

Light Manufacturing Industries

Introduction:

The period under study (1876-1985) was a very active one for the economy. Apart from new crops and industrial enterprises based on natural resources, a number of different light manufacturing industries were established.

- Gypsum



Gypsum in crystal

- Textiles
- Cosmetics
- Pharmaceuticals
- Cement
- Milk canning
- Cigarettes
- Records
- Oil based chemicals
- Footwear

- Cigars

The decision to introduce light industries into the Caribbean came against the backdrop of the harsh reality that the agricultural and new industries could not absorb the large labor force that existed in the region. The economy was growing far too slowly for the ever increasing population. The 'industrialization by invitation' program of Puerto Rico was seen as an attractive model to be copied by some British Caribbean territories.

Those territories that did not have any natural resource had to try something. Barbados for example introduced assembly lines. This is where machine parts are brought into the country to be assembled in the factories for re-export. They are therefore sometimes nicknamed 'screw driver industries'.

The government also attracted foreign investments from companies such as Good Year Tyre by offering generous concessions and incentives. For example they lowered the custom duties on raw materials and machinery for use in these factories.

They provided the necessary infrastructures and assistance to different companies. For example, Jamaica's Department of Industry and Commerce set up a saw mill and two lime oil distilleries while her counterpart in Trinidad provided supervision for the glass works factory. The availability and guarantee of cheap labor was an added incentive for these foreign companies.

Positives

1. The creation of a number of jobs resulted in a decrease in the level of unemployment. By 1966 Jamaica had 149 new factories.
2. An increase in the exportation of manufactured goods resulted in an increase in the earnings of foreign exchange

Negatives

1. Technical efficiency was inadequate when measured by international standards.
2. The agricultural sector tended to suffer as the concentration of labor and capital was on the new industries. The younger generation preferred to move to the towns to find jobs in the factories, even though the pay was small, rather than work in agriculture.

- 3.** Most of the industries were located in the towns. The massive rural urban migration placed a strain on the already limited services in the towns. This gave rise to the negative social conditions that would erupt into violence.
- 4.** Local industries suffered stiff competition from foreign products or products produced in the region by foreign companies.
- 5.** Wages were desperately low and often the working conditions were not the very best. For example, no lunch room was provided at many of these factories where literally thousands of persons worked. They were forced to 'find a corner' amidst the strong smell of tobacco or chemicals, here they would stand and have lunch.