

# **CSME, Culture & Economics**

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The CSME has no doubt become one of the most widely discussed Caribbean initiatives among CARICOM nationals. The fact that this year's week-long celebration (Nobel Laureate Week) of the birthdays and achievements of St. Lucia's two Nobel Laureates included not one but two formal panel discussions on the CSME is instructive. Maybe one has to go as far back as the federation to find a Caribbean initiative that generated as much discussion as the CSME. Of course, this is not surprising since short of a political union, the CSME professes to undertake everything the federation had set out to do and more. However, all such discussions and debates on the CSME need to keep one thing in mind. That the single most important motivation behind the CSME and all other integration initiatives is to help overcome the disadvantages of the tininess and wide dispersion of our territories. This may seem obvious, but often not fully appreciated. The structure-conduct-performance paradigm, i.e., structure influences conduct and conduct influences performance, is so universally known that it has become a cliché. Equally well known is that one of the most fundamental dimensions of structure is size.

In the Caribbean the small size of our countries has had a tremendous influence on our political culture and on the conduct and hence the performance of the region. Invariably, the government sector is the largest employer and its spending represents the largest component of GDP. To a large extent the survival of most large businesses depend directly or indirectly on providing services to the government. Just about nothing of consequence happens if the government isn't involved. The governments are to these countries what Godfathers are to the underground world. And interestingly enough the governments have structured their conduct of business much like the mafia organizations. Things are arranged such that the most insignificant of transactions require ministerial or permanent secretarial signatures or to get any movement on just about anything one has to make a ministerial visit—requesting of the Godfather favors and paying homage for services rendered. I can never forget what a nineteen year old shared with me a few years ago. She was watching a television news item in which a Caribbean Prime Minister, dressed in a black suit and surrounded by other similarly dressed government ministers, was officiating a public function. Then, as if experiencing an epiphany, it struck her that the Prime Minister was much like the boss of a mafia organization. I was puzzled that one so young would form such an impression of a Prime Minister. But I also thought that her youth and innocence may have afforded her an open window that was closed to us more mature adults.

Many people make the mistake that the problem lies with a particular administration, only to be disappointed when their new and favored administration brings no changes. They fail to realize that no matter the party or administration that's in power, it faces the same structure of which a major dimension is size. Here is where the CSME, other organs of integration, and membership in international organizations come in. They force our governments to act in concert and adhere to international best practices and standards, and in so doing they essentially modify the structure within which these governments operate, which in effect places constraints on their behavior, thereby saving them from themselves. To illustrate, imagine that general elections is due in an OECS country. Since in one way or the other the politicians control all governmental or quasi-governmental institutions, if this country had its own central bank, what is to prevent the government from putting pressure on the central bank to print more currency to create the false impression that the economy is performing better than it is, in the process fueling inflation and undermining the medium and long run stability of the economy? Compare that scenario with what presently obtains with the ECCB, where monetary policy and implementation is completely out of the hands of individual governments and where any fundamental policy change has to be

ratified by all members of the currency union. Clearly, the ECCB represents a structural constraint that forces OECS countries to operate (in the area of monetary policy) much like a large country in which there is an unquestionable separation between the levers of monetary policy and the government. Thus, is it any wonder that the EC dollar is arguably the region's most stable currency.

Clearly, the extent to which the CSME will fetter the undesirable conducts of our governments, is the extent to which it is a good thing.

## Technology and Culture

In his Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, Jared Diamond contends that, "all other things being equal, technology develops fastest in large productive regions with large human populations, many potential inventors, and many competing societies." How does this apply to CARICOM? Well, each nation or territory in the region represents a point of invention and technology adoption, thus CARICOM as a unit doesn't lack potential inventors. Similarly, since most member states are independent countries and historically considerable rivalry has existed among them, the region doesn't lack competing societies. For proof of that simply look at how the success of the St. Lucia Jazz Festival has led to a multiplicity of similar festivals in the region, seemingly turning it into a hot bed of jazz music.

However, with populations as low as a few thousand people, the Caribbean as a constellation of tiny states clearly falls short with regard to large productive regions and large human populations. Once again the CSME would help soften the effects of limited size, for it would allow the countries and territories of the region to operate as a single, virtually contiguous population and production sphere. Therefore, if in so doing, the CSME would help increase the speed at which technology would be developed, adopted, and transmitted in the region, then it is a good thing.

