

AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
AND MANAGEMENT (AAPAM)

Round-table on African Public Services:

Prospects for the 1980s

Freetown, Sierra Leone

31 July - 4 August 1978

THE CHALLENGE OF THE 1980s FOR AFRICAN  
PUBLIC SERVICES

by

ECA SECRETARIAT

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE 1980s FOR AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICES

### I. Introduction

The challenges inherent in independence fall into two broad categories: nation-building and development. These categories represent, however, broad goals, the attainment of which can be realized only by several decades of hard and systematic work. On the surface, these goals may seem simple to attain since they appear to be mutually reinforcing; but the real difficulty arises when dealing with their subsidiaries which are often as contradictory as they are apparently irreconcilable. For instance, maintenance of national unity may require the accommodation of ethnic interests which may be detrimental to economic development.

Past as well as current events in many parts of the continent have proved beyond doubt the vulnerability of many African countries to disintegration. The heterogeneous and often conflicting ethnic groups of which these nations are constituted had been held together prior to independence not by social, cultural, linguistic or economic factors but by colonial rule alone; and successive post-independence governments have not succeeded fully in consummating this fragile unity. The most formidable challenge to African Governments remains, therefore, the cementing together of the various ethnic groups of their respective nations by creating the necessary political, social and economic conditions which will strongly bind them together and inculcate in them a feeling that they belong to one and the same nation. This means that African governments must first and foremost integrate their societies.

The path to integration is long and prickly and therefore governments who are travelling on it have to be very careful and must calculate each step before taking it. The Chinese say that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step". After two decades of independence it is still doubtful whether the majority of African governments have taken the first step on the path to national integration, as many African nations are still as likely to fall apart as they were at independence. In Zaire, for instance, the secessionist movement that broke out in Katanga (now Shaba Province) in 1960 took many years to quell; it sprang up again after seventeen years and Zaire's unity was saved only with the help of foreign forces. We have

witnessed this year the eruption of the same secessionist and interneine struggle and the unity of Zaire was again saved not by mustering internal strengths but by resorting to foreign military intervention. Ethiopia has been similarly plagued by a secessionist movement which broke out in Eritrea in 1961 and has been gathering momentum ever since with the result that the province seems to be again on the verge of secession and the Ethiopian Government is mobilizing its military resource with some external support in an attempt to defeat the secessionists. Besides these two examples there are other African governments which are faced with disintegrative forces and which need to take the necessary economic, social and political measures to defeat such forces.

As evidenced by the situation in Shaba Province military solutions are only temporary and African governments should realize that it is costly in terms of human lives, money, destruction of property and foreign intervention to keep the multifarious ethnic groups of their nations together by force of arms. Lasting solutions of the root problems lie in the pursuit of productive economic and social policies and in the ability to use political skill so as to deal with dangerous cleavages. This means that governments must adopt and implement sound policies and must possess enough political farsightedness in order to prevent well in advance the dangerous coincidence of political, economic and regional cleavages. This is where development reinforces nation-building. The recent Paris conference on the Zaire situation emphasized the dire need for political and economic solutions which include adequate attention to the economic, social and political needs of the affected area. There was equal emphasis on the need to bring about administrative reforms in order to facilitate the tackling of Zaire's economic and administrative problems. Here then, is a vivid example where public services are reshaped or need to be reshaped in order to play a vital role in strengthening the unity of a nation, thereby saving it from the holocaust of violent disintegration.

This paper attempts to do three things: (a) to identify the challenge of the 1980s facing African public services and to explain the nature of this

challenge; (b) to examine whether the present capabilities of African public services enable them to meet this challenge; and (c) to suggest answers to the more difficult question of what can be done to prepare African public services in meeting the challenge. Needless to say that the overall purpose of the paper is to provoke discussion on the future role of African public services.

The 1980s are not far off; being only less than two years from hence they are within an earshot. It may therefore be reasonably expected that the present issues and problems will spill over into the 1980s. The paper therefore tries to review the challenges of the past (those of the sixties and seventies) and to see whether they have been met or not; it arrives at the conclusion that they havenotatall been met and that they will increase in magnitude only to confront the African public services in the 1980s. It is Part II that will cover this review. Part III will deal with the same challenges as they are likely to present themselves in the 1980s; but it will also consider new challenges that are likely to arise. The final part (Part IV) analyses what kind of public services will be desirable in the 1980s and beyond and arrives at certain conclusions.

In Africa, the task of predicting future events is a very difficult one mainly because of the Kaleidoscopic changes that occur in the continent all of a sudden and without preplanning. And the nature of these changes vary from the government-inspired to others that are brought about by external factors and the precarious weather such as drought. Some of Africa's major crises are caused by extraneous factors: the swarms of locusts which have now devastated vast areas of vegetation in the Horn of Africa and threaten to cross over to Kenya and Tanzania towards the end of the year are said to have had their breeding ground in the Yemen and Saudi Arabia; similarly, some economic crises in Africa can be attributed to the economic conditions prevailing in Europe and America. Any person venturing to predict future events in Africa is confronted with a number of uncertainties. There is the uncertain economic situation and the resulant but unpredictable political and social upheavals; there are ecological imbalances resulting in drought and famine, and the uncertainties in future international relations which may

be precipitated by eruptions of border and territorial conflicts. There are also uncertainties as to whether governments and individual public servants will remain committed to economic development for a long period. Finally, there are uncertainties that are brought about by cataclysmic events, such as revolutions, which lead to the purging of public servants as well as military personnel, an act which is very harmful since it removes a large proportion of highly trained and experienced staff from the public services. Therefore, the challenges of the 1980s must be identified in the light of past and current events as well as new dimensions in the future development and implications of these events.

## II. Review of the first two decades of independence

The early years of independence were largely spent on the euphoria that was the sequel to independence. Then the process of Africanization which was necessary to complete the transfer of power to the Africans took so many years since it proved to be a difficult one: there were not many technically and professionally qualified Africans to replace the expatriate officers who were manning the machinery of government. But rapid Africanization had nevertheless to continue at the cost of lowering standards in the public service which could not but have adverse consequences. The consequences varied from one country to another depending on the country's stage of educational, economic and political development at the time of independence. Africanization set the stage also for political appointments and thereby encouraged the resurgence of tribal sentiments.

