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CONF/DOC NO 9

Drug

CONFERENCE ON STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

OCTOBER, 27 - 29, 1969

RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LIBERIA

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LIBERIA

1. BACKGROUND

During the last two decades, the need for development has become fashionable. For the first time in human history, the leaders of all nations have during this period, in one way or the other, not only talked but also sought ways and means of promoting and maintaining development. International forums, typified by the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies, put teeth into this world-wide need by the establishment of the First Development Decade. At the time of writing, their world opinion, international development institutions and resources are being mobilized for the Second Development Decade.

One consequential question which in the last decade has haunted and provoked many minds is not so much the need for development but how to develop. The nature, the purposes, the scope, the measurability and the modus operandi of development have received considerable attention and consideration.

Often, however, many seem to nurse comfort in rising curves of aggregative and per capita indices of growth. We hear of impressive annual increases of gross domestic product. For Liberia the recent annual growth is of the order of 5 to 6 percent. We are told by national accounts technicians that per capita gross domestic product is gradually rising. For

Liberia that figure in 1968 stood at \$153.00. We observe annual increases in the volume and in some cases the value of exports. For Liberia, the value of merchandise exports was \$169 million in 1968 compared to \$155.5 million in 1967.

We could continue endlessly piling up economic and social indicators to support the view that on the average the country as a whole is doing well in the field of development. The truth is that such averages are specious and grossly misleading. Indeed, such impressive growth figures may not constitute development in the broadest sense.

One typical and common example may be given to illustrate the delusion of impressive rising aggregative data that may not truly represent general broad-based economic and social development. From the iron ore mining industry, the Liberian economy generated in 1967 wealth valued at \$84.4 million. Out of this wealth only \$22.8 million represented wealth accruing to the Government of Liberia and its people. What is more the iron ore mining industry, which also contributed in the same year 72.5 percent of the value of all merchandise exports, employed only 8,852 Liberians and contributed only 21 percent of Government domestic revenues.

Hence the rather exaggerated question may be asked. If an industry, the iron ore mining industry, which in 1968 had a gross plant and equipment valued at \$419 million and exporting \$118.5 million worth of ore provided only 21 percent of Government revenues, employed only about 9,000 Liberians, then

what is its impact on the large masses of the people as a whole? For, the critical test of development is the extent of the impact on a very broad segment of the population. This often brings us to the heart of the concept and meaning of development.

2. WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT

In the foregoing we have sought to uncover the notion that pockets of productive achievement, as important as they are, may represent only growth. It has the attribute of isolated, narrow skewed achievement. It is like the heavily muscled impressive youngman having the least ingredients of intelligence, drive and the sense of responsibility and of compassion for the less privileged.

The concept of development in its meaningful sense may, for purposes of simplicity, practicability and pointedness, be compared to the concept of development of the body. Such development covers the full spectrum of the state of the mind, the personality and the body itself as a whole.

Similarly, the simile is stretchable to the development of the economy as a whole. Indeed, if there is any arrangement of orders of priorities in meaningful terms of impact on the ordinary peoples for whom development is dedicated, then that priority number one goal is the development programs and projects that transform the lives of the majority of the people into better and improved standards and levels of living. Such activities, such exertions that generate palpable, tangible impact on

the lives of ordinary people constitute balanced development. It is also the critical test of peaceful, orderly, meaningful development.

3. WHY RURAL DEVELOPMENT

At the outset, one notion must be discredited. It is the notion that urbanization is evil. It is not. For thousands of years, urban centers and cities have been the cradle, the generators, the spring board of civilization. In these centers, typified in ancient times by Babylon, Athens, Rome and Venice, in modern times by London and New York, the Arts, Science, Commerce and Industry were given the patronizing fillip and promotion. Thus in Liberia, no implication is assumed that urban development is either evil or opposed to rural development. They are rather complementary and necessary.

However, the view is held in these that, for Liberia, rural development is decisive and critical in order to promote and maintain balanced broad-based development. You will kindly permit us to briefly give the reasons.

The first reason is demographic. About 19 percent of the total population of about 1.2 million live in areas that may loosely be described as urban. In other words 81 percent of the population live in areas that may be regarded rural. It is this bulk, composed of children, boys, girls, men and women, the potential cream of our population - that live in the large expanses of land beyond the not more than six urban localities. In these rural

areas, despite great efforts during the past two decades, a very great number of villages are reached only on foot. Most of the economically active are engaged in daily distasteful pursuits which barely keep them existing, not talking about living. They spend most of their time using the cutlass to produce food that is unfavourably disproportion to the efforts expended and the time consumed. The women are confined to the drudgery of the home and the tasks on the farm associated with the hoe. Worse still, they have been ordained to provide the suckling care to the babies for at least one year although the dietary intake of the mothers is far from satisfactory. It is hardly expected that the children would aspire to anything better in their rural birth places than their parents. The majority of them collect water from the nearby creek, carry firewood from the farm and drive away birds on the rice farm.

Indeed, for most of the rural population, life is one of poverty, poor health for even easily curable diseases, and belief that sooner or later their unrewarding sweat will be terminated by the Creator. Economic activities are to a very large extent ways of traditional life bequeathed to them and not considered means of prosperity in their given environment.

The justification for concerted development is to strike at the roots of despair, low production, low consumption, ignorance and preventable and curable poor health of the larger masses, who although presently constituting an ugly manpower

glut, are potentially the needed brains and the muscles for purposeful development.

There is also a second reason for rural development. It is political.

Liberia attained nationhood in 1847 when nationhood was unknown in West Africa. Historically, for several years after that momentous date, there existed a plural society. On one hand a segment who were born in America and their descendents and on the other the bulk of the nation who were joined by their immigrant brothers and sisters. For several years there existed suspicion and misunderstanding, in some cases leading to wars and strife. But gradually through intermarriage and other factors the two societies were welded together. During the incumbency of President Tubman, the Government, once and for all, enunciated and practised the Policy of Unification which is celebrated by a united people on May 14 of each year as Unification Day.

