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**LAND-MAN  
RELATIONSHIP  
IN THE CARIBBEAN  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO GRENADA**

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA OFFICE FOR THE CARIBBEAN



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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA  
Office for the Caribbean

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This report has not been cleared either with the Economic Commission for Latin America or with the UN Office for Technical Co-operation, who therefore, do not necessarily share the views expressed.



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LAND-MAN RELATIONSHIP IN THE CARIBBEAN  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GRENADA \*/

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past century agriculture in the Caribbean has fallen from a position in which it supported a plantocracy to one in which few investors are prepared to risk their capital. The reasons for this decline are many. Increasing costs of inputs, poor credit facilities, inadequate marketing and distribution arrangements, fluctuating prices of raw commodities on the world market and more attractive alternative investment opportunities have all contributed to the present situation. There is reason to believe, however, that there are more fundamental factors responsible for long term deterioration of the agricultural sector and among these is the traditional institutional framework for production,

This paper sets out to examine the outcome of attempts which were made in Grenada to ameliorate constraints of the market economy by state action which made land available for agricultural use to persons who under normal conditions would have been unable to command this factor of production. Attention is being focused on this aspect of the problem because long-term agricultural development in a non-collectivised economy depends on a stable relationship between man and the land which he cultivates, and Caribbean society has not been able to evolve a system which can give to the potential farmer the security and right of use which the planter class enjoyed during the heyday of the plantation system. Since the institutional framework through which land becomes available for productive use is defective, the economy lacks a sound foundation for long term development of its agricultural sector.

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\*/ This paper originated as an appendix to an Agricultural Sector Plan for Grenada 1977-1981. Though it eventually developed as a separate publication, it should be read in conjunction with the plan to grasp the author's total approach to Caribbean Food and agricultural development problems.

Yet another factor conducive to the industry's decline is the failure of Caribbean society to recognize agricultural activity, not only as a form of economic endeavour, but also as an expression of human interest - a way of life. This springs from the fact that the society is without any consciousness of linkages between educational experience, environmental productive activity, and livelihood. As a result products of the educational system have no orientation to biological activity or awareness of how such activity could provide self-fulfilment.

It is felt that these are important fundamental deterrents to agricultural growth and that support prices, credit facilities, subsidies and marketing structures, while they can and do perform an ameliorative function, cannot be substitutes for a long-term stable institutional framework for agricultural production. Furthermore such a framework is essential if the Caribbean wishes to develop those aspects of its historical experience which are part of the tradition of the Western democratic ideal. For democracy can only be safeguarded where there are numerous relatively small decision-makers performing vital functions for the society's survival and development.

After examining the historical pattern in Grenada the paper refers to the important role of agriculture in Caribbean development, a subject which is dealt with more fully in the Grenada Plan, and then briefly explores alternative policy directions for an institutional framework which could introduce long term stability in the industry.

#### GRENADIAN HISTORICAL PROFILE

The plantation system in Grenada as in the rest of the Caribbean was based on a large landless slave and/or indentured population working on estates owned by a relatively small planter class. Though the system permitted slaves and indentees in some instances to earn their freedom, and in such status own land, the acreages which they purchased were generally too small for them to identify with the landed elite. Mere ownership of land, however, in a property conscious capitalist system gave persons with proprietary rights a status above the landless mass from whom they were able



to escape. Individual land ownership, was in this context, not simply a secure means of livelihood but also a status symbol. It was, too, a potential tool which dominant power cliques could use for fostering loyalties.

There was no need for government intervention in the system as long as economic conditions were favourable to the plantocracy; i.e. either the real cost of labour was low and/or produce prices were relatively high. With the fall of sugar prices at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, as least one of the conditions for profitable entrepreneurship was removed and many estates were abandoned. The accompanying fall in the demand for labour at a time when there were few restrictions on mobility resulted in heavy out-migration, so that, as is shown in Table 1, from the census period 1891/1901 to 1946/1960 the total growth of population in Grenada was less than the annual natural increase. It fell from 79.9 per cent in the first census decade to a floor of -3.9 per cent in 1911-1921.

Table 1

Annual Average Changes in Population  
Growth in Grenada - 1891-1960

Census Period	Total Growth	Birth	Deaths	Natural Increase	Estimated Migration Balance	Total Growth as % of Natural Increase
1881-1891	1,080	2,060	1,120	940	+ 140	114.9
1891-1901	1,020	...	...	1,280	- 260	79.9
1901-1911	330	...	...	1,210	- 878	27.4
1911-1921	- 40	2,580	1,420	1,160	-1,200	- 3.9
1921-1946	240	2,650	1,240	1,200	- 960	20.2
1946-1960	1,260	3,360	1,090	2,280	-1,020	55.2

... = not available

Source: Extracted from Table 2 "Population Growth in Grenada"  
J. Harewood, Economic and Social Studies, Vol. 15,  
No. 2, June 1966.

During the inter-censal period 1891-1901, the average annual migration balance was negative and taking that period as a base, indices of this negative net annual migration up to 1946-1960 were as shown in Table 2. The period of greatest emigration was the census years 1911-1921, but from the turn of the century the annual outflow was significantly higher than it was in the 1890's,

Table 2

Indices of the Negative Net Annual  
Migration Balance in Inter-censal  
Periods: 1891-1960  
(1891-1901 = 100)

1891-1901	100,0
1901-1911	337,7
1911-1921	461,5
1921-1946	369,2
1946-1960	392,3

The Government implemented its first land settlement scheme during this period of agricultural depression. Many large estate owners were quite willing to sell in order to pay off debts, so acquisition by the state was not contrary to the interest of the landed elite. At the same time, since land ownership provided both security and status, the landless who were too poor to purchase land on the free market were able to acquire under an easy payment system.

