



**TRIBUTES TO  
AMBASSADOR THE  
HONOURABLE DR.  
RICHARD L. BERNAL, OJ**

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from Former Colleagues who served in the  
Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery  
(CRNM)

**CHANTAL ONONAIWU, DEREK (IT) BROWNE,  
MALCOLM SPENCE,  
MICHELE LOWE AND NIGEL DURRANT**

**(COLLEAGUES IN THE CARICOM SINGLE MARKET AND TRADE DIRECTORATE OF THE  
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) SECRETARIAT (SUCCESSOR TO THE CRNM)**

Much will be and has already been said about Dr. Richard Bernal's career as an academic and a diplomat; all richly deserved. In the view of colleagues whom he led at the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) as Director General and Caribbean Chief Negotiator between 2001 and 2008, this period of his life could be deemed the zenith of an outstanding and illustrious career.

Ambassador Bernal was a masterful negotiator, who led the region's participation in multilateral, hemispheric, and bilateral negotiations. He fearlessly championed the cause of smaller economies and the need for special and differential treatment (SDT) for those countries to integrate fully into the global trading system. He was indefatigable in his defense and pursuit of SDT for Caribbean countries and earned the respect - and ire at times - of negotiating counterparts for his negotiating skills and tenacity at the negotiating table. He, along with other Caribbean stalwarts, led the campaign which influenced the establishment of the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies in the negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).



His tenure as Chief Negotiator provided fertile ground for his pursuit of scholarship and publications on the effect of globalization on small states. He readily shared his manuscripts for comment and was willing to amend his approach if effectively persuaded. His extensive list of publications and academic lectures are required readings, including at his beloved UWI.

Richard captained a vibrant team of experts with varied technical skills at the CRNM. He invested in the professional development of his team and challenged members to seek solutions rather than articulate problems. Those who worked with him knew well not to present him with a problem without a possible solution, and that the reward for good work was more work!

Together with Henry Gill as Senior Director, and the team of trade policy professionals, the CRNM provided a model for small state co-ordination and negotiations, which was studied and emulated by other regional groupings. Richard also oversaw a Canadian-funded internship program within the CRNM that produced several of the current influential trade technicians. The CRNM was viewed by many young professionals interested in international trade as the place in the Region to work, not only because of its critical mandate but also because of the strong reputation of its trade policy professionals.



And yet, it was not all work and no play with Richard at the helm of the CRNM. Many negotiating strategies were discussed and determined over lunches and dinners, more often than not, at a Chinese restaurant. He encouraged camaraderie among staff. His enthusiasm, energy and optimism were infectious and he forged deep relationships with team members regardless of their status in the organization.

Jamaica and CARICOM are poorer with his passing. He has left to the Region (and frankly, the world) a rich legacy in how to approach international economic and trade negotiations, from which current and future generations will benefit.

## IMPRESSIONS OF AMBASSADOR RICHARD BERNAL

# JAN YVES REMY<sup>1</sup>, JUSTIN HAWLEY<sup>2</sup>, AND AYANNA YOUNG-MARSHALL<sup>3</sup>

(FORMER INTERNS UNDER THE CRNM PROFESSIONAL TRAINEES PROGRAMME)

Many of us who consider ourselves to be among the Caribbean region's trade cognoscenti have our beginnings in the coveted Professional Traineeship Programme, funded by CIDA and DFID, and administered by the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM). In the early to mid-2000s, those of us lucky enough to have been chosen as trainees under the Programme would have first encountered Ambassador Richard Bernal as Director-General of the then CRNM, headquartered in Jamaica and with an office in Barbados. The time spent in the 10-month internship was an indelible component of our early forays in the field of trade policy and negotiations, and Ambassador Bernal, who would serve variably as our supervisor, mentor, and fellow trade colleague, is an important part of that experience. No matter in what capacity we have subsequently come to serve the region – whether as Ambassadors, lecturers, consultants, local or international civil servants – we continue to hold him in high regard and with a certain measure of deference.

### Appearances Matter

When we joined the Programme, Ambassador Bernal would have been one of the towering, stately male figures at the time occupying the leadership positions of the CRNM. Even if his appearance was always immaculate – he cut an impressive figure in his suits – his formal demeanour belied the ease with which he greeted and socialized with his colleagues at the CRNM. Ambassador Bernal stood out in a crowd because, regardless of what else was going on around him, he was never ruffled, maintaining a sense of calm, even when many of us around him were losing our composure. While we might have found him intimidating at first, it wasn't long before we each felt that there was room enough for us in the CRNM bunch, and that it could accommodate each of our strengths and peculiarities.

### Star Power

Among the Ambassador's most endearing and memorable qualities was his steadfastness (stubbornness!) to his negotiating brief, irrespective of who might be applying the pressure for him to veer from it. Ambassador Bernal's insouciance could be infuriating if you were on the other side, but he deployed it with remarkable aplomb and effect in negotiations. There would be no budging on issues that had to do with Caribbean's treatment as small and vulnerable economies – whether in the FTAA or EPA negotiations – even if that meant that

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[2] Ambassador Justin Hawley currently serves as the St. Kitts and Nevis Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.

[3] Ayanna Young Marshall is Lecturer in International Business at the UWI, Cave Hill Campus.

negotiations were held up and extended to the wee hours of the morning, with him often the lone figure holding up consensus. And as if to add vinegar to the wound, he would often crack a wry smile, or infect the discussions with a joke, that would lighten the mood. For a young intern, these theatrics added much humour to what might otherwise be technical and boring negotiations; but it also taught us to be unapologetic about our region's smallness, and our place in the world.

We can also attest to the very human side of Ambassador Bernal. Knowing that we were away from home – and broke! – he would often invite us to functions at the Ambassador's residence. He also loved to tease us, forgetting nothing about our respective peculiarities that he observed during our internships – and reminding us of them even years later when we encountered him as full-fledged professionals.

