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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
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Addis Ababa, 14-27 November 1968

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTION
OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA SINCE THE FIRST CONFERENCE ON
URGENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS
(1962-1968)

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To submit a sincere and truthful review of the various activities of a group of public administration experts forming a unit within the Economic Commission for Africa is a difficult intellectual exercise, a painful moral process and a source of questioning for the future.

The intellectual exercise consists in identifying the positive factors in relation to which results or failure may be assessed. The sincerity and truth of the review submitted to you will depend upon this choice. Here, more than anywhere else, it is easy to leave out or to minimize certain of the criteria by which the activities reported are to be judged, and at the same time to point to other areas affecting the urgent administrative problems of African Governments where the Section's work has been of most assistance. It will be for the Second Conference meeting in Addis Ababa in 1968 to say whether the evaluation submitted has been made honestly and rationally in relation to African conditions, or to indicate what the Section's future objectives and hence the general framework of future reviews should be.

Morally, the review involves the delicate problem of justifying mistakes, omissions and failures. There are of course reasons for these, and not all of them can be attributed to negligence or unimaginativeness. The ECA Public Administration Section has experienced and still is experiencing internal and external difficulties that have an adverse effect upon its capacity for achievement. These differences must, therefore, be analysed, but the particular responsibility of the unit and the Organization as a whole should be recognized. The Second Conference on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments will then be in a position to judge whether, given the conditions in which it has operated, the Public Administration Section has done useful and adequate work, and in its recommendations will be able to suggest future improvements in the Section's structure and methods.

African administrations are at present in course of evolution. Now that the initial difficulties of installation have, in the main, been overcome, they are making subtler reforms which will fit them to assume the tasks of development laid down by governments. The number of problems remaining to be solved has, however, not diminished; the problems have merely become more specialized and technical and consequently involve increasingly difficult self-questioning and agonizing choice. This is why the Second Conference on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments has been placed under the twofold sign of development and prospective planning. A review of the Section's activities should be used not only for making rectifications and modifications to an existing situation which it is presumed will develop slowly, but also for

extrapolating to the future on the basis of past experience. The directives that the Section hopes to obtain during and after this Conference will influence its work for the next five years. Those years will probably be critical ones in adapting African administrations to progress and modern life.

In order to take account of these considerations, we shall examine the work of the ECA Public Administration Section from 1962 to the end of 1968 in the light of the following:

(i) Evaluation in relation to external factors

- (a) Amount of work to be done on improving, reforming and adapting African public administration services;
- (b) The activities of bilateral technical assistance in African public administration;
- (c) The usefulness of the work of the Public Administration Section to African States;
- (d) The attitude of African States to offers of service from the Public Administration Section.

(ii) Evaluation in relation to internal factors

- (a) Physical possibilities of the Section (staff, offices, equipment, documentation, etc.);
- (b) Structure and aims of the Section;
- (c) Methods of work;
- (d) Co-ordination with other activities of the Commission;
- (e) Co-ordination with other United Nations agencies.

This will pave the way for the discussion between the Section and Conference participants that will follow this review. Participants will be in a better position to assess and explain the external factors and, where necessary, suggest solutions for eliminating bottlenecks in their respective countries; the Section will discuss its organization and methods with a view to improving its effectiveness. Discussion of this kind, defining objectives, fixing the limits of possibilities, attempting to establish co-ordination and procedures, is essential if maximum results are to be obtained by economic means.

A. A short review of the work of the Section since 1962

The first ECA Regional Adviser in Public Administration was appointed in July 1963. Under the Commission's terms of reference, his first task was to organize a Seminar on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments, which was held in Addis Ababa in October 1962. This meeting identified the major administrative problems of the African countries and brought the attention of the governments of the region to the need to base their economic and social development programmes on sound administrative foundations. In so doing, the meeting examined the short- and long-term programmes, regional, sub-regional and national activities that might help in solving administrative problems. The final recommendations of the Seminar were submitted to the 5th Session of the Commission in February 1963 and were the subject of Commission Resolution 70(V). The recommendations provided helpful guidelines to African Governments, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the ECA itself in seeking solutions to the major administrative problems of the region.

