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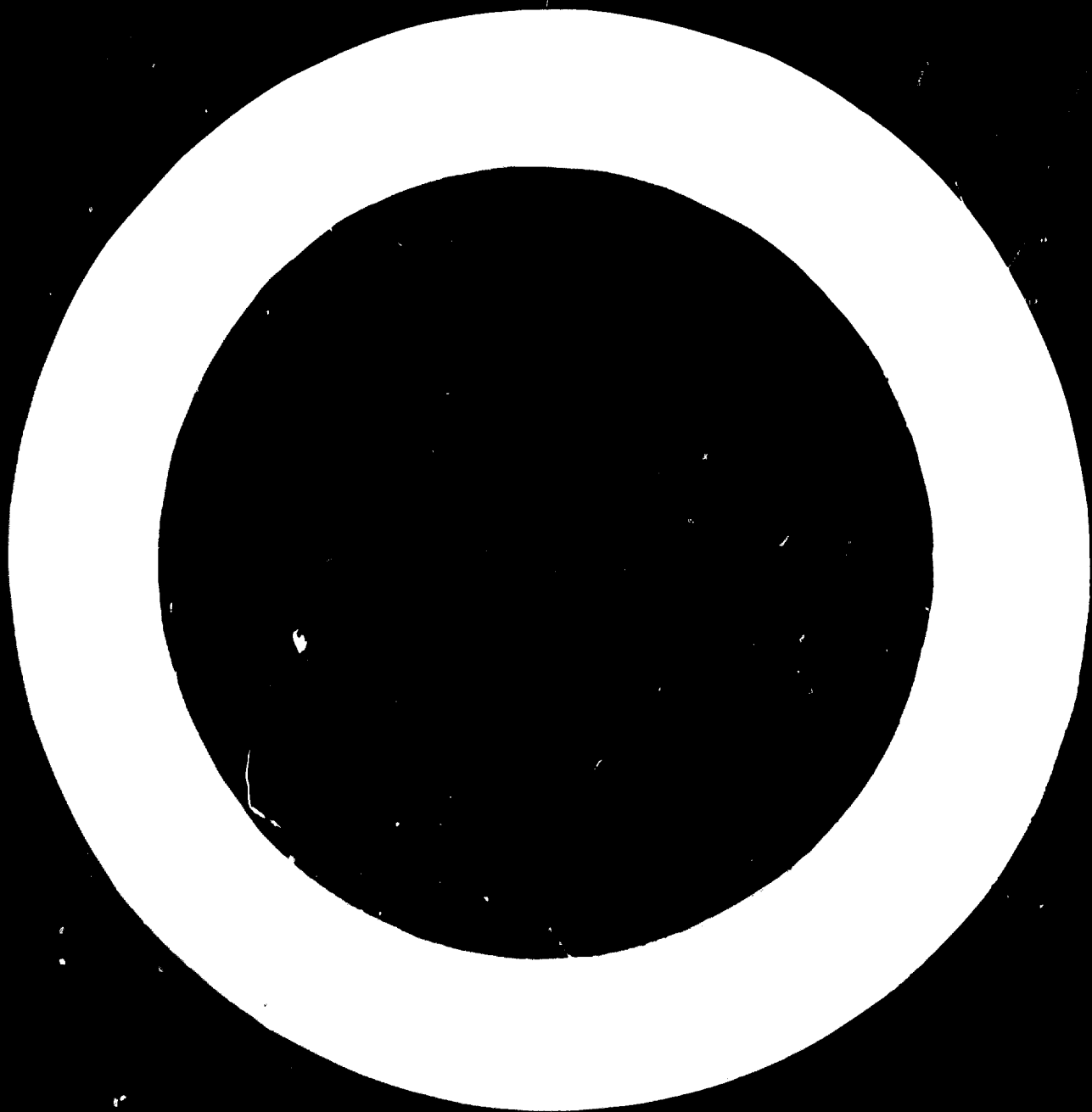
TRANSFORMATION OF HANDICRAFTS INTO
SMALL INDUSTRIES IN THE CARIBBEAN AREA ^{1/}

by

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CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	Position and potential of handicrafts in the economy	2
II	The problem of unemployment	3
III	Small industry concept and coverage .	4
IV	Modernization of craft skills	5 - 8
V	Government role - policies, measures and incentives	9 - 11
VI	Production strategy for handicrafts .	12
VII	Organized production and marketing ..	13- 15
VIII	Need for design and development centres	16- 17
IX	Organizational coordination	18
X	Future of Handicrafts	19- 20

