



Bananas not dead - Page 4



WTO Dispute Settlement - Page 7



Budget Day - Page 2



PROUD New Road - Page 3

## Gov't Ploughs Record \$129.7M into Banana Industry

Between 1997 and 2003, the Government of Dr. Kenny Anthony has invested well over \$129.9 million in the banana industry, excluding duty free concessions, farmer education, and farm infrastructure. The major investments are:

- \$44 million debt write off and \$700,000 debt forgiveness of outstanding trade payables owed by the SLBGA;
- 3.65 million for the retrenchment of SLBGA staff;
- \$16.3 million to fund the banana production recovery plan (PRP);
- \$6.1 million in loans to the old SLBGA to assist with input financing, working capital and the cost of dead freight;



- The construction of three modern Inland Reception and Distribution Centres (IRDC), costing \$12.5 million, to stimulate quality improvements;
- Between October 2000 and March 2001, \$2.5 million provided to fund Leaf Spot control;
- At the end of 2000, \$1.4 million was provided to facilitate reducing the price of banana cartons by \$1.00;
- In April 2001, \$3.5 million was made available by the Government for the establishment of a revolving input credit scheme;
- Special leave was sought and obtained from the European Union, to utilize funds under the 1995 STABEX Transfer, totaling approximately \$2.5 million, to finance Leaf Spot control activities between April 2001 and December 2001;
- Over \$20 million for the introduction of irrigation and drainage infrastructure on banana farms in the main producing valleys;
- Following the passage of Tropical Storm Lili, US\$500,000.00 obtained from the CDB and \$4 Million secured from STABEX resources, were mobilized to assist in the recovery effort on banana farms;
- A Banana Emergency Recovery Programme, costing \$11 Million for farm rehabilitation;



“Take ②” - A fifteen minute news review of the week.  
Every Friday at 6.15 p.m. on NTN, Cablevision Channel 2.

Government Notebook

A fresh news package  
daily  
on all local radio stations





# Budget Day is April 20<sup>th</sup>

Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony has announced that Budget Day 2004 will be on Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. The announcement follows today's regular Cabinet Meeting.

On that date Dr Anthony, in his capacity as Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, International Financial Services and Information, will deliver his Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure to the House of Assembly.

Preparations for this year's budget began rather earlier than usual, starting immediately after the official celebrations to mark the island's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence.

Since then, the Prime Minister, along with representatives of the Budget Section and other Finance Ministry officials, has been meeting with various Government Agencies to hear and consider their budgetary proposals for Fiscal year 2004-05.

Last year's Budget Address, which was delivered on April 8, was "Advancing Infrastructural Development and Economic Recovery in an Uncertain World."

Preparations for this year's budget are continuing apace with the Prime Minister attending daily meetings related to the process.

When this year's Budget Address is



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony prepares for Budget Day

delivered by the Prime Minister in the House of Assembly, it will be carried live on local radio and TV stations. The address will be preceded by the annual

Throne Speech by Her Excellency the Governor General and will be followed by the Budget debate, during which Government and Opposition Members of

Parliament (MPs) will each make that contributions to the discussion of the proposed Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the next Fiscal year.

## PM Calls for Elections and Caricom Position on Haiti

Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony left the island on Wednesday, March 24 to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> Intersessional Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which takes place in St. Kitts and Nevis on Thursday and Friday, March 25 and 26.

Haiti is expected to feature prominently at the two-day meeting and Prime Minister Anthony is expected to articulate St. Lucia's position on the Haitian crisis during the proceedings.

One thing, which is already clear however, is that the St. Lucia PM would like to see Haiti return to the democratic fold.

According to Dr Anthony, "It is vital that elections be held in Haiti as soon as possible, to bring the country back into the family of democracies." The St. Lucia

Prime Minister acknowledged that there's much interest in the matter of recognition of the recently-appointed government in Port au Prince. However, he says he hopes Caricom can come to a collective position on the question of recognition of the new rulers in Haiti.