Up till now, the Public Administration Division (which in 1965 was changed into the Public Administration Section) has based its work on the recommendations of the 1962 Seminar. The inventory of urgent administrative problems compiled at that time brought to light three major fields for consideration and possible action. These are summarized below:

- (i) Development planning needs effective administrative organization both in formulating and in executing plans;
- (ii) The training of administrative staff is a prerequisite for the smooth running of an administration, and it must cover all aspects of public administration in Africa;
- (iii) Reform of the structure and organization of administrative institutions can bring about notable improvements in the output of an administration (staff management, organization and methods, training centres, local government, etc.).

Once these objectives had been fixed, the internal organization of the Public Administration Section followed, in general, the major divisions corresponding to the four committees set up at the 1962 Seminar:

- (i) Organization, administration and development policy;
- (ii) Problems of financial administration (this was given to another division in 1965);
- (iii) Personnel administration and training;
- (iv) Problems of local government.

The Section's methods of action are of three types:

- (i) Supplying experts in public administration for advisory services to governments which request them. This type of work includes the contact missions that are systematically undertaken to explain to the governments concerned the ways in which the Section can help them, and to collect documentation on the countries visited;
- (ii) Organizing seminars, training courses and meetings of various kinds to study and find solutions to administrative problems and to provide further training for African officials in performing their duties; this type also covers participation by Section experts in training, information and study meetings organized by United Nations and other organizations;
- (iii) Collection, drafting and research on technical documentation suitable for circulation to interested African governmental departments, including public administration schools and institutes; participation in drafting studies undertaken by organizations outside the Commission.

Figures, though dry, are telling:

- (i) All the member countries of the Commission have been visited, some several times, either in contact visits or missions requested by governments for a specific study. For example, 420 days were spent on various missions by Section members in 1967 and 1968.
- (ii) Eighteen courses, missions and seminars were held during the same period (see Annex I):

five on local government;
three on organization and methods;
five on personnel administration;
one on in-service personnel training;
one on public enterprise administration;
one conference of directors of central personnel agencies; and directors of public administration institutes in Africa.

This does not include the Conference on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments held in 1962 and the present meeting on the same subject.

Section members also took part in inter-regional meetings organized by the United Nations, the African Training and Research Centre in Administration (CAFRAD, Tangiers), and other African training and research

organizations. They have also helped the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP, Dakar) by lecturing on public administration.

- (iii) Over 2,300 pages of reports, surveys and handbooks have been written and circulated to administrations and public administration schools and institutes. The Organization and Methods Training Manual has proved particularly successful. It is at present out of print and a new, completely revised edition is to be issued early in 1969. The Regional Adviser in Local Government has helped to write two booklets for the Division for Public Administration of the United Nations.

B. Structure and methods of the Section

As mentioned above, the Public Administration unit was originally designed as a division. In 1965 its status was reduced to that of a section in the Research Division. In 1967 it became an independent section under the Programme Co-ordinator and since 1 January 1968 it has been part of the Human Resources Development Division.

The number of staff in the Section has varied since it was set up, with a general trend towards expansion (see Annex I) and increased specialization. Until mid-1968 the Section's work was divided up as follows:

- Supervision and administration of the Section;
- Personnel training and administration;
- Organization and methods;
- Local government.

Since then a further branch of specialization - development administration has been introduced. The task of studying the problems of adapting administrative services to development work has been given to this branch.

The Section's staff at the present time is as follows:

- Supervision and administration of the Section: one regional adviser, who is also in charge of personnel training and administration;
- Organization and methods: one regional adviser;
- Local government: one regional adviser;
- Development administration: two professional staff members, one consultant in public administration;
- One associate expert;

i.e. seven officials at present. The following are being recruited:

- One postal adviser to replace an expert who had to leave the Section following an accident in October 1968;
- A second regional adviser on Organization and Methods;
- A regional adviser on the development administration.

This will bring the Section's experts up to ten by the beginning of 1969.

C. Critical survey of the Section's work

The activities covered by the above review may seem fairly sizable in terms of the Section's staff, but compared with Africa's immense present and future problems it is nevertheless inadequate and fragmentary.

All kinds of difficulties are facing African administrations; we shall try to define those that appear to be the most important in the medium term.

- (i) The shortage of middle-grade administrative staff; the fact that some high officials are inadequately trained for their responsibilities and that there are few young university graduates, specialists and technicians employed in the civil service.

These are problems of personnel training and administration.