The Ambassador was also generous with advice. For instance, he would encourage us to save any allowances received for our overseas stints and live off our core salaries instead. He also had some favourite maxims that, while useful, were also self-serving. He was known to say, **“the best reward for good work is more work”**. If you came up with a suggestion, you were likely to be assigned to do the research that was necessary to carry it out. It meant a healthy serving of additional responsibilities immediately upon submission of your initial output. Many of us use this with our junior staff and students even to this day!

Ambassador Bernal believed in lifelong learning and encouraged us to pursue degrees part-time, even during our postings at the CRNM. In this respect, he led by example having read for a second Masters in International Public Policy at the School for Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, while he was Jamaica's Ambassador in Washington, D.C. (1996). He was always picking up a new book, or scurrying home to write a think piece based on his experiences. Among the advice he gave to many of us with a penchant for academia was to always write because this was the way that you kept relevant and maintained your presence. In fact, he has remained a constant presence on the region's academic scene because of his publications, some of which have been engrained in the public consciousness of the region and serve as core reading for Caribbean students of trade, international business and entrepreneurship. One such piece is “Nano-firms, Regional Integration and International Competitiveness: The Experience and Dilemma of the CSME” (2006). It reflects his core teaching of the “nano-firm” in the Caribbean – firms that are so small by size, capitalization and employment, that they could not simply be categorized as small by international standards. Small firm size, he argued, was compounded by operating in small economies, which were characterized by acute vulnerability.

### **That which endures ...**

Even after we left the professional trainees' programme, Ambassador Bernal's influence continued to linger. In the typical CRNM way, he would claim us as one of the CRNM's, and by extension, one of his proteges. There was a kind of fatherly pride when he saw us doing well. He claimed us also so that he could provide safe passage into corridors of power and opportunity that his vast network gave him access to. The story is told of one ex-CRNM trainee who, disillusioned with his career after leaving the traineeship, chanced upon Ambassador Bernal on a visit to his country. Sensing the disillusionment of the intern, Ambassador Bernal took it upon himself to meet with the authorities in the young man's home state. Very soon afterwards, the wheels of fortune started churning again, and led to him being stationed at an international posting. For this, and many other ways, he touched our lives, we give thanks.



**AMBASSADOR BERNAL YOU FOLLOWED YOUR OWN BEAT AND LIVED BY YOUR OWN RULES.**

**NOW, THE REWARD FOR YOUR GOOD WORK IS NOT MORE WORK, BUT ETERNAL REST.**

**REST IN PEACE, AMBASSADOR BERNAL!**

## JUNIOR LODGE

(FORMER CRNM TECHNICAL COORDINATOR, EPA NEGOTIATIONS (BRUSSELS)  
AND TECHNICAL COORDINATOR, WTO NEGOTIATIONS (GENEVA) )

My first recollection of meeting Richard Bernal would have been at the start of the 1982/83 academic year at UWI, Mona when he taught me an undergraduate course in Caribbean Economic Development. His combination of wit, passion and intellect fueled my determination to delve deeper into all facets of Caribbean economic development. The following academic year, I followed Richard's course on International Trade and, unsurprisingly, it further piqued my intellectual curiosity. And so began a forty-year relationship with Richard that graduated from academic mentorship to professional ties and friendship.



Richard's support and mentorship was distinctly profound during my eight-year exile from Jamaica beginning in the mid-1980s. During that period, he was one of the few persons with whom I regularly corresponded, particularly during my struggle to advance doctoral studies in monetary economics in Frankfurt, Germany. Richard unerringly proffered two pieces of advice: "switch to trade economics as the nascent ascent of globalization will make this field far more appealing" and "come back home!" With my innate stubbornness, it took me considerable time before I accepted Richard's sagacity, switched to post-graduate studies in international trade policy, and I returned to Jamaica in 1994. Two days after my return home, I ventured to a meeting at the Planning Institute of Jamaica to explore a possible job at that government body. It was arranged by Richard who backed his serial entreaties for me to return home with concrete action and support.

Our professional relations deepened during Richard's long stint as Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States and I led JAMCO - a London-based, Government of Jamaica-owned, private sector- funded agency that represented the lobbying interests of Jamaican banana exporters. Fighting US dominant interests in the longstanding WTO trade dispute on the EU banana import regime captured two of Richard's lifelong professional pursuits, namely (a) defending the interest of small vulnerable Caribbean economies, and (b) seeking to temper the inimical and anti-developmental economic power of industrialized countries. In such endeavours, Richard's temperament never allowed for the expression of naked anger towards the Global North. Instead, his approach was based on a mix of technical preparation, calm personal interaction with his counterparts, and consummate articulation of the English language.



In my view, Richard's skill set was best displayed during negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between CARIFORUM and the European Union. Admittedly, my perspective is heavily jaundiced by the fact that Richard gave me the professionally rewarding post of CRNM's Technical Coordinator of EPA negotiations. The successful completion of the EPA negotiations remains a lasting testament to Richard's deep conviction that a recalibrated trade compact (his description) with the EU would catapult Caribbean economic development. In his role as Chief Negotiator, Richard developed an amiable relationship with his EU counterpart – a seasoned trade negotiator but also a fellow squash player and bon vivant. Richard also proved to be a master of leveraging political ties with Caribbean political leaders, most notably, with Prime Ministers Owen Arthur, Bruce Golding and Ralph Gonzalves. One final aspect of Richard's emotional comportment was both compelling and revealing. In spite of the sustained personal and public attacks on EPA negotiations, Richard maintained civil ties with Norman Girvan, Havelock Brewster, and Jimmy Moss-Solomon. He knew these gentlemen rather well – Norman was his academic mentor, Havelock was a coveted advisor during DC days, and Jimmy a former schoolmate. But primarily, Richard's personality brooked no role for the wasted emotion known as anger.