The attitude of V.S. Naipaul, Trinidad's Nobel Prize Winner, towards the region is well known. He has written, "History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies," (The Middle Passage, 1962). Since then Naipaul has said or written nothing that would suggest that his view of the region has changed. On the contrary, as if to make sure his assertion remained true, to the great chagrin of Trinidadians, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he made little reference to Trinidad, much less to the region, as playing a role in this his crowning achievement. The fact that our civilization has given the world reggae, calypso, cadence, and steelpan, the only acoustic musical instrument invented since the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the fact that based on the performance of Jamaicans alone, the region is over represented in the area of track and field; the fact that the West Indies is historically a cricket power that has singlehandedly changed the way the game is played and in the 1980's and 1990's totally dominated the sport; the fact that literature scholars are in agreement that the West Indies is over represented in world literature, both in terms of quantity and quality; and the fact that with three Nobel Prize Winners, on a per capita basis, the region is over represented in intellectual might, seemed not to have registered.

In light of all this, it would appear that Naipaul and others may have a misconception or a narrow conception of output, technology and innovation. They may have come to think of production and technology as shining apparatuses like computers, cameras, video games, computer software, automobiles, airplanes, etc. From that perspective, it is easy to conclude that technology and innovation are the exclusive domains of North America, Europe, and other large countries. However, these pertain to only certain kinds of products or technologies. If we were to look beyond

those most obvious manifestations of technology and production, then it may become clear that the West Indies is a region of great cultural and innovative vigor. For how else can one explain our over representation in so many areas of endeavor. From carnival, to music, to literature, to sports, the West Indian civilization has left its mark on many of the world's metropolitan centers.

Apparently, colonization and geography (dispersed, small island states) have conditioned the region to be outward looking, to invariably look upon the big countries for the solutions to its problems. But maybe this represents one of the region's greatest mistakes. For it may well be that most of the answers to its development problems lie within. Technology in its broadest sense is know-how. Knowledge that can be directly translated into the creation of products, services and processes. When viewed from this angle, clearly the islands have much technology to learn from each other. Take for example the technology of producing West Indies cricketers. On a per capita basis probably no country, state or province has been as successful as Barbados in the production of test crickets. Clearly, the Bajans are doing something right. So it stands to reason that countries like St. Lucia who have barely produced a test player and some not at all, have plenty to gain by studying the system or technology Barbados had in place for generating test cricketers. Off course more recently this balance of cricketing power seems to have shifted to Trinidad. This is but just one example. Every island has strengths that the others can learn from. Jamaica has been quite successful in the processing, packaging and exporting of agricultural produce. Barbados, Antigua, and the Bahamas have more developed tourism industries than most of the other Caribbean islands. Trinidad (of course its oil resource helps) has one of the most complex and diversified industrial bases. Each territory in the region may be doing something right, may have found the answer to a small part of the region's problem, thus by looking inwards for solutions, by sharing and exchanging information and technology among us, we may well come up with all the pieces of the puzzle.

True, these countries and territories belong to the same cultural group, they are of the same civilization, they share a common history, but there are differences in geography, history, and population mix which makes for cultural differences. Every country or territory in the region represents a variation on the West Indian cultural theme. Here again our diversity could be a strength. Sometimes it is just a cultural nuance, a slight cultural peculiarity (that arise not through dictate but simply because the people of a certain local were facing a set of unique anthropological circumstances), that may make the difference in terms of development. Sometimes the cultural trait that these circumstances gave rise to are so faint that it is only through art or through close personal association (in other words through an unconscious process) that it can be passed on to another population. Japan's economic success is one example where a people's culture or a cultural trait was conducive or predisposed to modern economic development. Its world economic dominance has been partly attributed to the translation of its feudal culture of fanatic allegiance to country, province, and lordship (and the notion that Japan is at the center of the universe), to a culture of intense corporate loyalty and dedication to Japanese world market dominance.

Technology is transmitted through cultural and educational exchanges and through the flow of people, labor, capital and enterprises. The CSME purports to free up the movement of all these factors, thus the CSME is a good thing.

## **The Comfort of Civilization**

In his path-breaking book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P. Huntington, defines a civilization as the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level

of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.” Based on this definition he classifies the Anglophone Caribbean as a civilization unto itself. Thus culturally speaking, someone born and raised in St. Vincent is likely to consider himself a Vincentian, and then a West Indian. Higher up, the next closest groupings would be the Western, African, or Latin American civilizations. However, grouping himself under anyone of these civilizations requires a stretch, because the cultural gap between the West Indies and these other groupings is sufficiently large to make our St. Vincentian hesitant to classify himself as belonging to them. Therefore, the highest cultural grouping with which he can comfortably identify is the West Indies, hence the West Indies could be considered a separate civilization.

