PEOPLE'S WORKS PROGRAMME—PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL

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The planning process in a developing country—more so in Pakistan—is characterized by the all-pervading atmosphere of the people being dissatisfied with the prevailing socio-economic structure. They consider the present situation as hollow, empty and abominable. There is a sharp awareness that the present system is the outcome of deliberate manoeuvring by the vested interests and that the change in this ugly situation is inevitable. The people are determined to act for the change and to construct a new order. In the process they are becoming impatient as they want to see themselves participating in efforts ensuring an improved quality of life, healthy environments and freedom from want, hunger and disease.

What are the socio-economic realities to which the people are reacting so sharply? The cruel and stark reality is poverty. By far the major portion of our people live below the lowest standard of living. They do not get enough to sustain even the minimum nutrition level; do not have enough to clothe themselves and to arrange adequate shelter over their heads. Half of the school-going children have never stepped into a school building. Medical care is non-existent. More than half of the village population has no farm-to-market roads. Electricity is still a luxury. The urban areas alone have a gap of one million housing units, only 7% of the urban population gets potable tapped water supply, and about the same number is provided with some sort of drainage and sewerage facilities. The indices of poverty are many and embrace every aspect of life. The socio-economic spectrum is really depressing. I am not surprised if the people are getting impatient, I am only surprised how they remained so patient for all these years.

The basic objective of economic development is to achieve material prosperity of the community as a whole based on principles of social justice. This country has the experience of some sort of planned development for the last two decades. What is the end product of all this planned development? The poverty level of the masses has remained the same. The number of unemployed and under-employed people has further gone up. 18% of the working labour is out of job. There is no improvement in quality of life. Any improvement in the per capita income over two decades has only sharpened the

inequalities by concentrating some more wealth in the hands of few fortunate ones. The shortfall of our planning experience stands fully exposed. There is a serious realization that a planning strategy based on growth maximization in an abstract manner has no appropriateness to eradicate mass poverty.

The assumptions with our planners have been :

(*i*) to create inequalities in income distribution as according to them it would promote higher investment;

(*ii*) that a high growth rate through rising investment would by itself be adequate to produce higher employment; and

(*iii*) the higher Gross Domestic Product would have some automatic way of ensuring improved quality of life.

The hollowness of such assumptions stand completely exposed. The last two decades have seen an aggregate increase of 122% in GNP. But could it produce any tangible results in decreasing unemployment or reducing the poverty? The answer is an obvious no.

The problem of unemployment and underemployment still remains the gravest problem before the nation. The order of magnitude of the problem can be estimated from the fact that the labour force above the age of 10 in the country is estimated to be about 1.67 crore—1.5 crore male and about 0.17 crore female. By 1975 the number in the labour force will increase to about 2 crores—about 1.82 crore male and 0.18 crore female. The unemployment rate in terms of man-hours lost is estimated as high as 20%. The net addition in labour force per year is estimated to be around 5 lakhs; out of this about one lakh could be educated persons. In present conditions of economy this is a serious situation. The Third Plan aimed at reducing the unemployment rate from 20% of the labour force in 1965 to 15% in 1970 by creating 55 lakh new job opportunities against a projected increase of 42 lakhs in labour force during Third Plan Period. But in actual practice there was no decrease in unemployed labour force. Such are the appalling conditions in the context of which some radical change in the planning concepts and development methodology need be brought.

Works Programme

The crisis in our socio-economic life is total and therefore requires total measures to counter it. The present situation calls for an agonising reappraisal of the past planning strategies. It is because of this realization that the present Government has launched a massive works programme. The essence of the programme is to mobilise the people to carry out such works as are the day to day needs of the community. The people should organize themselves at such grass root levels as can bring to them a sense of organic unity and homogeneity *viz.* in rural areas at village level and in urban areas at mohalla level. People

should discuss and debate their felt needs on these representative platforms and undertake the implementation of these works through their own representatives. The government agencies will be available for any technical administrative or legal assistance. Some finances will be provided by government but some local resources will be mobilised by the community itself.

