



NEWS WIRE

We Need to Look To Region

Architect Brian Lewis wants to see more Caribbean construction companies doing work in Trinidad.

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago (Trinidad Business Guardian) February 2, 2006 -- "I would have thought as Caribbean people, we would have looked to our Caribbean brothers," Lewis said. "Having a lot of foreign people in here is just stressing the whole economy."

He identified more cars on the roads, more phone use and a greater demand for housing, school places and the like.

While admitting that the large local construction firms are busy with projects, Lewis said that's not a justifiable argument for bringing in professionals from outside the region.

"We should be looking in the region first before bringing contractors from all over the world.

"One is concerned about overstressing the industry. It's not just a question of contractors but where are we getting the labour, materials, and so on to fulfill the Government's programme and how far one should go in order to achieve it? Would you bring in not only foreign contractors, but also for labour, cement?"

Lewis, who's a member of the Joint Consultative Council (JCC) and a director at ACLA-Works, said he thinks it would be better if the Government collaborated and consulted more with the construction industry.

He questioned if there were any boundaries to the Government's development agenda, if limitations should be set on bringing in foreign professionals.

Lewis said he was reliably informed that the International Waterfront Project will require as many as 14 crane operators who have to be trained. And the foreign firms are likely to pay local crane operators more handsomely to attract them to their projects.

"The principle is still there, whether it's four or 14. Is this ordered development? I think a more ordered development would allow better planning. If it is that the pace has to be sustained for political reasons, more emphasis has to be placed on this committee's work to reduce likely problems that's going to arise."

Lewis is also a member of the Cabinet appointed subcommittee on the construction industry. The committee's task is to sort out bottlenecks in the Government's construction programme.

He said while the steering committee has made a contribution to solve problems in the construction industry, it should do more to facilitate more ordered integration.

"To do that means government officials directing meeting that should be more receptive to practical proposals to them.

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“Sometimes they don’t want to listen. They are adamant about pressing ahead at a pace. At that speed, it’s difficult to resolve all the problems.”

He said he stands by the statement that development isn’t such if it’s going to lead to the demise of local contractors and consultants.



Brian Lewis is a Director of acla:works. He is a Registered Architect, a Past President and a Fellow of the Trinidad & Tobago Institute of Architects.

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