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SOME ASPECTS OF THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF TOURISM ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE OF ST. KITTS-NEVIS-ANGUILLA

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a wave of tourist development all over the Caribbean including the state of St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla. It becomes necessary to consider what possible effects the development of such an industry could have on the overall development of the State, particularly on agriculture which makes the greatest contribution to the economy. Government has already committed itself to supporting tourism and it must be accepted that, without such support, the benefits from the industry would not be channelled in such a way as to be of advantage to the whole economy. What is really important is to ascertain whether a strategy could be adopted which would promote the full development of the industry and also permit agricultural growth.

The purpose of this paper is to try and show the need for looking more closely at agricultural development plans. This is of particular importance since the Government is now reviewing agricultural development and it is hoped that some of the ideas expressed might be beneficial. The paper deals largely with St. Kitts and Nevis. Little reference is made to Anguilla since it is believed that the island has little potential for agricultural development; rather it is ideally suited for tourism. The problem of the incompatibility of development of tourism and agriculture therefore does not arise.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

Agriculture in St. Kitts and Nevis has developed along different lines. In Nevis the system of small farming on minute plots ($\frac{1}{4}$ to 3 acres) evolved as a result of the fragmentation of large estates which were no longer economically viable and, therefore, unable to employ labour. This fragmentation and redistribution of land enabled the former estate labourer to continue making a living from agriculture.

The crops grown on these plots included the same export crops which had proved to be uneconomical on the large estate. In addition there was sugar cane for which there was a guaranteed cash income and the production of livestock, root crops

and vegetables supplied the local market with cheap foodstuff. This source of food was extremely important during the war years and export of surpluses to St. Kitts and other neighbouring islands made Nevis an important area for food production.

In St. Kitts, on the other hand, in spite of the availability of land and a more favourable agro-nomic environment, land owners by means of tenancy and other methods were able to effectively frustrate any attempt at development of an independent farming society as existed in Nevis. As a result of this all the labourers were forced to offer their services to the sugar industry.

The pattern of development which had emerged in Nevis and St. Kitts became the chief determinant of how agricultural development funds were allocated. Greater emphasis has since then been placed on agriculture in Nevis, although neither the agro-nomic nor the socio-economic considerations suggest that the prevailing pattern of development there should be continued. This allocation could be justified on the grounds that there are a larger number of subsistence level farmers there.

Over the last decade a spectacular change of attitude has taken place towards agriculture. The general improvement in education and increased emigration outlets have contributed greatly to this. In St. Kitts this has resulted in labour shortages on estates in spite of growing unemployment and in Nevis (Appendix 2) the number of farmers, the acreage allotted to farming and the output of export crops have all fallen considerably. The same is generally true for the rest of agriculture, but statistics to support these observations are not available.

Reduced food production, coupled with rising food imports made it necessary to pass Food Production Laws in 1958 in order to compel the sugar estates to produce food. This approach has not been completely successful but created a tendency for sugar estates to encourage labourers in part-time farming as tenants on estate lands. Part-time farming served to retain the services of the labourers on the estates which were suffering from labour shortages. It also shifted the responsibility of food production to the labourers. However, labourers in St. Kitts prefer wage earning

to independent farming and as a result small farming is practised as a means of supplementing wage-earned income.

THE TOURIST INDUSTRY

Considering the amount of planned investment for St. Kitts and observing the impact of similar investment in Nevis, projections can be made on the future performance of the tourist industry. It is anticipated that the tourist industry will increase its capacity from a present 500 beds to 3,000. This will include resident retired tourists who are likely to build homes, those who build summer houses or come to spend summer in hotels, and those who come for shorter visits. Presently the tourist trade is not showing any marked seasonality, but the cost of accommodation fluctuates from season to season.

Reports from countries where tourist development is advanced indicate that wage levels are high especially when compared with agricultural wages. This is understandable since so much investment goes into the employment of a unit of labour thereby increasing its productivity. Available statistics suggest that if the wage in the sugar industry is taken to represent the agricultural wage and, accepting that it employs 25% of the total labour force during the off season and 40% during the crop, then the wage level here is higher than outside the industry. This is shown graphically in Appendix 3. The fact that there is a movement from agricultural occupation to other types of employment suggests that fringe benefits and general satisfaction from non-agricultural labour is greater than the wage index suggests. It is likely that this could be used as evidence that the agricultural image is not an healthy one.

