Paul Buhle, Tim Hector: A Caribbean Radical's Story

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Main content

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In Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy (2000), the sociologist-turned-philosopher Paget Henry pays tribute to the Caribbean public intellectual Tim Hector, someone who never tired of asking, "Where is our [the Caribbean's] philosophy?" Henry acknowledges Hector as an inspiration for his groundbreaking book on the subject and Hector's love of and contributions to a philosophy of the Caribbean, along with history, politics, cricket, literature, and the arts—all evident in his sweeping "Fan the Flame" essays published in the Antiguan newspaper Outlet. A writer, Pan-Africanist, Pan-Caribbeanist, and socialist, Hector constantly challenged the people and leaders of the Caribbean to live up to the promise engendered in the remarkable achievements of its writers, singers, and athletes, and in the Haitian and Cuban revolutions. His work as a writer, trade union leader, member of the Antiguan Caribbean Liberation Movement (ACLM), and as a senator and a leading figure within the oppositional United Progressive Party (UPP) placed him at the forefront of not only Antiguan, but Caribbean oppositional politics, particularly between 1968 and 1983. These were particularly crucial years that witnessed the emergence of Black Power and the Caribbean New Left, the consolidation of the Cuban Revolution, the assassination of historian and political activist Walter Rodney, and the rise and fall of the Grenada Revolution. Hector was connected to these defining moments in Caribbean history, and his writing helped to chronicle and assess them for a Caribbean and international audience. For these reasons and more, Paul Buhle's Tim Hector: A Caribbean Radical's Story is important and timely.

Buhle knew Hector personally. As a member of Students for a Democratic...

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Among radicals and socialists of his generation, Hector was probably the most profoundly affected by James’s teachings. Indeed, James’s influence on Hector is such a pervasive leitmotif of the book that one almost gets the impression that the best way to learn about Hector is to read James. He makes no attempt to assume the mantle of scholarly objectivity. Tim Hector: A Caribbean Radical’s Story is an intensely partisan book; Buhle identifies himself with his subject and, while celebrating his accomplishments, laments his passing from the scene as an irreparable loss to the interdependent causes of regional federation and socialism in the Caribbean. The titles of the book’s five chapters reveal the general drift of Buhle’s argument.