In the meantime popular pressures for economic development were building up and could no longer be ignored; this was one of the promises of independence and the need to respond to economic challenges was obvious. The politicians had made promises to the people to make life more abundant through economic development within a short span of time. Ambitious plans of economic development were formulated mainly by indigenous economists who were still fresh from the universities and who had little or no practical experience in public administration and the development process and also by expatriate experts who knew little about the country. The sixties were a

period in which the relevance of social and political factors to economic development was not clearly perceived. Hence the advent of the economists who were thought to have immediately applicable remedies to economic backwardness. However, such plans as were formulated inevitably failed and the post-mortem examinations showed that their failure was due to a number of factors: (a) the plans were highly ambitious and aimed at targets which were difficult to reach; (b) they did not take into account the modest resources of the country, both human and material; (c) no reforms in government structures were made to facilitate the implementation of the plans; (d) planning and implementation were treated as two separate processes; (e) there were no effective communication links between those who formulated the plans and those who were expected to carry them out; (f) owing to the communication gap those who were expected to carry out the plans were unable to understand its language and did not appreciate its targets, with the result that they simply shelved the plans away; (g) there were serious discrepancies between plan targets and local priorities and the plans failed to get local support; and therefore (h) there was no effective co-ordination machinery at the national level and the Ministry of Planning was unable to command the respect and confidence of the other Ministries with which it appeared to be competing for power; (i) similarly, the Planning Commission was unable to control ministries and to compel them to conform to plan requirements; (j) lack of harmonization between planning and budgeting and the failure to use the annual budget as an instrument for carrying out the plan targets for the year; (k) lack of appreciation of the political and social realities in the country with the result that, as in some cases, bargaining between politicians had to take place sometimes after plans had been drawn up and projects not in the plan were subsequently budgeted for and executed thereby upsetting planned priorities and resource use; (l) the intellectual gap between planners and politicians on the one hand and planners and the masses for whom they had planned on the other hand; finally, (m) development plans were, at least in a number of cases, drawn up on the basis of anticipated foreign aid which proved hard in forthcoming.

Plans and administrative reforms have been interrupted or occasioned by changes in government which arose from instability, the instability itself being a symptom of unfulfilled political promises. The result was that plans were seldom allowed to run their full course and thereby prove their worth. Each government that came to power had its own targets and priorities in mind which did not necessarily coincide with those of the previous government; each government was reluctant to carry out the development programmes of its predecessor lest it was accused of not having ideas of its own. Of course some programmes have gone a long way in their implementation and could not be halted and cancelled. This instability adversely affected the public services in many ways. First, it confused the public servants as to what priorities they should carry out. Secondly, changes in government were highly disruptive in that public servants had to deal with different ministers each time. Thirdly, the changes sometimes involved political appointments in the public services as well as premature promotions and retirements, especially in those countries which did not have very strong public service traditions. Fourthly, cabinet changes encouraged ethnic competition and thereby caused the resurgence of tribalism.

The seventies came with the same challenges but called for new approaches to the old issues and problems that were faced in the sixties. The nature of the problems was such that they could not be solved in one decade. The first decade, however, was one in which Africa was expected to set itself on the right track. Unfortunately, some of the early analyses of Africa's performance in development have led to the conclusion that the continent has gone astray.<sup>1/</sup> It can be said that in the first decade African countries were learning their lessons in development although the problems that posed the challenge to the public services cannot be neatly divided between the first and the second decades. The seventies can be said to be an era of new

---

<sup>1/</sup> See for example, Rene Dumont, False Start in Africa, Fredrick A Praeger, N.Y. 1966. Although this book applies largely to French-speaking Africa there is a chapter on the English-speaking countries in Africa which comes to similar conclusions.

approaches to old problems. There were new approaches to planning and an attempt to avoid past mistakes. There was a reasonable correlation between the resources available and the objectives to be attained. In an attempt to inject an element of realism in planning the plan periods were made shorter and plan objectives were based, at least partially, on local wishes. Furthermore, it was recognized that planning and implementation were two inseparable processes; but the accent was on implementation. It seems that African countries have taken to heart in the seventies the truism that 'a good plan is one that works'.

In the seventies the challenges were no longer seen as being purely economic. It is now widely recognized that economic performance is determined largely by social, cultural, administrative and political factors. The lessons of the sixties have taught us that sound economic projects can fail for lack of political support or for lack of proper administrative and management capability or both. Many agricultural extension projects have failed, not only in Africa but in many parts of the Third World as well, because they ran counter to prevailing social values and seemed to cause an unwelcome disruption of the social fabric in the villages. Furthermore, it transpired that the so-called 'rural obduracy' was mainly due to extension workers not being able to put across new ideas to rural communities rather than the latter being reluctant to absorb them; it has been proved that rural communities are amenable to innovations if the practical utility of these innovations can be physically demonstrated. So the challenge to the extension worker is the establishment of effective communication so that he can convince his rural partners in development to use new and more productive methods. The implication of this for training is that the extension worker must, besides his technical subject, be equipped with the necessary communication skills to enable him put across his message to the farmers.

On the administrative side, several reform measures have been recommended and adopted. Reform commissions have been set up in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, the Sudan and Tanzania and these commissions dealt with various aspects of the public services. As with planning there was also a great deal of debate



and literature on administrative reform especially on its definition, scope and purpose and, as usual, past mistakes which accounted for the failure of administrative reforms were identified. The failure was blamed on imprecise goals; on undue preoccupation with structural changes; on neglecting the human aspect of organisations; on limiting the reforms to central departments; on overestimating the capabilities of public servants; on the lack of institutional machinery to oversee and coordinate the implementation of reform measures; and, above all, on the lack of continued commitment by politicians and a dropping of enthusiasm on the part of public servants. An area where reform measures have conspicuously failed is local government. National issues and problems have eclipsed the need for local government reforms. Many governments have tried to introduce 'reforms' in this area but most of these reforms have been half-hearted because of the central government's unwillingness to transfer some of its authority and resources to local councils. The glaring need for the devolution of important development functions to local councils is recognized but central authorities usually withhold power from local councils on grounds that the local councillor is ignorant and corrupt. Even central departments in the field have little delegated authority to exercise. The result is the lamentable absence of genuine decentralisation and the deplorable existence of illusory decentralisation in its place.

