6.2 Payment vs. Voluntary Participation.

Perhaps the most important operational decision to be made--the decision that will most deeply affect the course of the project--is the decision as to whether to pay people in one form or another for any labor which they do as part of the project. The basic character of the project will be affected by the decision which project leaders make in this regard. The project in which people are consistently volunteering time and labor will in the long run turn out to be quite a different type of project from one in which participation is elicited and sustained via the payment of overt or disguised wages.

I have found this issue to be the mostly hotly debated bone of contention among planners and organizers of development projects in rural Haiti--Haitian technicians, international agencies, and private volunteer and missionary groups alike. The most vigorous and most articulate arguments tend to be those that advise against paying people for participation in reforestation or terrace building activities. Of the dozens of arguments against payment the following are probably the most frequently heard:

1. Most reforestation and wall building projects are done on the land belonging to the participants themselves, and the trees are ordinarily supplied free of cost. Why in the world should people be paid for making improvements on their own land?

2. Payment is in direct opposition to the spirit of self-help volunteerism that is supposed to imbue all true community development projects.

3. Payment can lead to the mechanical, obedient carrying out by the community of useless projects for which there is no genuine local felt need and in which the community's only stake is the money that will be received in the form of wages.

4. Payment has been found to open the doors to intrusion by outsiders who buy their way onto the project's payroll, creating the developmentally absurb situation in which community members stand angrily and helplessly by as strangers receive wages for carrying out projects in the community.

5. Payment for participation will almost guarantee that the project will subsequently not be sustained by the community.

6. Payment may even lead to intentional sabotage of the projects by wage-hungry individuals who hope that they will thus induce the project organizers to return with more money to pay people to repair the damage.

7. Payment completely muddies the water for those local projects which have succeeded in operating on a voluntary basis. Once the work gets out, everyone will demand to be paid by any would-be organizer of development activities.

8. Payment of wages may raise the cost of projects to levels beyond the reach of many otherwise effective local private voluntary agencies.

Of the persons contacted in this research, the most articulate opponents of payment for reforestation were the Turnbulls in Fermathe. As a result of their long-stanging presence in the community, they have been able to organize many (though not all) of their projects, including recent reforestation activities, on the basis of completely voluntary labor by local Community Councils. I visited the community of Madlen, across the ravine that separates the Kenscoff road from the neighboring ridge beneath Fermathe and did in fact see large numbers of trees (mostly Eucalyptus) which had been voluntarily planted by the Community Council.

But as of about two years ago, CARE has begun pumping into the region substantial amounts of Food for Work directly earmarked for reforestation activities. The principal organizers of the planting of the trees and the distribution of the food are two local Damien-hired forestry agents, whose reforestation projects have been given new vigor by this sudden infusion of food, so easily convertible into cash. Not all communities have as yet received this food. But in my conversations with the villagers of Madlen--those same villagers who have voluntarily planted trees--it was clear that work had reached them of the fact that members of other communities are being paid in food for carrying out activities which they had done for free.

Some among them made no bones about the fact that they also would like to cash in on the food and were wondering when their turn would come.

Indeed on many occasions I have come away convinced that a Community Council has undertaken a voluntary, unremunerated activity in some part of rural Haiti principally as a way of demonstrating to the blan the Community's good will in hopes that the blan will respond by pouring in a little ti-ankourajman (best translated as "Food for Work"). The Turnbulls are undoubtedly correct in their assessment that it will henceforth be much more difficult to organize voluntary self-help tree planting in the Fermathe region.

The arguments against payment are logical, articulate, and strongly felt; and those who make them are in many cases knowledgeable individuals with a longstanding track record of significant development activities in rural Haiti. But they are swimming against a tide whose momentum can now probably not be turned back. Paradoxically, the Kenscoff forestry agents who are reforesting the hills with CARE food get perhaps 90% of their trees from the Turnbull's nursery. It would be counterproductive to refuse the trees, since perhaps as much as 50% of the Fermathe annual stock is moved by precisely these two agents and their Food for Work.

The handwriting on the wall appears clear. Of the nineteen projects on which information was gathered in this research, at least fourteen employ or have employed some form of systematic remuneration of project participants.

Can no valid arguments be made in favor of payment? Is payment of project participants simply a capitulation to a bad habit with which certain development groups have now irreversibly infested the country? Absolutely not. The arguments have been heard against wages. In the case of reforestation and development projects, a number of arguments can be made in favor as well.

