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PERSONNEL POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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A Discussion Paper for the Second Conference on
Urgent Administrative Problems of African Governments^{1/}

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A paper whose purpose is to promote discussion at a fortnight's Conference should no doubt seek to identify matters worthy of examination rather than to advance views about the conclusions that should or might be reached. In this paper, therefore, I shall suggest (1) the major questions which it seems to me should be discussed, and (2) the order in which it might be logical to consider them. If Conference members feel that important questions have been omitted or that the sequence is inappropriate, amendments can be made so as to establish an agreed framework for our deliberations.
2. I shall assume that "Personnel Policies" which I have used in the title includes training and, indeed, all the questions that arise in the recruitment, remuneration, promotion, development and deployment of staff.
3. When the last Conference on this subject was held in October 1962, many African countries had only just achieved independence and some had still to do so. The problems involved in adapting their public services to their new situations were formidable - expatriate staff were leaving, relatively few nationals of the countries concerned were competent and experienced administrators, the educational systems were often inadequate to the countries' needs (especially in the realm of higher education), and the political expectations aroused by the advent of independence were by no means unambitious. As the aide memoire issued by ECA states, however, the economic and social evolution of African States in recent years places them in a very different economic, political and psycho-social context from that which obtained at the time of the 1962 Conference. Changes are no doubt still continuing, however, and we shall have to make some assumptions about what these are likely to be over the next ten years.
4. In considering the most urgent personnel problems of the next decade, there are two fundamental considerations to be borne in mind:-
 - (1) Personnel policies must be framed to meet the policy requirements of the government concerned. In other words, a specification of government objectives and the means to be employed to gain those objectives is a necessary prerequisite to the development of effective personnel policies.

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- (2) A country's capacity to develop its corps of public officials in both quantity and quality in a given period of time is not infinite. It is necessary, therefore, to make some assessment of the limitation that must be accepted on its capacity for personnel development, to ensure that this is understood by those responsible for framing major government policies, and to settle priorities in the light of that limitation.

In these matters precision will obviously be impracticable. A recognition of them and an attempt to evaluate them is likely, however, to produce better results than a disregarding of them.

5. A question that may merit early consideration is the principal strategy that is likely to be followed by African governments over the next ten years to promote economic development. In the early 1960's a system of comprehensive economic planning was developed by some countries, but few of the plans so devised seem to have come to fruition on anything like the scale that was hoped for. What is current thinking and practice on this matter now?

6. Under the national plans just referred to, many major developments were to be undertaken by State agencies. These inevitably enlarged the functions of government and the range of their managerial responsibilities. What are the problems that these agencies have created? Is it still the general policy to proceed in this way, or is there a disposition to afford a larger role, where possible, to private sector bodies?

7. An important question justifying early consideration is the extent to which governments, in framing their personnel policies, should pay regard to the requirements of other employers as well as to their own. While governments and their civil servants can do much to promote development, they cannot achieve success single-handed. How far, therefore, should governments and their principal advisers consider the needs of (1) other parts of the public sector - notably the public enterprises and local government, and (2) of the private sector in which personal initiative and administrative competence may be of great economic significance? If there is likely to be a general shortage of competent persons in a country over the next ten years, how should the available manpower be shared? Should the government take all competent manpower it needs, even if this may leave other important employers virtually destitute?

8. If, as suggested earlier, some of the critical questions arising from the change from colonial to independent status are being overcome, has the time now arrived when personnel policies can be considered primarily from the long-term point of view? Many decisions in personnel management inevitably have far reaching consequences - organizations become moulded by the persons who operate them, and individuals acquire rights and privileges by custom. In consequence, it often becomes extremely difficult to make desired changes because of recruitment

decisions that were taken, for example, a decade or more ago. In crisis conditions the future may have to be risked for the present. Sometimes, however, it seems desirable to accept disadvantages in the short run for the sake of benefits to come. How should African countries now strike a balance between short-term and long-term considerations in their personnel policies? What are the factors to be taken into account in reaching a conclusion?

II. QUESTIONS OF IMMEDIATE URGENCY

9. No matter how much it may be desired to work in accordance with long-term plans, there are always some problems which demand immediate attention. Among the urgent major questions confronting African States are no doubt the following:

- (a) Development of agricultural production;
- (b) Limitation of the rate of population growth;
- (c) Problems of rapid urbanization.

Are these agreed to be serious problems? Are there others to be taken account of?

10. Having defined the urgent policy problems we shall be able to consider the nature of the personnel policies necessary to deal with them. A pattern of action for dealing urgently with shortages of personnel is well-known. It involves two main possibilities - the recruitment of suitable staff from abroad and the organization of "crash" programmes of training. Are there any other possibilities that ought to be considered?

