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REPORT OF WORKSHOP IV

Subject: "Bridging the conflict between different groups in a rural community in planning programmes through participation and education - the Grand Bay Area"

The Working Group met for two full sessions, and, after some deliberations as to its terms of reference, considered that its subject could best be considered under three broad headings, viz:

- (i) identifying the main areas of conflict among the different groups in the Grand Bay area;
- (ii) considering what steps may be taken to minimize the areas of conflict; and
- (iii) suggesting proposals for development which may enlist the active support of the different groups, in an attempt to plan, prepare and carry out programmes which are beneficial to all, but more so to less privileged.

The Workshop agreed that the areas of conflict in the Grand Bay area could be classified as economic, political and social.

Economic considerations play an increasingly important role in the ideas of the people, particularly the younger people, who often feel that their efforts are not adequately rewarded. Most of these younger people in the Grand Bay area are dissatisfied with existing conditions, where they consider that differing levels of exploitation exist. For example, they believe that working for an estate merely makes the owners richer, while the low wage becomes an end in itself. They also believe that they were instrumental in influencing Government to acquire the Geneva Estate, and hence they should play an increasing role in its ownership, in order that the gains from production be more equitably distributed. As a result, they would refuse working for wages on the Estate, and they insist that it be worked by the entire community, on a cooperative basis. On the other hand, the older persons of the Grand Bay area are anxious for continued operations at the Estate where they could work for wages. This is, perhaps, because of their immediate needs for financial reward to support their families, as compared with the younger persons, who have no such financial responsibilities.

The Group believed that the economic differences of the younger and older persons have led to political conflicts regarding the administration of the Estate. For, while the more complacent older persons are concerned with earning immediate income, notwithstanding the ownership of the Estate, youths are more determined to sacrifice financial rewards for greater administrative powers. It is evident, therefore, that the decision-making process in the Grand Bay area is of far greater concern for the youths, as compared with the elders. This conflict has resulted in a situation where the elders and youths are opposed in their national political affiliations. The Workshop was mindful of this situation throughout its proposals for development.

The Group recognised that the social conflicts in the Grand Bay area were mainly between those who have some material welfare, and those who have less. But, these were not considered to be of serious dimensions; for the society is, internally, a relatively stable one. Furthermore, it was considered that, if the economic conditions of the less privileged persons improve, these conflicts of interest would soon be alleviated.

The Group considered that these basic areas of conflict can only be minimised by improving the access to land and to job opportunities. There were, however, other factors which must be given attention. For example, it was recognised that:

- (i) the community had little access to determining the use of available resources;
- (ii) there was no organised small farming sector to exert influence on pricing and marketing arrangements, as in the case of trade unions - hence these persons had little or no power to deal with their dissatisfactions;
- (iii) public services were distributed equitably without regard to who are more or less privileged; and
- (iv) there was lack of small farmer representation at all levels.

These factors led the Workshop to believe that the total community is dissatisfied in some way or other, and that some positive steps must be taken, not only to redress internal imbalances, but also to improve the general welfare of all.

In addressing itself to this problem, the Workshop attempted to identify the various groups or interests, which have some level of leadership in the community. It was surprising to learn that there were a dozen or more leaders, including village council leaders, leaders of social and religious groups, and senior civil servants. Although they differed in many ways, these leaders were, in fact, in touch with both persons from all age groups, and from all sections of the community.

It was, therefore, considered that the most appropriate approach to minimize the existing conflicts is to recruit some kind of outside technical assistance, which would work towards the development of local leadership, involving representatives from all internal groups, and encourage their working together on the planning and implementation of development proposals to meet these needs. The Workshop thought that a set of proposals should be outlined and presented to the local leaders, and, through them, to all the people. In this approach, it will be possible to obtain the necessary feedback from the people, regarding their acceptance, rejection or modification of proposals which are designed to meet their immediate needs of land and jobs.

Recommendations

In considering how the development of the Grand Bay area may proceed, in order to minimize areas of conflict, and at the same time ensure optimum levels of production, the Group made the following proposals.

1. In attempting to ensure that the efforts of the Grand Bay people are utilized to bring the Geneva Estate into full production, Government should make this Estate available, and provide arrangements for suitable infrastructure, especially roads, and for leasehold tenure for both individuals and cooperative groups. These arrangements should be mindful of the need to maximise both job opportunities and the level of output.
2. Since Geneva Estate could only accommodate about 200 families of the 1,000 families in Grand Bay at four acres of arable

land per family, whether in leasehold or cooperative tenure, the surrounding estates should be re-examined in terms of their land use policies, in an attempt to absorb more labour. Secondly, considering the shortage of houses, a housing project should be given immediate attention. Thirdly, consideration should be given to the development of agro-based industries, and to the possibilities of improving the berthing facilities at nearby Stowe, for would-be fishermen. Furthermore, farmers could be encouraged to settle on land settlement schemes in other areas. A possible distribution of the work force, if these proposals were implemented, would be:-

- 200 families - Geneva Estate
- 150 families - Services (shops, transport, etc.)
- 50 families - Tradesmen (tailors, bakers, etc.)
- 50 families - Agro-based industries
- 50 families - Housing projects and odd jobs
- 100 families - Government maintenance services
- 200 families - Surrounding Estates
- 200 families - New settlements.

3. Presently, a wide range of crops and livestock is being farmed in the Grand Bay area, most of which have a long production cycle and do not maximise the utilisation of the land and labour. The Workshop considered, therefore, that more attention should be given to short-term enterprises, e.g., corn, legumes, poultry, and rabbits which could yield at least two harvests per year. In this way the limited land can provide additional benefits.
4. The expected increase in production will have little value, unless a sound marketing system is established. It was proposed, therefore, that the Marketing Board provide a depot in the Grand Bay area, not only for the collection, purchase, grading and transport of produce, but also for the supply of such farm inputs as fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and weedicides. Furthermore, the depot should have established prices which are considered both remunerative to farmers, and reasonable to consumers, and it should provide the necessary information services regarding the supply and demand of particular commodities.
5. The process of involving the people in planning and implementing proposals is, itself, an educational one. However, it was thought that an adult education programme should be carried out simultaneously with the production and management programmes. It should be possible to obtain technical assistance for this programme. The programme should include classes on Family Life Education, Cooperative Principles and Policies, Farm Planning and General Farming Methods.