Richard's untimely passing summons a bout of reflection in me. He was never the most demonstrative person but showed compassion in his own inimitable style for those he thought deserving. For example, Richard was deeply aware of my proven ability to succumb to emotional mist. After all, he was himself victim of my periodic bouts of anger and witnessed my unkind attitude towards the region's technocratic class. Richard's reaction would veer from pretending not have heard my outbursts or quietly inviting me to reflect on my behaviour. Similarly, long after our professional relationship had expired, Richard would constantly encourage me to apply the American graduate school mantra of publishing my work – a dictum he fervently applied.



Conversations with Richard would often be fueled by a shared passion of food, language, and wit. There were some gems that will remain inside jokes, my favourite being the Star Trek treatment of being taken to places where no man has gone before. There were times when the wit would initially leave me fuming and later gullible, none more so than Richard prefacing his urgent demand for an additional piece of technical work by claiming "Young Lodge, you know that the reward for good work is more work!" But a deeper level, Richard's wit was often a channel to articulate his burning passion for Caribbean economic transformation. He fervently believed that we could overturn the path of Caribbean underdevelopment by formulating sound technical proposals and arming ourselves with sound technical preparations, soft skilled personal engagement, and heavy lifting of political leadership in negotiations with industrialized countries.

Richard, walk good, my deepest appreciation for your sustained support, and may you find eternal peace!

**DELROY SWABY**  
(FORMER DRIVER TO AMBASSADOR BERNAL, CRNM)

As his Driver, we spent long periods together on the road and we spoke and laughed about many varying topics, sports, current events and things I will take to my grave. I recall, collecting him from the Sangsters International Airport one day and on our way we both fell asleep in the front of the car... and I lived to tell this tale - which he still knows nothing about. Scotchie's Jerk Centre and Tastee patties were his favourite eateries along the way which I looked forward to because it meant FREE LUNCH.

He had confidence in me taking him to his destination on time, but this came initially from a trial. The first time he requested me to take him to a meeting, he was running late and therefore I attempted some 'taximan' maneuvers to get him to the meeting on time. I recall him exhaling loudly when I got to the location and when I looked over at him, he promptly dialed the number of our colleague (Patrice), who had recommended me for the job, to complain. The next day, I went Miss Daisy on him and he remarked "Swaby, you're not on form today. What happened?". He was never late again.

No one would consider me his equal, but he never considered me less.



**NAND C. BARDOUILLE**  
(CRNM COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, 2003-06)

I first met the late Ambassador Richard Bernal (RB) in the early 2000s, when I was still relatively new to the Caribbean regional trade policy scene. I was immediately impressed, marveling at this deep policy wonk. He was also adept -- as a consummate diplomat ought to be -- at holding court as easily in social settings (large and small) as in high-level policymaking meetings, all without once missing a step.

Not long thereafter, along with the late Ambassador Henry Gill, RB recruited me to the then-CRNM. I was honoured and privileged, gladly taking up the offer. That period of my professional life was incredibly fulfilling and especially memorable, thanks in large part to RB. Not long after coming aboard the CRNM, and for the duration of my time there, I ended up working very closely with him. He took me under his wing, and because of his tutelage I thrived in the job.

I am honoured to have known this truly great man, whose sharp mind and wit (and great sense of humor) were an inspiration to me and countless others. Whether it was watching him 'in action' in 'the job', when I shadowed him at meetings within and beyond the Caribbean, or joining him for the many working lunches we had when he visited the CRNM's Barbados office (where I worked), or the late evening phone calls spent preparing / strategizing for a meeting or speech and more, I am blessed to have been able to share a little time with RB.

He always took an active interest in me and my various pursuits, including my early writings on Caribbean development. He was supportive, but he also wouldn't hold back in providing biting criticism. His eye for detail and encyclopedic knowledge, along with his other remarkable qualities (including his prolific publication schedule), all resonated with me as an international affairs professional both during and following my time with the CRNM.

While he led the then-CRNM, I saw first-hand RB's inspirational and first-rate service to the Caribbean. I am proud to have been associated with that organization, whose small team of top-notch experts have had a considerable impact in elevating Caribbean trade policy within and beyond the Region's shores, while it was helmed by RB. And in the years that followed, his yeoman service to the Region continued in so many impactful ways.

It will be hard to imagine Caribbean (trade) diplomacy without RB, but I am heartened that he has left an indelible mark on it in multiple ways.

It's an inside joke ... but if Henry was 'the sweeper' at the CRNM's communal lunch or dinner table/outings, leading the charge in extra innings, RB more than held his own. In those moments, RB regaled us with stories and his rich life experiences, which many of us remember to this day.



**I AM DEEPLY SADDENED BY RB'S PASSING. MY THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME.**

**CHARMAINE BAILEY-BLOOMFIELD**  
(PROJECT/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, CRNM)

The man literally gushed into my work life and space. He came with so much energy, gusto and optimism, it was almost irritating. But that was the demeanor of my boss of five years as I learnt quite early in our working relationship. I recall presenting him with an issue I was having and he promptly asked “What is the solution?” That was the first hint that I was never ever to present a problem to him without a solution; and that is how my creativity and problem-solving skills were honed and matured over the years.

He believed in the development of his staff and provided opportunities he knew would not only benefit the organization, but the staff member. One such opportunity for me was when he included me in the FTAA delegation to Puebla, Mexico and I experienced first-hand how the actual negotiating machinery worked, at the highest level, and how respected he was among fellow negotiators.