Grass Root Planning

The objective of the programme is to reorientate the planning concept. In the past planning strategy was based on the concept of maximising the growth rate. The new dimension given to the planning strategy is to start from the felt needs of the people living in small units, as enunciated by them through their representative institutions and then let the people strive themselves for the completion of such items of work as represent their felt needs. This concept of involving the people at grass roots in the planning and execution of the development projects is not new to us. The rural works programme of the past was declared to be based on the same concept. This programme failed to make an impact as the programme has been subservient to the overall political and socio-economic goals pursued by the previous governments. The aggregate indices like G.N.P. etc. were so dominant on the minds of planners that no attention was paid to mobilize the people at grass root level to strive for their felt needs and thereby to activate the economy. The Works Programme was given only peripheral importance. The so-called representative institutions through which the work was to be executed were so overwhelmed by political objectives of the regime that their effectiveness as planning institutions was severely impaired. The programme now being conceived is on a much larger scale but the basic difference lies in more favourable political climate obtaining in the country pursuant to a number of reforms introduced by the present Government.

Methodology

The second characterstic of the works programme is the distinctiveness of methodology. The programme places complete reliance on the people. It assumes that the people are capable of pursuing organised and enlightened self-interest. Given an opportunity and proper climate to organise, the vast untapped potential of local leadership can motivate people to undertake the planning and execution of projects for the collective good of the community. It can be anticipated that the felt needs of the community will mostly centre round such works as can improve the quality of life and living conditions in the community. Such works can be the construction of approach roads, street pavings, houses, community shops, drainage and sanitation, improvement of irrigation, drinking water supply, school and health facilities etc. There is such

a vast gap between existing living conditions and the desired minimum standards that a truly massive effort is needed to bridge the gap. For example, it is an obvious need to provide a simple housing unit to each family. The new addition to population is putting a demand of 2,40,000 housing units every year. The existing gap already stands at one million units. Similarly, each rural community does require an approach road to provide an outlet to its agricultural products. On this count alone a minimum addition of about 30,000 miles of roads to 37,000 villages in West Pakistan is required. Then there are other minimum facilities as rural sanitation, open drains, community centres etc. According to a rough estimate it would require an investment of about two thousand crores of rupees to provide these minimum facilities. If the nation is to rely on the conventional development pattern of seeking capital investment to this extents it will never be able to make any headway. The developing countries are always faced with the problem of capital scarcity, but there is another form of capital in which these countries are surplus and this is the reservoir of human capital. The unemployed, under-employed labour force existing in different sectors of the economy can be best mobilised to help overcome the shortage of material capital. This labour force can fruitfully be employed on a massive scale to create such infra-structure as can help to promote the economic activity in the country and also generate resources for payment in kind to the wage-earners. The whole idea is that the wage earner should be paid in cash only to the extent that is necessary for his bare minimum subsistence. The rest of his earnings should be deferred and later converted into payment in kind. This will afford the advantage of augmenting the real values of goods and services without a corresponding increase in money incomes.

Mass Motivation

The Works Programme has been conceived as a joint enterprise of the Government and the people. As such its success will depend upon the motivation of the masses on a national scale. The crux of the programme will be the creation of a desire among the people to improve their living conditions by generating self-awareness and confidence in their own capabilities. Actually a whole change in the attitude will be required giving the people a sense of dignity of labour and asking them to do manual work. The Works Programme has not been planned as a purely economic or commercial venture. It aims at giving people an opportunity of participating as equals in planning and executing such jobs as affect their daily life. This will require an extensive Mass Motivation. A great responsibility in this field will rest on the educated and intellectuals. The engineers can prove to be the vanguard of such movement due to two predominant factors. Firstly-the physical works required to improve the

quality of life are all engineering based. The level of education in the community at large, being what it is, any effort to undertake these works will require the application of engineering knowledge to be provided by the engineers. So the engineers' knowledge of executing the work is basic to the programme. Secondly, the engineering community has not been a party to the politico-bureaucratic combine of the past which pursued the objectives of exploitation by using planning as an effective tool in their hands. By virtue of their education, training and the non-exploitive background they can pick up the flag to lead the movement.

Concept of deferred payments

A development programme of the magnitude of People's Works Programme which envisages to encompass the whole rural and urban population would require a massive injection of money expenditure. The resulting incomes are likely to exert great pressure on prices and in a shortages—ridden economy this may lead to serious consequences. To safeguard against such an eventuality efforts will be made through integrated planning to approximate flow of additional incomes by phasing out payment of wages and cost of material, especially of land, with the increased production of consumer as well as small capital goods.

To reduce the rate of cash outflow at a given time, the following measures may be taken :—

(*i*) The cost of land acquired for housing-plots should be kept low and paid as and when the prospective buyers of these housing units start paying the cost from their actual savings.