Another problem which has been partially attended to but was not tackled properly is training. Like planning and administrative reforms it was recognized in the sixties that training was essential for enhancing the capabilities of public servants. Accordingly, many training institutions were created, the most prominent ones being the Institutes of Public Administration and/or Management, the majority of which were sponsored by the United Nations, at least in their early years. Some of these institutes have become very ineffective, mainly for reasons which stem from government policy. However, the main fault of these institutes was that their lecturers were usually young and inexperienced and therefore a large number of staff in the middle and upper echelons of the civil service did not look to them for expertise and thought there was nothing they could learn from them. The

other main factor which also accounted for the ineffectiveness of these institutes was that government policy did not favour training; for example, vertical mobility seldom came as a direct consequence of training. The original idea behind the establishment of these institutes was to produce trained administrators and managers, in order to alleviate the deleterious effects of Africanization. The institutes were expected not only to train existing administrative and managerial staff but also to produce new cadres who will then gather experience as they ascend the organisational ladder so that they will have enough experience and professional background by the time they are called upon to take over from retiring senior managers and administrators. The universities have taken upon themselves the task of providing administrative training in a genuine attempt to mitigate the difficulties arising from the shortage of trained manpower. They have also established Institutes of Public Administration and/or of Management or of 'Development Studies'. But they have been often criticized for adopting too academic an approach to highly practical subjects such as management and public administration. All this, is nevertheless a healthy indication that, provided these efforts continue and improve, training will be successful in alleviating serious shortages in manpower.

Planning, administrative reforms, and training are of course strategies for meeting the challenge although they pose challenges of their own. They are factors which are interrelated and interdependent. Their interrelationship should be recognized and they should be taken seriously since they are essential components of any strategy to meet the formidable challenges of development and nation-building. Furthermore, any strategy for preparing the public service for facing these challenges must include the inculcation of a deep sense of probity and responsiveness to public needs in all public servants so that they will discharge their onerous duties with pride and confidence.

### III. The Challenge of the 1980s

Most of the challenges of the 1980s will be inherited from the seventies, the seventies themselves having inherited them from the sixties. The issue and problems that stood out prominently immediately after independence were

too great for the young African nations to cope with in a matter of one decade or two. But, they may not present themselves in exactly the same form and intensity in the 1980s. The problems will be more pressing and public demands for more and better services will be more clamorous. In the event, the politicians may become even more impatient than they had been in the sixties and seventies for speedy development and may accordingly press for more quantitative output at the expense of quality.

Perhaps the most dangerous of all the problems besetting the public services in Africa is the one stemming from the relationship between politicians and public servants. The drawbacks of African public services have been blamed on the politicians and the latter have blamed public servants for failure to carry out development programmes as expeditiously and as efficiently as was required and for failures to align themselves with the masses. Unwilling to accept any blame African politicians have publicly castigated high ranking public servants and thereby divested them of their prestige and honour. The public servants have been naturally hurt by what they considered as unwarranted and malicious attacks on their integrity and, being unable to use public forums to publicise their performance and exonerate themselves from blame, they resorted to subtle means of showing their extreme displeasure. The public servants have, on their part, been leaking out, perhaps in retaliation, all the blunders of the politicians with the result that the latter have tended to put loyal but less qualified officers in sensitive public service positions. The mutual recrimination between politicians and public servants have set the stage for conflict. As a result, services stagnated and development projects were invariably adversely affected. Meeting the challenge of the 1980s will certainly require the existence of a healthy and productive relationship between politicians and public servants. Unless they work together very closely and harmoniously national objectives will not be achieved and both will continue to disappoint the people. The result may be disastrous since the ensuing instability and public disappointments may lead to violent changes of government and even of public servants. Examples abound where at least the top echelons of the public service have been 'cleared of anti-revolutionary elements' and wide spread dismissals of public servants have often occurred after coups.

For a long time politicians, administrators and academics have been debating the relationship between politicians and public servants, especially about the relationship of a minister with his permanent secretary. No answer has yet been found except, perhaps, in the developed countries which have evolved very strong administrative traditions and even in these countries the issue has not been fully resolved. But Africa cannot blindly copy these traditions; it must evolve its own political and administrative systems.<sup>1/</sup> The challenges of the 1980s will demand that African politicians and public servants co-operate fully with each other in their joint responsibilities in the development task.

One of the issues that need to be resolved and the resolution of which will in all probability promote understanding between politicians and public servants is whether public servants should take part in politics and, if so, to what extent. This question is highly complicated because it requires a definition of what 'politics' is and a clear delineation of what is political and what is not. In countries where only one political party exists civil service neutrality has been rendered irrelevant. The neutrality of the civil service is apt and relevant when two or more political parties are competing for office in fair and free elections - that is, as President Nyerere puts it, "Where the continuity of public administration must not be thrown out of gear at every switch from one 'party' government to another"<sup>2/</sup> It seems that the idea of dual or multiple political parties is fading away fast in many parts of the continent and we see an increasing number of single party States. The other factor which eroded civil service neutrality is the new role imposed on the service by the requirements of development. The dormant

---

<sup>1/</sup> African countries, especially the French-speaking countries, have been accused of blindly copying other administrative systems, especially that of the erstwhile colonial power. See G. Langrod 'The Genesis and Consequences of Administrative Mimicry in Africa', International Review of Administrative Sciences, Vol. XXXIX, 1973, No. 2.

<sup>2/</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, 'Democracy and the Party System,' Freedom and Unity: Uhuru na Umoja (Dar-es-Salaam 1966), p. 203

masses need to be awakened to their interest and mobilized for the development effort. This is too great a task to be left for the politician alone. Owing to the magnitude of the challenge politicians, public servants and the masses will need to join hands in order to stand up to the challenge which faces them all. In a nutshell, development imposes a multiple role on the public servant: the administrator must also be a planner, a political agitator, a teacher or trainer, and even agricultural extension worker; the doctor must also train nurses and dressers and must, in addition, engage in public health education and thereby become a teacher for the masses; and even the tax collector must explain to the people why the government should need to collect taxes and must not confine himself merely to tax collection. This is not to say, however, that public servants should become the "Jack of all trades"; on the contrary, the challenges of the eighties will require them to be highly specialized. It is meant to emphasize the spirit of co-operation that should characterize the public service. The doctor will certainly be acting within his profession if he takes part in public health campaigns and thereby helps to advance public health education. The tax collector will collect more taxes and even make his job less burdensome if he can secure public co-operation.

The argument has been advanced therefore that development requires that civil servants come out openly in support of government policies and even try to legitimize these policies to the public so that the policies will have a real chance of success. The point made here is that policies should have the full backing of civil servants, indeed all public servants, the politicians as well as the masses so that they will have a full impact. Public service neutrality was a hotly debated issue in the late sixties and early seventies but it is by no means a dead issue since it touches on the relationship between politicians and public servants.<sup>1/</sup> It also touches on the question of political spoils vis-à-vis the merit system: if public

<sup>1/</sup> Professor Adedeji, for example, raises a number of questions about the relationship in a single party State between politicians and civil servants on the one hand and between civil servants themselves on the other hand. See his Monograph, The Tanzania Civil Service A Decade After Independence: Progress, Problems, and Prospects, University of Ife Press, 1974

servants are encouraged to become propagandists for the government then such political activity may become a criterion for promotion and may indeed eclipse all other criteria based on merit and performance.

