
CONFERENCE OF LEADING PERSONALITIES OF EASTERN NIGERIAN ORIGIN: AN ASPECT OF PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE - 1960-1966

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Abstract

This paper is an assessment of the contributions of an *ad-hoc* body constituted by the leadership of the defunct Eastern Region of Nigeria in 1960, under the Premiership of Dr. Michael Okpara, known as “The Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigerian Origin”. The body consisted of 400 leading personalities drawn from all parts of the Region, who were experts in various fields of human endeavours. They were saddled with the responsibility of contributing their quota to the development of the region through sound advice to the Government. The first Conference was held from 30th to 31st of December 1960, and from 2nd to 4th March, 1962. The meetings offered the elite the opportunity to assess the various sectors of governance of the Region, and the privilege to make frank assessments and recommendations to the Government. The areas examined and recommendations made included: education, agriculture, health, industry, information, social welfare, etc. The innovation enhanced the participation of the people in governance. The inputs from these experts were ingrained into the Region’s Development Plan (1962 to 1968). This enhanced the performance of the Region and its rating as one of the fastest growing economy in the Third World before the disruption of the First Republic in January 1966. The paper relies on secondary sources emanating from the deliberations of the Conference and adopts a historical narrative methodology.

Keywords: Eastern Nigeria, Participatory Governance, Scholarship

Introduction

As an institution of the state, government is seen as machinery through which the collective will of the people occupying a clearly defined territory is organised and managed. This is so because everybody cannot gather together to participate directly in the issues that affect their existence, hence the need for a representative government. As a process or an art of governance, government is also viewed as a body empowered with the supreme authority for maintaining security, peace and stability through conventional and fundamental laws formulated and implemented by it within its geographical boundary (Abia, 2006).

The tasks of government are universally standardised. Whether in a pre-colonial African society ruled by custom and tradition or a modern society, people look to government to find an acceptably balanced way to do certain things; among which: to protect them from others – the weak from the powerful, to provide them acceptable standards of welfare, to settle disputes among people peacefully, holding the community together as one. Anywhere in the world, the tasks of government emerge, and political debate centres on the appropriateness of a government’s dispositions in these directions; the balances of government strikes in policy, the demands it makes of the people to carry forward that policy, and particularly the way it distributes the limited resources available to it among these various tasks (Abia, 2006).

The Eastern Region of Nigeria in April 1960 formulated participatory advisory machinery consisting 400 leading personalities, who were experts in various fields of human endeavours drawn from all the sections of the Region with the mandate to help the Government in the task of development. In the opening address during the first conference which was held from 30th to 31st December 1960, the Premier of the Region, Dr. Michael Okpara, outlined the bottlenecks in the development policies and programmes.

They included: the need for high level manpower, particularly in the scientific and technical fields, the need for mobilising domestic capital and attracting foreign capital for increased agricultural and industrial production as well as modernising the land tenure in order to meet the needs and challenges of the time. He therefore admonished Conference which was broken into committees of experts to proffer tangible solutions to the problems.

The paper examines the decisions of the various Committees of the Conference which centered on education, agriculture, industry, information, justice, social welfare, town planning and community development, etc.

The Eastern Region of Nigeria

Following the constitutional agreements reached during the Nigerian Constitutional Conference held in London in 1957, Eastern Nigeria became self-governing on the 8th of August 1957. With the gaining of regional autonomy, the Governor ceased to preside over the meetings of the Executive Council (the Cabinet) and the Premier assumed the function.

The Executive Council of the Region consisted of 15 Ministers, including the Premier. The Provincial Administrative Law of 1959 divided Eastern Nigeria into 12 Provinces. They were Abakiliki, Annang, Calabar, Degema, Enugu, Ogoja, Onitsha, Owerri, Port Harcourt, Umuahia, Uyo and Yenagoa. At each of these provinces was a Provincial Commissioner who was a member of the House of Assembly or the House of Chiefs. The Provincial Commissioner presided over the Provincial Assembly which was made up of all the members of the House of Assembly and the House of Chiefs for the Province plus members elected by local councils to represent the various clans in the Province (Eastern Nigeria, Independence Edition, 1960).