I. POSITION AND POTENTIAL OF HANDICRAFTS IN THE ECONOMY

Most of the countries in the Caribbean area are passing through the early stages of development. Certainly, there has been an all round economic, social and political development that provides the frame which industry requires in order to grow. Yet, usually development takes this broad pattern - some large enterprises on the one hand balanced by a large number of artisans and handicraft workshops on the other. While modern well-equipped small-scale industries are few, manufacturing has, during recent years, grown to be an important component of the economy. Despite this, the development of small scale factory and artisan enterprises has not been assigned the economic importance it deserves.

The current level of attainment by small industry in most of the Caribbean countries is far from satisfactory. Much more could be done in the Caribbean area to analyse the problems, and to formulate policies and programmes for the development of small industry which can substantially contribute to the economy of these countries.

Firstly, there is need for a basic inventory of potentialities in this field, especially where there had been no prior satisfactory collection of data. The participants may like to review the present position and possible potential of handicrafts in the economy of their respective countries.

II. THE PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT

While with the growth in population, unemployment is generally increasing, yet another paradox to the Caribbean area is the increasing shortage of people qualified to fill needs of developing economy at all levels - professional, managerial and manual - that coincides with the serious socio-economic problems of unemployment.

The role of handicrafts as small scale industries is important, as their structure, capital and skilled labour requirements are particularly suited to conditions generally prevailing in the Caribbean area.

In developing countries like Jamaica, and perhaps so in other countries of the Caribbean, besides the need of labour intensive industries, the continuous movement of labour from small urban and rural areas to larger towns in search of employment creates in the town many acute problems of social and economic nature. The creation of employment opportunities outside the towns, through handicrafts and other small scale industries would help in arresting the tendency of migrating to, and over-crowding the larger towns and cities.

The need to establish small scale industries as widely as possible, is obvious and urgent in the countries of the Caribbean. Here the task is one of securing a better distribution of income and purchasing power, and the balanced spread of employment. In Jamaica, the Craft Development Agency is concentrating on organizing cottage industries in rural areas.

III. SMALL INDUSTRY CONCEPT AND COVERAGE

Small scale industries in the Caribbean area are of two types:

- a) Traditional - such as straw work, wood work, embroidery and jewellery.
- b) Modern - such as furniture making, metal work, manufacture of leather goods, ceramics, plastics, simple producer goods and components required by large-scale industry.

Small industry in every country should be defined precisely and clearly without being rigid. The definition varies considerably from one country to another both as regards the value to be assigned to the criteria of the definition - employment and/or investment - and the inclusion of artisan, handicrafts and cottage industries. It is important that the latter group is not excluded from the concept and coverage of small scale industry. The need of surveying, identifying, and listing these industries cannot be over-emphasized.

If handicrafts are not included in the definition of 'Small-scale industry' in a country, they are likely to suffer from avoidable neglect in respect of specific programmes for small industries, such as modernization of processes, grant of financial assistance, training and other extension services.

Along with clarity in the concept and coverage of 'Small industry', there seems an urgent need of evolving means and methods whereby the countries in the Caribbean can acquire the necessary skills for speedy industrial growth. Handicrafts represent a field in which development of existing skills as well as introduction of new ones is comparatively easy and capable of yielding early results. Many programmes of development of small-scale, whether traditional or modern, make small headway for the lack of trained personnel.