The following quotations sum up the factors which influenced the government's land settlement policy <sup>1/</sup>.

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<sup>1/</sup> 'Government schemes of Land Settlement in Grenada and the Grenadines', by Auchinleck, Smith and Bertrand, West Indian Bulletin, Vol. XIV, 1915 pages 9-27.

"Land settlements ..... have arisen as a necessary result of certain purely local and internal questions such as scarcity of labour, lessened production of food crops, the absorption of land by larger owners, and the increase of crime traceable to the existence of an unemployed surplus of production," <sup>2/</sup>

"Underlying the whole policy is the feeling that up to a certain point subdivision of each island among many owners make for the general progress, than does monopoly of land by a few large proprietors, and a valuable feature is that it ensures an efficient control by the government of economic questions generally."

The peasant settlements were, therefore, to

"Be regarded more in light of remedies for harmful conditions which have grown up in well populated places, than as attempts to settle on open districts",

and the lands were, therefore,

"Acquired from larger owners specially for the purpose of settlement".

The land settlement programme was started in 1903 and between that year and in 1946 over 3,500 acres were distributed, more than 2,000 acres of which were in Carriacou - approximately 25 per cent of the total acreage of the island. The average sizes of the lots distributed were between one and three acres <sup>3/</sup>. It is not clear if the size of acreage was envisaged as being sufficient to provide adequate independent livelihood for a peasant family, but the following assessment made in 1914, shows that one of the results

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<sup>2/</sup> This "unemployed surplus of production" was labour. It is interesting to note that unemployment was regarded as a factor contributing to crime, and that the government felt that it had to take remedial action. It is not clear that the close relationship between these two variables is commonly appreciated.

<sup>3/</sup> During 1903-1905, over 1500 acres in Carriacou were divided into lots with an average size of 2 acres. The present state of agriculture in this island might offer a salutary lesson on the result of fragmentation after 70 years of uncontrolled land use.

was that estates were provided with a more stable labour force. It must also have been hoped that there would have been a reduction in crime.

"A peasant barely subsisting on low labour wages will always be shiftless, unreliable and disinclined to work, but the instant he becomes a land owner and is able to provide himself with good food and comfortable living, he seeks labour in order to obtain money for further luxuries. At the same time his absolute dependence on the larger owners is of course greatly lessened, but it has not been found in the past that such absolute dependence leads to an ultimate benefit either of the larger owners or to the community as a whole. The general effect of a peasant settlement on labour supply may then be summed up by saying that labour is improved in quality and quantity because the peasantry are more independent.....".

The following distribution of three estates which were settled in 1913 suggests that the settlement programme was not conceived solely as a means of providing independent livelihood from agricultural holdings, since, as Table 3 shows, allotments were made to persons in the non-agricultural working population,

Table 3

An Analysis of those who were settled  
on three estates in 1913

Women	17
Agricultural labourers	64
Carpenters	9
Masons	6
Shopkeepers	2
Ex-School Masters	1
Other trades	5

This brief pre-war review of the land question indicates the following main characteristics.

Individual as opposed to co-operative land ownership has deep historical roots and is an important status symbol.

In settlement schemes, land was not distributed only to persons in the agricultural labour force,

There is no clear evidence that holding size was determined by the livelihood needs of the settler, and it would appear that the settler was expected to supplement his income by employment off his holding.

Land settlement was successful as a means of dampening social unrest. It, therefore, had social impact without reforming the social or economic structure.

Since land settlement provided the estates with a more reliable labour force it helped to increase agricultural production.

There have been further land development schemes since World War II with a peak in 1971 when over fourteen hundred acres of land were distributed. Most of the acreages in the Post-War era have been significantly smaller - a quarter, a third, a half, three quarters and one acre. The notable exceptions were thirty,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , and seventy-seven, 2 acre holdings settled in St. Andrew's Parish. A few three (3) acre holdings in St. George and sixty-nine  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acre holdings in St. John. Land ownership is most likely still a status symbol, so even a quarter acre of land serves the purpose of putting the holder on a peg above the landless poor while contributing little to raise him out of poverty. For though there have been important advances in agronomy and technology in recent decades, these mini-holdings cannot provide adequate livelihood for families settled on them. Residents are, therefore, as dependent as earlier settlers were on employment off the holding to attain satisfactory livelihood levels.

What effect has post-war settlement had on agricultural production? Here evidence is lacking for firm conclusions, but since a portion of each allotment is always put to non-agricultural use, then the smaller the size of holding the greater is the total acreage loss to agriculture. In so far then as land in farm use was fragmented for settlement, the agricultural potential of the country as a whole was reduced by the fall

in settlement holdings from an average of two to three acres to one quarter and half an acre. This decline in the available acreage for agriculture might have been counteracted by increases in productivity which have occurred in the export sector.

There has been considerable decline in production in Carriacou, but there was only one Post-War settlement scheme in the island - Limlair (1972) - and there are many obvious factors such as deforestation, rainfall, erosion and disease which are known to have militated against agricultural production there. In the island of Grenada, where there have been forty-six schemes involving approximately two thousand acres of land, there have been such changes in land use that it is difficult to assess the effect on total agricultural production. Land settlement may have contributed to a shift in land use in the export sector through expansion of the banana industry, but this may well have been at the cost of traditional production such as cocoa and sugar cane.