The Assemblies were purely deliberative bodies whose purpose was to make representations to the Government on the needs of the Provinces, on the allocation to the Provinces of funds for development purposes, on the preservation of fundamental human rights as set out in the constitution and on the award of scholarships. The Assemblies held one session a year of not more than two meetings of three sittings each. They had no legislative or executive functions. Each Province had a Provincial Secretary, who was a public servant and who had the duty not only of serving the Provincial Commissioner, but also of supervising the Divisional Officers, public servants in charge of the Divisions of his Province, and of co-ordinating the activities of the civil service representatives of the various Ministries in his Province (Eastern Nigeria, Independence Edition, 1960).

Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 30th to 31st December 1960

Report of the Committee on Education

The Committee discussed the Eastern Nigeria scholarship policy which covered Secondary, Grammar and Technical school awards and the process of selection for secondary school awards and public service scholarships. Also, strategies for improving the standard of education in the Region was deliberated upon. The following areas were exhaustively deliberated upon: Eastern Nigeria scholarship policy, Secondary, Grammar and Technical school award and public service scholarship.

Eastern Nigeria Scholarship Policy

With respect to post-secondary awards on a “divisional cum population” basis, many members of the Committee opined that this policy did not serve the best interests of the Region in its bid for increased manpower. They felt that post-secondary awards should not be on divisional cum population basis, but on the basis of the needs of the Region. Others could not see the logic of this argument. They believed that the policy was sound enough, as otherwise the backward divisions would not be able to keep pace with educationally advanced ones, but then added that in awarding scholarships on divisional basis, priority

should be given not only to the study of science, agriculture, engineering but also to the study of education and medicine. Moreover, scholarship awards overseas (i.e. outside West Africa) should continue in special cases to serve special needs (Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1960).

Secondary, Grammar and Technical School Awards

Some members of the Committee preferred that these awards be scrapped and the money be used for more essential scholarships such as postgraduate scholarships, as recommended by the Ashby Commission on Higher Education. It was indicated that in England, only about 6 percent of secondary school leavers go to universities and most of the rest are trained as technicians and executives. After giving due consideration to the points raised by some members, the Committee asked that a recommendation be made to the Government to increase the slot for Secondary Grammar and Technical School awards from 612 to 1,000 per annum.

On the question of the selection of candidates for the awards, some members felt that the Provincial Scholarship Boards were the better avenue for making these awards as members of such Boards would be in a position to know how best to distribute the awards to applicants within their constituencies. A contrary opinion was held by other members who believed that the Regional Scholarship Board should handle secondary, post-secondary and technical scholarships as hitherto. It then became necessary to put the question to the vote and this was done. Eventually, the resolution was that the award of secondary and technical education scholarships be in the hands of the Regional Government Scholarship Board.

Public Service Scholarship

The Committee opined that the Scheme for £5,000 Public Service Scholarship awards for post-graduate studies was too limited in scope as it was intended to benefit only civil servants. The members wanted the Government to expand the scheme to include those outside the public service. Moreover, the £5,000 was considered inadequate for post-graduate courses if the prevalent need for increased manpower were to be met. At this juncture, the Minister of Education told the Committee that the figure of £5,000 had been overtaken by events. He added that, he was prepared to place as many of the post-graduate students who were qualified anywhere in the world as many foreign countries were quite willing to assist the Region (Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin).

Another important subject that was considered was the need to improve the standard of education in the Region. In order to do this more exhaustively, the Education Committee was resolved into three sub-committees as follows: (a) sub-committee on falling standards, (b) sub-committee on teachers training (c) sub-committee on secondary education. The views of the sub-committees were later reported to the whole Committee for discussion and/or ratification. The Committee agreed that the standard of education in Eastern Nigeria had fallen since 1939.

The Committee agreed that the struggle for higher educational qualifications, in order to obtain higher pay, engaged in by many teachers has contributed to a lowering of the standard of education in the Region's schools for most of such teachers prepare for their private examinations at the expense of their students. It resolved that Teachers' Training Institutions should have minimum and not maximum staffing regulations as regards Graduate Teachers and Tutors should be given more opportunity for in-service training (Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1960).

On the question of grants-in-aid, the Committee was of the opinion that the prevalent system was faulty as many Headmasters were forced to promote pupils who were not qualified for such promotions merely because they wanted to have 30 pupils in each of Standards V and VI in order to meet up the required assumed local contribution. The Committee, however, did not feel that the grants-in-aid of

inefficient schools should be withdrawn. It would rather have the teachers responsible for the low standard of work traced out and penalised.

