

The Commonwealth of Dominica - Into The Twentyfirst Century And Beyond.

(Perspectives on socio-economic, cultural, educational, and political reform and national development in the Commonwealth of Dominica.)

by

[Aurelius Gordon](#)

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction (3)
2. On Regional Trade - Our Neglected Back Yard (6)
3. Human Resource Development - A Priority (10)
4. On the Privatization of Public Utilities and the Enhancement of the effectiveness of the Private and Public Sectors (14)
5. On Agriculture and Forestry (19)
6. Tourism and Hotel Development (26)
7. On the Question of Developing a National Strategy for Education Towards Year 2000 and Beyond (32)
8. Coping with National and Man Made Disasters (37)
9. Bibliography (43)

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this text is to create a framework within which the free exchange of ideas,perspectives and a national discourse on the development of policy for nation building can occur. The ideas put forward here are meant to articulate some specific recommendations of a concerned son of the soil,yours truly, who has heard enough political rhetoric which has done little to advance the process of nation building. Thus it is hoped that the suggestions made here will not serve as fodder for the political mill but rather as the basis for a blueprint for sustainable economic, social, cultural, and political reform and development.

The major areas of interest here are as follows:

1. The restructuring of the system of taxation so that prohibitive export taxes which impede the agricultural and industrial sectors can be removed.
2. The emancipation of agricultural lands on a national scale, particularly unused estate and crown lands which have maximum accessibility to traditional agricultural communities. Also,the issue of making lands available ,at very reasonable rates for housing,hotel development and industry will be explored.
3. The stimulation of the huckstering trade, and the removal of the label and negative image associated with the trade. There should be a process of training in marketing, second languages, accounting, economics, and entrepreneurial skills to establish this small business sector. The aim should be to bring it on par with traditionally recognized business operations.

4. The creation and penetration of local, regional and international markets for locally produced goods and services. Our diplomatic missions should be used primarily as trade and investment missions.
5. The exploration and expansion of regional markets, which would provide close proximity for our export trade, and strengthen long standing historical and cultural ties. Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Antigua are markets where much effort should be made to increase our export. The colonial eurocentric ethos which has guided the focus of our export drives should be shifted.
6. The stimulation, upgrading, and expansion of the infrastructure for land, air, and sea transportation. This is crucial for the establishment of any solid economic base.
7. The designation of industrial, tourism, and export zones. There is the need to upgrade port facilities associated with the informal export sector such as the Anse de Mai, and Marigot bays, Melville Hall airport, and the Roseau, and Portsmouth ports.
8. The development of mechanisms which will enhance the quality control, packaging, transportation, and pre-marketing process so as to facilitate export development. Education and training should play an important part in this process. Dominica needs to double its exports if economic prosperity is to be realized.

ON REGIONAL TRADE - Our Neglected Back Yard

For decades, particularly during the cold war, Dominica's foreign policy has been centred around articulating European or American made agendas, even when interacting with our regional partners. While it is true that our history of Colonial domination has left the region with the mother-country syndrome, with the shift of the geopolitics on the world stage, it is time that our foreign policy begin to articulate what may be referred to as the legitimate, home-grown aspirations of our people. *A case in point: Martinique and Guadeloupe*

Dominica has failed miserably to fully embrace our neighbours in Martinique, and Guadeloupe in a manner becoming of our status as an independent nation. The fact that we have yet to establish trade, and investment missions in each of these islands is testimony to the way in which our policies, thus far, have seemed to reinforce the adversative colonial relations between these sister islands and Dominica, as dictated by the colonial powers.

Firstly, an effort should be made to bridge the language gap which still exists between our three islands. When one considers that just a half-hour's flight to the north and south of Dominica lies an affluent potential market of half a million people, we should be asking ourselves, "Why have our trading and diplomatic ties been so Eurocentric for so long?" Aren't we like the thirsty seamen who were sailing on a body of fresh water, the Amazon River, and not realizing this, were trying to catch rainwater with their sail? Why can we not look to our sister islands in this region for some of the answers to help us find relief from this socio-economic mess?

The question of whether we, as a nation, have done enough to develop the long historical and socio-economic ties, which have existed between us and other Caribbean nations, is crucial. Not only do we share a common history and language, but there is a bond based on the common aspirations of our people. The political and socio-economic isolationism, which has existed between Dominica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe should end. Cuba is another case in point; though the situation is more complex it is no less obvious.