Settlement schemes might have, as in the earlier period, increased the available supply of labour, but it does not seem, judging from the number of abandoned and poorly maintained estates, that there has been a compensating demand for agricultural labour <sup>4</sup>. This observation is supported by the comments of farm operators, who when asked about unavailability of labour reported that labour is not in short supply.

While it is difficult to establish direct relationship between post-war land settlement and levels of agricultural production it is clear that land acquisition for settlement in the island of Grenada has increased significantly both in number and in frequency since the War, and the amount of land acquired has more than doubled (See Table 4). Whether land neglect and abandonment have been part cause or part consequence of land acquisition is not known, but it is unlikely that the agricultural sector will yield its full potential before a

The 1961 Census Survey reported that 69.6 per cent of cultivable land was uncultivated. While 87 per cent of the land in the class size of under 10 acres was cultivated, only 56 per cent of land in the 200 acres and over group was under cultivation.

firm workable policy of land tenureship is established. Such a policy should aim at getting land under cultivation irrespective of whether it is under public or private ownership. It should take into consideration the optimum farm size for given land use and determine quite clearly the

Table 4

Frequency and Number of Land Settlement Schemes in the Island of Grenada showing Acreages acquired and pre-and post-war Growth \*/

Year	Period	No. of Schemes	Acreages acquired	
1909	Pre-War (30 years)	1	314.00	
1918		2	592.67	
1919		1	69.60	
1921		1	62.14	
1936		1	...	
1937		1	78.08	
1939		2	291.08	(one unknown)
TOTAL			9	1,407.57
1946	Post-War (30 years)	1	...	
1949		1	112.00	
1956		2	61.45	
1957		6	101.85	(one unknown)
1959		1	141.63	
1960		5	55.83	(two unknown)
1961		3	...	
1963		1	9.69	
1971		14	1,416.69	
1972		7	109.36	(four unknown)
...		7	1,139.32	
TOTAL		48	3,147.82	(seven unknown)

... = not available

\*/ Carriacou not included.

Source: Supplied by Ministry of Agriculture.

conditions under which a farm operator will be allowed uninterrupted use of agricultural land without disturbance.

Land settlement schemes in Grenada have affected little or no transformation in social structure of the society, and they have not pointed the way to a new man-land relationship which could promote increased production. Descendants of settlers of the two and three acre era have moved away from the land since the standard of living which their parents were able to attain did not serve as an inducement to making a career in agriculture. There is no reason to believe that the descendants of the quarter and half acre plots will act differently. While, therefore, post-war settlement schemes may, as in the earlier ones, have ameliorated social discontent and fostered loyalties of one kind or another they will not contribute to long term growth of agricultural production or entrepreneurship. The Grenada experience is most likely not unique in the Caribbean and therefore the question arises whether the time has not come for a reappraisal of the value of land settlement schemes which do not at the same time aim at fundamental changes in the total agrarian structure - land tenureship, production units, input and output production services. In short, what is needed for a vibrant agricultural sector is land reform which establishes a far more permanent man-land relationship on a multiplicity of viable productive units than has been the case in the past.

#### Some Features of Existing Legislation

The main laws relating to land settlement in the post-war period are the Land Settlement Ordinance 1934, with subsequent amendments, statutory rules and orders under this legislation, Land Acquisition Ordinance 1945, and the Land Settlement Development Act 1969.

This legislation, viewed as a whole, indicates that there is no legal restriction on the Government's power to acquire land for purposes of settlement since provision is made for the acquisition of land compulsorily where it cannot be acquired by agreement, and such land is deemed to be acquired "for a public purpose".

An upper limit of five acres was placed on an agricultural holding in a land settlement area and persons who could be settled were "peasant proprietors" defined as follows:



"Any person who is the owner or occupier of not more than ten acres of land, and who is an agriculturist, labourer, domestic or menial servant, artificer, handcraftsman, or otherwise engaged in manual labour".

There was provision in the 1934 Ordinance that a holding would not be granted to an applicant without the permission of the Government if the effect of such grant would be to make him owner of more than 10 acres, but this provision was removed in 1941.<sup>5/</sup> It is not known to what extent, if any, its removal has resulted in peasant proprietors acquiring total acreages in excess of 10 acres as a result of receiving an allotment under land settlement programmes.

The requirement that applicants might have to undergo a medical examination and furnish evidence "that they are, or have been engaged in agriculture and have sufficient experience to enable them to work their holdings" did not apply after 1941, so that over the past 35 years there has been no statutory requirement that grants of agricultural land were to be made to persons who were able and willing to work the land. There was also relaxation with respect to land-use, for though there was always a requirement that the settler should cultivate crops as required by the Authority, after 1941, it was not mandatory that he must be evicted if he failed to carry out the directions he received. After this date a settler also no longer had to be evicted and deemed to be "undesirable as a holder" if he were convicted of praedial larceny.

In the Land Settlement Development Act 1969, provision is made for repayment to a lessee of money which he had paid towards the purchase of his holding in the event of forfeiture of such holding, after making stipulated deductions, but there is no provision for compensation for improving the capacity of the land through fertilizer application, drainage, or other farm improvements. This

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<sup>5/</sup> See Grenada Regulations 1958; Land Settlement Regulations, SRO No. 118.

could have made a holder reluctant to make capital improvements to his holding.

