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## SUMMARY ADDRESS

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The Caribbean Agro-Economic Society must be congratulated for breaking away from the conventional past to a practical approach to problem-solving at this Eleventh Conference. As its theme, Conference chose to look at the problems of the Grand Bay area of Dominica, and to develop a systematic and scientific action-designed programme, taking into fullest account the desires and wishes of the people of Grand Bay, which could lead to a solution of the pressing social and economic issues which for the past years have been of concern to the people of Grand Bay, the Government of Dominica, and indeed the entire population of this State.

This topic has evoked widespread interest, not only in Dominica but throughout the Caribbean and beyond, in this Eleventh Agro-Economic Conference. This has resulted, as we have seen, in a large number of experts and professionals, who are not members of the Agro-Economic Society, and of lay people, young and old, attending and taking part in the deliberations of the Conference. This widespread participation has been a major and outstanding success of this Conference.

The approach adopted by the Agro-Economic Society was to appoint a Team of Consultants with varying disciplines to prepare a working document for Conference, after making a study of the operations of the leasehold tenancies of the Dominica Land Management Authority at Melville Hall, and also of the activities of the Castle Bruce Farmers' Cooperative. The purpose of this approach was to assess whether these operations could provide any relevant information that could be adopted in arriving at a solution to the Grand Bay situation with particular reference to Geneva. The Team also undertook a study of the Grand Bay area itself, so as to compile background information of an economic and sociological nature to enable meaningful discussion at the Conference that could lead to a possible solution of the existing Grand Bay problem.

Before the Society could embark upon this exercise, the approval and collaboration of the appropriate Ministry of Government was sought and obtained. Thus, it is likely that the expectation of the Ministry is that a set of recommendations will be forthcoming from this Conference, for a quick and practical solution of the Grand Bay situation.

Because this problem of Geneva and Grand Bay has been hanging for such a long time, all concerned, and not least the people of Grand Bay, are anxiously awaiting the outcome of this Conference. It is to be understood that expectations have been heightened by the extensive publicity that was given to the theme of this Conference, which has been demonstrated by the large number of persons from the Grand Bay area who have attended this Conference from the beginning to the end, and participated so keenly in its deliberations.

In an effort to summarize the proceedings, it is necessary to begin with the Case Study Report, the main conference document. The

Consultants must be congratulated for having developed and presented this study. It is evident that a great deal of investigational work, expertise and professional competence has been put into the document. While it has provided a good basis for discussion and the springboard for the final conference recommendations that will eventually emerge, many participants complained that the document was deficient in the thoroughness of the economic analysis of the projects reported upon. However, in giving expression to their feelings on this particular point, one must comment on the high standard of discussion and professional etiquette that prevailed at all times.

Two participants have committed their critique on the working document to writing and limited numbers of their paper were circulated to the Conference. This document evidently was prepared after a very careful study of the working paper, and contains certain observations which should contribute in large measure to the high level of professional input which has characterised this Conference throughout.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, the professionalism and care which went into the interviews with the Melville Hall tenants were not similarly applied in respect of the interview with members of the Castle Bruce Cooperative, who were interviewed as a group, after having been selected by the leaders of the Cooperative: an approach which the Consultants themselves admit was fraught with problems. The group interview should and could have been avoided, if free comment was expected.

In organising a Conference such as this, the development of an effective programme for the conduct of the proceedings is vital to its success. Therefore, those who were responsible for the planning and implementation of the programme must be commended. The Plenary Sessions provided an opportunity for general discussion on the subject matter as presented, and for elucidation and clarification of points by the Consultants and Discussants, and the general body of participants. More detailed discussions leading to the framing of positive recommendations took place in the Workshops. It is of great significance that both the Case Study and the Conference took the view that the approach to the Geneva problem and indeed to rural reconstruction, should not be aimed solely at providing jobs for the jobless, however important this may be, but that rural development should be looked at as a total package aimed at improving the social and other needs of a community. It must be a comprehensive package, and it seems likely that it is along these lines that final recommendations will be made. This approach has apparently been adopted in Jamaica.

*Jamaica has shifted from its traditional concept of rural development, in which each Ministry or agency of Government conceives, formulates and implements its own project, often-times in isolation of each other. Endemic in this system are serious overlapping and dissipation of human and financial resources. The direction is now towards a package approach*

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: Since the authors of this controversial paper did not present it to the Conference and did not attend the Conference sessions after its circulation, the paper was not recognised as a Conference document.

*to development whereby the basic needs of a region are attacked simultaneously under an integrated Rural Development Project.*<sup>1</sup>

Very early in the Plenary Sessions it was contended that any proposals for the development of the Grand Bay area pivoted on the Geneva Estate, and could only have meaning and practical application within the framework of the political ideology of Government, which would indicate the socio-economic goals of the Government of Dominica, and the means of achieving these goals. It is not indicated in the Consultants' report that any attempt was made to obtain an expression of Government policy on this matter. It would seem that before finalisation of the recommendation of Conference, there is need for some clarification of this matter.

It is not necessary in this summary to repeat the various recommendations that have been advanced by the four workshops. The points of view advanced, when sifted and put together into a final project document, should prove of particular benefit to those who will be directly involved in the solution of the Grand Bay problem.

The Land Management Authority are happy that this particular exercise was mounted by the Agro-Economic Conference. The Authority has been concerned about the employment situation and other social hardships which are faced with in Geneva. The situation is really heart-rending and some alleviation of the situation cannot come quickly enough. It appears, therefore, that the problem should be tackled in two stages:

- (i) Government should immediately bring some meaningful development into Geneva to relieve the unemployment situation. This is supported in the recommendation of Workshop I.
- (ii) For the more long-term, dialogue should be established with the Grand Bay people, to involve them more fully in the management and development of the estate.

It is appropriate to mention here that Government has recently received from the UNDP Physical Planning Unit, a National Structure Plan for Dominica, covering the years 1976-1990. This document should be studied by the Team, which will be set up to prepare the final draft, as there are recommendations in this Plan that pertain specifically to the Grand Bay area.

The efforts of the Agro-Economic Society and non-members who have participated in this Conference have not been in vain. This is the first exercise of its kind, and it must be expected that there will be short-comings. There is no doubt that what will emerge from this Conference will have relevance to other rural areas of Dominica, and no doubt to other Caribbean territories with similar problems.

It is hoped that the Agro-Economic Society will go on in increasing strength and practical usefulness to the territories of this area.

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Rural Development Planning - The Jamaican Experience. A conference working paper.