A government's approach to development no doubt affects the shape, size and character of the public service. A number of African countries have already chosen the socialist approach to development and perhaps more countries may do the same in the 1980s. This option requires that all public servants be highly politicised and the top echelon may even be absorbed into the one-political party that is allowed to exist.<sup>1/</sup> Hence top administrators, managers and other professionals in the public service become politicians by being nominated as party officers. Indeed transfers from party positions to the top positions in the public service and vice versa may take place. It is worthwhile therefore to examine the implications of such a system for the public service. First, we have mentioned earlier that party and bureaucratic positions tend to be interchangeable. Secondly, the public servants are required to be highly politicised and may even engage in proselytising activities with the result that their role is no longer limited to the execution of policy. Thirdly, promotions tend to be granted according to the individual's contribution to the activities of the party. Fourthly, low-ranking public servants may accordingly enhance their prospects for promotion by becoming active agents of the party than by increasing their professional competence. Fifthly, senior public servants get a chance to improve the quality of policy making since they are better educated and better trained than many of the politicians. Sixthly, party positions may in the end be filled, to some degree at least, on the basis of education and long service (which means experience). Finally, nationalisation which is an integral part of the socialist ideology overtakes a very young and growing public service: (a) nationalized industries and commercial enterprises require highly competent staff to run them and these simply are not available, the result being that highly sensitive positions

---

<sup>1/</sup> The number of countries where such a situation already exists or is taking shape is not small; so far Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Benin, Guinea, Algeria, the Congo, Guinea Bissau and Libya have all adopted the one party system and Sierra Leone has joined the group this year.

in the economy are entrusted to young, inexperienced and untrained personnel; (b) government functions and responsibilities are increased considerably by further public takeover of other subsidiary enterprises like houses, shops, buses, etc.; (c) an already weak and overburdened public service then tends to stagger under the heavy weight of the additional burden with the result that services stagnate or even deteriorate.

Perhaps we will see in the 1980s many more public services which are no longer conducted by merit and are no longer characterized by political neutrality. In such situations public service commissions will be meaningless. The challenge posed to such public services will indeed be formidable since government will take over many more responsibilities which are beyond the capacity of their weak and overstretched public services.

Countries which intend to run their public services by merit and to insulate them from politics will need to strengthen their public service commissions so that the best and most highly qualified and competent candidates will be recruited into the public services. The commissions must also ensure that the services retain and reward those who show excellence in their performance. Our experience attests to the fact that African public services have not been able to retain their best men and women.

This brings us to the question of brain drain. Where have the brains of African public services gone? and why have they left? There is much truth in the saying: 'brains are like hearts, they go where they are wanted'. The best and most competent public servants have been lured into politics and businesses. A highly significant number of people have resigned their public service positions to stand for elections and become ministers. This has happened in many African countries because high public servants have lost their prestige and power to the politicians and especially to men who were either their own subordinates previously or who did not, in any case, have comparable experience and education. So those who were lured by political power resigned their positions and went into politics. The others, who were no less qualified and no less competent, were attracted

by the huge profits which they were likely to make in business. Still more others were attracted by higher salaries and better conditions of service outside their countries or even outside the continent.

Naturally, a public service which is facing difficult challenges must first of all muster its own internal strengths and must prevent itself from disintegration. Like a fighting army it must use its best talents and put its highly trained men in the most sensitive and strategic command positions and this means putting every man in the position for which he had been trained; it must keep its morale high; it must put itself above corruption; it must persevere in its duty; it must deploy all its resources in the best possible way, or else it will lose the fight and the service will disintegrate.

The challenges of the 1980s will be hard to meet. In the first place many boys and girls will leave school and many men and women will come out of the universities. All of these will want employment and most of them will want white collar jobs. Can the public services absorb them, if only to improve themselves? the challenges of the future have serious implications for educational policy. Educational planning must be based on the manpower requirements of the future and not on a set pattern which was determined long ago without considering the needs of the economy. The discrepancy between the output of the educational system and the requirements of the employment market may be wide and serious. Ghana for example, has since the early seventies been experiencing difficulties in employing liberal arts graduates while it had acute shortage of graduates in the technical and scientific fields. The social problems arising from unemployed but educated youth roaming about in the streets of the big cities may cause very serious political disturbances which African governments may find hard to cope with.

The notorious problem of inflation will probably remain with us at least in the early 1980s and curbing inflation will pose a difficult challenge to the African countries. Rising inflation has already outstripped the salaries of public servants and has made life more difficult for the rest of



the population because of the rising cost of living. As a result governments will be under increasing pressure to lower prices by subsidizing food prices, to build low cost housing and to create more employment. The people will certainly become more aware of their problems in the 1980s owing to the spread of education and as a result of government sponsored politicisation of the masses. They will therefore exert pressure on the government to provide more and better services which will of course be more costly to provide in the 1980s. The growing private sector in such countries as Kenya, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, and Senegal will no doubt continue to play its role in changing the quality of life of many people and thereby increase public awareness of the need for better services. The people will not only demand more and better services but they will also clamour that these services be delivered as expeditiously as possible. Therefore bureaucratic red tape will no longer be tolerated and will come under more severe attack.

However, all these developments are more likely to happen in the cities and towns than in the rural areas. If, therefore, the government concentrates on the urban areas as a result of these pressures the rural areas will continue to be neglected and urban populations will live more and more comfortably at the expense of rural inhabitants. Hence government must not allow these pressures to divert its attention away from rural development. Government capacity to deal with both urban and rural challenges will very much depend on how it organises its business. If it creates the necessary urban authorities, vests in them the necessary powers to perform urban services, provides them with specialized and competent staff, and assigns them wide revenue sources, its burden will be greatly eased and it can then pay more attention to the rural areas which have been neglected for a long time. But urban areas are very demanding and cannot dispense with central policies, guidance, and co-ordination. The big cities of Africa have grown very rapidly since independence especially the capital cities partly because governments have concentrated their development efforts on them and partly because of excessive centralization of decision-making. The result is that the administration of African cities has become, like that of big cities elsewhere in the world, complex and therefore has posed a number of difficult challenges. Such urban

