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Indicators to Development Planning in  
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RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN THE  
CARIBBEAN AND ITS SOCIAL INDICATORS

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As a discipline, development planning rests on value judgement based on what are deemed good and desirable for the individual, the group and the corporate state. This is so irrespective of whether the planner is conscious that his prescriptions are formulated against a moral code, for value-free social science is a contradiction in terms since no scientist can escape his own values. In dealing with rural development planning therefore one is focusing on a specific aspect of a total socio-economic and political complex which treats with the good for each individual state and for all states which comprise Caribbean society as well as the relationship of those states jointly to the world at large. The fundamental concept which must govern our thinking is that within man's experience democracy is the only form of socio-political organization which permits total fulfilment of human personality. All state structures, institutions and the total economic and social fabric are to reflect the overriding requirement that they must enable all persons in the society to participate through representation in decision making processes; to be collectively responsible for implementation of decisions relating to society's welfare; to have equal opportunities to develop human potential-technical, artistic and spiritual; and to have right to a share of national income which would enable them to live in conditions of human dignity and maintain a satisfactory level of physical and spiritual well-being. Our concern here today is to apply these general requirements to Caribbean rural society and to devise criteria for determining levels of achievements. But it is first necessary to identify the basic characteristics which make it legitimate to view Caribbean rural society as having common

denominators, and to posit that there are developmental horizons applicable to all territories within the region.

The definitive characteristic of Caribbean rural society is the overriding predominance of agricultural activity and the central role this has played in formulating personal and group relationships. But throughout the whole region the institutional framework in which farm production occurred was the plantation, and this together with the long historical experience of slave and indentured, as opposed to free labour, has conditioned relationships to such an extent that even today there is still in rural society a greater tendency towards dependence on authority and to suspicion and distrust among the citizenry, than to self-reliance and co-operation. The particular characteristics of plantation economies and the human personalities they tend to develop, are dealt with at length in Beckford's "Persistent Poverty". There he quotes Edgar T. Thompson, who writes of the plantation:

"It is one of that class of institution that pattern the relationship of people to the land and largely determine how people shall live on the land and with one another". 1/

And of the nature of the relationship which the institution promoted, Beckford writes, and we quote at length:

"Within plantation community, interpersonal relations reflect the authority structure of the plantation itself. In every aspect of life a strong authoritarian tradition can be observed. Any one with the slightest degree of power over others exercises this

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1/ Edgar T. Thompson, "Plantation Cycle and Problems of Typology" in Vera Rubin (ed.), Caribbean Studies - A Symposium (University of the West Indies, 1957; reissued University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington, 1960), p. 30. Extracted from page 8 "Persistent Poverty" by George L. Beckford.

power in a characteristic exploitive authoritarian manner, and attitudes towards work clearly reflect the plantation influence. Overseer types never do manual work which is degrading to their social dignity, and labourers consistently devise ways and means of getting pay without actually doing work - it is simply a case of always trying to beat the system. On the whole the plantation has a demoralizing influence on the community. It destroys or discourages the institution of the family and so undermines the entire social fabric. It engenders an ethos of dependence and patronage and so deprives people of dignity, security and self-respect. And it impedes the material social and spiritual advance of the majority of the people. In the circumstances, we could hardly expect to find a highly motivated population displaying the kinds of characteristics that development demands" ..... "Within plantation society, the tradition, values, beliefs, and attitudes which have become established as a result of long periods of plantation influence are, for the most part, inimical to development. Paternalism, anti-technologism on family plantations, and general attitudes toward life and work contribute to the persistence of under-development." 2/

When one combines these characteristic consequences of plantation economies with those of slavery and indentureship one realises that the type of rural citizen common to Caribbean society is far removed from the type envisaged in our ideal democratic society. The process of development prescribed for rural society must therefore be one which moves the citizenry

away from authoritarianism and the acceptance of all attitudes which go with it, towards self-reliance, human dignity, self-respect and co-operative activity designed to improve the life chances of the mass of the population. In so far as existing socio-political structures are such as to frustrate these ends, the preliminary requirement is a restructuring of relevant institutions before a society can be adjudged as being on a desirable developmental path.

Need to conduct an inventory of the present relative needs and to identify the indicators with observations to the future

This point is central to the exercise now being undertaken by this workshop and therefore it can bear repetition. It is customary to regard such criteria as the number of hospital beds available to the rural population, distribution of health offices, number of school places, availability of community centres, potable water supply etc., as evidence of development in a rural society. But according to our concepts, these are relevant criteria only when demands for them come from citizens desirous of improving their life chances, but not when they are supplied by authoritarian paternalistic power structures. For corporate states can be as damaging to the human personality as plantation owners.

