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DISCUSSION REPORT

(Paper presented by Dr. D.A. Ali)

Dr. Ali was first of all complimented for his approach and for exposing the technical possibilities in utilising new material in the region. With regard to the utilisation of the by-products from the sugar industry, delegates agreed to Dr. Ali's suggestion in principle but it was noted that this depended heavily on the volume of raw material consumed, whether or not the governments of the territories would want to collect all the raw material and make a regional industry out of the by-products. Undoubtedly, there must be rationalisation and harmonisation. If the region must get on with research and development and the import of technology for by-product utilisation, regional policies must be formulated as to where things are going to be sited and to prevent the situation where people are fighting each other to provide fiscal incentives of one kind or another for certain industries.

With regard to the shrimp industry the Guyana Government is leading the way by requiring each trawler, foreign-owned or not, to bring in at least 20 per cent fish in addition to shrimp. Dr. Ali was under the impression that it was two tons per voyage and not 20 per cent. However, this was certainly a start in the right direction but there is still a vast amount of fish that is still being dumped overboard.

Dr. Ali threw some light on the possibility of using banana in producing flour and making paper from the pseudo-stem of the bananas. A flour-type product can be made from green banana which is rich in starches and a powder from ripe banana rich in sugar rather than starches. This powder is aimed at the ice-cream trade, bakery trade, sundaes, baby foods, and invalid foods while banana flour can be used for cooking and baking. There is quite a sizeable market for banana powder in North America, which imports a large amount of banana puree from Central America, largely for making baby foods. There is as yet no banana powder being made anywhere of an adequate quality and at the type of price that people are willing to pay. Banana powder could command a price of US\$500 a ton. The fibre of the pseudo-stem is too coarse and long for paper-making but it makes very good quality rope and twine, and Cariri and the Industrial Development Corporation have been doing research on it.

One delegate observed that it was not the narrow profit areas that must be considered but the broader implications, as indicated by Dr. Sammy, so that Dr. Ali had done a little disservice to himself. The planning of food production cannot be left to private profit.

Concerning the structural barriers to change and development in economy in the Caribbean, Dr. Ali affirmed that the whole approach to development must be re-evaluated. Regional science policies need to be devised that are concerned with evaluating a selected technology more suitable to the region's development strategy. There must be definition of what the region is going to get out of this strategy.

With special reference to the fishing and shrimping industry, difficulties were recounted in being able to sell fish with shrimps to the Government of Guyana and in obtaining shrimps in the market in Barbados when shrimps were being processed at a processing plant nearby.

The fundamental issue was not in talking about technology and the application of technology and of the different processes but in how to control these sources of production supply, perhaps prior to how to process food supplies.

Dr. Ali agreed that something has to be done with respect to changing the whole legal structure. There were some funny laws in the Caribbean. For instance, the catches that come from the trawlers in the Guyana banks are bondable, and are all processed in Trinidad for processing fees and exported to the United States. A lot of the trawlers have people who operate out of that bonded plant and who would like to bring in some fish, except that they cannot sell it because they have got to go through Customs and there is not the mechanism set up to do this.

One delegate observed that there was a large import of protein concentrates or chicken production in the region. A recent U.N. survey had indicated that the largest known reserve of fish was off the continental shelf of Guyana and it was wondered whether fish was being developed as a major processing concern. Nevertheless, nothing was done except that 400m. pounds of fish were being thrown away when the region could be getting about 40 to 60 tons a year, enough to satisfy the Caribbean demand for fish. The fishing problem would be complicated by the pressure that little countries will face if they prepare and implement laws for their benefit.

One of the factors in the shrimp versus fish problem is sheer control as it will be difficult to bring in 600,000 pounds of fish and shrimp in these boats. Dr. Ali mentioned that these trawlers are by and large 72-foot trawlers, with a capacity of 60-70,000 pounds which go out for five to eight weeks. The Japanese boats will bring in 105-106,000 pounds a year and this means there is an unused capacity of about 60,000 pounds. The problem is not the whole capacity but how to tell the trawler captain to sort, wash and pack away his fish for the control price of one cent per pound. The answer to the problem, as Dr. Sammy had suggested, lay in a factory ship processing it right out in the sea.