

ABSTRACT

With the revolution of rising expectations most Caribbean governments find themselves beset with the insistent demands of their peoples for economic development. But, being poor countries, with few natural resources, save their beaches, most of these governments have turned to tourism as the sine qua non of their economic progress.

But tourism is an inherently unstable industry and carries with it severe problems which have not been fully appreciated by the various local governments. Among other things, it has meant the rapid disposal of the land by the local landowners to foreign investors, and this has caused the value of the land to appreciate remarkably.

Thus as land values continue to increase because of the demand for land for development, and as agriculture continues to decline in relative importance, given the bias against agriculture and the migration of youth to the urban areas, it is likely that incentives to dispose of land to outside investors will become even more powerful.

Since it hardly seems in the best interest of these societies that large amounts of their principal asset should be permanently alienated, it is important that there should be sound understanding of the situation in which these new pressures are operating.

Thus this study has two main objectives:

(a) To obtain a picture of the system of land tenure -- the customary practices and attitudes with regard to ownership, inheritance, acquisition and alienation of land.

(b) To see to what extent this system is changing and to examine the social consequences of these changes.

Chapter 1 deals with some of the methodological problems connected with defining the field of study. The second and third

chapters provide the historical and economic background of the two societies that appear to be relevant to an understanding of the system of land tenure. In the fourth chapter we present an analysis of the customary system of land tenure in the two societies, while chapters five and six give a detailed look at the way in which this system is changing in both societies.

Under the impact of economic development there appears to be some attempt to rationalize the system of land tenure. One feature of this is the replacement of communal ownership of land with individual ownership which has led to a proliferation of small holdings in the territories. Further, the changes in the system of land tenure has brought about changes in the class structure and ushered in movements of political protest. The final chapter attempts to bring the two studies together and provides a summary of the main findings.