

PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE

by

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“The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty” - Proverbs 21:5.

29 OCTOBER 2007 - As we discussed in a [recent column](#), the management of small economies in the Caribbean poses a significant challenge especially when the pride of sovereignty militates against the consideration of proposals based on economies of scale. If there were one sovereign CARICOM nation, we could experience faster sustained growth due to the combined wealth of resources and the synergies which could derive from the resulting interaction.

The reality is that, for the most part, the governance of these small economies has focused and will probably continue to focus on developmental challenges, small state by small state, and the best we can hope for is to learn one from another as the individual economies evolve. Even that is optimistic, however, as egos may tend to get in the way of the learning process.

As if the small economy syndrome were not enough, small states are now faced with the external factor of rapidly rising oil prices which have already begun to impact the cost of living. This will be of concern to politicians who know very well that if the “feel” in the constituents’ pockets is good, especially at the time of an election, this gives them some comfort in terms of security of tenure. In contrast, if rising cost of living threatens, then all hell breaks loose and panic station buttons are pressed with the likelihood of thrusting all of us into a state of confusion. What can we do about this? The immediate solution is two fold.

On the one hand, we must aggressively pursue strategies for developing alternative energy resources. Solar water heating has been very successful in Barbados, now we must focus on photovoltaics, solar electricity or “solaricity”, whichever you prefer. As the price of oil rises, and with technological advancements, this option is now becoming financially viable. There is no question that it is economically viable when we consider energy and environmental security. A solution developed in a given country, can be extended to other countries in the Caribbean and beyond.

On the other hand, we must recognize that our people are our greatest asset and we must develop them to the fullest – education, training, nutrition, exercise, peace of mind and preventing drug abuse among children and adolescents. A balanced food diet is essential to their holistic well being. The fuel component of the cost of food is increasing, hence we need to source food nearer home. It will also be fresher and

more nutritious. The local agricultural sector must be well developed. Systems of production and trade in fresh and processed commodities, developed in a given country, can be extended to other countries in the Caribbean and beyond.

In addition, the management of small states must be put under the microscope. In particular, strategic and action planning is paramount. This leads me to the adage “Proper Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance” and reminds me of a story which was circulated on the Net and reached my inbox last week.

A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When the farmer asked for his qualifications, he said, "I can sleep when the wind blows." This puzzled the farmer. But he liked the young man, and hired him. A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. The young man slept soundly.

The farmer and his wife then inspected their property. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements. The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn was properly locked. Even the animals were calm. All was well. The farmer then understood the meaning of the young man's words, "I can sleep when the wind blows." Because the farmhand did his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it broke. So when the wind blew, he was not afraid. He could sleep in peace.

This is a reminder to us that if we can catch up in our lives with all the things we are behind in, and prepare properly for the future, then we will learn to understand what sound sleep really is.

One of my readers last week observed that drug addiction is a manifestation of terrible heartache from physical and sexual abuse as well as neglect and is very psychologically harmful. The need to create opportunities for people to have a steady, sufficient income is essential. However, one cannot concentrate on getting a job, a house or other important needs when one is dealing with the emotional burdens of feeling affliction and disregard from others, as opposed to love, affection, and affirmation. This person is in a place of entrapment. What if we exuded a genuine care towards what they need and what they are trying to do – “my well being is based on your well being”?

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