IV. MODERNISATION OF CRAFT SKILLS

One important objective of any small industry programme should be the development and modernisation of traditional skills. First of all, it will be necessary to identify those crafts that hold potential for transformation into efficient small factories. In Jamaica, for instance, straw work, garment making, embroidery, costume jewellery, ceramics, furniture making and wood work, and leather work have been successfully identified as crafts which can be organized on regular workshop basis, using simple machines and modern tools. The most vital condition of progress in handicrafts is the improvement of tools and processes. The problem of technical improvement has three aspects:

- a) the organization of developmental research;
- b) technical training; and
- c) the organized extension of research results to working artisans.

A few points which hold good in guiding an approach towards the modernisation of certain processes and which help conversion of handicrafts into small industries are:

- i) The traditional methods and equipment should be studied thoroughly so as to improve productivity without sacrificing artistic expression of the products. In upholding craftsmanship, one does not by implication reject machines or make an impassioned appeal for return to hand production. The problem today is not Man vs. Machine but rather harmony and cohesion between the two.
- ii) Any process which reduces the drudgery of routine operation, and makes it easier to prepare the basic form on which the craftsman may execute certain decoration, embellishment etc., can be mechanized with advantage.

- iii) No given technology is the best economically and sociologically for all societies. Broadly speaking, for developing countries, equipment for handicrafts should have low capital cost, it should be capable of being employed by, and in small individual or co-operative units and it should increase efficiency and reduce costs without causing much labour displacement. Such equipment should minimise the inevitable servicing and repairing problems.
- iv) The degree and pace of mechanisation would also depend on the capacity of the market to absorb the resulting increased production.
- v) Certain techniques and processes should act as common facilities so that these may be made accessible to all craftsmen. Centres for the distribution of processed raw materials such as clay and bamboo, for instance, save 30 to 40% of the craftsmen's time.

It is necessary to prepare a favourable climate for change through education and demonstration. The orientation and training of craftsmen in the use of new tools or techniques is as important, if not more so, than developing the tools themselves. Some of the processes which have been partly mechanised with advantage in Jamaica and some other developing countries are:

<u>STRAW WORK:</u>	Stitching of bags, hats etc.
<u>WOOD WORK:</u>	Shaping, planing, turning, fretwork, joining, dovetailing, finishing.
<u>METAL WORK:</u>	Casting, sheet-metal pressing, polishing, lacquering.
<u>STONE WORK:</u>	Turning, polishing.
<u>POTTERY:</u>	Mechanical or electrical wheel, besides mechanical pounding of clay, mixing of glazes etc.
<u>JEWELLERY:</u>	Cutting, shaping and polishing of coconut shells, and beads and manufacturing of chains, hooks and other metallic fittings.

SHELLS/MARINE PRODUCTS: Processing of - into well designed objects.

The Seminar might go into the question of whether adequate facilities for handicraft research exist in the various Caribbean countries. If not, steps should be taken towards organizing required facilities. If any techniques have to be imported, it might be better to learn from the experience of other developing countries instead of advanced countries since the conditions obtaining in the former may be allied to their own situation. For instance, in the matter of handloom weaving, a country like India could be easily looked to for technical know-how, as well as supply of any looms, to begin with - which, of course, should be later reproduced locally. The suggestion of a handloom with fly shuttle and pick up motion seemed like a major improvement in Jamaica when a handloom imported there from Canada did not have those devices.

Again training of craftsmen from the countries of the Caribbean in the developing countries would be preferable, since such trained persons are likely to adjust more readily to local conditions.

As it is, most developing countries in the Caribbean area are more closely connected with developed nations and look to them as the first source of technology even if this is not necessarily the most appropriate or the least expensive. For a practical example, a handloom made in India or Pakistan would cost about 1/5th of the one made in any U.S.A. or Canada, and would possibly be easier and

more efficient in operation.

