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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE NO.1

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1. Committee No.1 was given the task of studying the problems involved in "organization, administration and development policy". It would like to draw the attention of the participants in the seminar immediately to the two following points.

On the one hand, the problems it had to consider are problems of which the political aspects are important, if not essential. But, on the other hand, however important these political preoccupations may be, they should not let the other relevant concerns be lost sight of. There are in fact technical, rational, objective, administrative factors of great importance which governments must not disregard.

While some problems have a purely political aspect, for example the apportioning of ministerial departments among the members of the government, and while others are purely scientific, such as the methods of drawing up administrative documents or the rules governing internal communications, most of them are of a mixed nature. To these objective factors we must add the urgent need to solve the problems raised by the development of the country and the concern of the various organizations participating in technical assistance to the countries in question. Therefore Committee No.1, while it is well aware of the importance of political factors in these problems, feels it essential for governments to take into account the considerations which follow.

2. The Committee's report will deal successively with: (1) general problems of organization; (2) problems relating to the administrative organization of development; (3) lastly, problems of methodology.

3. 1° General problems of administrative organization

The Committee had been requested by the plenary meeting of the Seminar to submit to it an "organigram" of the administrative structures of a State, which might be used, if not as a model, at least as a basis for reflection by the various governments concerned.

Despite the work done by the members of a sub-committee and the submission of a draft prepared by Mr. Chatti, delegate from Tunisia, the preparation of this "organigram" involved very great difficulties, which led the Committee to give up the task entrusted to it. It would have required a much longer time than was available. Moreover, and above all, certain technical difficulties emerged which should be briefly mentioned.

4. There are considerable obstacles to impede the preparation of this kind of organizational model.

A. The geographical size and the population size of States alter considerably the foundations on which an administration can be built up.

B. States have very diverse economic and social structures. Some are exclusively agricultural, others have also a mining industry, and others again have an embryo or even a relatively large manufacturing industry. Some States have a quasi-feudal social structure, while in others the traditional social structures have been disintegrating, etc.

C. There is a similar diversity in the ideas of different governments on development methods. Some put their faith in liberal machinery and dislike everything to do with planning, accepting at most the compilation of programmes. In the view of others, on the other hand, there can be no development without comprehensive and authoritarian planning. Lastly, some feel that it is necessary to resort to planning, provided that it calls for a variety of methods of implementation and does not use coercion.

D. The differing administrative traditions are a major obstacle to the establishment of a single organigram. Traditions derived from the former metropolitan countries have become an integral part of the national administrations; and this makes it difficult, without a prior effort to obtain reciprocal knowledge, to look for a structural model to be presented jointly.

E. In this field political and constitutional systems play an extremely important role which has all too often been underestimated in the past.

The administrative structures vary considerably according to whether there is a parliamentary or a non-parliamentary regime or whether there is a single party (moreover a distinction has to be made according to whether that single party is officially and constitutionally recognized or not). Furthermore, the existence of federal States (Nigeria, Kenya, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) poses the problem in special terms.

F. Lastly, the lack of prior documentation made the task devolving on Committee No.1 particularly difficult.

5. Nevertheless, the discussions in the Committee showed clearly how important the problem is. From them we may draw certain conclusions which should be brought to the attention of the governments and organizations concerned.

A. Administrative structure must not be simply the result of tradition or of political considerations. It involves an objective study of the problems arising in a given State. It is the responsibility of the government of that State to take urgent steps, if it has not already done so, to see that this kind of overall study is made with a view to guiding its work.

B. It would be of interest to have a complete monograph prepared on the structures and functioning of the administration of every State. The studies on this subject supplied by various delegates have been, in this field, undoubtedly useful for the work of the seminar. They ought to be supplemented and, above all, systematized.

C. A full comparative study should then be carried out throughout Africa, so as to enable the governments to become more fully aware of the problem.

D. Lastly, a further seminar should be able subsequently to take up the work already mentioned, this time restricting itself to questions of administrative structure, organization and methods.

6. 2^o Problems of the administrative organization of development

Committee No.1 attributed particular importance to administrative problems arising out of development needs. This orientation corresponds to the basic preoccupations of the African States; moreover it was mentioned specifically in the research task entrusted to the seminar by ECA. Many of the introductory documents for the seminar's work make specific references to this.

Committee No.1 first endeavoured to clarify precisely what it meant by "development". Development problems are all those economic and social questions connected with the progress of an individual country, especially with regard to increasing the national income, improving the level of living of the population, extending education, and transforming the social and physical condition of individuals and of the various communities.

This definition does not claim to be either scientific or exhaustive. It is simply a working hypothesis.

7. After prolonged discussion, the Committee agreed to put forward the following suggestions:

A. Development is not possible in any African country unless there is a specialized administration for planning problems, with its functions limited to that field alone.

B. The administration in question should be completely independent of any other ministerial department. Even if it appears necessary for it to establish close links with the Ministry of Finance, that should not entail any kind of subordinate status.

C. This planning administration must be given great authority if it is desired to make its action effective. This authority may result from being directly attached to the head of government, or from the appointment of a minister specifically responsible for planning. However, in no case should the administration concerned have priority over the rest of the administration of a country. It is and remains at the government's disposal.

D. The functions of the development administration relate primarily to the working out of plans, with, if necessary, the help of the various administrations concerned.

But it is also concerned with the implementation problems of the plan, for an administration must be able to collate all the information on how the programmes are being carried out, and to propose modifications to be made to the initial projects if necessary.

This means: that the development administration must be informed; that it must be able to supply information for itself; that it must have the right to make suggestions to the executing agencies; and that if need be it can appeal to the head of the government. But it cannot have a power of substitution. In short, the planning administration has a power of oversight of the implementation of the plan.

8. Besides the general proposals made in paragraph 5, the Committee proposes that a meeting of specialists, on the one hand in administrative problems and on the other hand in development problems, should have an opportunity to deal more fully with this problem. An effort should be made to fuse their experience and their different preoccupations in a harmonious whole.

9. 3^o Methods of administrative organization

Having endorsed the comments and conclusions submitted by one of its sub-committees, Committee No.1 feels it would be useful to make the following recommendations to the African governments. The latter should:

A. Establish an administrative structure in which the different administrations should have a clear-cut field of responsibility but one that is as wide as possible, with a clear definition of the functions, powers and responsibilities of those administrations.

B. Establish the administration of personnel on the basis of merit: "The right man in the right place" (see report of Committee No.3).

C. Make sure that the administrative usages and regulations, and also the legislation insofar as it impinges on administrative rules and procedures, are drafted clearly and are revised if need be at regular intervals.

D. Make sure that current procedures are correctly established and effectively applied in all the administrations, and that every effort is made to simplify working methods.

E. Create a specialized administration (office of organization and methods) composed of specialists in matters of administration, directly subordinated to the highest government level, for the purpose of reforming and continually improving the structures, the organization, and the standard procedures throughout the State administration.

The persons allocated to this branch should also possess a highly developed feeling for psychology.

It should be understood that the competence of this branch extends to highest-level problems of administrative organization, and not merely to the practical methods of technical organization in the government departments.

10. Certain reforms have already been carried out in several States, or are being studied, or in course of implementation. In this field it would be useful to know about these various reforms. A joint study could then be made.
