

Nitrates leach with water through soil to ground water. Levels fluctuate and are increased with heavy rains and over-irrigation, and in water contaminated with nitrate producing bacteria.

Nitrates are colorless, odorless and tasteless and can only be detected by testing, which should be carried out every 2 or 3 years on public water supplies.

The negative health effects are caused by nitrites, which are produced by conversion of nitrates by bacteria found in saliva, stomach and infected urinary bladder.

The nitrite oxidizes the iron of haemoglobin, reducing its oxygen carrying capacity (methaemoglobinemia). Conversion is highest at high pH, hence infants and the elderly are more at risk of anaemic hypoxia. (Blue Baby Syndrome)

There are some reports of potential birth defects with high nitrate concentration water and there is a potential cancer risk as nitrites can react with amines and amides to form nitrosamines, which have been shown to cause cancer in animals.

There are several studies that question the reported cancer and other health risks, but the consensus is that "we cannot say that there are no potential problems for human health. In addition, the high and rising incidence of gastrointestinal carcinomas, and the widespread expensive use of anti-oxidants justify continuation of a maximum allowable level of nitrates for prevention.

The United States Public Health Service and the Environmental Protection Agency recommend a limit of 10 mg/Litre or 10 parts per million of nitrate – nitrogen and there are guidelines for determining individuals who are susceptible to methaemoglobinemia.

Treatment includes the following:-

Blending with low nitrate concentration water (e.g. rain water)

Getting a new source of water New well or spring. Deeper well. Bottled water.

Removal by distillation, reverse osmosis, or ion exchange resins. Carbon adsorption filters, mechanical filters and water softeners do not remove nitrate nitrogen, and simple boiling increases the nitrate content.

In summary, nitrates in water can be a problem especially for children. There is a recommended maximum level of 10 mg/l for public water supplies, and prevention is possible by reducing contamination by fertilizers and manure. The experts conclude "That the potential long term health impact and related costs to society can be staggering and that we should be working towards preventing contamination of water supplies by nitrates, whatever the source."

References:

Should we worry about nitrate in our water? Peter Weyer. Center for Health Effects of Environmental Contamination. University of Iowa
Drinking Water; Nitrate – Nitrogen Nebraska Cooperative Extension G96-1279-A 1998

UNAUTHORIZED LOANS

The people of Montserrat continue to be subjected to unauthorized loans. It was normal for lending agencies to foreclose on clients who fell 3 months behind. Since the volcano crisis, instead of foreclosure, the full interest for each loan has been added to the principle and subsequently charged additional interest. This creates an increasing spiral of debt for properties, which no longer exist or remain unavailable for use in the exclusion zone. The financial institutions should not be allowed to charge interest on loans for assets that are destroyed or unavailable for use. Arrangement should be made for either write off, or repayment of the principle by installments. Similarly, interest on tax arrears should be waived for businesses that have been unable to operate at a profit since the onset of the crisis.

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MONTSERRAT ALIVE MAGAZINE

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The safe Northern part of Montserrat

Editorial

The North is Safe!!

An onslaught of negative reports in the international media, especially in the United Kingdom, makes necessary the release of another issue of the Montserrat Alive Magazine.

These reports describe Montserrat as one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the world, and a powder keg waiting to explode. The television documentaries gave the impression that very few people live in Montserrat, and made no mention of the over 4000 people who are living comfortably in the

northern area, which is sheltered by a central mountain range, and has no greater probability of being destroyed than say -the flooding of London by the River Thames or the smashing of Caribbean cities by giant tidal waves.

Such reports can be classified as irresponsible as they destroy all hopes of recovery for our economy, deter any potential investors, and influence the policies that determine how Aid is spent in Montserrat.

Montserrat seems to be inextricably linked to irresponsible statements and actions. The showing of charred bodies in Harris' reminds viewers of the unnecessary loss of life, which resulted from people being allowed to live and work at the bottom of a ghaat which had all the signs of imminent pyroclastic flows for weeks prior to the disastrous event.

I was disturbed by the Chief Minister's pronouncements on his willingness to die with the people of Montserrat, rather than run away. *I hope he accepts that it is unacceptable for us to lose any more lives to the volcano, and that he should insist on there being in place, an effective warning system and alternative accommodation for people who may have to move from Salem, Olveston and old town. I would also expect him to set an example and leave, if it was shown beyond doubt that it was unsafe for anyone to remain anywhere in Montserrat.*

It is irresponsible to continue with a policy that does not provide facilities for emergency surgical procedures and irresponsible to permit the relocation of the only secondary school from the safe northern area to an area described as subject to heavy ash falls and scheduled for evacuation, if a series of eruptive explosions start again. It may be some months or years before this occurs, but there is still no serious attempt to identify adequate shelter for those who would have to move from Salem, Olveston and Old Town

No wonder constitutional powers includes the right to make decisions at one's discretion without risk of litigation.

In 1997, after much prompting, our leader was able to counter the negative impact of media reports by issuing clarifying statements through the same media. Statements which

indicated that the 4000 people remaining safely in the north of Montserrat, were sheltered from the volcano by a central range of mountains, and remained on sound scientific evidence and advice. Nothing has happened this time.

