

Still Alive — AID With Strings

By Janet Jagan

Home Affairs Minister Clement Rohee recently criticized the manner in which the Inter American Development Bank (IDB) operates. His criticisms demand real attention. The major complaint is that the IDB is mainly interested in holding workshops and seminars and ignoring the realities of what is really needed.

He told a gathering at the Felix Austin Police Training School that the PPP/C administration wanted a programme that will empower youths and provide them with training and skills to better serve their communities. His main concern is the training of youths for skills that will provide them with good job opportunities and keep them out of trouble.

Minister Rohee noted that the community action component of the



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loan is "packed" with consultations and seminars to be done by overseas specialists. He has written to the IDB complaining about the real needs that do not match the IDB's programme, but so far the bank does not seem to want to change the programme to meet the needs as defined by the Minister. The amount involved is US\$3 million and Rohee believes that what is NOT required in a number of depressed committees are workshops, lectures and seminars, but practical objectives like job training. "We don't need the bank to

tell us what the realities are... if we want the programme to be redefined the bank must so redefine to be consistent with the social and economic realities in our country," said the Minister.

This episode in our dealings with international as well as country funding groups is reminiscent of the past practices of such institutions which rarely considered the real needs of the country being "helped." Frequently, proposals by the local recipients and their own experts have been brushed aside to make ample room for the donors' perceptions, plans and motives. The name "AID With Strings" symbolized the last century's international aid programmes where local needs and suggestions were ignored and the recipient nations were flooded with overseas experts who knew little about local situations and the people who live in their donor-aid countries.

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It was believed and

highest paid employees in the state under AID money.

Local initiative is slapped down as in the case of Guyana's use of anti-

loans, some with genuine attitudes to assist third world countries, continue to be bugged down with old ideas and worn attitudes

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expected that all this changed a few years after the end of colonialism, but in reality, it still exists in the form of "donor knows all" and fabulous salaries for the many experts that flow into the developing world — earnings in salaries and perks, far, far above the

ral drugs to treat AIDS, which was working beautifully until the US AIDS funding demanded its termination because it did not have the US mark of approval.

It is a great pity that many of the efforts of donor funding of grants and

about the capacities of the developing world. Plans and ideas of the recipients of aid and, who, more than not, understand the needs of their country and the solutions much better than the donors are ignored. We can only hope their eyes will open up sooner than later.