1. Certain reforestation projects, such as the Jean Rabel and Acul Watershed projects, have as their main goal the protection of lowland irrigation systems. The structures and trees being used are of little immediate value to the hillside farmers, may in fact be perceived as short-term detriments. Why should they not receive financial support for time and labor expended in activities whose major beneficiaries live down-stream?
2. Haitian peasants are the poorest group in the Western Hemisphere. Underemployment notwithstanding, they more than any other group can justifiably dedicate all their time to the pursuit of remunerative activities; they less than others can be expected to participate in projects whose benefits are off in the distance somewhere.

3. Projects wish to restore hillsides in as brief a period of time as possible. Where possible it is better to have project participants labor five or six mornings a week than one. But this obviously demands the payment of some form of wages.

4. In the U.S.A. soil conservation efforts among farmers have generally involved not only technical assistance, but various forms of cash subsidies. The restoration of the Great Plains Dustbowl in the 1930's under the U.S. Soil Conservation service, and the subsequent interventions, in the wake of droughts in the early 50's, made ample provision for the provision of direct financial assistance to farmers willing to implement conservation measures. In terms of U.S. overseas assistance policy, it would be most unusual for the U.S. Government to deny in principle to Haitian farmers the types of cash subsidies that have been found necessary to elicit farmer cooperation in the U.S.

5. If subsidies in the form of cash payments can be justified in principle--and they most certainly can, as argued above--they simultaneously provide an excellent practical route for channelling large amounts of resources directly to rural communities, complying thus with the recently revived official USAID interest in the "poorest of the poor."

6. From the point of view of the Haitian peasant, the benefits from soil conservation activities (including the ones to be proposed in this report) are still a matter of faith. The benefits have simply not yet been proven and project participants are exposing themselves to risks that are both financial and social. (More will be said of the latter below.) It would appear eminently suitable to give some for of direct support to the risk takers in different parts of the country.

This latter point of view corresponds to what one will hear from farmers as well. During a conversation with several farmers, in which we all agreed as to the economic value that could be derived from planting trees as a crop. I confronted them with the following question. If trees are like a crop, why should people here want to receive payment for planting them? You don't have anybody pay you to plant beans or corn. Why should you get paid to plant trees on your land? The answer was immediate and right to the point: pèyizan poko wè kob lap tiré nan pyé bwa-a. (the peasant still hasn't set eyes on the money he'll get from the trees. When tree planting has proven its economic value beyond a doubt, we may expect it to become as much a part of the economic behavior of the peasant as is the fertilizer buying and terrace building of the peasants of Furcy. But during the interim, financial support will be needed.

In short, even taking into careful account the many dangers created by the introduction of a wage element into development projects. USAID and the GOH should build such arrangements into the heart of any planned soil conservation activities. A compromise scheme has been developed by the USAID fund Project de Développement Agricole Intégré combining the need for wages with the desirability of a self-help philosophy. Project participants in the Acul Watershed and the Jean Rabel areas have been paid on a "3-4-5" scheme. The workers receive payment for the first three days of work. The payment for the fourth day goes into the treasury of the local councils. And the fifth day of work is volunteered to the Community. Though this plan has run into snags (e.g. the money for the council treasuries has in general not materialized, meaning that workers are in effect volunteering two out of five days), some modified version may be found to be a suitable compromise to the question of payment vs. voluntary labor.

6.3 Money for Work vs. Food for Work

We find ourselves now, having recommended the incorporation of some form of remuneration scheme into soil conservation projects. In the absurd position of having to ask what would strike most 20th century observers as a ridiculous follow-up question: should the people be paid in money or in some other way? But the question is made necessary by virtue of the past 25 years of development history in Haiti. Hurricane Hazel in the early 50's can probably be taken as the starting point for the massive importation into Haiti of various types of foodstuffs. In their original intent, and indeed in much

of their current functioning, these foodstuffs were destined for projects of an overtly humanitarian nature: emergency food, school lunch programs, hospital and clinic food, old age homes, and the like.