We seem to be in a state of impasse and perpetual "pause". Two ministers of government have recently announced their candidacies for the next election, which is constitutionally due within 3 months after November 2001. Neither minister indicated intention to run with the incumbent Chief Minister. This is in fact a public vote of no confidence in their own leadership, a vote which would fail in the legislative council, since salaries seem to be more important than principles.

I don't think our little, "pretend nation" will last the "very hard fourteen months" predicted.

Something has to break this impasse and unstick the pause button. Perhaps the volcano will.

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS 1989 AND NOW

The honorable Chief Minister David Brandt recently reported on a presentation that he made to the Consultative Council Meeting on behalf of the Overseas Territories. I wonder if other members of the Legislative Council, or the general public of Montserrat were invited to make an input or given prior knowledge of what he was going to say. Once there are proposals for, and discussions on constitutional change, it should be mandatory for an all party Commission to be actively involved. It is bad enough for a constitution to be foisted on a people. It is much worse if the people's representative agrees to one without a consensus of his subjects.

It is through constitutional change that our people will mature enough to achieve self determination. Something that can be earned only by practice of the principles of true democracy. This example of consensus neglect, hardly encourages confidence in a Government. Real confidence, that would be demonstrated by agreement for the Chief Minister to jointly share the portfolios of the Governor, or for the Financial Secretary and Minister of Finance, to be allowed to spend DIFID money without prior approval of a United Kingdom Official on island.

To elaborate on this discussion on constitutional matters, I publish the following excerpts from the booklet "Double edged sword. The Montserrat Constitution Order 1989. Fight for the Constitution of Montserrat"

Foreword

On 4th December, 1989 six Montserratians traveled to Britain's political heartland and reversed an attempt by the British Government to rob their island of its parliamentary freedom. In doing so, they wrote themselves into history. Their mission arose out of a retrograde constitution which was art-

fully

presented to the people of Montserrat in the wake of one of the worst natural disasters to visit these shores.

This is a long overdue account of the events and political chicanery leading up to the negotiations in London and the hard bargaining and skillful manoeuvring which compelled the British Government to compromise. Too few Montserratians are aware of the historical significance of this important victory or the shrewd tactics that were deployed to achieve it. Hopefully, Dr. Lewis' chronicle will correct this.

The author, who was the delegation's 'volunteer scribe', has penned an interesting and revealing account. We learn of the intransigence of the British Government and their refusal to entertain any discussion about the constitution. We learn of skill and determination with which those entrusted to defend our right to democracy successfully challenged the British Government in their own corridors of power. Of greatest interest perhaps, is the role played by the questions which were tabled by the Rt. Hon. Alfred Morris MP before the House of Commons.

The threat of ventilating Montserrat's concerns in the House, of embarrassment and exposure preserved our parliamentary freedom ultimately. It is, therefore, fight and fitting that the debt owed to our English friends in London has been acknowledged by Dr. Lewis. -

I congratulate the author for contributing a compelling and instructive chapter to the history of Montserrat.

Jean E.H. Kelsick

Page 5 Prologue

The Concise English Dictionary defines:

Constitution, kon-sti-tu'-shon, n. The particular frame or character of the body or mind; established form of government; a system of fundamental laws; a particular law.

In modern times, constitutions have arisen from the people they govern, not handed down by outsiders, who are themselves not subject to its regulations. Democracy, which we claim to enjoy, demands that a constitution be drafted and passed into law by the elected representatives of a people.

In 1989, this principle was ignored, and our colonial masters swung a weapon at the people of Montserrat, our new constitution, a double-edged sword, which purported to protect the rights of people, while at the same time subjugating them to the rule and control of their master.

Page 6 PROTEST

Mr. David Brandt LLB MLC, independent elected member for the Windward constituency, sent me a copy of the fifty-three page draft constitution. The large brown envelope also contained an invitation to a public meeting at the building of the Montserrat Allied Worker's Union.

justify restrictions on who can live in Montserrat, and then do everything to make sure this policy is justified, for instance, by not agreeing to a basic level of secondary care. Health care on the island should include a facility for emergency surgery. This does not have to be an expensive modern operating theatre.

There are many issues which require our attention which would be better dealt with by question and answers; What the volcano is doing, the Airport, Housing, How to boost the economy, Independence and our constitution. Issues which are too important to be discussed and decided on only by those presently in authority.

I believe the people of Montserrat are looking for new and different leadership. Leadership that puts the interests of country and fellowmen, even one's opponents, before their own. Leadership that seeks to embrace the whole Montserrat community, worldwide. Leadership that is committed to bringing our old folks who wish to, home or closer to home. Leadership that retains the active involvement of supporters in the business of managing our country.

I have a vision for Montserrat shared by many of my compatriots that is different from the British vision. It is up to those of us with the ability to do so, to convince them to accept and adopt our vision. In October 1977 as the guest of the British Caribbean Association, I had the opportunity to address members of the British Parliament at the House of Commons on the Montserrat issue. The response was sympathetic but the effort ineffective. I was not an official representative of Montserrat. I believe this will be different next time. Thanks for your attention.

26 October 2000

BASIL ABOUT

New Local Television Series

29th October 2000

Health Matters: How safe is our water?

Last week I encountered a half empty bag of fertilizer within half a mile of a spring at Barzey's Mountain. The water from this spring is not used for the piped water supply, but I have become concerned about the number of my patients who are testing positive for nitrates in their urine. It could be that they are eating a lot of spinach, which does have a high content of nitrates, but crude testing of water in the mains has led me to share the following information with the public.

