**Chapter Seven:**

**Nations Out of Nurseries, Empires into Bottles:**

**The Colonial Politics of Welfare Orange Juice**

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(This is the final chapter of my book manuscript *Many Mouths: State Feeding in Britain from the Workhouse to the Welfare State*)

In November 1941, the Ministry of Food announced a Vitamin Scheme aimed at compensating for the shortage of fresh fruit during the war. The new program was to provide cod liver oil, which was rich in vitamins A and D, and fruit juices, purees, and syrups high in vitamin C to all children under the age of two regardless of income. The scheme was free for the first few months and then a nominal charge was implemented but only for families not in financial need. In 1942, the Vitamin Scheme amalgamated with the government provision of cheap and free liquid and dried milk, expanded to include both pregnant women and children up to 5 years old, and was renamed the Welfare Foods Service. The Welfare Foods Service continued to provide government-subsidized vitamin-rich products for all young children and pregnant women until 1961 when it dropped the subsidy on welfare orange juice but continued to provide it at cost. Ten years later it withdrew both the juice and the cod liver oil, replacing these products with vitamin drops and tablets available at cost to the general population and free to those receiving income benefits. For its proponents, the provision of welfare orange juice in particular represented the “Welfare State at its best,”[[1]](#endnote-1) as it had been credited with leading to a phenomenal growth spurt (and apparently boundless energy) amongst those coming of age in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s.[[2]](#endnote-2) For some its effects were even more profound. Looking back on her 1950s childhood, the historian Carolyn Steedman maintained that, “I think I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and dinners at school hadn’t told me, in a covert way, that I had a right to exist, was worth something.”[[3]](#endnote-3) But for others welfare orange juice (WOJ)—even more than milk, cod liver oil, and school meals--represented the “Nanny State” at its worst. Rather than rearing a generation of fit, healthy, responsible citizens, WOJ, its critics maintained, had bred only “Super Spongers” who took their state benefits for granted and no longer felt obliged to earn their own keep.[[4]](#endnote-4)

The story of the WFS thus sits inside that of the rise and fall of the Welfare State. It is part of a larger narrative about whose bodies the state nourishes in the name of social justice and national health and the ways in which the ideals of the post-war Labour government were gradually eroded in the 1950s and 60s as both Conservative and Labour administrations reworked welfare policies to suit their ideologies, and a series of financial crises required them to make cuts and compromises.[[5]](#endnote-5) Its story has not been told before because the Welfare Food Service on first glance appears to be merely the Welfare State writ small. But the provision of welfare orange juice was not in fact a typical social service in that its history links domestic nutritional benefits to Britain’s political and economic relationship to its colonial territories. Unlike milk and cod liver oil, concentrated orange juice--which replaced blackcurrant products almost immediately after the WFS was announced--could not be domestically produced. In order to guarantee a uniform allowance to all UK beneficiaries the British government thus jump-started an orange-growing industry and juice concentrating plants in the British West Indies. Because liquid concentrated orange juice was a highly specialized product with little export market beyond the British government that used it solely for the WFS, the Caribbean orange growers and juice manufacturers were almost entirely at the mercy of UK consumers of welfare orange juice. Decisions about welfare orange juice—such as who should be its beneficiaries and how much they should pay for the product—thus pitted the needs of domestic British citizens who consumed the juice against those of colonial British subjects who produced it. As Jordanna Bailkin has argued, the history of Britain’s postwar Welfare State has largely been told as a metropolitan story severed from a wider global history of empire.[[6]](#endnote-6) The history of welfare orange juice, however, reveals the complex relationship between British domestic benefits programs and Colonial economic development projects. It suggests that the meanings invested in the term “welfare” were far from transparent in a period that witnessed a slow but steady process of Caribbean decolonization on the one hand and cuts to the Welfare State on the other.

**Vitamin Foods, Wartime Shortages, and Lend-Lease Orange Juice**

The WFS was born out of wartime food shortages and subsequent concerns about nutritional deficiencies caused by the lack of fresh fruit and other nutrient-rich foodstuffs and during the war concentrated orange juice (COJ) was imported from the USA under the Lend-Lease program.

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Despite the limited uptake of COJ, many members of the public as well as politicians and civil servants did credit the WFS with sustaining the health of all children during wartime, some contrasting bonny British babies with their Continental counterparts thus imbibing the rhetoric of nurturing the national body.[[7]](#endnote-7) The egalitarian nature of the program was also highly appealing to many who saw in it, as in the 1942 Beveridge Report, the means of leveling the playing field. Instead of “half the working-class children being brought up in poverty and malnutrition,” a Mass Observation broadcast asserted in 1942, the WFS ensures that “everyone gets a level break of at least the minimum requirements for life and health and happiness.”[[8]](#endnote-8) This view was widely shared by those across the political spectrum who were intimately involved with the WFS and thus knew first hand the significance of these vitamin products to the health of all of Britain’s children. Jack Drummond, as the Chief Scientific Advisor to the Ministry of Food and an expert on nutrition, Major Lloyd-George and William Mabane, as Parliamentary Secretaries to the MOF, Lord Woolton, first as Minister of Food and then as Minister of Reconstruction, and Colonel Llewellin, who succeeded Woolton as Minister of Food, all lauded the WFS as central to raising a generation of fit and healthy citizens. As such they all promoted its continuation into the peace as a highly effective and relatively inexpensive route to national efficiency.[[9]](#endnote-9)

**Postwar Provision and the Search for Empire Sources**

Before the war was even over, then, despite the fact that the WFS had been conceived like the British Restaurant as purely a wartime measure, the Minister of Food began planning for future supplies of COJ. In June 1944, Llewellin announced in Parliament that given that Lend-Lease supplies would not be available after the war, and the takeup of WOJ was now over 50%, he was “encouraging the production” of COJ in Palestine, Jamaica, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.[[10]](#endnote-10) In January of 1945, the MOF began in earnest to seek these “Empire sources” of WOJ. Preliminary calculations suggested that the Empire was capable of producing the WFS’s full requirements of COJ if long-term contracts were issued. This would foster Empire trade and at the same time save dollars, which would be in short supply after the war and which the Treasury was, naturally, wary of spending on orange juice. A scheme for the Empire production of COJ, argued P.G.R. Whalley (Deputy Secretary of the MOF) to John Bodinnar (head of the Ministry’s Supply Department), would meet the needs of the WFS; at the same time “those Dominions and Colonies concerned would be greatly assisted.”[[11]](#endnote-11) G.T. Shipston, an expert in citrus who had been employed by the MOF for the period of the war, maintained that independent of the future of WOJ, there was a strong case for developing citrus within the Empire.[[12]](#endnote-12) But MOF insiders were clearly motivated to save dollars on a product that they assumed they would need to continue to purchase once Lend-Lease had expired. It was only once they had determined that the cultivation of Empire sources of WOJ would be beneficial to the WFS, a domestic social service, that the MOF moved to approach the Colonial Office to “secure their support” for such a venture.[[13]](#endnote-13) In fact, unlike the MOF, both the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office were only lukewarm on the suggestion. Their officials did not object but were rather “discouraging” and did not give their “wholehearted support” to the proposal. They felt that Palestine could be looked to for future COJ supplies, should the WFS be extended past the war years, but other colonial products currently ranked higher on their list for priority support and long-term guarantees.[[14]](#endnote-14)

The Colonial Office’s tepid response to the proposal did not discourage Albert Feavearyear, Deputy Secretary in charge of Supply for the MOF, from continuing to pursue it. He was much more optimistic both about the future of the WFS, which he saw as central to the “vitality of the nation” and predicted would last at least another ten years, and the possibility of Empire supplies of COJ. Feavearyear supported the idea of contracts with Palestine, Jamaica, Southern Rhodesia, Cyprus, and Nigeria up to the end of 1950 in order to jump-start their industries. He argued that this would meet the UK’s needs for WOJ, which he argued will still be required for some time to come, “put our balance of payments right,” not compromise the Mutual Aid pact with the USA, and yet allow Britain to take “perfectly legitimate discriminatory measures” by favouring “Empire countries,” a policy of Imperial Preference that had been ratified by the Ottawa Agreements of 1932 and continued to be championed as central to Britain’s economic policy in the aftermath of WWII.[[15]](#endnote-15) Feavearyear thus proposed going straight to the Treasury with the plan for stimulating Empire sources of COJ rather than spending time trying to convince the Colonial Office to support the project. In these early stages of planning both he and Shipston were even optimistic that long-term contracts might not even be necessary. Shipston maintained that Jamaica, potentially the cheapest supplier in the long run, had already purchased most of the machinery for concentrating juice and would likely not need a long-term contract to spark production. Nor would the Nigerians, he surmised, though Palestine and South Africa, he noted would likely need these assurances.[[16]](#endnote-16) Feavearyear was similarly confident that these industries would be immediately profitable enough that it could be stated with “considerable firmness” to Empire producers of COJ that at the end of the contract period “the new industries will have to stand upon their own legs in free competition with the rest of the world.”[[17]](#endnote-17) Despite a marked lack of enthusiasm from the Colonial Office, the MOF was confident that COJ could be procured for an extended period of time from one or more economically viable colonial industries if only it was allowed to start the process rolling.

In planning a post-war food policy, WOJ was thus nicely positioned as a “subsidy” for the UK diet and for the development of Empire industries. A COJ industry that Britain had greater control over was not only central to the long-term health of the WFS, but was also in line with the “positive policies of the Colonial Office” to provide assistance to countries such as Jamaica and Cyprus. In addition, it could contribute to the “rehabilitation of Palestine and thus the economic reconstruction of the Middle East,” a matter of increasing importance to the British government as the Middle East Supply Center, through which the British government controlled commerce and transport in the Middle East during the war, was wound up.[[18]](#endnote-18) Indeed the year before, the Secretary of State for the Colonies had claimed that about 40% of the Palestinian citrus crop was going to waste precisely because of the lack of machinery for processing it into juice,[[19]](#endnote-19) which with WFS plans afoot could now be sold to Palestine in good faith. An additional benefit to such a scheme, argued Shipston, was that the production of COJ would lead to industries in by-products such as essential oils and pectin, which will provide a “wonderful opportunity” for the UK to export even more specialized machinery to the colonies and to Palestine.[[20]](#endnote-20) Thus as the war drew to a close, and in its immediate aftermath, plans were already well underway for the stimulation of Empire industries in COJ to supply the WFS, to create a market for specialized machinery, and to ameliorate the economies of Britain’s colonies and mandate. The Empire production of WOJ, shored up by the UK through bulk purchasing agreements, was thus the perfect expression of the “dual mandate” to exploit colonial resources for the world and Britain’s advantage while at the same time developing these territories for the long-term benefit of their own inhabitants, a policy that remained influential into the 1950s.[[21]](#endnote-21)

When the war ended in Europe there was much enthusiasm for the continuation of the WFS. The MOF continued to promote the use of COJ to ensure a “sound constitution and sturdy body” that would last a child in good stead throughout the school years and in “preparing for a successful career.” The Ministry thus continued to position WOJ as key to the rearing of future productive citizens, not merely “war babies,” and warned mothers not to be guilty of “child neglect” by failing to collect their “full share” of Welfare Foods even though the European war was over.[[22]](#endnote-22) The major political parties appeared to share this view. In the draft of a speech he wrote for Churchill in June 1945, Llewellin pushed the Prime Minister, who was campaigning to lead the nation into the peace, to emphasize the successes of the National Government’s “war-time fight for a healthy and well-nourished race of citizens” and the expected continuance of the WFS as part of a postwar nutritional program.[[23]](#endnote-23) Similarly, the Labour Party pledged to continue the WFS as part of its Welfare State. In its “Let Us Face the Future” Manifesto, the Labour Party insisted that, “parenthood should not be penalised if the population of Britain is to be prevented from dwindling.” Its food program would thus include not only the continuation of British Restaurants, it promised, but also “free and cheap milk for mothers and children, fruit juices and food supplements,” whose provision would not only be retained, but even extended.[[24]](#endnote-24) When Labour won the July 1945 election, its plan to institutionalize the WFS was expressed in the King’s Speech to Parliament thus ratifying this commitment regardless of any currency issues that made the acquisition of American juice difficult. Lord Woolton maintained that the “health of babies is more important than dollars,” and thus believed that the United States would surely not withhold this valuable product even though the war was over.[[25]](#endnote-25) But reliance solely on American supplies no longer seemed either practical or beneficial especially given the potential of the colonial territories to provide this product and the benefits that could accrue from this arrangement. If, as historians have argued, the scientific identification of nutritional deficiencies had taken place largely in the context of the colonial laboratory, and malnutrition identified as a key target of colonial development programs,[[26]](#endnote-26) in the immediate postwar period it was “colonial development” itself that offered the newly-elected Labour government a solution to the dilemma of metropolitan malnutrition that its Welfare State pledged to address. For however much the British government professed its interest in Caribbean child welfare,[[27]](#endnote-27) the Welfare Food Service was intended to ameliorate dietary deficiencies at home and was never extended to the children of the British subjects who would be charged with the Empire production of COJ.

The future of WOJ hinged on securing these sterling sources of supply that had seemed ripe for the picking at the close of the war. But plans for Empire production of COJ were slow to materialize and in 1946 they were not yet looking promising. The industry in Cyprus could not unite to form a cooperative operating with a single plant to supply the UK. The Jamaican crop had “failed disastrously” for two years running. Despite personal discussions between Llewellin and Jan Smuts during the war, South Africa had been “apathetic” about orange products, preferring to focus on the fresh fruit market. The Southern Rhodesian plant had limited output and much of it was not up to the standard required for WOJ. An agreement had been entered into with the Palestine Government to purchase all the COJ they produced, and the MOF remained hopeful that by 1949 they could at least obtain half their needs from Palestine and all by 1950. But although Palestine had an established orange industry (that the UK had helped to keep afloat during the war through bulk purchasing) and the MOF had sent an expert mission to develop a juice concentrating and bottling industry, difficulties in getting machinery to Palestine had meant missing an entire season of juice production and problems of quality and sterility were still being overcome. The MOF continued to negotiate with Jamaica, Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and Australia as potential suppliers of WOJ but with little assurance that ultimately any juice would be forthcoming.[[28]](#endnote-28) Indeed in 1947, almost the entirety of the WOJ imported in the UK still came from the USA under the Marshall Plan, with negligible amounts from Palestine.[[29]](#endnote-29) This foreign aid in kind would not last forever and the currency crisis of 1947 made the shoring up supplies of WOJ within the sterling area an issue of paramount concern. While the Empire production of WOJ could not earn dollars, as selling COJ to the USA was certainly coals to Newcastle, it could save dollars, which was crucial to Britain’s postwar economic recovery plan.

When a West Indian delegation arrived in the UK in 1947 to discuss bananas, the MOF thus urged them to consider expanding the citrus industry for the purpose of producing WOJ.[[30]](#endnote-30) Instead of encouraging them to pursue markets for “odd products like jam,” the MOF, desperate for some non-dollar source of COJ, asked them to “consider whether they could go into the production of welfare fruit juice in a fairly big way.”[[31]](#endnote-31) That same year COJ was taken up by the Colonial Primary Products Committee (CPPC) as a Priority II product, not as important as animal products and food grains, but alongside cocoa as a colonial agricultural product worth developing for export.[[32]](#endnote-32) The CPPC was set up in May 1947 to investigate increasing colonial production of specific commodities with regard to the interests of the Colonial Empire, the present and future needs of the world market, and the desirability of increasing foreign exchange resources. Its members included representatives from the Colonial Office, the Ministry of Food, the Ministry of Supply, and the Board of Trade.[[33]](#endnote-33) Its 1947 Interim Report stated that in promoting colonial development it was necessary to bear in mind “the doctrine of trusteeship.” The Colonies are not, it concluded, “British estates which can be exploited by the U.K. for her own advantage,” directly challenging the theory of Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1895 and 1903, which maintained that colonial territories were “great estates” to be exploited by their British landlord. While there are many common interests between the UK and her Colonies, “the primary concern of Colonial agricultural policy must be the benefit of Colonial peoples themselves.” It recognized, however, that some UK Ministries were “anxious to encourage particular lines of production in the Colonies,” and encouraged them to do so, provided that they gave “some form of long term assurance to producers which would at least guarantee a reasonable return on capital expenditure.”[[34]](#endnote-34) From its first meeting then the tension between the exploitation of colonial territories in order to serve Britain’s needs and economic development projects intended to set colonial peoples on the path to economic security and then responsible self-government was palpable.[[35]](#endnote-35) This conflict was typical of this immediate postwar period, which John Darwin has called this “strange Indian summer of the old imperial economy,” as despite its commitment to phase out Imperial Preference, the commercial bond between Britain and the sterling empire was renewed in the face of a serious economic crisis, a shortage of food, and a rise in import prices, a situation that required Britain to provide increased economic support to its Empire while at the same time expecting its colonial territories to contribute to the United Kingdom’s own financial recovery.[[36]](#endnote-36)