But in addition to these overtly charitable uses of food, program planners have for more than two decades engaged in the practice of dispensing food in the context of community development programs. Those who worked on roads, buildings, hillsides, or whatever would receive rations of food to help them through the day. From this it was but a short step to providing the workiers with enough food to feed not only themselves, but also their families. Since the amount of food an individual received depended , however, not on the size of his family, but on the number of days he worked, this Food for Work strategy came to be perceived by recipients quite accurately for what it was: a form of simple wage labor in which the medium of exchange was not the Haitian gourde, but the sack of cornmeal, wheat, or bulgur, the can of oil, and the tin of sardines.

During the past twenty five years, the use of this Food for Work has put wind in the sails of perhaps thousands of local development efforts which would otherwise have been hard pressed to elicit the cooperation of community members. The rural poor of Haiti, though the vast majority would prefer cash, have shown themselves highly willing to labor for this medium of exchange.

Though the origins of this practice fall outside the scope of this research, the proliferation of Food for Work projects is due not only to an eagerness on the part of the recipient communities. There have also existed strong pressures from abroad to utilize the available foodstuffs, and anecdotes abound in which local Food for Peace officers cajole the various relief agencies into accepting larger and larger amounts of food. Though the institutional background to this food pushing is now different from what it was in the '50's, by now local development agencies such Church World Service, Catholic Relief Service, CARE, CARITAS, and HACHO have adapted, have evolved in this direction, and to a frighteningly large degree have become simple intermediaries facilitating the flow of food. So essential has the "food pushing" role become that were the food to disappear, more than one of these agencies would undoubtedly find themselves without a role in life.

The relevance of the Food for Work issue to this research resides in the tremendous impact which this food has exerted on the course of most soil conservation efforts in Haiti. Though hard data are lacking, I am convinced that more than 8 out of every 10 trees that have been planted, and more than 9 out of every 10 linear kilometer of walls and terraces constructed in Haiti, owe their existence to one or another Food for Work program. Of the fourteen projects which I found using payment in their soil conservation efforts, ten used food rather than cash. And the projects that used cash tended on the whole to be much smaller in scope than projects run by Food for Work.

The containers in which the food is sent--heavily stamped with the admonition to neither sell nor exchange the contents--try to perpetuate a version of events that everybody in Haiti knows to be a total fiction: the fiction that the recipients of the food consume rather than sell the food. As a matter of fact, there is a vigorous market for most of the foods, especially the wheat, cornmeal, and oil. Much of the economic life of towns of the arid Northwest could well be symbolized by two photos: one would show sacks of charcoal piled outside of peasant houses, the other would show sacks of HACHO-endowed Food for Work piled in the town marketplace.

Unfortunately, the food is sold not only by its legal recipients. There is a widespread conviction heard throughout Haiti that an unspecified but hefty percentage of the food is siphoned off by administrators long before it reaches the hands of the workers. The mountains surrounding Limbe and Plaisance have been lined with hundred of linear kilometers of vegetal barriers to combat erosion; but the belief of people queried is that only part of the food which the "Company" (i.e. FAO) made available for this purpose actually reached the communities. An administrator in an irrigation project in Croix de Fer expressed relief that people were being paid in cash. Where Food for Work is involved, there is automatic suspicion that the administrators are selling off large amounts of it.

The suspicions are there even when the behaviors are not. I personally know of project administrators who regularly sell large amounts of food to finance legitimate development activities; but where sales by administrators take place, this creative use of the food is probably the exception in a system where self-enrichment appears to be the norm.

Whatever abuses have come to surround Food for Work, its use has become so institutionalized in rural Haiti that we must seriously entertain what could otherwise be dismissed as a ridiculous question: should soil conservation projects be based on payment with money or on payment with food?

In view of the widespread market for the food, the choice being proffered is not one between cash and nourishment, but rather between real money and make believe money that the recipient has to first transact to convert into hard cash. It is true that some of the food is consumed. But in the absence of hard data, one must go on impressions; and my impression is that more than 80% of the food received by workers is sold. Furthermore, perhaps as much as 40% of the food received <u>has already been committed by the worker to one or another form of creditor</u>--an arrangement that also exists where wages are paid in money. That is, Food for Work in rural Haiti has become another form of currency.

I have heard some defenses of food for work in soil conservation projects. The use of food guarantees that the families of the workers will receive at least some nourishment, that the entire monthly earnings will not be squandered in the gaguere (cockfights). A knowledgeable technician familiar with different remuneration arrangements has assured me that the physical condition of the workers being paid in food is superior to that of workers receiving cash wages. They work longer and harder.