Nitrates are present in ground water. Excessive concentrations are hazardous to health, especially infants, pregnant women, nursing mothers and elderly people.

Nitrates are commonly used nutrients for lawns, gardens and crop production, and are found in high concentrations in feedlots, animal yards, septic systems, and in decaying plant and animal residues.

Montserratians were recently treated to a new series of local programmes; "Basil About" presented by ZJB's Senior Announcer, Basil Chambers and produced by Tropical Film Studios, shows a variety of local activities which featured the following: -

1. Basil at cricket and the Heliport plus Joel Webb receiving the Manufacturing Entrepreneur of Year 2000 award.
2. Basil at masquerades featuring the activities of the Caribbean Cultural Festival in St Thomas, September 2000.
3. Basil interviews for International Teachers Day and excerpts from reopening of Montserrat Secondary School, Salem Campus.
4. Basil presents St Augustine School's 125th Anniversary Street Parade.
5. Basil presents Vegetarian Cooking.
6. Basil at basketball, festival 1991, New Years Day Parade.
7. Basil presents award to "Guess where I am" winner. Barbados welcomes home Olympic medal winner Obadale Thompson. Yvette and Charles get married.
8. Basil talks to fishermen Mosquito control. The making of Basil About.

The series was made possible by sponsorship of Cable & Wireless through Lonsdale Advertising Agency of Barbados. The producers are hoping to repeat the showing of this series during Festival 2000, and plan to produce a new series for November and December.

In the last programme, the presenter gave a demonstration of how the programme was produced with a low cost, portable production studio; showing that a normally expensive service could be made affordable for a small community.



Basil Chambers at work

a good deal? Not many, and a large proportion have moved on to England. The relocation grant of \$10,000 did not last very long and I suspect most was spent on rent.

In 1997 a group of us tried to do something. A Mr. Gus Williams and I explored the possibility of a UK-guaranteed mortgage-financed housing project for 200 homes. Such an idea was dead without political support from Montserrat. Such a project is still desirable and has the potential of contributing to the Montserrat and Antigua economies.

A community requires several essentials:

1. Safe homes for all residents
2. Employment and a source of income for living expenses.
3. An affordable system of administration to manage the social institutions, schools, prisons, etc, the spheres of activity of the government ministries.
4. Economic activity to generate wealth and ensure progress

The subject of affordable administration points to the salaries and allowances of ministers, and the size of the civil service. I have no problem with a minister getting a big salary, but I believe that it should match the level of support for those on welfare, who are entitled to a share of the public purse. A minister is a full-time representative, not a full-time office worker. An island the size of Montserrat, with a highly trained civil service, needs no more than the equivalent of a board of directors to manage the people's business. Economic activity to generate wealth and ensure progress is critical.

The office of Citizens and Friends of Montserrat (CFM) should be a hive of activity, functioning as an arm of the office of the CM of Montserrat, facilitating the development of the tourist sector and contributing to the boost in trade and labour relations.

The Antiguan population should be regarded as a market for Montserratians and vice versa, just as I believe that Antigua and the Caribbean should regard the whole world as its market. Montserrat agencies overseas have got to become more than just distributors of British aid. They must become viable,

productive economic units.

I could not end a presentation to you without comment on health-related issues.

We owe a great debt to the Government and People of Antigua who have saved many Montserratians' lives. I have fond memories of the early days of the crisis at the time of the first closure of Plymouth:

Arranging the emergency evacuation of a young man with a fractured pelvis, bringing a child with a head injury across in my arms on a scheduled flight. All our high-risk obstetric, medical and surgical patients were willingly taken, all this without any formal arrangements or concerns about how the service would be paid for.

This continues to some extent, but we, the local health personnel, have insisted on keeping a level of service going, at least to keep our skills up to a minimum level so we can cope when the island is cut off by hurricane or heavy ash fall. To preserve jobs and save people money. It costs \$150 for a ferry ticket. Overnight stay costs money. Waiting times at the Holberton Hospital are long and private sector services are expensive. I was pleased to learn that the UK Government had provided funds for the health sector to compensate for the use of resources by the people of Montserrat. This is a continuing process so I hope there will be continuing support and some contribution to the completion of the new hospital.

The health sector in Montserrat has been subject to several reviews and reports by strangers to our community. I disagree with some of their recommendations.

I object to recommendations which are ultimately detrimental to our well being. Recommendations that lead to loss of employment, increased cost of care, and put the livelihood and sometimes the lives of people at risk. I believe if they really want to help and intend to spend over £50,000 a year on a health professional, it should be someone who could provide surgical or obstetric services on island and not just another administrator or medical specialist. It is wrong to make a policy statement that uses the level of health services available to



Possible location of landing strip at Gerald's

Already there was widespread public objection to the proposed constitution, but most people were preoccupied with repairing their homes. Most of the twenty persons who attended the meeting were young graduates. There was no representative from the government.

Ms. Cherry Taylor, Ms. Adelina Bramble, Dr. Sonia Meade-Swanston, Mr. Austin Bramble and his son William, Chedmond Browne and Peter White were among the most vocal.

Everyone supported the decision for an all party delegation to go to London to present our views, but there was no agreement on who should go. Some demanded that persons involved in the offshore banking sector be excluded. Some considered the event to be an opportunity for a change of government.

