THE DOMINICA LIBERATION MOVEMENT ALLIANCE PROGRAMME

AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Over the past twenty years, the international community has placed great emphasis on the development of poor Third World countries like Dominica, but in spite of the many words, the policies, the plans and the vast amount of money spent on this process, Dominica like most LDC's has been unable to meet its basic needs for jobs, food, housing, health and education, for a vast section of the population. In other words, Dominica has remained poor !

The fact that the great majority of poor people live in the countryside, are farmers on tiny plots, tenants cultivating land they do not own, landless agricultural workers and their families, emphasizes the importance of agriculture and the rural areas and the urgent need for immediate attention to this sector. In short, the development of Dominica depends on the reorganisation, modernisation and democratisation of our agricultural sector.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The main concern of DLM-Alliance Government's agricultural policy is for a new strategy that will act more directly and quickly to improve conditions of life for the rural poor.

The specific aims of the policy are :

* To ensure that the labour of farmers and rural workers brings increased earnings to them ;
* To reduce the great difference in living standards between town and country ;
* To steadily increase the nation's ability to meet its needs for quality food, housing, jobs, industry and foreign exchange ;
* To secure a meaningful role for technicians, farmers and agricultural workers in the planning, organisation, management and control, of programmes in agriculture, i.e. establishing people's participation, self-reliance and democratic involvement as the methodology for development.

STRATEGY

To achieve these objectives, the DLM-Alliance Government sees the need for changes at three level – THE RURAL AREAS THEMSELVES, NATIONAL POLICIES AND IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

At the level of the rural areas themselves, essential steps to be taken are :

* Setting up of an office for rural development, working closely with the Ministry of Mobilization to ensure close coordination of all programmes presently underway in these rural areas. This will avoid duplication of effort and ensure more effective service to farmers and their families. Programes such as 4-H Club, Family Life Education, Agricultural Extension, Community Development, Social League, Credit Union, Farmers' Union, Forestry, Youth Division, Local Government and others, would all be considered here.

*Full government support for farmers organisations such as the Dominica Farmers'Union, the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives, the Bay Oil Coopérative, the Northern District Agricultural Cooperative and others. In this regard, the setting up of a Farmers' Advisory Council with representation from all farmers organisations, to advise on formulating and assist in the execution of the Government's agricultural plan. Full support to ongoing programmes of these organisations such as the Feeder Road Construction Unit of DFU/NDAP, the expension of our Essential Oils industry planned by the Bay Oil Cooperative, revitalisation of citrus packing and processing planned by the Citrus Growers Cooperative.

* The reorganisation of the Division of Agriculture to ensure :

– full participation by staff in the decision-making process ;
– ongoing retraining and study for staff ;
– work organised according to performance targets set in consultation with farmers and policy makers.

* Provision of opportunities for training farmers locally and overseas, in aspects of production, processing, management, record keeping, planning.

* In conjunction with the Forestry, conservation and Tourism and Education sectors, the more effective use of radio and film to promote concern for the environment, with special emphasis on conservation, wildlife, forestry and science education.

These steps will ensure that the farmer and his family have the necessary social incentive, the services and ability to increase production and establish control over that production.

AT THE LEVEL OF NATIONAL POLICY

The DLM-Alliance Government will attend to things that rural people cannot do for themselves at this time. In this regard, steps will be taken to ensure...

* The setting in motion of a comprehensive agrarian reform programme with the assistance of an Agrarian Commission, involving the World Bank, IFAD, the UWI and FAO, working closely with the Farmers' Advisory Council, the Ministry of Agriculture and other appropriate agencies.