On supervision, with respect to Visiting Teachers and Education Officers, it was considered that the existing number of each was considered inadequate to meet the growing need for supervision of the work of teachers. The Committee recommended that the number of Education Officers and Visiting Teachers should be increased to enable them cope with the great expansion that has taken place in the early post-colonial years. The Committee further recommended that inefficient teachers should have their increments withheld to serve as a deterrent to others.

The summary of the Committee's recommendations were as follows:

- (a) The preparation for examinations by teachers in the school room should be made an offence.
- (b) Government to accept the Ashby Commission Report that training facilities for Grade I Teachers be created by the provision of two to three years formal education in an Advanced Teacher Training Institution and not by private study.
- (c) The inspection of schools should be carried out regularly and rigidly and the number of Education Officers and Visiting Teachers and Voluntary Agency Supervisors should be increased.
- (d) The Grants-in-Aid to inefficient schools should not be withdrawn but rather the teachers responsible for poor standards should be punished after due warning.
- (e) Headmasters of schools should submit annual reports on their teachers to Managers or Supervisors as the case may be and adverse report on a teacher should receive the attention of the appropriate authorities. Education Officers, Managers and Supervisors should support Headmasters in their efforts to maintain discipline. The Ministry of Education should give more support to the governing Bodies of T.T.C.s in the matter of discipline of students.
- (f) The existing system of Grants-in-Aid should be looked into and so adjusted that the desire to raise the required Assumed Local Contribution for a class does not affect promotions adversely.
- (g) Government should instruct Local Government Councils to try as far as possible to hold their meetings on Saturdays or in the afternoons.
- (h) Government should establish a Publicity Division in the Ministry of Education in order to encourage good relationship between the Ministry, parents, teachers and children.
- (i) The Committee endorsed the views of the Ashby Commission on the question of raising the prestige and salaries of teachers.

The Report of the Committee on Agriculture

The Committee on Agriculture considered the question of the systems of farming in the Region, particularly the three main systems: (a) plantation system, (b) communal or co-operative farming, including farm settlement scheme and (c) individual holdings. The Committee felt that there was a place for all three systems in the Region although they differed in relative application and importance. It examined issues such as plantation system, communal or co-operative farming including farm settlement and other issues affecting agricultural development in the Region.

Plantation System: This system depended on the availability of large areas of suitable land. Where such land is available, the committee thought that the plantation system should be encouraged provided the following necessary precautions are taken, namely:

- (i) That the people of the area should be closely associated with the ownership of the plantation. Where they could not own it themselves, the Government might itself run the plantation, through such bodies as the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation;

- (ii) That as far as capital was concerned, the ideal thing would be for the Government to borrow money for this purpose. Such money could be re-lent to the Statutory Government body which is running the plantation. Where it is necessary to bring in foreign firms, the Government or its agencies should take as large a share as possible (preferably controlling share) in the capital of such an organisation. If it was necessary to lease the land, the Government itself should be the primary lessee and sublease to the firm which is running the plantation;
- (iii) that for work on plantations hired labour was considered essential. It was therefore necessary for the Government to ensure that the labour code was as liberal as possible to plantation workers so that the inherent independence of the people of this Region may not suffer unduly.

Communal or Co-operative Farming including Farm Settlement: The Committee felt that if this system could be made to work, it could have many of the advantages of a Plantation System and avoid many of its disadvantages. The Committee therefore posited that Government should do everything possible to further such schemes. Many members of the Committee were of the opinion that a properly conducted campaign in the Region would persuade people either to pool their lands voluntarily for co-operative farming or to surrender voluntarily communal lands which could be used for plantations or for farm settlement schemes (Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1960).

Individual Holdings: The Committee was of strong opinion that although the first two systems can make useful contribution to agriculture in the Region, this third system whereby individual farmers cultivate their own farms was bound to be the mainstay of agriculture in the Region for a long time to come. In spite of its drawbacks, the system has not been fully exploited in the Region. The Committee advised that adequate and efficient agricultural credit system should be evolved. Credits should either be in cash or in kind. The Committee also felt that an improved and enlarged extension service would greatly enhance agricultural production by this system.