President Tubman has always shown by word and deed that all the peoples of this land are one people and are all equal citizens of one united nation. True to this philosophy very impressive measures have been taken by the Administration to improve the conditions in the rural areas. These measures include the construction of highways to link all the counties, and secondary roads, the establishment of high schools in all county headquarters as well as elementary schools in rural

towns and the development of hospitals and clinics in the rural areas.

But, despite these impressive measures, more intelligible social and political cohesion, stability and general prosperity of all the people of this nation would require, ever than before, far more greater attention to the general development of the rural areas. For the responsibilities attached rightfully to equal united citizens demand reasonably equal opportunities for decent living and enlightened participation and involvement in the development of this nation. On the citadel of improved living conditions, as have wisely been initiated by the Administration, lies the continued permanence of political stability and real social peace.

The third consideration is socio-economic. We have alluded earlier to the involuntary frustration of many of the rural populations, the low production and consumption patterns, the poverty, the ignorance, the preventable poor health and the uncharitable, ugly living conditions which for centuries continue to be the lot and experience of a very large proportion of our society, particularly in the rural areas.

The rural population contains the relatively larger population of our abled pool of manpower that has to be nursed to produce more and efficiently agricultural products to feed our necessarily increasing urban population and for exports. Increased productivity, improved marketing means for them larger incomes. Increasing incomes of the masses of the population

would imply **greater effective demand** for consumption goods and other amenities. With a small physically small total population such as ours, increase productivity of the masses matched by increased money incomes and consumption, would enlarge the economic size of the internal market due to increased effective demand. Evidently, from this point of view, if for no other reason, rural development, as conceived in this paper, has the potential of ensuring viability for secondary and tertiary industries which today are regarded uneconomic mainly because of the smallness of the physical size of the internal market.

Socially, also, rural development has the practical potential of actually welding and unifying all the people of the land, irrespective of where they live or happened to be born, into a land whose people have reasonably equal social opportunities. Indeed, among the thousands of children born in the rural areas today, provided the proper accelerated measures continue to be taken, will come the leaders, the professionals, the technicians, the business managers and technologists - to mention a few - of the future.

Finally, we summarize the reasons why rural development is the key to national development. First, the majority of our population live in the rural areas. Secondly, political and social cohesion and stability are assured where the people, both urban and rural, are as a whole healthy, educated and pros-

perous. Thirdly, increased productivity in the rural areas would promote increased incomes and increased consumption thereby enlarging the local market for manufacturing industries.

4. WHAT IS RURAL LIBERIA

The term "rural" is a relative term. It is variously used according to the purposes for which it is used. Demographers for example, consider an area rural on the basis of the population size of the locality. Thus rural may be considered as localities having less than 5,000, 10,000 or even 20,000 inhabitants. Others consider rural in terms of amenities, flush toilets, theaters, parks and supermarkets. Areas which do not have these amenities are regarded rural. There are still others who use the attribute of political status. Thus the political center of a country, however small the inhabitants, is regarded non-rural. Finally there are others who describe an area rural because the inhabitants are engaged mainly in agriculture.

For this paper, whatever the merits or demerits of each definitional approach, though important, are irrelevant and cannot be used here like a suit cut to wear.

What then is rural Liberia? For convenience and pertinence to our purposes, we prefer to determine first what is Urban Liberia. The balance of the country would then be considered rural.

In terms of political status, relative size of population, extent of the availability of amenities and economic activities, Monrovia, with a population of some 100,000, and Buchanan, with a population of an estimated 18,000, are considered urban.

On the basis of relative size and extent of amenities and employment opportunities, the following other seven localities are regarded urban: Harbel, Bomi Hills, Bong Mine, Firestone, Harper Plantation, Yekepa, Harper and the National Iron ore Mine.

The combined population of the foregoing urban localities is estimated at about 200,000, living in nine conglomerations occupying a few square miles.

Strictly speaking, therefore, it is apparent that out of an estimated population of Liberia of 1,200,000 only 200,000 or 17 percent are considered urban. The bulk of the total population, one million strong or 83 percent, are regarded rural. They inhabit by far the largest area of the 43,000 square miles of Liberia.

For our analysis, however, rural Liberia is dichotomised into rural towns represented by some 15 localities including six county headquarters. The total population of such rural towns is estimated at 80,000, inhabitants. The balance of the rural population, some 940,000, living in localities having less than 2,000 inhabitants is regarded rural villages. Interestingly, included in the rural villages are localities in which inhabit about 450,000 persons living in villages of 100

persons but less than 2,000. Most germane also is the fact that about 470,000, an ominous close to 40 percent of the total population of the whole country, live in villages having barely 100 inhabitants each!

This then is nakedly rural Liberia in the aggregative sense. The quantities involved are startling and foreboding. But they make us appreciate more deeply the challenging scope, dimension and nature of the rural elephantine backlog which we desire to transform and modernize.

5. THE CONDITIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The problems of rural development are real but they are solvable. Already growth and development in many sectors of the economy have generated ideal situations that satisfy the two elements of economic progress. By the process of "demonstration effect", rural towns and even to some extent rural villages are most importantly aware that their conditions are unsatisfactory. Secondly through the radio and members of their family returning home and by other means, rural communities are also aware that it has been possible to change the living conditions of people in other parts of the country, notably in the urban areas and to a limited extent in the rural towns. Thus, contrary to general acceptance in many circles, the people in the rural communities are today by and large "economic individuals". They know that their unsatisfactory living conditions are changeable for the better just as those of their relatives

and friends in the urban communities.

The third element in the mechanics of economic progress is that the needs of rural transformation are many and countless; and we, the Government, the local leaders as well as the rural leaders must of necessity be able to make reasonably rational choices for achieving the goals and purposes inherent in integrating the rural areas into a comprehensive balanced productive national economy. This is the ingredient of priorities. In the sequel, analysis will be made of the priorities for rural development.