The meeting ended prematurely when insulting personal comments were made about persons present, prompting their rapid departure from the room.

Nevertheless, I was impressed with the quality and intensity of the protest. The best documented contribution coming from 26 year old Mr. Jean Kelsick LLB, in his paper, 'On the threshold of Tyranny'. (Appendix I)

I quote the opening and closing paragraphs, and other interesting sections of his paper:

"In 1986, the late Professor Hood Phillips, one of England's most distinguished constitutional lawyers, wrote in his authoritative work on the British Constitution, that the "central purpose of British colonial policy at the end of the last war was stated to be to guide the colonial territories to be a responsible self government within the Commonwealth in conditions that ensure to the people both a fair standard of living and freedom from oppression from any quarter." Now, some forty years later, the British Government, in a dramatic departure from the stated policy of an evidently wiser predecessor, have decided to roll Montserrat's constitution back to a position which would, effectively disenfranchise its 13,000 or so inhabitants. I propose in this article to examine the changes which the imminent constitution will introduce, to discuss some of the possible ramifications of those changes and to suggest some possible reasons for this radical change in British policy

Paragraph 8:

"What official explanation has the British Government given regarding the roll back. Explanations from this quarter have been frugal, to say the least, and inconsistent. Apparently the present Governor, when addressing Montserratians in London recently, said that the new constitution is necessary in order to curb the excesses of the PLM administration. Perhaps it would be opportune here to remind (the Governor) of William Pitt's address to the House of Commons in 1783, when he counselled that "Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants. It is the creed of slaves."

Official Foreign Office spokesmen, on the other hand stated that the new powers have been conferred in order to control offshore financial services. Both explanations are rather suspicious. To the Governor's explanation, the obvious answer is let the people make that decision by virtue of the ballot.

To the Foreign Office's explanation, it could be said that a sledgehammer is being used to crack a nut, for Britain has the power to impose legislation upon us imperially by Orders of the Privy Council. Thus, if for argument's sake, the Legislative Council was to refuse to pass legislation to regulate offshore banking, it could be imposed upon us directly from London. Hence, there is no need at all, if one accepts the Foreign Office's explanation, to roll back the constitution. In fact, those in the know believe that the official explanations are really red herrings and are in fact cover for a general plan for recolonisation of Montserrat

Paragraph 26:

What about the constitutional ethics of foisting this constitution upon us? It would appear that the Tory Government have chosen not to address this issue. I say this, because there is an established parliamentary convention against the British Parliament legislating for a self governing colony, which Montserrat is, without obtaining the prior consent of the citizens of that colony. As such, the constitution goes completely against the spirit and grain of colonial legislation. Moreover, given the total and scandalous lack of consultation of Montserratians on the part of the British Government, the passage into law of the proposed constitution will, given its erosion of the fundamentals of democracy, represent a clear and serious abuse of legislative power in the distinct constitutional sense, on the part of the British. Perhaps the Tory Government are of the view that democracy is a luxury which Montserratians are not entitled to enjoy. They would do well to be reminded of the words of Abraham Lincoln, that "those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves".

Whether or not we are on the threshold of tyranny will be revealed in the crucial months ahead. The signs thus far have not been too heartening. We should take note of the fact that the present Governor from the inception of his office chose to abandon the convention so respected by his precursors, that a Governor without a mandate from the people should occupy an administrative back seat. We should take note of the ruthless timing of the British Government in imposing an unacceptable constitution upon us in a time of weakness and distress, in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo. Most importantly, we must dearly appreciate the significance of the total and complete arrogance on the part of the British Government in not consulting us before drafting the document and then informing us that in any event have no say in the matter. This is the sort of arrogance that tyrants are made of. Montserratians will



not be able to say in the days to come that the writing was not on the wall.

The following chapters were titled - The Lobby, The Mission, The Talks and Compromise

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COMPROMISE

Four members of our team were invited to meet with Mr. Sainsbury. This took place at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in an elegant room with high ceilings, polished oval mahogany table and padded chairs.

This was my second visit to this opulent place. I had accompanied Mr. Vernon Jeffers, the Minister of Health, on a Category A visit one year before, and had sat with the then Junior FCO Minister Mr. Tim Eggar MP, as we were scolded over the stupid legislation which was being considered to allow the adoption of unwanted babies of American women, who wished to give birth in Montserrat so as to conceal their pregnancies from their neighbourhood at home in the U.S.A.

That meeting ended with a guided tour of the courtyard, decorated by relics from India, mementos of the largest colony of the Empire that was once ruled from the building.

Our team was presented with only one copy of the agreement, so Mr. Kelsick, Mr. Jeffers and I moved to the Chief Minister's chair, and read it over his shoulder -

"I'm not signing" said Mr. Osborne, "They want to keep Section 16."

We looked at each other. The situation was obvious. A public fight for control of offshore banking, would not be in our interest. Even though there was no evidence of government involvement in the alleged frauds, we would get no support from our lobby.

I for one, was prepared to concede Section 16, having previously expressed my disgust with our government and its advisors for putting at risk, the advanced constitutional status, won for us by our first Chief Minister, Hon. William Bramble and his colleagues. Put at risk by the enactment of legislation without safeguards to prevent crooked dealings in our offshore banking services.