COJ was taken up in the Colonial Primary Products Committee in its third meeting in June, 1947. Shipston, as the MOF’s WOJ expert, attended the meeting and outlined to the CPPC the need for future stocks of WOJ amounting to up to 10,000 tons per annum. While Shipston promoted Jamaica and Palestine as the best suppliers within the sterling area, even though Britain had already announced its withdrawal from its Middle East mandate, Frank Stockdale, the Development Adviser for the Colonial Office also suggested that Nigeria might be another good option. The MOF was reluctant to pursue this lead, however, as they feared that the start up costs of a juice factory would not be balanced by the proposed output and thus render the project uneconomical. But the CPPC agreed to further examine the possibility of stimulating citrus production in both Jamaica and Nigeria.[[37]](#endnote-37) By the end of the year, the CPPC concluded that Palestine and Jamaica could together meet the needs of the WFS, though it continued to keep other potential sources alive.[[38]](#endnote-38) Indeed in March of 1948, the CPCC discussed British Honduras and both East and West Africa as additional potential suppliers of WOJ, suggesting that multiple Empire sources could be tapped. It concluded that the MOF should contact the Colonial Office and spell out the assurances it was willing to provide for citrus growers in order that the next steps could be taken in developing these colonial industries.[[39]](#endnote-39) For as historian Allister Hinds has argued, in the wake of the currency crisis of the summer of 1947, when Britain reneged on its commitment to the USA to make the pound sterling a fully convertible currency, the nation decided to place even greater emphasis on the use of colonial resources in its program of economic reconstruction. It was in this moment, he argues, that many British government agencies began to reconfigure “colonial development” almost exclusively in terms of the expansion of either dollar-saving or dollar-earning colonial commodities.[[40]](#endnote-40)

Colonial subjects were not unaware of the implications of these development policies implemented in the last years of the 1940s. Despite the CPPC’s declarations that they would not sanction the exploitation of colonial territories merely to benefit Britain, far from witnessing a prioritization of the needs of colonial peoples, several historians have noted that the period 1947-51 was in fact the only time that Britain deployed a fully realized Chamberlainite “colonial development offensive” precisely to serve its own interests.[[41]](#endnote-41) This was not lost on the so-called beneficiaries of these schemes. While not specifically referencing WOJ, a series of articles in the *West African Pilot* in 1947 condemned these “development” programs that were “ostensibly meant for the welfare of colonial peoples,” but in the end only expanded the production of foodstuffs and raw materials that “Britain needs badly to carry out her socialism at home,” a critique that implied that while colonial peoples were producing explicitly for the Welfare State, they were not in any way its beneficiaries.[[42]](#endnote-42) What made the production of WOJ particularly problematic as a colonial development scheme was that, unlike the other agricultural produce the CPPC were promoting, it was a highly specialized export, not already under large-scale production, for which there was a very limited commercial world market, and no buyer on the horizon beyond the Ministry of Food that only distributed it through the WFS in the UK. Far from jump-starting the production of a globally marketable commodity that could lead to a stable industry for the colonies themselves, the Empire production of COJ benefitted primarily the British government that desperately needed a non-dollar source of juice in order to continue to build their own nation out of nurseries.

The decision to get the Colonial Office on board and to move forward with more concrete plans for procuring WOJ from Empire sources came not a moment too soon for the MOF. In late April of 1948 the Treasury was already pressuring the MOF to cut back the distribution of COJ in order to reduce US imports.[[43]](#endnote-43) By May, the most reliable non-dollar source of juice was in turmoil. The orange groves in Jaffa were a site of heightened tension as the Haganah, the army of the newly pronounced State of Israel, seized the town, forcing the exodus of the majority of the Arab population, and resulting in the occupation of their citrus groves. The MOF thus had every reason to fear that the “troubles” in Palestine would limit the production of COJ and Britain’s access to it. By August it had become clear that the heavy investment in Palestine had been for naught, a case of putting “too many eggs into that basket” as “the uneasy situation” there gave no confidence that it could be relied upon for future supplies of WOJ. The British government was highly concerned about the purchase of “stolen fruit” from Jews occupying Arab-owned groves.[[44]](#endnote-44) The citrus association that fulfilled the juice contract consisted of ten factories: nine Jewish and one Arab-owned, the latter a “collaborator resident” working with the Jewish producers.[[45]](#endnote-45) Since the Arabs controlled the oil pipeline, they threatened to cut supply to the factories, and thus the juice industry could easily and with little warning be brought to a standstill overnight.[[46]](#endnote-46) By September, the citrus association was prepared to offer guarantees that no stolen fruit was used in the processing of the juice, the fuel supply remained at least temporarily intact, and thus the British government moved forward with its contracted procurement of COJ.[[47]](#endnote-47) But future supplies of juice from the region seemed extremely uncertain and it was increasingly apparent to the British government that other non-dollar sources of WOJ would have to be found or else risk the reduction or even cancellation of this provision of the WFS for suggestions to turn to blackcurrant and rosehip syrups, even though this would help to “foster a struggling native industry,” were few and far between and never seriously pursued as COJ, however difficult to procure, remained the cheapest source of vitamin C.[[48]](#endnote-48)

**Long-Term Contracts and West Indian Citrus**

The plan to “stimulate” production in the West Indies by means of a long-term contract became the new focus of the MOF’s efforts to secure non-dollar sources of WOJ for the foreseeable future. Jamaica had for some time been identified by the MOF as a promising source of supply and had been discussed alongside Palestine by the CPPC. Plans became more concrete, however, and more important to the MOF in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war. In 1948, S & S Services Limited, a newly formed firm acting as the sales agents and technical advisers of the Jamaican citrus producers,[[49]](#endnote-49) proposed to the Ministry of Food that an industry in COJ could be cultivated in Jamaica and Trinidad. The firm was run by G.T. Shipston and J.W. Seymour who until the previous year had been respectively the Ministry of Food’s Director and Assistant Director of Fruit Juices and Pectin and as such had managed the sourcing and bottling of WOJ. Before the war Shipston had worked for the California Fruit Growers Exchange that marketed some of its fruit under the name Sunkist and had been making COJ since the 1920s.[[50]](#endnote-50) As a paid temporary officer of the wartime MOF he had built up production of WOJ from the start of the scheme, had been in charge of quality control, and was the chief contact with the British bottlers.[[51]](#endnote-51) It was Shipston who had presented to the CPPC the Ministry’s need for sterling supplies of WOJ. That Shipston and Seymour, who until that year had been the MOF’s own COJ experts, were claiming that within ten years the British West Indies could produce enough to supply two-thirds of the needs of the Welfare Food Service was highly reassuring to the Ministry.[[52]](#endnote-52) That the MOF’s former employees would be the point of contact with the West Indian citrus producers must also have been appealing as it meant the Ministry could continue to rely on its own former employees to jump-start and oversee production of this very specialized commodity. S&S Services, as technical advisers to the Jamaican citrus growers, as the sales agent for their products sold commercially in the UK, and as central players in negotiations been the growers and the various UK Ministries that oversaw procurement of WOJ, thus smoothed the way for the MOF to commit to a long-term investment in the Caribbean citrus industry.[[53]](#endnote-53)

While initially wary of plans for the Empire production of COJ, by the summer of 1948, the Colonial Office was also fully committed to procuring the product from the British West Indies. In July, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, David Rees-Williams, spoke in Parliament about the advantages to the Caribbean colonies of a long-term WOJ contract, which the CPPC had already identified as essential for industries such as citrus tree-crops given the lag time between first planting and full bearing. Decrying the accusation that an orange industry based on small holdings would merely turn former slaves into “kulaks,” Rees-Williams maintained that bulk buying was to be at the heart of the development of industries built around agricultural products. It was through this mechanism, he promised, that “happiness and prosperity” could be brought to a “very beautiful and romantic part of the world,” stressing that there was “every cause for optimism” in regards the economic future of the Caribbean colonies.[[54]](#endnote-54) These confident statements about the financial potential of the West Indies, and WOJ’s role in strengthening the Caribbean economies, were also an explicit rejoinder to the arrival of the Empire Windrush. Only weeks earlier the ship had brought some five hundred hopeful Jamaican migrants to London and in the process raised alarm about the UK’s permissive immigration policy and its generous social services at a time when many felt the outlook for colonial economies was far from promising. WOJ thus promised not only to build healthy bodies at home, but healthy economies abroad. British overseas subjects, Rees-Williams implied, would thus also benefit from the Welfare State but not by journeying to the United Kingdom to become dependent upon it.[[55]](#endnote-55) Stimulating the Caribbean economy through the development of a COJ industry, Rees-Williams seemed to be arguing, was an effective way to keep everyone exactly where they belonged.

In this climate, some officials within the Colonial Office wanted the MOF to provide more than just a vague long-term contract for WOJ. Eugene Melville, its Assistant Under-Secretary, stressed the importance of understanding COJ production in the British West Indies from the “Colonial political angle” and thus the economic imperative of providing these long-term assurances, at appropriate prices, and with minimal caps on the upward limit the UK would purchase. “The Colonies are constantly urged to increase their production of things which the U.K. needs,” he wrote, and thus Colonial producers must be supported up to the limit of their production capacities. To encourage foreign competition for the Colonial products the British government has urged dependencies to grow, in order to keep the purchase price low, “breeds mistrust of H.M.G.’s sincerity and tends to weaken the production effort.” The Colonial producer will thus “feel himself under no obligation to produce commodities which the U.K. happens to want or to direct his trade into the channels which H.M.G. desires.” Melville argued that the UK thus needed to provide a ten-year contract that allowed the West Indian COJ producers to feel secure that the government would commit itself to purchasing, at a reasonable price, their maximum output of the product, even if the MOF sought other suppliers as well.[[56]](#endnote-56) Others also felt that the prices paid in the early years of COJ production should be “incentive” prices not “market” prices and thus higher than what competitors might be able to produce.[[57]](#endnote-57) But Melville’s colleague, H. F. Heinemann, contrary to Shipston, was concerned that even in the long run the British West Indies might prove to be a more expensive producer than other suppliers and paying more at the outset might send the wrong message. “Indeed we should not be altogether happy about establishing the industry,” he argued, “if there were not a prospect that it would become able to produce on competitive terms.”[[58]](#endnote-58) Some Colonial Office officials were from the outset thus eager to strike the correct balance between providing aid to the colonies through protecting their industries and putting them on the path to economic (and thus political) independence by making their products commercially viable. Despite the Colonial Office’s willingness to approve the scheme, its officials nevertheless remained concerned about the nature of a colonial economic development program that was instigated first and foremost to serve the needs of a UK Ministry.

The different branches of the British government, and indeed different officials within them, thus saw the provisions of, and theory behind, the long-term contract with the British West Indies for WOJ from their varying investments and standpoints. The MOF had pledged to supply this product that they had promoted as absolutely essential to health and had constructed as both the right of all expectant mothers and young children and as a benevolent gift from the government. In December of 1948, Santa Claus himself had shown up at the Wandsworth Food Office to distribute the WOJ, playing on these themes of benevolence and universality, a practice that other distribution points picked up on in subsequent years.[[59]](#endnote-59) Thus the MOF badly needed a steady and consistent supply of juice. But it also favoured diversification in the sourcing of COJ: it required more than one supply of juice for blending purposes; it hoped that “healthy competition” would keep prices low and thus assure the continuation of the WFS; and it feared, in the wake of the Palestinian problems, putting too many eggs in one basket again. Thus even while MOF officials attempted to sell a long-term contract for WOJ directly to the Treasury as good for economic development in the Caribbean colonies, they nevertheless continued to take as much juice as they could from Cyprus and pursued Nigeria and other East African colonies as potential sources.[[60]](#endnote-60) The Treasury was also of two minds. It was fearful of being forced to overpay a single supplier, favored competition for the production of COJ in order to keep prices low and thus supported a diversification of global procuers. However, it also sought to procure COJ from non-dollar sources in particular and subsequently to earn foreign exchange by the direct sale of sterling area products to other countries, which made a deal with the British West Indies extremely appealing. The Colonial Office had similar conflicts. On the one hand it wanted to encourage the Colonial production of a product in steady demand and provide a means for “Colonial production to be increased to the maximum.”[[61]](#endnote-61) On the other, it wanted the Colonies eventually to be able to stand on their own feet in relation to the world market in order that self-government might one day be possible and thus saw too much UK support for any given industry as counterproductive. The Commonwealth Relations Office, which was also brought into these negotiations, sought to promote trade amongst the Commonwealth nations and thus to encourage commercial investments by the UK in the economies of its former colonies. It thus represented the interests of the present Commonwealth territories, such as South Africa that had long been identified as a hopeful source of juice, not merely the Caribbean colonies. Thus before the West Indian producers could be approached regarding a long-term contract for WOJ, a variety of British government departments had first to agree on what they had to offer.

The terms of the long-term contract that was eventually negotiated thus represented a compromise between these various stakeholders and the West Indian citrus growers. The contract specified that the MOF would purchase 75% of the output of COJ from the British West Indies up to a maximum of 5000 tons per annum. Quotas were to be divided amongst Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Honduras, though the latter territory was not expected to be able to produce much juice for years to come. This was a joint contract: if any of these colonies could not meet its quota, the others would be allowed to supply COJ in its stead. The stipulation of a maximum order of 5000 tons, which represented about half of what the WFS predicted it would need in the years to come, left room “for other potential Commonwealth sources of supply which might desire to receive similar facilities.”[[62]](#endnote-62) Prices for COJ were to be negotiated each year, but were limited to increases or decreases of not more than 12.5% from the previous year’s prices. The contract thus assured the MOF a steady supply of WOJ without committing them to a single source; it pacified the Treasury, which would no longer have to pay out scarce dollars for a product that its officials did not see as essential; it provided the West Indian growers with ten years of assurance that their product would find a market; and it jump-started a new industry in colonies that would one day, both the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office hoped, become economically independent of the United Kingdom while still choosing to remain within the Commonwealth.

The plan to procure COJ from colonial territories had been initiated by the demands of the WFS; indeed the Colonial Office explicitly thanked the MOF for “fixing it up,” taking none of the credit itself.[[63]](#endnote-63) But the plan was nevertheless sold and publicized as a win-win-win-win situation: it benefitted the domestic beneficiaries of cheap WOJ and the agency that procured this specialized product for them, the Colonial territories who were now assured a market for this export commodity, the nation as a whole whose financial security was shored up by the reduction of dollar spending, and other colonial and Commonwealth nations that might also seek to supply WOJ. The ten-year contract was thus heavily promoted as good for all parties. In October of 1948, the Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a telegram to the relevant West Indian colonies alerting them to the ten-year contract for COJ and stressing its mutual benefits. It stated that, “supplies from the Colonies of concentrated orange juice of which substantial purchases are at present made in the United States for the U.K. Welfare service will be of great benefit to the U.K. In providing a steady outlet for a high quality and specialized product, the proposed arrangement would clearly also benefit the producing Colonies.”[[64]](#endnote-64) According to the MOF, the British West Indies were pleased with the outcome of the negotiations and accepted the ten-year contract “as a very important piece of Colonial development” that “will materially assist in solving many of the problems which exist in the territories today.”[[65]](#endnote-65) In announcing the ten-year contract to the House of Commons in November of 1948, John Strachey, the Minister of Food, maintained that he hoped the contract would bring us an increasing supply of COJ and thus enable continued distribution under the WFS while as the same time reducing “our dollar expenditure.”[[66]](#endnote-66) It was thus hard not to conclude that the ten-year contract for WOJ was extremely beneficial for all parties concerned. In retrospect, however, this moment proved to be the high point of a relationship between the WFS and West Indian juice producers that was anything but unproblematic.

Despite this initial enthusiasm, COJ from the British West Indies was slow to start flowing down throats of British children. It took another nineteenth months before the contract that had been agreed to could be signed as the Jamaican citrus growers first had to establish themselves as an approved association under the Agricultural Marketing Law of Jamaica before jointly committing to the contract, for it was this organization that would sell its product directly to the Ministry of Food. It was not until April 1950 then that the contract was finally signed.[[67]](#endnote-67) In this period, as well as tapping the limited supply that began to trickle in from the Caribbean, the UK sourced juice from Palestine, South Africa, Brazil, and Spain. It was also forced to buy some juice from the USA, only a portion of which came subsidized, for fear of running short and thus being accused of prioritizing the “saving of dollars” over the “wellbeing of mothers and children.”[[68]](#endnote-68) At the end of September 1950, the US ceased its subsidy on the COJ exported to the UK for the WFS. Bad winters in Spain and Israel had led to decreased juice production, plans to obtain some juice from Southern Rhodesia seem not to have materialized, Jamaica had experienced several years of poor crops, Trinidad did not seem to be able to provide juice for years to come, and British Honduras was only just beginning to convert much of its grapefruit crop into oranges for juicing.[[69]](#endnote-69) But in October, the Standing Committee on Medical and Nutritional Problems, while acknowledging that the science on Vitamin C was inconsistent, recommended the continuation of WOJ, which was still the cheapest source of Vitamin C available.[[70]](#endnote-70) The MOF was obliged to continue to supply it despite the fact that its sources were limited and more expensive than it had anticipated.

