SIR ARTHUR LEWIS MEMORIAL SYMPOSIUM
23rd JANUARY, 2018

CALL FOR PAPERS

On Tuesday 23rd January, 2018, the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at the St. Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies will host a one-day symposium on the life and work of Sir Arthur Lewis.

It is most appropriate that the 70th anniversary year of The UWI in 2018 should begin with the celebration of the life and work of Arthur Lewis who served as its first West Indian Principal and first Vice Chancellor.

Many persons have only viewed Lewis as an economist, largely because he won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1979. However, he never confined his academic, public, and professional work only to the discipline of Economics and indeed pursued vast cross-disciplinary activity inclusive of the discipline of political science.

Lewis argued that his 13 visits to Africa, up to that time, had always been emotional for him. His familiarity with the leaders of many of these new states allowed him a level of connection that was more than the average academic would have enjoyed.

His economic theory on industrialisation by invitation and his published views on politics would establish him as a cross-disciplinary academic.

SALISES will be delighted to receive proposals for presentations at the one-day Arthur Lewis Memorial Symposium that will focus on the life and work of Sir Arthur Lewis and encourages scholarship that is broad-based, multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary. Contemporary policy implications of the scholarship of Sir Arthur Lewis will also be welcome.

The deadline for submission is 22nd December, 2017 and proposals can be sent to:

salises@sta.uwi.edu

Looking forward to receiving your proposals.

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AN ABRIDGED BIOGRAPHY AND PROFILE OF SIR ARTHUR LEWIS

Sir William Arthur Lewis (23rd January, 1915 – 15th June, 1991) was a native of St Lucia who won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1979. When he won the Nobel Prize he was James Madison Professor of Political Economy at Princeton University.

Lewis graduated from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1937 with a Bachelor of Commerce degree (First Class) and a Ph.D. in Industrial Economics in 1940. He also taught there and later resigned his position as a Reader in Colonial Economics to take up a Chair in Economics at the University of Manchester in 1948 where he held the Stanley Jevons Chair in Political Economy.


In the Caribbean Economic Review article, he wrote inter alia:

“Laissez-faire economic philosophy of British West Indian governments has been the principal obstacle to the industrialization of the islands.” (p. 34).

He went further to say in the same article:

“The islands cannot be industrialized to anything like the extent that is necessary without a considerable inflow of foreign capital and capitalists, and a period of wooing and fawning upon such people. Foreign capital is needed because industrialization is a frightfully expensive business quite beyond the resources of the islands.” (p. 38).

In 1954, he wrote a seminal piece entitled “Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour” in The Manchester School 22 (2) May 1954, pp. 139-191. In it he said:

“The Law of Comparative Costs is just as valid in countries with surplus labour as it is in others. But whereas in the latter it is a valid foundation of arguments for free trade, in the former it is an equally valid foundation of arguments for protection.” (p. 191).

This article was followed in 1955 by the publication of a book entitled The Theory of Economic Growth (London: George Allen & Unwin).

In 1957 he took up a position as United Nations Economic Advisor to Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana’s first year of independence. He later served the United Nations as Deputy Managing Director of its Special Fund before becoming Principal of the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in 1959 which had been established by Royal Charter in 1948, and in 1962 he became the first Vice Chancellor of The University of the West Indies which was the successor to the UCWI.

In 1963, he became Professor of Economics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and later became James Madison Professor of Political Economy.

Another of his famous works, Politics in West Africa, published in 1965, offered a unique insight into the emergence of new states in West Africa that had recently become independent. He did not confine himself to English-speaking countries, but also probed those that had emerged from colonial rule under other imperial powers.
This book was published out of Series X of the Whidden Lectures that he gave in 1965 on the topic of Politics in West Africa at McMaster University in Canada. These lectures were established in 1954 to honour the memory of a former Chancellor of McMaster University, the Reverend Dr. Howard P. Whidden.

On Marxism in the politics of West Africa, he wrote:

“The point is not that the Marxist thesis is wrong, but that whether right or wrong it does not apply to West Africa. This fact is of tremendous importance. Most of the political philosophy of Europe and the Americas, stretching back long before Marx, derives from the clash between haves and have-nots; as we shall see later, when transported to West Africa much of this philosophy is irrelevant.” (Politics in West Africa, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1965, pp 18–19).

In relation to the political problems being faced by new states that were emerging in the post-colonial era after gaining their independence in the 1950s and early 1960s, Lewis had this to say:

“Plurality is the principal political problem of most of the new states created in the 20th century. Most of them include people who differ from each other in language or tribe, or religion or race; some of these groups live side by side in a long tradition of mutual hostility, restrained in the past only by a neutral imperial power.” (Politics in West Africa, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1965, p 66).

From 1970 to 1973, Lewis served as the first President of the Caribbean Development Bank through which he was able to play an important role in development finance in the Caribbean region. He returned to Princeton after that as James Madison Professor of Political Economy where he remained until his retirement in 1983.