Undoubtedly there is need for developing technologies appropriate to the needs and endowment factors of each country. In fact the countries in the Caribbean would do well - at least so far as handicraft industries are concerned - in adopting semi-modern technology involving greater use of man-power and/or involving simpler servicing conditions for maintenance of equipment. Some of the participants must be having experience of imported machines lying idle, either because sufficient skill to handle them was not available, or the needed repairs could not be undertaken locally. A survey of such cases done by an UNIDO Expert in Jamaica, brought out the quantum of waste being suffered and suggested the need of having a full-fledged workshop, to be run by the Government for meeting the repair and maintenance requirements of a number of small and medium industries.

The experience at Things Jamaican of having imported a huge wood-seasoning plant, years ago, and not putting it to use, despite dire need for seasoning wood, was sad and depressing indeed. In such matters, feasibility study should be rigidly followed by a time-bound action plan.

It is expedient for each country to study the existing tools and techniques used in their crafts, and collect information from other countries, who have similar crafts, regarding any improved equipment employed there. One may import such tools/machines and adapt them to local conditions. In India, a Handicrafts Development Centre set up by the Government with a similar objective is doing useful research work.

V. GOVERNMENT'S ROLE - POLICIES, MEASURES AND INCENTIVES

The most important contribution the Government of any developing country - including those in the Caribbean area - can make towards the development of small scale industry is to adopt those policies and programmes which will facilitate the growth of enterprises in this sector.

Since small scale industry generally needs help in all aspects of its establishment, operational and managerial, the various measures of promotion and assistance should be part of an integrated industrial development programme of the country. This should include:

- i) identifying local crafts, self-employed artisans and small industrial units;
- ii) carrying out feasibility studies;
- iii) guiding the craftsman or the entrepreneur to identify the items to be produced;
- iv) helping him in preparing a scheme/project;
- v) providing training facilities in skills and management, grant of incentives for increase in production of quality goods and their export;
- vi) informing him about the sources of supply of machinery, materials and credit, and helping in getting them; and
- vii) setting up Common facilities and other infra-structures such as working sheds, industrial estates.

In Jamaica, various Governmental agencies are handling partly some of the above functions. It is necessary there, as also in other countries, that the problems of self-employed artisans, craftsmen and small manufacturers are continuously studied, and they are provided knowledgeable guidance in what to produce, how to improve productivity

and how best to market their products. Their problems of non-availability of adequate supplies of imported raw materials, such as metals, yarns, dyes etc., and lack of finances also need sympathetic attention.

Services of U.N. experts have been availed of for improving productivity in the wood working and leather crafts in Jamaica. Mention has already been made of Things Jamaican's role in respect of modernizing certain crafts. On the marketing side, it has brought out a commercial catalogue of Jamaican crafts. An Export Promotion Council has also been set up, under Government sponsorship to facilitate and encourage the development of island's export trade generally. The experience of deputing sales teams with samples and catalogues to some of the other Caribbean countries has been encouraging.

Some of the specific measures and incentives which may be considered for progressive transformation of handicrafts activities into small industries, in the Caribbean area are:

- i) Selecting of crafts which can do better with small machines - such as wood work, embroidery, garment making, leather work, metal ware and jewellery.
- ii) Securing and supplying machines to craftsmen, on a subsidised basis, concessional interest and repayment of loan in easy instalments.
- iii) Supplying to craftsmen or their units, drawings/designs and prototypes of items which could be easily produced with the help of available tools and machines.
- iv) Streamlining quality control measures, voluntary or compulsory, according to circumstances.
- v) Setting up/strengthening national organization which will ensure offtake of quality products and secure wholesale/export orders. This organization would supplement and not supplant the private enterprise.

- vi) Sanctioning National Awards for inventiveness and outstanding performance in production and export of handicrafts.