When assessing the juice that could be available during the 1950/1 season, the British government faced the harsh reality that again pickings were slim. The minimum number of tons of COJ that could be obtained from non-dollar sources was 3100. This would have to come from Brazil, Spain, Israel, and Jamaica, though a slim possibility existed of obtaining a small amount of juice from Sicily and South Africa. The following year, it was hoped, small amounts could also be obtained from British Honduras and Trinidad. But in the meantime more than the 600 tons of juice that the Treasury had already authorized to be purchased from the USA might be needed.[[71]](#endnote-71) When the Treasury suggested that it would not authorize further dollar purchases of COJ tensions emerged between the well-being of “mothers and children” and economic considerations, a situation the MOF had been dreading and attempting to avoid for years. If non-dollar sources could not be found by March 1951 then the supply of WOJ would be insufficient and have to be severely curtailed either by halving the amounts given to each beneficiary or by halving those entitled to the product.[[72]](#endnote-72) But the full requirement of WOJ had already been enshrined as available to all and its consumption as part of the ritual of becoming a British child citizen. When Princess Anne was born in August 1950, after her birth had been registered, and she had been supplied with a ration book and a national identity card, the Westminster Food Office publicly bestowed on the Duke of Edinburgh Anne’s entitlement of WOJ.[[73]](#endnote-73) To curtail the scheme now would prove an embarrassment to the Labour government that had just slipped past the post in the February 1950 election and was eager to uphold its campaign promises. According to their manifesto, “Let Us Win Through Together,” these included not only the perpetuation of cheap and free food supplements but also the amelioration of colonial economic conditions through “long-term contracts and bulk purchase agreements” in order to properly prepare them for democratic self-government.[[74]](#endnote-74) That these two promises were linked through the procurement of WOJ from the British West Indies was likely lost on most Labour voters as the product was never advertised to beneficiaries as an empire good whose consumption would benefit colonial economies and thus Britain itself.[[75]](#endnote-75) But it was front and foremost for MOF and Colonial Office officials who continued to scramble to find non-dollar sources of supply despite having successfully concluded a long-term contract with Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Honduras.

In 1950, the possibility of providing a contract to Nigeria thus re-emerged, but this time the initiative came from the Colonial Office itself. Nigeria’s cocoa crops had been badly hit by swollen shoot disease and the Colonial Office argued that a “promising new industry” was required so that “new wealth” could be created, nutritional standards raised, and the “social and political ambitions of the people” realized.[[76]](#endnote-76) In 1948, Sir Stafford Cripps, as Chancellor of the Exchequeur, had released a “statement of principles” in relation to long-term contracts for Colonial products. In it, he declared that it was the government’s policy to “push ahead will all possible speed with the economic and political advancement of the Colonial Empire.” The importance of a rapid increase in “colonial productivity,” he maintained, had been accentuated by “world shortages of many of the raw materials and foodstuffs which the Colonies produce and by the special balance of payment difficulties in the sterling area of which the colonies form part.” Long-term contracts, extending up to ten years, especially in the case of tree crops, were thus to be offered as an incentive. These contracts, he hoped, would be “mutually beneficial to His Majesty’s Government, Colonial producers and the Commonwealth as a whole.”[[77]](#endnote-77) Cripps’ general principles--while applying to contracts for other bulk purchase crops such as vegetable oils, cocoa, coffee, sugar, bananas, rubber, groundnuts and cotton[[78]](#endnote-78)--read as if taken whole cloth from the long-term contract for COJ provided to the British West Indies. This contract thus served as a model for others, such as Nigeria, seeking to get in on the WOJ game at a time when the MOF was desperately in need of sterling supplies.

The Nigerian government thus moved to ask J.W. Seymour of S & S Services to provide an analysis of their citrus industry given that his firm had smoothed the way for the MOF’s long-term contract with Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Honduras. Seymour returned from Nigeria in August of 1950 buoyant about their potential to produce as much COJ as Jamaica, which although it had not supplied much to date was still envisioned as a good bet for future supplies. His report mobilized the rhetoric of tropical abundance, declaring that never had he “seen untended citrus grow so prolifically anywhere else in the world” and suggested to the government of Nigeria that they should approach the Colonial Office to ask the MOF for a long-term WOJ contract along the lines of the one that had been concluded for the British West Indies.[[79]](#endnote-79) But to promise to take a large amount of COJ from Nigeria in order to incentivize their production raised the question about whether all future supplies from the Caribbean could then be absorbed by the WFS and thus whether those contracts would need to be renegotiated. As the Colonial Office noted, the Welfare Foods Procurement Department was little concerned about the economic future of Nigeria. It faced the responsibility of meeting the needs of the WFS without acquiring too much of a perishable stock.[[80]](#endnote-80) The immediate need for more COJ in the short term was of considerable concern, but a contract with Nigeria was a long-term venture and the MOF remained hopeful about obtaining large supplies of COJ from the West Indies. The Colonial Office thus suggested that since Trinidad would likely not be able to provide its COJ for some time, Nigerian supplies could be substituted, despite the fact that the contract allowed Jamaica and British Honduras to fulfill this shortage.[[81]](#endnote-81)

Initially, Alec Warren, who as Director of the Canned Fish, Fruit & Vegetable Division was in charge of WOJ procurement, had no objection to purchasing supplies from Nigeria or providing them with a ten-year contract for up to 1000 tons of juice per year. He categorically refused, however, to renegotiate the West Indian contracts given that neither these suppliers nor Nigeria would be likely to supply as much COJ as the UK government were contracted to take from them and for fear of raising concerns in the Caribbean.[[82]](#endnote-82) The Caribbean colonies, Warren claimed, had been “suspicious of our motives and intentions” when we sought the ten-year contract with them, suggesting that the win-win-win-win had not in the end been so easily negotiated and that the West Indian colonies had not necessarily bought into the rhetoric of colonial development. He was loathe to reopen the issue now that another colony might be in a position to compete for the provision of a much needed commodity.[[83]](#endnote-83) Although the Colonial Office’s T.B. Williamson admitted that it was in fact contrary to its own policy to try to get the MOF to buy things that they didn’t really want and thought they should let the matter drop, negotiations continued into the following year with an attempt made to get Jamaica and British Honduras to help the economic development of a “fellow Colony” by forgoing their claim to Trinidad’s contract shortfall.[[84]](#endnote-84) While the MOF had no objection to either British Honduras or Jamaica relinquishing its claim in favour of Nigeria, given that they were solely concerned with getting the juice in the short term and cared little where it came from, neither Jamaica nor British Honduras stepped up to give a “helping hand to a sister Colony in another part of the world,” fearing future competition.[[85]](#endnote-85)

In 1951, John Dugdale, Minister of State for the Colonies, thus re-approached the MOF for a small contract for Nigeria not tied to Trinidad’s deficit. He argued that this was a “valuable piece of Colonial Development,” clearly backtracking on any concerns the Colonial Office had had about using a UK domestic benefit to prop up a colonial industry. But Maurice Webb, the Minister of Food, stood firm, rejecting Dugdale’s proposal and undercutting Warren’s previous advice.[[86]](#endnote-86) He feared overcommitting the MOF at a time when the future of the WFS was uncertain given the slim Labour majority, the inevitability of another election, and the Conservative Party’s attack on what it conceived of as indiscriminate social services provided by the “Socialist” Welfare State, of which the WFS was a prime example.[[87]](#endnote-87) He may also have been wary of initiating yet another failed colonial development scheme. In 1950, the Gambian Poultry Farm, initiated to supply the British market with dressed chicken and eggs, had collapsed; and early in 1951, Webb had finally pulled the plug on the equally disastrous Tanganyika groundnut scheme that had been launched to provide more cooking fats for the “harassed housewives of Britain.”[[88]](#endnote-88) Both of these initiatives, like WOJ, had been developed not primarily in the interests of colonial subjects but rather to meet Britain’s needs.[[89]](#endnote-89) Although the Central Office of Information collected photographs of a COJ factory in Nigeria in operation in 1950, a WOJ industry didn’t in fact materialize, likely because no long-term contract could be guaranteed.[[90]](#endnote-90) Indeed, the MOF never entered into another long-term contract for WOJ, not even with Israel, which continued to supply it with large quantities of COJ.[[91]](#endnote-91)

**The Conservative Party and Cuts to the Welfare State**

Webb was right to be wary of further contractual obligations. Although some historians have argued that between 1951 and 1964, the Conservatives did little to undo the structure of the Welfare State and instead maintained the status quo,[[92]](#endnote-92) others have emphasized the Conservative Party’s continued commitment to targeted social services but not to the egalitarian distribution so central to the Labour Party’s vision.[[93]](#endnote-93) While the Conservatives did not jettison the WFS, this period saw significant changes to it in terms of both the number of entitled beneficiaries and the cost of the products to the consumer. The Conservative win in the 1951 election in fact initiated a slow and steady decline of government support for both the WFS and for the long-term contract with West Indian suppliers. This was despite the fact that this marked the very beginning of the period of agreement with the West Indian growers, and that some Conservative MPs, such as the new Minister of Education, Florence Horsbrugh, had campaigned on the basis of having brought orange juice and cod liver oil to British children during the war.[[94]](#endnote-94)

In 1951, the MOF and MOH were in fact already in discussions about reducing the provision of WOJ for children over two years old as the promised West Indian supplies were limited and other cheap sources of vitamin C had not been found.[[95]](#endnote-95) The hurricane season in the Caribbean that year had led to limited production: the UK government received no Caribbean juice in 1951 and instead had been required to furnish replanting grants.[[96]](#endnote-96) Prospects for a sustainable industry in Trinidad looked doubtful and it eventually withdrew from the contract, having provided no juice and leaving Jamaica and British Honduras to fulfill its obligations. But British Honduras could provide only 3 tons of COJ to the UK in 1952.[[97]](#endnote-97) The established industry in the USA with plentiful and thus cheap juice made it difficult for the upstart British West Indies to compete with either California or Florida producers in sales outside the UK. Prices for West Indian COJ were also consistently higher than those obtained by the MOF for Spanish, Israeli, and American juice, even once the latter’s subsidies under Mutual Aid had been removed.[[98]](#endnote-98) Whether the British Government should be obliged to pay more for West Indian juice in order to stabilize their economy became a highly contentious issue that the ten-year contract had not actually resolved and meant that hostility to West Indian COJ was evident almost as soon as it became available. By the early 1950s then the enthusiasm for Caribbean COJ had faded as had the sense that the WFS continued to be of much value to the general population.

But to alter the beneficiaries of WOJ required scientific evidence that it was no longer necessary for this age group or else the government would risk public censure. The scientific literature on nutritionally appropriate vitamin C intake for children was limited and inconsistent for as Magnus Pyke, who had worked under Drummond in the MOF during the war, pointed out in retrospect, recommended dietary allowances “occupy a curious and interesting position midway between science and politics.”[[99]](#endnote-99) The League of Nations Technical Commission had recommended 5-15 mgs per day in 1938. In 1941, the American National Research Council had recommended between 30 and 50 mgs, depending on age. Eight years later the British Medical Association proposed that only 10-15 mgs were necessary. But no British studies had been undertaken to determine how much vitamin C was needed to ward off scurvy in young children.[[100]](#endnote-100) Since it was “impractical” to undertake such a study, as it would mean depriving young children of vitamin C, the government turned to other kinds of evidence.[[101]](#endnote-101) In 1951, the Standing Committee on Nutrition requested that a social survey of the national diet be undertaken with particular attention to vitamin C intakes of children for the explicit use of the MOF and MOH in further discussions on the future of WOJ.[[102]](#endnote-102) A randomized sample of 461 mothers were recruited to keep a record of the food and beverages, carefully weighed and measured, consumed by their young children for one week. The survey found that the average daily intake of vitamin C ranged from 14mg for children under a year up to 28 mgs for children aged 4-5 years old. On average only an additional 5mg per day was obtained from WOJ and 2mg from other vitamin preparations.[[103]](#endnote-103) Without these supplements factored in, the diets of young children exceeded both the League of Nations’ and the British Medical Association’s recommended intakes, though they did not come close to meeting the standards of the National Research Council.

In 1953, E.R. Bransby, a MOH official, moved to publish a scientific paper that he had written with J.E. Fothergill of the Social Survey based on these findings. This paper, which used the BMA recommendations as definitive, could be utilized as the most up-to-date scientific support, suggested Bransby, should the government move to withdraw WOJ from children over two.[[104]](#endnote-104) H.E. Magee, the Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health approved this course of action, citing the need for some reason to be given once the benefit was withdrawn. He initially suggested that the paper be published before any announcement was made regarding a reduction in WOJ benefits and without any reference to why the survey was conducted in the first place. “Simple reference to the paper,” he argued, “would suffice to answer questions and much official time would thereby be saved.”[[105]](#endnote-105) Bransby suggested that should it be decided to withdraw WOJ from children over two, then the paper would appear somewhere prestigious such as the *Lancet* or the *British Medical Journal*, implying that this would provide further confirmation from the scientific elite that WOJ was no longer necessary for older toddlers. Should that decision not be taken, the article could still be sent to the *British Journal of Nutrition*.[[106]](#endnote-106) This planting of scientific evidence for a decision not yet taken began to feel problematic to a variety of officials and Magee backpedalled on the decision to publish in advance of any official announcement.[[107]](#endnote-107) But within a week a report on the survey had been leaked to the press, possibly by the Treasury who sought to reduce the cost of WOJ by a cut in beneficiaries but wished first to “test public opinion.”[[108]](#endnote-108) An article in the *Daily Express* disclosed that the survey had found that WOJ brought little measurable benefit to children over two and thus that the MOF had wasted millions of pounds by supplying it for children up to five years old, a policy that had benefitted only “American orange growers.” Armed with this new information, argued the *Daily Express*, the Chancellor of the Exchequer will surely wish to economize by ending the supply of juice to children over two. “But such a move,” it concluded, “might be misconstrued as a Tory attack on the Welfare State,” thus reinforcing the delicate domestic politics of WOJ.[[109]](#endnote-109)

The MOF was “extremely embarrassed” by the newspaper article and warned the MOH to be wary of publishing Bransby and Fothergill’s study before the Standing Committee on Medical and Nutritional Problems had itself reached a decision on the future of WOJ.[[110]](#endnote-110) Norman C. Wright, the Chief Scientific Advisor to the Ministry of Food who had replaced Drummond after the latter’s brutal murder, objected to Bransby and Fothergill’s findings, citing major scientific differences of opinion as to the vitamin C requirements of children and questioning the conclusions drawn from the survey itself, which he suggested were far from transparent.[[111]](#endnote-111) But other MOF officials were less committed to the product. Alec Warren, who directed the division in charge of WOJ procurement, had apparently made an annual comment that their dealings in COJ were “an unbusinesslike affair” as it meant “buying something which is not very popular at a high price and selling it at a loss.” He recommended refraining from advertising and pushing sales and “adopting a laissez-faire attitude” to the scheme if it could not “for political reasons” be entirely abolished.[[112]](#endnote-112) Given that there was little clarity as to the nutritional benefits of WOJ, and much to be lost in abandoning or curtailing its provision even if it was uneconomic, the MOF wavered as to the proper direction it should take regarding who should be the beneficiaries of the WFS.[[113]](#endnote-113)

The Minister of Food, Gwilym Lloyd-George, was himself “uneasy” over the proposition and refused to withdraw the provision until he had convinced himself “that we have a political defence for any action we take which is not only well based scientifically but which can be made really convincing to the public.” WOJ was not merely providing the bare minimum of vitamin C, but was, he argued, an “over-insurance,” which we cannot disavow now based on “inferential” supporting evidence that is open to “technical doubt and certainly not convincing to the layman.” If we withdraw subsidized WOJ, he reasoned, comparable vitamin C is obtainable at a cost of four to seven times as much. This is “awkward in the present atmosphere of public sensitiveness to price levels,” particularly food prices, which were rising each year during the first half of the 1950s.[[114]](#endnote-114) In the end, the MOF dragged its feet and ultimately did not accept the MOH’s recommendation to terminate the benefits of children over two.[[115]](#endnote-115) This prompted the *Daily Express*, citing the Bransby and Fothergill study which had appeared in 1954 in the *BJN* as had been previously arranged, to continue to complain that “the cut-price orange juice is doing little more than provide [sic] an enjoyable drink at the taxpayers’ expense.”[[116]](#endnote-116) This apparent lack of unity within and between the Ministries of Food and Health on the issue of WOJ suggested that it had received only a temporary reprieve, its future was far from assured, and its provision a highly politicized issue, which was about to get even more contentious.

