

Extract from "THE COLONIAL PROBLEM", Royal
Institute of International Affairs,
Pages 157 - 161.

AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE.

(3) 'Rationalization of Native Agriculture' International Colonial Conference held at The Hague, June 1927, Compte Rendu, pp. 139-83.

The encouragement and rationalization of native production by means of instruction and assistance in technical and commercial matters were discussed by the International Colonial Institute in 1923, in 1927 and again in 1929, on the basis of theses presented by M. de Wildemann⁽³⁾

At the Brussels Conference of 1929 M. de Wildemann said :

"Cultivation by the natives must be improved and intensified and we observe that wherever the study of this question has been pursued, the native finding himself in the presence of instructors, takes easily to the practice of rational cultivation and clearly understands the value of the soil upon which he works.

This intensified and improved cultivation, however, must also be supervised - this is essential. If the colonial Governments will only introduce strict regulations, and if they will apply them as they should be applied, they will succeed in making the natives produce raw materials in large quantities and in excellent quality.

Uniform international legislation is quite unnecessary, but still we must not lose sight of what has been done in other countries; on the contrary, we might apply in our own colonies such regulations as may have given satisfactory results in other colonies."

(1) Debate on a report by M. de Wildemann, International Colonial Conference held at Brussels, June 1929, Compte Rendu, pp 132-7. M. de Wildemann's Memorandum is printed as an Appendix to the Compte Rendu.

He recommended the creation of specialized scientific institutions, as in the Dutch East Indies. To sum up, he contended that cultivation of all kinds would be better if left to the natives under the supervision of government institutions; and that processing industries should be carried on in factories provided with modern equipment by European capital.⁽¹⁾

For the 1929 Conference a mass of material was made available in the replies by colonial authorities to a questionnaire ⁽²⁾ on measures taken by the nation to improve agriculture and stock-raising; on land tenure; on technical supervision; on internal markets; on the social and economic results of the policies adopted. The information collected is indispensable to the student.

(2) See International Colonial Institute, Extension intensive et rationnelle des cultures indigenes. Enquete. Resultats (Brussels, 1929)

Too much stress may be laid by certain colonial authorities on production for export. As colonial communities advance there is much to be said for the development of small-scale industry and of a mixed economy providing various kinds of employment. An example may be taken from Northern Nigeria, where cotton is grown in large quantities for the local hand-spinning and weaving industry and there is a quite considerable production for export. When export prices are low the local industry competes directly with the export trade and the price in the local markets rises above that paid by the exporters. In the Northern Provinces the local demand is a safeguard to cotton-growing for, no matter

(1) Some French administrators have insisted on the necessity of instructing Africans in mixed farming and especially in stock raising, providing as it does food, manure and for a sale of the product in the shape of hides. (M. Auguste Chevalier in the *Depeche coloniale*, Jan. 16th, 1931, cited by J. Goudal in *Destin de l'Afrique* (Paris, Librairie Valois), P. 86.)

(2) Speaking at the 1927 Session of the International Colonial Institute, M. de la Motte Saint-Pierre referred to the excellent results obtained by the expenditure of money and administrative efforts in native agriculture in Dutch and English colonies. See *Compte Rendu* (Brussels, 1927), p. 161.

(3) Cf. O. T. Faulkner and J. R. Mackie, *West African Agriculture*, p. 7.

(4) Cf. Orde Browne, *The African Labourer*, p. 49.

how the world price of cotton falls, this demand always exists and cotton is grown to meet it. Therefore there remains a safe nucleus, and the industry can expand if the world market expands. In two provinces of Southern Nigeria cotton is grown, mainly as a catch crop. A local market provides an element of stability, and Nigerian experience certainly seems to reinforce arguments for a less one-sided colonial development than is commonly pursued. The native peasant farmer is only relatively safe from destructive movements of prices, and from the even more destructive effects of continuous use of the same plot for the same crop, if he practises mixed farming. (1) The education and assistance required are costly and in the early stages often require special financial assistance. (2) Sometimes the natives are pressed by local officers, against their better judgement, under directions from high quarters, to grow cotton and other export crops to assist the trade of the colony. In such cases the position is dangerous, although the African shows extraordinary patience in face of repeated failures. Often Europeans practically impose new crops and new methods, and, if for some reason these fail, distrust of European advice becomes profound. The African will grow new crops and adopt new methods if the advantage is proved. The production of cocoa in the Gold Coast and of ground-nuts in Northern Nigeria show that the native can develop an industry almost unaided, when satisfied that it is sound; the failure of American cotton in Southern Nigeria proves the uselessness of trying to force upon him an unsuitable crop. (3) American cotton was successful only as a sole crop, and planting meant clearing more land, whereas native cotton could be grown in rotation. When the Nigerian farmer was offered an improved native cotton which did not require fresh clearing, he took it up eagerly.

