

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES

With their usual lack of fanfare, the Barbados Statistical Service and the Caribbean Community Secretariat have published the first three volumes of the Population Census for Barbados. Most of us will dismiss them with at most a passing glance, which is a great pity. The volumes may be mined for a great deal of interesting information about the way we live - or rather, the way we lived on May 12, 1980, the census date. It would be surprising if each of us was not made to take a second look at one or two favourite notions.

The population in Barbados grew at 0.42% between 1970 and 1980, rather less than for the majority of Caribbean countries (with population growth rates between 1% and 1.4%). The population of some of the smaller islands - particularly those that have gone in for offshore activities - grew much more quickly. The Cayman Islands had the record with over 5% per year but their population still remains relatively tiny. Economic stagnation is reflected in very slow population growth in Dominica and in a static population in Montserrat while Guyana's deteriorating economy provoked very high emigration. The prospects of better working conditions and more attractive prospects in neighbouring countries served to reduce the populations of St. Kitts and Grenada. In Barbados itself, 15,800 people migrated during the 10 year period.

The census report also had something to say about the man shortage. There is actually one and one-tenth woman for every man or, if you prefer, 90% of a man for every woman. The real shortage is of mature men; up to age 30 the ratios are practically even.

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