The Governor should not be responsible for any aspect of fiscal policy in a colony out of formal Grant Aid. Once the correct safeguards had been introduced, the Governor could have been given a temporary supervisory role, or even better, an independent watchdog be appointed by Her Majesty's Government.

Instead the Government of Montserrat was being punished and humiliated, by immoral insinuations of government corruption, and our people deprived of reaping the benefits such as enjoyed by the Cayman Islands. Our penalty for the over US\$500 million allegedly lost by clients of some of the offshore banks registered in Montserrat.

Perhaps direct control from London would restore confidence in the financial services sector, at least until a government free of the stigma of false accusations, and perceived as trustworthy, could be put in place. A government which could then demand correction of the anomaly of responsibility for fiscal policy being shared with the Governor's office. We advised the Chief Minister to sign the document. He reluctantly agreed.

There were smiles all around.

The next day we were lunch guests of the Foreign Office at a river boat restaurant for the official exchange of signed 'Letters of Agreement', and issue of a statement to the press, a statement which we were not allowed to contribute to or see before its release. There was no mention of the deleted Section 45 and nothing about Hurricane Hugo.

PRESSLINE

CHIEF MINISTER
OF MONTSERRAT: DISCUSSIONS ON THE
MONTSERRAT
CONSTITUTION: 6 DECEMBER 1989

1. The Chief Minister of Montserrat, Mr. John Osbourne, called on Mr. Sainsbury at 5 p.m. today to discuss the new Montserrat Constitution. He was accompanied by Mr. Vernon Jeffers (Minister of Education, Health and Social Services), Mr. John Kelsick ~Nominated Member, Montserrat's Legislative Council) and Dr. Lowell Lewis (Chief Medical Officer). This meeting followed talks earlier in the day with FCO officials and those which took place in Montserrat.

2. Both Governments agreed that a well managed international services sector, properly regulated and supervised, had an important part to play in Montserrat's future development, and agreed to work together energetically to ensure that this sector would in future benefit Montserrat's economy as fully as possible.

3. Following these consultations, Mr. Sainsbury and Mr. Osbourne agreed on both the text of the new Constitution and the timing of its introduction. The understanding reached at the meeting will now be recorded in an Exchange of Letters between the two governments. Further briefing will be given after the exchange scheduled for 7 December.

4. The new proposals will be submitted to the Privy Council for their approval in the course of this month.

5. HMG has agreed to provide technical assistance to Montserrat's offshore banking sector.

The following two letters were published in the chapter 'Aftermath'



Montserrat Alive), the title of my magazine. Why KMA? Is our island dying? Dead? Certainly not, but there was a time when we came close. In fact, the last two issues of the magazine have changed to MAM (Montserrat Alive Magazine). The "Keep" has been dropped because we have succeeded in preserving our community for now.

In July 1995, I was in London at the time of the first steam vent. I called an official at the Montserrat desk of the foreign office in London and was told that about 3,000 Montserratians were going to Guadeloupe and the rest to Antigua. That would have been the end of Montserrat, a forced evacuation directed by London.

Needless to say I was relieved to arrive in Montserrat the following week to find that "Nuttin Tall Go So."

Relieved to find that the scientific reports and predictions which had been available since 1986 had clearly concluded that the Northern part of Montserrat would be free from danger, and that it was unlikely for us to ever have to consider total off-shore evacuation.

For the first time I realised the significance of our fight over the constitution in 1989, when we got a compromise agreement to withdraw Section 45, which would have allowed the Governor to personally overrule the decision of the elected government and legislature.

Since then, we have been struggling to have our wishes rather than the wishes of others. Montserrat is alive but struggling. The way things are going, the Montserrat you and I know as a community may not exist for long.

Last week, an overseas relative said to me, "Why don't you get a retirement home in Cayman Brak for your mum and dad? It is a quiet, nice little place with about 2,000 people." I was insulted. Why should my parents, who gave 60 years of their life and service to the people of Montserrat, serve their last days among strangers in a strange land and alone? Our communities, Caribbean communities, are built on family units with three or four generations enjoying the company, support and fellowship of one another. Why should we accept being torn apart? What's wrong with looking after our own till they die?

Grandparents and great grandparents have been the core of our societies. They taught us the virtues of love, loyalty and selfless service. I am not saying that we should carry on as we did, but right now I prefer being called Montserratian rather than a British Overseas Territory Citizen of Montserrat.

Montserrat is my home. It is the place I come from and where I can make a difference.

On February 14 1992, a cold day in Edinburgh, I was feeling on top of the world, having just become a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. On my way to the hotel, I let a little old lady onto a bus. On the steps she turned and said, "Thank you. Why don't you people go home?" She had a point.

Montserrat must be kept alive to be the home for the people

who come from there, and for the descendants of the people who come from there. Many may not want to return, but the choice must exist.

I wish to speak for a while on the Montserrat-Antigua connection, a very important and critical factor in the development and survival of our island. When I was 12 years old my mother sent me to spend one month with the Wallings in the Villa area. This family became our Antigua family. We then shared an Antigua and Montserrat grand mummies and we had lots of aunts and uncles. Not blood relatives but family all the same, going in and out of each other's homes for over 40 years.

This has been a continuing trend and in 1996, when many of us had to run for the boat, we were received with opened arms. Not at Camp Lightfoot by the powers, but into the homes and villages of the Antigua people.

