

Cornerstones of Bantu Development

L. MORGAN

It has become fashionable in South Africa to focus attention predominantly on the problem of the urban Black man. There prevails a curious acceptance of the thesis that rural development is of mere secondary importance and, indeed, the effort and resources required to achieve it could be—if a choice were forced on us—more rewardingly redirected and concentrated upon the urban community.

Firstly, I will explain why I disagree fundamentally with this view. Secondly, I will try to identify a major barrier to any attempt to achieve—let alone accelerate—rural development. And, thirdly, I will outline an approach which may help to secure a reduction of this barrier.

A key consideration in development planning is obviously the provision of adequate employment opportunities. South Africa's spectacular industrial development during the past two decades has now produced an euphoric faith in the ability of industry, in the context of a high economic growth rate, to provide an almost limitless number of urban jobs. Yet nowhere on the African Continent, including Southern Africa, is there evidence to support such hopes.

The current economic development programme forecasts an excess of more than 300 000 Black workers over those needed by 1977. But this estimate is at an anticipated economic growth rate of 5,75%, while the real growth rate for 1972 amounted to only 3,1%. This means that for the remaining 5 years there will have to be an average

growth rate of at least 6,28% for the shortfall in jobs to be held to even this level.

However, there are few authorities who now accept the accuracy of the official estimates based on the EDP projections which predict an annual entry into the labour market of 120 000 men from the homelands, of whom about 60 000 will have to be employed within those areas. A recent analysis of the calculations of several leading economists shows a variation in projections which ranges from a minimum shortfall of jobs within the homelands of 70 000 a year, to an annual unemployment increase of over 100 000.

The harsh fact to be faced is that in the context of this country's rate of population growth there is not the smallest hope of sufficient jobs being created by an attainable economic growth rate. Those of you who still believe that we are already treading the same path of progressive industrial revolution leading to relatively full employment, as trodden by Europe and North America, are bemused by a perilously deceptive mirage which has no relevance to the stark realities of the situation in Africa.

The pattern which is beginning to emerge here is one of a relatively skilled, educated, well-paid urban Black society, capable of meeting through its own population increase the larger proportion of the labour needs of an increasingly automated industrial sector. We are already witnessing the birth of this elite class. In contrast, this pattern also includes almost as many rural Blacks, but the employment opportunities of these will fall disastrously short of their needs. To a large extent, their role will continue to be that of an unskilled, pick-and-shovel migrant labour force—for the minority fortunate enough

South African Financial Gazette, Johannesburg

L. MORGAN, *Business Editor*

Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the South African Nutrition Society, held in Pretoria on 6 - 8 September 1973.

to find jobs. And even this outlet is likely to shrink as the drive for increased productivity in White industry gains momentum.

For the mass of the rural population the immediate goal will not be the prospect of rising living standards, but the bare needs to secure physical survival itself. Many will cling to the hope that an exodus to the squatter areas of the White industrial centres will afford them this. But the jobs will not be there and, in the words of Schumacher: 'This disintegration will continue to manifest itself in mass unemployment and mass migration into the metropolitan areas; and this will poison economic life in the modern sector as well.'

But need this situation develop—at least on the scale which now seems likely to occur by the end of this decade? Although the homelands occupy only 13% of South Africa, they constitute 23% of its productive agricultural potential. An intensive study of sample areas has indicated that, excluding the Transkei and the Ciskei and some of the smaller homelands, they could feed almost 25 million people. Yet they are net importers of food. The only significant cash exports consist of livestock—their cattle make a major contribution to the beef supplies of White areas. But even here there is incongruity: the rural Black is exporting the very commodity which could alleviate the protein deficiencies which are now menacing him even more than they do his urban compatriot.

His maize yields average under 4 bags per hectare, although demonstration plots in the same areas are yielding as much as 30 bags and more. In the few commercial Black dairy enterprises now existing, it takes 4-5 cows to yield a total of milk equal to that produced by 1 cow in a reasonably well-managed White dairy unit. The average sow production of my own pig herd is 2,1 litters a year, with 10,3 piglets weaned per litter. Results of some of the better Black farmers with whom I have spoken recently, are on average 1 litter per year with 3 piglets weaned. And these results, it should be pointed out, are not dependent on soil fertility but on management standards.

In effect, I cannot accept that the agricultural potential of the homelands has yet been exploited to even a fraction of what is possible. Neither do I accept that precepts and technical policies formulated a quarter of a century ago—and I am not without considerable respect for the Tomlinson Commission's work—should inhibit recourse to adopting and adapting facets of the science-and-technology inspired agricultural revolution which has been proceeding in the succeeding years. I recognise the difficulties of technical transfers and cultural change, and the fact that Black rural development needs a far greater degree of financial and manpower under-pinning than it has enjoyed in the past, but it is not too late and it is even more urgent now.

The three basic ingredients for rural regeneration anywhere are motivation, extension, and amenity values. In South Africa an approach to motivation in agriculture has been developed, on a relatively small scale, through health and nutrition. This justifies far greater application than at present, for it is one of the most promising

concepts in this field. Needless to say, the entire extension effort demands reinforcement, and the planning of those amenities—improved educational, medical and social facilities—which can influence population stability, must be accelerated.