According to Dr Anthony, "While the diplomatic recognition of a country is a sovereign political matter, one would hope that it would be possible to have a collective Caricom position in respect of Haiti."

## Water Resources Unit takes Mini-Exhibition Island-wide

World Water Day started here on Monday, March 22 with a mini exhibition at the Castries Central Library, organised by the Water Resources Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in Collaboration with NEMO. Communications Officer with the Water Resources Unit, Jerry George says this initiative forms the basis for a travelling exhibition, which will be held in various com-

munities around the island, to inform people of the many important issues relating to water and disaster management.

According to a Mr. George, one of the key objectives behind that thrust is public education, and it is for this purpose that this exhibition will be taken to communities around the island. He also indicated that the majority of natural disasters worldwide are water related.

Among the activities planned to mark the observance, is an effective public speaking competition among primary schools. Mr. George emphasized that the significance of this activity was to create a certain level of awareness among a vital component of the population, namely, students at the primary school level.

Meanwhile, the only two water-catchment areas on the island, Talvern and Thomazo are being targeted by the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Water Resources Unit, to hold community meetings in their respective areas to appraise these communities on issues relating to water and water resources management.

According to Cornelius Isaac of the Forestry Division, the Thomazo meeting will be held on Thursday, March 25, while the Talvern meeting will take place on April 1 of this year. Among the issues to be discussed are, water policy, water resources management legislation and issues relating to the water supply legislation in those communities, in terms of quality and quantity of water that are supply to these communities.



# Civil Society Can Influence Law Reform

“Veranda Pontificating” will no longer suffice as the winds of political change and law reform are sweeping the OECS; in fact, the time has come for civil society to do more to influence reform initiatives, which are ongoing in St. Lucia and many other OECS and Commonwealth territories.

This perspective was stressed by Attorney at Law and Lecturer, Tracy Robinson, guest speaker at the biennial general meeting of the St. Lucia Crisis Centre held on Saturday, January 31st at the Indies Conference Centre. Robinson spoke on the topic “We the People in the



Tracy Robinson

21st century, facing the crisis and securing justice: A vision for the St. Lucia Crisis Centre.” She called on the St. Lucia Crisis Centre to feel the need to act politically.

She said, “The Crisis Centre is well placed to speak to matters of development in St. Lucia and to take its place in the collective, deliberative, active intervention in all fate. Some aspects of your intervention must be private and confidential; especially those carried out through your counselling committee but many others I urge must be public and must contain that element which I call political.”

She called on all citizens to participate in the reformation of St. Lucia’s constitution saying, “The Commonwealth Caribbean now more than any other time since

independence is taken up with constitutional reform. Nothing hitherto comes close to the single mindedness of the last decade of many different elements in the region, about the need to rethink the existing constitutional arrangements. Almost every single independent Commonwealth Caribbean country has entered the 21st century, contemplating or engaged in some structured process of constitutional reform.”

In the midst of this reform, Robinson advised that citizens be alert to what is happening with the reform process to ensure their voices are represented.

## PROUD Delivers New Road to La Ressource Residents

By:  
Claudia Monlouis

The construction of roads and the installation of water and electricity significantly increases the value of land in any community. For this reason, says Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny Anthony, the residents of Palwi Drive should be cognisant of the priceless opportunity of becoming house and land owners, which the PROUD initiative affords them. The Prime Minister was speaking on Thursday, March 18 at the official opening of the new road in La Ressource, Vieux Fort, which was constructed under Phase 7 of the Programme for the Regularization of Unplanned Development also known as PROUD.

“I want to remind you”, he told residents of Palwi Drive in his constituency, “that when you own this land there is a lot you can do with it. If you want to expand your house, you can walk into a bank, mortgage the land to raise that money; if you want to provide for the education of a child, you are able to use that land to get the bank or other institutions to make the money available to you.”

The Parliamentary Representative for the area also challenged the people of Palwi Drive to dispose their garbage

responsibly, and to keep the community clean. Dr. Anthony further promised that garbage bins would be disseminated in the community to encourage the proper disposal of waste.