When I fly into Antigua, St. Kitts, Nevis, Tortola, Anguilla, and see the green open countryside, the beaches, the Caribbean sea, I wonder why so many of our old people are cooped up in flats in Britain. And I commiserate about 80 years old Sister Baby who had to die in a nursing home in Scotland surrounded by strangers. Our old people should not be treated this way.

Despite protests this philosophy persists. The new social welfare system, which excludes a state pension for retired people, perpetuates a situation in which elderly Montserratians are much better off living in the UK than in the Caribbean. The



Antigua connection should be better utilised in the care of our elderly.

Passengers waiting for ferry in Antigua and Montserrat.

Two years ago, I rode the Ferry with the Director of Tourism, Ms Ernestine Cassell. Together we dreamed of the ideal twin project. Of matching Port facilities at Little Bay and St Johns, that would ensure comfortable and efficient travel by sea. I suspect that this will happen some time in the future.

How many Montserratians who came to Antigua have had



The Dome today - October 2000

A lot has happened since, but we are still at a time of uncertainty, uncertain about whether or not any one should continue to live in Montserrat. I visited Montserrat last week - Thursday to Saturday. Approaching the island by helicopter, one can see why the scientific opinion concludes that persons living in the northern 10 to 12 square miles can remain there safely, even in the event of a major eruption.

It is my opinion that this scientific advice is sound, just as sound as the advice that told us that the airport and Plymouth were directly at risk. Advice which was ignored to our peril, with resulting severe financial loss and loss of life.

Last week, Montserrat was alive with activity, some 200 new buildings under construction and a determination by many people, never to leave Montserrat unless it is absolutely necessary. And they are committed to returning as soon as possible, after the eruption ends, if total off island evacuation becomes necessary.

Approximately 5000 people have signed for voluntary evacuation to the United Kingdom, and about 3000 have already arrived. Many of those who have come over to the UK have done so because of having no other choice, being without work and without a place to live. Some of those who remain in Montserrat, have signed up only as a contingency plan and have no intention of leaving until it is absolutely necessary.

It may be that our community will be grateful that the delayed responses prevented other options from being available. Those of us who believe in freedom of reasonable choice, will have to wait for these options. I say reasonable choice, because it is not acceptable for people to choose options which are not affordable, or options, which will lead to death.

Despite being impressed by the determination and drive of many, I left the island distraught and disappointed. Disappointed that there is still no genuine sense of caring for the ordinary people, and a continuing emphasis on making money.

Old people lying in shelters, waiting to die. Pregnant women, sick children and adults, lying in a school room without easy access to a toilet, bathroom or wash basin, in an ap-

palling excuse for a temporary hospital.

I was disappointed, that children are still going to school in the buffer zone, where the ash and dust levels are expected to be too high.

We have observed in Montserrat what I call 'reverse post emancipation colonial passive resistance'. Students of Caribbean History know well the deliberate under-performance and inefficiency of Caribbean natives who grudgingly made a living working for white landowners. Now we see a similar slow drawn out, obstacle laced, reluctant response from those supposedly coming to our help. And sadly, the recipients of aid monies are seldom the people it is meant for.

Some believe, that allowing unacceptable situations to persist, guarantees more aid, but we have been the victims of our own inaction, and reputations have been severely embarrassed. We should help ourselves whenever we can.

Ladies and gentleman, I would like you to take away a clear understanding of the situation in Montserrat and what help is needed.

There are three groups of Montserratians in need: -

Those in the United Kingdom, many of whom wish to be offered permanent resident status. Most are yet to obtain suitable housing, furnishings, and employment.

The second group are those relocated to other Caribbean islands. Many need help with mortgage financing, access to employment and where desired, naturalisation in their new home land.

The third group are those who have chosen to stay in Montserrat. Mixed messages are being sent to them. The scientific reports say the North is safe, but warn of the dangers of ash and falling rocks. Millions are being spent on infrastructure to allow relocation to the north, but little done to provide secure employment opportunities.

One understands the reluctance of residents to leave properties that are not damaged or not considered to be at risk. Most of those who remain accept that they may have to leave, but will not do so until that option becomes unavoidable.

I end this presentation with my answer to the question- How much should one invest in our island which appears to have an uncertain future?

I believe that our supporters should provide what ever is needed to make life comfortable for those who remain and to allow easy return to Montserrat when the volcanic activity is over.

I thank you for your attention.

A Different Vision

(This is an abridged version of an address given on September 28 to the general meeting of the Citizens and Friends of Montserrat in Antigua)

My suggestion for a topic was "Improving the Montserrat Antigua Connection" but I was advised to speak on KMA (Keep



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The following week, the Financial Times delivered the final blow from the U.K. with an article by Canute James.

FINANCIAL TIMES FRIDAY DECEMBER 15, 1989

Montserrat bank row resolved.

By Canute James in Kingston

THE CHIEF MINISTER of Montserrat, a British colony in the Eastern Caribbean, has given up his fight against proposed changes to the island's constitution by the British government, and has accepted that responsibility for offshore banking be taken from the locally elected administration and given to the British appointed governor.

Mr. John Osbourne, Chief Minister of the island of 12,000 people had said he would fight the proposed constitutional changes "with life." The amendments to the constitution are the result of the Barlow Clowes investment affair in Britain, when UK investigations of offshore banks on the 39-square mile colony revealed irregularities.