services as electricity, water, health, education, sewerages, and telephones are not only to be provided in great quantities but on high quality as well. These services are also very interdependent and highly technical with the result that they require sound physical planning and good co-ordination as well. They require highly specialized engineering, medical, and educational staff as they require huge numbers of skilled labour. Professional staff will not only be needed to execute urban projects but they will also be needed to draw up the necessary physical plans which are themselves very technical. Apart from the technical complexities there are also political and socio-economic complexities in the urban scene. In the first place, shanty towns and squatter settlements have their own political and socio-economic implications and have proved to be difficult to deal with. Secondly, urban areas and urban interest groups continue to compete, sometimes fiercely, for the attention of the various urban authorities and they lobby for the adoption of policies that will serve their own interests. Thirdly, co-ordination is complicated by all these centrifugal forces. Therefore, urban administration will need first class administrators which means administrators who are highly trained and able to perceive the interplay of political, economic and sociological factors and who are able to accommodate competing interests. The urban administrator should be trained, inter alia, on the peculiar nature of urban administration; he should be able to identify, understand and tackle the highly complex problems of cities as well as those problems which generally entail urbanization. This is of course a call for specialized and professional administrative generalist. One may argue that a specialized generalist is a contradiction in terms. But it can be argued -- and it has been argued -- that the generalist is a specialist of a different kind since he has specialized in being a generalist. This argument should not sidetrack us from our mainpoint which is that urban administration will need highly technical and specialized personnel as well as professionals who specialize in urban administration.

The rural areas will continue to cry out for development. Rural inhabitants have been neglected and alienated for a long time with the result that they harbour a deep mistrust of the central government. Much of the pressure

for attention to the rural areas is not, however, coming from the rural population themselves. The desire to relieve urban congestion, the need to cope with urban unemployment, and the compelling fact that about 90% of the population live in the rural areas have all combined to make rural development a priority area. So far, however, the concern with rural development has not manifested itself in meaningful programmes of action. Institutional facilities for rural development have been very inadequate and the best staff have been concentrated in the cities. Decentralization has been largely illusory in consequence of which local government councils have been poorly staffed and poorly financed. These consequences of illusory decentralisation has been used by governments as a pretext for not devolving meaningful functions upon local government councils.

In the 1980s we can reasonably expect the pressure for rural development to increase sharply. The need to increase agricultural production in order to feed a growing population, to increase foreign exchange earnings and to be able to exploit raw materials with which to establish and run the necessary agro-industries will necessitate more attention to the rural areas. The economic performance of Africa has 'fallen substantially below targets set in the Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade'.<sup>1/</sup> Its growth in agricultural production has been very slow. The result is that after two decades of independence Africa still remains very poor in relation to the other continents. Of the 28 countries in the World designated as 'least developed' 18 of them are in Africa. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Professor Adebayo Adedeji, gave this warning recently to the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa:

---

<sup>1/</sup> Speech by Professor Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, to the 4th Meeting of the Conference of Ministers and 13th Session of the Economic Commission for Africa (Kinshasa, 28 February to 3 March, 1977) published by ECA, P.7

"If past trends persist and if there are no fundamental changes in the mix of economic policies that African governments have pursued during the past decade and half, and if the current efforts to fundamentally change the international economic system fail to yield concrete positive results the Africa region as a whole will be worse off compared with the rest of the world at the end of this century than it was in 1960".<sup>1/</sup>

With such a state of preparedness Africa is facing fresh and difficult challenges which the New International Economic Order poses. This New International Economic Order seeks to establish international economic justice by attempting to remedy the imbalance between rich and poor nations. In the first place one of the principles of the New International Economic Order stresses 'the need for developing countries to concentrate all their resources for the cause of development'.<sup>2/</sup> In view of past experience, however, the mere channelling of resources to development will, in Africa, be quite a feat. We know from experience so far that financial resources have been reprehensibly dissipated while human resources have not been properly utilized. The New International Economic Order calls upon the rich nations as well as international organisations to adopt policies which are designed to help the economic advance of developing countries. However, we have learnt from past lessons that it is not easy for developing countries to utilize foreign aid. Post-mortem examinations have revealed many 'graves of foreign aid'. One tragic consequence of such revelation has been the reluctance of rich nations to be as generous in their foreign aid as they were in the 1960s. The New International Economic Order has therefore been meeting with some resistance. The main attack has been on the premise on which this new order rests, namely, that the rich countries have become richer through centuries of exploiting the peoples of the Third World. Whatever the merits and demerits of this arguments, however, the fact remains that rich nations have become very sceptical about the efficacy of foreign aid.

<sup>1/</sup> Speech to the 13th Session of the Economic Commission for Africa and the 4th Meeting of the Council of Ministers, Kinshasa 28 February to 3 March 1977, published by ECA, p. 10

<sup>2/</sup> Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly during its Sixth Special Session, 9 April - 2 May 1974, U.N. New York, 1974, p.4

The implications of the New International Economic Order for the African countries are fairly clear and can be summed up in one sentence: the African countries will have to work hard in order to help narrow the gap between poor and rich nations and have therefore to produce more. The rich countries will play the role of a helper and no more, but we cannot say with any certainty that all the necessary help will be forthcoming. Even if the developed countries show genuine commitment to the New International Economic Order the targets spelt out in that order will not be attained as far as Africa is concerned unless Africa itself makes a real effort to do its share. In the transfer of technology, for example, African countries must show their capacity to absorb technology and to adapt it to their own local conditions; these are things which they cannot expect foreigners to do it for them. Transfer of technology is one of the corner stones of the New International Economic Order. Another is manpower training and management development. Developed countries and international organisation may train managers, administrators, technical personnel and other professionals but the brain drain may deny African countries the benefit of their service, the brain drain itself being the sequel of counter-productive policies which many African governments pursue. Even those trained personnel who choose to serve and remain in their countries may not be utilized in positions for which they had been trained and so doctors and engineers may be nominated as ambassadors, or cabinet ministers, laboratory technicians may become administrators and agricultural officers may be assigned administrative positions in the Ministry of Agriculture with little or no time for field work. All this serves to illustrate how government policy can defeat the whole purpose of international aid.

Economic performance is not determined purely by economic factors. As some of the critics of the New International Economic Order state, "In all cases, in the Third World as in the West, the principal determinants of economic achievement and performance have been human aptitudes, motivations, aspirations, mores, modes of thought, social institutions and political

arrangements".<sup>1/</sup> These critics say that it is these factors '... which have either fostered or hindered the willingness to work, save, take risks, and perceive and pursue economic opportunities'.<sup>2/</sup> These criticisms are, however, directed as much against the Third World, of which Africa is a part, as they are against the New International Economic Order. But the criticism is justified because agricultural extension has often failed in Africa, as in elsewhere in the Third World, for sociological reasons and development projects are known to have failed for political reasons. Even the proliferation, mismanagement and near-collapse of public enterprises have been blamed, at least partially, on political factors. Development plans have been rendered useless by lack of public support, administrative inadequacies and absence of political commitment.