The fourth condition to economic progress is that all of us, including the rural people themselves, must be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices required by real social and economic rural development. The rural people must, for example, be helped to see the need for choosing between the use of new agricultural techniques, sheer hard work and on the other hand clinging to traditional, age-long agricultural cultural practices and desultory, inefficient activities which have not yielded attractive rewards. They must be guided to produce efficiently, for example, more chickens and eggs while at the same time being persuaded to eat more eggs. In such efforts are involved not only crucial choices and what may appear to most urban dwellers not sacrifices. They are the simple disciplines and socio-cultural sacrifices which are basic conditions for real development. Some rural people do not eat eggs except on festive occasions or for ceremonies. For purposes of development, they will have to be weaned to produce and to eat more eggs, the source of protein

required for the maintenance of good health. These are typical simple examples to illustrate the type of choices and sacrifices required by development. We must first take care of the simple but consequential things. In due course we will be able to take care of the big things.

6. THE STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

How to develop the rural economy and its people into healthy, educated, prosperous and contented people is, besides other factors, a problem of strategy, which must be explained in terms of the most effective modus operandi for achieving change and progress. We organise such strategy around four integrated areas of priorities: (a) Research and training, (b) infrastructural development (c) agricultural development and (d) functional education.

(a) Research and Training:

The area of rural development has still many socio-economic-cultural unknowns. For many rural communities life as a whole is philosophically conceived as one predestined and ordained by the Creator and man must resign himself to perpetuate practices bequeathed to him through generations.

The cardinal tasks then of research are threefold. First, to understand the strengths and weaknesses of these age-long practices. Secondly, to find the techniques to motivate such strengths towards the lofty height that man can change his given

environment, his living conditions and the purposes of life. To give one illustration. Our rural farmers know that a burnt high forest farm produces better rice crop. They have reasons for selecting in the first place high forest for a farm. Also they certainly do not know the name of the chemical that burning in place deposits on the topsoil. Such knowledge surely provides a favorable clue for extension work techniques for motivation in the use of fertilizers.

Now, thirdly, research must have the function of shrewdly channelling the traditional weaknesses along intelligible lines into understandable profitable activities. An example may be given. Most of our farmers prefer upland rice cultivation. For centuries there has been no problem about the availability of good forested upland areas for rice cultivation. Where the forest lands are getting farther and farther away, they leave the cultivated land for some eight years for topsoils to be improved. After this period of fallow, the land is cleared again for the cultivation of rice. Today we know that such practice is wasteful on all grounds. It destroys our forest. It unnecessarily entails annual arduous preparation of new land. It destroys our soils because of erosion. Certainly, such culture is not very productive. The task of research is not only to prove, but to demonstrate that with less resources, the same farmer can produce larger quantities of rice by swamp rice cultivation. That is the only intelligible way of showing the naturally resisting rural farmer that productivity pays.

So we regard in this paper research not in the academic sense of delving into such abstruse areas as exotic anthropological phenomena of the society for academic audiences. We consider research in the applied sense to solve practical problems for rural improvement. We place top priority to functional research.

Nor do we consider that research work terminates with observation and conclusions. This is beautiful, ineffectual ivory tower research. We stoutly disparage it. We would want the results of research work to be transmuted into real, practicable pilot projects. We are not thinking of research that merely prescribes didactic conclusions from controlled experimentation that a variety of rice seed, a formula of fertilizer, a few improved hand implements are adapted and usable in rural Liberian conditions. We give priority to the research which also puts these conclusions and results into practice in the form of pilot schemes without the paraphernalia of controlled experimentation, bull-dozers, complex planting and harvesting machines beyond the means and intelligibility of the hesitant traditional rural farmer. In the pilot activities, we would want the use of a few ordinary near-by farmers to be involved in order to test their reactions, their capability and their interest.

Obviously and naturally, the pilot project, conceived at the level of the ordinary farmer, may reveal weaknesses. This

is a blessing. It facilitates feed-back reconsideration of techniques, further wiser research and provides invaluable material for training. Subsequently the pilot project is repeated. If the pilot project proves successful, which we must be prepared to regard usually a stroke of luck, the purposes of functional research would considerably have warranted our hopes, efforts and support.

Bearing in mind relative inputs and outputs, even when the pilot project can be applied by the ordinary farmer, we do not support the view that the tasks of research are over. The workers involved in the applied research and the pilot project should guide and participate in action projects, which may further provoke feed-back and induce continual improved techniques to maximize the output of the farmer at the least input cost.

We deliberately link research to training. Research in the sense advocated in these pages is mainly a process of learning. Whatever the qualifications and experience of the senior research workers, they would be immodest, indeed dangerous, if they claimed they were not learning. The truth is that they learn and will learn each day. Research should be the fertile ground for training of workers for rural development.

Let us illustrate our approach by a real illustration. The Government of Liberia, supported by the US Government, is considering the establishment of a Rural Development Center,

where research for rural development will be conducted.

Most of the senior research workers may or will for a number of years be expatriate personnel. Counterparts will be provided. Such counterpart relationship results in mutual learning and in a way of training. (For in line with external assistance, the Liberian research counterparts are expected to eventually shoulder the research functions.) Working with the expatriates and the counterparts will be junior research workers who would sooner or later, through on-the-job and overseas training, join the ranks of full research personnel.

Further, as an integral part of research and training institution building, research workers would organize their work in such a way that classroom training will be provided by the research personnel at Cuttington College, whose grounds the Center will be located. The gifted students with the proper aptitudes would be selected for special training in the various phases of rural development. These would provide the core of dedicated leg workers in research, pilot projects and actual farmer guidance work. Incidentally, the University of Liberia is also hoped to be so oriented that students, particularly from the College of Agriculture and Forestry, would be selected for such rural development-biased careers.

Research and training, therefore, is considered by us a decisive condition to rural emancipation and transformation. In this endeavor, we have the multiple marriage embracing the

functional acquisition of knowledge, rule of thumb practice, guidance of and participation in the production and marketing activities of ordinary farmers whose lives we want to help to improve generally. Running across the marriage is the pervading training function.