When rationing ended in July 1954, the distribution of Welfare Foods, but not the procurement or quality control, was transferred from the now defunct food offices to Local Authorities. The WFS replaced ration books with books of tokens to which beneficiaries continued to affix postage stamps that served as payment for the products. At the same time, the government introduced a residency test for Welfare Foods that required those newly arrived in the United Kingdom to wait 28 days before receiving their benefits. This was primarily intended to avoid giving a year’s supply of tokens to families from Ireland who came over for seasonal, temporary harvest work and it was feared might illegally dispose of the tokens before their return.[[117]](#endnote-117) These workers were not denied Welfare Foods, but rather given small numbers of tokens at a time, though it was rare for pregnant women and small children to be amongst these seasonal workers.[[118]](#endnote-118) Welfare Foods were also given to families of the armed forces regardless of any absence from the UK and to any child born in Britain even if its parents were not permanent residents. Those that didn’t qualify under any of these provisions but whose spouse or parent had been resident in the UK for 26 of the previous 52 weeks were also eligible as were citizens of countries who had reciprocal agreements with the UK.[[119]](#endnote-119) The WFS residence test was thus much easier to satisfy than the Family Allowance residence test that required British subjects and citizens of Ireland to be resident for 52 weeks out of the previous two years, and foreigners 156 weeks out of the last four years, before receiving benefits.[[120]](#endnote-120)

The residence test, which was fairly generous, had limited impact on the takeup of WOJ. But the new distribution system caused a further decline in public consumption. In fact, 1954 witnessed the worst uptake of COJ to date, hovering around 28%.[[121]](#endnote-121) In the 1940s and early 50s there were plenty of complaints about the inaccessibility and inconvenience of securing supplies of WOJ from welfare clinics and food offices.[[122]](#endnote-122) After 1954, these problems intensified as distribution centres in many places were fewer in number, less well-staffed, open at less convenient times, and sometimes much harder to reach.[[123]](#endnote-123) But government officials could never quite ascertain why takeup was quite so low. It was difficult for them to discern whether “a mother is refusing to take up her entitlement because of laziness or prejudice, or because she finds that the child genuinely does better without these additions to its diet.”[[124]](#endnote-124) When the Central Office of Information undertook a survey on the takeup of Welfare Foods in 1955 it found in fact that there was little evidence that a change in methods of distribution had negatively effected the takeup, especially given that those who did not take Welfare Foods were not living further from the distribution points than those that did take them.[[125]](#endnote-125) A survey of pediatricians found that they believed that it was “ignorance and apathy” that were the root causes of low consumption of vitamin foods, but cited a range of other concerns as well. These ranged from resistance to government products versus those with commercial “prestige,” inconvenient distribution and queues, and the belief that orange juice led to loose stools and other digestive problems.[[126]](#endnote-126) Thus even after a dozen years of providing WOJ, government officials could still not account for why this product was not more popular amongst mothers and small children.

**Colonial Policy, Economic Development, and West Indian Juice**

Initially, the West Indian suppliers seemed unperturbed by the steady decline in the consumption of WOJ after the end of rationing. In May of 1954, Alexander Bustamante, Chief Minister of Jamaica, led a deputation to London to discuss concerns about the future of the citrus and banana industries in the light of a potential British liberalization of the juice and fruit trade, which was part of a wider policy of relaxing import restrictions even when this would harm colonial exporters.[[127]](#endnote-127) But at the time the Jamaican COJ industry seemed healthy. Indeed in June, the MOF held off-the-record talks with S & S Services about their next purchase from Jamaica, a discussion that suggested the Jamaicans were not in fact reliant on the WFS at all.[[128]](#endnote-128) The previous two seasons the MOF had bought only 534 and then 18 tons respectively from this source, minute amounts given their needs and the terms of the ten-year contract.[[129]](#endnote-129) Despite the fact that the MOF had been paying higher prices to Jamaica than to their other suppliers, the S & S representatives maintained that the Jamaican growers could currently get even better prices on the open market for their orange juice and might need to be released from their obligation to provide 75% of the juice available from their fruit, which in the following season would amount to about 750 tons. They felt that this was not disadvantageous to the MOF as it could turn to Israeli juice and negotiate an even more competitive price for a larger quantity of COJ than the WFS had been accustomed to purchasing from this source.[[130]](#endnote-130) The newly amalgamated Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) that had emerged in the wake of the end of rationing thus agreed to buy only a “token” amount (150 tons) of juice at the price of 30s per gallon from Jamaica during the 1954/544 season. British Honduras opted not to provide any juice at all from that crop because of shipping and storage difficulties.[[131]](#endnote-131)

But what seemed like a mutually advantageous arrangement during the summer of 1954 no longer looked quite so beneficial to West Indians by the Fall. In October, the Regional Economic Committee that represented all of the West Indian governments sent a delegation to London specifically to discuss citrus as plans to issue an Open General Licence for non-dollar non-sterling fruit juices was under consideration. At this meeting, Sir Robert Kirkwood, who owned a sugar estate, led the short-lived Farmer’s Federation that represented the interests of both large plantations owners and small farmers, and was now head of the Jamaican Citrus Growers Association (JCGA), advocated for protections for the industry. While the Jamaicans had found another outlet for their product, and a few months earlier announced that they did not need or intend to sell to the WFS, he nevertheless emphasized that WOJ was in fact their main product. Purchasers of liquid COJ were few and far between, Kirkwood reminded the MAFF, and the Jamaican producers were not in a position to switch to the production of frozen COJ without capital expenditure on equipment and without assurances that there would indeed be a market for this brand-new product.[[132]](#endnote-132) Nor were the single-strength juices nearly as profitable.[[133]](#endnote-133) Although in the summer it had seemed advantageous to seek the best price on the open market for West Indian orange juice, and in effect buy into the benefits of free trade, it now seemed more beneficial to the JCGA to shore up the ties that bound the MAFF and West Indian citrus juice producers together. For what Kirkwood rightly feared was that in this climate of increasing trade liberalization the British government could congratulate itself on starting a now commercially viable industry and thus in good faith walk away from its long-term contractual obligations.

To pacify the West Indian citrus growers who insisted that trade liberalization would negatively impact their industry, and to obtain a better understanding of the outlook for Caribbean citrus, the Secretary of State for the Colonies initiated a fact-finding mission into the economic viability of the industry at the end of 1954.[[134]](#endnote-134) While awaiting the findings the Colonial Office tried to deflate what they feared were mounting tensions at a delicate political moment with the installation of a new Chief Minister in Jamaica, the social-democrat Norman Manley, and with negotiations over Federation ongoing and tense. The Colonial Office thus encouraged the Welfare Foods Procurement Division to purchase more orange juice concentrate from the West Indies, which was now retreating from its earlier assertion that it would prefer to sell its juice elsewhere on the open market. There was no “commercial” justification for this purchase argued the WFPD, clearly irritated by this request as they had already obtained supplies elsewhere. Instead, they claimed, the issue was “entirely political.” The West Indian producers will play, argued one official writing two days after Jamaica’s election, “whatever card suits them best at any particular time.” While he insisted that the purchase request had no commercial merit, he conceded that given the “political climate” it would be hard to resist.[[135]](#endnote-135) Indeed within two days the MAFF had reluctantly agreed to the Colonial Office’s request to purchase an additional 100 tons of COJ from the British West Indies but put the onus on the Colonial Office to convince the Treasury to sanction a transaction that was so patently uneconomic.[[136]](#endnote-136)

By the spring of 1955 the fact-finding mission was complete. It concluded that apart from a very small trade in fresh oranges to New Zealand, all Jamaican oranges were exported in the form of juice as they were not suitable for the whole fruit trade. Most of these juicing oranges were grown by small farmers, each of whom produced less than 50 boxes per year. Trinidad’s citrus industry, it concluded, was minute and focused largely on grapefruit. In the case of British Honduras whose economy was based largely on forestry, citrus was found to be its only important agricultural export though the report stressed that its grapefruit crop was much larger than its orange production.[[137]](#endnote-137) An assessment of the risks to the industry based on the fact-finding mission noted that orange juice prices had dropped since the introduction of the Open General Licence for non-dollar fruit juices, which had allowed these goods to be imported into the UK more easily after 1954, and that only British Honduras could currently obtain a reasonable return for the production of COJ at present market prices. It projected that the future for Jamaican COJ was particularly bleak: its welfare concentrate was uneconomical and unprofitable and “its future prospects against U.S. competition” are “very poor.” In order to obtain a fair return on their product, the report concluded that the British government would need to pay Jamaican producers 37s/6d and continue to pay them based on their production costs rather than on the world market commercial price, which was closer to 31s.[[138]](#endnote-138) The production costs were higher in the West Indies, it reasoned, because of the high cost of living when compared with “the native populations of many other tropical countries.”[[139]](#endnote-139)

The fact-finding mission strayed from providing just the facts. The report concluded that the Caribbean growers could rightly argue that Her Majesty’s Government “have a moral obligation to pay the West Indies an economic price for the juice which it is producing in response to a United Kingdom request and to continue the contract beyond 1960 until at least the capital cost of establishing groves has been recovered. The decision on this point will materially affect the profitability of the whole West Indian citrus industry.”[[140]](#endnote-140) It claimed that, unlike in other colonial industries with bulk purchase agreements, the orange trees in Jamaica and British Honduras had been planted almost entirely for the purpose of producing WOJ and without the security of that contract, the planting, which had increased by 12,000 acres by the end of 1954, would not have developed “to anything like the extent that it has,” for the scale of the industry, especially given that the shipping services were irregular and inadequate, was patently uneconomic.[[141]](#endnote-141) The fact-finding mission thus undercut substantially any optimism the JCGA had expressed the previous year regarding the competitive price they obtained for their juice and returned to a narrative that clearly underscored that the West Indian industry was not yet competitive and would thus require continued support through the period of the long-term contract and beyond. The fact-finding mission thus presented the British West Indies as dependent colonies whose citrus industry had been developed entirely for the purposes of the WFS. That they were unable to compete in the commercial marketplace was due to the fact that their industry was based around this specialized product, the report concluded, and thus the orange growers would need to be supported by the UK indefinitely. The alternative, the report predicted, was the eventual collapse of the industry, a situation that would have significant political ramifications.

In May of 1955, after the results of the fact-finding mission had been disseminated to the relevant departments, F. Hollins, Under-Secretary of the MAFF, contacted W.B.L. Monson at the Colonial Office to clarify that the West Indian citrus industry was “not really an industry at all” given that 97% of the produce was grown by very small producers in a “haphazard” way.[[142]](#endnote-142) Supporting the growers themselves, he argued, would thus be “money down the drain” as unlike in the estate-based sugar industry there was no large-scale integrated system of production that could be made more efficient in part because of outdated land tenure systems and “uncontrolled” peasant ownership.[[143]](#endnote-143) The Colonial Office seemed to be implying, Hollins maintained, that “H.M.G. must be regarded as under an obligation to support the citrus industry even if the conclusion to be drawn from the report of the Mission is that it is incurably uneconomic.” We should not be forced to pay an “uncompetitive price” for our WOJ, he countered. The knowledge that the contract will end, and that the demand for WOJ is diminishing, should stimulate “the more efficient elements of the industry” to develop new outlets for products likely “to hold their own in a competitive world.” Thus if money is to be expended on the West Indian citrus industry, Hollins reasoned, it should no longer be put into plantings but rather into research regarding the transportation of agricultural products to “different overseas markets.”[[144]](#endnote-144) Hollins seemed to be implying that hard work and initiative would buoy up the citrus producers willing to put the effort into making themselves competitive and that the others should be left to reap what they had sown. The WFS, Hollins suggested, subsidized the WOJ provided to its British beneficiaries, but it had no responsibility to subsidize the West Indian producers of the product despite the fact that they too were British subjects.

The argument that the MAFF was building against more investment in the Caribbean citrus industry in the Spring of 1955 was undermined by a surprising 22% increase in uptake of WOJ during the unexpectedly warm and dry July and August that followed.[[145]](#endnote-145) The new crop of juice from Israel, Spain and the USA would not be available before February 1956 and thus the WFS was forced to turn again to Jamaica. This proved embarrassing having represented recent purchases as a political concession not in the nation’s best economic interests. In this climate, the Jamaicans thus moved to demand a higher price than the MAFF usually paid: 33s/9d per gallon as opposed to 30s. This was still within the 12.5% mark up allowed each year by the long-term contract, and according to S & S Services well below the current market price of 38s. But the MAFF balked at what they considered an inflated price, arguing that it placed large and reliable orders in return for low prices and were even prepared to buy early season juice, which “although admirably suited to the purpose for which it is required, is less attractive to some other buyers.”[[146]](#endnote-146) Furthermore, the MAFF asserted, Welfare Foods were heavily subsidized and since they “were bought with the taxpayers’ money” it was critical “that they were bought as cheaply as possible consistent with the requisite standard of quality.”[[147]](#endnote-147) But Kirkwood pressed the Ministry to reconsider their purchase price and by implication the interests of not merely taxpayers but other British subjects, namely the West Indian citrus growers. He insisted that the price of WOJ “ought not to be negotiated on commercial considerations alone.” Kirkwood claimed that the Ministry ought to buy at a rate that “reasonable” payments could be made to growers to help them to bring “production to a maximum efficiency at the earliest possible date,” for failure to do so, he asserted, “could wreck all that had so far been achieved by this section of the citrus industry.”[[148]](#endnote-148) The prices that the Ministry paid for juice, he argued, should reflect the British government’s historical investment in the industry, and its future plans for the economic viability of an independent West Indies, not merely its current needs.

Kirkwood found little support for this position even from the Colonial Office, which felt that it was not in the West Indies’ best interests to maintain artificially high prices and that its citrus industry needed to be made more competitive in relation to the world market. The UK was also concerned about its commitment to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and felt considerable pressure from the Americans to encourage freer global trade rather than protecting its own and its colonial industries hence the Open General Licence issued in 1954. In order to assuage the citrus industry, and others that were equally hanging in the balance, the UK nevertheless conceded to seek the amendment of GATT to include a Colonial Waiver that permitted the UK to help its colonial industries on the same terms as their domestic industries.[[149]](#endnote-149) The Colonial Office continued to stress, however, that although the British government was willing to help to “create the conditions in which colonial industries can flourish” it could not support unfair methods of competition. It insisted that it was now up to the industry itself to make itself competitive in a global citrus market without the assistance of the British government. Any means of subsidizing the orange juice industry in the West Indies would no longer be reflected in the price of the WOJ procured by the MAFF as this agency was obliged to seek the cheapest price it could negotiate. All future aid must instead be sought from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund that since 1940 had provided grants to ameliorate the standard of living in colonial territories and had been introduced in part as a response to agricultural depression and social unrest in the West Indies.[[150]](#endnote-150) The British government thus insisted that the West Indies free itself from dependency on the United Kingdom market, casting the citrus growers, rather than the consumers of their juice, as welfare recipients.

The recent surge in uptake of WOJ, however, placed the WFS in a precarious position in these price negotiations given that they knew it would be hard to get by without additional West Indian juice. The WFS thus proposed buying a token amount of juice, 200 tons, at the higher price to tide them over. Kirkwood, however, demanded that the MAFF procure 750 tons, 75% of their yield, which was in accord with the long-term contract that required the UK to purchase three-quarters of the British West Indies’ production up to a maximum of 5000 tons. If the UK would not fulfill its side of the bargain, Kirkwood argued, then his organization was not prepared to do business at all, for he well understood the WFS current requirement for more COJ and the limited availability of other supplies at this time of the year.[[151]](#endnote-151) But he was not merely driving a hard financial bargain. He was also re-focusing the government’s attention on the terms of the ten-year contract. For despite having declined to provide juice during the 1954/55 season, Kirkwood now feared the cancellation of the contract, and the repercussions this would have on the Caribbean citrus industry. He thus announced that it was Jamaica’s intention to supply juice up to the maximum amount stated in the contract for the 1955/56 season, hence his insistence on the 750 tons of juice, even though this meant accepting a price lower (33s/9d) than its commercial value (38s). This was a short-term sacrifice, Kirkwood implied, that placed greater value on Jamaica’s long-term relationship with the UK government in relation to the citrus industry. Reminding the government of the origins of the contract, he rightly asserted that the British West Indies’ provision of WOJ had never been merely a commercial transaction. The development of an industry in COJ had been born in the context of the “the economic and agricultural advancement of the Colonial Empire” and the diversification of colonial industries on the one hand, and “the special balance of payment difficulties in the sterling area” in the wake of WWII on the other, Kirkwood claimed, spitting its own 1948 rhetoric back at Her Majesty’s Government. From an “entirely non-political view,” Kirkwood asserted, the “threat of purchase of dollar concentrate in order to drive down prices would be hardly consistent with the original intention of the Contract,” he reasoned, “which was to build up a Colonial industry which would gradually replace dollar Concentrate with Sterling Concentrate.” This was not merely an economic issue, he reasoned. If the contracts were abrogated this would make it impossible to establish the industry on a sound economic basis, which he declared had repercussions that took the entire “matter into the political field.” The JCGA thus dissents from the view, which was clearly already in wide circulation, that it would be in any way mutually beneficial prematurely to terminate the contracts set to expire in 1960, he concluded.[[152]](#endnote-152) For the JCGA then, these discussions were no longer about price; they were about the contract itself and the necessity of reestablishing the British government’s enduring obligations to the West Indian orange growers and juice manufacturers.

Given the terms of the contract, the MAFF was obliged to commit to the purchase of all 750 tons of West Indian juice, and because their need for stocks was now urgent they had little room to negotiate price especially given that 33s/9d per gallon was permissible by the 12.5% markup stipulated in the contract. Although on the one hand this purchase shored up British stocks and thus placed them in a comfortable position vis-a-vis future price negotiations,[[153]](#endnote-153) MAFF officials also feared that buying the West Indian juice at what they still considered an inflated price jeopardized future purchases. Argued one MAFF official: “care will have to be taken to avoid consequential embarrassment in future price negotiations.”[[154]](#endnote-154) The Ministry thus attempted to cast this deal as a special case, a subvention for the West Indians, so as not to be held hostage by other suppliers for higher prices in general during the upcoming seasons. If Israel or Spain kicks up a fuss next year, we would have to “let it be known that we might buy all we want from the U.S. under Mutual Aid,”[[155]](#endnote-155) argued one MAFF official. Similarly, it needs to be made clear to the Jamaicans, argued the MAFF, that the prices currently paid were not conceded to on “commercial” grounds but rather as an interim measure of assistance to the industry and that in future the 30s price would be paid.[[156]](#endnote-156) Thus although the WFPD badly needed this COJ, and had themselves been caught in a market transaction, they took up Kirkwood’s own rhetoric in order to cast their willingness to pay what they considered an inflated price as helping a colonial industry. While the use of this language served the West Indian growers who clearly wanted Her Majesty’s Government to feel obliged to invest in their industry, it also reasserted the colonial relationship between the UK and the British West Indies by clarifying exactly who was dependent on whom at a time when this relationship was in fact much less obvious.