Regarding exports, a big part would be inevitable, since bulk of the handicraft products in the countries of the Caribbean would be purchased by the tourists visiting the islands. Souvenir items, typical of the place, and locally manufactured, have tremendous scope. At present, it is mostly the imported souvenirs sold all over the Caribbean. Many tourists who visit more than one island, are already getting choosy; they would not like to come across the same cheap machine-made stuff everywhere, imported from abroad, and just bearing the name of the place it is sold at - suggesting as if it is made there. Steps should be taken to provide design and manufacturing facilities to local craftsmen, using straws, wood, clay and even new and imported materials such as plastic, rubber, metals and their alloys for producing selected souvenir items. It is also suggested that each country may set up a Jury, to pass any new artistic items, for commercial reproduction. This should ensure good design and workmanship.

The countries may adopt/expand the following special measures for export promotion:

- i) Duty-free import of raw materials as also packaging material.
- ii) Sending out of sales teams.
- iii) Inviting of foreign buyers, designers and feature writers.
- iv) Giving grants for publicity, promotion, special display and participation in foreign exhibitions.
- v) Encouraging foreign collaboration proposals for setting up export-oriented production units especially in case of new crafts with prospects of being run as organized small industries.

VI. PRODUCTION STRATEGY FOR HANDICRAFTS

From the production angle, the future of handicrafts lies in taking a positive view on :

- (a) the categories of products of such value that would justify high prices and may be produced in small quantities; there is growing market of affluent and discerning consumers.
- (b) the categories of products which need to be produced in large quantities to cater to the mass of consumers who are attracted by the cheapness of retail prices; this would involve industrial production of artistic goods.

A clear understanding and determination of a production strategy for handicrafts is essential. It is not at all necessary that every craft item should be produced in large numbers and inexpensively. Certain hand-crafted items should remain exclusive and expensive. For instance, exquisitely carved wood work, sculptured stone or artistic ceramics, finely embroidered garments, and handwoven tapestry, fine carpets or rugs, should remain in high price area. However, craft objects such as mats, baskets, shopping and other bags, simple fabrics, handprinted textiles, cutlery, crockery, costume jewellery, sandals and shoes, wooden bowls, gifts and souvenirs manufactured with the help of small machines, or improved tools should be produced in large numbers - again according to local market and export demand - so that these can sell widely and give sizeable employment to a country's craftsmen. It is this area which needs special attention, in transforming production of handicrafts into small industries. And it is the field in which Things Jamaica, as a Governmental Undertaking and some private enterprises in Jamaica have met with encouraging success. Experience of advanced countries like Japan, Germany and Italy, in industrial production of artistic goods, is worth emulating.

VII. ORGANIZED PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

The Jamaican experience shows that organized production can enable craft industries to blossom into promising operation. At Things Jamaican, a team of local craftsmen and designers have developed new original designs in wood, pewter, straw, leather and ceramics.

Things Jamaican has established a large and well-equipped centre for products in various materials - wood, straw, metals, leather, textiles and ceramics. The workshop has a mechanised unit for wood products including furniture, a cast metal unit for pewter products, a straw weaving and embroidery section, a medium sized leather unit, and a hand-weaving department.

Things Jamaican has also had the benefit of the advice of I.L.O. consultants and a UNIDO expert. The Company also had assistance of experts from Canada. Various technical improvements were suggested by them.

In the early stages, the Company had received and implemented a suggestion for weaving on a specially designed handloom, of Banana bark - one of the most attractive natural fibres for straw-work in general. Instead of making 'rounds' and 'belts' woven by women 'on the knee', a weaving loom was erected. Since Banana bark is practically unlimited in supply in Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean, its use in making various products, could be expanded.

Another useful suggestion received by Things Jamaican was regarding setting up a regular workshop for Alabaster. It was proposed to do this with proper equipment and tools - vertical hand saw, lathe, special table drill, chamfering, milling and buffing machines. This and

other relatively soft stones, available in other places too, could be used, with the aid of mechanised equipments for making a variety of items. There is interest in sophisticated markets, for stone products not only as decoration pieces but also as tablewares.

One of the lines specially developed by Things Jamaican is period furniture. There is high demand for traditional furniture made of Mahogany, Mahoe, Cedar and other woods. Things Jamaican complement their furniture products with their weaving department. Here colourful and attractive fabrics are hand-woven for upholstery work.