The cementing and furthering of our regional ties beginning with Martinique and Guadeloupe for obvious reasons of geography, language, history, commerce, and culture may be pivotal in our

ability to keep the doors to the European Market open. Considering the excellent shipping and airline connections, which these islands have with Europe, and North America, the potential for export market development is immeasurable. Also, Dominica stands to benefit tremendously from the industrial, infrastructural, technological, and socio-economic know-how, which both islands have to offer. We have not taken the implications of these concrete relations seriously in the past.

Serious consideration should be given to the establishment of a ferry link between Martinique, Dominica, and Guadeloupe. Such a service could be so structured that it would handle passenger vehicles, cargo vehicles, and a bus service. This could form part of a free-trade agreement between the three islands. The economic and cultural benefits of such a link may be one way out of our present economic crisis. This would also stimulate regional tourism.

Now that the cold war is over, Dominica should critically reconsider her geopolitical and foreign policy structures with a view to evaluate the extent to which they hinder or further the cause of nation building. The opportunities which now knock at our door are many in the socio-economic sphere; however, care must be taken to harmonize and depoliticize the ethos which shapes the approaches to trade and foreign policy, which any government adopts.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT - A Priority

Dominica's natural beauty is celebrated in song and dance but even more worthy of celebration is the beauty of her people. Dominicans are a most talented and resourceful people.

Our beloved nation cannot develop without the human resources so critical to nation building. The development of our human resources should be a major focus of any long term infrastructure development scheme. To this end, top priority has to be given to stopping and reversing the brain drain. This national cancer is a reality, which we will always have to live with; however the onus is on us to create opportunities in Dominica, which will convince our people that they can prosper here.

This is not an easy task however, some possible starting points are as follows:

1. Providing our locals with a stake in the country's future - a solid reason and purpose for investing themselves, their future, and that of their children in the process of nation building. This has to be at the social, economic, cultural, and political level. It is very important that our people feel that they and, above all, their children can live and work here in Dominica, and enjoy a decent standard of living, particularly in light of the twenty-four hour-a-day bombardment of this nation by USA cable television.

USA cable television daily undermines Dominicans sense of ourselves as a nation. How does the old saying "know thyself" come true for us if the daily images with which we are bombarded on the screen are alien to us? How else does one explain the rise in crime, drugs, and the undermining of our values and cultural institutions?

2. Education in Dominica at the moment, particularly higher education, is still treated as a privilege and luxury to be enjoyed by the chosen few. Education, including higher education, should be viewed as a right ; and education policy and institutions should be reshaped to reflect that principle. There needs to be the expansion of educational

opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels. Also, there needs to be a marriage between the structure and function of education and the goals of nation building.

3. More opportunities should be created by the banking and real estate sectors to allow more families to own a home of their own. Housing should remain a basic human right, and as such, housing costs should be kept at affordable levels for all. This should include the cost of land.

Government should realise that an investment in a home, and a descent opportunity to earn an income through self-employment or employment in the public or private sector serves as solid reasons for staying in this country. While it is very important to attract foreign capital investment, and transfer of advanced technology, care must be taken to guard against predicating nation building on the illusion of the influx of expatriate millionaires. Dominica should be made attractive first to our people before economic citizenship is marketed wholesale to foreign nationals.

On the Privatization of Public Utilities and the Enhancement of the Effectiveness of the Private and Public Sectors:

In recent years, the notion that government should divest itself of most, if not all, utilities has been put forward as the cure to our economic woes. Most often, this prescription has come from international lending agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Judging from the effects that such measures have had in other Third World countries, the extent to which this measure fosters national development is highly over rated. Whereas government may be able to put its fiscal house in order, on paper, using such measures; it has been noted that the wholesale transfer of publicly-owned operations, particularly utilities, into private hands can grossly undermine the control of the elected representatives of the people over the prices of essential goods and services. Latin America is a case in point.

