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Discussion Report

Mr. Demas stressed what he called the need for a "theory and ideology of development" in the Caribbean and he chose as the focus of attention the tourist industry in the Caribbean and its relation to the agricultural sector.

The discussion which followed, examined the theme of the address and the relation of tourism to agriculture in some detail and considered some of the possible means of increasing the efficiency and contribution of the domestic agricultural sector.

With respect to the particular case of tourism and agriculture, Mr. Demas pointed out that this caused a drain on agricultural labour since the tourist trade could afford higher wages and this is added to the stigma already attached to agricultural labour. With agricultural labour supplies being depleted, the tourist industry turned to importation of its food requirements, thus hindering the development of domestic linkages and at the same time responding abroad foreign exchange earned by the tourist industry.

It was argued then that the way out of this dilemma was to change the structures of both the tourist industry and of the agricultural sector. The discussion then settled on the question of how can the type of luxury tourism currently in vogue in the area be turned into a more domestic "Guest House" type tourism as suggested in the address. There was some argument as to whether "Guest House" tourism, carrying as it does the assumption that the tourist is made to accept the local area unchanged, will necessarily lead to more domestic linkages. The difficulties were seen to be both the quality of local foods - e.g. meats-*vis-a-vis* the quality of foreign foods to which the tourists are accustomed and also the alleged 'palate' or tastes which the tourist brings with him. A partial solution here, of course, was to aim at the middle and lower-middle class tourist (rather than the rich tourist) through a Guest House programme.

The subsidiary question of getting agriculture moving was considered on both the territorial and regional levels. It was felt that a system of land taxation on unused or under-utilized land would force such land into production, although difficulties about the basis of such taxation-potential value - were recognised.

It was also suggested that the agricultural sector could perhaps be made more efficient by

the involvement of small-scale farmers in the national planning process. This could be done through extension services - the inadequacies of extension services were considered an extremely serious difficulty - or alternatively through more direct participation of farmers by means of regional or crop-groupings. However, it was conceded that the mere inclusion of small-scale farmers into the dialogue of planning would not be sufficient if the "trinity of essentials" - marketing, credit and extension - were not given far more detailed and serious consideration than they presently receive.

At this point it was suggested that perhaps encouragement of the co-operative movement would provide both a theory and ideology of development in the region. The establishment of co-operatives would not only facilitate the involvement of small-scale farmers in the dialogue of planning, but could also serve as a source of incentive which would increase productivity in the agricultural sector as well as provide an ideological commitment to local enterprise. In the context of the co-operative movement the standards of agricultural output would be improved and there would be an economising of scarce resources available for that "trinity of essentials" - marketing, credit and extension. Perhaps, with co-operatives also, some of the conflict between structural change and employment in the agricultural sector could be mitigated and change made in a manner that effects the problems of unemployment - the most important social and economic problem in the region - most favourably.

The discussion then shifted briefly to a consideration of the conflict between national planning in agriculture and planning on the regional Carifta level. It was pointed out that while the intention was not to relegate the less-developed member-countries of Carifta to the roles of "hewers of wood and drawers of water" they could nevertheless gain from a policy of co-operation in terms of the sharing and pooling of information and regional consultation on national plans. In addition, since the region had accepted the principle of regional planning in terms of industry, there was not a priori reason why it should be difficult for such planning and programming to occur with respect to the agricultural sector.

A specific suggestion that arose in this respect was with regard to the setting up of regionally integrated agro-based as well as other industries with share equity being held in all member countries. Individual member countries would benefit

from the enterprise not only from its operation in the actual territories in which it is based, but also by profit-sharing by territories in which the enterprise has no plants. Thus there may be less conflict with respect to the siting of particular industries.

The final item considered by the session concerned the possible establishment of an agricultural professional association with a view to ascribing status to agriculturists and to overcoming bias

against agricultural professions.¹ It was suggested that this has worked well in Canada and elsewhere and might go a long way in improving the social acceptance of agriculture and related professions.

The Chairman of the Discussion Session was Mr. Randolph Williams of the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

¹It is perhaps an interesting comment that by the end of the week-long conference, preliminary work had begun on the establishment of such a professional association.