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Discussion of Workshop Reports

The Chairman (H. Blades, Guyana) began the session by summarising the needs of the Grand Bay area as identified by the workshops. These were as follows:

- (i) involvement of the people of the area in the implementation of the proposals;
- (ii) increasing the economic welfare of the people;
- (iii) getting proposals implemented immediately;
- (iv) a major input into the area of management, technical and organisational skills; and
- (v) implementation of an educational programme to provide some skills which are lacking and to raise the level of social and political consciousness.

There had been general agreement that these proposals must be implemented by setting up a body comprising representatives of Grand Bay, and other persons with technical skills. As a result, it was recommended that a company should be organised. Eventually this could develop into a cooperative body with members from the Grand Bay area on the Board of Directors.

It had been suggested that the Estate should be farmed by both cooperative groups and individuals on a leasehold basis, employing about 200 families. Employment for the other 800 families could be provided by agro-industries and service activities and also by the establishment of new land settlements. The need had also been recognised for a change in the present crops produced in order to allow for production on a more intensive basis.

In the discussion that followed it was pointed out that there were conflicts in the various workshops as to what type of production would be best for Geneva. The reports of the consultants did not go far enough in examining the cropping patterns. Thus it was advised that these proposals should be discussed initially in relation to their ideas for organisation and management, and then the cropping patterns should be examined taking into consideration marketing possibilities for new and existing crops. New crops and livestock should be considered in relation to the life style of the people of Grand Bay as well as market opportunities and nutritional needs.

Concerning the need for immediate employment discussed in Workshop I, it was suggested that the coconut area which was contained in all the proposals and which was run at present by the LMA, needed immediate and fundamental rehabilitation. Also, with the same object in mind, the lime area could be rehabilitated and the coir factory re-installed.

During the rest of the discussion participants addressed themselves to the major constraints affecting the development of the Grand Bay area. These were identified as: (i) Government's lack of commitment to the development of the area; (ii) the constraints under which the LMA had to operate; (iii) the inability of the people to effect development; and (iv) the serious need for capital. The discussion

also produced some inflammatory remarks especially with regard to the LMA's failure to develop the area while receiving 'fat salaries,' and Government's failure to implement an agricultural plan.

The observation was made that under Section 24(1) of the LMA Act, it would appear that the LMA and not the Government has the capacity to set up an organisation like the proposed Grand Bay Council. The title of the land could, therefore, be transferred to a Development Council.

Replying to the criticisms levelled at the LMA, the Chairman of the LMA informed delegates that the Authority was relatively new, and had been set up for just two and one-half years. The Authority had been instructed by Government not to pursue a development programme at Grand Bay because a national agricultural development programme was being prepared and consideration would be given to the development of Grand Bay within that programme. The LMA was expected, however, to bring the estate into some form of operation. This meant that it had to undertake a considerable capital expenditure: the office and the estate roads had to be repaired; accommodation had to be provided for an overseer; transport had to be provided; and water had to be brought in by hand. Furthermore, the LMA had to operate within an overdraft of just \$15,000.

In addition, the Estate's income was diminished considerably since people helped themselves to the produce of the Estate. In spite of this the Authority tried to hire as many people as possible but not everyone could be employed. When seasonal work was ended, e.g., lime production, people had to be laid off.

Recognising the hardships faced by the people of Grand Bay, the Authority placed 121 tenants in Geneva on small plots to grow provisions even though Government had forbidden this. It was, therefore, possible to provide only annual tenancies in order not to preclude other developments on the Estate in the future. In closing, the Chairman of the Authority stated that the development of Geneva depended principally on the availability of credit; he hoped that the Conference could use its influence to help the Authority to obtain both short- and long-term loans from some of the financial institutions present at the meeting.

Although clarifying somewhat the position of the LMA the statement by its Chairman did not prevent delegates from continuing to criticise the Authority, on both general and specific issues. The lack of political will to effect change on the part of the Government was seen as a contributing factor to the poor performance of the LMA. The secrecy surrounding the national agricultural development plan, which had hampered both consultants and Conference participants, was also seen to be part of this problem and was deplored.

Several suggestions were made for utilising the limited funds available to the LMA for productive activity rather than for infrastructure, thus generating employment and revenue in the short run. Reference was made to the *Lot 10* settlement scheme in Trinidad which was established without any institutional credit and has proved most successful.¹

James, L.J. (1969). *Lot 10: The Introduction of a Small Farm Project in an Oilfield Area*. Occasional Series No.4, Dept. of Agric. Econ. & Farm Management, U.W.I., Trinidad.

Finally, delegates recommended that the report of the Post-Conference Committee to be established by the Society make specific recommendations for alleviating the problems of Geneva/Grand Bay. Such a report was felt to be more likely to be implemented and less likely to 'gather dust on a shelf'.