The World is moving at a fast pace and is likely to move at a faster pace in the future. Keeping up with this pace is itself a very great challenge. African public services should be able to cope with rapidly changing situations; otherwise, new technologies will be rendered obsolete before they are learnt and adopted to local situations. Of course the New International Economic Order does not mean that the progress of the World must be stopped so that Africa will catch up with it. President Nyerere once said to the Tanzanian people: 'We must run while others walk'. This is the spirit that should characterize African public services in the 1980s, for they must stand up to the challenge. There is yet the challenge of coping with demands of rising complexity; future public demands will be complicated by technological considerations, by complex internal and external political situations and by difficult economic factors.

Despite nearly two decades of independence African public services cannot yet free their economies from foreign domination. The universities have not produced enough competent geologists to explore the resources of their countries and many African countries still depend heavily on foreign

<sup>1/</sup> Professors P.T. Bauer and B.S. Yamey, 'Against the New Economic Order' Commentary, April 1977, p. 28

<sup>2/</sup> Ibid, p. 29

geologists to tell them whether they have mineral resources. Similarly, engineers, doctors, veterinarians and agronomists are all in short supply. So are African entrepreneurs, for in a great number of African countries the commercial sector is still dominated by foreign minority groups. The situation is far worse when it comes to intermediate labour and so doctors may work without nurses and without laboratory technicians. Engineers may work without surveyors, foremen, or other assistants. Sometimes there is the tendency to think of producing higher professional and technical staff without thinking about their assistants. Intermediate and skilled labour are very important to development since they can do many things which unnecessarily take most of the time of highly specialized labour. In the United States, for example, the pressure on the highly specialized medical doctors has been relieved by physicians and much of the physician's work has been entrusted to special nurses. The result is that highly specialized medical doctors spend their precious time only on genuine cases. African countries have not yet learnt to concentrate on areas where they are experiencing acute shortages. In Somalia, for example, there are but a handful of water engineers when in fact much of the country is arid and the country's economy is mainly pastoral. Loss of human and animal lives are common in the droughts and are mainly due to lack of water. Water supply should therefore have been top and urgent priority in that country; yet the technical personnel to do the work are very few and cannot cope with the huge demands made upon them.

How can African countries industrialize, multiply their agricultural production, and develop entrepreneurial talent when they have only very few doctors, geologists, engineers, agricultural specialists, trained managers, administrators, nurses, laboratory technicians, and other skilled labour? The challenges of the future demand that these be produced in adequate numbers. It is not only their quantity that matters. Since their capacity to execute very technical development projects will depend on their quality, it is necessary that they should receive first class training which enables them to apply skills and solve problems. This is a special challenge to the universities, polytechnics, and schools of management and/or of

administration. They themselves must be of high quality in order to produce specialists who will meet the expectations of their people.

But the mere production of such staff is not enough. There still remains the question of their utilization. The challenges will not be met and the situation will remain unchanged if they are allowed to sit in air-conditioned offices in the national capital. These are the men and women who are trained for the field and should be deployed into the field. Their retention is equally important since their training represents a heavy investment. To retain them governments must adopt sound policies of personnel administration, incentives for field work, good salaries, promotions, protection against arbitrary discharge or dismissals, medical care and good terminal benefits.

The stagnation of African economies has very often been attributed to the pursuit of sterile (even damaging) policies by African governments. There is a great deal of justification in this. Government policies have been said to be responsible for bureaucratic inefficiency, for the failure of development projects, for aborting development plans, for misusing foreign aid, for lack of economic analysis and forecast, for discouraging foreign investment, for soaring public debts, and for rural stagnation. If every conceivable failure is blamed on government policy then there is a glaring need for the improvement of policy-making. Africans, however, have not been oblivious to the need to improve public policy-making. Indeed President Siaka Stevens said in a speech recently that since the best educated and best trained people are in the public service to isolate them from policy-making circles would be tantamount to denying the country the full use of its best brains. In a similar vein, President Nyerere argued that in a one-party State it is 'absurd to exclude a whole group of the most intelligent and able members of the community from participation in the discussion of policy simply because they happen to be civil servants'.<sup>1/</sup> Apart from ensuring their loyalty this is in fact the main reason why senior

---

<sup>1/</sup> Julius K. Nyerere, op. cit.



civil servants are members of the party in single-party States. Top administrators and managers, are encouraged not only to influence policy but to involve themselves actively in policy-making so that they will be seriously committed to the execution of the policies which they had helped to formulate. The major advantage to be derived from this is that policy-making will cease to be the exclusive preserve of often ignorant politicians.

The issues which African governments will deal with in the 1980s and beyond will be highly complex. They will need to have highly specialized people in their public services to collect data on and analyze the various issues that confront government with a view to coming up with policy alternatives with a complete analyses as to the relative merits and demerits of options. Politicians will never have the time to undertake such a difficult task even if they are highly educated because undertaking research into and coming up with a comparative analyses of the various policy issues which confront a government is time-consuming and intellectually demanding. The people who are researching into the various policy issues must first establish themselves as authorities in their respective fields of research so as to assure the quality of their produce and in order to command the respect and confidence of the politicians so that the latter will heed their advice.

Governments will need to have feasibility studies of economic projects; they will need to know in advance the likely immediate results of policies as well as their far-reaching implications; they will need to understand and appreciate the full implications of the New International Economic Order; they will need to know the full implications of the various proposals that are being discussed in the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas which will govern future exploitation of marine resources; and they will need to analyse the various economic issues that are being raised and discussed in the North/South dialogue. Likewise, foreign aid is not always purely altruistic and is sometimes granted on a quid pro quo basis, and so African countries will have to know its political as well as its economic implications, both immediate and long-range. Nowadays, we witness a great deal of foreign military intervention in Africa and the signs of super-power rivalry. Is this a 'second Scramble for Africa' as some people fear

it is? Governments must of course be able to examine the full implications of this on their economies and on their exercise of sovereignty. Similarly, domestic political and economic issues have to be examined in detail so that policy options will be weighed more carefully. For example, there is a talk, following OPEC's recent meeting in Geneva, of increasing oil prices in the 1980s. What will be the impact of this on African economies? African governments should know well in advance so that they can take good precautionary measures. Furthermore, we know from past experience that African countries become aware of problems when these reach a crisis point. Government should look ahead and be able to foresee the problems that are in the offing and deal with them before they deteriorate into a crisis and this requires that the implications of events be analysed in order to see what they may mean for the future. Above all, a government should approach problems with a clear mind as to what it wants which means that it must have clear policy goals and objectives to direct it not only in international negotiations but at all times. These goals and objectives, however, should be arrived at after a thorough appraisal of their feasibility and implications.