Along with organised production, Things Jamaican has established a number of retail stores on the island, besides acting as supplier of goods to numerous privately owned shops throughout Jamaica. Export contacts have also been established mostly within the Caribbean area. The retail shops are marketing 'Things Jamaican' products as well as those made by other local producers, who are provided design assistance. The shops serve not only a marketing function, but also as a 'pace-setter' for good design for Jamaica made products.

Due to expansion and growth over the past few years, of product design and production-cum-marketing programs, Things Jamaican has fairly streamlined its operations and could safely be recommended as a model to other countries in the Caribbean.

There is another organisation for marketing of handicrafts in Jamaica. This is Victoria Craft Market, established in 1956 by the

Jamaican Industrial Development Corporation .(a Government Undertaking). This supervised outlet for craft products is quite popular with tourists.

In Jamaica, private enterprise has also done remarkably well in establishing certain crafts as modern small industries. Some of the instances are:-

- i) Establishment of screen printing unit by Cuban born Jamaican, who initiated the venture after 12 years experience in New York in the textile line.
- ii) Turning Jamaican bamboo, beans, seeds, woods and coconut shell into a variety of imitation jewellery and establishing sizeable export market for it.
- iii) Ingenious combination of straw and wood work in turning out contemporary furniture, lamp and architectural accessories.
- iv) Training and rehabilitating, by a social organisation^{of} over a hundred handicapped children in commendable woodwork and jewellery with the help of modern tools and machines.

An active collaboration between public and private sector operations in the handicraft/small industry field is most important. While the Governments in the developing countries are taking steps to revive and encourage handicrafts, and to assist and promote small scale industry, mostly by creating and expanding necessary infrastructure, it must be ensured that the private enterprise not only derives casual benefit from these measures, but rather enthusiastically welcomes and cooperates with the Government in their plans and programmes. This can happen when the private parties engaged in this line are consulted or heard while drawing up plans of development. Any schemes based on felt-needs of the people have more chances of success. Otherwise, there is a likelihood of facing certain sad situations such as 'sheds' or factory spaces remaining vacant in an industrial estate, put up by the Government.

VIII. NEED FOR DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

The expanding tourist market in the countries of the Caribbean, the growing cooperation within CARIFTA, and the evergrowing small industry capacity to meet local demands for manufactured goods, all tend to emphasize the need for continuing and expanding efforts to develop product design and development abilities and facilities.

It is recommended that each country may establish a Design and Development Centre whose work would be closely related to the actual needs and conditions of the concerned country. Such a Centre in a country should broaden the base of the craft development programme, to reach small industries, small producers, and individual craftsmen who are in need of new products and development assistance. This should, of course, take into account resources already available and institutionalised in the country.

The objectives of the proposed Centre may be outlined as under:-

- a) To assist in the development of the crafts and small industries sector on a national level.
- b) To direct design and product development as a first priority towards raising the standard of living of the small producers and assist in stimulating employment for youth in urban as well as rural areas.
- c) To provide services to other agencies and institutions who have related programmes in crafts or small industries sector.
- d) To promote the diversification of design and products.
- e) To stimulate the existing crafts and small industries.

potential as well as new techniques utilising mainly local materials, and coordinating with other research institutes in the country and abroad.

- f) To employ effectively the talents of local designers and artists by encouraging them to actively participate in the Centre. Besides employing certain designers, the Centre should serve as a gathering place for free lance designers and young artists, interested in product design.
- g) To invite, on special assignments, well known 'sons of the soil' who have migrated to other places, but can advise on new designs or products because of their experience.

The functions of the proposed Centre can be divided into the following main headings

- (1) Training of staff - Formal Training and On Job Training . Also coordinating activities of visiting designers and consultants.
- (2) Development Programme - covering design and product development services to small producers and individuals, besides advisory services to institutions.

The proposed Centre will conduct, inter alia, experimental work with local (and imported) materials, to find new uses, improve finishes and new (local) forms in application:

- (a) To be initiated within the Centre on a straightforward experimental level.
- (b) To be taken upon requests by firms, individuals and/or Govt.

