



Seventeenth sessionINFORMATION FROM NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES: SUMMARIES
OF INFORMATION TRANSMITTED UNDER ARTICLE 73 e OF THE CHARTER
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

CARIBBEAN AND WESTERN ATLANTIC TERRITORIES

British Virgin Islands

In accordance with the statement of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 27 September 1961, the Government of the United Kingdom has transmitted to the Secretary-General the following political and constitutional information on the Territory of the British Virgin Islands.

This information, which was received on 20 April 1962, is herewith submitted to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session.^{1/}

^{1/} In accordance with General Assembly resolution 1700 (XVI) of 19 December 1961, this information is also submitted to the Committee on Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories.

B R I T I S H V I R G I N I S L A N D S

POPULATION

The British Virgin Islands comprise some forty islands and islets, but four-fifths of the population lives on Tortola. The population at the 1960 census was 7,338; it is almost wholly of African descent.

GENERAL

Until 1950, the British Virgin Islands formed part of the Leeward Islands for administrative purposes. In 1950, however, the power vested in the Governor of the Leeward Islands to legislate for the Virgin Islands was abrogated, the Legislative Council reconstituted and an Executive Council introduced. In 1954 the present Constitution was introduced.

CONSTITUTION

The head of the government of the Territory is the Administrator. At present Mr. W.St.P.M. Hancock is Acting Administrator. In the exercise of his powers, the Administrator works in close consultation with the Executive Council, and normally follows its advice.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Executive Council is the main executive body in the Territory and normally takes decisions on all internal matters. The elected members of the Executive Council now undertake the supervision of certain departments of the administration. The present membership of the Council, of which the Administrator is chairman, is as follows:

Mr. H.R. Penn (Member for Trade and Production)

Mr. H.A. Besson (Crown Attorney)

Mr. N.E.A. Harrigan (Administrative Secretary)

Mr. J.O. Georges (nominated member)

All the above are inhabitants of the West Indies.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The Legislative Council consists of 6 elected members, 2 nominated unofficials and 2 officials. All members are of West Indian origin. There are no political parties in the Territory, and the elected members sit as independents. Elections to the Legislative Council take place every five years, the last elections having been held in October 1960. Members are elected on a basis of universal adult suffrage.

JUDICIARY

A Supreme Court and a Court of Appeal for the eight Territories of the Leeward and Windward Islands (including the British Virgin Islands) were established in 1939. Fresh provisions regarding those Courts were made by an Order in Council of 1959, which also provided for the establishment of a Judicial and Legal Services Commission composed of the Chief Justice and the Joint Supreme Court of the Leeward and Windward Islands, a Federal Justice, a judge or ex-judge of a superior court of any part of Her Majesty's Dominions and the chairman of two of the advisory public service commissions in the Territories concerned.

The Leeward and Windward Islands Judicial and Legal Services Commission advises the Administrator on the appointment, etc., of magistrates, registrars and law officers. The judiciary are entirely West Indian.
