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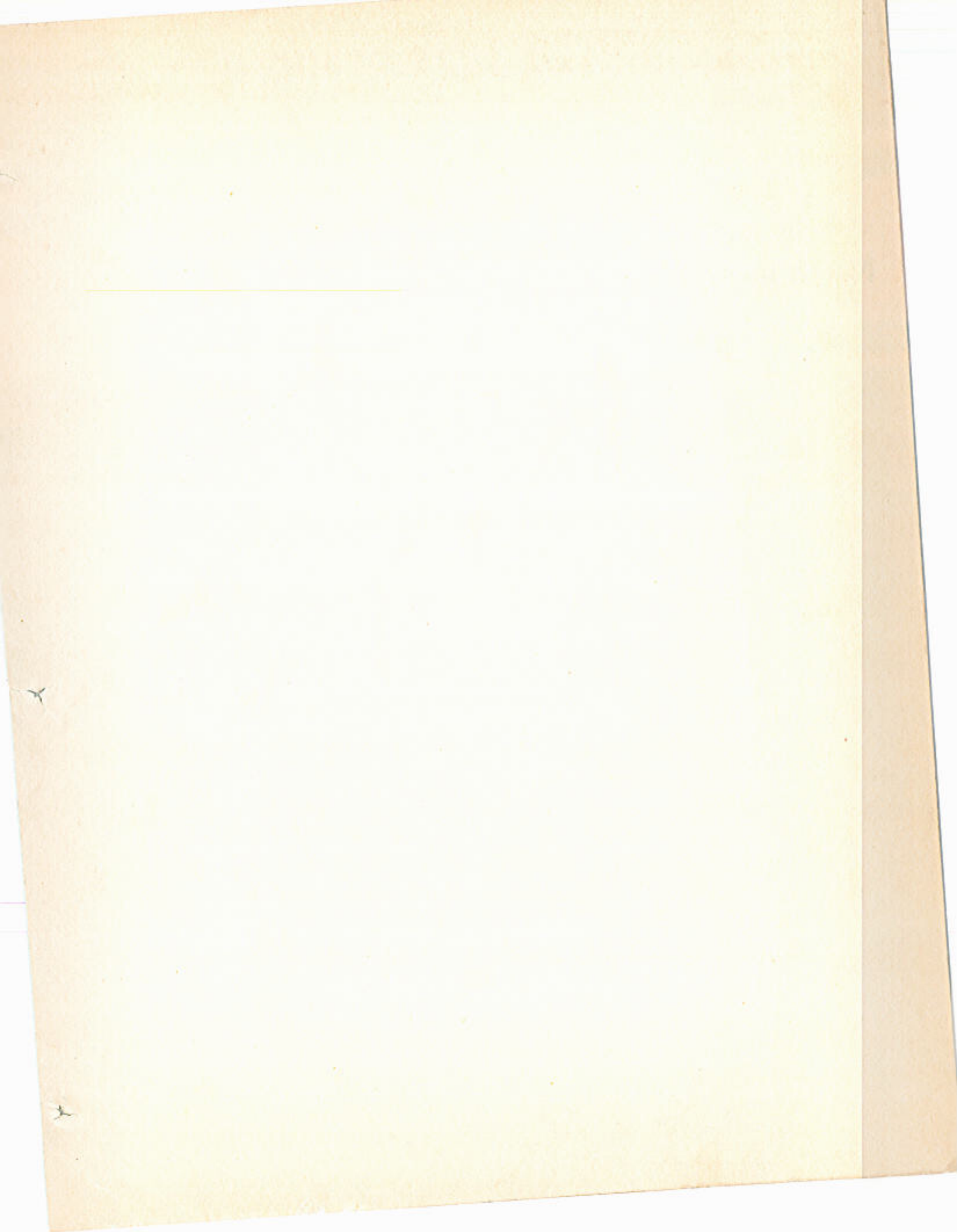
MANPOWER AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