By the start of the 1955/56 West Indian juice season, which was already underway in late September that year, the annual negotiations with the Caribbean citrus delegation had transformed, as Kirkwood had feared, into more significant debates about the future of the contract. When the Colonial Office and the MAFF met to discuss the issue at the end of September 1955, E.G. Harwood, a senior official of the MAFF, declared that although the ten-year contract had “doubtless been conceived in a spirit of helpfulness towards the Colonies,” it was economically “bad” for both parties. It bound the government to buy more juice than it needed and required the colonial producers to accept a price below market value. It would be best, he stated, if the Colonies could be brought to recognize that it was mutually advantageous to terminate these agreements.[[157]](#endnote-157) In contrast to seeing the abrogation of the contract as in their best interests, the Jamaican and Trinidadian governments had been pressuring for an extension of the provision of WOJ to schools and the military in order to bolster the Caribbean citrus industry rather than acknowledging any benefits to loosening their ties to the British state, though Trinidad had not supplied any juice. Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, rebuffed these suggestions that government contracts should be the solution to the failing economy. Instead, he argued, the West Indies should turn to the free market as full employment and an expanding economy created by his Government had led to opportunities for the sale of West Indian goods. “The market is there for those who wish and are ready to build it up,” Lennox-Boyd claimed, returning to the idea that committed and efficient growers could not only make ends meet but turn a profit. “I am quite sure that it is in the industry’s own interests to build its market in this way,” he argued, “rather than to become largely dependent for its outlet on Government schemes of this nature.” Lennox-Boyd cautioned the West Indian leaders that the MAFF would likely be selling their surplus supplies of West Indian COJ commercially anyway, and thus, he concluded, it would be in the interests of all parties that these contracts be mutually terminated.[[158]](#endnote-158) Lennox-Boyd thus positioned the ten-year contract as keeping the Caribbean colonies in a state of dependency. Those who were willing to take responsibility for modernizing their production, he implied, could take advantage of the expanding opportunities provided by embracing the free market and free themselves of their servility to the British government.

The British Caribbean Citrus Association (BCCA)--newly formed in 1955 to eliminate competition amongst the West Indian citrus-producing territories themselves and to improve quality and production[[159]](#endnote-159)--responded to the Secretary of State’s position by arguing that the WFS should be considered “ancillary to the general purpose of safeguarding the industry” and thus the relationship between the two should not be severed. Its representatives maintained that when the contract had been negotiated the then (Labour) Government had indicated that there should be an “expanding demand for the product.” We were given to understand that there would be a “permanent future for this business,” the BCCA maintained, otherwise we would never have “persuaded growers to plant trees which take 5 years to come into bearing, and which have a life expectancy of 35 years.” (And they might have added would increase in productivity between 1955 and 1960 by 335% in British Honduras and 102% in Jamaica.[[160]](#endnote-160)) It is a “revolutionary suggestion,” the BCCA asserted, that the British government should embark upon a change of policy without considering how growers should market the orange production “created solely as a result of this Contract.”[[161]](#endnote-161) Norman Manley, the Chief Minister of Jamaica, and Albert Gomes, Trinidad’s Minister of Labour, Industry and Commerce, were at that time in London and in talks with Lennox-Boyd presumably on issues relating to the proposed Federation of the West Indies, the political union of Caribbean islands that together sought independence from Britain as a single state. They similarly decried the idea that the long-term contract could be cancelled and insisted that the British government was obliged to keep the West Indian citrus industry afloat. In a letter to Lennox-Boyd signed also by Gomes, Manley asserted that from the very beginning the citrus industry in the British West Indies had been intimately tied to the WFS and had not been conceived of primarily as part of a diversification of colonial agriculture. Manley cited the 1948 telegram sent from the then Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of Jamaica that made it patently clear that the industry had been started largely to provide a non-dollar source of COJ available specifically for use in the WFS. He further maintained that G.G.R. Sharp—one of the chief exporters of Caribbean citrus products and a regular member of the West Indian citrus delegations[[162]](#endnote-162)--testified that he had been assured by “high officials” in the Ministry of Food that when the contract came to an end further arrangements for the supply of WOJ would certainly be forthcoming. It was thus clearly a “deliberate policy of the British Government to encourage the production of concentrated orange juice within the Caribbean area” in “the interest of plans which England had for the Welfare State and for the avoidance of dollar difficulties.” “I should doubt very much if there is any other case in which a Colonial industry has been stimulated in this deliberate way,” insisted Manley, “with full appreciation of all that it would involve in long term capital investment, as a result of considerations arising from British policy and dollar difficulties.” “Consequently,” he concluded, “the contention that there is a unique situation which has every moral claim for protection at this moment of critical difficulty, this turning point of the whole future development of the industry, is clear beyond question.” Not only can the ten-year contract not be prematurely terminated, argued Manley, but “no argument will ever eradicate from the minds of the people in the Caribbean that they have had reasonable grounds to believe that special regard would be paid to the citrus industry, even after the termination of this contract.”[[163]](#endnote-163) Manley could not have made the UK’s moral obligation to the Caribbean citrus any industry clearer and had the documentation—namely the original telegram announcing the contract—to back up his assertion.

Within three days of this letter that so clearly laid out the history of the Caribbean citrus scheme in relation to the WFS, the MOH, MAFF, Colonial Office, and Treasury were compelled to agree that the ten-year contract with the British West Indies for COJ could not be abrogated. But they insisted that it would continue on “strictly commercial principles.” By this it was meant that the MAFF would only pay prices at which they could buy WOJ from other non-dollar sources, subject to the clause in the contract limiting the annual variation in price to 12.5% up or down.[[164]](#endnote-164) In presenting this position to the Citrus Association the government stressed that the West Indians needed to market their COJ commercially to prepare them for the ending of the contract in 1960 and presumably for an independent Federation that could stand on its own feet.[[165]](#endnote-165) The Caribbean growers were greatly “disturbed” that Her Majesty’s Government was suggesting that it was up to the producers of COJ to develop a market for the greatly expanded production that had been brought about as a direct result of its own domestic policy. This would seem to imply, the BCCA noted, that Britain “no longer considers itself under any obligation to provide preferential markets for the produce of British colonial territories” despite the fact that the UK government’s own fact-finding mission had already determined that the Caribbean citrus industry could not hope to compete on the open market with that of the USA, Israel, and Spain.[[166]](#endnote-166)

The British government thus grudgingly agreed not only to honor the contract but also to implement a Price Assistance Scheme for the citrus industries of Jamaica, Trinidad, British Honduras, and Dominica (which produced limes) for the three crop years ending June 30, 1958 as a cushion for fluctuating prices. Growers would pay into the fund when prices were high and withdraw from the fund when prices were low. Until such a time as payments could be made in, Colonial Development and Welfare funds would be used to provide interest free loans to the fund so that monies would be available as needed.[[167]](#endnote-167) The scheme was clearly meant to pacify the governments of colonial territories bound for independence and was thus political in nature as increasingly the UK no longer felt obliged to put colonies on a sound economic footing before granting self-governance.[[168]](#endnote-168) The following year, Alan Marre, Under-Secretary to the MOH, which had taken over the distribution of Welfare Foods but not their procurement in October 1955, admitted that because of the purchase of West Indian WOJ, the nation’s nutritional policy had become “mixed up with considerations of Commonwealth relations,” and clearly those of the political kind.[[169]](#endnote-169) Indeed as an MAFF official was to argue in 1957, the ten-year contract with the British West Indies had in recent years “acquired great political significance” as the producers felt they had sunk their capital into a project that was only now coming quite literally into fruition.[[170]](#endnote-170)

The politics of the WFS were not merely bound up in the relationship between WOJ and the West Indian citrus industry. The WFS was also a constant target for Conservatives seeking to cut expenditures on the Welfare State. It epitomized the indiscriminate subsidization of products that many could afford to buy for themselves, serving as a symbol of an age that Conservatives felt was breeding a generation dependent on the state. In 1955 the cost of WOJ was a mere 4% of the entire cost of the WFS, though Treasury officials continued to bemoan the fact that there was “some waste of public money in running this service,” and that beneficiaries were not asked to take more of the costs “off the shoulders of the Exchequer.”[[171]](#endnote-171) The problem with charging more for Welfare Foods, however, was that the WFS was linked to the Family Allowance Scheme as a benefit-in-kind.[[172]](#endnote-172) If the subsidy for WOJ (or other Welfare Foods) was reduced, compensation might have to come in the form of raising family allowance payments. Decreasing the subsidy on WOJ was therefore not necessarily a financial benefit to the government. However, reducing the entitled beneficiaries was a possibility; thus Treasury officials recommended limiting WOJ to those under six months old, a suggestion that was never seriously pursued.[[173]](#endnote-173) But the idea of stopping WOJ benefits at age two, which had failed to get off the ground a few years earlier, had more traction now that the more Conservative Derick Heathcoat-Amory was at the helm at the MAFF and distribution of welfare food products was now in the hands of the MOH that had since 1951 been advocating this policy change. This became the focus of a review of Welfare Foods policy that began in January of 1956.

The MOH, now in charge of the distribution of Welfare Foods, acknowledged that Churchill’s government had not wanted to make any changes to it for “political reasons,” implying both that they feared making too many cuts to social services and that they were anxious about the Caribbean economy. But income and diet had improved since the war and the low takeup of WOJ was evidence that it was no longer needed, argued the MOH’s Enid Russell-Smith. The time was ripe, she suggested, to revisit the need for WOJ and the “economies which might result from some limitation” of the service.[[174]](#endnote-174) Robin Turton, the Minister of Health, and T.D. Haddow of the Department of Health for Scotland were both clear that any changes to the WFS would be “politically tricky,” needed to be backed by “the most authoritative recommendation,” and would require “careful handling.”[[175]](#endnote-175) The MOH thus decided to remit the matter to the Standing Medical Advisory Committee in consultation with the Medical Research Council. The Ministry asked Sir Henry Cohen, Chairman of the Committee, to work jointly with the Scottish Medical Advisory Committee and prepare a “reasoned report” on the present needs of pregnant women and young children for orange juice and cod liver oil, paying particular attention to children aged 2-5 years. The report could then be published, public opinion sought, and used by the MOH to determine the best course of action in regards to the provision of WOJ.[[176]](#endnote-176)

The Cohen Committee began its deliberations in 1956 and was asked by the MOH to release an interim report that summer as contracts for WOJ had to be placed in advance and the purchasing season was approaching.[[177]](#endnote-177) Having determined that the MOF’s most recent decision to continue to provide WOJ to children over two was made on “administrative, not nutritional, grounds,” the Committee turned its attention to the medical evidence before them. This included Bransby and Fothergill’s *BJN* publication, which had been published precisely in order to provide scientific evidence for just such a policy change, and a series of experiments in vitamin deprivation undertaken by the Medical Research Council that had concluded that requirements might not be as high as previously supposed.[[178]](#endnote-178) Two members of the Cohen Committee favoured the continued provision of WOJ for all children up to the five years old. They argued that the consumption of vitamin C-rich foods was dependent on “social background” and that there should be no return to the “malnutrition of the ‘bad old days’,” evoking the types of argument made by Orr and others during the war. But the majority position expressed in the interim report was that there was now adequate evidence that COJ was no longer required for children over two. The report concluded that the beneficiaries of WOJ could safely be substantially reduced, a position widely held amongst MOH officials.[[179]](#endnote-179)

That same year the residence test for Welfare Foods became unenforceable, leading to a small expansion of beneficiaries. In the summer and fall of 1956, British subjects returning from Egypt in the midst of the Suez Crisis, and Hungarian refugees that had been given sanctuary by the UK in the wake of the anti-communist revolt, challenged the policy of a 28-day waiting period. The former were documented British citizens who had merely been resident abroad, many in government service, and were now returning without adequate funds and in poor physical shape.[[180]](#endnote-180) The latter were bona fide refugees with few resources and a demonstrable need for nutritional supplements for their children whom the British government had pledged to help.[[181]](#endnote-181) Staking two different sets of claims based on particular relationships to the British government, these groups exposed the difficulties in enforcing a residence test at all, leading the government to waive the waiting period for both the Suez repatriates and the Hungarian refugees and ultimately to a decision to abrogate the test entirely at the earliest possible moment. The administration of the test had cost more than it was worth in savings to the WFS and was proving embarrassing to the government as more often than not it was returning British subjects who were being caught in its net, not the temporary visitors it was set up to exclude from these benefits or the Irish seasonal workers it feared were profiting off the tokens.[[182]](#endnote-182) Both the new recommendations that would formally be forthcoming from the Cohen Committee and the decision reached to abolish the residence test meant significant changes to the beneficiaries of WOJ that was to have major implications for the Caribbean citrus industry.

The abrogation of the residence test slightly expanded those who would in the future be eligible for Welfare Foods as there would no longer be any distinction made between those permanently resident in the UK and either visitors or those newly arrived. But this increase in beneficiaries could not possibly offset the decrease envisioned in the wake of the Cohen Committee’s report, which by adjusting the age of child beneficiaries down effectively cut recipients of WOJ in half. The Cohen Committee’s final report was not scheduled for release until the end of July 1957 and in the interim the Colonial Office moved to be included in all discussions of the future of WOJ that might result from its findings given the “political difficulties of the most unpleasant kind” that might arise in relation to the future of the long-term contract.[[183]](#endnote-183) One WFS official anticipated that the Colonial Office was likely to object to any reduction of beneficiaries, “waving the flag of Empire, etc,” and in the end he was correct.[[184]](#endnote-184) When the MOH and the MAFF received the results of the Cohen Committee they conferred with the Home Affairs Committee of the Cabinet, the Treasury, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the Prime Minister as to what action to take. Lennox-Boyd, as had been expected, cautioned against moving too quickly to withdraw WOJ from the 2-5 year olds. While I do not suggest that the juice “should continue to be supplied to children aged 2 to 5 merely in order to provide a market for West Indian orange juice,” West Indian interests are nevertheless “one of several factors” we should take into account in relation to the Cohen committee’s recommendations, he urged. Her Majesty’s Government, he argued, is liable in the price assistance scheme and thus the savings from ending COJ for 2-5 year olds may be undercut, he reasoned, by these financial obligations to the West Indian citrus industry, a point made also by MAFF officials.[[185]](#endnote-185) “There is no question of the contract being operated as a political instrument to boost the industry artificially,” Lennox-Body argued, but any “attempt on the Ministry’s part to offer the producers minimum and unacceptable prices in an attempt to kill the contract would be bitterly resented in the producing Colonies and might well have serious political repercussions,” suggesting that the MAFF had its own plans to decrease consumption of WOJ besides the cut in beneficiaries.[[186]](#endnote-186) Only a few days later British Honduras’ Attorney General cabled Lennox-Boyd in order to object to the implications of the Cohen Committee’s findings. Its orange trees had been planted expressly to serve the needs of the WFS, he asserted yet again. It was thus up to the UK government, should it limit beneficiaries of the WFS, he argued, to encourage young children to develop a liking for citrus juice and thus make COJ a desirable commercial product in order to strengthen the long-term market in the UK for British Honduras’ COJ.[[187]](#endnote-187)

At the same time, the question of the subsidy for WOJ was raised, an issue that the Cohen Committee had declined to take up as it was not a nutritional matter. Although the Treasury heartily agreed that the subsidy had outlived its purpose and that its removal would save £1 million per annum at a time when budget-trimming measures were actively being sought, even Norman Brook, one of its Joint Permanent Secretaries, was wary. Reducing the subsidy, he feared, “would make the whole matter controversial and call the Government’s intentions into question.” Brook implied that for the public to trust the scientific findings of the Cohen Committee, cost saving should not appear to be a motive. A reduction in beneficiaries could not, therefore, be coupled with the removal of subsidies. But again, this was not merely a domestic decision. These determinations, Brook argued, were further “complicated by our obligations towards the West Indian citrus industry—which depends on this market, and to a large extent on the welfare scheme, as an outlet for its product.” He similarly raised the issue of the price assistance scheme, which he argued made the “financial consequences” of withdrawing the subsidy “somewhat obscure.”[[188]](#endnote-188) What the Treasury acknowledged was that the WFS and the West Indian citrus industry were so closely linked that one could no longer legislate regarding one without considering the other.