It is learnt that I.L.O. have developed a project for a regional craft development institute. When properly established this institute should be in a position to handle important common problems - technical and organisational. It would also be in a position to impart advanced training in selected crafts, to persons drawn from the countries of the region. The proposed Design and Development Centres, could very well work in close cooperation with the Regional Institute-drawing inspiration from, as well as working as extension centres for the research and experiments conducted at the Institute. The Country Design and Development Centres liaising with the Regional Institute - in a two way traffic - should produce remarkable results.

IX. ORGANISATIONAL COORDINATION

In Jamaica there are more than one Government agency dealing with different aspects of handicrafts/small industry. It is desirable that the planning and programmes of the agencies/departments interested in this sector of a country's economy should be closely co-ordinated. Their efforts can achieve more substantial results when there is a better understanding of the common objectives and of the division of responsibility among different agencies for special areas of activities, within the totality of an agreed overall plan. Countries where handicrafts and modern small industry are under two different Ministries as in Jamaica, necessary co-ordination especially in a matter of technical research and systematic conversion of 'handicrafts' into small industry needs special attention.

Whether one or the another Government organization handles craft work, two diametrically opposite thoughts and a third one in between, generally exist. Some believe that it should work purely as a service agency and make no profit; others may want it to run on strictly commercial lines and make profit, and those who want it to be both service and commercial. Experience in Jamaica and some other countries shows that service and commercial operations can be happily continued if certain boundaries have been laid.

Organisation of research and technical training, and marketing represents the most important condition of progress in handicrafts. The Government marketing agencies, such as Things Jamaican Ltd., have the responsibility as well as the opportunity for compiling detailed marketing information and communicating it to all concerned. Apart from promoting sales, it can be of very great value in planning the development of handicraft production on a scientific basis.

X. FUTURE OF HANDICRAFTS

Most countries in the world today are conscious of their responsibilities towards preserving, reviving or developing crafts. It is realised that craft activities promote a harmonious social and cultural climate, besides their economic benefits as labour intensive small industries. Marketing has been the most important plank of developmental activities in respect of handicraft industries in the developing countries of the world. However, the crucial aspect of marketing of handicrafts is inseparable from a transformation of production. The problem is to improve production in every aspect: material utilisation, machinery and methods employment, designing, finishing and packing.

The future of craft industries in the Caribbean area is promising. Skills learnt at training and organised production centres in each country, as well as design, research and product development work to be done at the proposed Design & Development Centre as well as on regional basis, should help in building up profitable cottage and small industries to meet growing domestic demand, to cater to increasing number of tourists and to develop exports.

In developing craft industries, maximum use should be made of the local raw materials, such as agricultural products, mineral wealth and marine resources though there should be no inhibition in using imported raw materials, when the skills available locally, can substantially contribute 'added value' to them.

If handicrafts and small industry goods are to gain increasing public favour, and continue to produce goods of sufficient artistry and utility value to ensure sales, they must have not only suitable equipment