by

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PLANNING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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Economic planning has become almost universal in the less developed countries of the world. It is considered that only in this way can the centuries of economic and social poverty be rapidly overcome, so as to ensure decent living standards, for the people in a world in which the gap in the standards of living between the 'have' countries on the one hand, and the 'have nots' on the other, threatens to grow even bigger. In Nigeria a ten-year development plan (to be effective from 1945) was formulated even before the last war came to an end. The plan was ultimately found to be deficient in many respects and had to be revised. Since 1954 when a Federal Constitution was introduced the three Regional Governments, as well as the Federal Government, have formulated and implemented their individual Development Plans. There was a tendency for these Plans to be competitive in character. Recently, however, (for the period 1962-67 for example) the need for co-operation and co-ordination has been increasingly emphasized.

All the Plans have these common aims:

- a) to diversify the economy so as to stave off the danger of too great a reliance on a few primary products and
- b) to raise the productive capacity of the country with a view to raising the national income and thereby the standard of living.

Another thing which has been common to these Plans is that they have been conspicuously void of any well-defined manpower policy; i.e. that until the last year or two, employment creation, for example, has not been regarded as a specific aim of general economic development: it has been looked upon, so to speak, as a by-product. This seems to contrast, for example, with the "Vanoni Plan" of Italy (1955-64), the 1960-70 Development Plan of the United Arab Republic and the Five-Year (1960-64) Development Programme of Greece, which laid stress on employment objectives. It would appear that there are two reasons why manpower policies have not featured

significantly in the economic development of Nigeria. In the first place, it was clear that high-level manpower, in particular, took a long time to train. Since it was essential that the development programme should be implemented as quickly as possible, there seemed no need to divert limited resources to local manpower development. It was hoped, indeed, that the expertise required would be obtained from overseas as there was very little available locally. In the second place, there was no population pressure; in other words, there was no serious unemployment problem to have attracted the notice of the economic planners.

To understand this, it is necessary to examine the manpower position of Nigeria. Unfortunately the statistics available in this respect are not only far from complete but rudimentary. A cursory glance at these statistics sometimes, indeed, tends to give the wrong impression of the manpower situation.

At the last census, the population position was as follows :

Table 1

Nigerian Population by Age Groups 1952-53

Age	Male (000s)	Female (000s)	Total (000s)	%
Under 2 years	1,670	1,717	3,387	11
2 - 6 years	2,755	2,677	5,432	17
7 - 14 years	2,676	2,264	4,940	16
15 - 49 years	6,999	7,909	14,908	48
50 years and over	1,142	1,340	2,482	8

For the purposes of determining the manpower situation it may be noted that the Nigerian Labour Code forbids the employment of children of 14 years and under; and that the normal retiring age is 55. The latter age, however, has very little significance. There are very few people who do in fact "retire" at 55 years of age. Nigeria's potential labour force or manpower therefore consisted of those from age 15 years upwards; i.e. 17,390,000 or approximately 56% of the population. At the same date the occupied manpower was in fact 14,911,000.

A superficial examination of the above figures would suggest that there were 2,479,000 unemployed persons in Nigeria; i.e. nearly 14% of the potential manpower. This would be an alarming situation by any

standard. A further analysis of the figures show however that the potential and occupied manpower were distributed between the male and female sectors as follows :

	Male (000's)	Female (000s)
Potential manpower	8,141	9,249
Occupied manpower	8,284	6,627

This dispels the illusion of unemployment; for far from there being unemployment among the male population, at least about 143,000 male persons outside the potential manpower group (who would be children below the legal working age) were also employed. This is possible because at that time only 20 - 25 percent of Nigeria's five million children between the ages of seven and fourteen were in school. Most of them are likely to have been engaged in subsistence agriculture with their families, although there is evidence of child labour in the wage-earning sector of the economy, e.g. in construction and mining.

Another conclusion one reaches from the figures analysed is that the unoccupied 2.6 million in the potential labour force were practically all women - most of them, no doubt, housewives. One could conclude therefore that, far from there being unemployment in Nigeria, there was apparently "over employment"!