The power of a peasant proprietor to alienate the holding allotted to him was restricted by the Land Settlement Ordinance 1934. The settler was forbidden to let his holding for "any period exceeding three years" or to sell or encumber it in any way "without the consent in writing of the Governor in Council". This restriction was amended in 1965 and the conditions governing alienation were changed from the duration for which land could be alienated to a period during which the holder could not alienate his holding. The requirement after 1965 was, that the peasant proprietor could not alienate his holding "for a period of fifteen years from the date of allocation without the consent of the Administrator in Council". In the following year, both these restrictions were placed on alienation of small holdings but the settler was left free to let for periods of less than three years and to do as he wished with his allotment after fifteen years. The law did not therefore prevent him from becoming a petty landlord. Furthermore, the restrictions placed for the first fifteen years did not, according to Land Settlement Regulations SRO No. 118 of 1935, "refer to or include an involuntary alienation as in the case of descent or bankruptcy nor alienation partly involuntary as in the case of the devise by will". This exemption was rescinded in 1941, but until that date, it would seem as though it was possible for a settler to fragment his holding by will or for the benefit of his descendants. Existing legislation does not stipulate specifically that fragmentation of a holding is forbidden and it would seem as though a limitation of this kind was never thought necessary.

The Land Settlement Ordinance 1934 gives the Government power to take lease or acquire land for settlement purposes, but where land is compulsorily acquired under the Land Acquisition Ordinance, provision is made only for purchase. It would appear, therefore, that while the Government can by agreement lease agricultural land from a proprietor for agricultural purposes, it has to compensate the owner for land acquired under the Land Acquisition Ordinance even if it is also going to be used for agricultural settlement. This means that the acquisition of land for this purpose could put severe strain on Government's finances.

This historical review of land as a productive factor in Grenada reveals that there has been fundamentally no difference between the policies of colonial and independent governments. Land distribution policy has been concerned with ameliorating potentially explosive social situations and hopefully securing acceptance of the status quo by tempering economic hardships. There has been no concerted attempt to formulate policy which gave a farm operator a viable agricultural plant over which he had the kind of personal involvement and long term security of an entrepreneur in manufacturing industry. And yet, with an easily divisible resource under his control, he could have so fragmented, ill-used and neglected it as to rob the society of a productive factor with a low threshold of renewability.



CARIBBEAN AGRICULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

There was very little evidence during the 1950's and 1960's that planned agricultural expansion was seen as an integral part of economic development. Jamaica was the only territory which made a definite attempt to bring unused agricultural land under cultivation, but economic development was mainly construed throughout the area as an exercise in facilitating the establishment of manufacturing and industrial enterprises with no reference to a domestic supply of raw material. In the 1970's, Guyana and later on Jamaica saw development more in terms of expansion of the internal economy to meet the basic needs of the population, and with this vision, increasing domestic food production has taken a central place in their developmental efforts. Barbados too, faced with Balance of Payments problems in part due to rising costs of food imports and to declining export agricultural earnings, has recently put emphasis on agricultural diversification in order to achieve greater self sufficiency in food.

On the regional level, CARICOM has indicated through its Agricultural Marketing Protocol, the Caribbean Food Plan and the Caribbean Food Corporation, that special attention has to be paid to agriculture. But there is still a dominant impression that there is a core of leadership in the area which can envisage success in developmental effort without concern of what happens in the domestic agricultural sector. It is therefore most appropriate to make a short statement about the pivotal role of agriculture in Caribbean development.

In writing on "The Industrialization of the British West Indies" in 1950 Professor Arthur Lewis had this to say.

"There are still people who discuss industrialization as if it were an alternative to agricultural improvement. In countries where agriculture is not carrying surplus population industry and agriculture are alternatives ... But ... in the West Indian islands ... there is no choice to be made between industry and agriculture. The islands need as large an agriculture as possible, and, if they could even get more people into agriculture, without reducing output per head, then so much the better".

And again

"If agriculture is to give a higher standard of living, then industry must be developed. But equally, if industry is to be developed, then agriculture must give a higher standard of living, in order to provide a demand for manufactures. The agricultural and the industrial revolutions thus reinforce each other, and neither can go very far unless the other is occurring at the same time. Those who speak as if the choice in the West Indies lay between agricultural development and industrial development have failed completely to understand the problem".

The author's view on the close tie between agriculture and industry is clearly illustrated in the Agricultural Sector Plan for Grenada. His emphasis is different from that of Professor Lewis's and he has a broader view of agricultural activity than that revealed in the article quoted. The extract is intended to show, however, that the definitive piece of writing which focused attention on potential for industrial development in the Caribbean a quarter of a century ago, clearly indicated that such development could only be successful if it was accompanied by growth in the agricultural sector. Unfortunately, it has been found easier to seek foreign markets and capital and promote "industrialization by invitation", which was the main thrust of Lewis's article, than to embark on the highly disciplined exercise of reorganization and diversification of agriculture to meet growing needs of the Region. As a result the area has become increasingly dependent on foreign supplies of food and agricultural raw material.