When he left the CRNM, you knew from the bare walls where his precious paintings were and, of course, there were no more impromptu Chinese lunches with the small staff -- moments I relished as I am also deeply fond of Chinese food.

There was never a dull moment working with him. This tornado of a man will be missed!



## **AMBASSADOR RICHARD BERNAL AND MAKING SMALL EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL**

### **ANTHONY PETER GONZALES**

(FORMER CRNM DIRECTOR AT THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION, GENEVA)

One never knows what destiny has in store for you. Joining the Trinidad and Tobago delegation to the FTAA talks in 2002 I never envisaged being provided with the opportunity to see regional trade policy being formulated and negotiated under such tough conditions. Even more, I never anticipated that I would meet some of the finest trade negotiators in the region at that time and with whom I would forge an undying relationship. But that is fate, and I can only be grateful for the experience as I look back on it today.

Ambassador Richard Bernal [ARB] was Jamaica's lead negotiator in the FTAA talks at that moment as the region was attempting to coordinate a trade policy response to these negotiations. I was familiar with his intellectual work being at UWI and we had even collaborated before on holding a trade conference. That however did not prepare me for what I was first to encounter in the FTAA. There the region was faced with the full-blown opposition of the US and most large countries in the Hemisphere to what they deemed our reluctance to move with an open trade approach. The region was seen as largely seeking and holding on to preferential trade treatment and unwilling to undertake the necessary reforms to engage in free trade.

For small Caribbean economies trade liberalization was generally seen as a tool of the developed North to dominate the South and was inherently against the development of small states who could not expect to make any gains in such a world of free trade. Caribbean small states historically argued for trade preferences to counter the imbalances in world trade and their trade policy was so adopted as shown in its high degree of trade protection and participation in preferential trade agreements.

The task ahead for ARB was first to get the region on board with a common approach and then undertake joint diplomatic efforts to convince the major actors in the Hemisphere that small economies deserved special and differential treatment in any FTAA in the Hemisphere. His diplomatic style was inclusive as he embraced also the smaller countries of Central and South America whom he felt had common interest with the Caribbean small economies. The underlying idea was that a small economy was not based on narrow population size but the weight of the economy. Singapore for him for instance, was a small country in terms of population but with a large economy.

The big challenge of course for ARB came in trying to win over US Congressmen on the plight of small economies. He was uncompromising in this regard as he tirelessly walked the corridors of the US Congress. He backed up the latter effort by promoting seminars and conferences to diffuse the position of these states throughout the Hemisphere. He found for example the Interamerican Dialogue Forum of the IDB a useful forum to disseminate the region's views and effectively employed it.

Although the FTAA was short-lived, ARB was successful in getting the region united behind a common policy. He also managed to convince five Central American countries to join the small economies group and get a dialogue started with a fully recognized Small Economies group.

But ARB's focus was not just on the FTAA. He was quite conscious of the need to operate at the WTO where the region had also launched a similar trade initiative under the Doha programme. Similarly, he was quite mindful of the EU level where small economies were under pressure to engage in more reciprocal trade. From the outset ARB developed an integrated outlook of what was needed by small economies in these three operating theatres and put in place the required coordinating strategies.

In 2003 I was fortunate to be assigned by him to the WTO to assist in advancing these strategies. There I met a considerable skepticism about the validity of special and differential treatment for small economies. ARB insisted that our efforts had to be redoubled. He felt that we could build on his efforts in the FTAA and the five Central American countries who had agreed to support their Caribbean counterparts in the FTAA could be a welcome addition to the WTO small economies group.

Just around that time these five countries agreed to join other small economies in the Doha Round especially in the tariff negotiations on Agriculture and Non-Agriculture and support special preferential agreement for small economies. I came to realize that the work of Amb. Bernal in the failed FTAA had paid dividends for the voice of Caribbean/Central American alliance in the WTO SVE group began to gain traction. Although the Doha Round never came to full fruition, small economies finally got some recognition in the adoption of special treatment on tariff liberalization at the Hong Kong Ministerial in 2006.

The strengthening of the case of small economies in the FTAA and WTO later proved rewarding for CARIFORUM in the Economic Partnership Agreement talks with the European Union. There the region secured the best asymmetrical free trade agreement ever negotiated in a comprehensive trade agreement comprising goods and services and between the developed and developing world.

I have selected this story from the many experiences I shared with Amb Bernal to highlight a struggle for the acceptance of the cause of small economies. Obviously, Amb Bernal was not alone in this fight and shares the rewards with some other luminaries but he remains a central figure in this saga that showed the character and strength of his leadership. His powers of persuasion as well as intellectual command and capacity to engage his opponents with dignity, calm and knowledge reflected the best in our Caribbean diplomatic tradition.

In all this journey what has always stood out for me was his commitment to consultation, his mastery of the craft of negotiation and ability to stay the course. He also had a great sense of humour and employed it skillfully in his diplomatic efforts. I recall once at an FTAA meeting in Puebla when just accidentally the guys around ARB happened to be generally over 6 feet tall and they would walk together in an intimidating way. First world delegates would jokingly remark that his colleagues did not look as though they came from small economies but ARB would quickly reply that he wished his firms had the same look.

I always remind my colleagues that the idea of vulnerability of small economies and their entitlement to special concessions is not an easy sell internationally. Your opponents are not just the developed countries but lined up strongly against you are the Least Developed Countries who believe you are trying to get the same status as them and the many developing countries whose per capita income is less than yours and who see you as trying to get more than them. This is the real world that ARB had to navigate and he had to muster his best diplomatic skills to prevail. May his soul rest in peace and let's hope future generations will be inspired by his efforts.





