

Haiti

Haiti was discovered in 1492 by Columbus.

The Spanish settlers massacred the Arawack Indians and brought slaves from different tribes in West Africa to work in the sugar plantations. This practice was continued by the French when they took over the island.

The slaves invented Creole in order to communicate with each other. In 1792 they drove out the settlers. Napoleon sent an army of 20,000 soldiers to put down the rebellion. The slaves defeated this army and set up the first free black republic. Unfortunately Haiti has suffered as the result of misrule within and outside political pressures.

The island, which is little bigger than Vancouver Island, has a population of nine million. Malnutrition, malaria, tuberculosis, dysentery, and Aids are rampant. Almost 80% of the people are illiterate and many live on one meal per day. Erosion has devastated the countryside as 90% of the trees have been cut down to make charcoal. A succession of hurricanes have devastated large areas

Many missions are now involved in humanitarian work The Methodist Church came to Haiti in 1804 at the invitation of President Petion who asked them to introduce the Lancastrian method of education. In recent years the Creole language has been written down by one of their pastors. Using a phonetic script developed by Dr Laubach an adult can learn to read in nine weeks. The church now has 150 schools as well as a printing press, a teacher training college and several technical schools and colleges. Experimental farms, tree nurseries, cow and pig projects, medical and dental clinics, have been set up.

This hardly begins to meet the appalling need. This poverty stricken island desperately needs urgent and on- going help.