

visit of former Prime Minister Trudeau to Cuba in 1995 was a case in point.

Currently, Cuba is not the flavour of the month for Canadian companies. It has become a country where there is nothing but red tape. Total domestic credit is minimal and the banking sector underdeveloped. Moreover, Cuba is a small island economy and does not offer significant market outlets for the big multinationals. The U.S.A. embargo has also had a significant negative impact on the growth of business in Cuba. Notwithstanding the welfare from drugs invented by Cuban scientists (for cancer treatment, for instance), American companies will not consider manufacturing them.

Both the poverty of the Cuban economy and the restrictive and repressive state environment force Cubans to employ survival tactics that are often illegal or semi-legal (i.e., self-employment, secondary part-time work, theft from the state, payment for services in foreign currency, bribes, etc.). This duplicity undermines the social fabric of the Cuban society and poses further challenges to a potential transition to democracy. Legalising some of these survival activities may solve the problems related to "double morality." Reform could be gradual. It has already hesitantly started with legalising foreign currency accounts and private lending, granting licences to export and import on a small scale, and transferring some state-owned farms to farmers. While the growth of a small market economy has been beneficial for a select group of people, some roundtable participants emphasised that social justice must be maintained. The danger of dollarisation should also be considered.

4. NGOs and Civil Society in Cuba

Mark Fried said that Oxfam has been engaged in Cuba since 1994 and today has between 12 and 15 Cuban counterparts. The NGO community in Cuba has been developing throughout the 1990's and is quite lively. Cuban NGOs stem from several sources including: the government ministries, mass organisations, religious communities as well as concerned citizen groups. The NGO leadership is fairly consolidated. It has the respect of the Cuban authorities and influences policy to a certain degree.

Cooperation between Canada and Cuba intensified in 1995 when an exchange programme was launched in Havana. Canadian foreign policy has greatly facilitated this cooperation. Since then the relationship had its ups and downs. Canada-Cuba projects are especially successful in the agricultural sector and in housing. These projects bring new ideas, promote the virtues of the Canadian system, and generate new contacts. Nonetheless, communist systems are not set up for NGO operations. Despite the fact that these are limited activities and their impact is often muted, NGOs often attract innovative people who want change.

In response to Fried, some participants pointed out that except for humanitarian assistance, cooperation between Canadian and Cuban NGOs requires collaboration with the repressive state structures. Moreover, independent NGOs do not exist in Cuba. A more appropriate term for these