#### Growth and Markets

The strength of a nation's economy depends on its capacity to develop and command markets - national, regional, international. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British economic growth took on new dimensions under an aggressive free trade policy which widened the market for British manufactures. When by the turn of the century newly industrialized countries successfully challenged British exports, Britain established a protected foreign market by its system of imperial preferences, thereby reinforcing its position in international trade by the creation of a preferential regional market. European economic growth cannot be divorced from the military and political power which gave those

countries control over world resources and overseas markets. Irrespective of how ambitious a Caribbean government may be, however, it can never have the requisite political, military or diplomatic power to enable it to pursue an aggressive economic policy of the kind followed by European states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or by the United States and Japan in the twentieth. Although, therefore, foreign markets are important for Caribbean development, the likelihood that they will perform the major role "of an engine for sustained growth" is remote and is unlikely ever to be achieved despite the fact that the area has a labour cost advantage which enables it to produce goods at competitive prices. The provisions of international conventions notwithstanding protective action will always be taken by governments in industrialized countries when employment levels are threatened by overseas imports, because what is at stake is not simply economic strength but dominance in international politics. <sup>6/</sup>

These obvious barriers to total dependence on the world economy were factors which contributed to the formation of CARICOM, a regional protected market. But since this body has no political dimension, it can wield no power in international affairs. The area is therefore in no better position to influence its economic future through the exercise of a regional political consensus than it was before the establishment of the

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<sup>6/</sup> United Nations Yearbooks of International Trade Statistics record that "developing market economies" share of world exports fell from 23 per cent in 1958 to 19 per cent in 1973. A rise to 27 per cent in 1974 which halted the downward trend was due solely to a 183 per cent increase in value of OPEC exports. And while the value of world exports increased by 433 per cent between 1958 and 1973, and exports from "developed market economies" increased by 473 per cent, those from "developing market economies" increased by only 349 per cent. A specific case which reflects this general situation in world trade is the fact that the United States has significant quantitative restrictions on imports of textiles from Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Haiti, the last being one of the poorest of the poor.

community. <sup>7/</sup> CARICOM can only function as a referee trying to keep the combatants in a ring constantly fighting, and never giving up. But since each individual territory has to try to increase the size of its market within the region, and there is much industrial duplication this cannot be done without trade conflicts. Faced with rising unemployment and with adverse Balance of Payments, both Guyana and Jamaica sought solutions to their problems by restricting food imports and vigorously pursuing programmes of domestic agricultural expansion. In effect, trying to achieve economic growth by development of the only market over which they have control. While taking advantage of the regional market available to them, they have at the same time had to put restrictions on imports from other producers in an effort to develop their internal economies even at the expense of regional markets.

Just as the region as a whole has no collective power to command foreign markets, in the same way no government within CARICOM can command the regional market in the Caribbean. In the present situation a government can only have complete control over its domestic market, and it is this fact which has made some governments realize that sustained economic growth depends on the extent to which they can expand their internal markets for domestic indigenous production instead of allowing these markets to be heavily dependent on non-regional sources for their food supply. It is not impossible that a member country of CARICOM may find itself, because of fortuitous circumstances, in a position in which it need affect little concern in the short and medium term about its Balance of Payments position, and therefore may ignore its agricultural sector. In the long run, however, the cost of this neglect will be very damaging to the economy, for current industrial activity is without a sound economic base. But even for such a government, current employment problems may be of far greater economic relevance than a healthy Balance of Payments.

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<sup>7/</sup> The unity of purpose of representatives of Caribbean governments in ACP deliberations with the European Economic Community has resulted not from a regional political consensus, but from common economic interests.



For each member country of CARICOM, there can be no more effective growth factor than the development of the economy around the basic needs of the population namely: food, shelter and clothing. And for the region as a whole, sustained growth will depend on the extent to which these island goals can be made regional. A realistic Caribbean Food Plan, therefore, based on the attempt of each member country to develop its food potential to its greatest, is pivotal to sustained regional economic growth.<sup>8/</sup> Agriculture and other biological production can then form the basis for industries, the products of which will meet the demands of an ever increasing population. The rates of population growth and of family formation will of themselves give a demand base for a satisfactory growth rate of the economy.

The fundamental requirement for the attainment of this goal, however, is a sound institutional base for long term expansion for the agricultural sector. The dominant importance of land as a factor of production must be recognized. Its productive use must be seen as imperative and those to whom it is entrusted must be able to envisage long term commitment for themselves, self-fulfilment and social status because they are entrusted with a valuable national resource.

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<sup>8/</sup> It is apparently not commonly realized in the Caribbean that the United States, the most highly industrialized country in the world, virtually feeds itself, and in the years 1973 to 1975 had a net trading surplus on food, beverages and tobacco to the value of 4.5 and 7 billion dollars respectively.



## POLICY ALTERNATIVES

### Land Use

Governments are faced with many problems in designing a land use policy, for though there might be scope for reclamation which could increase supply, land resources are usually fixed by territorial boundaries, and locational, historical and economic factors determine population cluster distribution and size, well in advance of a government's consciousness of the need for land use planning. A government, therefore, never starts with tabula rasa. It usually has to ask what limitations or expansion should be allowed with respect to land which is already in residential, commercial, industrial, recreational and service use before examining alternative uses of land or the use to which virgin areas should be put.

The more a country's wealth depends on the development of its agricultural resources, the greater is the problem of what and how much land should be allowed for non-agricultural use. There are many questions which arise. Should lateral housing be encouraged where each family lives on a given land area, or should the bias be towards vertical construction which makes more use of space and accommodates more than one family? Should agricultural population be settled in clusters, thus giving priority to proximity of farm operators to their farm units, or dispersed? Given its location and functions, what should be the optimum size of a cluster? Given its use, what is the optimum size of a farm? If historical forces have resulted in a highly skewed land distribution pattern which is regarded as inimical to socio-political goals and to economic efficiency how can this be corrected while at the same time increasing the level of agricultural production?