Mr. Osbourne visited London last week to discuss the matter with the British government, and returned home admitting defeat: "The reason the government gave for the planned changes is that offshore banking does not take place only in Montserrat, but has to do with other nations of the world. So offshore banking does fall under Britain's foreign and international responsibilities. We did not have any answer to this argument because Britain is responsible for international affairs as far as Montserrat is concerned."

Following the Barlow Clowes affair, the UK government ordered investigations of offshore banking in British territories. Irregularities in Montserrat were discovered by British US and Canadian police. The licences of several banks were revoked and six Americans were charged with conspiracy to defraud.

In resisting the proposed constitutional changes, Mr. Osbourne had argued that they would give the governor of the colony "wide powers" over the economic, financial and judicial affairs of the island, and would "take Montserrat back 200 years constitutionally."

Our response was a letter from Mr. John Kelsick.

The Editor
The Financial Times
Bracken House
Cannon Street
London EC4

December 19, 1989

Dear Sir

The article appearing in the 15th December, 1989 issue of

your newspaper entitled "Montserrat bank row resolved" by Canute James misrepresents the facts.

The main thrust of the objection of the Chief Minister of Montserrat to the proposed changes in the island's constitution was that article 45 gave the Governor the right to declare as enacted, legislation which the Montserrat Legislative Council might either refuse to enact or which, in the Governor's opinion, it might be too tardy in enacting.

While Mr. Osbourne also objected to responsibility for the offshore financial sector being taken from the locally elected administration, he agreed that in any event responsibility for the administration of that sector should be controlled by a regulatory body completely free of interference from both the locally elected ministers and the Governor, while being responsible to the Governor in Council on policy matters.

At a meeting of the Montserrat Legislative Council held on the 28th November, 1989 the inclusion of article 45 in the proposed constitution was condemned as being repugnant to the democratic process in Montserrat by Government members and two out of three opposition members of the Council. In taking that position they expressed the views of a substantial majority of the people of Montserrat.

Following that meeting Mr. Osbourne led a delegation to discuss the matter with the British Government. As a consequence of those discussions it was agreed that article 45 would be deleted but in view of the international implications of offshore financial business, responsibility for that sector would be left with the Governor.

It is quite untrue to say that Mr. Osbourne returned home admitting defeat. Indeed, to the contrary, Montserratians whose minds are not clouded by political bias have expressed considerable satisfaction with the success of his mission in securing the deletion of article 45 from the constitution, and his political popularity has been enhanced.

I should be most grateful if you would publish this letter.
Yours faithfully, John C. Kelsick

That was 1989. Now in the year 2000, we are no better off. Despite the transfer of Section 16c, we continue to be tarnished by scandals in the off shore banking sector.

Perhaps the Speaker of our Legislative Council, should give guidance on the formation of a permanent constitutional commission or advisory committee.

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14th October 2000

CANCEL ELECTIONS?

Reply to Man from Baker Hill

Dear Mr Editor,

I wish to congratulate the Man from Baker Hill for his provocative article which should awaken those aspiring to be our leaders. I do not agree with his impression that many people in Montserrat would support a cancellation of the next election. This measure is contradicted in the same article by the suggestion that Montserrat be managed by the Governor and a group of concerned citizens. Who should choose these concerned citizens? Should it not be the entire electorate? Every teacher, fisherman and taxi driver has an equal right to a say in who should be selected or appointed.

I agree that the cost of our ministerial system is higher than can be afforded by our population and economy, and I am committed to a readjustment of salaries to match incomes for other comparative tasks in Montserrat. However the cost of the Ministerial system should not be judged in isolation, without reference to the cost of the Governor's Office, and the cost of the DIFID management team.

It is absurd for there to be three management teams, each taking a large slice of the resources available to the people of Montserrat. The only valid management team in a democratic society is one that includes the elected representatives of the people. It is my opinion that there should be a merging of the three management teams to ensure more equitable and cost effective use of our resources.

I am sure that my good friend from Baker Hill was not serious when he suggested what was in fact a suspension of our constitutional rights. This is a very serious recommendation which would require a 2/3 majority of the electorate. I doubt if more than 10% of the population would support a cancellation of elections. Especially if they are reminded that:-

It was their constitutional rights that prevented the residents of Baker Hill and the North of Montserrat, from being forced to abandon their homes, which will never be threatened by the volcano.

Constitutional rights that allowed us to make alternative plans for the provision of emergency surgical services on island, despite the decision not to support such activity.

Constitutional rights that give those elderly Montserratians overseas who have a burning desire to spend their last years in their homeland, a chance of achieving that goal.

Constitutional rights that allow us to remain and participate as a full member of CARICOM.

It would be biased not to admit that there have been negative consequences of our constitutional rights.

For example; a constitution that allows wealthy candidates or those with wealthy supporters to have an advantage. A constitution that allowed bitter political rivals who lost an election to get together and totally exclude the group with the largest popular support from the management process. Constitutional rights that cost us the 1000 homes that Governor Savage wanted in the North, Constitutional rights that allowed a \$3 million dollar return of the secondary school to Salem, despite potential risks from ash.

Notwithstanding these negative events, it is our constitutional rights that allow us to retain some semblance of pride, and a desire for equity, self sufficiency and freedom.

Constitutional rights that allow us to fight the weapons of cultural and economic suppression, which are:- control of the media, and restriction of the capacity to earn.