In providing an update on the progress of Phase 7 of PROUD, Project Co-ordinator, Delia Didier Nicholas says the property within the community covering some 47 households have been subdivided and pegged, and now the responsibility rests with residents to take the process one step further.

“To date, boundary service has been established, and the road and drains have been constructed. The next phase of the project is the provision of title deeds, which can only be achieved after you have purchased the land you occupy”, Mrs. Didier Nicholas said.



New Road on Palwi Drive

## Antigua and Barbuda has new PM



Baldwin Spencer  
Voting

On Wednesday, March 23 new Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr. Baldwin Spencer was sworn into office.

In an interview with GIS News, OECS Communi-

cations Officer Raymond O’Keiff, who grew up in Antigua says the new Prime Minister will have a packed agenda to attend to at the OECS and regional level.

He will definitely be welcomed by the OECS Heads of Government,” commented Mr. O’Keiff.

Like the other Heads, Prime Minister Spencer is expected to bring his experience and competence to bear on the mandate of the OECS, Mr. O’Keiff said, add-

ing that he is a Trade Unionist; he has had a lot of exposure; and he is a people person, who knows about the issues affecting people.

Former Prime Minister Lester Bird had been at the helm of Antigua and Barbuda since 1994, when he took over the leadership of the twin island nation from his father, Vere Bird. The post of prime minister had been in the Bird family since the country obtained independence from Britain in 1981.



# Banana Industry Not Dead

Minister of Agriculture, Ignatius Jean has assured the farming community that despite Opposition claims and the new era of globalization, the banana industry is not dead, and that with Government commitment, it will regain its pride of place as a significant earner of foreign exchange. Minister Jean was at the time refuting a recent claim made by NDM Leader, Ausbert d' Auvergne, that the banana industry had lost \$279 million in revenue as a result of mismanagement by the Kenny Anthony-led administration.

In a response last weekend, Minister Jean said, "Mr. d' Auvergne comes to that conclusion by looking at Saint Lucia's banana production figures in 1997, and then calculating on an annual basis, the revenue lost by not meeting what he has mysteriously determined to be an achievable market share, which I will abbreviate as AMS".

## AMS Theory is Nonsense

Referring to Mr. d' Auvergne's AMS-theory as nonsense, Minister Jean said, "I have tried to read as much literature on the banana industry as I could lay my hands on, and nowhere do I see any mention of an AMS. So, I must conclude that the AMS is a new concept and construct for the banana industry, developed and employed by Ausbert d' Auvergne", adding further, "I should not be surprised, as Mr. d' Auvergne is well known for his different and unorthodox approaches".

Mr. d' Auvergne's AMS theory, Mr. Jean explained, has been determined after making allowance for the impact of adverse weather occurrences, and the fact that as actual production declines,



**Bananas being shipped to the United Kingdom**

purchasers shift to other suppliers. "I would like to see the mathematical formula used to determine AMS, the value given to the variables, and the 'fudge' factor that Mr. d' Auvergne has employed", Mr. Jean said.

## St. Lucia Better than Most

Arguing that declining production was

a Windward Islands phenomenon, which was not unique to Saint Lucia, Mr. Jean said that St. Lucia had not performed worse than its neighbours. Using 1990 as the base year, St. Lucia's best banana producing year, he showed that in 1990, Dominica produced 56,617 tonnes and derived \$79.60 million; Saint Lucia produced 133,777 tonnes and derived \$186.90 Million; St. Vincent produced 79,561 tonnes and derived \$110.50 million; and Grenada produced 7,486 tonnes and derived \$10.30 million.

In 2003, Mr. Jean points out, Dominica produced 10,379 tonnes and derived \$12.82 million; St. Lucia produced 33,972 tonnes and derived \$43.57 million; St. Vincent produced 22,558 tonnes and derived \$28.51 million; and Grenada produced 393 tonnes and derived \$0.45 million.

