Dharamsala and the Balak Sahaita Mandalee)

(c) Women's Organizations

By the 1930's the traditional narrow view of women as homemakers was beginning to change slowly but surely. A number of women were forced to become more active when the men left either for service in the World Wars or to find jobs in Latin, central and North America and Europe.

There was also the view that enough was not being done by the men to address the specific issues that women faced. In order to combat the gender discrimination that existed and its various manifestations women needed to be in place of power.

There were literally dozens of organizations that were founded and operated by women in response to the adverse social and economic conditions that they faced on a day to day basis. These organizations provided skills training for women, opportunities for education and child care among other facilities.

Here are some examples:

(i) St. Kitts - Ann Liburd was the first President of the Caribbean Women's Association. It became an umbrella group for over 500 women's organizations in the Caribbean



Ann Liburd

(ii) St. Vincent- Sarah Baptiste spearheaded the local chapter of the Girls Guide and Mothers' Union.

(iii) Jamaica - Una Marson was one of the founding members of the Jamaica Save the Children Fund. It built and operated several day care centres. The children received one hot meal per day and had a safe place to play while their parents were at work. After 1946 the organization also began to operate Basic schools. After this period also they received assistance from Canada and became

known as CANJAM- Canada Jamaica Save the Children Fund.

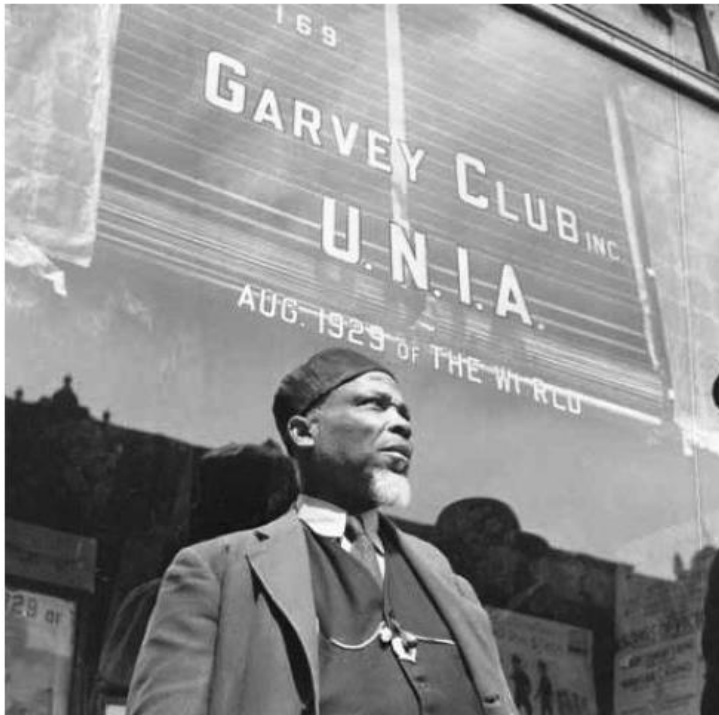


Una Marson

(iv) Trinidad- Amy and Merle Dowers were among the founding members of the Negro Welfare and Cultural Industrial Youth Movement. The organization provided wholesome activities for the youth in an attempt to prevent juvenile delinquency. Handicraft, sports, concerts, short story competitions, the performances of plays written by Merle were some of the features of this organization.

(d) The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

This dynamic organization was established by Marcus Garvey of Jamaica. It is said to have more than 30 chapters over the world. Garvey's philosophy of racial dignity and pride help to lift the masses of people. The U.N.I.A. was actively involved in health. Black Cross nurses provided health care for those who were sick. A number of nurses were trained to give services at the community health centres that were established. Garvey established a cultural centre at Edelweiss Park in Jamaica.



The Garvey Club

In **1929**, Garvey founded the **Peoples Political Party**. It was the first political party to be started or founded by a black man in Jamaica.

Excerpts from the Party's Manifesto:

- an eight hour work day
- a minimum wage for the working class
- the passing of a law to promote and protect local industries
- a legal aid department for the poor
- technical schools for each parish
- the establishment of a Jamaican University and Polytechnic Institution
- land reform
- libraries and civic amenities for each parish
- imprisonment of judges who use the law to oppress the poor
- beautifying Kingston Race Course and making it a national park

In August 1929 Kingston had the honour of hosting the sixth International Convention of the UNIA.

1. The following year (1930) he started a Trade Union- The Jamaica Workers and Labourers' Association