

# US Congressmen discuss Caribbean

BY VALERIE KREUTZER

USICA STAFF  
CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Increased assistance to the Caribbean and U.S. relations with Cuba were two key points in testimony before the House Inter-American Affairs Subcommittee last week.

Going against the views of some of his Congressional colleagues on the Committee, Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally (D. Calif.) urged an immediate lifting of the embargo against medical supplies to Cuba, and subsequent normalisation of relations with Cuba.

This "will allow us," he said, "to more adequately address the issues of political prisoners, human rights, and legal migration of Cubans who qualify for admission to the United States."

Normalisation, said Dymally, was one way "to contain Cuba's threat." The Cubans, he said, are anxious to start a dialogue with the United States.

Not so, said Daniel Andrew Mica (D.-Fla.), pointing out that Cuba has stepped up its "terrorist activity" in the last 18 months. Robert J. Lagomarsino (R.-Calif.) said "until Cuba changes its actions and tune, it is counterproductive to get closer to them." Robert K.

Dorman (R.-Cal.) pointed out that "Cuba is getting to affect other nations."

Dymally was the lead witness in the first of three hearings on the Caribbean basin and Central America. The hearing followed on the footsteps of the Caribbean Basin Development Conference held in Nassau on July 11 and attended by the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, and Canada.

During the first hearing on the Caribbean, Dymally, who was born in Trinidad and is chairman of a newly formed group, the Caribbean Action Lobby, reviewed some of his own policy proposals for the area.

He stressed increased trade and the elimination of discriminating tariffs, bilateral and to small Caribbean nations that presently receive only multilateral aid, amnesty for undocumented Caribbean workers, a more human policy toward Haitian entrants and refugees, and "a more conciliatory stance toward the Government of Grenada."

Subsequent witnesses from academia substantiated Dymally's request to normalise relations with Cuba.

"The excessive fear of Cuba as a threat to security is unwarranted," said Jorge Dominguez, a Harvard professor, who emigrated from Cuba 21 years ago.

"The real Cuban threat" to

the area is the fact that Cuba has become an alternative model, Dominguez said. Cuba is seen as having successfully broken away from the United States, and it has "accomplishments in the areas of education and health."

However, Cuba has not been able to break away from the Soviet Union, Dominguez said, and has growing economic difficulties. The wars in Ethiopia and Angola have taken away some skilled young people from factories, he said, and the decline in efficiency creates serious problems at home.

"Cuba's foreign policy collapsed during the last 18 months," said Dominguez, "Central America — Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala — are the most dramatic exception" of this collapse. "But on the islands, Cuba has experienced set-backs, except for Grenada."

"It is very unlikely that Cuba will move away enough from the Soviet Union to be unaligned, and it would be unrealistic to think that the Reagan Administration would lift the trade embargo," said Dominguez. "But a variety of contracts are possible," he said, to ease immigration from Cuba and prevent terrorism.

This viewpoint was echoed by Anthony Maingot, a sociologist at Florida International

University.

"The Caribbean is getting heated up because of rivalry between east and west," said Maingot. "Normalisation of relations should be introduced to defuse the spirit of confrontation and the arms race in the Caribbean."

Maingot, like Dominguez an immigrant from the Caribbean, also urged a favourable review of Caribbean-U.S. migration.

Immigration from the Caribbean guarantees "one of the best sources of capital flows" to the area, said Maingot. One hundred million dollars, he estimated, has flown directly to recipients in Haiti, \$5 million to Grenada. These remittances were received from family members and friends working in the United States. In contrast, he said, approximately 50 per cent of the public assistance funds never reach the recipients.

On the subject of economic development, economist Richard Weisskoff proposed to convene a meeting of Caribbean and North American scholars and pragmatists who know the problems of the region and the full range of solutions available to the people who live there.

Weisskoff maintained that the capitalist economies in the Caribbean, based on the so-called "Labour-surplus" model, have failed.

In this model, developing countries are seen as having two main sectors, the traditional and the modern sector. The process of economic development, Weisskoff said, takes place when the traditional sector releases its workers who then find jobs in the modern sector at slightly higher wages. But the problem is, said Weisskoff, that the traditional sector collapses and the modern sector fails to provide adequate work.

"Facing unemployment at home, Caribbean people migrate and fill the slums of London and Liverpool, the south Bronx and Chicago, Houston and Miami. It is nothing less than the economic failure of these countries that causes millions to flee, and they appear as our problem: boat people, illegal aliens, undocumented workers, economic exiles all," said Weisskoff.

Weisskoff who is associated with Iowa State University, has lived and taught in the Caribbean, is at present doing research at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. temporarily turned the hearing room into a lecture hall, substantiating his views with maps and charts. Instead of offering an alternative economic model, Weisskoff urged that the Caribbean "unify itself" and that the United States "recognise the Caribbean

as one people, one society fragmented by the incursions of European and American History."

"It is not in the interest of the U.S. taxpayer to give the islands bi-lateral assistance," said Weisskoff, urging instead, that the region receive multi-lateral aid.

Rep. Lagomarsino took issue with this viewpoint. Bilateral assistance had, in fact, been very effective, said Lagomarsino, citing information Prime Minister Eugenia Charles had supplied during a recent visit in his congressional office. A building materials project the United States had supplied after Dominica had been devastated by several hurricanes had been very effective and the people knew who the donor had been, Charles had told Lagomarsino.

The debate is likely to continue.

"A comprehensive analysis of the problems and the Administration's approach to the area" are the purpose of the three consecutive congressional hearings on the Caribbean and Central American said subcommittee chairman Michael Barnes (D.-Md.). A hearing on Central America took place on Tuesday. The administration's viewpoint will be heard a week later.