

EMPLOYMENT CREATION IN AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In discussing the lead paper on "Changes in Agriculture and Industry", the changing patterns of economic and social life in the Pacific Region were outlined. Special reference was made to the employment problems which already face school leavers throughout the region. These, it was pointed out, would become more serious in the future as populations increase and as education systems expand. Further, educational standards of school leavers are likely to rise, and will be accompanied by rising expectations for paid employment. Despite this, and despite the great efforts of governments to diversify their economies, the main possibilities for employment of the majority, at least, in the foreseeable future, will be self or family employment. This, it was pointed out, means that the emphasis of policies and programmes in agriculture and industry should be the creation of employment opportunities for young people, both to bring in an income sufficient for their needs and to achieve growth in family and national productivity.

The programmes and policies which have been or could be introduced in agriculture and industry in order to increase opportunities for employment were also discussed. This led to a wide ranging discussion on development philosophies, as they applied to the situation in the Pacific Region. More specific comments were also made on the problems and the desirability of particular programmes and policies aimed at promoting agricultural and industrial change.

Goals of National Development

It was observed that most of the countries in the Pacific Region have adopted or emulated the western capitalist model as the basis for their development plans and programmes. The main target of such development efforts was felt to be the achievement of material progress. It was agreed that this was often at the expense of other types of progress. It was also recognized that on a world wide scale, the rich are getting richer, and the poor, poorer.

These considerations prompted discussion of the question, "Do we know what kind of society we are striving for?" Serious doubts were expressed by some delegates about the wisdom of pursuing a path for development which has already thrown up many problems and pitfalls, and which may not be appropriate to the situations in countries in the Pacific Region. Over-emphasis on the profit motive and, related to this, on productivity, were questioned. In particular, attention was drawn to the fact that despite efforts to raise productivity, the problem of rising unemployment persists among the young. It was suggested that the adoption of profit motive and related goals reduces the independence of Pacific countries, thus compounding the problems which are being experienced as a result of heavy dependence on outside agencies.

There was general agreement that it was essential for each country to be clear about its development goals, and, related to this, about acceptable means for achieving them. Outside and inherited or imposed models were

generally agreed to be inappropriate.

Population Policies

Given that in many countries resources for the young generation are already limited, and are likely to become more so, most participants agreed that there was merit in integrating population policies into national development planning. It was also suggested that such policies might include provision of family planning facilities and education. However, it was also recognized that family planning programmes alone cannot solve the complex development problems which face Pacific Region countries.

Education Policies

It was stressed that education cannot create jobs, but that education should be one ingredient in the whole package of a development plan. Looked at this way constant communication between educators and those dealing with other aspects of society was agreed to be essential in order to ensure that educational developments, both formal and non-formal, occur in a co-ordinated and integrated way, and in accordance with national development policies.

Related to this it was observed that there is a need to redirect and to motivate young people towards social, economic, and national as well as personal goals. This, it was agreed, would require education to strengthen their sense of national unity as well as their understanding and feeling for traditional values. The introduction of a service element into schools and other education programmes was seen to have a contribution to make in this.

Other Suggestions for Change

In considering ways of achieving agricultural and industrial change, the following approaches were elaborated:

(a) Block Development Schemes: It was observed that one problem, which often has to be faced when governments take over expatriate plantations, is lack of management capacity to run the operation on an economic basis. Two solutions were suggested. One is to expand management training at regional or national levels. Another is to reorganize the plantation so that it operates along lines which build on traditional methods of working, for instance, by organizing the working day to fit in with traditional life styles.

(b) Technology Demonstration Centres: It was agreed that wider understanding and use of appropriate technologies had a substantial contribution to make in village-level development. In considering how this could be achieved, experiments in Papua New Guinea were reported. Here a network of technology demonstration centres is planned throughout the country. These are to be co-ordinated through a Central Foundation for Appropriate Technology. The starting point for this programme was a workshop for teachers and community workers which presented the idea of appropriate technology, and included how to encourage its development, and demonstrations of specific examples of appropriate technology.

(c) Programmes for Self Sufficiency: It was generally agreed that self sufficient attitudes might be further encouraged if governments required all public servants to make a practical and personal contribution to local productivity.

It was suggested that this might be done by:

- (i) putting public servants on to a four-day working week, with a requirement that the fifth day should be devoted to productive activity at local level;
 - (ii) requiring all schools to run a school garden and to include gardening in the curriculum. School teachers and pupils would be expected to work part-time, or after the school day, on school gardening.
- (d) Community Education: It was agreed that community education had an important contribution to make in improving the health and welfare of village life. At the same time it was recognized that the effectiveness of community education programmes would largely depend on the approach adopted. In particular it was suggested that:
- (i) such education should be provided in an acceptable and enjoyable way, and in a context that villagers would understand;
 - (ii) community education, especially for young people, should include participation in community service activities.
 - (iii) both these approaches could be combined in community education which involved young people in entertainment designed to provide basic information and stimulate discussion on a wide range of issues.