The privatization of publicly owned operations should only be considered with the public interest in mind. To this end, there are some public sector establishments in which it is most vital, for the national good, that government retain the controlling shares eg. electricity, telephone, public works, water, sewage, road and highway operations, health, education, and basic essential food supplies. These can not be left to the whims and fancies of enterprises aimed solely at profit. This is not to say that these operations should not be made self financing, and thus not allow them to become a burden to the public finances. While it is important for efficient management principles to govern the operation of such public companies, priority should be given to ensuring that the public interest and the right to basic services and essential goods is preserved.

It may be true that privatization, when done on a measured basis allows for companies to be effectively operated, this may at times open the core of the economy to foreign ownership and thus undermine the nation's economic integrity. As much as is possible, the local public should be allowed to hold sixty percent of the shares in public operations. These corporations should be made more transparent in their public accountability. The individuals who pay the telephone, electricity, and water bills should all be allowed to buy shares in these public corporations, and be able to enjoy the profits.

Not only should the aim be to democratize this important sector of the economy but the nation's economic integrity should be preserved. The industrialized countries, like those of the G-8, who control the I.M.F., and who readily prescribe the wholesale privatization of public corporations

to Third World governments, never use any of their own prescription. The pain to the poor, which is caused as a result of the I.M.F.'s austerity measures seems good only for Third World people. Industrialized nations never visit their people with such measures without providing the cushions of unemployment insurance and welfare to their people.

In the case of the public service, there is the need to depoliticize and professionalize appointments; this is crucial if this vital machinery of governments is to work efficiently. At the moment there is too much party political involvement in the business of appointments and the day to day functioning of the public service.

There is urgent need for the formulation and implementation of conflict of interest laws regarding parliamentarians, government ministers, senators, and senior public officials to protect against corruption in government. Senior public service appointments should be open to the scrutiny of parliament. This will go a long way in restoring confidence in these offices. At the same time, care should be taken to avoid the politicization of public service appointments.

Of major concern is the fact that to a large extent the critical eye of the media and press have been kept out of the day to day operations of government. This crisis is further compounded by the lack of diversity, and the almost total absence of a depth of independence and journalistic professionalism in the press and media. This should be viewed as a major threat to the democratic process in particular, and the national development in general. A conscious, and well informed public is the greatest asset to nation building, and the survival of our democratic traditions.

The right of citizens to critique and question the every thought, word, and deed of those in government is more important than having a government. The principle that, in our system of parliamentary democracy, governments are elected by a simple majority to govern on behalf of all citizens is pivotal to the proper operations of our democratic institutions. This makes all elected officials accountable to all citizens. It must be remembered that their allegiance, in taking the oath of office, is to the nation and her people at large, and that their salaries are paid from the public's purse. Laws on ethics in government should be formulated and implemented which would remind elected officials that they are responsible to God first, the nation second, and maybe later to their party.

In Dominica's political reality, a simple majority in parliament, coupled with the unbridled power of the prime ministership under the west ministerial system of parliamentary democracy often results in democratic dictatorship. Furthermore, the presidency is largely ceremonial, both in nature and function, with emergency powers which can only be invoked largely upon the advice of the prime minister. Serious consideration should be given to making the senate into a separate lower house, whose members shall be elected, and whose duty would be to review and fine tune legislation proposed and passed by parliament. This along with the above is necessary if our democratic institutions are to mature as Dominica "comes of age" as an independent nation.

In essence, the sole function of government is that of implementing the Will of the People, and as such, the structures of our democratic institutions should be so shaped as to make the achievement of this objective possible.

ON AGRICULTURE and FORESTRY

The history of agriculture in Dominica has shown that the only era in which there has existed any long term strategy for the development and exploitation of our agricultural and forestry resources has been that of the period of colonization. During that period, the focus of economic planning was on how the agricultural, human and forestry resources of this island, along with those of our sister islands, could benefit the economies of England, France and other European colonizing powers. It seems to be the case that our economic planning, even after fifteen years of political independence, has not emerged from the colonial ethos, which has dominated every aspect of our economic life for so long.

Consistently, it has been demonstrated by successive governments of all shades, that the absence of a home grown philosophy to govern economic planning has resulted in a reactionary methodology being used within government planning. This has been based largely on political ambitions from one five year term to the next. This has created a fragile economic base, the core of which is agriculture. When this is measured against the needs and aspirations of the Dominican people, it leaves much to be desired. How else does one explain the current banana crisis with which we are faced?