Issues on Agricultural Development in the Region: The Committee considered a number of matters of general agricultural policy and made the following recommendations:

- i. That there was an urgent need for a comprehensive land use and soil survey of the whole Region, as a preliminary to agricultural and other development programmes. This survey should be given top priority;
- ii. That a suitable system of land registration will make it easy to put into practice land consolidation measures in relation to increasing the size of farms;
- iii. That there was a strong need for a bold policy on agricultural education at all levels;
- iv. That it was imperative to offer inducements to agriculturists and agricultural workers by way, for example, of higher salaries and wages. On these two latter points, the Committee wished to draw the attention of the Government to the very valuable suggestions made by the Ashby Commission on Higher Education;
- v. That the development of a sound and greatly enlarged extension service was a matter of great importance;
- vi. That there was a need for a suitable organisation for marketing and distribution of agricultural produce particularly for food crops.
- vii. That there was an urgent need for increased provision for research facilities in the Region. On this point the Committee was strongly of the opinion that the present research facilities in the Region were too meager.
- viii. That it was necessary to work out a better balance between cash and food crops. This was one of the reasons for the land use survey suggested (i) above;

- ix. That there was need for intensive investigation in farm mechanisation ;
- x. that there was need for a definite livestock policy;
- xi. That there was need for diversification of crop economy;
- xii. that it was necessary to adopt a more vigorous policy with regard to fisheries in the Region;
- xiii. That there was need for vigorous campaign by Government to change the present general attitude of the people of this Region towards agriculture.

Industrialisation

The Committee observed that industrialisation in the Eastern Region should be based on two basic principles:

- (i) Government must be anxious to industrialise the Region as quickly as possible;
- (ii) Manufacturing industry in Nigeria contributes no more than one per cent of the gross domestic product of Nigeria in 1957. To raise this to say five per cent in 1967-70 the net output of manufacturing would have to rise from £15 million in 1957 to about £70 million in 1967-70 and would require an investment today of the order of £210 million equivalent to roughly 15 per cent of the gross domestic product in 1967-70.

It became clear to members that the investment required in manufacturing which could help the Region to make a significant contribution either to employment or to output was higher than could be reasonably expected to be met out of existing domestic resources. Consequently Government's policy on Nigerian participation was to be ordered in the light of this phenomenon.

The following central issues formed the basis of detailed discussion: (i) Nigerian participation - private and public; (ii) protection for infant industries; (iii) priorities in the manufacturing sector; (iv) location of industry in the Region; (v) strategy of industrialisation; (vi) aid to Nigerian industries.

(i) Nigerian Participation: It was noted that the Region started the industrialisation process from a very low scale that had not built up a tradition of management, or investment in manufacturing. The lack of substantial capital by private Nigerians was not really feasible. Foreign capital participation was welcomed in manufacturing activities not already exclusively state operated, subject to observations hereunder. Existing policy was guided by the following consideration: (a) no definite data existed on available private finance for industry; (b) Government was willing to take up what would have gone to private Nigerian capital with a view to making it available at a later stage to Nigerian private citizens; (c) Government's objective in participating in industry was partly to push the establishment of manufacturing and partly for control.

(ii) Protection of infant Industries: This took the form of tax holidays, import duty relief on raw materials, and in some cases explicit tariff protection on the product. The danger was that inefficient firms could be protected along with efficient ones under a general tariff wall. The use of a tariff wall for the benefit of particular industries needed to be restricted and, where used, should be for no longer than the tax holidays concession granted in the first instance, i.e., seven to eight years. Any industry which did not stand on its own within that period must have some underlying inefficiencies.

(iii) Priorities in the Manufacturing Sector: Activities can be grouped around the following: (a) those likely to aid the rapid development of construction industries, e.g., cement, steel fabrication, nail, roofing materials, sanitary ware, (b) those likely to be most import saving, e.g., textiles; (c) those likely to be most labour intensive, e.g., textiles (depending on design of plant), bakeries, and furniture. It was agreed that these and other criteria should be examined, that our level of industrialisation is such that we would want to stimulate activities on all fronts but that the development of a group of activities as in those specified above offers an immediate opportunity and should be taken up.

(iv) Location of Activity: Frequent criticisms have been leveled on the bunching of manufacturing in Port Harcourt and Aba to the neglect of say Enugu, Onitsha and the rural areas. Location of activity should continue to be governed by the most favourable combination of factors for particular activities: transport facilities, land (for plant and residential requirements), power, water, communications facilities, labour and raw materials availabilities, nearness to market. The choice of location is essentially the business man's; we can offer alternative locations but must let the final choice to be made by the person whose business it is to operate the business.