The need for policy analysis is therefore obvious. It follows that the institutional framework for this be established. First of all, the universities and other institutions of higher learning should be strengthened and their ability to undertake research should be developed. Governments should also be willing to channel funds into research so as to encourage it. Secondly, special research institutions such as the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), should be established at the national level and encouraged. Thirdly, governments may establish 'think tanks' comprising persons of high intellectual standard and experience who are drawn from the universities and other research institutions as well as from administrative and managerial ranks. The main function of the 'think tank' would be to advise the government on highly complicated issues and to present viable policy options to it. In addition, government ministries should contribute to the improvement of policy-making by giving their expert advice. This requires, however, that the senior officials in the ministries should be experts in their own right and should be able to render sound technical

advice concentrating especially on the implementation aspects of policy in order to balance academic discussion of issues. This will also serve to enrich the jobs of specialists as well as generalists.

Planning should be recognized as a tool of policy-making. The objectives of the plan, determined through a rational process of policy-making, should be clearly enunciated in the plan so that departments will have a clear mind as to what targets to hit and when. Planning should also involve a realistic appraisal of available means and an equally realistic evaluation of the capacity of government departments to carry out the plan and achieve its purposes within the plan period. The hiatus that has hitherto divided the formulation and implementation aspects of planning should be bridged. Plan implementation should also be reflected in the budget so that objectives are related to available resources.

To do all this, there should be an attitudinal change on the part of public servants as well as politicians. Senior public servants should discard anachronistic bureaucratic values which are not compatible with development. They should also get rid of the aloofness and diffidence that still characterizes some of them. They should go to the masses and try to understand them and interact more vigorously with them in order to be sensitive and responsive to popular needs. They should equally try to understand the politicians and have a meaningful dialogue with them on national issues as well as issues that concern the interests of the public service. Human nature being as complex as it is, there will no doubt be some frictions and sometimes sharp conflicts among the various personalities but conflict should be institutionalized and not be allowed to get out of hand.

The implications of all this is that there must be a highly professionalized and motivated public service in order to meet the difficult challenges of the future. There is dire need for training in all fields of endeavour and the need for training is greater with the greatness of the challenge. The expansion of government functions and responsibilities will call for intensive training throughout the service in order to be able to

cope with these huge responsibilities. Governments should therefore take training more seriously and should strengthen all training institutions. They may indicate their seriousness by linking training to promotions so that individual public servants will willingly seek to be trained. The majority of public servants in Africa need training to improve upon their present job performance and learn new jobs or new and more efficient methods of doing things. Furthermore, professionalisation of the public service which includes the learning of new skills implies a great deal of training activity. To emphasize the dire need for training in all sections of the public service in Nigeria the Udoji Commission states in its report that:

"Of the various problems facing public management in Nigeria, by far the most serious is the shortage of experienced, skilled manpower. This constraint is seen in all categories and all levels of the service. From the birth of the Federation, this has been the prime problem impeding public management".<sup>1/</sup>

So the 1980s will require a highly professionalized public service which is able to handle and analyse very complex national and international issues and which can cope with the challenges of the future generally. But the ability of the public service to handle these issues and carry out difficult and highly technical functions will be largely determined by its ability to learn and use new administrative technology and also by its ability to adapt other technology to the peculiar situations of its country. Training should therefore be intense and continuous. However, it is not sufficient that African public servants know how to do their jobs; they must also enjoy them so that they will do them properly and with dignity. This brings us to the question of morale which depends on decent remuneration, fringe benefits, promotion and recruitment on merit, a good superannuation scheme and general conditions of service. The strains and stresses within the service can also be eased by esprit de corpse and by 'elasticity of control'<sup>2/</sup> which is the hallmark of a professionalized public service.

<sup>1/</sup> Report of the Public Service Review Commission, Federal Ministry of Information (Printing Division) Lagos, September 1974, p.2

<sup>2/</sup> On the concept of 'elasticity of control' and its place in a professional service, See Professor Herbert Werlin, 'Elasticity of Control: An analysis of Decentralization', Report on the Conference of African Local Institutions and Rural Transformation, Lincoln University, USA, 1967, Appendix I.

Conditions of service should also be revised on a periodical basis, say once every five or ten years, in order to take account of the inevitable rise in the cost of living, otherwise the salaries of public servants will be outstripped by rising inflation in consequence of which the temptation of corruption will become too great to resist.

The deleterious effects of corruption on African political and administrative systems is also too great to be ignored. Corruption has distorted these systems to a great extent and has stripped the public services of their dignity and courage. It is not only meagre salaries and low pensions that encourage corruption but also government policies such as restrictions on trade licences as well as the cumbersome and involute administrative procedures which create bottlenecks with the result that members of the public corrupt public officials in order to have them expedite the processing of their papers. To fight against corruption will therefore require establishing good conditions of service, improvement of administrative methods and procedures and a definite attempt to imbue the public service with a very strong sense of probity.

Along with corruption governments must also fight against other forms of impropriety such as nepotism and favouritism. As mentioned earlier the requirements of nation-building may compel a government to accommodate tribal interests and to favour the recruitment of members of tribes who are aggrieved by being unrepresented or under-represented into the senior positions of the public service irrespective of their educational qualifications and experience. This will inevitably hurt the morale of competent and dedicated officials and will also adversely affect the quality as well as the quantity of the output of public servants. Political needs may thus be antithetical to the requirements of administrative efficiency. The discrepancy can of course be remedied by educating and training promising members of under-represented tribes and this requires advance planning.