Huntington also points out that because members of the same civilization share the same basic core of values and beliefs, there is a greater level of trust, comfort, and ease of understanding and communication among them. Therefore, members of the same civilization tend to trade and engage in greater economic and other exchanges with each other, and efforts at forming economic, political, sporting and cultural unions tend to be more successful than those that involve peoples of different civilizations. Another facet of this concept of civilization that bears out is that members of the same civilization are more willing to help each other in times of crisis than to helping someone of a different civilization facing a similar situation. So this partly explains why say the US might be quicker to come to the aid of an European country than an African country; why the Anglophone Caribbean might feel more compelled to help say Grenada than Haiti, which, by the way, Huntington classifies as a civilization apart. This strengthens the argument that CARICOM states should be looking more to each other for the solutions to the region’s problems, and that businesses and organizations are not fully exploiting the benefit to be had by thinking of the region as one entity.

In recent years there has been some excellent examples of how businesses can benefit by thinking of the region as one backyard. With three hotel properties in St. Lucia (and still counting) Sandals, which is of Jamaican origin and ownership, now accounts for the largest piece of the island’s tourist market. Similarly, by establishing a plant in St. Lucia, SMJ, a Trinidad beverage company, has captured a significant percentage of the St. Lucian market. One of the surprises of the St. Lucia Jazz festival, and which organizers of the event may have never anticipated, is that the region provides one of the largest blocs of visitors to the festival. Clearly, successful and well established enterprises in the various territories can help themselves by branching out into other member states. And in terms of attracting capital investments, the governments of the region can do their people a favor by diverting some attention away from extra regional to regional sources of capital. In all such exchanges and activities, CARICOM businesses have an advantage. We know each other, we share the same culture, we are of the same civilization.

Jamaican agro-processing enterprises may want to explore setting up plants in say Dominica to exploit their abundance of fruits and pristine water. The Trinidadian manufacturing sector may want to follow the example of SMJ and expand into some of the other territories, thus extending brand name and cultivating a captured market. In my mind, other things being equal, it is better for St. Lucia that a resident establishment is of Barbadian ownership than say American. Concerns such as repatriation of profits, filling management positions with foreign nationals, etc. become less of an issue.

Clearly, such intra-regional business opportunities abound. After all, the insurance and banking sectors are already showing the way in what could be achieved by business mergers across national boundaries. What I suspect has precluded West Indian businesses from taking greater advantage of these kinds of opportunities is that there seems to be a mental barrier to the willingness of nationals to settle in other member states, and to the concept that the relevant domestic market

is the region and not just the home territory. In other words, there seems to be a lack of business adventuresome, a lack of risk taking, when it comes to expanding into the markets of other member states.

Therefore, if the CSME will help rid us of this mental bloc and allow us to start investing in each others economies and to seek capital from each other, then the CSME is a good thing.

## **Communication, a Key to the Success of the CSME**

Nowadays with access to US cable television, it would appear that we in the Caribbean know much more of what is happening in the US than what is happening in the island next door. We can sit in front of our television with our remote control and surf across as many as forty US channels, yet we are able to access not one station of another CARICOM territory. It has come to the point where I can hardly tell whether I am watching a St. Lucian as opposed to a US program. Sometimes it is only the predominance of black people in a program that allows me to conclude that it is of St. Lucian origin. Yet, even so, I can never be sure, because there is BET. If we can get every US station there is, why can't we get a station of each member state. Why don't we have a cable network package comprising Caribbean television stations. Or at the very least have access to the television evening news of each territory.

Another West Indian peculiarity is that, unless it is a text book or part of a class assignment, the majority of us don't read the literature (newspapers, fiction, history, etc.) of other member states. This is regrettable because no other medium communicates the nuances of a culture as well as the arts of a people: film, theatre, music, paintings, literature. Furthermore, if say a Kittician author can rely on the whole region for readership as opposed to just St. Kitts nationals, then this makes the business of writing and publishing books set in the region a much more viable and sustainable undertaking. We would have come along way when a Grenadian is just as likely to pickup a novel written by an Antiguan and set in Antigua as one by a Grenadian author set in Grenada. Furthermore, one should be able to walk into any secondary school or public library and pick up any newspaper from any member state.

