

**ADDRESS OF WELCOME BY HON. L. M. ROBINSON, MINISTER OF  
AGRICULTURE, LANDS AND FISHERIES, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

In the name of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I am very pleased to extend to you all a most cordial welcome. It is particularly gratifying to me personally that this second Agricultural Economics Conference and Root Crops Symposium is being held here at St. Augustine, and that the organisers seem to have taken the decision to make these conferences an annual affair.

The West Indian nations and territories have all, I believe, through this University and by other means, set about the not inconsiderable task of developing and building what I would term a national scientific personnel. It is only right, therefore, that opportunities should be afforded to our scientists, technicians and administrators to meet to exchange ideas, discuss their problems, and plan the future direction and orientation of their efforts in this very crucial field of agricultural development. It would be tragic indeed if no means of association existed and if everyone endeavoured to plan and work in isolation, divorced from each other in the Caribbean region and possibly also from the international scientific community of which we are a part.

I am perhaps laying too much stress on this point, since I notice from your programme that papers will not only be presented by West Indians, but also by some very distinguished people from other parts of the world. I feel, however, that this is something that should be repeatedly and continuously emphasised until it is understood and comprehended by everyone involved.

An associate of mine once said, that we in the West Indies are famous for imitating, emulating, but never originating, except for the steelband; and it is time that we attempted to change this state of affairs—especially since we have the talent—and get down to the task of finding solutions to our problems — problems which in many respects may be unique to our region.

I do not subscribe to this comment in its entirety, but I believe that there is much we can do to speed up the diversification and the development of our agriculture along new lines and in new areas of specialisation.

I do not think that I am being melodramatic when I say that this is a critical period for West Indian agriculture. Our staple export commodities are being sold on a buyer's market, and we are entering a period when preferential arrangements in our traditional market, the United Kingdom, are likely to be progressively removed. People like yourselves working in agriculture have a special responsibility, therefore, to widen our horizons and give direction to our efforts so that West Indian agriculture can meet the challenge with which it is confronted in the second half of the twentieth century.

During your stay here an opportunity will be provided for you to become better acquainted with what we are attempting in agriculture, and I trust that you will not hesitate to call on my officers and myself as we are ready to be of assistance.

Once again I welcome you most heartily to our island, and hope that your stay will be extremely pleasant and rewarding.