Support for cancellation of the election will come only from those who accept the dog and bone attitude label, recently described by Hon Ms Claire Short. The lady is quite right to be concerned about DIFID's money being wasted in Montserrat. Just as she objected to the Millenium Dome project, I would expect her to object to One hundred thousand (100,000) pounds being spent on a 'Tax Advisor' for a community of 4,000 people, where very few business places can make a profit. Barking when the bone is withdrawn is not the answer. A preferred option is to adjust one's needs and expenditures, until a new bone is either found or created. For this, our constitutional rights are indispensable.

Canceling the election is not the solution. Those of us who wish to see this country run properly, and its future secure, must come out from behind personalities and parties, and actively support the election of representatives who will do what we expect of them.

August 4 2000

Our Democracy Experiment

(cont'd from MAM Vol1 No 2)

The overseas voters

Last weekend a good friend of mine said to me, "I strongly disapprove of any overseas person coming back to vote." A few minutes later he said, "The economic situation is so bad that I may have to pack up and leave in the next month or so." He is on the electoral roll and I know he will return to vote.

Montserratians overseas have always had a say in elections here. In 1991, several old people in St Patrick's told me, "I would vote for you because we are family, but my children in England tell me to vote for Mr. Osborne, because he is the only candidate who can do anything for me".

Many do not share my view that justice has been done by



the decision to allow anyone on the 1996 list to come back and register by 31 August 2000, without the need for a period of residence. I will never support voting by postal ballot, because the size of the electorate is too small to accommodate such a system. In general, I believe that the people living in a community should determine their own leaders. At the present time there are members of our community who are overseas, but everything they own is in Cork Hill, Weekes, Salem or Richmond Hill. They are overseas because they have nowhere to live and no employment for an income. Living temporarily in the UK in a council house on benefits does not stop someone from being a member of the Montserrat Community. Why should someone at home, because Salem is reopened, be more entitled to vote than someone who will return as soon as Cork Hill or Foxes Bay is reopened? We are our brother's keeper, and we should not want for others what we do not wish for ourselves.

ZJB's call-in program on the eve of Emperor Haile Selassie's Anniversary was enlightening. The need for education was very apparent. It was interesting to learn that the perception of X being a symbol for wrong could become a reason for individuals not 'participating' in the electoral process. At one time, pay roll slips carried a long line of X's, because all the payees had the same signature.

Whether it is an X for Xmas or an R for Rasta, there are several concerns about the holding of the next election. How many X's to make? How to count to nine? Can you take into the booth a slip with the names you want to vote for?

Will the photographs help? What if Mr. Brandt and Dr. Lewis wear their glasses and have similar hair cuts?

There will be problems for the candidates, which may number well over 40. Should they vote for anyone else or only team members? If beaten by one vote, one may have voted themselves out of council.

This election calls for some special safeguards: A pen that makes only nine X's; a ballot paper that flashes or makes a noise when nine have been chosen. Modern technology allows us to be more realistic. We could have polling booths with computer-controlled voice responses, which could include, "You have selected candidate John Smith. Please confirm Yes or No by pressing appropriate button." After the confirmation button, another message could say, "You have eight votes remaining." If the voter is deaf or blind, the agent of the electoral office could assist as necessary.

This democracy experiment may cause chaos and confusion. There must be proper planning. Those of us who believe in a truly democratic Montserrat must be assured that the event will be run fairly and smoothly.

Addendum

The supervisor of elections has since made radio broadcasts in which she confirmed that continuous registration is

taking place, and that Montserratians who were on previous electoral roll who return to live permanently in Montserrat, qualify for registration on their arrival in Montserrat.

Presentation to British Caribbean Association at the Houses of Parliament in London on 29 October 1997

by Dr Lowell Lewis

Chairman Ladies and Gentleman, I am grateful for the invitation to share with you information about the situation in Montserrat. The tragic experiences of our people present many important lessons for the Caribbean and for those responsible for international development policies.

Our volcano became active in July 1995, several months after the Regional Seismic Unit in Trinidad recorded increased seismic activity. By November 1995 the public were made aware of the detailed reports made by scientists Wadge and Isaac in 1986 and the

1935 publication of the American scientist Perry who studied the 1930's eruption of our volcano. These reports recorded the 30-year cycles of volcanic activity in Montserrat and indicated that the next period of activity was expected to be in the late 1990s. The reports provided diagrams of the areas at risk and descriptions of the likely sequence of events that would occur with a continuing eruption.

We have always had an obvious measure and predictor of continuing volcanic activity – a growing and exploding dome. In addition, the network of seismic monitors has been useful, but not essential for appropriate management. Having been told what areas are at risk, we simply needed to move away to the areas considered safe.

In April 1996, I published my first volcano poem in - Keep Montserrat Alive Magazine -

BRACING FOR THE BANG

*We are expecting another bang soon,
Probably at th time of the next full moon.
But this won't be the big one,
And certainly not the last,
As our dome continues to grow fast.*

*Once, it resembled the steaming droppings of a raging bull,
Now its more like that of an elephant,
With the crater full
And the heap widening its base.
Perhaps it wil grow to Dinasour size
Before the top comes off.
Last night there were short bursts of showers,
Sprinkling the shingles on my roof,
Another shower of dirt and dust
That the leprecaun on Chance's Peak keeps shovelling on us.*

I wonder what the mermaid thinks of him!