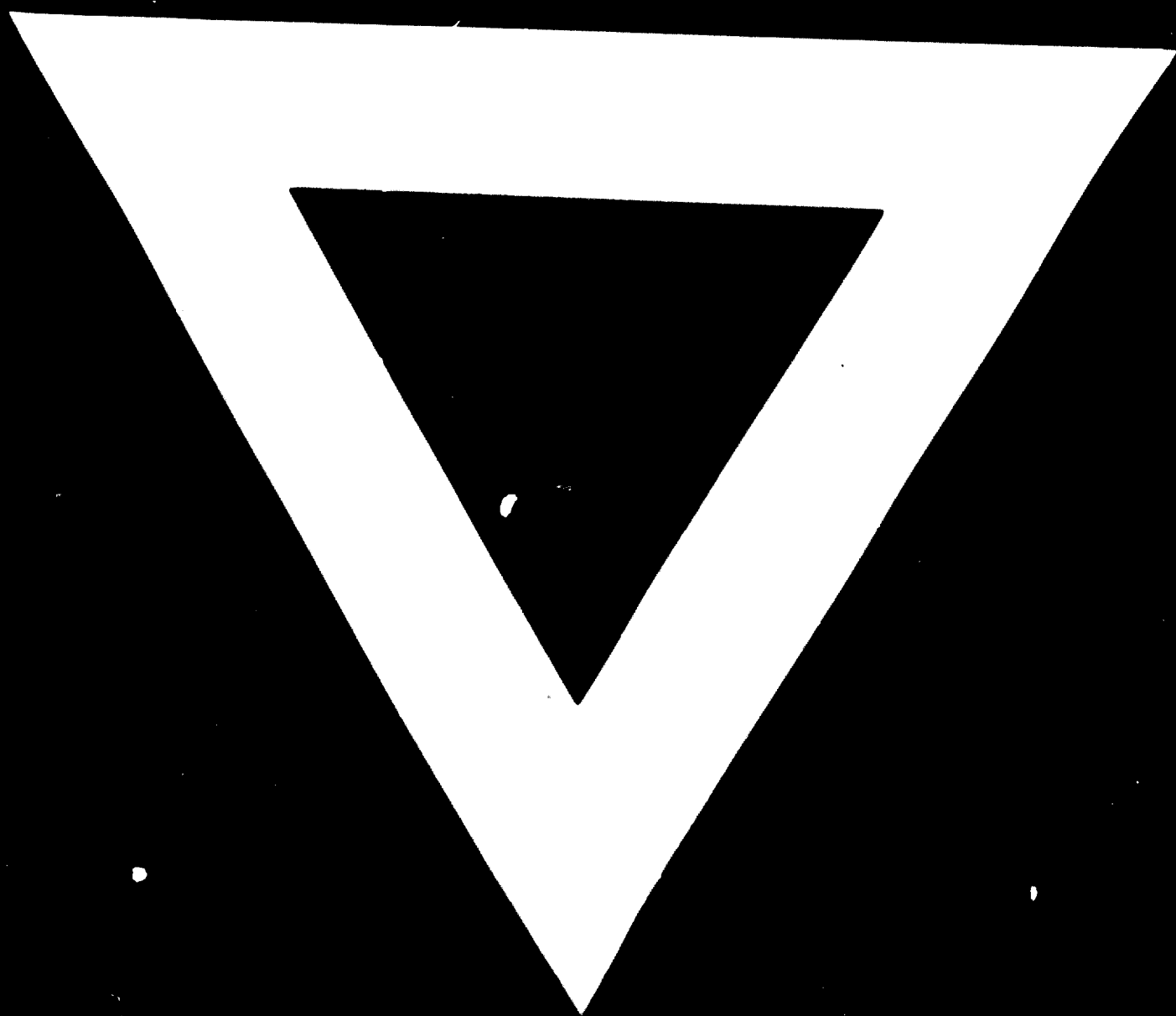
but able and adaptable workers. It must also be ensured that the wages and working conditions of craftsmen improve steadily. It would not be correct to assume that in future - with all-round developments taking place in the countries, crafts will attract people, unless these provide reasonable remuneration and social recognition.

Above all, production and sales methods must be improved and designs adapted to the requirement of the market. The programme should assure the craftsman or a small industrialist of reasonable assistance at all stages - from the decision to set up a production/industrial unit to the marketing of finished products - and of all types financial, technical, managerial and marketing - as far as possible at one convenient point.

The countries in the Caribbean need to develop their industries, at an accelerated pace. They also need to convert most of their crafts into modern small industries. Initiative is necessary to tap their present and prospective entrepreneurial talent and admit viable small industrial units to the economy.

Handicraft and small industry can become one of the major industries of the countries of the Caribbean area. This field can appropriately reflect, in numerous forms, the art work capturing warmth and glow, the colour and the beauty, the happiness and the humour of the Caribbean people.





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