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CRY: K. Y. Attoh

EDITORIAL

PATH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It is fashionable in post-independence Africa for political leaders to label themselves "Socialists", "non-socialists" or believers in the "welfare state". What, however, is often forgotten is that these ideologies are derived from the economic and historic experience of other countries—mostly Western countries. Each particular doctrine did not spring from a vacuum, or from acts performed in a "monastic cell". Each was the product of a particular kind of society, and of human minds reacting to that society. Since this cultural factor was not constant and unchanging, the doctrines changed through time. Traditional socialism was largely concerned with the evils of traditional capitalism. But to-day traditional capitalism is reformed out of all recognition. The "welfare state" is the unintended consequence of the attempt to reform capitalist economies in the light of socialist criticisms. The problems formulated, and the solutions provided, are conveniently summarised in doctrines and ideologies. They are peculiar to the societies which formulated such ideologies.

The tragedy of Africa is that we believe these doctrines are of universal application. This is not the case. At best these alien doctrines enable us to see how other societies solved their economic problems; by examining such doctrines we shall have the inspiration also to examine our problems un-encumbered by the need to slavishly apply them to our societies. Our problems are fairly well-known—low level of capital, low agricultural productivity, low living standards and a slow rate of economic growth. These are the problems, and the challenge to African intellectuals in the mid-twentieth century—political leaders, and the educated elite—is to reformulate these problems clearly, state our objectives and adopt fresh, original means to achieve our objectives. In this enterprise we should not be encumbered by 'dead' ideologies and doctrines. If effective means are formulated, intellectuals who care can come later to summarize the means in the form of an ideology. This is the challenge to the African conscious of his environment and of his historical situation.

The Economy

A POLICY FOR THE FISHING INDUSTRY: I

by

G. Kportufe Agama

THE FISHING industry of Ghana is in a state of neglect. Over the past six years nearly £58 million of tax-payers' money has been invested in the industry, of which £36 million has been put in the Fishing Corporation alone. In addition, there has been an estimated private investment of about £7.2 million, bringing total investment in the industry during the period to £65 million. What government policy is there to ensure a reasonable return on this large outlay?

We may approach this question by considering a few facts about the industry. Fish consumption in Ghana increased from 77,748 tons in 1962 to 103,305 tons in 1963, fell very modestly to 102,435 tons in 1964, and rose again to 107,533 tons in 1965. Thus between 1962 and 1965 consumption of fish rose on the average by 9.6 per cent per annum which indicates an increase in the per capita consumption. The value in monetary terms of fish consumed were £16.1 million in 1962, £22.7 million in 1963, £22.2 million in 1964 and £38.2 million in 1965. The figures show an average rate of increase of 37.5 per cent a year which largely reflects increases in the value of fish per ton from £205 in 1962 to £355 in 1965. The rising trend of value of fish accompanied by increases in volume indicates that the demand for fish has been growing at a rate higher than that of its supply.

As the quantity of fish imported decreased sharply from 19,778 tons valued at £8.6 million in 1962 to 5,699 tons valued at £3.2 million in 1965, our fishing industry became the main source of fish supply. The domestic catch of fish increased substantially from 57,970 tons in 1962 to 101,833 tons in 1965 with the value per ton rising more substantially from £149 to £343 between the respective years. These latter figures imply that the domestic market for fish has been in an exceptional state of buoyancy. Let us look at some of the difficulties in the way of the industry meeting the high domestic demand for fish.

First, let us consider the private sector of the industry. There are about 67,000 fishermen who operate 10,212 canoes along the coast of Ghana. By 1965 nearly half of these canoes were fitted with motors for mechanical operation as compared with about one-fifth in 1962. In addition, there were in 1965, some 248 motor fishing vessels which belonged to private fishing co-operatives, among which was the Mankoadze

Fisheries, the largest single private firm in the fishing industry. Five problems face the private sector of the industry. First the area of operation of fishing vessels, particularly canoes, is limited, especially as they have no facilities with which to investigate new fishing grounds beyond the shallow fringes of our shores. Secondly, as the government has signed no agreement on fishing rights with neighbouring countries, private fishermen are compelled to avoid the increasing risk of operating in the territorial waters of these countries. Thirdly, most of the motor fishing vessels built in Ghana lack adequate equipment for efficient operation. For example, during the fishing season last year, ten fishing vessels from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, caught twice as much fish as sixty Ghana-built boats of equal dimension. The fourth problem is the inability of the State Boatyards Corporation to meet the demand of private fishermen for boats. This has arisen largely because of the Corporation's fruitless efforts in securing adequate foreign exchange to cover the import of motor parts for its boats. The Corporation has now a backlog of two years order to fulfil, including orders from foreigners.

The private sector of the industry has presented memoranda on these problems to the authorities concerned with fishing both in the old and the new regime without any realistic response, and it is difficult to deny that the government's neglect of the industry, in spite of its own substantial investment in it, reflects lack of a basic policy.

This lack of policy is more evident in the public sector of the industry. This sector comprises the activities of the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and those of the State Fishing Corporation. Out of a total fishing fleet of 27 directly owned by the Corporation, only seven worked regularly in 1965. The story of the Corporation's purchases of some foreign fishing vessels is sad. The Corporation bought twelve boats from the United Kingdom, the first six of which, bought at £2.3 million, were resold after not more than two years of arrival in Ghana for £1.3 million at a loss of one million Cedis. They were resold because they turned out to be not seaworthy. The second batch of six vessels from the United Kingdom were purchased as part of the supplier's credit agreement on the ship breakyard at the fishing harbour in Tema under construction by Parkinson Howard Ltd. By 1966 only one of these boats was delivered. One fine day last season, it went to sea, and down and struggled ashore with its meagre catch of fish rotten. It has been laid up ever since.

Indeed, since February last year, many of Corporation's boats have been laid up at