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ADDRESS OF WELCOME

by

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It has been stated repeatedly that the basic wealth of the West Indies is the land and that the future of her peoples is dependent primarily upon the sound and rapid development of her agricultural resources. No longer is it acceptable to continue with the development of peasant subsistence land use economy at the rate at which such development has taken place in the past. If a modern economic system offering higher standards of living, better nutrition, and the many other desirable essentials, is to be achieved, then there must be radical and fundamental changes in the whole system of peasant land use.

In a region that is predominantly agricultural, the real measure of progress is ultimately to be found in output from the soil in terms of yield per acre and yield per man-day of work. Increased productivity of which so much is heard nowadays, can only be achieved by raising these two levels of output at a greater rate than the increase in population. Thus, the soils of the West Indies, as well as the persons who farm them, are called upon to produce an ever-increasing amount of food, cash earning crops, and animal products, by which the general living standard of the people is determined.

This task in itself is formidable enough and it is rendered far more difficult by the enormous problems created by the wide scale soil deterioration, erosion, and other consequences of present misuse of land. These difficulties have arisen primarily from expansion of crop cultivation and increase of grazing pressure, without adequate agricultural safeguards being observed. In most cases, better systems of farming, suited to the environment, have yet to be evolved and put into general practice.

The growth of industrial and urban populations is also throwing a new and increasingly heavy burden upon the farming industry. This takes the form of an even greater demand for a wide variety of foodstuffs, i.e. the fresh staple foods, meat, milk, vegetables and fruits, and other foods such as cereals and pulses. In the long run, industrial development and the living standards and health of urban populations will be determined by the capacity of the farming industry to

maintain the supply of essential foodstuffs. High wage rates are of no real value to the West Indian if he is forced to compete in the purchase of inadequate supplies of foodstuffs.

The School of Agriculture of the University of the West Indies has been set up as one of the many agencies to serve the farming industry of the West Indian territories. Upon its success largely depends the training of a body of West Indian agricultural scientists to take an ever-increasing part in the development of the farming industry of their own people. The U.W.I. School of Agriculture also holds a unique position in being able to harness the co-operation of all agriculturally qualified personnel in the West Indies in the solution of regional problems. Indeed, the presence here of this distinguished gathering of agricultural economists and social scientists in proof of the unique position of this Institution in the service of the West Indian region.

It is important in this context to distinguish between the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture which was an old established Institution, and the present University School of Agriculture which came into existence only at the beginning of this decade. The old Imperial College was geared primarily to the needs of tropical countries within the colonial Empire of Great Britain, and its activities were not specifically directed towards West Indian problems. But it did provide a technical advisory service to the Eastern Caribbean and undertook projects, the results of which have made a significant contribution to the development of Agriculture in the region; particularly in such areas as cocoa production and soils classification and mapping. The University School of Agriculture on the other hand, is a West Indian Institution designed primarily to meet the needs of the West Indies. Its undergraduate student body is almost entirely West Indian, and the large postgraduate group also includes many West Indians. It has a key role to play as the only training Institution at present having responsibility for University level courses in Agriculture in the West Indies. It must therefore be regarded as an Institution that has to cater to a wide range of agricultural interests throughout the varied conditions of the West Indies, and that has to depend for its growth and vitality upon the fullest support from, and co-operation with, the many agencies concerned with farming development in this region. This implies regular consultation and a continuous adaptation of the work of the School of Agriculture to meet the changing needs of the farming industry of these territories.

Over the past year, we have attempted to provide greater opportunities for consultation and collaboration between the University and the territorial Governments in solving the problems confronting West Indian Agriculture. In April 1965, we organised a "Summer School" in Grenada, whose theme was 'Livestock Production, Pasture Management, Animal Health and Weed Control'. It provided an opportunity for some of my colleagues and myself to see something of Grenadian Agriculture and to discuss with the territorial Ministry of Agriculture personnel problems relating thereto. We hope to include some of these problems in our current research and investigational programmes. In September 1965, we conducted a work-shop on the various aspects of "Land Use and Land Capability" in Dominica. In December 1965, a School on "Food Crop Production and Extension Methods" was held in Barbados and another School on "Soil and Water Conservation," "Food Crop Production and Extension Methods" was organised in St. Lucia. In addition, we also organised a major Agricultural Research Conference in Jamaica in January, 1966. The success of these efforts was evidenced by the fact that Agricultural Research programmes in Jamaica, for instance, are now planned by joint action of the Jamaica Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the University School of Agriculture in Trinidad.

There is no doubt in my own mind that future rapid development in Agriculture in the West Indies would entail an intimate dovetailing of the efforts of both University and non-University Institutions. As a group of agricultural economists and social scientists, you have an important role to play in demonstrating that the technical and the economic approaches to Agriculture are essentially complementary. We look to you as the body of persons who should provide the guide lines for the pattern of future agricultural development in the Caribbean countries. That the University of the West Indies has recognised the importance of the discipline of Agricultural Economics is evidenced by the creation in 1964 of a full Department of Agricultural Economics on par with the Department of Crop and Animal Production, Botany and Zoology and Soil Science. That it has taken so long to implement this obviously progressive move should not deter the Department from growing rapidly from strength to strength in the future.

Other pressing University duties have taken me to St. Lucia on a day when it should have been my privilege to be with this distinguished gathering of agricultural economists. I would however like to express appreciation to you for the way in which you have responded to our invitation to attend this Agricultural Economics Conference.

A week ago I was in New York to solicit the support of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations for the further development of our University School of Agriculture. In accepting our proposals for support, the Foundations gave their blessing to the direction in which we are moving. They accepted that the active participation of the U.W.I. School of Agriculture in Agricultural development in the West Indian territories is not only desirable but also essential. They further agreed that at the present stage of development of West Indian Agriculture, the University should make a special effort at coordinating research, extension and education activities in Agriculture in all the Caribbean islands. I am indeed happy to let you know that in pursuance of this philosophy, the Ford Foundation has made it possible for a University Department of Agricultural Extension to become a reality in the triennium 1966/69 in the University of the West Indies. There is little doubt now, that staff of the territorial Ministries of Agriculture would be kept informed of the knowledge available from research conducted at the University, and equally the regional problems which require solution could be more readily brought to the notice of University researchers. The establishment of this two-way communication between the University School of Agriculture and the territorial Ministries is one of the most progressive steps made in the cause of Agricultural development in the West Indies in the current decade.

In the field of Agricultural Education, my Faculty has recently commenced to play an active part in the development of agricultural training at all levels in the West Indies. Thus, at the Eastern Caribbean Farm Institute in Trinidad direct assistance is provided by my colleagues in the conduct of courses for students preparing for the Diploma in Agriculture of that Institution. Diplomates from both the Eastern Caribbean Farm Institute and the Jamaica School of Agriculture, who have the ability and ambition to pursue University courses in Agriculture are given every encouragement to do so, and my Faculty admits such Diplomates to degree courses even though they may not satisfy other Matriculation requirements of the University. Ways and means by which additional assistance could be provided for furthering the present valuable role that Institutions such as the Eastern Caribbean Farm Institute and the Jamaica School of Agriculture play in the field of Technology, are now under active consideration.

May I say, once again, how delighted my colleagues and I are to have you with us on this Campus for this week. We hope that you would recognise that this is your Campus, your University, and that you would come again.