To this end, the development of other urban industrial layouts will serve as additional inducement to the investor to move to new areas but we can neither be rigid in location of activity nor should we be compulsive.

(iv) Strategy of industrialisation: The Committee emphasised on the stimulation of small scale industries – cottage industries and handicrafts, e.g., furniture, weaving (textiles), metal work, leather work – which do not require heavy utility overheads. These can be dispersed widely in the Region on the basis of raw material location and market facilities. In the end, the prosperity of the countryside will depend to a large extent on how far local pockets of unemployment are absorbed in local activities -agriculture and industry.

(vi) Aid to Nigerian Industries: The problems were: (a) finance in sufficiently large doses; and (b) management and development of skills. Following from V, we can do a great deal to rehabilitate the countryside by Government making available some finance for industrial credit for small industries, and assisting these industries by making management available. This is an area in which foreign technical assistance is readily available and equipment and management services will be readily available. The aid need not be in the form of cash –it could be in the form of equipment issued on credit to the Nigerian business but will follow-up services laid on for repair and maintenance.

Report on the Third Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, Held on the 2nd to 4th March, 1962

The Conference was held from 2nd to 4th of March 1962 in Enugu and was attended by 398 elite drawn from all the segments of the Region. The conference was very crucial because it met specifically to deliberate the 1962 to 1968 Eastern Regional Development Plan. The Conference deliberated on the following issues: education, agriculture, the private sector, health, justice, information and social welfare, town planning and community development.

The Significance of Social Services in Eastern Nigeria, 1962-1966

The Committee noted that if government was to improve its resources and therefore its provision of social services, it must have to earn more money from exports. To this end, this Committee endorsed the shift of emphasis in the 1962-1968 Development Plan to the productive sector of the economy. In doing so, the Committee was however conscious of the fact that the Development Plan will be greatly handicapped if it was not adequately supported with requisite social services, particularly education, health and agriculture. The Committee was also aware of the place of social welfare, town and country planning, information, justice and community development. It was the opinion of the Committee that all these aspects of social services were inter-related and more or less constitute a whole. It was therefore considered necessary to strongly recommend that the activities in these various fields should be very closely coordinated (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1962).

Background on Education

The investment in education in the 1950s especially at the primary school level gave rise to a turnout of nearly 800,000 primary school leavers between 1962 and 1968 period. In addition, there were some

12,000 to 15,000 secondary school leavers, and about 2000 graduates, for whom the Eastern Regional Government considered her statutory responsibility to provide employment.

The Committee considered that the existing educational system could not provide the Region with the calibre of manpower envisaged in the Development Plan. It was therefore considered necessary to redefine the purpose of education in the Region to reflect the urgent requirement for a large number of scientifically and technically trained personnel. The Committee referred to the Ashby Report on Education and urged that government should implement the sections on primary, secondary and technical education.

The Committee recommended that the school age for primary education should remain between age six to seven. On secondary education, the Committee noted that in addition to the existing secondary schools, technical schools should be built immediately so as to admit some of the primary school leavers who would receive instruction in various technical subjects, such as: Electrical Installations, Carpentry, Plumbing, Sheet and Metal work, other aspects of Building Construction, Agriculture, Mechanics and Drawing, Fishing, Arithmetic, English and General Science. The trade school period was to be three years. The schools were to be established in various County Council Areas.

More technical instructors were to be trained. Nigerian graduate teachers were to be encouraged to undertake teaching as a profession and to replace expatriate staff whose maintenance cost was exorbitant. It was considered cheaper to run a double stream teacher training college and so the committee recommended that large training colleges be encouraged (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1962).

In the opinion of the Committee, the Regional County scholarships were to continue, but the Committee noted that "in view of the urgent need for technical men, emphasis should be placed on technical subjects and managerial training so as to produce the manpower requirement for our industries and commerce. Finally on the educational sector, the Committee recommended that rural and adult education should not be left out in the scheme.

Background on Agriculture

In the area of agriculture, it was realised that although agriculture was the main source of income in the Region, it received very little attention in the Development Plans beginning in 1945. With the increase in population, the existing level of living was envisaged to be maintained only as a result of increasing productivity in the rural sector. Such increases needed to manifest themselves not only in the export sector but also in the food crop sector. The government discovered that the growth of industry could be retarded if food production (in Nigeria as a whole) was not raised significantly. The aim was not only to make the Region self-sufficient in food but also to raise the protein content of the diet, raise the productivity in the output of those crops for which the Region had an advantage. The agricultural plan therefore proposed to modernise rural agriculture for food and for export - through the use of improved techniques, change in technology and agricultural education, and changes in land tenure (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1962).