These figures show that for Dominica, the volume fell by 81.3%, while revenue fell by 83.9% or 2.6% more. In St. Lucia, there was a 74.6% reduction in volume

and a 76.7% fall in revenue or 2.1% more. St. Vincent saw a 71.6% reduction in volume and a 74.2% reduction in revenue or 2.6% more. And for Grenada, the fall in volume was the highest at 94.7%, as well as the fall in revenue, which was 95.6%, yet the difference was the lowest at 0.9%.

Minister Jean concludes therefore, that on the basis of the difference between the percentage reduction in volume and the percentage reduction in revenue, St. Lucia with 2.1%, placed second to Grenada (0.9%), and was better than Dominica (2.6%) and St. Vincent (2.6%).

Moreover, Mr. Jean contends that while speaking glibly about the adverse weather phenomenon, Mr. d' Auvergne did not mention the drought in 2001, which was the worst in decades, reducing production in the Windward Islands by 40% and in Saint Lucia, by 51.6%. He questioned therefore, "What value did he (Mr. d' Auvergne) give to this adverse weather phenomenon in the calculation of his AMS?"



**Hydraulic Lifts at the Odsan Inland Reception Distribution Centre**



# Government Establishes Banana Recovery Plan

## Donor/Government Initiatives

Minister Jean informed that the crisis situation throughout the Windward Islands, not just Saint Lucia, had led the Banana Donor Group in 1998, to develop with the Governments, a banana Production Recovery Plan (PRP). The reasons given in the PRP for the sharp drop in production were “uncertainty relating to the future of marketing arrangements in Europe; falling farmer prices; increasing cost of inputs and labour; and the effects of weather, including hurricane, and subsequent drought, which have reduced grower confidence and consequent production volumes”. In this regard, Mr. Jean questioned whether any of these factors went into the calculation of Mr. d’Auvergne’s AMS, and what weight was given to each.

## Farmer Migration

Empirical data shows that between 1992 and 1997, 49% of St. Lucian farmers left the industry; in Dominica, the figure was 44%; and in St. Vincent, 17%. Minister Jean said he wondered whether Mr. d’Auvergne factored any of these attrition figures into the calculation of the AMS.

Pointing out further, Mr. Jean said he could spend time explaining to Mr. d’Auvergne the elements of the PRP and the various Donor/Government/Stakeholder meetings that were held during the period between 1995 to 2001: Canouan I (1995), Castries I (1996), Castries II (1998), Castries III (1998), Bridgetown I (1999), Kingstown I (1999) and Kingstown II (2001). “I could also describe to him the pivotal role played by Dr. Kenny Anthony and his Government in fashioning favourable solutions and assistance packages for the Windward Islands industry during that period, but if the NDM are really serious about wanting to help our local farmers then they should first do their homework”, Mr. Jean said, informing that the Memoranda of Understanding from these meetings were available for all to see, and that there were supposedly enough consultants within the fold of the NDM to do at least some basic, accurate research.

## Nuances of the UK Market

Minister Jean said that Mr. d’Auvergne, in putting forward his argument, displayed an alarming absence of knowledge on the operations of the United Kingdom and European Union market for bananas and fresh fruits. Pointing out the reality, Mr. Jean said that

the Market share for (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) ACP bananas had taken a beating from the various changes to the EU banana import regime.

“When the trans-Atlantic trade war between the European Union and the United States and Ecuador was settled, the ACP producers were given a global quota, known as the C Quota, allowing them to export 750,000 tonnes of bananas to the European Union; 100,000 tonnes of licenses were taken away from the ACP and placed in what is called the A/B quota, which is the quota that is used to import Latin American bananas. This affected the ACP in two ways. Firstly, there was the obvious loss of an opportunity to export 100,000 tonnes of bananas.

Moreover, by allocating the licenses to Dollar producers, it resulted in 100,000 additional tonnes of bananas entering the UK market and competing with Windward bananas. “Was Mr. d’Auvergne aware of these market dynamics when he arrived at his contrived AMS?” Mr. Jean asked. “And if he was”, he continue, “why did he not factor their impact?”