The spectrum for research for rural development is surely limitless. But we choose in this paper to suggest twenty illustrative sensitive points and areas:

1. Why the existing agricultural cultural practices?
2. Methodology, techniques, size, attributes, logistic requirements, the special objectives, training, practical demonstration materials and work conditions of agricultural extension work.
3. The extent of Government assistance or credit facilities to serious-minded farmers in the form of seeds, small improved hand implements, fertilisers, transportation facilities, etc.
4. Storage and marketing of farmers' produce.
5. Price structure of farm produce and competing imports.
6. Swamp rice technology at the level of the ordinary farmer.
7. Proper incentives for increased productivity.
8. Land tenure
9. Education in rural areas, including the possibilities of television.
10. Functional off-season rewarding activities for farmers.

11. Suitable local government institutions to foster and maintain rural development.
12. Possibilities of small agro-industries.
13. Road construction and maintenance in rural areas.
14. Meaningful types of community development projects for rural communities.
15. Proper types of self-help projects in rural areas.
16. Taxation in rural areas.
17. Techniques for mobilizing rural savings.
18. The adaptation of the cooperative movement to rural communities.
19. How best to use World Food Program resources for rural development.
20. Statistical reporting on rural development indicators.

(b) Infrastructural Development

"Infrastructure" is used in the paper to refer not only to the construction and maintenance of highways, secondary roads, feeder roads and transport generally but also communication, light and power, water and sewer.

The role, the contribution of infrastructure to general development, is as crucial as the arteries are to the human body. Indeed, it is no accident that we hear of "arterial" roads. New frontiers of wealth are reachable and the wealth exploited and consumed only through the vehicle of roads. Without burdening the subject, one illustration will suffice to support the case that transport facilities are an essential catalytic generators of economic growth. A few miles of secondary roads constructed during 1967 a forest concession area induce the exportation of logs from 496,300 cubic feet in 1968.

But the role of roads in rural transformation is most decisive. Efforts for improved productivity and increased production necessarily imply the transportation of the produce from the rural villages to rural towns for marketing. From these rural towns must also be transported back to the rural villages the consumption goods, supplies and materials on which the increased income of the rural communities is spent. Development, unlike isolated spasmodic growth, encompasses the whole gamut of production and consumption by different communities, which are facilitated by an integrated transportation and communications network linking in a convenient mutual relationship the producer and the consumer.

Hence if we have the desire for the need of rural transformation, we must provide far greater resources than we have ever done towards the construction and maintenance of transportation and communication facilities in the rural areas to instrumentalize the real integration of the Liberian economy into a single comprehensive whole. For the lack of an integrated network of roads in the rural areas has dwarfed the real contributions of the rural areas towards the creation of nations wealth.

Light and power are equally important. The relatives and friends in urban areas visit their people in the rural areas. They tell their people of the convenience and simplicity of "putting on the electric light" by the touch of the finger.

Our rural dwellers have for centuries, of necessity, spent nights in rooms lighted by smocking wick hanging in a bottle or tin containing palm oil or, if luckily, kerosene. The demonstration effect to the rural people is disheartening. The rural village people in this way are obliged to feel that the benefits of this land are denied them.

We have ardently advocated that agricultural modernization is the priority number one in the scheme of rural emancipation. For in the wake of increased production of agricultural commodities and enlarged rural incomes, there is the corollary of potential increased effective demand for manufactured goods, such as furniture, a good number of them, with proper indicative planned efforts, must be supplied by the development of agro-industries, whose wheels must be turned by power. But power to produce electric light in the hitherto smoky rooms of the rural people would produce a magical impact that language cannot adequately describe but only the heart could feel.

Earlier, we made a distinction between rural towns and rural villages. In terms of allocation of national financial resources, we would place great priority on the provision of safe pipe-borne drinking water and sewer to rural towns, most of which are our County and District headquarters. The point is clear that priority consideration is needed for safe drinking water and sewer for our rural towns. The multiplier demonstration effect on the people in the rural villages will induce

an impact for motivating and stimulating them towards the construction of simple community water purification projects in the rural villages, whose people are presently infested with health-sapping worms of all types.

The prophylactic role of good, safe, not necessarily expensive drinking water, as opposed to expensive curative measures, can hardly be emphasized. Traditionally, the villages are usually cleaner than our urban areas and sewerage is the problem of the urban and to a less extent in the rural towns, but certainly not in the rural villages.

(c) Agricultural Development

The third ingredient in our integrated attack on rural stagnation and despair is the all-out modernization of agriculture. Palpable improvement in agriculture is the most meaningful measurable criterion of real progress in the rural communities whose lives are tied to the land and the fruits of the land.

In the developing countries there seems to be a disproportionate penchant for spectacular industrial growth. This seems to be natural; but it is misguided. Very often the bulk of the raw materials are imported in order to establish manufacturing industries. More often such dazzling prestigious industrial projects are erected at the expense of increased agricultural, particularly food, production. In such circumstances, balance of payments disequilibria become the fashionable agonizing affliction of Governments. Of course, we are not arguing here that industrial advancement should be neglected. What we are strongly cautioning

against is the argument that the developed countries are more prosperous because of their industrial progress. Ipso facto, the argument continues, the developing countries will ensure prosperity by industrial growth. Such deductive argument is fallacious and dangerous.

For historically economic progress meaningfully springs from and mutually reacts on the strong foundations of agricultural progress. We often hear and read about the Industrial Revolution of England beginning the second half of the 18th century. We hardly hear of the initial earlier fundamental progress in agricultural techniques. Indeed, England had an agricultural revolution before an Industrial Revolution. That agricultural revolution was less noise, it was a quiet modernization of land use and improved culture. The truth is that generally, industrial revolutions are the sequel and sustaining extensions of economic progress, the genesis of which is a "Green Revolution", that is, agricultural modernization. One can hardly sensibly talk of industrial growth without the sound establishment of a spring-board of a modernized agricultural sector.