A policy on long term national strategy is needed for the proper management, development, and exploitation of our agricultural and forestry resources, beyond the twenty first century. The aim of such a policy should include:

1. The development of human resources and expertise at every level, which would ensure the proper management of Dominica's agricultural and forestry resources.
2. A careful research and assessment of training needs at every level, but more specifically at the level of the farmer and small cultivator. Areas such as farm management, methods of production, ecology management, harvesting techniques, conservation, animal and plant husbandry, and the economics of agriculture are critical areas. Our farmers need to be trained and kept up to date on modern and appropriate farming methods since they are the ones involved at the most fundamental level of this the back bone of our economy.
3. Educational needs should be clearly stated and a national training programme should be put in place to take care of those needs. A basic literacy and numeracy program for farmers should be a national priority. Also, the extent to which our local educational institutions can meet those needs should be assessed.
4. A survey must be done on how the location and functioning of our botanical garden, research and propagation stations, and other such facilities can best serve the nation building process. Also, the extent to which a single national development strategy for agriculture and forestry informs the use and co-ordination of these facilities should be examined. The question to be asked is, "what sort of emphasis or degree of specialization influences the operations of these facilities?" In other words, "is adequate and maximum use being made of these facilities, and along what lines?" Should a structure be set up so that these facilities specialize in one area of research and development such as animal husbandry, plant propagation, pest and disease control, etc.? The extent to which each facility contributes to the food production needs locally, as well as production for the export market should be assessed. This will indicate what impact such programs have on the socio-economic needs as related to agriculture and forestry, and thus, the appropriateness of location and the efficiency of operation of these facilities can be modified accordingly.
5. Research and development facilities related to agriculture and forestry should serve the farming community in the field; and their base of operation should be so located as to

make them accessible to the farming community that they are meant to serve. This is not presently the case.

6. The area of horticulture and the cut flower industry should be vigorously explored. All areas of the industry should be researched including product development, marketing, transportation mechanisms, support services, and agencies necessary to ensure the viability of such an industry. The cherished tradition of horticulture as best exemplified by the Village of Giraudel should be allowed to bloom into a full fledged national industry.
7. No apologies should be made for the fact that agriculture is the base of Dominica's economy. This has been so historically and will remain for a long time to come. A nation which can feed itself has a firm reason to be proud.

While diversification within the wider economy is to be vigorously pursued, agriculture should be strengthened to ensure that:

- The island becomes self sufficient in food production. To this end, food import substitution should be a priority.
- The local, regional and international marketing of our agricultural products is to be promoted.
- The marriage of policy goals within agriculture and forestry, and the curricula at the elementary, secondary and tertiary levels of education is to be made a reality.
- Of critical importance should be the focus on the development of the infrastructure related to agriculture and forestry. An adequate road network should be a national priority. Presently the highway system in the northeast and other areas of major economic activity is limiting the access to arable land.
- Land reform is of critical importance. The high price and lack of accessibility of agricultural land should be addressed. The estate system which now exists is a legacy of slavery, and stands in the way of democratic agricultural development in which land is made available to all and not to the chosen few. More use should be made of the Melville Hall Airport, Ans de Mai, Portsmouth, and Roseau seaports for the shipment of agricultural and industrial products. In addition, there needs to be diversification and expansion within the transportation industry in the areas of air and sea transportation.
- With the increasing fortress mentality now taking shape in Europe and much of the international markets, we should look towards the Caribbean, South, Central, and North America for alternative markets for our products. As such, our airline and shipping connections to these points should be enhanced. The importance of an international airport can not be overemphasized.
- The huckstering industry should be encouraged and the banking and credit union sectors should make funding more accessible at concessional rates.
- Local and foreign investors in agroindustrial production should be given incentives to expand, diversify, and modernize their operations. Why not use some of our bananas locally for producing vinegar, banana chips, jams, liquors, or animal food? The same can be done with our citrus, bay oil, and other crops.

In short, we have to be more innovative and discard the pre-independence, colonial approach to agriculture.