Careful consideration of all the relevant factors is necessary before natives are urged to change their traditional methods and crops, and limited trials should precede general application. (4) The Departmental Instructions of the Nigerian Agricultural Department forbid any recommendation, direct or indirect, for changes in native agriculture which are not based on solid experiment; they provide that no recommendation should be in the form of a general instruction, but should be made (of course with the concurrence of political officers) to selected natives or to selected villages only. If these make a success the example will be followed. General recommendation might then be justified, but would probably be unnecessary. In Nyasaland an agreement made, in 1922, with the British Cotton Growing Corporation to purchase cotton crops at a fixed price from natives led to a great increase in production. A Native Tobacco Board, established in 1926, which approves seed and grades the leaf, has brought native tobacco production up to more than half the total produced in the colony. In Kenya a new system of marketing native crops, involving careful inspection for cleanliness and quality, has been successful in the Native Reserves and is shortly to be applied to the settled areas.

In the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan there are several interesting experiments in peasant production with Government participation and assistance. In the

Gezireh district the large sums spent on irrigation for cotton-growing might have been thought to excuse expropriation of private property, but the irrigation scheme provided safeguards for native land-rights, all claims being examined before any area was declared government land. The Government took powers to acquire any native-owned land which was needed on a forty years' lease at 2s. an acre, a price above the current rate. Natives could and did take up tenancies in the areas where they had freehold rights. A private company, the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, was then given a concession of about 300,000 acres for ten years, later extended to twenty-five years, on the understanding that it would finance the settlement of peasant cultivators and act as agricultural manager in return for a share in the cotton crop. The land-rights remain with the Government and the freeholder: there is no permanent alienation to the company. Cotton is grown as a crop in a four-year rotation. The acreage is divided into small holdings laid out so that they can be prepared for cultivation by the syndicate's tractors. The Government arrange for the water supply from the Sennar Dam, and take 35 per cent. of the gross yield. The native provides the labour and gets 40 per cent., from which is deducted the actual cost of ginning and marketing; though he has the benefit, free of taxes, of the other crops he may grow. The syndicate supervise the cultivation, ginning and marketing the crop, and take 25 per cent. They arrange cash advances to the tenants, erect buildings, and carry out minor canalization. A smaller company, the Kassala Cotton Company, operates in the same district on the same system.

As compensation to the owners of land along the river who will be displaced by the lake to be formed south of the new Gebel Aulia Dam, the Government have projected in the Gezireh another scheme slightly different from that of the syndicate in that the tenants will be encouraged to do their own ploughing. Some British inspectors supervise the district with the help of native agriculturalists and the sheikhs, and not directly, as in the Syndicate's area. The scheme is intended to teach the tenant mixed farming, not merely cotton-growing.

(1) For an argument in favour of a triple partnership, State, landlord and peasant, in the organization of tropical agriculture see H. Martin Leake, Land Tenure and Agricultural Production in the Tropics (Cambridge University Press, 1927).

The Government plays a similar part in financing and organizing cotton-growing in the Gash Delta and Tokar, both of them flood-districts; and in the Southern Sudan, in the Nuba Mountains, the Upper Nile Province and the Mongalla Province where the people are more backward. Cotton in the latter districts is rain-grown.

The result of the largest share system, that in the Gezireh, appears to be a prosperous peasantry: (1) the growers are under close supervision and have no voice in the disposal of their cotton. Their interests are partially safeguarded by the Government's being directly involved as a beneficiary.

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.