For Liberia, the bulk of whose population live in rural communities tied by fate to agriculture, the very serious attention which the sector requires and demands can hardly be ~~over-emphasized~~. Agricultural modernization, fully buttressed by comprehensive integrated infrastructural base and improved marketing facilities, would lead to the following results,

(a) increased production, (b) improved productivity of land and

human power, (c) enlarged incomes and (d) increased consumption of goods and services. This circle of gradual improvement would continually generate itself into higher planes of improvement and progress.

Increased production of food crops and tree crops will mean greater supply of food to feed the urban communities as well as promoting greater quantities of raw agricultural crops for exports. It will also provide the conditions for the development of manufacturing industries, based on agricultural raw materials, for domestic consumption, not mentioning the possibilities for exports of such manufactured products.

Improved productivity of land and labor in agriculture will in the long run lead to steadily stable prices to the advantage of the whole economy. Historically, production efficiency would eventually result in falling prices. But since the manpower generating system will continue to make demands on the bulk of manpower in the rural areas, the number of agricultural workers will progressively fall in order to be channelled into other economic activities. Hence eventually effective demand for agricultural products will increase, thus ensuring stable prices to the advantage of farmers whose incomes would thereby rise.

Increased incomes resulting from rising productivity would lead to greater consumption of goods and services in the rural areas thereby raising their standard of living, which is the objective of development. For consumption of better balanced foods is the surest indirect way of improving the general health of the people.

Finally, full paid employment in the urban areas today stands at an unimpressive figure of about 100,000. Significantly half of this total paid employment is engaged in the rubber industry. As far as one can see, the nearest future does not hold promise for any large additional employment in these areas. Mining, despite its large creation of wealth, is capital-intensive. The exploitation of iron ore and possibly other ores will not significantly add a large number of our abled labor to paid employment. Manufacturing which is still in its bare infancy does not in the nearest future hold prospects for increased employment. Such forecast on paid employment opportunities is applicable to many other sectors.

It is apparent, therefore, that for several years to come, the bulk of our population will continue to live on the land in the rural areas. Hence it is imperative that we give the greatest attention to agricultural modernization and general rural development. It is in this area that will decisively determine the extent of our ability to fight the war against poverty, want, despair, diseases and ignorance.

(d) Functional Education

The fourth strategic integrated approach to rural development is that of education.

In this paper we do not pretend to hide the conscious and determined bias of regarding education as an across-the-board pervading catalytic motive force for all-out development

of the rural areas. We use it in the strictly functional sense to promote and sustain attitudinal changes and frontal preparation of our youth for rural transformation. Nor do we consider education in the limited sense of the classroom. We stretch the educational apparatus to embrace the inculcation and practice of new improved agricultural techniques and technology in the garden at the school and at the backgrounds of our illiterate women, in the swamps areas and in the rural villages. We include the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by mothers in child care and family health in the purification of rural water and in improved dietary practices. We expand the concept of education - the learning process and the application of the acquired knowledge - to cover every aspect of rural change and rural development. Our definition is limitless.

Now, let us make an attempt to describe the existing educational system in order to make progress for the future.

Although the formal educational system is supposed to be supervised by educated personnel, statistics on it are paradoxically poor in coverage and quality. Hence it is difficult and even impossible to make meaningful analysis of the existing situation. We therefore resign ourselves to the use of general impressions on the relevant features of the system.

The quality of urban schools, particularly most of those in Monrovia, is known to be superior to that in rural towns. The quality of rural villages is regarded very poor. Faced by the ugly, distasteful difficult conditions in the rural

areas, the enterprising rural youth, most of them well advanced in age, stream to Monrovia in search of the magic wand of education. Waiting lists in reasonably good schools keep longer and longer each semester and each year. Some of the rural youth find themselves in equally poor schools in Monrovia. In their frustration most of them begin to look for work which they have had no training and preparation. Youth delinquency becomes the natural escape route to the unsatisfied hopes of the rural immigrant youths.

With the assumption that rural schools are the weakest in content, materials and guidance, one is provoked to make the intelligent guess, in the face of the average passing results of the National Examinations for the period 1963 - 1968:

PERCENT PASSING IN THE NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS, 1963-1968

Subject	12 Grade	9th Grade	6th Grade
Mathematics	26	14	12
Science	29	19	20
Social Science ..	39	29	30
Language Arts ...	44	37	27

According to the Report of the National Examination Board, "although the average percent of students and pupils passing the National Examination percent is depressingly small, it is even more distressing to see that the lower the level the weaker the system." 1/

1/ The National Examination Board Report 1968, page 3

The irresistible conclusion is that the rural formal educational system must be deplorably very poor. For many obvious reasons, including the provision of congenial quality education to arrest the annual exodus of rural youth to urban areas, we strongly advocate the development of formal education incentive to wonder to urban areas because of his lack of faith in the quality of education in the rural schools. Good teachers should be provided the incentives to teach in rural areas. We are thinking of special "rural allowance to good teachers in rural schools. Equally, improved teaching materials and facilities should be provided the rural schools. For the exodus from and drop-out in rural schools constitute a waste of our youth resources.

The second unfavorable feature of the educational system, and, indeed, of the society is the acceptance that the acquisition of a diploma in a formal school is a passport for any kind of employment. We have seen each week in Monrovia young girls looking for filing clerk jobs. They are sure that their education is to prepare them for clerical work in the urban areas. The educational system is, to use the Biblical parable, is an old bottle into which we are pouring new wine. Its content, its purposes in terms of development needs complete reconsideration, revamping and change. The Rural Development Center and the Teacher Training Colleges have a challenge to bend education to the needs of development.

Liberia is preponderantly rural and agricultural. The educational system (used in the widest sense in these pages) should be biased towards the preparation of a large number of our youth for

productive activities in agriculture and rural economic modernization. Reconsideration is urgently needed to determine the skills needed for rural transformation, to guide our youth in the acquisition of such skills and to promote and maintain the conditions and incentives for the use of such skills for an efficient, productive rural economy.