## Supermarkets and the Impact of WalMart

“But that is not the only thing the NDM leader ignored or is ignorant of”, Mr. Jean said, pointing out that the retail trade in the United Kingdom was dominated by supermarkets or multiples, with Sainsbury’s, Tesco, Asda, Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, Safeway, Co-op, Morrisons and Somerfield being the dominant players. “These retailers handle approximately 550,000 tonnes of bananas, of which, in 2002, 16.5% was sourced from the Windward Islands”, he informed.

He noted that unfortunately, for the higher-priced, Windward Island fruit to fetch a competitive price, it must be sold in the supermarkets, as the wholesale markets just do not pay enough for the islands’ higher-priced fruit. When the US retail giant WalMart bought over Asda, it changed the supermarket landscape in the UK. The new WalMart/Asda, in keeping with its philosophy of offering highly competitive prices, awarded its entire banana business to the low cost supplier Del Monte, which resulted in the loss of 10,000 cartons of banana business per week for the Windward Islands.

To further compound matters, Minister Jean said, Asda then initiated a price war, which has caused the price of bananas to drop from £1.08 per kilogram to £0.74

per kilogram. “The impact of these moves on the marketability of Windward Islands bananas has been tremendous and in some ways, catastrophic. Unfortunately, however, Mr. d’Auvergne has taken none of these factors into account in deriving his fictitious AMS”, he said.

Mr. Jean said that Mr. d’Auvergne also did not take into account, the license fraud which took place in the European Union in 2000, resulting in the unlawful entry of thousands of tonnes of non-Windward Islands fruit, further depressing prices, and in turn, causing a loss of market share. “Neither in his analysis, has he taken into account the performance of the pound sterling during the period under review, which impacted negatively on the revenue derived”, Minister Jean remarked, accusing the NDM leader of painting only part of the picture.

## Commitment to the Banana Industry

Minister Jean informed that between 1997 and 2003, millions of dollars have been invested in the banana industry. The major investments are:

- \$44 million debt write off and \$700,000 debt forgiveness of outstanding trade payables owed by the SLBGA;
- 3.65 million for the retrenchment of SLBGA staff;

- \$16.3 million to fund the banana production recovery plan (PRP);
- \$6.1 million in loans to the old SLBGA to assist with input financing, working capital and the cost of dead freight;
- The construction of three modern Inland Reception and Distribution Centres (IRDC), costing \$12.5 million, to stimulate quality improvements;
- Between October 2000 and March 2001, \$2.5 million provided to fund Leaf Spot control;
- At the end of 2000, \$1.4 million was provided to facilitate reducing the price of banana cartons by \$1.00;
- In April 2001, \$3.5 million was made available by the Government for the establishment of a revolving input credit scheme;
- Special leave was sought and obtained from the European Union, to utilize funds under the 1995 STABEX Transfer, totaling approximately \$2.5 million, to finance Leaf Spot control activities between April 2001 and December 2001;

*Continued on page 8*



**Farmer attending to Bananas**



# EDITORIAL

## Saint Lucia has Many Friends, a Bright Future

**S**t. Lucia is truly blessed with lots of friends around the world, sharing in the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of its nationhood. This is evidenced by the continued pouring of congratulatory messages to Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony and the people of St. Lucia, expressing solidarity and wishes for continued prosperity. The messages are coming from as far as Eastern Europe.

From the seat of Government in Bucharest, Prime Minister Adrian Nastase expressed Romania's kind wishes for "peace and personal happiness for Saint Lucians."

European Union Head of Delegation, Amos Tincani, on behalf of the Delegation of the European Commission in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and on his own behalf offered warm congratulations to Dr. Anthony, his Government and all St. Lucians. He said that he looked forward to continued fruitful cooperation with the Government, and to further strengthen the cordial relations, which exist between the country and the European Commission.

The expression of congratulations from the United Mexican States was articulated by President Vicente Fox Quesada. "I am confident that we will continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation that unite our nations," he said.