These are questions many developing countries tend not to ask, or ask them long after the private sector has determined land-use patterns through market forces, but usually at high social costs. Current Caribbean consciousness of responsibility for its own economic future has as a concomitant, however, a more positive role on the part of

governments with respect to land-use; its importance in physical and economic planning and its relation to environmental and ecological factors. But land use policy cannot be considered in isolation, it has to be viewed as part of a total complex of thought on desirable long term socio-political and economic structures of the society. The spacial distribution of population, the size and location of population centres, the location of industries and of such social facilities as schools and hospitals, are all factors which must be taken into consideration in determining optimum land use. Road building, for example, which must always encroach on land resources has to be justified not in terms of short term requirements but of long term transport policy and desirable population distribution.

Agriculture played a major role in bringing the Caribbean to its present state of development and is still an important determinant of living standards. But the level of its contribution in the future will depend largely on the area's readiness to address itself to fundamental issues which now limit agricultural expansion and put severe restrictions on the region's capacity for industrialization. These fall mainly into two broad categories, production structures and the human factor. Certain aspects of these matters will be explored in the following sections.

#### Land Ownership

Private as opposed to public and co-operative ownership of land is one of the main tenets of the existing economic system. Historically, such ownership can be traced back to land grants which were made by British sovereigns during early colonial expansion. But it was reinforced by a lengthy period of capitalist production, first during slavery and later on under a free enterprise system.

It is interesting to note, however, that Royal grants of land were conditional, requiring the grantee to develop trade or cultivation. Proprietorship carried with it not only the right but the obligation to use. With the growth of capitalism the right to ownership became sacred but use became optional, so that despite the high social and economic cost of leaving factors of production idle, there is a general tendency to accept such waste as long as the political risk is minimal.

There were never restrictions on size, and therefore acreages acquired by individual owners were relatively extensive. At the same time a comparatively simple technology made production dependent on a large labour force which was easily supplied because of the high rate of population growth up to the beginning of World War II. After the war, however, a high level of out-migration from urban areas, and an accompanying internal migration from rural areas to the cities, reduced the available agricultural labour force.

Post-war developments in non-agricultural sectors have also affected the agricultural labour market. The growth of manufacturing industry and tourism have established new workers' norms for wages and conditions of work which agriculture has not been able to satisfy, so it continues to remain a Cinderella industry in an expanding economy. The rural worker, therefore, even if he is unemployed shies away from the drudgery connected with agriculture with its comparatively low wages. This attitude on the part of the worker has been reinforced by wage rates paid by the public sector in "crash programmes" (See Table 5) and by the overall success organized labour has had in raising the level of rates in the economy as a whole.

These supply factors have affected demand for labour. Wage costs and rising prices of physical inputs have pushed up production costs of most agricultural commodities. Fluctuations in commodity prices on the free market make profit returns uncertain even where there are commodity price agreements, so that investment in manufacturing industry is more attractive because of higher and more assured profits. Under these conditions, farmers have tried to reduce costs by moving to more capital intensive operations, thus reducing the demand for labour. But there are severe limits to this type of substitution in tree crop cultivation and in hilly terrain, so that barriers to labour substitutability have affected production levels. In the case of sugar cane, mechanized aids prevented wages costs from rising steeply, but the social cost of a complete switch to intensive mechanization, e.g. mechanized harvesting, will be very high when other sectors of the economy are not expanding fast enough to absorb displaced labour for which there are few migration outlets.

Table 5  
Comparative Weekly Wages in  
Agriculture and in the General  
Economy - 1973

Country	EC\$	
	Agricultural Worker	General Worker
Barbados	27/36	42/48
Guyana	30	32
Jamaica	29/42	25/83
Trinidad & Tobago	15/25	24/45
Antigua	36	40
Dominica	15/20	24/30
Grenada	15/25	15/25
Montserrat	...	35
St. Kitts	40	20/25
St. Lucia	21	16/20
St. Vincent	15/20	15/20
Belize	23	20/28

... = not available.

Source: International Agency estimates compiled from official data.

The Caribbean is now facing a situation where private plantation production is becoming increasingly unprofitable.<sup>9</sup> Switching to state-owned plantation production is no answer to the problem, for it does not necessarily change man-land relationship. It is primarily a form of state capitalism

<sup>9</sup> The readiness of both foreigners and nationals to sell their plantations to Governments, and of the latter to fragment and sell to the private sector is testimony to changes in the economy which make plantations uneconomic.

possibly with limited profit motive but also without the incentive for cost control, with the worker having no long term relationship with the land which he works. He has a relationship similar to that of the factory worker to the machine which may meet the needs of industry but not of agriculture. The latter requires of the producer a high degree of involvement, a characteristic of private capitalism, which is necessary for sustained interest in biological production.

The traditional sanctity of private sector proprietary rights now needs to be re-examined. Certainly such rights are now neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for agricultural entrepreneurship. If good agricultural land lies idle, it is not an indication that the proprietor is devoid of social responsibility or not interested in profit. He is possibly simply investing where he can get the highest rate of return. It may be too, that the traditional system of production by which he relied on a labour force which had no commitment to the land can no longer provide a base for agricultural production.<sup>10/</sup> It seems, therefore, that a new institutional structure has to be developed to promote cultivation. Since one of the responsibilities of a government is to create conditions for economic growth irrespective of whether land is in private or public ownership, it is therefore, government's responsibility to re-examine the institutional and legal framework for agricultural production.