The Public Service Commissions of the 1980s should play a more vigorous and positive role in order to help in moulding a civil service that is equipped with the skills and knowledge essential for discharging its onerous

duties and which enjoys at the same time public confidence and esteem. They must help to mould an energetic and dedicated public service that combines high professional standards with high moral standards. The distinction has been made between 'advisory' and 'executive' Public Service Commissions. 'Advisory' Public Service Commissions tend to be passive and indifferent to political nominations within the public service and an 'executive' commission may conflict with an executive President who is keen to assert his authority and seeks to relegate the Commission's role to an advisory one. The politicians do in fact make the general policies governing the public services but they are not content, apparently, with their role of policy-making. Some countries do not even have a public service commission or a Head of the Civil Service and appointments to high positions in the public service are made by the Politbureau of the Party or by the cabinet. Public Service Commissions should, wherever they exist, be composed of persons who are well educated and whose integrity is impeccable; they should be persons of sufficient means so that they will be above corruption and they should also be fair-minded and free, as far as possible, from nepotism and tribal prejudice. This is perhaps too idealistic but pursuing the ideal is often very rewarding.

So much has been said about improving the public services. What about the politicians? This paper is not of course about politicians but improving and enhancing the capabilities of the public service alone will be grossly insufficient to meet the formidable challenges of the future if the quality of the politician does not improve. The politicians themselves should be educated and enlightened so that they can discuss difficult problems intelligently and understand and weigh the advice of specialists. If the intellectual gap between politicians and public servants is very wide, as it is in some cases, they will never understand each other, and, worst of all, they will continue to pull in opposite directions.

#### IV. Conclusion

The numerous challenges that continue to confront African public services and will continue to confront them in the 1980s are the subsidiaries of two broad challenges: nation-building and development. These challenges are so difficult, perhaps impossible, to meet with a poorly staffed, poorly motivated and largely untrained public services, especially when the problems of the public services are compounded by political, economic and social factors. To meet the challenges, therefore, African countries should greatly improve their public services. They should, in addition, develop sound and practicable strategies for achieving their goals and objectives.

What is required to meet the great task that lies ahead is a highly professionalized and strongly motivated public service. The need for this has been recognized of late, and those who advocated reforms in the public service have called for a high degree of professionalization.<sup>1/</sup> But professionalization does not only mean that intensive and widespread training be undertaken but it also means that the individual public servants should persevere in self-improvement and in the uplifting of their respective professions by conforming to professional standards and ethics and by subscribing and contributing to professional journals so that they will keep abreast with developments in their respective fields of specialization.

The task of professionalizing the public service falls mainly to the Public Service Commission. They should be the first to give due recognition to professional qualifications, experience and performance by recruiting and promoting on merit. They can do great harm by recruiting and promoting the wrong people and by devising a grading system that favours generalists over specialists and does not, therefore, encourage specialists. A continuous staff development programme should also be an integral part of the Commissions work since feeding the public services with officers of high calibre will require the undertaking of such a programme. This should not

<sup>1/</sup> Chief Udoji, for example, has called for a professionalized public service in Nigeria; See Chapter 3 'A New Style Public Service', Public Service Review Commission, op.cit. Similarly, Professor Adebayo Adedeji concludes his analysis of the Tanzanian Civil Service by saying that Tanzania '... needs a growing corps of committed professionals,' See Adedeji, The Tanzania Civil Service, A Decade After Independence, op. cit., p.30

be taken to mean that the Commission must be involved in the actual conduct of training; it means, however, that the Commission must have a programme according to which the Ministries will send their officers for training so that these officers will either receive additional professional qualifications which will prepare them for higher responsibilities or will attend 'refresher' courses which are designed to expose them to the latest developments in their respective fields of specialization. Finally, the Commission should play a leading role in bringing about the appropriate attitudinal change and in creating an atmosphere conducive to development.

Improving the public service as well as the political system of a country is a continuous process, the stages of which must be planned with meticulous care. However, while it is necessary to adhere to such plans the adherence must permit a degree to flexibility so that plans can be improved upon in the light of unforeseen developments as they run their course. It is therefore necessary to have a permanent machinery to ensure a periodical evaluation of the capabilities of the public service and to identify problems and bottlenecks. An Organisation and Methods (O & M) department may be established to undertake such a task but this should be so highly placed as to be able to command the respect of the Ministries. Alternatively, a Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform may be established as in the Sudan so as to combine two complimentary functions in a single organisation. The need to improve the Public Service should be considered a natural accompaniment of administrative reform and one institution should be entrusted to perform this dual function as in the Sudan.

Owing to the paucity of resources many African countries certainly need help to improve and increase the capability of their public services. In the first place, the African countries themselves must co-operate in the exchange of information on administrative and political innovations and must share their experience so that each country will have the chance to learn from the other. This can be facilitated by existing regional institutions such as ECA, AAPAM and CAFRAD which already contribute a great deal to the improvement of African public services by holding seminars, conferences,



symposia and training courses. In addition, African countries should have programmes for the exchange of national experts as well as university professor; both the OAU and ECA can do a great deal to facilitate this. Furthermore, African countries should avail themselves of the wide range of opportunities presented by foreign aid in the form of advanced administrative, management and technical training. As far as the analysis of public policy is concerned ECA has tried to create and develop a regional institution which will monitor, analyse and assess future World and African economic and political trends in order to help African governments arrive at more rational policy decisions. However, the idea of creating such an institution, which was to be called 'African Centre for Advanced Public Policy Analysis and Strategic Studies (ACAPPASS)', did not attract the interest of many African governments and so the proposal did not, unfortunately, take off the ground.

However, socio-political factors may tend to defeat all these efforts. The competition between the various interest groups (ethnic, commercial, professional etc.) for the allocation of scarce resources will tend to militate against recruitment and promotions to sensitive policy-making positions in the public service strictly on merit. The problem of tribalism is as much damaging to a fair and just system of recruitment and promotions as it is to a sound policy-making system. Persons who are appointed to high public office for their political credentials rather than for their educational and professional qualifications and experience will not be able to command the confidence and respect of their subordinates; nor will the politicians heed their advice. But a government may be compelled by circumstances to use high public service positions as a means of preventing a dangerous coincidence between political and regional (ethnic) cleavages.

Political stability is essential also for the evolution of political and administrative systems. But politicians are usually impatient for quick results and tend to assail in public, or even replace, individual public servants when they see that quick results are not forthcoming. Future challenges will demand that politicians overcome this weakness by trying

to learn that the process of developing a strong and professionally capable public service takes a very long time. This does not mean, however, that they should tolerate bureaucratic inefficiency and indifference to public opinion which politicians are, quite understandably, very sensitive about.

Finally, Government may flicker between the need to promote national unity by trying to accommodate disparate ethnic interests and the need to recognize and reward individual merit in the public service. Only highly dedicated and experienced governments can steer the ship of state through such a difficult course and unless African governments show seriousness of purpose in their efforts to transform their public services into powerful instruments for formulating and executing national public policies and development programmes they will fail to achieve their objectives.