To summarize. The strategy for rural modernization is the total all-out effort to achieve general balanced national prosperity and stability. We advocate a broad-based, interdisciplinary, integrated priority consideration in four areas. These key areas are (a) functional research, (b) infrastructural investments, (c) agricultural modernization and (d) functional education in the rural areas where by far the largest bulk of our precious human resources live in despair, poverty, disease-ridden and in dark ignorance.

7. A TECHNIQUE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In the foregoing pages, we have pointedly maintained that the extent of the success in development is determined by the extent we fulfil four conditions. We repeat these conditions. First, there must be the awareness that the unsatisfactory conditions can be changed for the better. Thirdly, there are alternative ways of achieving the desired goals. We of necessity must select the techniques and choices that meaningfully motive our people and induce their enthusiastic participation

for development. We should not import techniques; we may adopt them to our needs. We may even invent them. We have to "invent" our development. Finally, all sections of the nation, leaders as well as the masses, technicians as well as the workers, must be prepared to accept that development requires and demands sacrifices in order to achieve the wanted goals of national reliance, hope and general prosperity.

Rural development, in the real meaningful sense, cannot be achieved unless and until these attitudinal disciplines are instilled and maintained by all of us including the masses whose conditions we determine to improve. The most imaginative, fervent and compassionate leadership does not in itself automatically, ensure improvement in the conditions of the masses. Development requires the equal and mutual participation and involvement of the masses and all the sections of the society.

The key therefore for opening the doors for rural progress lies in the technique of "Animation Rural." There is no equivalent English word with the connotation of these French words. It implies the conscious awakening, the deep-rooted mental concession, the attitudinal stimulation that rural development is to a large extent the business, the willing involvement and the voluntary participation of the rural people themselves.

This brings us to the problem of the often asked strickly

question: Development by whom? We strongly disabuse the technique, the practice that development is the business, the concern, the responsibility of only the Central Government, Government Departments or Government officials. Successful development is the joint venture of the leadership and the society itself. It implies of course, in the early stages leadership, guidance, inducement and stimulation from the top of the political, technical hierarchy down along the rungs and from the bottom upwards. Erroneously, often the location of a school, a road, a clinic, a pilot demonstration agricultural project is determined on the basis of blue prints of Government offices in the capital town often without consultation with the local leaders and the people and without their understanding of the need for them let alone the involvement of the local leaders and their people. This is surely arrogance; it is a development approach whereby we put a cart behind and in front of the horse. The horse can hardly move. And this illustrates the reasons why Governments spends large sums of scarce resources on development projects which always fail to have impact on the lives of the people. They are white elephant projects imposed on the people. Doubtless, these projects fail. In Liberia, examples are the abedin project, the Rural Area Development (RAD) project, the Rice Zone Project and the Fundamental Education Project in Klay. In such circumstance it is wonder that we find rather development of stagnation, inertia and passiveness.

We cannot describe all the organizational aspects of "Animation Rural". We approach the technique and fervently hope that research work at the future Rural Development Center at Cuttington will develop and implement the idea in detail.

We conceive the development of the spirit and the technique of "Animation Rural" in the following manner. First, immediate research should be conducted to determine, under Liberian rural conditions, the techniques for motivating the rural people to do the things that have to be done in order for them to achieve and improvement in their living conditions. Also the types of pedagogical and other subject-matter. Skills required for such motivation and stimulation; the aptitudes and skill preparation of a hard core of dedicated personnel to trigger the first shots of the spirit of "Animation Rural" against rural misery, frustration, poverty, disease and backwardness. Such effort will require our advocated marriage between functional research, pilot activity and training as well as follow-up.

Once these have been determined, we carefully select the first corps of, for lack of a satisfactory English term, "Animateurs". The crowning of our technique with success will surely call in the subsequent use of female Animateurs, that is, "Animatrice".

The training of the Animateurs is critical. It should be interdisciplinary, broad-based and integrated. The Animateurs should be considered and they must regard themselves missionaries

and evangelists, in the literal Biblical sense, for rural motivation and stimulation. They are a kind of Peace Corps in the modern J.F. Kennedy sense. Indeed, we may call them Rural Development Corps.

Their first test activity, after proper contacts convenient to the leaders and their Elders of the community, is a scheduled visit by a group of Animateurs to say a clan headquarter or any meaningfully determined focal point. The Animateurs would explain to the people the concept, the objectives of Animation Rurale. It is a technique, a spirit to motivate the rural people for rural development. Among others, a sustained dialogue would be maintained to find out what the people themselves consider areas whose improvement would produce rural transformation. The dialogue should not of the type between a government official and local people. We have in mind the approach of a David Livingston and his would-be converts. The Animateurs would list these needs according to orders of priorities or integrated priorities, bearing in mind the three action strategic areas specified in this paper. But the Animateurs should listen to the needs of the people as given by them. The Animateurs may discuss with the leaders, for example, the net advantages of swamp rice culture over upland rice cultivation. After exhausting the stimulation, at least to the extent of the awareness of the local people for the need to change and the sacrifices involve, assurance would be given that their needs would be further

discussed in detail with the proper agencies.

Let us assume that the local leaders and their Elders consider that swamp rice cultivation or a road or a school or a clinic is wanted by the.

The Animateurs would report the results of the dialogue to the Department of Planning and Economic Affairs, the development coordinating agency of the Central Government and the National Committee for Rural Development. The Department would then discuss the needs with the relevant Departments together, the Animateurs participating. Out of these coordinated discussions, an integrated development strategy for the rural community would involve. The strategy, of course, would include an interdisciplinary technical reconnaissance and follow-up to the area. At each stage in the reconnaissance activity are involved the Animateurs and the leaders of the rural community.

The Animateurs would then return to the community and discuss the strategy to the people. Then the reconnaissance team would follow.