It was considered not enough to merely expand agricultural production; but also opportunities for employment needed to be found in other branches of activity for the increasing number of educated youth who could not be absorbed in agricultural pursuits. This triggered the deliberate government's objective in the rapid expansion of industrial employment.

Land Acquisition Policy/Land Tenure

It was suggested that the Government's land acquisition policy was hampering private Nigerian initiative; that by acquiring large tracts of land without declaring clearly to what use they would be put,

Government was discouraging private citizens who would have been able to use the land for large scale agricultural development.

On land tenure, it was suggested that since the prevalent system of land tenure was not conducive to agricultural development, government should provide for reform of the land tenure. The Committee was informed that the problem was being seriously studied and provision had been made in the Development Plan to implement recommendations arising from that investigation. It recommended that Government would try to induce land consolidation through its agricultural extension services, through the demonstration effect of Farm Settlements and plantations, and through peasant oil palm planting schemes in which assistance will be given only to those farmers whose holdings are consolidated to a minimum of five acres (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1962).

Farm Settlements

On farm settlements, the Committee advised that:

Farm settlements should be approached with great caution; that every endeavour should be made to adapt the schemes to local conditions; that the mistakes made in Western Nigeria should be avoided; that in each settlement area, the local population should be associated with the scheme; that leaseholds of the land for Farm Settlement should be preferred to outright acquisition and that each settlement be established not by Government Department or Ministry but by a limited liability company specially constituted for that purpose (Official Document No. 29 of 1962).

Assistance to Farmers

It was recommended that Government should specify and publicise the minimum acreage which should be developed by an individual farmer before assistance could be given. The Committee felt that Government assistance to farmers should be in kind rather than in cash and that greater use be made of Co-operative Societies in administering agricultural credit. The Committee also recommended that the Government should give maximum publicity and propaganda to the need for increasing food production so as to stabilise food prices during the Development Plan period and to control the inflationary impact of proposed expenditures in the Development Plan. The Committee stressed the need for local processing of agricultural raw materials, particularly palm kernels. The Committee was informed of the plans of Government to introduce a new type of palm produce processing equipment. It recommended that Government should give attention to storage and marketing of perishable agricultural commodities.

The Committee suggested that the cooperative societies and clan unions should be used as instruments for the mobilisation of savings. It also noted that government should set up a development fund to which private citizens can contribute either in kind or in cash. Also Licensed Buying Agents were to be persuaded to contribute to the scheme on terms to be defined, using the Marketing Board as the instrument of collection. The Committee also recommended the establishment of an Agricultural Bank and the use of premium bonds, lotteries, etc., for raising fund. It also stressed the need for effective propaganda and dissemination of ideas and the need to change the psychological attitude of the people (Official Document No. 29 of 1962).

Background on the Private Sector

There was also the objective of strengthening the private sector. The Regional government noted that the bulk of the development attained in agriculture and industry was largely due to private enterprise: export crops had been developed on a peasant basis, and manufacturing had grown largely through private investment. This was possible through government assistance, investment funds and encouragement

provided without which the present rate of growth could not have been attained. Even then, it was recognised that success could be limited by the shortage of skills. Therefore government marshaled a plan of raising the level of technology in the Region through the encouragement of technical and scientific training and education. This attempt represented a major shift from the predominantly liberal education. Indeed, an important objective of the 1962 to 1968 Development Plan was to reduce the disparities in development in the different parts of the Region and evoke a wide and general participation in governance. The spirit of self-help and participatory community development was one of the objectives of the Development Plan (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin, 1962).

The Regional Government gave priority to agriculture. £35.5 million was allocated to primary production - agriculture, fisheries, forestry and veterinary services. This represented roughly 34 per cent, of the total planned development expenditure. This development was expected to yield a substantial increase in the export earnings and aid improvement in the nutritional standard of the population.

The second in the scale of priorities was manufacturing and processing industries for which £13.5 million (representing 12.5 per cent. of the total development budget) was allocated. While the role and the importance of agriculture in the economy of the Region was fully recognised, it was considered imperative that development of industries should be pursued *pari passu* with the development of agricultural resources. This development was to pave the way for a more balanced structure of the economy.