## MEMORIES OF AMBASSADOR RICHARD BERNAL

### DERYCK R. BROWN

(FORMER DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION & PARTNERSHIPS, CRNM, 2002-05)

When Ambassador Richard Bernal and Henry Gill ushered me to the pier at the Grand Barbados Hotel and asked me to consider joining the CRNM, I was both surprised and intrigued. I soon discovered how persuasive Ambassador Bernal could be and agreed to join the CRNM, which I did in April 2002. Thus began a relationship that lasted for 20 years before Richard – my former boss, mentor and friend – departed this earth suddenly and all too soon on January 4th, 2023.

As Director-General of the CRNM, Richard was my boss. His management style soon became apparent and I found much that was worthy of emulation. For example, I learned that camaraderie among a team of professionals is the glue that binds everyone together and unites all members of the team around a mission, a goal and a cause. I learned that meals were the ideal, subliminal way to build a team; Richard once told me that when our mouths are open we are vulnerable and more inclined to share things about ourselves. As others can attest, the CRNM certainly did a lot of team-building over lunches and dinners.



Along with Henry Gill, the CRNM Senior Director (who later succeeded him as Director-General), I shared many meals with Richard during my time at the CRNM at which we discussed broad matters pertaining to CARICOM and the status of our regional integration process, trade negotiation strategy, technical issues, organizational and staffing issues, books, music and just about anything that came up. When he was in Barbados, we frequented a Chinese restaurant in Top Rock where the owner had seen his photograph in the local newspaper and would always refer to him as “Big Chief”, to which Richard would reply “No, you are the big chief.” And, of course, while Richard always finished eating first, Henry just kept on going until there was nothing left (for which Richard gave him the nickname “the Sweeper”).

Richard was a delightfully affable man who was easy to like. Even when one became angry at him over some matter – and, have no doubt, tempers flared occasionally – it was impossible not to like him. He always knew how to defuse a situation and use his sharp wit to turn things around so that, before you knew it, everyone was laughing.

I am most grateful for the opportunities he gave me and the confidence he placed in me. Very early in my sojourn at the CRNM, he delegated me to represent him at one of the famous Mona Conferences on the Caribbean organized by Professors Kenneth Hall and Denis Benn. My task was to make a presentation on the CRNM before an audience that included its original architects, Sir Shridath Ramphal and Sir Alister McIntyre, as well as then Secretary-General Edwin Carrington. What could I possibly say about the CRNM after a few months that these titans of regional integration did not already know? Despite my reluctance, he assigned me to be the Lead CARICOM Negotiator in the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies (CGSE) in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), where I was tasked with negotiating what was then called the Hemispheric Cooperation Program on behalf of the region. And for the three years that I was with the CRNM, I attended every single CARICOM Heads of Government meeting and many Trade Ministers' and even Foreign Ministers' meetings. Taken altogether, these opportunities gave me a front-row seat where I gained valuable insights into not just our regional integration process, but also the many handicaps and challenges that Caribbean countries face as small states in the global economy.

Richard often used the analogy of globalization as a kind of bus that was taking us to a destination not everyone was comfortable going to. "Stop the world!! We want to get off." was an attitude we often confronted and he very much saw his role – and the CRNM's – as "mediating the encounter between the region and the forces of globalization." This was a role he took seriously and for which he was uniquely suited, particularly given his past experience representing Jamaica in Washington, D.C. for ten years. It was the same energy with which he approached his work when he became the Executive Director for the Caribbean at the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as when he was appointed Pro-Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs at the University of the West Indies.

As a mentor, Richard was almost like a big brother to me. He offered sound and oftentimes unsolicited advice about my own career and professional development, about diplomacy (or, rather, about being diplomatic), and about life in general. He was a firm believer in "the invisible hand" which proved to be very useful on many occasions. He was a clear thinker and an extremely effective communicator with an uncanny ability to hold court for 45 minutes with no prepared text, capable of communicating very complex ideas of international trade or international affairs in simple language so a lay audience could understand. Many will recall his slim tan briefcase which seemingly contained nothing but a toothbrush, a small tube of toothpaste, his trademark fine-point red ink pen, and a few loose sheets of paper on which he could often be seen scribbling a few bullet points mere minutes before giving a major speech or presentation. It would not be improper to mention that he – along with Henry Gill - taught many in the CRNM about appropriate business attire. He was a stickler for looking the part and anybody who knew Richard would always remember him being very smartly dressed in his dark business suits.

But it was as a friend that Richard excelled. We shared similar world views and perspectives on the region we both came from and loved, as well as a few common interests. Our conversations were filled with laughter. He had a sardonic wit and mischievous sense of humor – he was a genuinely funny guy! And if he said something funny extemporaneously, he would repeat and refine it in his mind until it became one of his many famous sayings ... so that what started off as a spur-of-the-moment comment would, in time, become well-rehearsed.

It was an honor to know him and his dear wife, Margaret, who was his rock that kept him centered. I first met Margaret in 2002 when I accompanied Ambassador Bernal on a trip to Havana, Cuba for the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between CARICOM and Cuba. In what was clearly a phenomenal mix-up, I was given his suite and he was assigned a room that was clearly meant for me. We had no idea of the mistake until I visited his room and saw how small it was (relative to the spacious suite I was inhabiting). I immediately offered to switch rooms but he and Margaret opted to stay where they were and allowed me to keep their suite. To hear him tell the story afterwards, however, you'd be forgiven for believing that I'd barricaded myself in the room and refused to give it up.

He was a loving son, a loyal husband ("in the pasture") and a proud father and grandfather. I will miss our conversations, which were always enlightening, and the many meals we shared. Most of all, I will miss his wise counsel. But knowing him has enriched my life, for which I will be eternally grateful. Eternal rest be granted unto him and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.



## **IVÁN OGANDO**

(EPA COORDINATOR – CRNM BARBADOS)

I was not as close to Ambassador Richard Bernal as most of my former colleagues at the CRNM, but I always felt quite comfortable and very much enjoyed the occasions we shared time together.