ON TOURISM and HOTEL DEVELOPMENT

Given Dominica's central location in the Caribbean archipelago, her abundant natural beauty, and the warm hospitality of our people, the island is well placed to develop a viable tourism sector. Furthermore, the unique features of the island as captured in her nicknames: Nature Isle of the Caribbean, The Best Kept Secret of the Caribbean, etc.; these provide Dominica with the opportunity of developing a new product which can be marketed internationally with the increasing popularity of environmental and ecological issues internationally, this image of Dominica as an unspoiled part of the planet is a major trump card which can be used in marketing our tourism product. Indeed, ecotourism is the ideal tourism product that we should vigorously protect, promote, and market at the local, regional, and international levels.

Some specific institutions necessary for the development of a tourism industry would include:

1. The establishment of a tourism and hotel training institute. Such an institute could focus on such areas of training as:
 - a) Tourism and Hotel management
 - b) Tourism Marketing, promotions, and the Travel Industry
 - c) Studies in Cuisine and Culinary Arts
 - d) Business Management
 - e) Math, History, English, Spanish, French, and German
 - f) Studies in Culture, Arts, and Music

The development and marketing of a tourism product which is "home grown", and appropriate to the culture and economic needs of the island should be carefully planned so as to avoid the social and cultural pitfalls which we have seen in other islands. The philosophy which informs the formulation of tourism development policy has not only to be based on economic considerations but more importantly, they should address, with a large measure of sensitivity, the issue of social, cultural, and environmental impact which tourism does have on any country. Any development which is out of tune with the heart beat of a nation's culture, social fabric, or natural environment can bring with it very serious and often irreversible consequences.

Coupled with a national strategy and "home grown" philosophy for the development of the tourism and hotel industry is the very important factor of the infrastructural development which is a must if tourism in Dominica is to get off to a good start.

2. The need for an international airport can not be over stressed. This is not going to be done if governments "continue to treat this as an egg." There is bound to be financial risks involved in a venture of such magnitude, however, the crux of the matter is that no administration has come up with the economic foresight or political guts to embark on so bold a venture. The development of an international airport may be the cure for the "banana syndrome" with which we are faced.

The large scale employment which such a project would create would be a major boost to the economy, not to mention the investment potential which it would generate. This is key to turning the economy around and the risks involved have proven to be well worth taking. We should not expect such a project to be handed to us on a silver platter however, capital should be raised locally, from private sources, and loan funds, as well as from friendly governments.

3. The upgrading of our natural scenery and parks is also important. Our capital city, Roseau is in great need of a face lift and all around landscaping. Slums within the city should be eliminated; St Joseph and Grand Bay are areas which require similar revamping and slum elimination. Portsmouth is another case in point.
4. The roads and paths leading to our beaches, waterfalls, lakes, and mountain climbing sites should be upgraded.
5. National festivals, cultural events, and local folklore should be nurtured and cultivated into a calendar of activities around which marketing and promotion can be done locally, regionally, and internationally. Dominica is still the Caribbean's best kept secret. There are so many major travel magazines, whose editors have yet to hear of Dominica. We have so much to offer the visitor.
6. Tourism education should be included within the high school curricula. This may include the teaching of an appreciation of our local culture, people, natural environment, and an awareness as to what elements are involved in the business -both positive and negative. The local community should always play a major role in the planning and decision making process since this is the best way to democratize economic development, fine tune the entire process -from the policy formulation stage to the project implementation, evaluation, functioning, and follow-through stage.

Foreign interests should be encouraged to participate in and take advantage of the many fertile opportunities which do exist within the hospitality industry. In so doing, it will be the duty of government to have the nation's best interest and that of her people at the heart of any development policy at all times. This requires a fluently articulated philosophy.

It often occurs that the fundamental question of national territorial, economic, social, and political integrity is sacrificed at the altar of political and economic opportunism. Investors should at all times be guided carefully and uncompromisingly on the fundamental questions which have serious implications for the future good of both their investment and the national interest.

7. Of absolute importance should be the support of the small and family owned guest house operation, tour guide service, restaurant, craft and hotel operations managed by our locals. To this extent locally owned establishments should be encouraged to expand and be provided with loans from the banking sector at concessionary rates, along with consultancy services.

On the Question of Developing a National Strategy for Education Towards the Year Two Thousand and Beyond

The basic principles which govern the structure and function of Dominica's education system are antiquated. They form the cream of our legacy of slavery; and to that extent the system of education has functioned to undermine the social fabric and independence of our society by the creation of institutional barriers to education and training.

Education, particularly secondary and post secondary education in Dominica is still a privilege reserved for the chosen few and financially well off.