#### Land Tenure

A system of land tenure which gives security to the farmer is an essential requirement for long term agricultural development. This enables him to feel so confident in his right to use land that given all things equal, he would not hesitate to undertake regular capital expenditure to improve and maintain productive capacity of his holding.

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<sup>10/</sup> In some islands owners have died intestate and their descendants having no clear title, have left estates to go to ruin. The incidence of this is relatively high in the eastern Caribbean.

He must be able to envisage his involvement beyond the period of his lifetime through descendants who might be interested in agricultural activity. This condition is very often ignored in agricultural planning, because insufficient weight is given to the unique features of agricultural as opposed to industrial plants. While the latter is a physical asset with no reproductive capacity, the former is a biological unit whose capacity depends on the care and attention which it receives from the farm manager. He works with nature to create and knows that his effort will continue to bear fruit beyond his lifetime. Though he is aware that there is a high degree of uncertainty in agriculture he keeps on because in the long run his progeny might reap the benefits. There is a level of personal involvement which is unknown to an industrialist.

Caribbean governments have legislated to provide security of tenure to farmers and compensation for capital improvements in case of disturbance, but duration of leases are sometimes inadequate. Recent legislation in Jamaica which provides for a 49 year lease with option to renew is a new development which certainly encourages long term planning beyond the lifetime of a farmer and contributes to the concept of the family farm. This is an improvement on the general pattern of leases for 25 years and less. But there are other support structures which are important to make suitable terms of lease effective and some of these still have to be implemented.<sup>11/</sup>

One of the more important is that of land use. There must be provision to ensure that a person to whom land is leased uses it in ways specified by the competent authority. When he ceases to do this, he should be made to quit. In most instances, where land settlement schemes were established in the Caribbean, the pattern has been, short-term increase in agricultural activity followed by neglect. Most holdings eventually become homesteads where the

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<sup>11/</sup> The related problems are not unknown. Land distribution is still more closely related to political patronage than to competence and interest in agriculture. Unless rival politicians can put the national good before personal power, agree on fundamentals of agricultural policy, and take them out of the political arena, there will be little progress in agricultural development.



bread-winner earns part or all of his income in the non-agricultural sector. This cannot be remedied unless the agricultural holding is viewed as a production unit - a plant, which an entrepreneur will only be allowed to occupy if optimum use is made of its potential. Furthermore, the holding has to be large enough to enable the farmer to earn a satisfactory income so that he would not be forced by economic necessity to become a part-time farmer.

### A New Structure

For Grenada as for every other Caribbean island the supply of land is limited by definition, and the quantum relative to population size and to demand makes it a scarce and highly priced resource. In the modern economic world private ownership of these resources is not necessary for the accumulation of personal wealth and since such ownership frustrates agricultural entrepreneurship and is increasingly becoming a barrier to sustained economic expansion, it is not in the long term interest of a society to perpetuate it. It is possible, however, to construct a system which nullifies the right of the individual to have unfettered control over land while at the same time according to the state the right to grant, conditionally, uninterrupted tenureship of land for specific use. To effect this the State must be regarded as having a custodial role with respect to all land, both public and private. A Lands Commission should be set up whose main function should be to hold, to manage and to determine the use of all land. All publicly owned land must be vested in the Commission. With respect to private land the Commission will have power to acquire through lease for a period not exceeding 100 years.<sup>12/</sup> The conditions of the lease should be such that the lessee pays to the lessor or his estate the value of the

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<sup>12/</sup> There may be variations of this general practice for acquisition. The Commission may pay the lessor a proportion of the value of his land on condition that it is invested in the economy, or the lessor may opt to take shares in a State owned enterprise to the value of some given proportion of his claim.

land over time, and the lessor loses all claim to the property when such value is paid. After determination of a lease the land must become the property of the State but must be vested in the Commission. Thus in due course of time all private proprietary ownership will cease. While this will bring to an end the right of an individual to bequeath ownership of land to a descendant, it will not abrogate his right to bequeath leased property for the unexpired period if such a lease meets with the approval of the Commission on the basis of continuous satisfactory utilization.

As the authority to whom custodial responsibility of the national heritage has been entrusted, the Commission will lease land for specific uses to individuals, co-operatives, corporate bodies and the State. The land may be used for agricultural, industrial, commercial or service purposes, but in every case the Commission will retain the authority to determine the lease if the right to use is in any way abused. In this context neglect of agricultural land will be regarded as an abuse. A lessee may bequeath property over which he has usufructuary rights with the consent of the Commission, but he may not under any condition sell, lease or in any way alienate any portion of the property. In the final analysis right of transfer of use of the property must rest with the Commission.

It is not appropriate here to go into the nature, composition and function of the Lands Commission in detail. But it is pertinent to state one essential condition for success. Members of the Commission must be appointed by the Head of State, whom it is assumed can at least appear to be above politics. The national legislative body may by majority decision require the Head of State to remove a member of the Commission, for reasons which must be stipulated. The conditions under which this can be done must form part of the articles under which the Commission is established.

#### The Jamaican Experiment

The most recent attempt at land reform by constitutional means is that attempted by the Government of Jamaica. The relevant legislation are the Land Bands Act, the Land Development and Utilization Act, and the Land Acquisition Act. The main purpose of these ordinances is to enable the

Government to have control over land which it deems is underutilized and make such land available to prospective farmers either individually or co-operatively. Under the Land Development and Utilization Act, owners of underutilized farms in excess of 50 acres are required to sell their land to Government at prevailing market prices. The Government pays 20 per cent of the purchase price in cash and gives 20 year land bonds carrying an interest rate of 10,5 per cent for the remainder of the purchase price. In its redistribution programme the Government leases land for 49 years with option to renew for a similar period.