Industry and Trade

The Committee noted that past private Nigerian industrial undertakings have failed owing to mismanagement, inexperience, lack of capital and skills and lack of confidence. Consequently, loans given by Government to private businessmen had to be written off.

The Committee noted that most of the loans were not given to deserving businessmen but that grants were influenced by nepotism and political considerations. Industries established by Government in the past also failed not only because of inefficient management, but also because appointment to the Boards had been influenced primarily by political considerations as a result of which the Boards have not been able to exercise the degree of financial control required of commercial and business undertakings. The Committee recommended that appointments to Boards should not be based on political considerations; that loans to private businesses must be on specified and predetermined conditions and that repayment should be rigidly enforced. It also advised that loans should as much as possible be made not in cash but in equipment, materials and technical services; that corporations and industries operated by the Eastern Regional Government should be on commercial basis; that workers in such corporations and industries should not be governed by civil service conditions so that the management would have a free hand to effect efficient operation and to remove inefficient operatives. (Official Document No. 29 of 1962).

The Committee also observed that Nigerian businessmen experienced greater difficulty in obtaining industrial sites than their expatriate counterparts. It was therefore recommended that an effort should be made to facilitate prompt allocation of sites to Nigerian industrialists; that they should be given the basic services like water, electricity, telephones, etc., without undue delay and red tape. To meet the problem of shortage of capital, the Committee suggested the establishment of Industrial Bank to which private citizens could be persuaded to contribute. In order to promote the growth of confidence and the development of business combinations, it was suggested that the Ministry of Commerce organise conferences of businessmen. At the same time, Nigerian businessmen should be sponsored by the Government of the Eastern Region to attend industrial and trade fairs overseas.

On Government participation with foreign investors in industry, the Committee recommended that wherever possible, it should be written into the agreement that equity, control will ultimately be held by

Nigerians; that Nigerians be used as much as possible in top management positions; that a proportion of profits be reinvested in Nigeria and that private Nigerian investors be associated in the equity structure from the start. The Committee discussed the location of industries and recommended that while location of activities should be governed by economic factors, for example, raw materials, water, etc., Government should pay attention to the rehabilitation of depressed areas. It was also noted that a number of new ventures established by Government had ruin similar businesses efficiently run by Nigerian businessmen. Examples were cited in insurance and printing. The Committee recommended that wherever possible, Government should endeavour to strengthen and accommodate indigenous businesses efficiently run by Nigerians and that a Committee be established to serve as liaison between this Conference and the Ministry of Commerce so as to remove conflict between Government industrial policy and effort of indigenous enterprises (Official Document No. 29 of 1962).

The following industries were mentioned as either already owned jointly by Government and foreign interests or which it is proposed to established on this basis: Michelin (Nigeria) Limited, Nigerian Cement Company, Niger Steel Company Limited, Apex (Eastern Nigeria) Limited, Nigerian Aluminum Products Limited, Turners Asbestos Cement (Nigeria) Limited, Eastern Enamel Factory Limited, Zenith Plastic Limited, Sunray Flour Mill Limited, Textile Printers of Nigeria Limited, Aba Textile Mills Limited, Alcan Aluminum Nigeria Limited and Williams and Williams (Nigeria).

The Committee also recommended that serious thought must be given to other incentives which would encourage local participation in industrial enterprises as also to those existing obstacles which, because they militate against this policy, should be removed. It noted that various projects were inserted in the Development Plan to assist the local entrepreneur. For instance, fund for agricultural and industrial development was set up in the Eastern Region to assist the small entrepreneur. At the Federal level, the Nigerian Investment Development Bank was proposed to commence operations and to provide funds for the larger viable enterprises.

Committee on Health

The Committee considered the nature of the health services of Eastern Nigeria and noted that in view of the importance of health in itself and the liaison that it has between the production sectors of the society, more funds should be made available to the sector. It also recommended that more doctors should be posted to the existing hospitals. It specifically suggested that there should be at least three doctors in each hospital. This number was to be increased for hospitals in big towns. It was considered that this move would reduce the common congestion that was found in most Government hospitals. It was also recommended that a Medical Officer should be in charge of at most five and at least three health centres and rural dispensaries.