This is not simply a matter of cultural exchange. The success of the CSME is heavily dependent on the palatability to nationals of persons from other member states taking up job positions in their country, or enterprises moving in and competing with locally owned businesses. However, the degree to which we can think of other Caribbean nationals as not much different from us, as being in the same boat with us, is the extent to which we would be willing to accept such provisions of the CSME. Reading about each other, gaining an understanding of each other beyond West Indies cricket, and beyond soca, calypso and reggae, could go a long way in creating a climate of acceptance and tolerance.

It is for these reasons that I think Caribbean mass media vehicles like the OECS Advocate, Caribbean Week, Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), and Island Link are playing a vital role in helping to cement the region into a whole. People tend to care most about those they are closest to, not just in terms of friendship and family ties, but also in terms of distance. The urge to help is greater when we can see and feel the pain of the other. Regular news and communication among Caribbean states would help minimize the emotional distance and develop closer affinity across territorial divides. In that regard, the *SHE* magazine is working wonders. In a single stroke it has provided Caribbean people across the Caribbean, Europe and America, with an instrument of cultural unity. A young St. Lucian lawyer once told me that when she reads about all those African

American women in *Essence* and *Ebony* who are running companies and are listed among the richest in America, it makes her feel so proud to be a black professional woman, it motivates her to emulate these women. I suspect this is another benefit of a magazine like the *SHE* that provides a bridge joining people across oceans.

Hopefully the CSME will induce us to take greater interests in what's happening with each other, thereby binding us into a more cohesive unit that is better able to address our development needs. If so, the CSME is a good thing.

## **CSME & Employment**

In the past year or two, a young St. Lucian journalist has made a name for herself with her newspaper and television commentary on how the government has failed the youths of the nation. The boldness, brashness and confidence of one so young (under twenty-five) in attacking the government caught the nation by surprise. In essence, she said that instead of pointing fingers at the youths for their apathy and disillusionment, and for the country's escalating crime rate; instead of saying that the youths are indisciplined, lazy, vulgar, disrespectful of authority, and licentious; instead of accusing them of not reading, of only watching BET and playing video games; instead of accusing them of a blocko culture; instead of saying that they are a now generation, they want to get rich in a hurry, they want the nice things of life without working for them; the government and the establishment should be blaming no one but themselves. Because how, after laboring five, six years in a secondary school, do they expect the young people to engage in such unpleasant and demeaning jobs as waiting tables, packing groceries on supermarket shelves, pumping gas at gas stations, and cutting rich people's lawn.

Now, obviously, in her youthful exuberance, the journalist may have gone overboard. Waiting tables is nothing to scoff at. It isn't as easy a job as it looks. When people go to a fancy restaurant for dinner, they go not simply for food. Part of the deal is the ambience, the romantic atmosphere, which a good waiter or waitress can go a long way in creating. For a waiter to pull this off, it takes a high level of grace, manners, cordiality, and social skills. Traits most secondary school students, still embroiled with what's going on inside them, are not yet equipped with. In fact a secondary school education does not qualify or prepare students to take up any but the most menial and non-skilled jobs. Most of our secondary school students have little work discipline because they have never worked, have limited social (especially those from disadvantage homes) or other skills directly usable in the work place. Banks and other establishments spent vast amounts of time and resources training these graduates to perform specialized tasks, they need employ a high ratio of managers to staff, and they incur large costs in rectifying the mistakes of the new entrants.

Marketable skills aside, there is also the old adage that one should do with what one has until better things come along. Also, it is about time that us West Indians disabuse ourselves of the notion that education legislates us jobs and that it disqualifies us for self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, our young journalist has placed her finger on one of the worse eyesores in the region—unemployment. The region is in the odd position that even in the best of economic times its unemployment rate hovers above 15 percent. For example, in 1992 St. Lucia's economy grew at an annual rate of 7.7 percent but the unemployment rate was 16.7 percent. Similarly, the economy

grew by 3.8 percent in 1999 but registered a 15.7 percent unemployment rate. Yet these unemployment statistics do not include persons (representing roughly 5 percent of the labor force) who have given up job seeking altogether. If they were to enter the computations, then these unemployment rates would climb well above 20 percent. What is even more odd is that our governments behave as if that is perfectly normal, that is the international standard; as if once the economy is growing at an annual rate of 3 or 4 percent, unemployment can be ignored. Yet one could well imagine a country like the US going in search of a war if its unemployment rate starts climbing above 10 percent.