It is quite possible that this is the only practical approach available to the Jamaican Government, but it is questionable if the nation can afford the cost of buying up all the land required to resuscitate domestic agriculture at the price of J\$350 per acre when it also has to undertake heavy expenditure for settlement, production and marketing infrastructure, training and administration. The estimated investment cost per beneficiary excluding cost of land for the first Rural Development Project situated in Western Jamaica, was, at its initial costing, US\$6,000. The development cost was slightly under US\$2,000 per acre. When the problem of agricultural development is viewed regionally it becomes patently clear that State acquisition of land by outright purchase must be ruled out. It is necessary to go back to first principles and query the right and the need for an individual in modern industrial society to have proprietary ownership of such land through time. Even if it is argued that such ownership was necessary in the past as an incentive for investment, today such an argument would be without foundation. The important requirement now is that agricultural land must be made available to those with the skills for an interest in its cultivation, and there must be new institutional arrangements to meet this requirement.

Though there is undoubtedly merit in Project Land Lease, it is likely to flounder because many settlers will be found, in due course, to be without the necessary orientation to an agricultural life. The absence of a tradition of education towards this orientation is a severe drawback to immediate success in agricultural

development.<sup>13</sup> A high percentage of settlers may eventually become squatters and give new dimensions to the country's political problems. A medium-term solution may be the establishment of a State farm as a training ground. The land lease project can then be used as a reward for high level individual performance. It may also be advisable to lease land only to young married couples, thus giving preference to persons who are inclined to living a settled agricultural family life. There is really no short-term solution to the problems of agricultural development.

### The Human Factor

The reluctance of young people to enter the agriculture sector is a common feature throughout the Caribbean. The explanation which has commonly been given is that work in the field is rejected because of its historical connection with slavery. This seems to be a naive and simplistic explanation and it does not accord with the facts of the situation. Indian indentees, for example, had no experience of slavery and yet one finds young Indian youths who are also not attracted to agricultural labour. It must be realized that the Caribbean economy has expanded considerably in the past forty years, and that educational and training opportunities have given youth entirely new occupational vistas. It is not surprising therefore that they gravitate toward new and more promising fields of employment than follow a traditional occupation like agriculture which is associated with low wages and drudgery. For those who believe, however, that the slavery explanation is valid, the question still has to be asked whether the historical factor of slavery must forever be a determinant in human behaviour, or if educational and environmental factors can foster new attitudes in existing and future generations.

Every educational system inculcates attitudes of one kind or another, irrespective of whether or not it is a deliberate policy to do so. The content

<sup>15</sup> Enquiries made by the author in 1958 revealed that all of those persons who completed training at the Jamaica Agricultural School in the previous course, only one entered practical agriculture. He was a student from Barbados who had returned to his native island.

and subject classification of Caribbean education do not relate to environmental activity. A narrow concept of education with an abstract and intellectual rather than a practical approach to learning, forces students to be bookish and to develop memory rather than to acquire understanding of how the educational process relates them occupationally to the world environment of which they are a part. At the end of their educational experience students are often without orientation to any type of occupation, or vision as to how they can use what was acquired in school to earn a livelihood. Their attitude to employment is largely dictated by social and occupational values in the society. The white collared job or a profession is viewed as being desirable because these types of occupation carry what is regarded as a desirable status. The acquisition of a craft or skill requiring the use of hands are regarded as second best, and agriculture, because it connotes drudgery and dirt rather than biological production has the lowest possible rating. Attitudes of this kind can be changed by a positive approach to the content of education at every level. And it is this orientation in the educational system which needs to be undertaken if there is going to be a closer relationship between learning experience and the occupational demands of the economy.

If goals of this kind are to be achieved, there must be a fundamental re-thinking within Ministries of Education. The very reliance on printed text books has to be queried. In the exploratory exercise of preparing new material for presentation to students, it is more important in the experimental stage to use cyclostyled material which can be constantly reviewed than to saddle the teacher with a fixed text and impose unnecessary financial burden on parents. In this way, the content of subject matter can become a live component in the educational system, subject to change and variation resulting from new ideas from teachers as well as pupils, and content can be amended quite easily to meet varying interests of students. There must also be a shift away from the common practice of a subject approach in elementary education to a project approach. This gives far greater scope for establishing linkages between subjects and relating subject content to the real world.

In so far as agriculture is concerned, the goal of the educational system at primary level ought not to be, to deliberately develop an orientation to agriculture as apposed to other types of economic activity. A teacher must be conscious that plant and animal life are important biological sciences, the understanding and knowledge of which are crucial in the struggle of man to come to terms with his environment, and this understanding must be imparted to the students. In educating children with this type of consciousness, one is not orienting the student to any particular kind of employment but at the end of his primary school career he will have an enquiring and exploratory mind towards his environment.

From an occupational point of view the society has to train farmers in the same way as it trains craftsmen, and therefore there must be farm schools which give a sound agricultural training. A modern agricultural sector cannot depend on a peasant population motivated by traditional attitudes. Government policy, therefore, has to be such as to indicate that those who enter the agricultural sector are devoting themselves to a prime economic activity, that of performing the major and crucial role of feeding the population. In other words, there must be a recognition that the very nature of their occupation carries with it high status in the society.