Out of these activities, a mutually agreed strategy, in which the local rural people participated to formulate, would become a project for that rural community. Once this point is reached a Center for rural stimulation, "Centre d'Animation", headed by a crack Animateur, is established. The Centre d'Animation becomes the physical,

mental, technical heart of the rural transformation of that specific area. The Centre combines the qualities of humanity and understanding of the people and the environment in order to mobilize the energies, the hopes and ferrouer of the people for change and improvement. In this Center, future Animateurs who originate from that community may be assigned after their training as junior or counterpart Animateurs. Together, they would arrange local training programs for teachers, farmers, town chiefs and so forth in the spirit of "Animation Rurale". In this way more local missionaries are produced; they trainees in term continue and spread the gospel of Animation Rurale. This process would go on until the whole population is imbued with the need, conditions and objectives and the strategy for rural transformation. And side by side with them are the assigned extension workers, the teachers, the road construction supervisors, the nurses and all rural workers, all motivated and dedicated towards one goal: Rural Improvement.

The final form that this idea will take and the details of the concept can naturally not be adequately detailed in these pages. It will await immediate research and pilot activity.

Finally, the conclusion is clear. Rural Liberia has its traditions, values, strengths and weaknesses. It is the total sum of centuries of experience formation. But since the thirties and particularly during the present

Administration, it has increasingly been exposed in various degrees by the phenomenon of demonstration effect to the glamor of a new way of life, that based on the money nexus. It is hardly able to continue to escape disintegration. Some of the enterprising youth from the traditional rural societies will keep on finding themselves in new urban environments. Traditional rural Liberia will disintegrate. It is in the state of contradiction. On one hand it is emotionally clinging to forms of life which is continuously being invaded by foreign forces; on the other hand it is naturally hesitant and halting in its acceptance of the new ways of life. A vacuum, stretching from passive hostility and auto-conservation to complete absorption and integration by the new development process measurable in terms of living standards is each day being created. To fill this apparently widening confused vacuum, we need a new spirit, an invention, a challenging technique to guide and motivate the strength of the ageing traditional society, while canalizing the hostile, hesitant weaknesses into meaningfully intelligible activities for the general prosperity of the rural communities. In doing so, the leadership, the corps of well-trained dedicated workers in rural motivation should not shy to make use of modern science and technology. We mean the possibilities of mass media, including the radio, the moving picture, the television. We mean simple but

improved agricultural technology. We mean new cheaper ways of constructing and maintaining roads. We need challenging innovation. We need bolder but humane measures. We need the accumulated world-wide heritage of the application of science and technology.

8. THE FINANCE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

From the point of view of the financing of rural development, many would raise brows. Such reaction is regarded by us natural but unjustifiable and defeatist.

We unashamedly and strongly advocate that absolutely and relatively more resources, ever than before, should be committed for rural development. Such development would be the salvation and the panacea of our economic and social ills.

We give an example in one single area to illustrate the levels of resources which real vigorous effectual rural development would imply.

There are some 250,000 farm households in the rural areas. But presently there are no more than 100 agricultural extension workers reasonably well equipped and prepared in the whole country. Their work conditions are generally characterized by incentives far from satisfactory. Worse still some of them, although regarded as agricultural extension workers, are really known to be interpreters.

Now the sobering and startling implication of these cold figures is that this nation is expecting one hardly dedicated agricultural extension worker to help to improve the agricultural activities of 25,000 farm households. It may be wondered whether we are not expecting too much from the existing number and quality of agricultural extension workers. The truth is that we seem to be. If this is the cold naked truth, then we cannot achieve any significant change and impact on the majority of our rural population. The unavoidable stark fact is that assuming that in the difficult Liberian environment a good, trained, dedicated and reasonably well rewarded agricultural extension worker can humanly generate agricultural change among 250 farm households composed of about one thousand persons, we will need no less than 1,000 well trained, animated agricultural extension workers for serious rural transformation. Assuming again that the trained agricultural extension worker, who is no inferior to ordinary clerks in urban areas receiving higher income, is provided an annual regular income of \$1,200. The total minimum salary bill per year would be \$1,200.00.

From this simple illustrative example, the relevant question naturally may be asked: Where are we going to get the money from?

Our answer is that it is a problem of public finance, the vigorous harnessing and conservation of resources for productive and transformational development.

Briefly, however, we would like to give a few constructive and provocative suggestions.

In its barest essentials, there are two fundamental resources or factors for development. They are Man of whom we have an apparent glut and the Environment which nature has kindly endowed this land. Man creates capital. Man creates finance.

Hence our first proposal is that with the will and the ability to really develop, we must find ways and means of exploiting capital in this primary sense from our glut of manpower. It would need spirited animation and motivation of the masses. Our large underemployed manpower can, with little training and with little equipment and enlightened supervision, be harnessed to be placed on rural road construction and maintenance and useful community projects, such as schools, clinics, play grounds, parks and afforestation. The infrastructural result is capital in the real sense.

In the creation of such infrastructure, we have for our support and use the "Capital" of the United Nations in the form of food assistance under the World Food Program to feed the workers. From this source also can be exploited the vital resources of improved seeds and simple farm implements for the rural population.

The problem that haunts many of us is that we are too used to the traditional assumption of, for example, construction and maintenance of roads, often under contract to a foreign company or by the Department of Public Works costing several

thousands of dollars per mile. We need a total change in our ways of doing things. We must be prepared to learn to make full use of our abled men and even women to create real capital out of them. They need the feeder roads and they must be motivated to construct and maintain them by their own hands. The Central Government then conserves its resources for supervision and logistic support to help the rural people to do those things themselves which will in the shortest time will bring improvement in their lives.

There is also a second area where attention for its possibilities towards development does not seem to have been seriously given. It is the development of proper institutions to mobilize savings on a national scale.

There are at present seven commercial banks in Liberia. Six of them are all foreign-owned and of course foreign-managed. One commercial bank is Liberian owned and managed. It is The Bank of Liberia. All the seven banks have been located in Monrovia. Recently, however, pioneering efforts by the Bank of Liberia has led to the establishment by three commercial banks of seven out-of-Monrovia branches.

Certainly, the number and the type of institutions in the country regarding the mobilization of personal savings from within the country are not geared to the needs of development.