- (ii) The structures and methods of central administrative authorities are top-heavy and hence ill-adapted to the tasks of formulating, supervising and executing development programmes.

These are problems of reform, organization and management.

- (iii) In the French-speaking countries, there are no local government institutions to ensure the participation of country-dwellers in the execution of plans, or else the experiments made have failed; in the English-speaking countries, the local government system is ill-adapted to this objective.

Here the necessary reforms require a new local government strategy and establishment of new institutions.

The four consultants responsible for the introductory papers for the Conference will put forward suggestions for future work on these problems. For the time being we shall merely ask whether the work policy of the ECA Public Administration Section from 1962 to 1968 has corresponded to the true needs of African public administration. If not, what are the lessons to be drawn for the future? Should more stress be laid on missions to African countries, on training and study meetings, research and circulation of documentation? Are there any further methods of action that can be worked out?

The former colonizing countries are unquestionably still playing an important part in assistance to the African countries.

Other countries have offered assistance which the African States have accepted for political reasons or in order to diversify the sources of technical assistance and obviate too great an ascendancy by the ex-colonizers. This results in a certain specialization in assistance, which can prove beneficial but only too often leads to a struggle for influence which does little good to the countries concerned. Here we might ask whether the ECA Public Administration Section has fulfilled its purpose by meeting needs that were not being satisfied from elsewhere. Has there not been some duplication of its work with bilateral aid? Can the Section's future work be co-ordinated with that of the aid-giving countries?

Evaluation of the Section's work for African States is made difficult by the fact that information on missions, meetings, and documentation is lacking. Hence it is practically impossible for the Commission's experts in public administration to assess the helpfulness and adequacy of the advice, training and documentation they are providing. Only too often the Section's work stops at the first stage in the achievement of its task, and because continuous contact is lacking, it is unable to make the adaptations and modifications necessary to the process of reform, further training and information which should in fact be based on such contact. Does this mean that African governments have too much confidence in experts and consider them infallible? Or, rather, that they wish to be masters of the decisions to implement the solutions proposed? Or, more simply, that there is a gap that can be explained by negligence or the harassing nature of the work of the officials involved? The Conference should examine the problem of maintaining contact between African administrations and the Section so as to obtain the maximum benefit from the Section's work.

The Commission and particularly the Public Administration Section are too young to have acquired the audience and the regard that the amount and diversity of their resources would seem to merit. This reserve can probably be explained by the inadequacy of publicity and information about their work, the results already achieved and the energy potential available upon request. The Conference might usefully look into the place of a specifically African organization in defining and accomplishing progress for the African continent.

Not everything can be done at once and in full. The Section's work programme in coming years will depend, in particular, upon the concept of its overall mission. For the moment the Section is a regimental headquarters without troops, and its members are used when necessary as rank and file. More specific guidelines for its work are needed: should the Section in fact be acting as a regimental headquarters? If so, should it have executing staff for its general work programmes and the policies it is required to formulate, or should it consist merely of a

team for thinking and research? If the latter, it would be better for the Section to concentrate upon the global aspects of African administrative problems, merely transmitting the results of its investigations and keeping informed on the development of problems. To try to do both at once would only mean a sterile loss of substance with no hope of achieving lasting results. On the choice between these two approaches will depend the number of the Section's staff, the equipment to be placed at its disposal, and, in particular, the type and size of documentation to be constituted.

Does the division of work within the Section - which until now has followed the guidelines laid down by the 1962 Seminar, with the exception of the addition of a nucleus of experts on development administration - correspond to the realities of African problems, or is it an artificial and ad hoc division? It might be useful to ask whether another arrangement might not be preferable for instance a more composite division of work, either with all sectors of activity placed within the context of development administration, or with increased and diversified specialization, or again by distinguishing activities covering research and ideas from those covering reform and implementation as such; or - more questionably - by distinguishing development administration from management. But whatever the guiding principle adopted, participants will doubtless regret that the Section should have lost financial administration, an important part of public administration, which is a planning and programming method and a key sector in administration. The Conference's suggestions on this point may have a favourable effect on the Section's future.

The role of the Public Administration Section within the Commission should also be more fully specified. Since public administration is the instrument used in designing, directing, supervising and executing all governmental economic and social development policies, it affects the whole of a government's work, conditions its success and influences the results. All development programmes involve problems of organization, methods and management and must therefore be examined from the standpoints of these problems. The role of the Public Administration Section would therefore seem to justify a special place in the Commission's structure and compulsory, automatic liaison with other divisions.

