

# The Impact of World Wars 1 and 2

## Introduction:

World War 1(1914-1918) and World War 2 (1939-1945) took place in Europe. There were adverse effects on the world market and economy in general. The effects on the Caribbean were devastating. Firstly trade was disrupted. This includes the production and shipping of beet sugar. Cane sugar was able to enjoy a monopoly of the market. Also the price of sugar increased. Many planters began to feel a sense of hope.

This hope would be shattered with the Great depression (1920's) that followed World War 1 and the disastrous impact of World War 2 (1939-1945) some 19 years later.

The Royal Commissions of 1882-1883 and 1896-1897 recommended diversification as the only solution for ALL but three of the territories: **Barbados, Antigua and St. Kitts**. Diversification then, was evident in all of the other seven colonies.



*Sugar cane being processed*

A number of agricultural workers were already disillusioned with the fact that the owners of the sugar estates had cut their wages in an attempt to cut the cost of producing sugar. Possessing only agricultural skills they were forced to find alternatives in that area. Besides, there were some planters who were willing to sell portions of their estates in order to clear debts. Driven by the motivation to have their own business, the peasants bought small plots of land on which to grow their crops. Their very survival depended on it.

These crops did not require large acres of land or large amount of machinery or capital that these peasants would not be able to afford. In addition, the work could be done by the family and if necessary a hired hand or two.

They enjoyed somewhat of a guaranteed sales on the local or domestic market. They had gained vital experience from the Sunday market system during their enslavement.