Despite these cogent arguments that centered on interdependency--and subsequent jeers that it was “mean, parsimonious and wretched” to deprive children of orange juice for the purpose of solving the government’s economic problems[[189]](#endnote-189)--Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was clearly in favour both of limiting the beneficiaries of WOJ to those under two and of removing the subsidy so that the product could be sold at cost. Although he would later claim that the WFS had been part of his “political philosophy,”[[190]](#endnote-190) Macmillan advised Peter Thorneycroft, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was adamant about trimming public expenditure especially to health and welfare services, to take “full advantage” of the Cohen Committee’s recommendations to reduce beneficiaries and at the same time to seize the “opportunity of getting rid of this subsidy.” Most people didn’t need this kind of government assistance, Macmillan insisted, indeed “most of our people have never had it so good,” he intoned in July of 1957.[[191]](#endnote-191) While the Cohen Committee had not found COJ to be hazardous to the health of children over two, Macmillan nevertheless likened it to the radioactive strontium 90; but he also clearly viewed the report’s medical justification for a reduction in the WFS as an opportunity to save money on these services at a time when he was already at loggerheads with the Treasury about cuts to other social services.[[192]](#endnote-192) He found it trying that anyone thought the views of the West Indian producers should be heard: “we did not have to get [gin magnate and Conservative MP for Farnham] Godfrey Nicholson’s agreement before stopping the supply of gin to babies,” Macmillan grumbled.[[193]](#endnote-193) Ironically, Macmillan’s “never had it so good” speech was made at a celebration of Alan Lennox-Boyd’s political career.[[194]](#endnote-194) But as was to become apparent, the decisions made first about the reduction of benefits, and a few years later about the withdrawal of the subsidy, meant that the colonial subjects that the Secretary of State for the Colonies at least nominally represented were not in fact entitled to share in this so-called economic prosperity. Indeed Lennox-Boyd could do little in this instance but cable Jamaica and British Honduras to inform them in advance of the public announcement that the Cabinet had decided to withdraw WOJ from 2-5 year olds effective November 1, 1957.[[195]](#endnote-195)

Significantly, the Cabinet retained the subsidy for remaining beneficiaries, not only because the price of milk had recently been raised, but also because of fears that its removal might lead to rapid decline in the consumption of WOJ, and thus to “adverse effects on Jamaica and British Honduras which would give rise to pressure for further Exchequer assistance to price support schemes.”[[196]](#endnote-196) British Honduras was already heavily dependent on Colonial Development and Welfare funds and the Jamaican industry was faltering that year: there was a shortfall in the promised amounts of COJ to be delivered from Jamaica due to some substandard oranges and “teething troubles” with newly installed machinery.[[197]](#endnote-197) The removal of the subsidy, it was feared, might be the straw that broke the camel’s back. A year later, however, with Derick Heathcoat-Amory as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the wake of Thorneycroft’s dramatic resignation over Macmillan’s refusal to sanction other cuts to social services, the Treasury reopened the issue of the subsidy. Heathcoat-Amory was well aware of the WOJ situation, having previously headed up the MAFF before assuming the role of Chancellor and thus having been the Minister in charge of its procurement. It was not out of ignorance of either the domestic or the colonial impact of removing the subsidy that the Treasury now proposed that the price of WOJ be raised from 5d to 9d a bottle. Given that the beneficiaries not entitled to free supplies could well afford to pay this minimal charge if they desired to consume this product, the Treasury argued that it was “wrong to assist the West Indian economy through artificially maintaining a high consumption of orange juice in the United Kingdom” by keeping the price unnecessarily low.[[198]](#endnote-198) Lennox-Boyd was adamant, however, that political considerations should be of paramount concern and not an afterthought when making Welfare Foods policy. Whatever the “domestic merits” of the proposal to raise the price of WOJ, he feared that it would only encourage Manley, who was poised to visit in the New Year, to pressure for a more favourable price assistance scheme to compensate for any losses in sales of WOJ. After the reduction in beneficiaries consumption of WOJ had already declined from 34.31 million bottles sold in England and Wales in 1957 to 22.07 million in 1958.[[199]](#endnote-199) He further raised the spectre, in a looming election year, that the Labour Party would invoke these decisions as part of a plan to return to State trading generally as a means of supporting Colonial economies.[[200]](#endnote-200) The Scottish Office echoed this view with a letter of its own, arguing that raising the price of WOJ at this time was “highly inadvisable” on “political grounds,” again wedding domestic economic concerns to colonial politics.[[201]](#endnote-201)

**Decolonization, Moral Obligation, and the Cold War**

The Colonial Office’s anxiety to maintain the full subsidy in these last years of the 1950s was acute because the political climate had indeed shifted. The ten-year contract was due to expire at the end of the 1959/60 juice season, leaving the Caribbean citrus industry with no more guarantees from the British government at exactly the moment when their orange trees were finally bearing to capacity. At the same time the West Indies was moving towards decolonization: the West Indies Federation had finally been formed in January of 1958 after years of negotiation. At the end of the 1958/59 growing season then, with only one more year on the contract, the West Indian citrus delegation pushed for further commitments from the MAFF. They did not ask for another ten-year contract but rather a five-year agreement for a smaller quantity of juice, arguing that the trade liberalization policy of the British government had left the Caribbean citrus industry unprotected at just the moment that it was reaching maximum output. “It is essential that we should know how the Ministry proposes to discharge its obvious moral obligations to the industry,” argued the delegation.[[202]](#endnote-202) In a reversal of the events of 1948, it was the Colonial Office that now contacted the MAFF asking them to accept this proposal for a new contract. It would “have very great value to us in the political context in the West Indies,” given how much weight this delegation, the first to come to the UK on economic matters under the aegis of the Federation, seemed to place on having a contract for WOJ with the MAFF, argued one official. Seeking to “buttress” the Federation of the West Indies with their general election looming, and feeling “a real obligation to the West Indies in regard to Citrus as we did so much initially to promote the plantings,” the Colonial Office all but begged the MAFF to at least give their “blessing in principle” to such an agreement.[[203]](#endnote-203)

But in 1959, the MOH and MAFF were seeking further to curtail the distribution of WOJ and decried any attempt to continue the supply based on the economic and political condition of the Caribbean colonies. Officials within these Ministries maintained that the “appeasement” of the West Indies through WOJ purchases had “gone too far as it is.”[[204]](#endnote-204) G.S. Bishop, a senior official of the MAFF, wrote repeatedly to his Ministry’s Permanent Secretary, fearing that the Colonial Office sought to “embroil the Ministry of Health and our own Department in seeking a way out of their own difficulties by trying to use the Welfare Foods Service as a means of assisting citrus producers.”[[205]](#endnote-205) The Welfare Foods Scheme, he insisted, cannot be used as a “permanent attempt to sustain the citrus industry in the West Indies. The Government could not defend taking risks with welfare juice on the grounds that this was necessary to help the West Indies.”[[206]](#endnote-206) A memorandum by John Hare, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food, explicitly stated in July 1959 that to ensure low prices, protect against crop failure, and diversify sources for the purposes of blending in order to maintain a uniform product, we “need to spread our purchases around the globe” and not give preference to West Indian growers. While the Secretary of State for the Colonies might wish us to purchase specified quantities of juice from the West Indies, he insinuated, “the Welfare Foods Scheme is not an appropriate means of providing aid for their citrus industry.” If there is a case for additional assistance, Hare argued, it should be provided in “some other way.” He suggested that this was entirely the responsibility of the Colonial Office and their own development and welfare funds, completely ignoring the fact that the West Indian citrus industry had been initiated precisely to provide aid to the WFS in the form of a steady supply of sterling COJ.[[207]](#endnote-207)

The language of “moral obligation,” that was used repeatedly in these debates, thus placed the responsibility more heavily upon the MAFF than the Colonial Office despite the fact that the former agency was now trying to shift this responsibility onto the shoulders of the latter. Lennox-Boyd argued that the British government had always welcomed the efforts of the Jamaican and British Honduran governments to develop their citrus industries as part of a “policy of diversification.”[[208]](#endnote-208) But this was not in fact the origins of the citrus scheme that as the Caribbean growers had consistently and rightly asserted was born out of the needs of the WFS for non-dollar sources of WOJ and was not conceived as primarily a colonial policy of economic diversification. For many who supported the continuation of some kind of contractual relationship to the West Indies, the fact that the industry had been started expressly for the benefit of a UK social service, and that its producers were only now able fully to reap the benefits of its investment in a product with little commercial marketability, seemed to argue for an extension of a purchasing agreement. But if Her Majesty’s Government had a moral obligation to the British West Indies, and could demand purchasing agreements based on this, some feared the Israelis could make similar demands. They too had built new factories for the production of WOJ when still a British mandate and had been told by the Minister of Food in December of 1945 that the distribution of WOJ was a permanent feature of the food policy of the British government. Thus the WFS officials feared that Israel might also argue that Britain had a moral obligation to buy substantial quantities of juice from them in the future and “there should be no appearance of going back on past promises.”[[209]](#endnote-209) To acknowledge any moral obligation to the British West Indies, the MAFF implied, was to open to scrutiny any number of trading relationships with territories historically tied to Britain.

While Israel made no demands of the UK based on a moral obligation to support their citrus industry, the West Indian argument was strong. It had been raised in Parliament two years earlier by MPs already sympathetic to the problems that could arise when the contract reached its termination and the potential fallout from the Cohen Committee’s recommendations. In December 1957, Hilary Marquand, the Labour MP for Middlesbrough, East, who had been Secretary for Overseas Trade at the end of the war and then served as Minister of Health in the year before the 1951 Conservative victory, raised the issue in the House of Commons. He drew attention to the fact that the standard of living was “pitifully low” amongst the small co-operative farmers who grew oranges in Jamaica to be juiced for the WFS. WOJ, he maintained, was an excellent example of the mutual benefits of Commonwealth co-operation. The farmers get the long-term contract and can be assured of a market for their OJ, while the UK gets a supply of OJ appropriate for the welfare scheme. That the long-term contract was due to expire at exactly the time when those who “voluntarily undertook, at the request of this country, to plant the orange trees” would be most likely to reap the full benefits of the crop was problematic. I am thus pleading for continued “mutual co-operation” with and “help for the famers of Jamaica,” he declared. This is advantageous to our balance of payments, as we obtain this product from the sterling area, he insisted, and it would thus be to the “mutual advantage of our own people and the people of Jamaica.” Although he clearly supported the extension of the contract, this statement also implied that the West Indians were not in fact “our own people.” He made this inference clearer by referencing the issue of West Indian immigration. Claiming that he himself was not anti-immigration, Marquand nevertheless also argued that support for the orange industry would forestall any unnecessary increase in Caribbean immigration. A 1955 newsreel entitled, “Our Jamaican Problem,” had attributed the recent increase in Jamaican immigration in part to a depressed agricultural industry and offered more economic development of the colony as a solution to the implied “problem” of the “influx” of West Indians. For many feared that these West Indians “who come in search of hope” were merely cashing in on Britain’s generous Welfare State.[[210]](#endnote-210) This echoed the 1948 concerns around the Empire Windrush migrants. Marquand pressured for the extension of the long-term contract by demarcating one type of British subject from another and proposing that decisions about the procurement of WOJ could contain this beneficial separation, an argument not dissimilar to Rees-Williams’ 1948 rationale for issuing the contract in the first place. Marquand and others who had been involved in the Labour Party’s decisions to continue the WFS after the war, thus attempted to clarify that what might appear to be merely a domestic social program, needed to be understood within the context of colonial political and economic stability that had repercussions, they implied, that would play out in the metropole itself.[[211]](#endnote-211)

In 1959, these concerns were even more pressing in the wake of the emergence of the Federation of the West Indies and many MPs from both political parties pressured Lennox-Boyd to pursue a concrete agreement that would provide security for the West Indian citrus industry, insisting that whether or not there was a “moral obligation” to extend the contract, it was politically expedient to do so.[[212]](#endnote-212) Even the Treasury, while keen to get the cheapest price for COJ, acknowledged that some “slight preference” must be given to Colonial and Commonwealth suppliers in order that the sterling area not become depressed. The “political realities” of the situation, as the Federation of the West Indies was finding its feet, suggested to at least one Board of Trade official that new agreements would likely need to be pursued.[[213]](#endnote-213) The Nottingham and Notting Hill race riots that had erupted the previous year had exposed the deep tensions around West Indian immigration to the British Isles and could only have provided further stimulus to keep as many Caribbean subjects as possible on their own islands, as Marquand had implied, by propping up their failing industries.

At the end of July 1959 a new strategy for the West Indian citrus industry was thus being sketched out on paper with the objective of raising yields in order to be competitive in the world market. It included a research unit, a plan for the use of more fertilizers, and the broad outlines of an agreement for the UK to purchase more juice for the four crop years following the termination of the contract.[[214]](#endnote-214) This commitment was vague and thus in July of 1960, when the ten-year contract did in fact terminate, the BCCA re-asserted the British government’s responsibility for maintaining an orange juice industry that it had created, denying that the ten-year contract had ever been a purely commercial transaction. The BCCA used the government’s own postwar rhetoric of “Colonial Development, and agricultural diversification” and the more recent UK policy of providing assistance to “economically backward areas within the Commonwealth” to argue for continued purchases of WOJ.[[215]](#endnote-215) This strategy that threatened to expose the hollowness of these postwar commitments to colonial development was successful and led John Hare, as one his final acts as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to make concrete the vague purchasing agreement that had been floated the previous year. Although the MAFF refused to concede its moral obligations to the Caribbean orange growers, it signed a “Statement of Intent” that bound the WFS to purchase from the West Indies in each of the subsequent four crop years at least 60% of their requirements of WOJ at a price to be agreed upon each year.[[216]](#endnote-216)

At the same time that the MAFF was brokering this new Statement of Intent, Macmillan reshuffled his Cabinet and appointed Enoch Powell Minister of Health. The Ministry of Health had been in charge of the distribution of Welfare Foods since 1955. In 1961 they were also scheduled to take over the procurement of WOJ from the MAFF thus consolidating the administration of the service. Powell was adamantly opposed to the WOJ subsidy and had little sympathy for the use of the WFS to subsidize the West Indian economy. His removal of the subsidy was in fact more of a political than an economic decision. As members of the Conservative One Nation Group writing in the 1950s, Powell and Ian Macleod, who had become Secretary of State for the Colonies the previous year, had articulated the philosophy that one should first help those in need rather than providing the same benefits to everyone. It was not that the government should not subsidize some individuals’ benefits, but rather that state funds should be directed only at the necessitous; in a “responsible society,” Powell, Macleod and their One Nation colleagues argued, people paid for themselves whenever they could and should be encouraged to do so.[[217]](#endnote-217) In fact, Powell had resigned alongside Peter Thorneycroft in 1958 over the issue of government over-spending on social services.[[218]](#endnote-218) For Powell then, removing the subsidy was thus at least in part ideological. In fact, MOH officials had calculated that increasing the price of welfare milk would save £3 million per annum as opposed to the savings of a mere £1.4 million achieved by the abolishment of the WOJ subsidy.[[219]](#endnote-219) The choice to do one over the other was necessarily weighed in terms of cost saving in this tense financial moment that was by the end of 1961 to see Britain request the International Monetary Fund for a loan. However, broader philosophies about the role of government in a post-austerity age were also at stake.