Cuba wrote of the great importance it attaches to friendly relations with Saint Lucia, and the commitment of the two islands to further integration of the Caribbean. President Fidel Castro Ruz said he was "encouraged by the outcome of the CARICOM-Cuba Summit of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2003", as the two countries pursue integration.

Premier of the State Council of The People's Republic of China, Wen Jiabao wished for Saint Lucia "... to make new achievements in the construction of political, economic and social fields and various areas."

Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, General James T. Hill extended congratulations to Dr. Anthony and the police. The U.S. Southern Command Leader commended Saint Lucia's role in achieving and maintaining a stable democracy. "Their professionalism and commitment to excellence are most com-

mendable". Of Prime Minister Anthony's role, he said, "You personally have provided exceptional leadership and direction as Chairman of the Council of Ministers to the Regional Security System (RSS)".

The congratulatory messages from sister Caribbean islands focussed on building consensus on shared ideals of integration in the strengthening of CARICOM, the advancement of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, the Caribbean Court of Justice and the development and progress of the OECS.

Former Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Honourable Lester Bird said "Twenty-five years in a nation's history is highly symbolic and significant, especially in the context of the contribution, which St. Lucia has made to the development and progress of the OECS, CARICOM, and the Caribbean region". He pledged to continue working with the Government and the people of Saint Lucia "to advance the goals of our countries and the region as a whole".

Jamaica's Prime Minister, P. J.

Patterson committed his country to working with Saint Lucia on the effective implementation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the Caribbean Court of Justice, indicating that 2004 would be a milestone for the two countries as they worked towards "fulfilling a regional agenda that will allow for enhanced interaction on all levels".

The Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr the Honourable Keith Mitchell spoke of a common heritage, and political ideals. "We share values of democracy and a similar historical heritage. The close relations we enjoy augur well for a united Caribbean region. Together with the rest of the member states of the Caribbean community, we will continue to strive towards meaningful integration, progress and prosperity of our societies," he said.

Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, His Excellency Edwin W. Carrington spoke of outstanding achievements in the 25 year history of nationhood. He said, "... the Community shared the pride of all Saint Lucians on the two occasions on which its nationals won Nobel Prizes, and it's most recent suc-

cess in being the smallest member country of the United Nations to ever hold the Presidency of the United Nations General Assembly."

Meanwhile, the Organisation of American States - St. Lucia Office called for St. Lucia to close ranks with the rest of the Caribbean, to tackle the issues of a changing world environment. Pointing to inequities hastened by the technological changes the OAS said, "We are not unaware of the will and ingenuity of the Saint Lucian people, or their ability, especially in collaboration with their CARICOM partners to find answers to the difficult questions posed by new and mutating theories about the rules of international interface", said Alphonsus Antoine, Director of the Office of the OAS in Saint Lucia.

Also in St. Lucia, OECS Director General, Len Ishmael conveyed congratulations to Dr. Anthony, his Cabinet colleagues and the people of St. Lucia on behalf of the Secretariat.

St. Lucia celebrated twenty-five years of Independence on February 22, 2004.



Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny Anthony conferring with the future of St. Lucia — the youth



# WTO Seminar to Improve Dispute Settlement Skills

By John Emmanuel

Work has gotten underway here aimed at giving trade officials an improved knowledge of the dispute settlement rules, procedures and practices governing World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. The latest initiative comes in the form of a week long regional seminar which started Monday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Bay Gardens Hotel.

The event has been organized by the WTO, the CARICOM Secretariat, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Deputy Programme Manager for External Economic and Trade Relations at the CARICOM Secretariat, Valerie Alleyne-Odle says over 20 similar sessions have taken place exposing over 200 regional officials to the various WTO disciplines.

This particular seminar will hopefully prove beneficial as participants seek to implement the dispute resolution mecha-

nisms at the level of the single market and economy. Also, it is hoped that at the end of the seminar, "the region will be better able to deal with the inevitable challenges that may arise not only at the level of the WTO, but with respect to all other trading relations like the FTAA, and many of our bilateral agreements," notes Mrs. Alleyne-Odle.