11. The recruitment of experts from other countries is not without its difficulties. Such experts are often expensive to hire, and they may be willing to accept appointments for only relatively short periods of a year or two. In these circumstances, a large proportion of their time is spent in first adapting themselves to their new environment and later in winding up their affairs prior to their departure. Moreover, they may sometimes find it difficult to overcome the background assumptions in which they work in their own countries, even though these may be inappropriate to the new countries in which they have gone to serve. This is not to say that experts from abroad cannot, in the right circumstances, render extremely valuable service. What then, are the lessons to be learned from recent experience? What are the conditions which most favour the employment of foreign experts? What are the consequences of changes in present practices?

12. With schemes of urgent training there may be a choice between organizing suitable courses in one's own country and sending the officials concerned abroad. The second of these possibilities will usually be employed only for senior officers, and then on a fairly restricted scale. Most African countries, however, now have a school or institute of public

administration, and other training institutions of various kinds. How can these best be utilized for the purpose? Do they have any shortcomings, and, if so, how can these be best eliminated? Do they offer special opportunities for the advantageous use of foreign experts?

III. QUESTIONS OF LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANCE

13. It may seem paradoxical to introduce long-term questions into a Conference designed to deal specifically with urgent problems; but, as indicated earlier, the future must inherit the consequences of present actions. Conversely, if we are to ensure as best we can the long-term well-being of the services we now have a hand in shaping, we must review the nature and implications of our present policies, and amend them over the next few years, if that should seem to be needful.
14. As the newly-independent States progress and their countries develop and mature, their personnel policies may well come to have fewer features of special significance. In other words, will all countries that have advanced beyond a certain point have basic governmental policies and institutions of certain kinds and therefore need personnel policies of a certain similarity?
15. One question which may merit consideration is the effect of the size and nature of the State upon the personnel policies that are most suitable for it. For example, do large States have special problems not found in small States, and vice versa? Do federal States have to meet particular needs not encountered in unitary States? And does the grouping of countries in close association, as in the European Common Market and in East Africa, raise personnel questions not encountered elsewhere?
16. The staffing of public enterprises and of local authorities may give rise to personnel problems different in some ways from those encountered in the central government's civil service. Is this so? And, if so, what is the nature of these particular problems that have to be solved?
17. Appointment to the public service in many countries implies engagement in a life-time career. Where this is not the case, dismissal may be due to political factors such as a change of government. Is the life-time career desirable? Is an alternative feasible? Are political appointments desirable? If not, how can they be avoided?
18. What are the criteria to be adopted in the selection of recruits for the various kinds of work to be performed in government and other parts of the public sector? Are special pre-entry studies, e.g., in law or politics, necessary? Are certain classes of subjects better than others? Has there been too great an emphasis on high standards of accomplishment in academic studies? Are other qualities, e.g., those relating to personal character and the capacity to achieve results, sometimes of greater value? If so, what are they and how can they be identified?

19. Most large organizations - and governments and their agencies are among the largest - find it necessary to have well defined staffing structures. This is at present the case with the United Kingdom Civil Service, although the recently issued Fulton Report suggests that a single class Civil Service should be developed. Does the organization of a civil service to promote development raise problems of structure? If so, what are they, and how can they be best resolved?

20. The traditional British method of organizing the Civil Service has been to have two main groups of officers - generalist and professional. The generalists are expected to be versatile and to undertake a wide range of administrative work, including at the highest level the formulation of policy for ministers. The professionals are more usually engaged in particular tasks, e.g., public health or engineering. Is a division of this kind necessary and desirable? Must a decision on the uses to be made of these two kinds of officers depend to some extent on the numbers in which they are available?

21. Do the levels of remuneration of public servants provide a subject for discussion? In countries where a vigorous private sector has developed, levels of pay and other conditions of service are generally superior to those in the public sector. What is the nature of the problems to which this situation gives rise? And how can they best be overcome?

22. The training of public servants is becoming a subject of increasing importance in many countries of the world. This is understandable when one thinks of the growing complexity of public administration, the rapidly developing techniques of management, and the increasing demand for competent staff from the private as well as the public sector. Since many public servants are in their employment for as much as 40 years, the question arises as to how much training they should receive immediately after entry, and how much at later stages of their careers. In other words, can training be a once-and-for-all exercise, or must it be a continuous process? If the latter, how should it be devised?

23. A distinction can be made between education and training, although they merge and overlap in certain respects. Some of the training hitherto undertaken in institutes of public administration, particularly in those associated with universities, have had a substantial educational content. As systems of higher education develop, better educated candidates will present themselves for public service than those that were available in the past. Is this a factor of which account should be taken over the next ten years in the framing of training schemes?

24. Much administration, as well as the practice of many professions, depends primarily on skill - very often a skill that has been acquired with long experience. Such skill may rest on a basis of knowledge, but knowledge alone is insufficient. The transmission and development of skills is a different process from the imparting of knowledge. Is it

possible that too much attention is being paid in training institutions to the imparting of knowledge and too little to the development of skills? Could it be that this situation, if it exists, is due to too much reliance on universities in the development of training programmes?