There have since been developments, however, which have brought the problems of manpower development to the forefront of economic planning. In the first place, it has proved very difficult, for example, to recruit technicians and other key personnel from overseas essential for economic development. Where available they have had to be paid very highly. In these circumstances the development of local manpower has seemed a desideratum of economic development. In any case, with political progress and the attainment of independence, Nigerianisation of key posts whether in Government or private industry, has become a matter of national prestige. In a recent conservative estimate, Frederick Harbison, showed that Nigeria's requirement of high-level manpower in the ten years 1960-70, compared with the position in 1958, would be as follows :

Table 2

High-Level Manpower Requirement 1960-70

	1958 Re- ported	1960 Esti- mated	1970 Target	1970/60 Net Increase	Replace- ment Factor	10-year Require- ment
<u>Senior Category</u> Managerial, Pro- fessional, and	12,937	15,375	35,875	20,500	10,700	31,200

Table 2 (Cont'd)

High-Level Manpower Requirement 1960-70

	1958 Re- ported	1960 Esti- mated	1970 Target	1970/60 Net Increase	Replace- ment Factor	10-year Require- ment
Administrative Personnel and Graduate Teachers.						
<u>Intermediate Category</u>						
Technical and Supervisory Personnel and Non- Graduate Teachers.	12,729	15,375	55,375	40,000	14,700	54,700
Total	25,666	30,750	91,250	60,500	25,400	85,900

Secondly an examination of Nigeria's occupied manpower shows that there is an imbalance in the occupational distribution. The situation in 1953 was as follows :

Table 3

Occupied Manpower in Nigeria : Occupational
Grouping

Occupation	Male (000s)	Female (000s)	Total (000s)	%
Agriculture	6,469	5,188	11,657	78
Crafts	507	-	507	3
Trading and Clerical	491	1,439	1,930	13
Administrative, Professional and Technical	232	-	232	2
Other Occupations	585	-	585	4
Total	8,284	6,627	14,911	100

The Table shows that 78% of the occupied population was engaged in agriculture. Accordingly it is held that this proportion is too high and that if an increasing diversification as an aim of economic development is

to be achieved then an increasing proportion of those at present engaged in agriculture, or of those who would otherwise be so occupied, should be diverted into the newer forms of economic activity - manufacturing, mining, etc.

The third factor which has brought the importance of manpower questions to the fore in current economic planning is the great and growing number of persons passing out of primary schools in the last few years. In 1959, for example, the total number of children who were in their final year at primary schools in Nigeria was about 140,000. In the same year the number of enrolment into Secondary Grammar Schools and other colleges including Technical Colleges and Trade Centres was of the order of 55,000. This left about 95,000 children requiring to be placed in employment. For the most part these children had been educated out of their agricultural background; yet they had acquired no technical knowledge which would make them useful in the newly developing industries. The fact that these children were concentrated for the most part in urban centres made their presence to be all the more felt; and accordingly attracted much attention.

Finally, while the problem of unemployment appears to have been growing, attention has been focused on better utilization of the occupied manpower, as a result of the apparently general view held in foreign countries that local labour was inefficient. Once consideration was given to the matter, however, it became clear that existing generalizations were too simple if not completely inaccurate. They required scientific investigation and analysis and therefore the attention of the economic planners concerned with raising productivity and living standards. Available information, supported by the research carried out by the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara, indicates, however, that the widely held notions of the inherent inefficiency of the Nigerian (or indeed African worker are baseless.

What appears to be supported by available evidence is that Nigeria's occupied manpower is not so much inefficient, as under-employed. Economists are not yet agreed about what is "under employment", particularly in relation to the less developed economies. Nevertheless the problem is particularly acute in agriculture, although it applies also to many of the self-employed craftsmen and traders who constitute the bulk of the 16% of the country's occupied manpower indicated in Table 3 under the categories Craftsmen, and Trading and Clerical.

In the case of agriculture the problem is associated with the small size of individual farms and the seasonal fluctuations in agricultural activity whereby little or no farming is carried on for about three to four months of the year during the dry season.