It was also recommended that there should be rapid and intensified training of doctors. To achieve this objective, the Committee recommended that scholarships should be awarded in the field of medicine. Also the establishment of a Specialist Hospital was considered a necessity in the Eastern Region. To this end, the Committee recommended that a liaison with the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, should be explored. It strongly requested that an orthopedic wing should be added. The Committee also made a case for a Mental Hospital in the Region (Official Document No. 29 of 1962).

Town and Country Planning

In the above sector, the Committee recommended that the government should not adopt a non-chalant attitude when new towns are springing up like it did at Mile Nine to Enugu and Oji River areas, rather, positive steps should be taken to direct County Councils to avoid building them near the main roads, and destroying shades, parks and village assembly grounds which were good features of our village lives.

The Leaders of Thought were admonished to serve as agents to help explain to their kith and kin to make less exorbitant demands for compensation whenever any good scheme requires any land. Government was also requested to provide trained surveyors and other staff to help the rural planning authorities free of charge. Other recommendations made in this respect included specifications for the building of housing estates,

Information

The Eastern Region Leaders of Thought also x-rayed the problems facing the information sector. They noted that there was not enough publicity of government activities both within and outside the Region more particularly the masses in the rural areas. According to them, there was competition between the various governments of the Federation in the dissemination of news by radio. They pointed out that enough money had not been provided for the development of information services to the people. The Committee recommended that the existing media should not only be intensified but also films well censored should be shown to the masses in the rural areas.

All the different activities of the government and the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation (ENDP) should be publicised. Broadcasting was to be done in co-operation with, and not in competition against, the Federal Government. It also recommended that efforts should be made to persuade the Federal Government to vacate the medium wave length to the Regional Governments and to concentrate on the short wave length. This was to enable the Region to expand their broadcasting. Also, television service was regarded as desirable for other townships (Report of the Conference of Leading Personalities of Eastern Nigeria Origin).

Social Welfare

The Committee observed that there were only five Social Welfare “Provinces” in the Region and so recommended that 12 Social Welfare offices be established to be in accordance with the administrative set up. It strongly recommended that community development should be more encouraged so as to harness the more the inherent characteristic of “self-help” in the Region. It also made recommendations for the provision of fire service equipment in each provincial headquarters so as to guard against the potential danger in establishment of petrol stations throughout the Region.

On sports, the Committee commended the government’s achievements. The Committee noted the facilities provided at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, but nevertheless recommended that a stadium of international standard, not inferior to that at Ibadan, Lagos or Kaduna, be built at Enugu. It also recommended that training be intensified so as to maintain or attain the lead in football, tennis, netball, wrestling and boxing. It also argued that traditional annual festival of arts should be more encouraged so as to preserve our native culture. On libraries, the Committee observed that there were two modern libraries at Enugu and Port Harcourt and recommended that Government should not concentrate on townships but should also give grants to schools and councils to establish libraries in their areas.

Justice

The Committee commended the government’s allocation to the Justice Ministry and noted with satisfaction the improvements on High Court buildings at Enugu and Onitsha but recommended that similar modernisation be extended to other High Courts and Magistrate Courts in the Region, while more Magistrates be appointed so as to ease congestion and delay in these Courts. It also recommended that the Eastern Nigeria Law Reports be revived.

Conclusion

Good governance has always been a major challenge to many societies especially in Africa. One of the critical issues is that some leaders “privatise” governance thereby narrowing the channels for sound

ideas and effective participation of the people in the running of government. The Eastern Region of Nigeria under the leadership of Dr. Michael Okpara devised a method that enhanced the participation of the elite across the Region in governance. The think tank, which consisted of about 400 leading personalities, who were experts and authorities in various fields of human endeavours were painstakingly selected from all parts of the region with the mandate to proffer solutions to the problems of governance in the region.

The selection of the leading personalities was completed in April 1960. Between the 30th and 31st of December 1960, the elite had their first conference in Enugu, the regional capital. Subsequent conferences were held from that time to deliberate and advise government of crucial areas of governance. The inputs helped in the formulation of the Eastern Nigerian Development Plan (1962 to 1968). Available records show that issues such as education, agriculture, industrialisation, health, information, justice, town planning, social welfare and community development were discussed.

This process of “inclusion” which was a great innovation in governance enhanced effective participation of the people, triggered trust and enhanced development. Thus, the Eastern Region was the centre of excellence and in industrial endeavours and was rated as fastest growing economy in the Third World.

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