In Africa, the work of the United Nations is amplified by Resident Representatives in almost every country. A great many experts in public administration operating on a national scale depend on the offices of these Resident Representatives. However, their work almost wholly escapes ECA and its Public Administration Section, who learn of it only through copies of the experts' reports, often received late, even after their work has been done. Unfortunately, discordant notes are sometimes heard, with consequent financial loss to the African countries. It is essential to institute better co-ordination of efforts and much closer contacts than at present. Co-ordination should take place before work programmes and methods for use at the national level are fixed, and this presupposes:

- (i) that the ECA Public Administration Section should at least be given detailed information about the position of the public administration services of the African countries and their specific problems;
- (ii) that it should take part in the general definition of solutions (studies to be undertaken - methods and procedures - qualifications of the expert, etc.);
- (iii) that it should exercise some control afterwards over the execution of the work.

Unity of purpose in United Nations work on African administration can thus be ensured more easily and directly.

By means of frequent contact and exchange of experts, the ECA Public Administration Section and the African Training and Research Centre in Administration (CAFRAD-UNESCO) maintain an excellent and profitable relationship. One might, however, ask whether the work of these two bodies might not be re-organized more rationally and profitably still, for this work is in many ways complementary. The suggestions of the Conference in this regard would serve to confirm present arrangements and also to open up new prospects for collaboration.

The Commission's desire for co-operation and co-operation with the United Nations specialized agencies in general must also be stressed. As regards the public administration sector, this desire should be translated by better contacts with UNESCO and the ILO. Training for public administration and public enterprise are of interest to both these institutions. Apart from the members of the United Nations family, the Section would also like to develop its contacts with public administration training and research institutions in Africa and elsewhere. It has already established firm links with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Brussels, the International Union of Local Authorities, the Hague, the Institut International d'Administration Publique, Paris, the Royal Institute of Public Administration in London and many other institutes and universities.

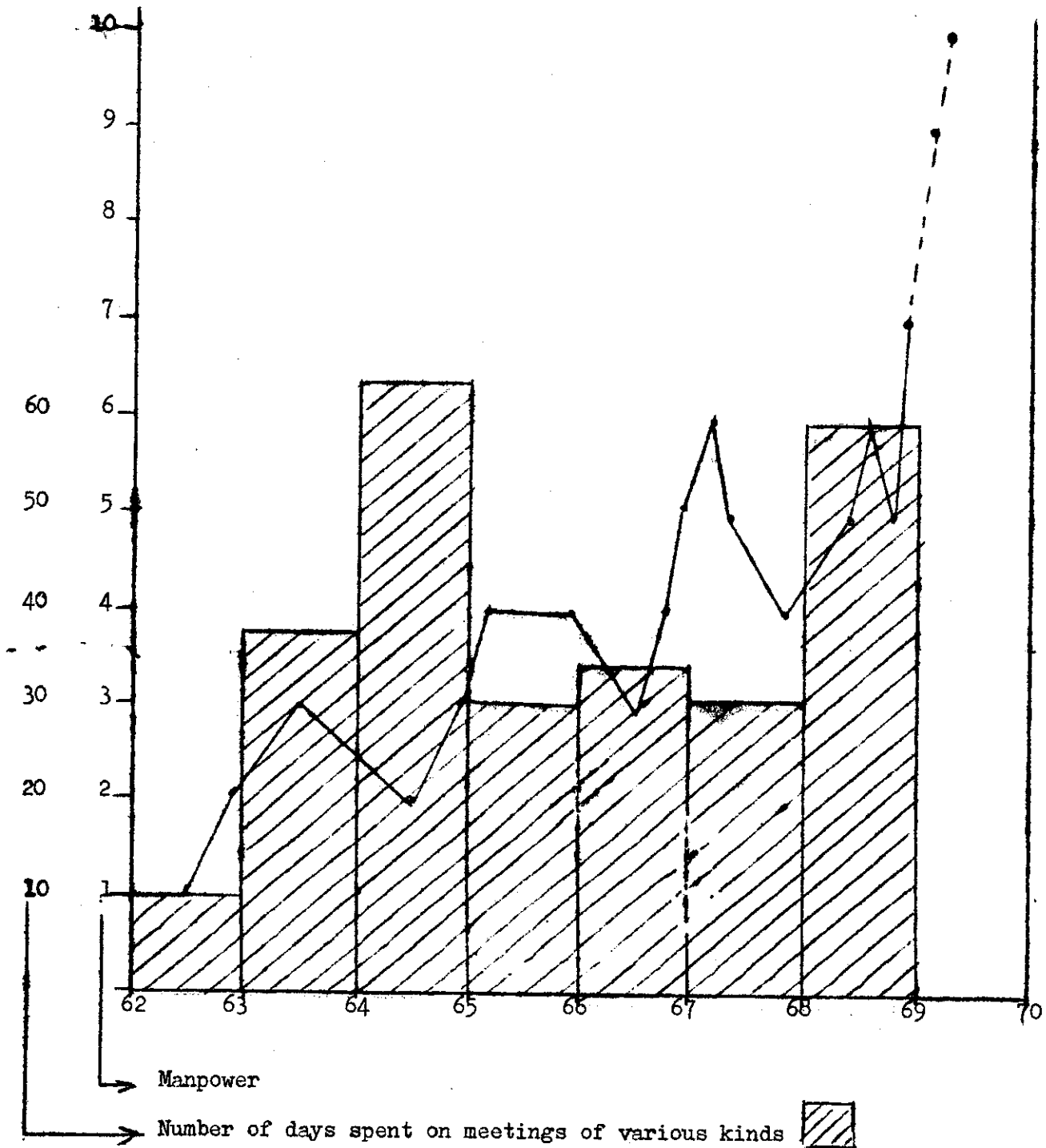
The Section's aim in making this public review is not to seek a pat on the back. Constructive criticism and guidelines for the future expressed by the Conference will be much more invigorating and exhilarating than passive approval without prospects for the future.