Indicators

A case in point is the establishment of community centres. It is a fair guess that this type of facility did not originate through the desire of any rural society to achieve greater self-fulfilment. For all such societies create their own local communal institutions. These may be, the cafe or parlour, the rumshop, the yard, the mango tree or just simply the road junction. And they continue using them even after the so-called community centres are built. These buildings in fact serve more as extensions of the authoritarian paternalistic arm of the state than as new avenues for development of human personality.

In summary, development planning in the Caribbean should be viewed as an exercise in creating a new Caribbean personality. One which will not be shackled by those aspects of our historical

experience which rewarded subservience and the submission of our mental and physical selves to authoritarian and dictatorial leadership. But which develops in us a sense of responsibility for ourselves and for the quality of life available to all members of Caribbean society. One which forges an ethos based on human dignity and which eschews all particularisms based on race, colour, creed and power. In the final analysis development has to do with the quality of life of individuals and every course which is charted in the planning exercise has to be judged not in terms of how much is added to national wealth, but how that wealth both in its production and distribution contribute to enrichment of human personality and to life chances of individuals. In applying these requirements to the rural scene we are primarily asking how rural activity can be enriched to create human personalities more in keeping with the democratic ideal. But since the rural world, here designated "Ruritania" is only part of a social continuum we must first consider those programmes which are applicable to society as a whole.

Distribution of  
wealth be studied  
Rural studies  
Village studies

Education, both formal and informal, is the most potent force for conditioning man's mental processes, and it is therefore the instrument of prime importance in any programme designed to develop in Caribbean man a more self-sufficient personality. At the formal level the society needs to re-examine both the content and practice of primary education. This is the level which sets the tone, on the one hand, for society as a whole, since it is the one through which every citizen passes, and on the other, for higher levels of education. In so far as content is concerned, it should be more environmentally biased, relating man to the physical world around him and to Caribbean society of which he is a part. The pupil must be made familiar with the historical experience of his society and be able to place this within a total world concept of relationships between the socio-economic, political and scientific forces which have conditioned the behaviour of man through time.

Education

Educational practice in the Caribbean has treated knowledge in compartmentalized areas, on a subject by subject basis, forcing students to see their educational experience in terms of abstractions which they either like or dislike. The tie between those abstractions and the real world is lacking. There is need for a more project approach towards learning experience. This can establish linkages between subject discipline and the social framework. At the same time, it can replace the individualistic concept of education with a socially oriented one through co-operative exercises in the school which emphasize the inter-dependent character of all human existence. At the informal level all communication media have an important role to play. One quite different from that which they currently fulfil, that of providing sensation, stimulating demand for brand products and keeping the regional population informed about all the lurid and gory details of the excesses of miscreants in the world at large. They will have the important tasks of moulding public opinion towards the social ideal, of encouraging individual and group expression, since only through dialogue can the society come to terms with itself, and of fostering increasing critical analysis of current affairs and of the region's historical past, so that the opinions of individual thinkers do not become regional dogma. An important aspect of their function is to create an intellectual climate of enquiry and an open society where thought and expression of opinion are seen as a norm for social growth and expansion.

Of parallel importance with education is the political organization of society for management of its affairs. Concentration of political power in one central national institution is of the same genus as the plantocrat in plantation society. It is therefore crucial to have a decentralized institutional political system so that there can be broad base

participation in political management of the society. In this way those with political ambition but mediocre talent will be able to function at levels in keeping with their own limitations. There ought through this to be a greater chance of developing not only competent political leadership but statesmen who can project a new regional ethos. Provision for local government does not however necessarily indicate that there is broad based involvement in domestic affairs, for local representative bodies are very often emasculated by not being given powers of taxation and responsibility for expenditure. These powers are usually retained by the central government thus preventing local politicians and their electorate from developing a sense of personal involvement with the way in which their immediate environment is managed. Movement towards our ideal requires that all representative political bodies must have power to raise taxes from citizens within their domain and must have responsibility for some aspects of environmental management.

Two arguments are often advanced against distribution of political management. It is said that these local bodies are too small. Our reply is that where human affairs are concerned, no minimum size of a social group is required to justify concern of that group for its own welfare. The second argument is that these bodies are often corrupt and badly managed. Our reply is that a national government concerned with eradicating corruption can always act against such practices at regional levels, and management of a society's affairs is, in the final analysis, in the hands of the regional electorate. If they are conscious of their needs they will see that they get representatives who satisfy them. That consciousness, where lacking, will arise from the practice of management.