Given the very limited administrative capacity and human resources of small states, trade officials say St. Lucia and the wider CARICOM grouping will continue to press the case for greater assistance to be given to smaller economies, in order to facilitate their effective participation within the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. That view is sheared by External Trade Advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Calixte Leon. He emphasized that "followers of debates involving dispute settlement would recognize that the cost of participating in such settlement procedures was exorbitant," much beyond the capacity of small countries like St. Lucia.



Workshop Participants

While commending the initiative taken to promote the effective participation of all WTO members in dispute settlement proceedings, the senior government official pointed out that most small economies were still unable to afford the discounted rates being charged. St. Lucia, he says welcomes a suggestion to have a pool of WTO lawyers to assist in cases. Notwithstanding that, he says individual small economies have little capacity to either mount or defend their cases.

The odds appear to be staked even further against small states Mr. Leon laments, "in that if a small state was ever to



Calixte Leon

be successful in a dispute against a larger WTO member, and the WTO member concerned fails to bring its measure into conformity with the WTO provisions, it would be very difficult for that smaller country to impose sanctions." In light of those developments Mr. Leon says CARICOM must continue to lobby at ensuring that small economies are better able to participate in the dispute settlement mechanism.

He suggested among other things, the need for WTO members to show due constraint in invoking dispute settlement procedures against small states.

# Ministry of Commerce Embarks on Massive Public Education Campaign

By Julita Peter

The Ministry of Commerce, Tourism, Investment and Consumer Affairs has embarked on an initiative geared towards repositioning its internal capabilities in or-

der to deliver a more effective and efficient service to its customers. In addition to its education and outreach program on Consumer Rights and responsibilities, the ministry will be concentrating on pertinent external trade-related issues such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA),

and World Trade Organisation (WTO), among others.

The first in the series of educational programmes took the form of a public forum at the NIC Conference Centre on Monday March 15<sup>th</sup> 2004, where representatives of a cross section of the public were invited to share in a panel discussion on "The FTAA and Consumers."

Moday's panel comprised Mc. Donald Dixon, Trade Advisor in the Ministry of Commerce; Businessman, Guy Mayers; External Trade Advisor in the Ministry of External Affairs, Calixte Leon; and Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizens/ Global Trade Watch based in the USA.

The Ministry's Deputy Permanent Secretary, Alison Jean says the Ministry of Commerce views the changes in the global market as critical to the development of small island states, such as St. Lucia. "The challenges they present to business and consumers are matters that must be discussed fully with all stakeholders, so that they can take the appropriate action with the help of government to survive the onslaught of globalization and trade liberalization, in an ever changing and dynamic environment where the gap continues to widen between rich and poor countries,"

Mr. Jean added.

The FTAA earmarked for 2005, is a trade treaty involving the movement of goods, persons and capital, and involves nine negotiation areas. External Trade Advisor, Calixte Leon has warned that for countries like St. Lucia with limited human, financial and other capacities, the effort to follow such negotiations is humongous. He has suggested that in order for St. Lucia to become involved in such trading arrangements certain criteria were paramount.

Mr. Leon said, "There must be a provision for technical assistance first and foremost on the one hand and financial assistance during the negotiations process on the other. St. Lucia will be desirous of having an FTAA that is geared primarily to economic development, and secondly it should be an FTAA which is geared to structural transformation of our economy."

It has been recognized that negotiations financing will have to be derived from domestic and regional resources. In the case of St. Lucia, efforts have gotten underway as evident in the recent passage of the Government Securities Bill, whilst at the level of CARICOM, the idea has been mooted for a Regional Integration Fund.



