

## **UWI PROFESSOR CALLS FOR INCREASED PUBLIC EDUCATION ON CCJ AND CSME**

University of the West Indies Professor and Head of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), Neville Duncan, has called for increased public education about the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), noting that the low level of knowledge amongst Jamaicans about the regional institutions was "worrying".

With just over a year to go before the CSME and the CCJ come on stream, Professor Duncan said a broad-based educational approach was needed, which would incorporate all members of the society at the varying levels, with concentrated efforts on the part of the media. "I think if we start there, people are going to begin to ask to know more. but we need to do a public education."

Speaking on the basis of information gathered from a survey carried out locally by SALISES, Professor Duncan said 77 per cent of the 1,581 adults questioned about the CCJ showed "an apparent lack of clarity about the role and function of the CCJ at the national level."

"I think what we have done is to see it largely in terms of being the final court of appeal, when its real value is to be the final court of appeal for trade issues and investment issues; that is the initial value to having it," he stated.

He pointed out that Government, as part of the implementation process, would have to get the "public more involved and find new and innovative means by which the idea and value of the CCJ can be dispersed to the Jamaican public."

The survey showed that knowledge associated with the establishment of the CSME was also low, as persons were unable to say the kinds of changes that were associated with it, such as the need for a single currency or an easily convertible currency.

Furthermore, Professor Duncan informed that even fewer persons knew "how the single judiciary system, the CCJ, related to the process."

"That was far lower than everything else. none of them reached even close to 50 percent," he said, pointing out that the CCJ was integral to the process to establish the CSME, as it would administrate on matters relating to the single market such as the free movement of labour, freedom to establish businesses and services and the absence of taxes on goods produced in the region.

Professor Duncan said the public education effort should extend to the rest of the region in addition to widening knowledge about the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and negotiations with the European Union and World Trade Organization. "I think people don't even know much about them," he stated.

In addressing concerns about the readiness of the Jamaican workforce to cope in the open market environment, he expressed faith in the island's institutions, which offer skills training. "We do have the institutions that can be put on this overdrive footing we're talking about; not just three universities but a lot of tertiary institutions spread out through out the island. We are talking about using the computer technology for online learning", he noted.

He also reinforced the importance of developing existing skills. "We have infinitely more educated people than a Trinidad or a Barbados or a Dominica .so basically we do have a core to start a number of major industries that can be competitive regionally and globally," he pointed out.

Meanwhile Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Justice, Michael Cohen, has said that plans were being put in place to mount a major public education effort on the CCJ. He said a campaign plan was presently being developed and "once it has taken shape, the CARICOM Secretariat will provide the funding for its implementation."

He informed JIS News that this time, a multi-media approach would be adopted in which posters and drawings would play a major role.

Mr. Cohen informed that although the campaign would be more costly than the previous public education effort, it would be more effective, as the Ministry "would like to take a broader and more intense approach on a sustained level, as well as place increased focus on community outreach."

He told JIS News that the Ministry has been making an effort to reach the public through a number of town meetings and public fora, messages in the media and through town crier services. "People choose not to come; it is a challenge.very little persons have shown any interest despite the efforts," he stated.

He pointed out further, that there "was low demand for information" and very little "initiative on the part of the public" to find out about the CCJ.

He said so far, the only groups displaying much interest were legal groups, human rights bodies and tertiary and sixth form students conducting research for assignments. He said it was hoped that the next phase of communication and public education would yield a positive response.

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