The first time I met Richard was in July 2000 when he was part of a fifteen-person panel who were interviewing candidates for the post of Director of the Free Trade Area of the Americas Administrative Secretariat. Richard, in his capacity of Director General of the CRNM, was representing CARICOM countries on the panel and the rest were from different countries from all over the Americas. I had applied for the job with few expectations but, being the only national from the Dominican Republic that made the short-list, I wanted at least to perform well at the interview, so I had done my homework and had a good idea of the kind of candidate they were looking for. I was doing well on the interview, which was in both Spanish and English, until somebody asked me about my capacity to adapt to different countries, since the Directorate was expected to move from Miami to Panama and eventually to Mexico. Automatically I responded that if they had seen my CV, they could see that I had lived for over four years in Guyana and that itself should answer the question. The moment I said that, I remembered that a representative from CARICOM was part of the panel and with that answer I may have offended the region and blown my chance. But suddenly I saw this tall man who burst into laughter at my answer. It was Richard. He was the only one on that panel who knew what I meant so I was relieved.

I ended up getting the job and lasted for four years in the post, during which time I got used to seeing Richard coming to the FTAA regular meetings in Miami, Panama and Mexico, and as well in many other cities of the hemisphere where FTAA Trade Negotiation Committee meetings were held. Unlike many CARICOM negotiators, Richard always saw me as being Caribbean.

Of the many anecdotes about Richard, I remember one at the height of the FTAA negotiations. A Vice-Ministerial level meeting was held in the Headquarters of the Secretariat in Panama. Negotiations were tense. It was the last day of the meeting and Richard was defending CARICOM's position which the rest around the table considered to be blocking the consensus of the group. The meeting extended all day and by midnight, Richard got up and went to his room, leaving Brandy Isaacs in charge while other issues were being discussed. The meeting extended overnight and Richard came back at around 6:00 am, fresh as a lettuce and impeccably dressed. He walked into the room and sat in CARICOM's chair, replacing Brandy. All the others around the table had been there all night and were exhausted, having removed their ties and jackets. Richard asked for the floor and in very cool way said that his flight was leaving at 5:00 pm so he was ready to continue discussing the issue until then. Then he got up and went for coffee. I met him outside the meeting room and joked with him that he was not a very popular person in the meeting room at that moment. The other heads of delegations had been putting a lot of pressure on him, but Richard seemed very cool. He laughed at my comment and said "I couldn't care less, they are not my constituency, and I have a mandate to defend."

At the end, the meeting did not arrive at a consensus but the fact that Richard held to his position did not sit particularly well with the United States, which ended up sending emissaries to some of the CARICOM capitals to ask that Richard be removed as the region's Chief Negotiator. Fortunately, despite this, CARICOM Heads of Government kept Richard in his post.

After years of intense negotiations, the FTAA fell into a hiatus. By the end of 2004 it was clear that the process was doomed. In October that year, I got a phone call from Richard asking me to join the CRNM for the EPA negotiations. I was really surprised by the offer. He told me that they needed somebody from the DR in the team and that he thought I could be that person. Eventually I talked to Henry Gill, who was the No. 2 at the CRNM and a good friend, and that's how I ended up moving to Barbados in February 2005.



At the CRNM, I had the privilege to work alongside the most capable team of professionals I had ever seen. Aside from the fact that everybody was extremely good in their respective areas, it was the genuine spirit of camaraderie among the group that made me feel like a full part of the team. Richard, along with Henry, was largely responsible for that. At every opportunity, whether in Barbados or in Brussels, we went out for Chinese food, of which Richard was a big fan. The discussions around the table were like fun academic lectures and, for me, they were learning sessions. I also enjoyed watching Richard in the negotiations and admired his peculiar, very easy-going way of addressing the issues. He certainly took things seriously but I never saw him looking stressed.

A few years after I left the CRNM, Richard was back in Washington with the IADB. I sent him an email that I was going to be in town and he quickly replied inviting me for lunch. We talked and laughed about the EPA negotiating process. Later, around 2012, I was back in Guyana and he came for a short visit. We met for a quick breakfast at the Pegasus hotel and that was the last time I saw him. Nevertheless, we managed to keep in touch every once in a while and through the CRNM email group.



**THE NEWS OF HIS PASSING WAS SHOCKING AND SAD FOR ME. HE STILL HAD SO MUCH KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE. RICHARD WAS ONE OF THE VERY FEW AND TRUE PAN-CARIBBEAN MEN THAT I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGED TO MEET. I WILL CERTAINLY NOT FORGET HIM AND THE LESSONS I LEARNED FROM HIM.**

## **DR. RICHARD BERNAL, O.J. REGIONAL NEGOTIATOR, DIPLOMAT AND ACADEMIC<sup>1</sup>**

### **CARL B. GREENIDGE<sup>2</sup>**

Although adult male life expectancy in the Caribbean is little more than 70 years of age, Richard Bernal's associates and colleagues were caught off guard by his sudden death over a week ago. Bernal was a colleague who seemed able to carry his burdens lightly without any of the telltale signs most of us mortals exhibit in the face of a life of stress.

Dr Richard Bernal was a Jamaican economist and diplomat who held a series of senior representative posts in and outside of Jamaica. It is arguable that his most influential regional post came as Director General (DG) of the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM) under which CARICOM and the Dominican Republic combined to undertake external trade negotiations. I first met Bernal whilst I was SG, ad interim, of the ACP Group and Director of the Technical Centre for Agricultural & Rural Cooperation (CTA). In 2008, I was invited by Minister Henry Jeffrey to an ACP-EU Joint Council Session. Bernal enquired during the course of lunch, whether I would be interested in contributing to the work of the CRNM. He later proposed more specifically that I join the team as an Adviser. I agreed.