It is true that incomes of a large number of our population are low. But it is also true that even in the towns and

particularly in the rural areas people, notoriously women, prefer to hoard silver coins and notes under their beds and in the roof of their houses. Savings for development involves the tapping and even exorcizing to the maximum by every possible means and ingenuity the few dollars of silver coins and notes. The women-folk, the old ladies, the old men in the rural areas all hoard money, in some cases burying the coins. We should motivate all of them to place such money in institutions in which they will be motivated to have confidence and whose need they will be stimulated to appreciate and support. Such mobilization of small individual coins and notes by honest institutions accepted by the ordinary masses is the crux of development financing. Assuming that on the average each individual in the rural areas would "save" one dollar a year, to be most modest, we would have squeezed \$1,000,000 from the masses in the rural areas. A good portion of such financial resources would then be invested by the savings institutions in Government securities. By such efforts, the Government increasingly be able to raise funds from within for development.

The type of savings institutions suitable for Liberia cannot be detailed in these pages. Some amount of research will be necessary. But two facts are clear. The existing commercial banks may not have the will nor the capacity to extend savings opportunities to a large portion of our masses. The commercial banking is also too sophisticated and cannot easily be adapted to the needs of the masses for

for development.

We may, however, suggest the possibilities of the Post Office Savings Banks and Credit Societies which are popularly adapted in other parts of Africa. The Post Office Savings Bank System has two clear advantages. The development of Post Office facilities in all parts of the country would have an impact on communications generally. Adapting the British System, which permits businessmen to run Post Office Savings Banks along with their business, has great possibilities. Secondly, resulting from the adaptation of the British innovation, it will relatively be less difficult to expand the usual Post Office facilities *pari passu* with the development of Post Office Savings Banks, in the first instance in all urban towns, rural towns, and District Headquarters and, gradually to all Clan Headquarters and other large rural villages. Even heads of rural schools and pastors of churches might be considered not only for the motivation of the masses through their children and church members but also for part-time employment, after training and other preparation, as managers of post offices with savings facilities.

Indeed, in the area of small financial resource national mobilization, the Church and other local institutions should be considered healthy institutions for the motivation of the people towards the need for small savings.

This proposal, within the framework of the four strategic priority areas for rural development, will undoubtedly have real practical problems and difficulties. But with the will and the ability to innovate, a way suitable for Liberia can be found.

There is a second proposal. The fiscal institutions and practices regarding the rural people were conceived and established at a time when the nation was concerned with mere existence. For example, the Hut Tax was established by President King in the early twenties as a fiscal measure to involve the rural people in the upkeep of the Central Government. The Hut Tax, as the name implies, is a tax on the hut, since it was and is still difficult to place the incidence of the tax on individuals in the rural areas. In 1968 the intake from this tax was \$500,000.

Recently, linked with the Hut tax have been the Education Emergency Relief Tax and the Development Tax in the rural areas.

From the twenties up to this time the intake of such taxes in the rural areas has been channelled into the coffer of the Central Government. The size of the intake of these taxes from a particular rural community is not necessarily reflected in the size of expenditures by the Central Government in that rural community.

Rural development, and, for that matter general social and economic development, implies, in a free, united, integrated

society, the maintenance and application of self-reliance, initiativeness, self-respect, total involvement and knowledgeable voluntary participation of all the sections of the society.

It may be wondered whether at this time we should not consider the adaptation of such fiscal experience for rural transformation. Firstly, it appears timely that all these ad hoc fiscal measures tied to the Hut Tax should be consolidated into a Rural Development Tax or just a Development Tax. Secondly, the siphoning of all tax payments in the rural areas into the Central Treasury appears unhealthy and out-of-date. We advocate a structure and system of taxation which leaves a large portion of the revenue to the rural local government for local rural development. In the early stages, experimentation, supervision, training and guidance from the Central Government would be necessary. But in the long-run, probably a few years from now, it will be possible for the local administrations, in line with the Animation Rurale technique, and with the marginal support or grants from the Central Government, to stand on their own feet to promote rural modernization. Indeed, with the concurrence of the Central Government, rural communities which really desire rural improvements would invent and determine other reasonable sources of revenues for their development. We therefore need institutional fiscal and administrative changes in the rural areas. This would unearth initiative, creativeness, greater local involvement

and needed sensivity of local administrations to really serve the needs of their rural people rather than, as in vogue to day, the local administrations, without sources of revenue, looking to the Central Government for rural transformation. Fiscal over-centralization is a stumbling blick to rural initiative and self-reliance. Today, the maintenance of roads, even in rural areas, is regarded the problem and the headache of the Central Government. It is no accident therefore that our secondary and rural roads are either poorly maintained or maintained at great cost to the Central Government.

In the context of road infrastructure, we need greater imagination and inventiveness. For an example, is it not possible that the personnel of military barracks located in rural areas be oriented to supervise and assist the local community on construction projects, at least one day a week by the youth of the community. Well organised military personnel civil action guidance, assistance and involvement by particularly the engineering units would certainly help us to create, build and maintain rural roads at very low cost. For that matter can we not include in the training of military personnel the concept of Animation Rurale, simple road engineering techniques and other civil action techniques for rural development? Can such training also not be oriented to apply to the personnel and activities of the Youth Bureau for real rural modernization?

Finally, it is to be expected that businessmen, foreign as well as local should, in their own interest and that of the nation as a whole, be interested in the integration of the rural sector into the market economy. Certainly, it will not be contrary to the Open Door Policy, if, besides income tax, we consider a special consolidated Rural Development tax of the order of say one percent of the total sales of all companies in the country. Such resources would be earmarked to guide and support rural development projects.

With the background of concerted fiscal and institutional orientation and innovation purposefully geared to the mobilization of all existing resources of Man and the Environment to improve rural life, we have the hope and optimism that international assistance, in the form of outright grants or of loans, would be induced to support our determined all-out attack on rural stagnation and misery.

8. SUMMARY

Rural transformation is politically healthy. It is socially just. Economically it is a means of enlarging the size of the physically small domestic market and thereby generating self-reinforcing secondary and tertiary linkages and promoting greater multiplier effects on all sections of our population. Rarely do political consideration, social needs and economic justification pleasantly share identical.