Land

It has been observed that with the development of tourism there has been a tendency for all land values to escalate. This results in a tendency for small farmers to retain land for speculative purposes. In addition there is a shift from agriculture which was noted above. There is no need to emphasise how these two tendencies can affect agricultural development in St. Kitts, particularly because the land owning peasantry is so small.

Labour and Wages

Tourism at the level anticipated is likely to need about five thousand additional labour units in the next two to three years. This figure is almost the total labour force presently employed in the sugar industry. Moreover, this labour will probably be employed at wage levels that are higher than agriculture can afford. Further, the natural increase in the labour force will only be about one thousand, so that the increased demand for labour

in tourism i. e. four thousand will be met by drawing labour from other activities particularly from agriculture.

Given that the present agricultural labour force and farmer population is eight thousand to eight thousand five hundred it appears that tourism is likely to attract 50% of this number. Present immigration policies do not appear to allow this deficit to be met from other sources of labour. Furthermore, the average age of this group is over 50 and as tourism is likely to attract the younger members of the labour force, the effect will be to further increase the average age of the agricultural labour and farm population. In addition part of the labour force will have a preference for skilled or clerical occupations. The combined effect will be to decrease the labour force available to agriculture. This should condition the future pattern of agricultural development.

Capital and Investment

It is possible that new investment funds will be invested in tourism, not in agriculture, given the relatively higher prosperity of the former. In addition, in view of Government's commitment to tourism scarce public funds will be invested in tourism at the expense of investment needed to implement a suitable agricultural development plan.

Benefits of Tourism

There is likely to be an increased demand for agricultural products and especially for fresh vegetables and meats. The increased demand may result both from a growing number of tourists and from increased domestic incomes associated with the rise in tourism.

At present some hotels in Nevis are producing their own beef and vegetables at high cost. This development does not provide the basis from which maximum benefits can be derived. The agricultural sector should be allowed to specialise in the production of food which could then be sold to the tourist sector at lower cost.

CONCLUSION

If the above disadvantages seem to outweigh the benefits then Government will have to decide on a course of action. Two alternatives exist:

- (a) transform traditional agriculture in order that it may be able to co-exist with tourism
- and (b) allow tourism to become the dominant industry and permit agriculture to decay.

However, the second alternative suggests replacing a monoculture sugar economy by a 'monoculture' tourist economy. Therefore, it would appear preferable to choose alternative (a).