But these reasons carry little weight in making the decision between the two types of currency to be used in payment. There would be something distastefully paternalistic in a decision to continue Food for Work out of a fear that the workers will misuse their money.

If there is total administrative freedom to choose between the two types of currency, I strongly recommend the use of money rather than food. It may be the case, however, that leeway in this matter is limited, that there are strong institutional pressures from abroad which would render very difficult a prior conversion of the available food into cash. If this is the case, that is, if it is a choice between food or no remuneration at all, then the food should be used. It may be an inferior currency, but, after all, it still is a currency. And in deciding which currency to use, we should keep in mind that we are eventually aiming for the design of reforestation.

and terracing projects in which the major payoff is not the ti-ankourajman which the people receive during the project, but rather the enhanced annual domestic income that they will hopefully come to enjoy as a result of their transformation into growers and harvesters of trees.

6.4 How should the currency be distributed?

Whatever the currency used in projects, the task is to administer it in such a way that it effectively reaches the hands of the workers.

In the case of food, the strategy adopted by the FAO project in Aux Cayes seems reasonable. The food was stored in a central depot in the town of Aux Cayes. Payment was made on the basis of a 24 day work month, each worker receiving for that period of time two sacks of cornmeal (each containing 50 lbs.), a bottle of oil, and 18 cans of sardines. The payroll was prepared once a month. The person in charge of delivering the food made every attempt to distribute it directly. The payroll was prepared and sent down once a month, and a truck with the correct amount of food would be dispatched to a centrally located village. There the food would immediately be distributed to the workers, every attempt being made to avoid storing the food in the rural areas. It is in this context of rural storage that much food is reported to have been pilfered.

(There are an equal number of anecdotes, however, in which town administrators have been caught unloading entire trucks at the homes of friends or relatives in towns.) The work month was arranged in such a way that the workers received entire sacks. The project tried to avoid a situation where sacks had to be opened and doled out in smaller quantities.

Using this system, the peasants themselves converted the food into cash. The cornmeal could be sold for about $6.00 a sack, the oil for $5.00, and the sardines for about 20¢ a can, giving the worker an approximate effective wage of about 4½ gourdes a day.

Two interesting patterns emerged in this regard. In the first place, there may frequently be a difference of opinion between Port-au-Prince administrators of agencies such as Catholic Relief Service and local field technicians in terms of the quantities of food that should be given for a day's work. The Port-au-Prince personnel, perhaps still assuming that people eat the food, calculate daily consumption of each item in arriving at their payment levels and generally come out low. Field technicians, fully aware that the food is sold, is in fact a poorly disguised wage, aim for a level that will give the worker the equivalent of a local daily wage if the food were to be sold locally. The market price, not the daily consumption quota, is the determining criterion.

Secondly, local field administrators appear to fix their quotas in terms of the wages prevailing in the region. The administrators of Afe Neg Koumbit in the Furcy area set a substantially higher daily quota of cornmeal than is given in the FAO projects in either Aux Cayes or Limbe (7-8 lbs. a day as opposed to 4-5 lbs. a day). This also may be a reflection of differences in wages between Furcy and other regions of the country.

But in either case we have the interesting pattern whereby the Food for Work is in fact being treated as a market commodity, few people even reflecting any more on the irrelevant injunction printed on the sacks prohibiting the sale or exchange of the contents.

I have already mentioned that a handful of projects paid the workers, not in food, but in money. In at least some cases reported around rural Haiti, communities have been known to refuse to work for food. But the cash-paying projects observed in this research chose this option, not from local pressure, but from project principle.

The use of money appears to trigger off even more agressive maneuvers on the part of the workers to secure and maintain a job, increasing the difficulty of administration and supervision. One of the grandfathers of Haitian development projects--the famous Marbial project of the late forties and early fifties-- opted for cash strategies. Peasants were paid, for example, to supply and plant sisal and bananas as erosion control barriers. Because these items were in short local supply at the time, peasants would line a hillside with the proper quantities of plants,collect their wages, and

fortwith dig up the sisal and bananas to replant them on another hillside, where they would collect another round of wages.

But the most serious problems created by wage labor arrangements concern the loss of income which has been observed to occur. In the first place the foremen and supervisors find themselves in positions of great local power, and it is common knowledge that you generally have to buy your way into the payroll of a project, forfeiting at least a month's wages to the supervisor who deigns to include you in the list of workers.