This broad outline for the society as a whole presents the background against which the particular characteristics of rural life will develop. It has already been pointed out that the

dominant rural activity is agriculture. But our total vision must include forestry, hunting and those traditional activities in rural areas which service all biological production. If our rural citizen is to travel along our path to the democratic ideal then he must be entrusted with use of national resources with which he has to work. The farm worker must have usufructary rights over land which he will be allowed to use as long as he follows good farming practices. There must be a multiplicity of farm operators functioning in this capacity so that rural society will comprise numerous farm families operating holdings dependent primarily on family labour rather than relatively large plantations relying on hired farm labour. Since they are all conscious of the gains to be derived from co-operative activities, they will act communally in areas, like the purchasing of inputs and the marketing of products, where it is to their economic advantage to do so. With pride in their own regional performance they will try, through acquisition of knowledge, to improve group performances. Joint behaviour for commodity supply will indicate a number of other areas where social life can be enriched through group activity, so that the rural community develops its own personality. These farm operators will be decision makers in their own right and will be performing managerial functions on their farms. This will help them to develop a sense of responsibility and the self-respect and pride which results from making a meaningful contribution to the national economy. They will be interested in the political management of their region and will try to ensure that those whom they elect to local bodies will serve local interests. At the same time they will be better equipped to judge the calibre and moral standards of citizens they elect to national office.

Our range of political and economic prescriptions for the development of our democratic society indicate quite clearly the kinds of social indicators which will meet our requirements. They will indicate broadly degrees of participation and interest of the

rural citizenry in regional and national affairs, and the extent to which they, of their own accord, act to enrich social life and life chances of citizens within their communities.

At the education level, we will expect to find the school community as a microcosm of the region. Relevant indicators will be the existence of:

- a. School farms with animals and other forms of life, not for the purpose of teaching agriculture, but for familiarizing students with their environment.
- b. Naturalist societies. These will establish practical linkages between the school and the environment through field excursions and develop in children observation of natural phenomenon.
- c. Cultural activities. Schools should by periodic displays provide opportunities for cultural and artistic expression.
- d. School communities. Since children are being prepared for the adult world, they should be involved while still at school in management of the school society. Students from different levels in the schools should be elected to sit with teachers to discuss matters relating to classroom or school management.
- e. Parent/Teacher Associations. School discipline can be most effective when both teachers and parents can meet to discuss matters relating to child education. An important requirement for social discipline is therefore that there are provisions for such formal meetings. Pupils should know that meetings of this kind do occur and they should be made to realise that they give both home and school an opportunity to check on a student's progress and behaviour.

- f. Sport and Athletics. Citizens can best appreciate the pleasures of work when they learn the importance and value of play. This should be inculcated at school. Sport and athletic activities should be built into school syllabuses as integral parts of the human development programme and should not as so often happens simply provide a break for teachers from the onerous task of maintaining classroom discipline.
- g. Religious education. Man's spiritual needs have been provided for by religious beliefs of one kind or another which have traditionally played a part in social discipline. Religious education should therefore be provided in schools so that children on leaving school have both scientific and religious models of the world and a broad base for formulating their moral codes.
- h. Library services. School children should develop the reading habit so that at the end of their school career they can continue enjoying the pleasure of reading. There should therefore be libraries in every school. At the same time since for the individual education is a never-ending process, rural citizens must have access to books in adult life. Indicators of development therefore are the presence of libraries in rural society, the number of persons who use them and the frequency with which they do so.

In the field of health there must be evidence that rural citizens, conscious of their own needs, take positive action to secure the following:

- a. Adequate local nursing and midwifery services.
- b. Medical and dental preventive and curative services.
- c. Hospitalization facilities for serious cases.
- d. A potable supply of water.
- e. Satisfactory levels of public sanitation.
- f. Adequate sewerage disposal systems.

- g. A visiting service for needy old-age cases.

In the field of political activity, one would expect lively interest in government. The degree of interest and involvement can be ascertained from:

- a. The percentage of the electorate voting in both local and national elections.
- b. Attendance at meetings of the local government council.
- c. The extent to which citizens demand services from their elected representatives and show interest in the way in which local affairs are managed.
- d. The willingness of rural citizens to pay taxes for general improvement and maintenance of their environment.

The criteria for development in economic activity towards our goal of the good society must reflect self-reliance and interdependence. Primarily, one will expect:

- a. That there will be a multiplicity of own-account farm operators.
- b. That farm land will be more or less evenly distributed among the farming population.
- c. That plantation agriculture, both private and state, will be either non-existent or dying.
- d. That there will be farmers' co-operatives both for the purchasing of inputs and the marketing of produce.
- e. That there will be locally organized agricultural exhibitions.
- f. That farmers' co-operatives will demand and ensure that its members receive technical assistance from the national agricultural extension service.