Bernal himself had held a variety of senior representative posts on behalf of Jamaica, including Ambassador to the USA and Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the Organization of American States from 1991 to 2001. Prior to venturing into diplomacy, he had been an economics lecturer at UWI, Jamaica, and a banker for a short period. He then went on to lead the CRNM and subsequently became the organisation's longest serving DG. Afterwards, Richard was appointed as Alternate Executive Director and then Executive Director of the IDB. Latterly, he served as Pro-Chancellor and Professor of Practice at UWI, and Research Fellow at the P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy.

I believe that of all these posts his most significant contribution was made as DG of the CRNM and most importantly as our Lead Negotiator for EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) and the World Trade Organisation) WTO. This was a position in which he succeeded the venerable Sir Shridath Ramphal (SSR).

It was whilst he was at the helm of the negotiating agency that the latter endured its most controversial and challenging phase and that is not to say that it was ever without controversy. From its very birth, the agency was dogged by, if not immersed in, controversy. At its inception the Heads of Government let it be known that the late Hon Bernard St John, Deputy Prime Minister of Barbados, who had served as the ACP Ministerial Coordinator and Spokesman would head the negotiating body which was about to be established. In spite of this stated intention, they contrived to appoint Sir Shridath to the position. Notwithstanding his sterling work at the institution, Ramphal's term was marked by an abrupt resignation widely believed to be a result of his dissatisfaction with the region's mode of decision-making.

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[1] Dr Richard Bernal, O.J. former Director General of the CRNM Pro Chancellor for Global Affairs, and Professor of Practice within the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies and Research Fellow at the P.J. Patterson Centre for Africa-Caribbean Advocacy.

[1]Carl B. Greenidge; former Senior Director of the CRNM and OTN and until Sept 2020 one of the ACP's, three lead negotiations for the ACP-EU Cotonou Successor Agreement and the Caribbean's lead negotiator for its Regional Agreement with the EU.)

In appointing Sir Shridath Ramphal as head of the CRNM, the Heads had effectively taken it from under the umbrella of the Caricom Secretariat and the authority of its Secretary General within which it had been conceived. Sir Shridath, in effect, reported to the Heads directly thereby severely limiting the influence and control of the negotiating process exercised by the Secretary General of CARICOM/CARIFORUM. Therein lay the corrosive and intractable troubles of the body.

Bernal was not Sir Shridath and as DG of the Negotiating Machinery, Bernal's mannerisms and his leadership style helped to attenuate this problem of reporting and control in the post-Ramphal era. He was a laid-back manager, soft-spoken and flexible but confident among Heads and untroubled by underlying challenges to his authority, perhaps buoyed by sociocultural factors specific to the region. He allowed his technicians, led frontally by the late Henry Gill, Senior Director, considerable room to maneuver and confront organizational as well as technical challenges. The regional standing of the technicians was such that they easily networked effectively among the key advisers of the individual Heads. They rarely gave up an argument, and in the process earned the opprobrium of the SG of the Caricom Secretariat, in particular, as well as some of the venerable members of academia, who seemed sometimes affronted by Gill and his team's strong and persuasive forays in the arena of international economics. This CRNM team was very effective and reminds me of the traditional 'good cop bad cop' combinations made immortal in gangster films like *The French Connection* in particular (Doyle and Russo), and *Starsky and Hutch*.

At the commencement of Richard Bernal's term at the CRNM, the region's leaders were committed to regional trade initiatives focusing primarily on reducing and removing tariffs and non-tariff barriers. The body established in 1997 was expected to negotiate the FTAA, WTO as well as the Cotonou Agreement with the EU, and associated trade and development initiatives. The importance of having articulate but tough and competent negotiators was recognized as critical to promoting and defending the region's positions. In time, however, the region was faced with new protectionism practiced by its OECD counterparts, including the EU. The latter were calling for tariff reductions and opening of developing country markets while they themselves were pursuing domestic restrictions and much of which, while they did not necessarily render the freeing of international trade redundant, sought to secure advantages for themselves vis a vis other states and the developing countries, in particular. Although Caricom/CARIFORUM states recognized these divergent and contradictory trends they never actually managed, with or without the CRNM, to address let alone decide from among alternative options to the existing regimes of preferential access.<sup>3</sup> The late Owen Arthur, former PM of Barbados, pointed to the internal tensions amongst the Heads of Government arising from the difficulties they encountered when confronted by these hard choices.<sup>4</sup>

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[3] For a view from the private sector See D. Jessop (2008) "A view" from Europe. *Stabroek News* May 4.

[4] Arthur, O (2014) Caribbean regionalism in the context of economic challenges. *Caribbean Journal on International Relations and Diplomacy*. Vol 2. Pp 147-164.



The dilemma faced them in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations with the EU, correctly described by one observer as, “arguably the most technically complex of the trade negotiations that the region has engaged in”. The conclusion of those negotiations in December 2007 (the Agreement was actually signed in October 2008) seemed to have taken many observers, by surprise. An alliance of critics, including many development NGOs, attacked the agreement as well as CRNM staff. In the face of that onslaught, the region’s political leaders whose nominated spokesmen charged with oversight of the negotiations had cleared the agreement, feigned ignorance and practically disowned the EPA. The Dominican Republic (DR) which had earned the ire of the Caricom Secretariat for its strong advocacy of liberalisation throughout the negotiations, stood almost alone save for Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in defending the package. Guyana which had been the country insisting that the EU’s inclusion of a development package would be a pre-condition for its approval of any EPA also joined the critics in attacking the alleged independence of the CRNM although the package Guyana advocated had been secured.