But secondly, and more seriously, long delays in the arrival of payrolls cause individuals to enter into debt arrangements by which they may forfeit as much as 50% of their income. Unlike regular state employees, who receive a monthly check, participants in development projects are placed on a monthly payroll. The payroll has to be composed by the foreman, verified, sent to Port-au-Prince, and make its way through a large number of ministries. It is standard practice to expect a two or three month delay.

However very reliable information gathered and crosschecked in the Belladere region indicates that the delays are in fact longer, in the order of four or five months, giving rise to the suspicion that local foremen may somehow be contributing to the delays. Why should they do this? Faced with delays, a large percentage of workers resort to the strategy of <u>vann mwa travay-yo</u> (selling their month's wages). The approach either the foreman or a local lender and sell

their monthly salary of 130 gourdes for 70 or 80 gourdes. The lender gives them the 70 gourdes. When the payroll comes through, the foreman or other lender simply pockets the borrower's 130 gourdes.

Thus the problems associated with the distribution of cash wages are quite different from those which surround the distribution of Food for Work. Soil conservation projects (any type of project, for that matter) will be seriously jeopardized unless institutional arrangements are devised which ensure the prompt flow of the cash to its proper recipients. This entire question will be discussed in a later section of the report.

6.5 Day Labor vs. Contract Labor

Having made the decision to remunerate, projects have been forced to decide on the specif unit that would serve as the basis for payment. Two major options have been utilized by different projects--or by the same project at different stages. The first is the standard practice of paying by the day. The second option entails paying by the unit of work accomplished--which was generally referred to as a "contract" system by the projects utilizing them.

The day labor system is by far the most common, and is a simpler system to administer. There is no need to check up on the quantity of work done by an individual (or a team) in a given day. All that is needed is a list of the persons present. But though it is simpler, it has been found to produce inferior results in the projects studied.

Two of the projects--the FAO project in Aux Cayes and the HACHO project in Jean Rabel--switched in midstream to a system whereby people were paid by the amount of work, claiming that there was intentional foot-dragging on the part of many workers being paid under the day-labor system.

In its revamped version, the payment system in Aux Cayes worked as follows. A team of two men would be expected to build 20 linear meters of rock wall per day. If mini terraces were being built, a man was expected to do 20 linear meters in a day. In the case of digging holes for trees an individual was expected to dig 40 holes per day if the holes were 30 cubic centimeters, 30 holes per day if the holes were 40 cubic centimeters. (Fruit trees and forest trees have different size requirements for transplanting.) In effect the contract system reverted to a type of day-labor system, because in fact most individuals managed to do a day's quota before going home. All that was added was the expectation that a person had to do so much work in a day.

At first the farmers objected to the contract system, but after a brief period of time the majority reportedly came to prefer it. Individuals would start early in the morning and would have terminated their day's work by as early as 10:00 A.M., leaving them free to go home and tend to their own gardens. Some complaints were heard that perhaps the contract system produced sloppier work. But the general

feeling in three regions where I observed it was that it was superior to the day-labor system. The most dramatic effects of a contract system were to be seen in an irrigation project visited in Croix Fer. Groups of men are being paid to dig canals at the rate of three and a half gourdes per cubic meter. The adoption of this system has accelerated the construction of the canal in a manner that is truly impressive.

Where contract labor of this sort is used, some flexibility is called for. In the case of building rock walls, for example, in some spots rocks have to be dug up and the construction is more difficult. Adjustments in the rate have to be made. But on the Whole positive responses to contract arrangements should lead us to adopt some form of a contract system in soil conservation projects, at least for some tasks.

A major innovation that is in addition called for is the design of a strategy for maintaining the trees during their vulnerable early years. It must be remembered that, even if a project successfully induces peasants to plant trees as a crop, the outcome will be in doubt until one or two harvests are in. But if trees with a short rotation are used, it will be programmatically feasible to usher participating families through at least the first rotation with some form of financial aid, preferably based on the number of trees that "escape" (chapé)--a term which succinctly captures one dimension of Haitian peasant orientation toward the survival of trees. That is, the strategy should entail, not the use of watchmen or marschalls,

but the use of modest cash inducements. And such maintenance strategies should be seen, not as permanent features of the Haitian landscape, but as interim measures until the fast growing trees have proven their economic value to the participating communities.