Education at all levels should be a basic human right, just as food or clothing. If we claim, as some of our high school mottos do, that the mind is as important as the body, how does one

explain the fact that we as a nation have for generations robbed over eighty percent of our young people of a basic high school education, through the outdated Common Entrance Exam? There is absolutely no excuse for having such a guillotine around.

While one must acknowledge the fact that more recently, following the island's attainment of political independence, much progress has been made in the field of education, such as long distance learning, this does not negate the fact that:

1. The literacy rate is still below acceptable levels.
2. A large proportion of our young people have had no training beyond the elementary school level.
3. Dominica hardly has more than two thousand places in the first forms of high school island wide.
4. Though the results of the Common Entrance Exams have proven it to be outdated, it is still used as a means of justifying the lack of intense efforts on the part of government and the churches to build more high schools. Of fundamental importance should be the clear affirmation of the principle that education should be a basic human right, and as such, a high school education should be a basic right that our nation should afford every man, woman, and child by the year two thousand.

To a very large extent, the education system in Dominica, at the elementary, secondary, and post secondary levels have been geared at producing an "educated elite", whose members would become the future civil servants, lawyers, doctors etc. Our system has not addressed the serious business of human resource development, which education as a most noble of institutions is supposed to do. Though Dominica has become politically independent, the legacy of colonialism evident within the structure and function of the education system has largely remained intact.

The fact that more than twentytwo years after our attainment of independence, the political will has not yet been found to challenge the colonial and elitist ideology, which has informed and shaped our system of education, as well as many other social and economic structures in this nation, is cause for concern. Our education system is in dire need of emancipation from the archaic and colonial ethos, which strangles its development. The ability of the child to reach one's full physical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and psychological development should be the heartbeat of any credibly system of education:

1. Dominica needs an education policy which treats education, at all levels, as a fundamental human right of every citizen. Education should be treated as a right as much as the right to life and liberty of the individual. This is the philosophy which should inform policy from which any initiative to shape or develop our education must begin.
2. The barriers of political ineptitude, which for centuries have barred over seventy percent of our youth from a high school education, must be brought down once and for all.

High school education structured into the academic, vocational, and technical streams, should be made compulsory for every citizen.

The empty excuses, which have been used to keep the doors of high school education closed to so many for so long should be thrown off the cliffs of the Cabrits.

3. A newly formulated education policy should be aimed at achieving long term national economic and social development objectives.
4. The academic programs at the Dominica Community College should be fully restructured so that a complete spectrum of courses can be covered. We should stop focusing on preparing students only to sit external exams. Instead, we should develop a local system of accreditation connected to the University of the West Indies; one which articulates the needs and aspirations of our people.
5. A detailed policy on national standards for literacy, numeracy, and adult education should be formulated geared at wiping out illiteracy by the year two thousand.
6. The structure and function of the Teacher's Training College, the School of Nursing, and the Extra Mural Department should be merged to create a full fledged University. The possibility of establishing a Dominica University of the O.E.C.S. should be explored in consultation with our O.E.C.S. and international partners. This institution may be made into an out-growth of the University of the West Indies.

COPING with NATURAL and MAN-MADE DISASTERS

Our recent history has provided us with very vivid evidence indicating that it is of paramount importance that Dominica as a nation and the Caribbean as a region, have to be able to prevent and cope with natural disasters. The passing of Hurricane David in 1979, showed us that our economic infrastructure, and agricultural tourism, and other industries stand to suffer major damage if left unprotected from the elements or if left uninsured. The magnitude of such damage can be so enormous as to have the ability to undermine the prospects for economic prosperity in the long term.

A major disaster prevention and management policy should be put in place which would focus the attention of government on putting in place of the means by which the island's people, its economy, and social infrastructure shall be prepared to survive and return, as quickly as possible, to normality following the occurrence of any natural or man-made disaster.

In conjunction with national, regional, and international government, and non-government agencies, a disaster fund, and food bank should be established. This fund should be aimed at the restoration of the economic and social infrastructure following any disaster. The banking sector should be encouraged to play a major part in this project. Its role should also be to provide storm victims, farmers, etc., with a grace period on repayments or view of the economic slow down which may follow the occurrence of a major disaster such as a hurricane.