But as much as Powell would have liked to charge forward with the abolishment of the WOJ subsidy alongside his other proposed cuts to the NHS, he could not ignore that there was also pressure to consider the former, if not the latter, from the perspective of colonial politics. [[220]](#endnote-220) Thus before any decision on the future of the WFS was to be taken, particularly in relation to the issue of the subsidy, the MOH conceded to confer with the Colonial Office. While Macleod, at the time a close ally of Powell’s, might have been theoretically in favour of removing the WOJ subsidy if viewed only as a domestic policy change, there were also colonial political issues to be considered. The Colonial Office thus explained to the MOH that this was a particularly tense time in the Caribbean as the “whole future of the Federation is at stake.” There is a “difficult” constitutional conference in the New Year, followed by a Referendum in Jamaica, and thus, argued, W.L. Gorell Barnes, Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonial Office, we should try not to “rock the boat.” If the MOH feel the rise in price would not adversely affect uptake then we at the Colonial Office have no grounds for objection, he stated. It is only if the result is “expected to be a sizeable cut in usage that I feel sure my Secretary of State would wish to urge this change be abandoned or at least deferred to a later date,” he explained to the MOH.[[221]](#endnote-221)

The MOH’s response was to admit that the normal uptake of WOJ without the subsidy would likely be “appreciably lower.” But the Ministry proposed that since the government would be offering the product at cost, they were willing to return to the policy of making COJ available to all children up to the age of five. Powell hoped that this might offset the anticipated drop in uptake without the state incurring any additional expense. In addition, the MOH proposed that raising the price might encourage private companies to market their own brand of COJ that could now be more competitive, which might benefit the West Indian industry.[[222]](#endnote-222) But Powell was throwing the Colonial Office a bone. For the MOH’s prime concern was not the West Indian economy but rather domestic issues. Sources of vitamin C were now, unlike during the period of rationing, plentifully available and parents could choose whether to consume these natural foods or to continue to use WOJ at cost. For those that couldn’t afford to pay the full price of WOJ, which remained even at full price a very cheap form of vitamin-C, free supplies would still be available to those that met the income qualifications.[[223]](#endnote-223) Cognizant that legislation restricting West Indian immigration to the UK was imminent and that a London conference on Federation was looming at which British financial aid for a post-independence West Indies would be the key point of negotiation, and thus that it was a sensitive time to introduce a policy shift that would negatively impact the West Indian economy, the MOH nevertheless announced in April of 1961 that it was removing “the indiscriminate subsidy” on WOJ, effective June 1.[[224]](#endnote-224) Hereafter the juice would be sold at the cost of 1/6d and made available again for children up to 5 years old. Edith Pitt, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health, reassured Parliament that she did not expect the level of takeup to change, despite the fact that the juice was now more than three and a half times more expensive, and promised that if it did she would revisit the question of the subsidy.[[225]](#endnote-225)

Pitt was wrong, very wrong, and the Colonial Office’s worst fears were realized as the uptake of WOJ declined precipitously in the wake of the removal of the subsidy and the imposition of what one MP identified as “miserable, skinflint charges.”[[226]](#endnote-226) In 1960, 21.48 million bottles of WOJ had been sold in England and Wales; in 1962 that number plummeted to 8.82 million.[[227]](#endnote-227) According to Local Authorities, the MOH’s assumption that all who needed it could afford to pay the full cost, was very far from the truth. Those on the ground distributing Welfare Foods argued that in fact the increase in the price of WOJ was borne by the section of the national community that could least afford to pay as they were barely keeping afloat without National Assistance. In addition, there were those who might qualify for free juice but rejected government assistance on principle, a sentiment that Mass Observation and others had noted in the 1940s and the *Daily Mail* had suggested continued well into the 1950s.[[228]](#endnote-228) Coming alongside charges for prescriptions drugs, hospital beds, dentures, and spectacles, many Local Authorities viewed this decision as merely a cost-saving measure by a penny-pinching administration keen to eviscerate the Welfare State.[[229]](#endnote-229) Figures issues by the Treasury had shown that the government’s budget for the health service for 1961-62 would represent the lowest state contribution since the service began.[[230]](#endnote-230) Several Members of Parliament saw the removal of the WOJ subsidy in this light, yelling “Back to the workhouse” at Powell during debates over the subsidy.[[231]](#endnote-231) Others, such as Harold Wilson, drew attention to what they saw as the hypocrisy of the Conservative government that was willing to spend £40 million a year on free drinks for themselves, and cut taxes on alcoholic beverages, but were unwilling to subsidize orange juice for children.[[232]](#endnote-232) This “cheeseparing in relation to the children of working-class people,” according to Labour MPs, was a typical Tory move.[[233]](#endnote-233) But the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland countered these accusations that the government was compromising the health of the poorest. The fact that the consumption of Welfare Foods was already lowest amongst the most impoverished, was proof, he argued, that “those who are the worst off” financially have been relying on natural foods and proprietary preparations and yet health in general has improved. Indeed amongst the “poorer people,” he noted, the takeup of Welfare Foods has increased since removal of the subsidy, suggesting that more were taking advantage of obtaining these products either through the National Assistance scheme or by applying for gratuitous supplies based on income considerations.[[234]](#endnote-234)

Members of Parliament on both sides of the aisle who opposed Powell’s abolishment of the subsidy also argued that the high price of WOJ was having a deleterious effect not just on the health of mothers and children but also on the economy of the West Indies, implying that the availability of other vitamin-C rich foods in the UK was only part of the larger issue around the supply of WOJ.[[235]](#endnote-235) Eirene White, Labour MP for Flint, East and a member of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, queried whether the Colonial Office had been consulted on this decision. Given the “difficulty we have had over the economy of the Caribbean,” she argued, what use was it to “pay out of one pocket for what we are saving in the other?” Removing the subsidy on WOJ, struck “a blow at the economic prosperity of the West Indies for which we still have some responsibility,” she insisted.[[236]](#endnote-236) Edwin Leather, Conservative MP for Somerset North who years later would become Governor of Bermuda, attempted to refocus attention on the “grave situation” facing the West Indian citrus industry. He claimed that since this was due largely to changes of policy in the UK that were beyond the control of the West Indies themselves, the least the British government could do was to put more effort into publicizing the WFS to stimulate uptake amongst those still entitled to WOJ.[[237]](#endnote-237) These fears about the future of the industry were not unfounded nor were these concerns premature. If in 1961, Britain was one of the world’s three biggest importers of citrus juice, drinking over four times as much as before WWII,[[238]](#endnote-238) the removal of the subsidy led to a drastic and immediate decline in the procurement of WOJ that represented a major portion of this consumption. In the 1960/61 season the government bought 1360 tons of juice from Jamaica and 740 from British Honduras. But in 1961/62 the figure dropped to 667 tons from Jamaica and only 333 from British Honduras. Although Jamaica could have supplied 3000 tons that year, British Honduras had been hit by Hurricane Hattie at the very start of the juice season in October of 1961 and was not able to export again until 1964.[[239]](#endnote-239) That same year the British government warned a newly independent Tanganyika off developing a trade in COJ because the market was clearly “not expanding,” thus signaling that everyone was well aware that the removal of the subsidy had had serious consequences for citrus industries based around COJ.[[240]](#endnote-240)

 This drastic decline in purchasing of West Indian juice could not have come at a more inconvenient political moment for the British government as Gorell-Barnes had warned. Jamaica seceded from the Federation after a referendum in September 1961 and began preparing for independence. In the lead up to Jamaica’s first election on April 10, 1962, parliament reconsidered the charges for WOJ given that their rise had in fact led to a dramatic decline in consumption and Pitt had promised at the very least to re-examine the issue if this situation were to arise. Frank Allaun, the Labour MP for Salford East, decried the price hike as one of the most “miserable cuts” in social services since before the war, part of the Conservative government’s “slaughtering” of the Welfare State.[[241]](#endnote-241) Kenneth Robinson, who would have his turn as Minister of Health in 1964, challenged Powell to provide some evidence that children--especially those of “feckless or careless” or “not very intelligent mothers” not receiving National Assistance benefits--were actually getting the vitamins they needed.[[242]](#endnote-242) But the MOH held firm, arguing that it was vitamin intake from the diet as a whole that was important to the nation’s health, not the consumption of Welfare Foods *per se*, which were not a “sacrosanct” nutritional supplement. It was of little concern to the MOH whether people chose “Government vitamin products” over commercial products or natural foods as long as the vitamins were obtained. Pitt promised to continue to monitor the “nutriment” obtained by mothers and babies but felt no need to reintroduce the subsidy.[[243]](#endnote-243) The MOH was thus more than satisfied in 1962 that the “vitamin state of the nation was at present satisfactory, despite the fall in Welfare Foods consumption.”[[244]](#endnote-244) Its officials thus kept the discussion focused on the health of UK residents whose interests this government agency was bound to serve, and explicitly refused to use the services it provided this constituency for any other purpose, skirting entirely the issue of the economic health of the Caribbean and its inhabitants.

This debate over WOJ, which essentially went nowhere, coincided with the Jamaican general election and with the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act that heavily restricted West Indian immigration to the UK. The election returned Alexander Bustamante as Prime Minister who was to assume his position with the coming of independence on August 6. In the summer of 1962, the West Indian citrus delegation, now representing the producers of a newly independent nation, pushed the MOH to buy more COJ in the coming season than it had the previous year. But given the drastic drop in uptake the requirements of the WFS were now for only 200 tons of juice for blending purposes. Powell was “personally strongly against” making additional purchases and proved “obstructive” in these negotiations.[[245]](#endnote-245) In discussions that extended into the Fall, the issue of the “moral obligation” re-emerged and some officials at the Commonwealth Relations Office and Colonial Office were prepared to admit that the British government had been responsible for encouraging the West Indians to plant orange trees for the production of WOJ and thus now that the trees had come into full bearing and the contracts had been terminated we had “let them down pretty badly,” and could not be “proud of this.”[[246]](#endnote-246) But the official position voiced by the Commonwealth Relations Office was that as far back as 1955 the growers had been told that the contract would not be renewed; instead it would run its course on the understanding that it would be regarded as a “primarily commercial commitment—i.e. but not as an additional means of subsidy by H.M.G. of Jamaican Industry.”[[247]](#endnote-247) The Commonwealth Relations Office conceded that the West Indian growers had “incurred considerable expense” in planting trees and setting up juice processing plants. However, it insisted that they were not given any reason to believe that the contracts would be renewed or extended. These were “purely commercial” contracts “of fixed duration,” and the government could not therefore be responsible for the fact that the West Indian growers somehow “gained the impression that a more permanent market in Britain might continue.”[[248]](#endnote-248) Although Pitt had proclaimed that if the consumption of COJ declined precipitously in the wake of the removal of the subsidy, the MOH would reconsider the matter, the Commonwealth Relations Office insisted that these comments pertained only to the assessment of the Welfare Foods Program and did not amount to a promise to purchase COJ in order to “support the economies of British dependent territories,” a position that in April the MOH had reiterated. The Jamaicans have, however, the Commonwealth Relations Office argued, seen the intransigence of the MOH in refusing to buy more WOJ from Jamaica and British Honduras as “something akin to a breach of faith.”[[249]](#endnote-249) Upon assuming the Prime Ministership, Bustamante had written to Duncan Sandys, the Secretary of State for both the Colonies and Commonwealth Relations, arguing that the removal of the WOJ subsidy had jeopardized the Jamaican economy and asking the British government to assist Jamaica to find markets for “thousands of acres of citrus planted through encouragement of Her Majesty’s Government specifically to provide the vital source of vitamin C” for British children.[[250]](#endnote-250) The Commonwealth Relations Office was immediately defensive: L.B. Walsh Atkins, its Assistant Under Secretary of State, drawing on both a stereotype of the slow-paced West Indian and the rhetoric of dependency, figured this and other requests as typical of the Jamaicans, who he claimed did not seem to be “bestirring themselves” to find alternative outlets for their product.[[251]](#endnote-251) In meetings with the West Indian citrus producers, the Commonwealth Relations Office continued to reiterate that there was “no obligation, legal or moral, on us to continue to take supplies of concentrated orange juice.” Even if we can provide some economic assistance for this year, they stood firm that the West Indians must “look elsewhere for future markets.” If this COJ is really as “valuable as the producers tell us,” the Commonwealth Relations Office asserted, then “surely there must be some potential buyer other than the British Minister of Health,” suggesting that it was now Jamaica’s responsibility to seek and find this elusive purchaser.[[252]](#endnote-252)

Despite having rebuffed the accusation that there was any moral obligation to purchase more juice, both the Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office felt strongly that “from the political standpoint this, at the time of Jamaica’s independence,” was a “singularly inappropriate moment” to turn down their request.[[253]](#endnote-253) The Commonwealth Relations Office admitted that there was no need in the UK for additional stocks of juice, and thus the argument for purchasing more was purely “political,” and hinged on “being nice to the Jamaicans in the early months of their independence.”[[254]](#endnote-254) The Duke of Devonshire, Minister of State for the Commonwealth Relations Office, stressed that political stability in Jamaica was essential and that the small farmers who grew the bulk of Jamaica’s oranges were Bustamante’s keenest supporters. To undercut this industry, he implied, might have devastating political results.[[255]](#endnote-255) Sandys thus urged Powell to reconsider his decision to buy only 200 tons of COJ from Jamaica. If we stop buying juice this year, Sandys argued, Bustamante “will say that it shows that we have lost interest in Jamaican welfare at the moment of her independence: and I should like to avoid a deterioration of relations at such a time.”[[256]](#endnote-256) The Commonwealth Relations Office was thus keen to help the citrus industry at this tense moment. But its officials were careful to construct any forthcoming aid not as blood money that reinforced the UK’s primary role in the death of the COJ industry, but as stemming purely from “a political desire to help Jamaica through the first months of Independence and our general policy of assisting under-developed countries,” the latter being the rhetoric the BCGA had previously resorted to.[[257]](#endnote-257)

Even if construed in these terms, this was not merely about being “nice” to a newly independent and “under-developed” Jamaica. It was also part of wider concerns about the balance of power in a Cold War world given that since the early 1950s the UK had been waging an extensive anti-communist campaign in the Caribbean.[[258]](#endnote-258) In the summer of 1960, Macleod had stressed that it was critical to maintain the “store of goodwill” already built up in Jamaica in relation to the UK by remaining flexible as to the purchase price of COJ. There is a “very delicate political side to all this,” he had cautioned the MAFF, as the UK needed the then still viable Federation to emerge from the process of decolonization as a “well-disposed ally of this country and the West.” We must be careful in all negotiations over WOJ as West Indians, Macleod insisted, are “inordinately sensitive” around citrus.[[259]](#endnote-259) By 1962 Jamaica had left the Federation but it was no less urgent to retain their goodwill. The British High Commissioner in Kingston suggested that year that the Jamaicans were currently “extremely friendly to Britain and to the West in general.” He felt there was “a very good chance of Jamaica aligning itself with the Western powers in debates at United Nations.”[[260]](#endnote-260) The Duke of Devonshire similarly stressed “how desirable it would be for us to have a country, the majority of whose people are of Afro-Asian descent, supporting Britain in international disputes.” “I do not think it is an exaggeration to say,” he maintained to the MOH, “that if we cannot meet the Jamaicans over concentrated orange juice we will be in danger of losing the friendship of the Jamaican Government.”[[261]](#endnote-261) Devonshire’s allusion to those of “Afro-Asian descent” was a direct reference to the Afro-Asian (or Bandung) Conference of 1955 that was generative of the Non-Aligned Movement, which viewed the Cold War blocs as a form of neocolonialism, a reassertion of the old world order that decolonized Asian and African peoples had newly freed themselves from. Devonshire thus warned that Jamaica must be cultivated as a “friend to ourselves and the West,” lest its government choose either to non-align, or worse still, to go the way of its closest neighbour Cuba.[[262]](#endnote-262) The Cuban Revolution had ushered in a Communist government in 1959, whose strength was tested during the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. That Jamaica might follow suit was not unthinkable. In September of 1962, Bustamante insisted that the British government should not leave the orange growers “in the lurch” and threatened to sell Jamaican COJ to Cuba and to Russia. It was not the first time he had raised this as a possibility. Though the British High Commissioner had initially thought Bustamante was “pulling [his] leg,” the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Foreign Office were rattled by the statement and worried that this might prove embarrassing to the British government, particular in terms of their own relations with the USA, their most important Cold War ally.[[263]](#endnote-263) But despite the Colonial Office, Commonwealth Relations Office, and Foreign Office’s concerns, the MOH was prepared to call Bustamante’s bluff and in the end Powell sanctioned the purchase of only the 200 tons needed for blending purposes, which was nowhere close to the 6000 tons the Jamaicans had on offer.[[264]](#endnote-264)

Other government departments continued to press the issue, seeing COJ as part of an economic plan to secure the Caribbean against a Communist revolution. In 1963, the President of Britain’s Board of Trade told the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, that, “politically, Britain’s task in the Caribbean was to keep the countries there from going Communist. We could not abandon them to the fate of Cuba, nor could we change their economy over-night.” The President then suggested that it would help if the American producers went into the West Indies and assisted with citrus production and marketing. “As a first step at least,” he suggested, “the industries of the West Indies and the United States should get together.” It might be possible, he suggested, for the Florida growers to take some orange juice from the West Indies and blend it with their own before exporting it to the United Kingdom.[[265]](#endnote-265) This blended juice scheme, he maintained, had important political significance for the Cold War. “It was in everybody’s interest that we should prevent Soviet penetration,” in the Caribbean, he argued, “something which would obviously be easier if the economy were allowed to deteriorate.”[[266]](#endnote-266) COJ, the President of the Board of Trade theorized, could be an effective weapon in the Cold War, securing the West Indian nations from converting to Castro’s Communism.

The Commonwealth Relations Office and the Colonial Office also continued to put pressure on the MOH to buy more juice and to be consulted regarding the future of the WFS, which was set to expire in 1964 with no guarantee of its renewal. Any decision which “led this country to reduce very substantially and permanently the quantities of concentrated orange juice bought from the West Indies might have such far-reaching political and social effects in the West Indies as to necessitate a fairly delicate act of explanation by the Commonwealth Secretary to the Jamaican Government (and possibly by the Colonial Secretary to British Honduras too) before the decision was made public,” argued E.L. Sykes of the Commonwealth Relations Office.[[267]](#endnote-267) At the same time, however, Sykes was careful to sidestep the claims of moral obligation, arguing that, “insofar as the British Government ‘encouraged’ the West Indies to start producing orange juice, we did so as a means of getting the West Indies to diversify their economies and reduce their dependence on sugar.”[[268]](#endnote-268) But the Colonial Office, now mainly representing the interests of British Honduras, abandoned the rhetoric of colonial development and argued instead that the Jamaican statement that the production of COJ was undertaken at the request of HMG and thus the government was under a “moral obligation” to support the industry was in fact “justified.” The development of an orange juice industry in the West Indies was not merely about agricultural diversification in the post-war period. It was in fact the result of “our intervention,” argued a Colonial Office official, in response to the MOF’s concern about obtaining COJ from Palestine given its instability. The issue, he explained, had been taken up in the Colonial Primary Products Committee in 1948, which recommended the extension of citrus cultivation in the Caribbean colonies as mutually beneficial to all parties involved given the long-term needs of the WFS, a statement easily corroborated by ample documentation.[[269]](#endnote-269)

**The Bitter End of Welfare Orange Juice**

Despite his own mounting fears about West Indian immigration, Powell refused to use WOJ to artificially sustain the Caribbean economy. In the 1963/64 juice season the MOH purchased another minute amount from the West Indies: 200 tons from Jamaica and 100 tons from British Honduras, who had only just begun to be able to resupply after suffering hurricane damage in 1961.[[270]](#endnote-270) Had the MOH not needed the low-acid Caribbean juice for the purposes of blending, no orders might have been forthcoming at all in these last two years of the Statement of Intent.[[271]](#endnote-271) For unlike the ten-year contract that obliged the UK to purchase up to 75% of the West Indian juice crop, the Statement of Intent only required them to acquire 60% of their own required amounts. That the Jamaicans had estimated that 60% would work out to 2000 tons per year, not the “pathetically small” 200, was not therefore the responsibility of the MOH that had indeed abided by the terms of the Statement.[[272]](#endnote-272) The only bright side for the West Indian orange growers was that by February of 1964 the WFS had been renewed and thus the purchase of WOJ for consumption in 1965/66 could move forward with approximately 1200 tons allocated to the West Indies now that even without the subsidy stocks had run dry.[[273]](#endnote-273) With this renewed confidence in the future of the industry, in the summer of 1965, the BCCA thus pushed for a new long-term contract, citing the fact that the previous four-year agreement had been of little value considering how small the purchases had been in its final years. A new contract would represent a “continuation of a policy which was accepted a number of years ago as being in the mutual interests of Her Majesty’s Government and the Commonwealth territories concerned.”[[274]](#endnote-274) In this climate the Colonial Office was quick to assert that British colonies, such as British Honduras, would get preferential treatment in such contracts over independent Commonwealth countries such as Jamaica.[[275]](#endnote-275) This was a moot point in the end as the MOH, now run by Labour’s Kenneth Robinson, declined to enter into any further long-term contracts. Its officials maintained, however, that the Ministry would continue to order from both Jamaica and British Honduras if the price was satisfactory, reiterating that while the new Labour government supported the continuation of the WFS, it was “not appropriate for the Welfare Foods Scheme to be used as a medium for giving special support to the economies of overseas territories.”[[276]](#endnote-276) The Labour Party, while committed to the domestic beneficiaries of WOJ, was no more willing to concede its responsibility to the producers of the product than were the Conservatives.

