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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA
Seminar on Urgent Administrative
Problems of African Governments
Addis Ababa, 2-12 October 1962

MINUTES

OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE
SEMINAR ON URGENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS
(Thursday, 4 October 1962)

Morning session to receive the papers on Administration and Development Policy and the Problems of Governmental Supply Management.

Mr. L.L. Barber presented both papers before the Plenary Session.

Concerning the first, he stated that it was a paper complementary to the one of yesterday on Organization and, therefore, he would stress the methods aspects and the advisability of setting up a central unit to deal with the problems of organization and methods in governments.

The chairman summarized the presentation by giving the three main points the meeting should discuss: The creation of a unit of organization and methods and its proper location; the relationship that should exist between Organization and Methods and the planning agency; and, the selection and training of the staff of this unit.

The discussion that followed referred to various forms of organization but the consensus of opinion was that the unit should be located where it could be of service to all agencies and levels of government equally and impartially. Centralization or decentralization to ministries could vary according to the degree of development and training of the staff and also of the resources available.

The question was raised on the qualifications of the staff and the type of training they require. It was felt that a broad educational background was necessary coupled with experience in government work. Reference was made to personal qualifications such as tact and good judgment. Attention was also drawn to the necessity of including O and M in the curriculum of the institutes or schools of public administration not only for the training of O and M specialists but also for the benefit of general administrators.

The second paper on supply management was not read but Dr. Barber made some comments regarding it. He pointed out that the paper was intended as a sample or example of the fields that may be of interest to O and M. Other fields could be: structure of government or of ministries, flow of work, office layout, form design etc. The O and M studies could likewise be made in pay offices, transport and communications, in fact in any part of the government machinery.

During the discussion that followed, reference was made to the tests that would be required to ensure that standards be maintained. This led to the question of where can qualified personnel be found to administer the supply or purchasing departments and how can the staff be trained effectively. Mr. Hosch suggested that a workshop could be organized in Africa to consider those problems and suggest suitable solutions. The idea received the support of the participant from Ghana.

The chairman concluded by saying that the function of O and M was to increase the efficiency of the government work and effect economies. He emphasized that it also has a broader function, one related to the economy of the country as a whole.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Afternoon session to receive the paper on Problems of Financial Administration in African countries.

Mr. D.M. Bhouraskar, who presented the paper, commented that the lack of resources was the main obstacle to economic and social development programmes. This problem is aggravated by the two following factors: Lack of trained African personnel and the shrinking numbers of expatriate personnel. Public Administration could help relieve the situation by improving the structures, training personnel and establishing more efficient and simple procedures. He concluded by stating that questions of financial administration resolved themselves into the two main divisions, namely budget management and tax administration.

The discussion that followed underlined the urgent need of tapping additional sources of revenue and by more efficient management to make the present ones go as far as possible. Reference was made to possibilities of effecting reforms in the field of direct taxation, re-distribution of fields of taxation, especially between central and local governments, using customs tariffs to affect the balance of payments and of improving the customs administration in order to reduce the leakage in revenue at the borders.

The chairman concluded by stating that fiscal policies frequently led to vicious circles when the tax structure adversely affected the mass of people. He expressed the opinion that the saving habit should be stimulated even among the very low-income brackets and the excessive borrowing would certainly lead to bankruptcy in the case of countries as well as for individuals.

The meeting was adjourned at 16:30 p.m. in order to allow the committee on finance to hold a special meeting.