On the other hand there are probably 1½ million persons employed in trading (i.e. mainly retail trading) in Nigeria. Whereas a rise in the number of persons engaged in service and distributive trades is often a

mark of economic progress, one can hardly say so in the case of Nigeria. Compared with the amount and value of goods which have to be distributed, the number of traders in Nigeria appears to be too large. In a sense this large size would seem to be attributable in part to the low incomes of the majority of the population. For example, owing to the low individual purchasing power goods have to be sold practically in their lowest possible denomination: salt is sold by the pennyworth, cigarette by the stick. The general poverty of the consumer thus creates an army of retailers who may appear to be fully occupied, but certainly not so, in terms of optimum utilization of resources. Much the same thing applies to the artisan craftsmen - blacksmiths, mechanics, tailors, etc. - whose productivity remains low partly because of lack of modern machinery or the technical know-how.

Against this background the directions of manpower policy in Nigeria seem to be clear - to redistribute the manpower in the light of the increasing diversification of the economic structure, and also to eliminate wastes; to train the managers, technicians and craftsmen necessary to man the new industries; and to gear the training to these requirements; to create employment opportunities for the increasing number of primary school leavers; and to raise productivity especially in agriculture.

The need for early action on the above lines is now fully recognized and it may seem appropriate to conclude this paper by describing in outline something of what is being done to achieve some of these manpower objectives.

The first necessity has been to obtain reliable information on the character and extent of the manpower problem. First attention was paid to high-level manpower, because of its crucial importance for economic development. The first task was to determine the high-level manpower requirements of the country; this was done in 1959 by Professor Fredrick Harbison on commission by the Federal Government. These requirements as estimated by him have been indicated in Table 2. The next step was to plan ways and means of training the high-level manpower targeted. In April 1959 the Federal Government (after consultation with the three Regional Governments) accordingly appointed a Commission headed by Sir Eric Ashby "to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-school certificate and Higher Education over the next twenty years". The Commission's report which was bold and imaginative rested on three foundations:

- (a) the Commission's conception of Nigeria in 1980;
- (b) the study of Professor Harbison of Nigeria's high-level manpower needs in 1970, to which reference has been made; and
- (c) the Commission's estimates of the present capacity of the educational system. The Commission rejected a cautious approach and made proposals which are, in their own words, "massive, unconventional and expensive."

The Commission noted that enough children are now completing primary education to provide the flow of recruits for post-secondary education which their proposals demand. But they recommended an annual secondary school intake of 30,000 compared with the 1958 figure of 12,000. The current bias towards academic subjects is to be corrected; and some 3,500 students annually should be enabled to work for the High School Certificate or the General Certificate of Education; at the Advanced level. Up to 2,500 students annually should go into technical institutes, etc. Teacher training and the training of agricultural superintendents are to be stepped up, and the university population is to be raised from about 1,000 in 1959 to 7,500 as a first objective and to over 10,000 in 1970.

In Sessional Paper No. 3 of 1961 the Federal Government, after consultation with the Regional Governments, accepted the Report in principle and proclaimed "its determination to pursue a vigorous policy of manpower development that will at once rectify the existing imbalance in educational development, and promote the economic development of the nation". The Government regarded Professor Harbison's estimates as too low and accepted those of the Ashby Commission as a minimum.

To attain these ends both the Federal and Regional Governments have embarked on a vigorous policy of educational expansion at all levels. For example to the one University College existing in 1959, has been added the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. A beginning has been made with the construction and development of three other Universities at Ife, Lagos and in the Northern Region. By the end of 1962 Nigeria will have five Universities compared with one in the year preceding Independence. There seems to be justifiable hope therefore that the high-level manpower requirements of the country to meet the needs of an expanding economy will be met, if not surpassed, in the not too distant future.

The manpower situation will, however, require constant appraisal and continuous adoption of policy to match changing economic structure. For this reason the Governments of the Federation have accepted the recommendation of both Professor Harbison and the Ashby Commission to set up an Inter-Regional Manpower Board to keep the supply and demand for high level manpower under continuous scrutiny. In the meantime the Federal Ministry of Labour has, with technical assistance from the International Labour Organization, set up a Manpower Information Unit. This Unit will carry out periodical surveys of the employment situation. It recently issued a first report on the basis of a sample survey, indicating the position as at March 1961. It is probable that the work of the Unit will be taken over by the proposed Inter-Regional Manpower Board.

