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DISCUSSION REPORT

(Discussion of paper presented by Dr. L.G. Campbell)

Discussant: W.J. Phillips

Anyone who has been associated with this Conference for some time and reading this paper will leave it with a sense of familiarity. This is not meant as a criticism of the paper since the need to stress the importance of certain things - land reform better marketing, more and better institutions, zoning etc., is well recognised.

To say the above raises a fundamental question concerning the Conference, i.e., to whom are our suggestions, recommendations etc., directed and whether and how are they effected. We would like to think that our recommendations are aimed at policy-makers and that we ourselves use any power or position at our disposal to see them effected.

If this is so, then the limitations of the paper become apparent, indeed the limitations of the Conference become so. This paper has not provided any firm strategy for the development of the food sector. Nor has the Conference to my mind provided to policy-makers any firm coordinated strategy for agricultural sector or agricultural development except in few cases dealing with specific areas. There is doubt in my mind as to how effective the Conference has been in influencing policy, specifically or generally. The fact that we have been seeing familiar papers over time is evidence that we have not.

In this regard, I would like to suggest that now the Conference will be run by the Society that the Society *qua* Society should aim to influence policy more directly. The Society should try to develop some programme or programmed guidelines for agro-industrial development nationally and regionally. I am aware that there are several groups in the region doing this type of work. On the other hand, we can make a start to assist them as well as to be assisted by them.

The suggestion is that the Society commission a person or small group to go into our proceedings of the last nine years and with the papers from this Conference and the groups already working, see whether some firm strategy or plan can be put up for consideration, feedback and implementation by policy-makers.

To get back to the paper: as the paper indicates (p.65), we know the *what* both in terms of problems and broad approaches. The problem for this Conference and its individual delegates is some more detailed answers to the *how* and *why* questions. For example:-

- (1) Page 54 - crisis situations leading to necessary response. A fundamental question to my mind is whether development is a function of crisis situations, can these be managed, and how? If answers are positive, it may well be that our state of *in-betweenity* would never give us the will and determination called for by the paper.
- (2) On page 55, the importance of chemicals and fertilisers is mentioned and well recognised.

In a paper last year, Nurse and Farrell suggested how Trinidad's oil revenues may be used to develop fertilisers and petrochemical industries for the provision of these inputs to national and regional agriculture. How seriously this was taken, I do not know. Maybe this is being done, but as I say, I do not know.

Of course the balance of national and regional interest interposes itself here. The question is, can we in the region use the fertilizers reportedly promised by the Trinidad Government to China?

- (3) Page: 57 - the question of processing. Again a problem of how development of techniques, use of manuals etc. Maybe CARIRI can help us here.
- (4) Page 60 - Why are low prices paid to farmers and also by implication low prices to consumers? Why are "*ministers ... often more inclined to give protection to the consumer ...*" as against the farmer? Are not farmers political forces also, and also consumers? Are they not vocal enough, and what could be done?
- (5) Page 61 - Can feeder road building be done on a self-help basis with Government providing materials etc.?
- (6) Pages 62 and 63 - the need for training is well recognised, particularly concentrating on the school age groups. We are hoping that at a lower level than indicated, our National Service will make a positive contribution in this respect in Guyana.
- (7) Page 64 - in a regional approach, we have talked a lot about the rationalisation of agriculture in the Region. The paper does not mention this specifically, and perhaps for the good reason that the politics of rationalisation prevent its immediate implementation. The approach through joint projects may well be the answer to meeting current food shortages in the Region quickly. It does not, however, obviate the need for structural changes both at national and regional levels.