Any recommendations on the general future work of the Section should be taken from an "ends-means" point of view, i.e. they should proceed from the recommendations of the four working groups of the Conference. It would be useless to define fresh objectives for the Section without immediately and realistically anticipating the measures essential for their implementation.

The next review, in five years' time, will show whether or not the recommendations of this Conference have been able to provide for the future and organize it, and will assess the degree of success in carrying out the objectives that the Conference will suggest to the next session of the Commission.

ANNEX I

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTION: TABLE OF MANPOWER,
MISSION TOURS AND DAYS SPENT ON MEETINGS OF VARIOUS KINDS



ANNEX II

LIST OF SEMINARS, COURSES AND STUDY TOURS ORGANIZED BY
THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SECTION (1962-1968)

1. Seminar on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2-11 October 1962.
2. Local Government Study Tour of Yugoslavia and India, 1 November - 7 December 1963.
3. Conference of Directors of Central Personnel Agencies and Directors of Public Administration Institutes in Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18-29 May 1964.
4. Training Course on Organization and Methods, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 12 October - 20 November 1964.
5. Seminar on Central Services to Local Authorities, Zaria, Nigeria, 29 June - 10 July 1964.
6. Seminar on Personnel Administration for Central and Local Authorities, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17 May - 3 June 1965.
7. Seminar on Personnel Administration in Central and Local Authorities, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 22 November - 3 December 1965.
8. Seminar on Local Government Finance, Addis Ababa, 5-16 September 1966.
9. Orientation Course on Organization and Methods, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 7-15 November 1966.
10. Seminar in Personnel Administration for Central and Local Authorities, Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, 21 November - 3 December 1966.
11. Training Course in Local Government Personnel Systems, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 9-18 March 1967.
12. Course for Organization and Methods Officers, Achimota, Ghana, 19-30 June 1967.
13. Training Course on In-Service Training Methods and Procedures, Bangui (Central African Republic), 21-30 November 1967.
14. Seminar on the Methods and Procedures to improve Personnel Administration, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 20-28 June 1968 (English-speaking).
15. Seminar on the Methods and Procedures to improve Personnel Administration, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 7-15 October 1968 (French-speaking).

16. Second Conference on Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14-27 November 1968.
17. Study Tour on Regional and Local Administration (France-Yugoslavia-Sardinia), 1-15 December 1968.
18. Seminar on the Management of Public Enterprises, Tunis, Tunisia, 9-20 December 1968.