



FOREWORD

The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) was established in 1950 on the Mona Campus of The University of the West Indies. A branch was set up on the Cave Hill Campus in 1962, while the St. Augustine branch came into being in 1970. As the "research arm" of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, ISER's mission was to conduct research on the social, political and economic systems of the Caribbean region which would feed into the teaching programmes of the Faculty of the Social Sciences, as well as into the policy formulation and decision-making processes in the countries of the region.

Since its inception, the Institute has fulfilled its task with distinction. It has endeavoured to fulfill its mandate by responding to the shifting needs and challenges in the region. It has provided basic and critical data on the social, political, economic, and demographic characteristics of the countries. It also focused particular attention on the development of appropriate theoretical paradigms and models for the region, and more recently took a critical in-depth look at specific sectors and issues such as technology and technology policy, the state, public enterprises, the nationalization of industrial and financial sectors, regional integration and tourism.

In addition to these more general areas of work, the Institute has also done specific studies on topics such as Caribbean family systems, small states in the international system, the nature and functioning of mass political parties, trade unionism, entrepreneurship, race, gender and class in the region and the small farm economy and society. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it does provide an indication of the scope and variety of research activities in which ISER has been involved. Reports, books, monographs, papers, seminars and conferences have been generated by these activities, all of which have profoundly affected the public policy debate and policy-making in the region, as well as the teaching curriculum at the university level.

During the last decade, there have been new developments and challenges in the region, and there have been increasing as well as more diversified demands on the research capabilities of the Institute. It therefore became necessary to look again at how best the Institute could seek to relate to, and address the needs of its "client groups" within, as well as outside the university. To this end, ISER, with the aid of the Ford Foundation, undertook a "Self Study" in 1993 as part of its continuing attempt to examine its role and function in a changing and dynamic social and economic environment.

The need for this study was also stimulated by the perception that while ISER has produced a great deal of research relevant for the formulation of public policy, it was now necessary that this research be more explicitly policy-oriented, and that there be greater emphasis on the identification of innovative but viable policy options for the region. The growing demand for this can be seen in the increasing tendency for both governmental and non-governmental agencies to enter into contractual relationships with agencies external to the region for the purposes of obtaining these kinds of analyses and information. However, it is clear that the depth and sensitivity of analysis required necessitates much greater involvement of regionally-based research institutions such as ISER.

One of the many recommendations which emerged from the "Self-Study" related to the need for greater and easier dialogue between university academics and the policy-making communities throughout the region. The specific recommendation was as follows:

ISER would, as a matter of deliberate policy, seek to ensure that the results of its policy research are widely disseminated in a timely and "reader friendly," manner using a variety of formats that target its various constituencies. Consideration should be given to the frequent publication of a policy bulletin which would serve as the vehicle for bringing to public notice the results of research being undertaken or information or opinion relating to issues that are the subject of actual or potential public interest or concern.

Caribbean Dialogue represents ISER's attempt to implement that particular recommendation.

The editors of the Journal take this opportunity to invite contributions from academics and policy-makers throughout the region and in the Caribbean diaspora. Such contributions should not normally exceed 3,500 words and should be written without excessive use of specialized jargon or footnotes. The submissions should identify the problem area being discussed, the specific solutions being proposed and the costs and benefits (both monetary and otherwise) of the solutions being suggested. Submissions would be refereed and evaluated in terms of how well they meet the above criteria.

This inaugural issue features an address given by the Vice-Chancellor, Sir Alister McIntyre at the opening session of an ISER-sponsored conference which addressed the need for Caribbean policy-makers to be better prepared than they have been in the past to negotiate contracts with international firms and agencies. As he told the Conference, "we have secured important benefits from our economic agreements with the rest of the world, but better planning, better targeting of benefits desired, better preparation and networking with supportive interests could have yielded us much more". We feel that Sir Alister's address should be more widely circulated to policy-makers in the region and what is more, that his advice needs to be heeded, particularly as the Caribbean becomes more involved in negotiations of a reciprocal nature.

The other articles by Dr. Anthony Gonzales, Trevor Boopsingh, Trevor Byer which are featured in this issue of the Journal are abbreviated versions of studies which were commissioned by ISER and which were funded by a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

The main goals of the research programmes are:

- (a) to facilitate economic growth in the Caribbean by providing analysis, amenable to use by decision makers, in key areas of international trade and finance of direct relevance to the region;
- (b) to build continuing relationships of collaboration and dialogue between government decision makers, the private sector, and the academic community;
- (c) to educate and train a nucleus of scholars who would enhance the capability of governments and the private sector, to deal with substantive issues arising in this field;
- (d) to enlarge the foundations for sustaining a programme of policy research in international economic relations.

The findings and recommendations of some of the remaining studies will be featured in future editions of *Caribbean Dialogue*. Also planned for future editions are structured debates on critical policy issues as well as reviews of books and other publications which address such issues.