At a party during this year's Christmas season, I found myself part of a group discussing the plight of Vieux Fort, the southernmost town in St. Lucia, and the country's fishing and industrial capital. In a momentary space in the loud exchanges, the calm measured voice of my friend who was visiting from the US was heard saying that we are there talking about the backwardness of Vieux Fort people, but in the twenty-five years since he migrated to the US there has been no new enterprises that offer significant employment. I was taken aback by the simple truth of the statement. My friend was right. True, in recent years, the island's largest fishery complex, a free zone complex, and the national stadium have come to Vieux Fort, but these facilities are underutilized and they can hardly be counted as employment Meccas. In fact, it seemed that not only has there been no new large employment enterprises, but such as there were have contracted. Half of the factory shells that once buzzed with activity are now quiet and rusting under the combine action of the salt laden breezes of the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Containerized cargo shipment has sharply curtailed both the number of and wages paid to stevedores, who once upon a time earned in three days what their children's much higher educated teachers took a whole week to earn. Precipitous declines in banana production and the number of banana farmers have brought Winera, the paper and cardboard plant, to a go slow, and have left Vieux Fort stores, restaurants, and commercial centers languishing for customers.

So then is it any wonder that Vieux Fort has become one of the island's centers of drug traffic, crime, and gang violence? Where it is rumored that some of the town's most prominent and seemingly successful business persons are the ones fueling the drug enterprise. Where gang activity may represent the largest source of added employment since independence. In fact, so prominent are crime and gang violence in Vieux Fort, that a certain freelance newspaper journalist has been making a living out of reporting police shootings and gang warfare, as if this was the only news coming out of Vieux Fort worthy of newsprint paper.

Interestingly, Vieux Fort with its wide expanse of flat land, an international airport, an oceangoing seaport, and an infrastructural base unmatched anywhere else on the island, has always been considered St. Lucia's last frontier. Fooled by all this, businesses have rushed to open their doors in Vieux Fort, only to close these same doors shortly after they were opened because of the paucity of customers passing through them. Unsurprisingly, this has left a lot of people bitter, and the saying goes that Vieux Fort is cursed, nothing works there, nothing succeeds. This attitude towards the town is suggestive of a comical situation, because it seems that few have considered that the town and its environs just don't have the critical mass of population and purchasing power (household income), to support all but the most basic needs enterprises, or those whose patronage are national rather than regional.

Small has its advantages. At the very least it should make central planning a less complicated matter. Without much difficulty governments of the region should be able to gain clear pictures of their unemployment situations, including the growth, composition, education, and skills of their labor forces, and the ability of their economies to absorb job seekers. Accordingly, governments could estimate how many new and different categories of jobs that need to be created

to bring their unemployment rates to below double digits, and then determine the configuration of enterprises—how many new hotels, factories, informatic enterprises, silicon-like valleys, agricultural and food processing enterprises, etc.—that could accomplish that goal. With these intelligence, governments can then proceed to derive strategies, and incentive regimes, and execute plans of action to make below double-digit unemployment rates a reality.

In their annual budget speeches, leaders of the region shy away from presenting concrete plans designed to reduce their unemployment to below certain target rates. It is as if they are unaware of the seriousness of the problem, unaware of the multitude of social ills that high rates of unemployment could give rise to, unaware that persistently high levels of unemployment is probably the greatest challenge facing the region.

Therefore, in as much as the young reporter's commentaries would impress upon her government the seriousness of the unemployment problem, she is doing her country a big favor.

Recently, New York high schools and hospitals have come to the region in search of teachers and nurses. Considering the acuteness and seriousness of our unemployment situation, I was a bit baffled when ministers of government began complaining about the brain drain this was causing and that they need to put measures in place to curtail or block this outflow of teachers and nurses. I could not help but ask, "Why complain about additional employment outlets when each year thousands of our secondary school leavers are out on the streets with nothing to do? Why not see this American demand as a golden opportunity to train and export our teachers and nurses? It seems to me the emphasis should have been on making sure that our training institutions receive adequate compensation for their investments, and that the Americans take on a mix of experience and inexperience professionals. Once these measures are in place, we could simply look at our nursing and teacher's programs as factories producing for at home and abroad.

Interestingly enough, I heard no complaints when England came shopping for military recruits. It occurred to me that sending our young people to their deaths to defend values and policies we may not share and may even oppose, should have been a bigger objection.