But even given effective motivation, extension, and adequate and attractive social amenities, there is still one crucial factor which exerts a major influence on the outcome of any rural development effort among both White and Black communities of peasant farmers. If we are to seek an increased output of food and farm commodities from the Blacks, this presupposes increased effort and energy inputs on the part of the operator. It is curious how prominent authors of works on development appear to believe that once you have managed to persuade your peasant farmers to embark on social and cultural change to utilise improved seed and livestock types, you can put your coat on and move off and evangelise the next potential convert. Naturally, when he returns the following year he is dismayed to find the initial bumper crop harvested but not replanted, and the stud bull still the centre of interest—but now at the braaivleis.

The attention paid to the increased energy demands involved in boosting output is depressingly ignored. And yet, in the developed countries, this problem has been one of the principal factors accelerating the drift from the smaller farms. One suspects that those who write textbooks are rarely extended physically, over long periods, to the extent that effort becomes an experience in pain; where an endless day ends in physical and mental exhaustion to a degree where a man can even envy the cud-chewing leisure of his beasts. A day must come when he asks himself why he undergoes this numbing toil when his city cousins have time, and energy to spare, after their work, to enrich their lives. Why, therefore, should we expect the Black farmer—who in any case has no tradition of agriculture, and has no love of the hoe—to react any differently to the White peasant? And is not this problem exacerbated in Africa by the frequently low-energy resources which already exist as a result of protein-calorie malnutrition, by the fact that it is often the woman or the ex-TB victim who must perform the labour?

While the developed world is reducing the physical demands on the individual worker, it would be incomprehensible to the rural labourer in the underdeveloped regions that he should not also benefit. Indeed, the time has come in the South African development effort to look more closely at accepted farming techniques, and to decline to promote those which incur a physical burden which we personally would judge unacceptable if we had to apply them ourselves.

With this conviction, and with a farm available for our purpose, two years ago my family and I initiated a series of studies in an effort to make a practical contribution in this field. A section of the farm, which is situated on the coast of West Wales—an area which has its own developmental problems because of lack of employment—was earmarked for trials focused on crop production. In addition, the livestock enterprises on the farm were involved in a number of parallel studies. The total project was conducted on the basis of a fully-

integrated small farm enterprise—livestock and crops in essentially supportive roles. No outside labour was employed for the cropping studies, and the livestock enterprises—consisting of beef and dairy cattle, a pedigree pig herd, sheep, and a variety of poultry—were also run on family labour, with only occasional assistance from outside the farm.

The cropping studies were conducted among both field crops and horticultural crops. Varieties used in the trials were selected not only on a basis of quantitative yields but from qualitative factors on nutritional considerations. To reduce energy demands to any significant degree, it was considered that attention should be given to two main aspects: implement design and the use of chemicals, particularly in the control of weeds, which usually exerts a particularly heavy demand on labour. We were generously assisted in the selection and design studies of tools and implements by manufacturers. Newer types of non-residual herbicides were studied, not only from the point of view of their efficiency but also from their risk factors when handled by semiliterate operators. Trials were carried out into the use of polythene mulch for both weed control and moisture conservation, and into row and plant spacing for optimum yield and ease of weed control.

We also looked at the influence of unchecked weed growth on crop yields at various stages of maturity, in order to obtain indications of the optimum times for weed control measures and the minimum operations which would enable a reasonable crop to be harvested.

In the livestock studies we investigated improved fence designs and fencing tools; manure removal from sheds and yards and its distribution on the land; and the provision of water supplies to points where they are required. Much consideration was given to the design of labour-reducing systems for the handling of livestock, including the design of simple buildings, and to handling

methods which would reduce stress factors for both the worker and the animal.

It is planned that these studies will, in the near future, be transplanted back in South Africa. It is hoped that they will not only be expanded, but that their positive contributions to the problem can eventually be disseminated among the people they are intended to assist.

It is planned that these studies will, in the near future, can ever compete with the timeless attractions of the city. It has been shown in individual regions of Europe that it can indeed. But in Africa the most potent influence is almost certain to be the prospect of a greater chance of survival than that offered by a decision to join the desperate exodus in search of non-existent jobs and opportunities in distant urban centres. We must not allow ourselves to be orientated to the currently fashionable cataclysmic school of prophecy on race relations, but unless the nutritional standards within the homelands are significantly raised within the next few years, together with the development of the broader aspects of their social environment, I believe we will see the emergence of an increasingly desperate people, for whom neither border fences nor systems of influx control will have meaning or effect.

There are infrastructural components of some magnitude which are still missing from the Black rural areas. There must be growth over a wide spectrum to include not only production, but entire marketing systems, co-operation, and the creation of local industries based on farm commodities and their processing. Yet all this will be to no avail if we lose sight of basic human problems which confront those we are trying to assist. And foremost among these is the heritage of sweat and toil, and the degree of physical burden which need no longer be inevitable historical stigmata borne by those who till the soil.