Recommendations

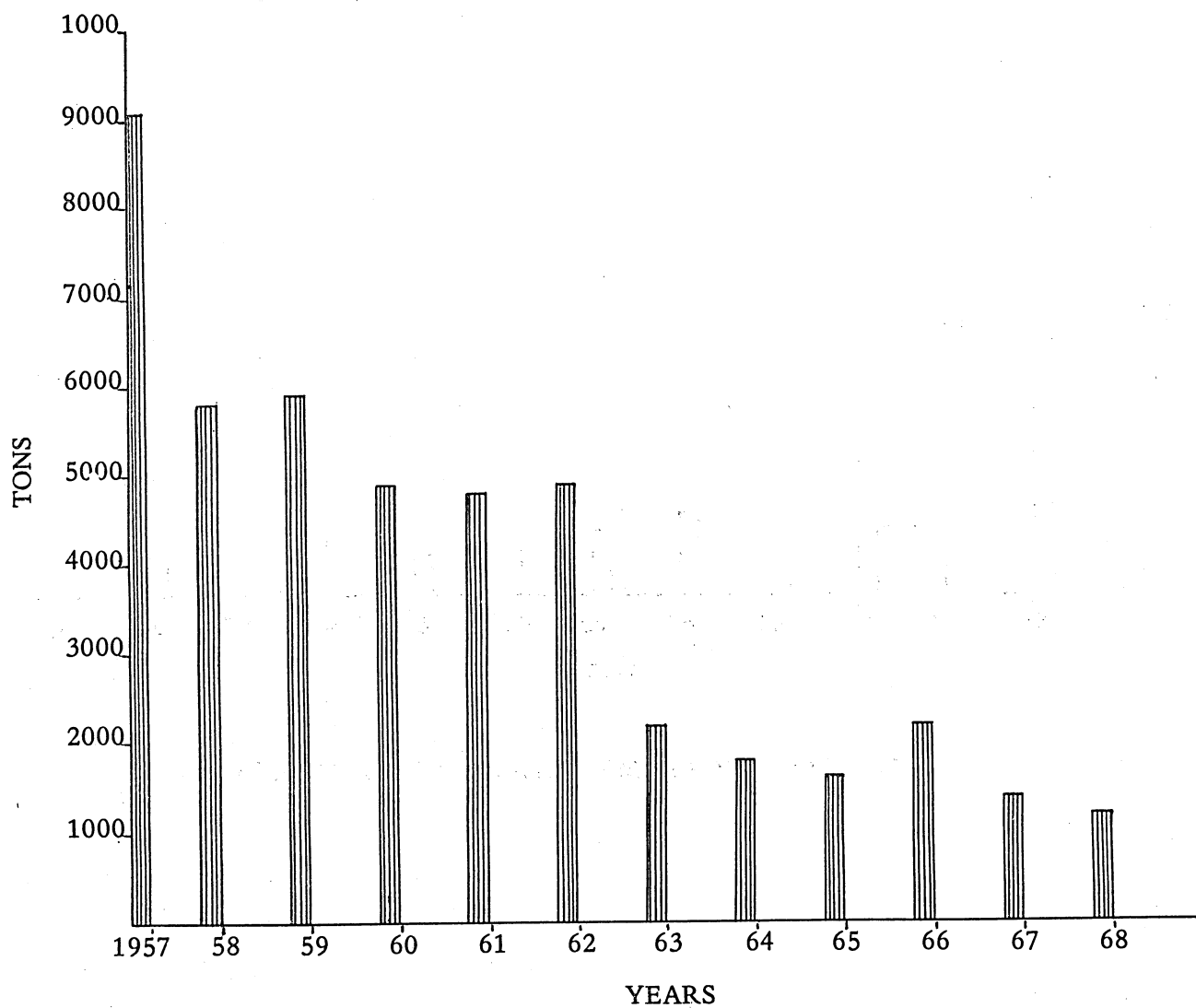
Any strategy to ensure compatibility between agriculture and tourism must incorporate the following:

1. A system that would equalise real incomes in tourism and agriculture. This may involve heavy investment in agriculture and the possible reduction in the

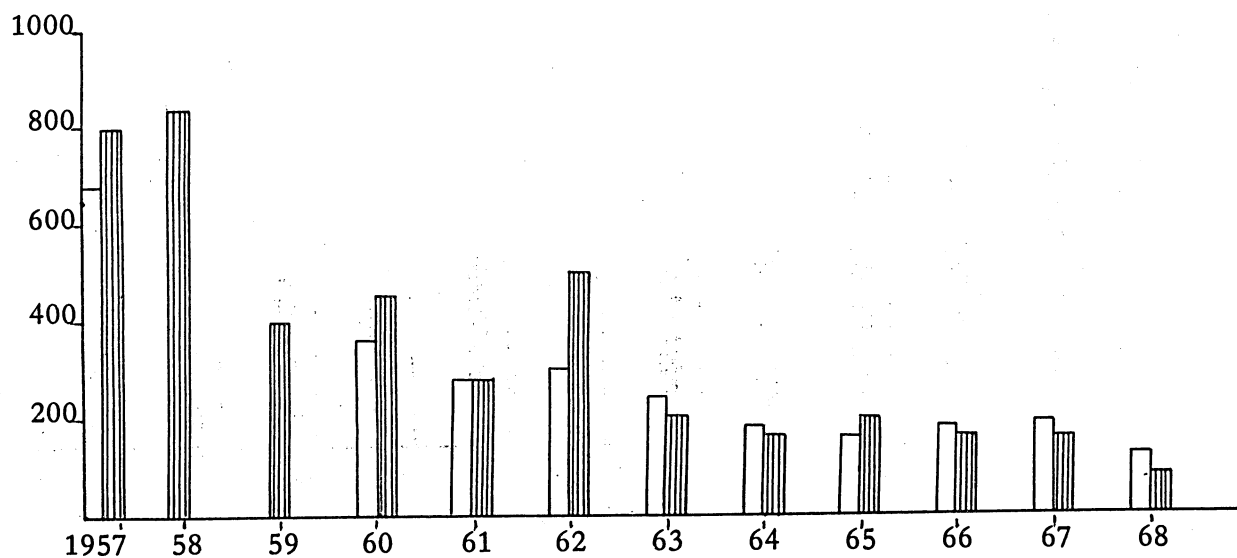
existing agricultural labour force by retirement and re-training schemes.