Caricom Heads of Government meeting in Belize, urged on by the Caricom SG, dismembered the CRNM on grounds of the package’s content, being unsatisfactory. Henry Gill who succeeded Bernal as the new DG, and who had long been regarded by the Secretariat as the ‘bad cop’ was forced out during the subsequent 20th Inter-sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, Belize, 12-13 March 2009 and formally resigned in June 2009. The agency was effectively dismembered and parked under the SG as the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN) of the Caricom Secretariat. This was exactly where then CARICOM SG had proposed it be located at the inception of the trade negotiations exercise.

Axing leaders of allegedly offending institutions and sidelining those institutions when the underlying problems to be tackled were inappropriate structures or crossed reporting lines are common reactions of the Heads Summit.<sup>5</sup> The impact of that particular decision on the CRNM and the region’s capacity, or lack thereof, to effectively negotiate subsequent agreements would undoubtedly be a more appropriate topic for another time. Suffice it for me to say here that, shortly after the initialing of the pact, Bernal possibly in anticipation of that evening of ‘the long knives’ that was to ensue in Belize, resigned to take up a position at the IDB.

The EPA was the most visible and lasting achievement of the CRNM, and it was concluded under Dr Richard Bernal’s leadership. It was negotiated and delivered by the CRNM in circumstances under which, until the deal was announced, most observers, inside and out, believed would make a mutually acceptable outcome highly unlikely, if not impossible. The preparation for those and other negotiations involved long, extensive, expensive and careful preparation and completion of studies and the region had anticipated undertaking several other negotiations during Bernal’s tenure. Such preparatory work inherited by the Caricom Secretariat had been undertaken at Bernal and Gill’s initiative to facilitate these and succeeding negotiations especially because of the technical weakness and lack of adequate analytical skills in many member states.

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[5] Grant, C (2012) Caribbean Development Alternatives and the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement. *Journal of International Relations and Development*. Pp. 82-110.

Bernal, when he had time to reflect, would have looked back with pride on that preparatory work and the way he had managed his team with Henry Gill. Many of those with and against whom the CRNM negotiated speak glowingly of its technical capacity. Neither it nor its leaders were the source of the region's problems in securing a more favourable agreement. For much of its lifetime the institution was regarded and envied as one of the premier regional negotiating bodies in the developing world, one of the outstanding examples of an effective regional technical competence. In fact, not long before Bernal invited me to join his team, I had completed a consultancy assignment for the West African Economic and Monetary Community (UEMOA) on an appropriate organizational and reporting framework within which that region could undertake their external economic and trade negotiations, particularly with the EU.

As it happens, Richard Bernal has shared some of his thoughts on the trials and negotiating challenges faced by the CRNM and the region.<sup>6</sup> He lived long enough to have seen the role played by the Secretariat and its specialist institution in the negotiation of the Cotonou Successor Agreement which, although effectively concluded in 2020, has yet to be signed off by the EU. Under the new arrangement and under the oversight of Caricom, the region was unable to prevent each ACP region, including Caricom/CARIFORUM, having to negotiate individually with the EU and with region-specific provisions, although there remains an ACP-wide framework within which the regions were constrained. At the same time, the provisions of the draft agreement can be seen as being more intrusive in many ways than its predecessor and especially the Lomé accords. The NGO and University Communities, which did so much to make life uncomfortable for the Heads and which proved to be the nemesis of the CRNM, has been 'missing in action' on the new terms negotiated. It is as though they had returned to the pre-Cotonou 2008 era when they took little interest in such matters. Trade and development issues are no longer sexy in those communities, unfortunately, they are still very important to our economies.

Following Bernal's resignation from the CRNM, and the previously mentioned Council actions, negotiations began with Canada on a CARICOM-Canada Trade and Development Agreement to replace CARIBCAN, Canada's non-reciprocal free trade pact with the Caribbean. The region's negotiating guidelines had, as before, been agreed by the Caricom Heads of Government and the Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Negotiations. Two rounds of negotiations were held, November 2009 and March 2010. They were suspended following Canada's conclusion, as I recall, that the Caribbean 'lacked ambition' as regards its goals. In 2011, subsequent to my departure, the region negotiated an Additional Protocol to the CARICOM-Cuba Trade Agreement and a CARIFORUM-UK EPA consequent to the departure of the UK from the EU. Little of note has emerged from the CRNM's successor and CARICOM since.

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[6] Bernal, R (2014) Negotiation by CARIFORUM Regional Cooperation. Chapter 3.

## Conclusion

To the very end, Bernal remained a colleague who always lent a sympathetic ear to others and he often proffered suggestions and ideas which underlined his abiding interest in analytical writing. I recall that in 2022 during our penultimate discussion which touched on the Guyana-Venezuela case before the ICJ, he asked why I had not published my observations about the predominant influence of the threat to Guyana's borders on the formulation and direction of Guyana's foreign policy.

I close with a personal reflection on the man himself outside of academia and the negotiating room. Bernal knew that I enjoyed playing squash and when he learned that I had sustained a severed achilles tendon and was hoping to quickly return to the game he went to the trouble of bringing from Jamaica, one of his highly prized squash racquets as a gift in order to encourage me to quickly get back on the court by joining and playing at the Barbados squash club.

Bernal's commitment to exercise and sport was not the least of the reasons why the news of his demise took so many of us by surprise. We knew how committed he was to exercise and sport and if fitness alone was a sufficient shield against heart attacks he would not have left us for a long time. We shall miss him for those characteristics and also for his hallmark smile which was a prelude to either a joke or a profound observation.

# **THE CONTINUATION**

## **NATALLIE ROCHESTER**

The wind touches us with love from the past

The warm morning sun softens the chill of the night before

The songbirds cheer us along to chart new paths

Glances of cherished memories remind us of all we have to give

And all you gave

Our reason for being drives us

To be ever more