The problem of employment for the growing number of primary school leavers is also receiving the urgent attention of all the Governments. The expansion of secondary, technical and university education on the lines already indicated should partly meet the problem. For those who have not the opportunity for higher education, however, it is increasingly recognized

that some form of re-education is required to condition them to agricultural employment for which they seem to become unsuited under the current education system. The setting up of special institutions known as Farm Settlements and Farm Institutes is therefore in the forefront of the development schemes of the Regional Governments.

The Western Regional Minister of Land and Housing while addressing the I.L.O. African Regional Conference in December 1960 said of these farm settlement schemes as follows : "It is not merely a question of finding jobs for our young citizens but of ensuring that in that sector of the economy upon which the country so largely depends, they have the necessary training and skills to make a worth-while contribution". Each Farm Institute, for example, is intended to occupy between 600 and 100 acres of land and admits about 100 trainees yearly for a two-year course. Lectures are given in agricultural science, including arm mechanization, soil conservation and fertility, crop husbandry, farm management and organization, general science, civics and English. After a period of training in the Institute the trainees are placed on Farm Settlements. For the Western Region five Farm Institutes were due to be completed by the end of 1961.

In Eastern Nigeria the object of the farm settlement scheme is to "Provide some employment and livelihood for primary school leavers who cannot be absorbed in industry, public services and commercial houses at the present level of the Regions development". Twelve farms are proposed in the current phase of the development plan, six of which will be established initially at an estimated cost of £12,000,000 which works out at about £3,000 per settler. It is estimated that about 3,800 families will be settled in the six estates. A minimum income of £660 p.a. is expected for each settler when the scheme is fully productive.

Finally, the problems of agricultural employment and productivity for the general population are increasingly being appreciated. As one Nigerian Economist recently put it, it is recognized that there is a great and urgent need "to bring about a substantial increase in agricultural productivity in order to feed a population which is growing rapidly and becoming more urbanised, to provide raw materials for industry, to earn foreign exchange, to increase incomes and to expand the internal market for the more expensive foodstuffs and manufactured goods". Accordingly the Governments have tried among other things to improve the quality of the major export crops, and to improve crop yields by propagating the use of better quality seeds. Nevertheless it is clear that only limited success has been achieved. For example, between 1948 and 1958 the volume of agricultural exports increased only by 50% at a time when their value rose by nearly three times, as a result of high world prices. Under the 1955-62 development programmes the capital expenditure on agriculture was only 4.1% of the total; and the fact that food imports increased in the last few years suggests that agriculture is probably not expanding rapidly enough.

Apparently aware of these facts the Federal Government stated in Sessional Paper No.3/1961 (referred to above) that "agricultural education must be expanded in all secondary schools except in Lagos". It is also intended to step up the training of agricultural assistants and superintendents to about 600 per annum. There is room to doubt the adequacy of this number in view of the great effort that must be made to improve agricultural production. Mechanization of agriculture and a mass education of the general population to improved methods of cultivation appear to be indicated. They cannot be achieved without a large army of personnel trained to carry out extension work in scientific methods of cultivation. The agricultural settlements and institutes are an excellent beginning. But nothing short of a general agricultural revolution appears to be called for. The greatest problem in effecting it may appear to be in limited capital. But experience has shown that in the less developed countries foreign capital often tends to be more easily attracted to agricultural development of primary produce than to manufacturing, for example. There is perhaps room for diversity of opinion here. Nevertheless it seems clear that long-term economic planning in Nigeria must allow more capital to agriculture.

The above outline indicates what has been achieved in manpower development in Nigeria. But it is realized that these achievements constitute but a beginning. It is believed that the present phase of the Development Plan (1962-67) which is going to cost about £500 million will show much greater results. There appears to be general confidence that the Governments and the people of Nigeria will make the necessary sacrifices to achieve these objectives because of the grave national issues involved.

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