Participants at the Public Forum



# Government Committed to Banana Industry

Continued from page 5

- Over \$20 million for the introduction of irrigation and drainage infrastructure on banana farms in the main producing valleys;
- 100% import duty and consumption tax exemption on farm vehicles for banana farmers, and 100% duty concessions on production inputs;
- Following the passage of Tropical Storm Lili, US\$500,000.00 obtained from the CDB and \$4 Million secured from STABEX resources, were mobilized to assist in the recovery effort on banana farms;
- A Banana Emergency Recovery Programme, costing \$11 Million for farm rehabilitation;
- A revolving credit programme for on-farm infrastructure and drainage, pest and disease monitoring;
- An input credit scheme;
- A farmer education programme; and
- Establishment of the Banana Emergency Recovery Unit staffed by officers of the Ministry of Agriculture to provide dedicated and specialized technical support to the industry.

“Not only is this record unmatched by any other administration in Saint Lucia, but no other Government in the Windward Islands can be said to have done so much to save the livelihood of its farmers”, Minister Jean stated. He said despite all of the claims that have been made by others on the banana industry, the records show that pioneering infrastructure in irrigation and drainage, and the mass distribution of higher-yielding tissue culture banana plantlets were undertaken by his Government, in a short period of seven years, to save a severely ailing banana industry. “That is not just involvement, it is commitment, Mr. d’Auvergne”, said the Minister.

## New Standards for Production

Through the encouragement of the Kenny Anthony administration, WIBDECO was able to embark on the bulk procurement of inputs for the banana industry, and in



The Odsan Inland Reception Distribution Centre (IRDC) for Bananas

so doing significantly reduce the cost of fertilizer to the farmer, said Mr. Jean. Pointing out that Mr. d’Auvergne also did not seem to know that the supermarkets, which pay a premium for Saint Lucian and Windward Islands bananas had long frowned on aerial spraying, and had advised that such a practice was inconsistent with the marketing image developed for the fruit. He also said that Mr. d’Auvergne was very ignorant of the EUREP GAP standard for production, which placed strict guidelines on what could and could not be done.

“The undisputed fact”, Minister Jean said, “is that the European Union, the ally that has stood with the Windward Islands banana industry through thick and thin, has consistently given Saint Lucia high marks for its restructuring of the banana industry”. Under the Windward Islands Action Plan (WIAP), signed in Barbados in May 1999, and designed to help achieve a competitive banana marketing structure, St. Lucia scored significantly higher marks than every other island. The scoring was based on the assessment by the Banana Donor Group, of the actions that St. Lucia had taken to modernize, streamline and increase the efficiency of the banana industry. St. Lucia recorded 100% scores on many of the components of the modernization program.

Moreover, through the Labour Government’s aggressive approach to the European Union Special Framework of Assistance (SFA) programme, the Saint Lucia Government was the first to access funds under the SFA and the allocation to Saint Lucia was greater than that to any other island. “There is so much more that can be written on the commitment of the present administration to the banana industry, but I believe the point has been made”, Minister Jean said.



Farmer attending to Bananas



## THIS WEEK ON NTN

### Highlights: Week of March 26-April 2, 2004

NTN’s Special: Konsit Kweyol - GIS speaks with St. Lucia’s Ambassador to CARICOM, H.E. Earl Huntley on several issues, including the current crisis in Haiti - Tuesday, March 30th at 8 p.m.

Highlights of the Duke of York’s visit to St. Lucia – Wed. 31st March 8 p.m.

The Fire’s Shadow – Wed. 31st March 9 p.m.

National Dress Festival 2004-Thurs. 1st April 9 p.m.

The Giant African Snail – Thurs. April 1st 6:30 p.m.

Inter-Secondary School Sports 2001-Friday April 2nd 8:30 p.m.

### Remember to tune in for:

GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 pm

Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:

Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :

Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):

Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).

Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)

Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at [www.stlucia.gov.lc](http://www.stlucia.gov.lc) and then click on the NTN icon.

[www.stlucia.gov.lc](http://www.stlucia.gov.lc)

Saint Lucia NATIONWIDE is published every fortnight by the Department of Information Services.

Contact us at: The Department of Information Services, Graham Louisy Administrative Building, The Waterfront, Castries, St. Lucia, West Indies  
Tel: (758) 468 2116; Fax (758) 453 1614; E-mail: [gis@candw.lc](mailto:gis@candw.lc); <http://stlucia.gov.lc>