

# New Caribbean Body Launched

Hon. Mrs. Janet Jagan, Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, played a prominent part at the special session of the West Indian Conference of the Caribbean Commission which took place at St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. The conference lasted two weeks and Mrs. Jagan returned to B.G. last Sunday. Mr. D'Andrade, acting Financial Secretary, was the other delegate from B.G. Conference discussed the organisation of a successor to the Caribbean Commission.

Before the close of the conference Mrs. Jagan addressed delegates as follows:

We have now completed the two important problems set before this conference—that of agreement on the legal instruments for the establishment of the new Caribbean Organisation and the financing of this new organisation

It is now time to indicate our views on the functions and activities of the new organisation. To do that it would be helpful to examine the replies to the questionnaires sent to all member Governments last year.

Considering the replies as a whole, it is my impression that member Governments did not

feel that the Caribbean Commission had functioned in a manner satisfactory to all.

## Too Academic

(Mrs. Jagan here quoted at length from the replies to the questionnaire by B.G. Govt., Jamaica Govt., French territories in the Caribbean, Netherlands Antilles and Puerto Rico. General trend of the replies was that the Commission's activities had been too academic to be of much real value and that to achieve the real objectives, a reorganisation was necessary.)

Mrs. Jagan then stated:

It seems clear that most of us see eye to eye on the need for the new Caribbean organisation to function at a different level than the present Caribbean Commission

In coming to this conclusion I wish to make it clear that in no way do I say that the Commission has not served a useful purpose.

## Caribbean Consciousness

I could not express my views better than in words of Dr. Eric Williams, now Premier of Trinidad, who once made these remarks — "Whatever reservations may be made, the role of the West Indian conference of the Caribbean Commission has been that of catalytic agent, and its significance rests in the fact that, like the Commission itself, but at a different level, it is a symbol of national and international collaboration. Its discussion and recommendations have served to ventilate common problems and promote a regional consciousness"

Mrs. Jagan continued: "If the new Caribbean organisation were to be only a symbol of our Caribbean cooperation, I think I would be happy for that alone is a fundamental reason for the existence of such a body."

## Promoting Trade

Yet I know that the new organisation we are establishing can mean more than that, can achieve more than that, I think that promotion of trade in the area would serve as a most useful purpose.

Our ministers of trade can sit together at round table conferences and discuss the potential application of Caribbean trade. We can achieve something too, if we can standardise requirements for trade through the Caribbean.

There is no sense in talking of Caribbean cooperation if we cannot cut out many of the barriers to free travel in the area.

## Technical Experience

In the field of research and technical assistance, I think we have not yet tapped sufficiently the tree of experience nor have we sufficiently exchanged our Caribbean experiences. Many experts coming to us are sent by international bodies but I cannot fail to comment that some have brought with them only their northern or metropolitan knowledge and experience.

Experience of different territories in certain fields can be far better than academic knowledge thrust upon us. It can be of greater value to us in the Caribbean who frequently cannot afford to apply the recommendations of these experts. We do not have the financial resources.

More often than not we have found later or too late that our neighbours have solved a similar problem in a "Caribbean manner" at a cheaper cost and with a greater use of local ideas and materials. I would like to see the mapping out of a plan for this Caribbean zone, so important as a unit of this world, yet so neglected and underdeveloped.

I would like to see a plan something like the one known as the Colombo Plan to raise funds at international level to pump into this area. Like a sick patient in bed receiving blood transfusions we need some heavy transfusions of the money to put us on our feet. I think a Caribbean organisation is the correct body to prepare such a plan and bring it out at international level.

In closing her address, B.G.'s delegate to the special Session of

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