Between the 1964/65 juice season and that of 1968/69, the Labour Party did not restore the WOJ subsidy, but the MOH continued to buy between 800 and 950 tons of juice per year from Jamaica.[[277]](#endnote-277) It also purchased between 450 and 550 tons from British Honduras in these years.[[278]](#endnote-278) These West Indian orders represented approximately half the needs of the WFS, the rest being supplied by South Africa and Israel whose juice became available at different times of the year and remained cheaper.[[279]](#endnote-279) But in the Spring of 1969, before negotiations could commence regarding the next West Indian juice season, the newly created Department of Health and Social Security released a report linking COJ to dental caries. Rather than COJ improving “that terrible black spot” in British health, “children’s teeth,” as some had earlier hoped,[[280]](#endnote-280) misuse of undiluted juice in children’s pacifiers and reservoir feeders, the report uncovered, had significantly increased dental disease amongst young children.[[281]](#endnote-281) The report was written by the Panel on Cariogenic Foods that had been set up by the Chief Medical Officer’s Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy in 1967 to investigate the use of vitamin preparations in babies’ pacifiers and feeding bottles. It came as a direct response to a series of letters to the editor and an editorial that had appeared in the *British Dental Journal* in the summer and fall of 1967 blaming WOJ and rosehip syrup for the marked increase in acid erosion and cavities in young children.[[282]](#endnote-282) The report recommended that reservoir feeders be abolished, that additional sucrose not be added by parents to WOJ, that pacifiers should not be dipped in undiluted juice, that vitamin supplements carry caution labels about their misuse, that alternatives to sucrose be substituted in the blending of WOJ, and that milk-based preparations be fortified with vitamin C. It did not, however, recommend the withdrawal of WOJ entirely.[[283]](#endnote-283) The DHSS responded by printing warning labels on WOJ bottles that cautioned parents not to use the juice in its undiluted form and by investigating alternatives to the sucrose they used to make the product consistent and palatable though it concluded that this latter problem was “insurmountable.”[[284]](#endnote-284) But, as had Bransby and Fothergill’s *BJN* publication and the Cohen Committee’s report, this scientific study furnished the DHSS with an opportunity to revisit the whole question of WOJ not merely its misuse. It provided scientific and seemingly apolitical support for retrenchment in a financial climate in which no aspect of the Welfare State could afford to be held sacred even for the Labour government. The late 1960s was a challenging time for Harold Wilson’s administration that was faced with a faltering economy. His Cabinet had chosen to devalue the pound in 1967 and then raised taxes, announced a spending cut of £716 million, hiked the cost of school meals, and ironically even re-introduced prescription charges, an issue that had led Wilson to resign from Atlee’s government in 1951.[[285]](#endnote-285) Given that new synthetic combined vitamin drops and tablets were cheaper than WOJ for the State to acquire, and thus for consumers to purchase, the government could no longer justify the continuation of these older products. That cheap milk, which had not been found to be unsafe, was withdrawn at the same time suggests that the decision to discontinue WOJ was as much about the larger goals of reducing expenditures as about dental health, which merely provided a convenient rationalization for a position that had already been taken.[[286]](#endnote-286) The DHSS could thus confidently move forward with this cheaper, and what their Secretary of State lauded as a “more modern method” of providing vitamins.[[287]](#endnote-287)

These decisions were also easier to justify by 1970 because the child life of the British nation itself was, like the nation’s budget, under intense scrutiny. WOJ had contributed to the goal of building “Nations out of Nurseries”: many people credited the WFS with transforming British infants into “miniature Samsons.”[[288]](#endnote-288) But it was this “milk-and-orange-juice-generation”[[289]](#endnote-289) that had also been responsible for the Swinging Sixties and the challenge to traditional British values that this moment presented. Argued one reporter in 1962, these smoking, illiterate, cursing teenagers that epitomized the youth of today seemed “a poor return for all that orange juice and vitaminised milk.”[[290]](#endnote-290) Moral reformer Malcolm Muggeridge’s 1967 attack on the “Permissive Society,” and the youth whose culture had reshaped, even revolutionized, Britain in the 1960s, itself contained oblique references to youth washing down their newly available birth control pills with WOJ.[[291]](#endnote-291) In June of 1970, with an election looming, Home Secretary James Callaghan, notorious for voicing his own traditional values, articulated this disillusionment with the Labour Party’s investment in the welfare of Britain’s youngest citizens. Responding to critiques about rising prices from skinny, long-haired, newly enfranchised teenagers, he declared, “When I think of the welfare orange juice that was given to you I can only say it was wasted.”[[292]](#endnote-292) By 1970 then, WOJ was no longer tied to a sentimentalized vision of bonny British war babies and had come to stand in, even for some of the staunchest supporters of the Welfare State, for a cynical youth population who many were loath to let take control of the wheel.

Despite seeing the advantages to the withdrawal of the juice from the Welfare Foods Service, the DHSS still acknowledged that to do so would have “economic and political” disadvantages in relation to the hardship inflicted on the West Indies and economizing in one area might lead to expenditure in another.[[293]](#endnote-293) Although the medical evidence was solid, and the supplements would be cheaper than WOJ not only for the state but for its beneficiaries,[[294]](#endnote-294) Marre, now Second Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, maintained that his department still needed “confirmation in writing from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the view they have previously expressed that no serious difficulty in international relations is likely to be caused by the decision to stop buying the juice.”[[295]](#endnote-295) But the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, newly created in 1968 by merging the Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office (the latter of which had already combined with the Colonial Office two years earlier), could not easily assure him that a sudden cessation of orders for COJ from the Caribbean producers would not be deeply problematic given that there remained “difficulties with the Caribbean countries which required us to help them maintain a stable economy.”[[296]](#endnote-296) The “delicately balanced” economy of the not-yet self-governing British Honduras was of particular concern given that any reduction in COJ orders might make her “once again dependent on grants-in-aid.” We cannot risk losing the “goodwill” of the West Indies at this juncture, and thus the future of COJ, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office maintained, should be part of the larger plans underway for reviewing the current problems in the Caribbean and our plans for helping to resolve them.[[297]](#endnote-297) Similarly, the Minister for Overseas Development argued that this decision to terminate the importation of WOJ came at a “particularly bad moment” for Jamaica as the long term outlook for bananas was “dubious” and it was consequently planning to expand the citrus industry. For British Honduras, he warned, the discontinuation of WOJ entirely would be “a serious blow.”[[298]](#endnote-298)

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s position that cancelling all arrangements with Caribbean suppliers would have “considerable political repercussions,” was strong enough to force the DHSS to acquiesce in 1969 to continue the supply of WOJ concurrent with the vitamin drops and tablets through the end of 1971. This would allow for an additional buying season with an allocation of 54% to the Caribbean suppliers and would also buy them more time to seek alternative markets for their COJ.[[299]](#endnote-299) This was obviously a political compromise between the DHSS and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and when the Conservative Party resumed power in the summer of 1970 their new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health was indignant that this deal had already been made: “Surely Health,” he reasoned, “should not bow before Foreign Relations!”[[300]](#endnote-300) But, countered J.W. Seymour of S & S Services, who continued to represent West Indian citrus interests, it was equally unfair to those “who have served the British Government so faithfully for so many years” to “suffer” because of the “stupidity” of a few “irresponsible mothers” who ignored the directions on the label.[[301]](#endnote-301)

The question of whose welfare was at stake in decisions about welfare orange juice died a slow death but by 1971 this issue, like the product itself, was dead in the water. These and other cuts to the Welfare State had led to an outpouring of criticism that Wilson had betrayed the Labour Party’s traditional socialist mission, reneging on the promise of cradle-to-grave care. A few members of the House of Lords continued into the spring of 1971 to raise the alarm over the West Indian economy and blamed the withdrawal of WOJ for this bleak state of affairs.[[302]](#endnote-302) But the decision to withdraw the juice at the close of that year was final and in the end supported by both political parties. To bring closure to relationship between the WFS and the West Indian citrus industry, in January of 1971 B.J. Crisp of the Supply Division of the DHSS undertook a trip to Jamaica and British Honduras to express his agency’s gratitude in person for the services rendered by the growers and producers of WOJ. While the Jamaicans and British Hondurans pressed him for help with the economic impact of the withdrawal of WOJ, Crisp maintained that even if their economic difficulties were in fact real, they were, at least in the case of Jamaica, “far more likely” to stem from their “own organizational and political policies than from the ending of our contracts.” In the end Crisp blamed the “easy-going Caribbean attitude to life” that eschewed competition, and their long-term reliance on UK business that had “blunted the initiative” to seek other markets, for any economic difficulties the West Indians might be experiencing in relation to their citrus industry.[[303]](#endnote-303) He comfortably asserted that it was the national character and habitual behaviours of West Indians themselves, which both led to dependence, and not the policies of the UK government, that were to blame for any economic decline in the region. Crisp’s report of his visit, which served as the final official word on WOJ, rehearsed a narrative deeply imbedded by the early 1970s of West Indians as unambitious malingerers with a “mendicant mentality” who rather than contributing to the Welfare State, had become dependent upon it.[[304]](#endnote-304) But the archival evidence clearly points in a different direction. It exposes Britain’s own dependency on its colonial subjects to provide the means of furnishing welfare benefits to its metropolitan citizens. The history of WOJ thus opens up a much more complex understanding of the politics and economics of the Welfare State and its relationship to colonial development projects on the one hand and the slow processes of decolonization on the other.

1. “Fruitful,” *Daily Mail*, 18 December 1970, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. George Schwartz, “For Services Rendered,” *Sunday Times*, 28 June, 1970, p. 54; “Are Baby Clinics Needed? Ask GPs,” *Daily Mail*, 16 April, 1966, p. 3; George Schwartz, “On the Poverty Line,” *Sunday Times*, 21 July, 1963, p. 8; Elizabeth Good, “Wide-Awake Ideas,” *Sunday Times*, 3 February, 1963, p. 31; Mary Murphy, “Return to Teaching,” *Sunday Times*, 24 February, 1963, p. 36; Rodney Tyler, “Why I can’t get into top gear…” *Daily Mail*, 19 November, 1970, p. 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press), p. 122. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. George Schwartz, “Playing to the Gallery,” *Sunday Times*, 17 June, 1956, p. 9; Atticus, “People and Things,” *Sunday Times*, 13 September, 1959, p. 9; “Problem Parents,” *The Times*, 16 November, 1959, p. 15; “Super Spongers,” *Daily Mail*, 26 September, 1968, p. 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Charles Webster, “Government Policy on School Meals and Welfare Foods, 1939-1970,” in David F. Smith, ed. *Nutrition in Britain: Science, Scientists and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1997), 190-213. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012). See also James Vernon, “The Local, the Imperial, and the Global: Repositioning Twentieth-century Britain and the Brief Life of its Social Democracy,” *Twentieth-Century British History* 21(3) 2010: 417. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. “Family Planning 1944-49 Survey # 365” Mass Observation 3-1-C Surveys (Topic Collection); “The Effect of the War on Health and Happiness,” 11 February, 1942, Mass Observation File Report #1086; Anne Blythe, “Article by a mother of 5,” *Daily Mail*, 23 March, 1944, p. 2; Rhona Churchill, “Mme. Morin’s third baby,” *Daily Mail*, 28 December 1944, p. 2; Ann Temple, “Mothers Say the War Babies Don’t Suffer,” *Daily Mail*, 25 may, 1943, p. 2; Charles J. Martin, Harriette Chick, and E. Margaret Hume, “Letter to the editor of the Times,” *Times* 14 November, 1944, p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. “How Britain Eats,” 1 January 1942, Mass Observation File Report #1022 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Hansard HC Deb, 3 March, 1942, 8 December, 1943, 9 June, 1944, 19 November, 1944; Minute from J.R. Bellerby to Feavearyear, 10 Sept 1945, TNA MAF 101/513. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Hansard 9 June 1944 vol. 400 cc 1667 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Minute from P.G. R. Whalley to Sir John Bodinnar 1 January 1945, MAF 86/328. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Minute from G.T. Shipston to E. Jones Parry, January 16, 1945, MAF 86/328 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Minute from P.G. R. Whalley to Sir John Bodinnar 1 January 1945, MAF 86/328 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Minute from J.F. Knight to Mr. Shipston, 12 February, 1945, MAF 86/328 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Letter to J.F. Knight from A. Feavearyear, MOF, 9 February 1945, TNA MAF 86/328; [A. Feavearyear], Draft. Lord President’s Committee. Vitamin Welfare Scheme. Note by the Minister of Food, c. September, 1945, TNA MAF 101/513; David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 170-7; Allister Hinds, *Britain’s Sterling Colonial Policy and Decolonization, 1939-1958* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Minute from G.T. Shipston to F.S. Anderson, Feb 17 1945, TNA MAF 86/328; Letter to A.E. Feavearyear from G.T. Shipston, 22 Sept 1945, TNA MAF 101/513 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
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127. D.J. Morgan, *The Official History of Colonial Development Volume 3: A Reassessment of British Aid Policy, 1951-1965* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 129-30; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, pp. 105-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-127)
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138. Assessment of Risks to the West Indian Citrus Industry, appendix A, draft, TNA MH 110/12 [↑](#endnote-ref-138)
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147. Note of a meeting held at Great Westminster House, on the 5th August, 1955: Concentrated Orange Juice from Jamaica, signed C.L. Huntingford, 12 August 1955, TNA MH 110/12 [↑](#endnote-ref-147)
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163. Letter from N.W. Manley to Alan Lennox-Boyd, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 4 October 1955, TNA MH 110/12 [↑](#endnote-ref-163)
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296. Note of Meeting to discuss future proposals for the Welfare Foods Service and the effect on citrus interests abroad, 24 April 1969, TNA BN 13/186 [↑](#endnote-ref-296)
297. Letter from Michael Stewart, [Secretary of State for] Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Richard Crossman, 14 May 1969, TNA FCO 44/238 [↑](#endnote-ref-297)
298. Letter to Richard Crossman from Minister for Overseas Development, June 1969, TNA MH 156/328 [↑](#endnote-ref-298)
299. Letter to F.D. Milne, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, from B.J. Crisp, Ministry of Health and Social Security, 28 October 1969, TNA FCO 67/100; Welfare Foods Service. New Vitamin (A, C & D) Preparation. November 1970, TNA BN 13/186; Minute from E.L. Mayston to Oades & Jewsbury 1 September 1970, MH 156/335 [↑](#endnote-ref-299)
300. Handwritten note by PUSS on Minute from Marre to Oades, 17 August 1970, TNA MH 156/335. [↑](#endnote-ref-300)
301. Letter from J.W. Seymour, S&S Services, 11 January 1971, to B.J. Crisp, TNA MH 156/335 [↑](#endnote-ref-301)
302. Hansard HL Deb 11 March 1971, vol 316 cc197-204; HL Deb 22 March 1971 vol 316 cc.646-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-302)
303. Concentrated Orange Juice. Note of Visit to Jamaica and British Honduras, January/February 1971, BJ Crisp, Supply Division, DHSS, 15 February, 1971, TNA BN 13/186 [↑](#endnote-ref-303)
304. S. R. Ashton, “Keeping Change Within Bounds: A Whitehall Reassessment,” in Martin Lynn, *The British Empire in the 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2006), p. 41; Nicole Longpré, “’An Issue That Could Tear Us Apart’: Race, Empire, and Economy in the British (Welfare) State,” *Canadian Journal of History* 46(1) (2011), pp. 87-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-304)