We need to find creative ways of solving our unemployment problem, and in this regard maybe the CSME can come to our aid. A big impediment to individual islands attracting foreign investments beyond light manufacturing and assembly plant type operations is that there may be an insufficient number of nationals trained in the area of interest. Take for example, a hi-tech company like Microsoft who wants to have a presence in the Caribbean. It may well be the case that the company may decide that no one country has the critical mass of computer engineers to support such an activity. However, in such a scenario, the CSME could allow CARICOM countries to legitimately make the claim that the relevant pool of labor is not just what obtains in any one country but what exist in the whole region.

If the free movement of labor provisions of the CSME, and the fear that a nation's best jobs could be taken up by professionals from other member states, would force governments of the region out of their complacency and complicity, and motivate them to find more creative ways of tackling their persistently high unemployment problem, then the CSME is a good thing.

## CSME & Education

The region also needs to take a closer look at the education of its people, for although historically it has produced a highly educated and intellectual elite—its three Nobel Prize winners is proof of that—the vast majority of its populace have not always had access to secondary school education. In fact, it wasn't too long ago that secondary school education was considered a privilege and not a right. Today, in many CARICOM states secondary school education is still unavailable to all, and in some territories the illiteracy rate climbs above 28 percent. Yet, for the longest while, Barbados has enjoyed an illiteracy rate of under 5 percent. Clearly, considering that we are already disadvantaged by size and lack of natural resources, global competitiveness demands near zero percent illiteracy rates and universal access to secondary schools. Otherwise, are we not relegating our countries to low-wage, minimal skill economies?

The region can also do better in the area of college education. The University of the West Indies can not accommodate all of the region's prospective college students. And even if it could, this would not be wise, because we ought to strive for diversity in schools of thought. The capacity of the UWI, however, need not be a stumbling block to the region meeting its college education needs, for the number of institutions of higher learning in Europe and America is mind boggling. Take America, for example. Everyone of the fifty states have at least one, or, more often than not, several major state universities. Then there are a multitude of private and four year universities. Then an uncountable number of junior colleges and technical and vocational schools. And at the top of the heap are the top echelon schools, which include the traditional ivy league universities and some state and private universities.

What is to prevent governments of the region from setting up special education committees charged mainly with matching our secondary school graduates with overseas universities, whether it be through athletic scholarships or through outright altruism on the part of the universities? I have a St. Lucian friend, a dentist, in Florida who has single handedly matched several St. Lucian athletes with American universities. I know of a St. Lucian graduate coordinator at a US University who, a few years ago, went to great lengths (including sending brochures to UWI administrators) trying to recruit UWI undergraduates with offers of scholarships to study in his graduate economics program. Of course, he was unsuccessful because the UWI administrators never responded. Nonetheless, this suggest that there might be great opportunities for our students to study at such institutions at little financial cost to them or to their governments. Imagine where the region would be in terms of university education if say American universities would be as generous or a fraction as generous as the Cuban government in offering Caribbean nationals scholarships. Clearly, this Cuban generosity has led to a significant increase in the region's stock of human capital.

We need not concern ourselves with whether these students will return to the region upon graduation. For we don't even have enough jobs for those at home, and by remaining in the US and taking up jobs these nationals would acquire invaluable experience from which the region could benefit when they decide to come home. Too often those who return home straight after graduation simply come and swell up an already overcrowded government payroll. One casual observation I have made is that a disproportionate number of the progressive and innovative businesses in St. Lucia were established by people (nationals or not) who had spent a significant amount of time working abroad.

Recently, in an interview with St. Lucia's Star newspaper, the Honorable Derek Walcott, intimated that it is bad enough that our economy is now based on begging, but it is worse that we are begging for the wrong things. But what are the right things to beg for? He said, "We'd beg for

scholarships for actors, for writers, to create an environment on this island (St. Lucia) in which people don't have to get depressed and abandon their gifts."

If the CSME would force regional governments to focus on the education of their people so that they can be competitive region wide and even worldwide; force them to introduce career counseling in secondary schools that would impress upon students that they can hardly consider themselves educated with just a secondary school education, that to stand any chance in this modern world they would have to consider post-secondary school education (including college, or art, craft or trade school); force them to make secondary school education available to all their young people; force them to take drastic steps to eliminate illiteracy, then the CSME is a good thing.

In the same interview mentioned above, Derek Walcott said that the opportunities are not there to nurture the exceptionally high concentration of talent (in painting, sculpture, theater, etc.) that exist in these small islands, "because Caribbean governments think in a cliché, mechanical manner. They do not think creatively." He said, "that is my bitterness about Caribbean culture. The governments are not creative governments, they simply follow a pattern. It's just that you change White men for Black men, but they're doing the same thing."