2. Real incomes depend on job satisfaction. As long as social attitudes hold agriculture in low esteem, real agricultural incomes will remain low and agriculture will fail to attract able personnel. This aspect may require the attention of sociologists and rural development experts.
3. The need for legislation to institute zoning according to land capability principles. This would control the price of agricultural land and minimize the effect on land prices of the growing tourist industry.

CANE PURCHASES FROM NEVIS 1957 - 68

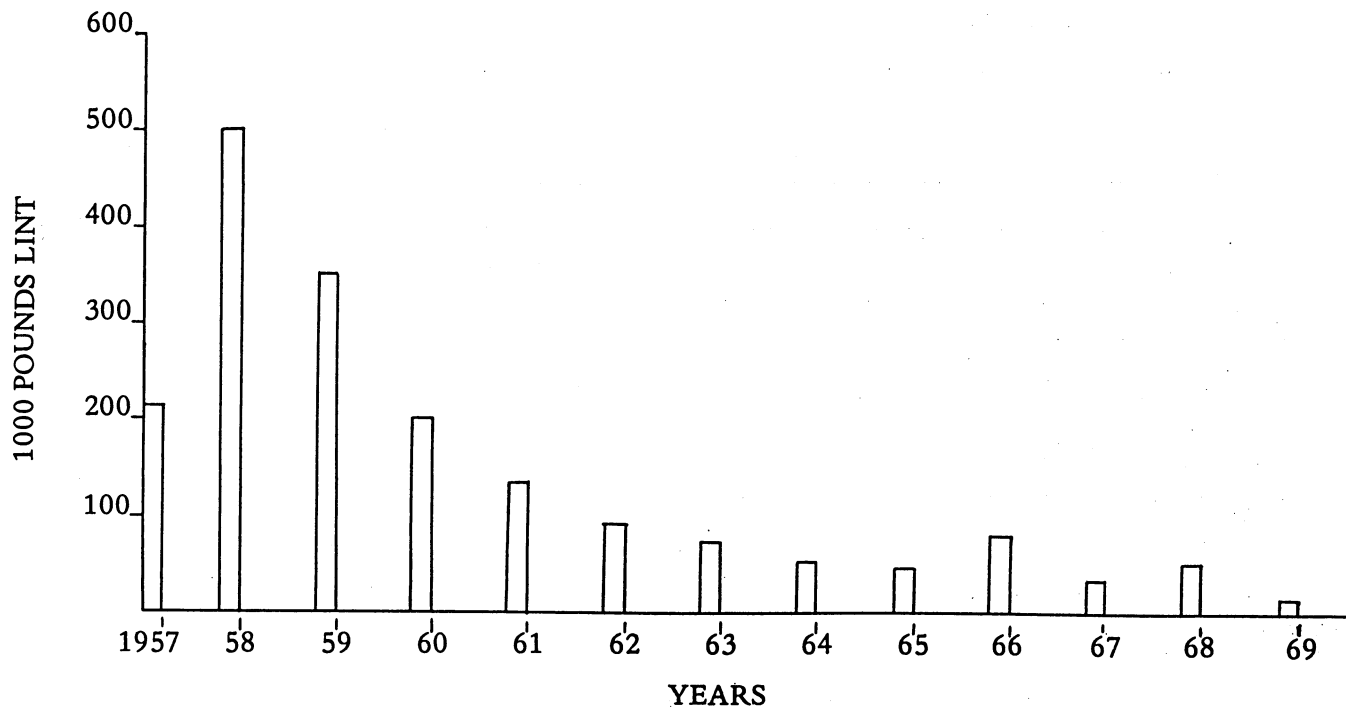


NO. OF CANE FARMERS □ AND CANE ACREAGE ■ 1957 - 68

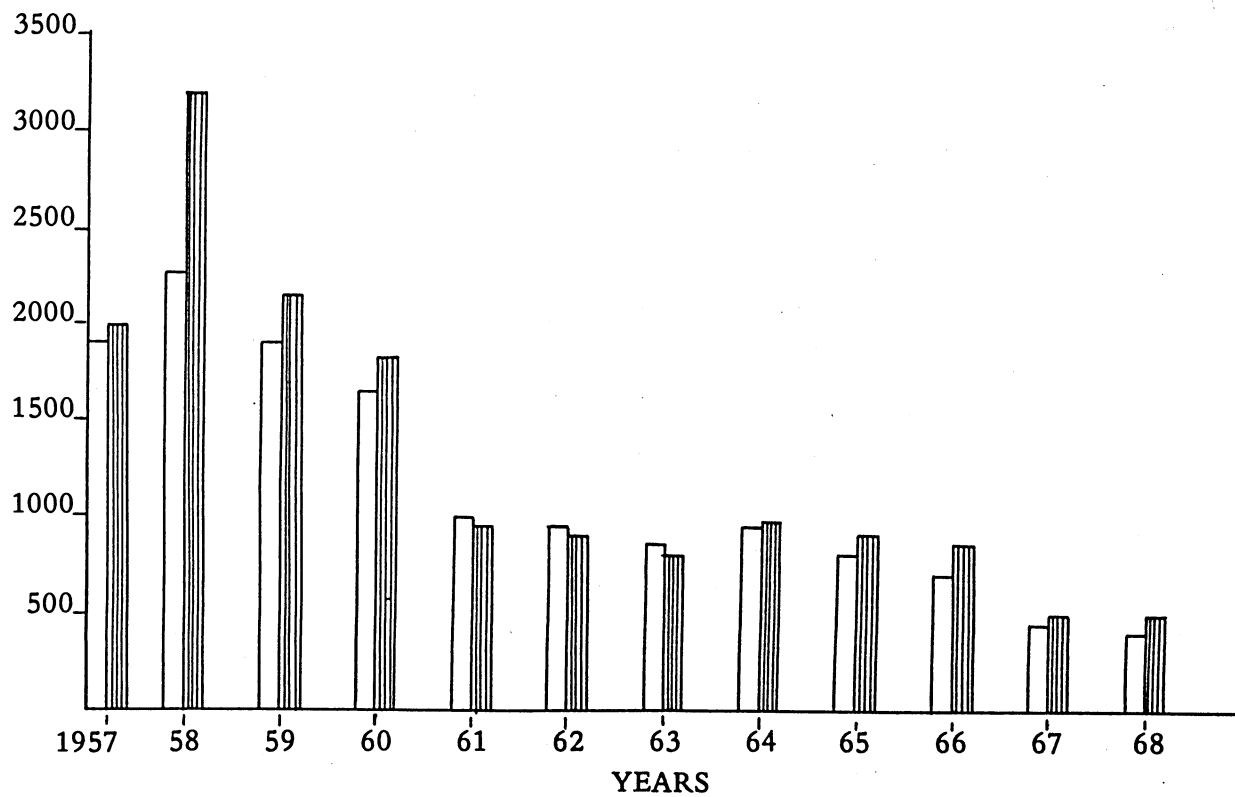


APPENDIX 2

CLEAR LINT PRODUCTION IN NEVIS 1957 - 68



NUMBER OF COTTON FARMERS □ AND ACREAGES ■ 1957 - 68



APPENDIX 3

TOTAL LABOUR WAGE Vs. AGRICULTURE WAGE