The crop insurance scheme which was established following the occurrence of hurricane David was a very important first step. This should be expanded to cover other crops such as coconuts, citrus, and other tree crops; also the fisheries, and tourism industries. Other sectors of the economy should be required by law to have all businesses fully insured. The aim of such a program should be to provide reasonable insurance coverage which would guarantee speedy recovery and, as a result, would also promote confidence in the stability of the economy.

In the area of housing in particular, and the construction industry in general a strictly enforced code should be formulated regarding:

1. Building specifications for withstanding winds of speeds of up to 200 miles per hour and providing safe areas to serve as hurricane shelters, and protection against earthquakes.

2. Attention should be paid to low lying, coastal areas with respect to their vulnerability to flooding, and tidal surges.
3. In light of the enormous damage done to roads, and bridges by land slides, floods, and tidal surges, methods need to be developed to protect such vital infrastructure. This may include the building of retaining walls, the construction of adequate drainage, and the planting of trees to stabilize the soil and so prevent erosion.
4. Education in disaster awareness should be incorporated into the curricula at the elementary, and secondary levels. Focus should be on methods of prevention, survival, and rescue. The police, fire, and civil service should be mobilized along with the media, press, health department, and other essential services. Training for these sectors should include seminars, workshops, and drills relevant to disaster awareness and prevention.
5. A serious feasibility study must be done on the growing of crops, which are much more resistant to hurricanes than bananas. The banana industry, the pillar of our economy, is too vulnerable to hurricane winds. This means that in a matter of a few hours years of hand work and the main stay of our economy can be blown out to sea. The growing of crops such as ground provisions and tree crops which are more resistant to storms should be encouraged. Also, farmers should be encouraged to plant wind breakers, particularly along coastal areas.

The long term viability of Dominica's economy depends heavily on our ability to cope with man made and natural disasters. Further, the question of pollution, and environmental, and ecological disasters is to be examined vis-a-vis practices in agriculture and industry which impact negatively on the environment. Some of the catastrophes which can occur as a result of damage to our national environment tends to be very subtle and can go largely undetected until its too late.

Of particular concern should be the environmental impact of: Pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides used in farming, and the toxic, chemical, emissions, from our factories, power plants, and other industrial and domestic sites. Also, there is the need to measure the environmental impact of infrastructural projects. Some cases in point for an immediate environmental assessment study are: the emissions from the citrus processing plant located next to the Dominica Grammar School. The liquid chemicals discharged into the river and sea by the Dominica Coconut Products plant and the chemicals discharged from the agricultural experimental station at Londonderry.

It is also important that any future developmental project be preceded by an indepth environmental, social, and economic impact study. The point to be noted is that considerations of economic or social gains should not take precedence over environmental concerns.

In order that the national development process be democratized, broad and open public discussions and consultations should precede the setting up of any project. An approach to policy formulation which is broadly based, open, and consultative has many benefits. Not only does it generate much education and public participation but it also guarantees Community support and confidence in government in general and the nation building process in particular.

Finally, the bottom line should always be democratic nation building. Democracy, that is government by, of, and for the people, should not only apply to our political institution but also to every aspect of the economic, social, cultural, and education life of the nation. Though this

process is time consuming, and requires much political will on the part of any government, it is the most bedrock upon which the future prosperity of this nation must be built.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Barth, Fredrik, Scale and Social Organization, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1978.
2. Bradby, Barbara, The Destination of the Natural Economy -Economy and Society, 1975.
3. Burawoy, Michael, The Politics of Production - Factory Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism, Verso Editions, London, 1984.
4. Dalton, George, How Exactly are Peasants Exploited?, American Anthropologist.
5. Firth, Raymond, Elements of Social Organization, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961.
6. Foucault, Michel, The Archeology of Knowledge, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1972.
7. Frank, Andre Gunder, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1967.
8. Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, Peasants and Capital - Dominica in the World Economy, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1988.

NOTE:

Financial support for the publication of this manuscript for release in print to the Dominican public is hereby requested. This will cost EC\$4000. Contributions can be mailed to the following address:

Aurelius Gordon
PO Box 2103
Roseau,
Commonwealth of Dominica
Eastern Caribbean.
Email: auregordon@hotmail.com

© Aurelius Gordon: Re-publication with author's permission only

[Back to The Future](#)