(*ii*) The workers executing the Peoples' Works Programme should agree to defer the receipt of their wages, at least in part. They should further agree to exchange these deferred wages for some economincally productive articles, at a later date. These articles may be such as may help the workers to augment their individual incomes by engaging in such profitable works as poultry, animal breeding, bee-keeping or some handicrafts, etc. The articles may be such which may increase the mobility of workers or their capability to put in more productive effort, such as a cycle, working tools, farm implements or agricultural inputs.

The first aspect of deferring the payment of land cost requires a bold policy decisions by the Provincial Government. The provisions of Land Acquisition Act may have to be amended to suit this requirement. The details of hire-purchase system and clearance of liabilities would be worked out by the Provincial Department of Housing.

As to deferring the payment of wages, the administration of the Programme has to build the system into the institutional arrangement envisaged for executing the People's Works Programme. The operational level committees at village and mohalla level will have to decide as to which workers depend wholly for their subsistence on wages to be earned now—they can be paid in full either in cash or in kind. For others who will be doing part-time jobs or have other means of subsistence, the payment of wages should be deferred in proportion to their capability to live for the time being without these wages. These deferred wages will be accounted for in the cost of the project but will be transferred to a special account to be maintained by the 'Halqa Committees' in rural areas and by Municipal Town Committees in urban areas. The wages thus transferred to this special account will be available to the Halqa Committees in a pooled-up form to be invested in productive efforts or to purchase for distribution to individual wage-earners such productive articles as may be decided. It can be envisaged that the Halqa Committees may pool up enough resources and invest them in some productive project on community basis. The workers, whose deferred wages have constituted this pool, will then be sharing profit from this productive concern. The individual wage-earners will be given a pass-book accounting for all the work-credits (in cash terms) or any subsequent adjustments.

The Halqa Committee's role in the long term is visualized as that of a 'Co-operative'. The savings of the wage-earners will be pooled here and further supplemented by such earnings as the 'Cooperative' may earn by getting rights of purchase/sale of agricultural commodities, or by deposits of savings by the members.

Organisational Set-up

For planning, implementation and evaluation of the People's Works Programme two types of parallel organisations are being created—one at the people's level and the other at the administrative level. The institutions at the people's level will be composed of People's representatives and set-up at Provincial, District, Halqa and village levels. The administrative organisation will co-ordinate planning and execution of the programme at various tiers and provide financial and technical support for the implementation of the project.

Organisation in the Punjab

At the provincial level there is a Provincial Board which includes Ministers and Secretaries of all the Development Departments. This Board will supervise the People's Works Programme throughout the Province.

At the district level, there will be a People's District Works Council. The Council will consist of all Members of the National and Provincial Assem-

blies in the District, one non-official representing each Tehsil and such District Officers as nominated by the Chairman. A Minister of the Provincial Government will be Chairman of the People's District Works Council and Deputy Commissioner will act as Secretary. The Council will perform the following functions :—

(*i*) approval of Annual Prople's Works Programme for the District;
(*ii*) supervision of the People's Works Programme both in rural and urban areas;
(*iii*) evaluation of the Programme.

On the administrative side the programme will be under the charge of an Attached Department headed by a Director-General who will function under the overall control of Local Government Department. The Directorate-General will ensure necessary coordination with various tiers of Local Government.

The Directorate-General will have the following three Directorates at the headquarters :—

1. Administration.
2. Prople's Works Programme (PWP).
3. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP).

Each of the above Directorates will be under the charge of a Director.

The Administration Directorate will deal with establishment matters, allocation and distribution of funds under PWP, maintenance of accounts, preparation of Budget, collection and compilation of statistics, preparation of evaluation reports, organisation of training programmes and direction and control of Community Development Centres. The Director will be assisted by two Deputy Directors and two Assistant Directors.

There will be 4 Assistant Directors in the Administration Directorate, each in charge of Establishment, Budget and Accounts, Evaluation and Training.

The IRDP Directorate will have one Director and one Project Manager at the headquarters. At present 19 Projects have been selected and each Project will be under the charge of a Project Manager.

The field organisation will consist of a director to be located in each division and will be in charge of Local Government Institutions. There will be an Assistant Director in each district, a Development Officer/Supervisor in each Tehsil and a Secretary in each Union Council.

The Local Government Directorates will supervise the staff of the Local Government Department in the districts and the functioning of the People's District Councils and People's Municipal Committees, examine budgets and taxation proposals of these councils, co-ordinate District PWPs, consolidate reports and liaison with nation-building departments at divisional level.

The Central Government has already given Rs. 9 crores to the Punjab Government and an additional amount of Rs. 5 crore will be given on the basis of progress of expenditure. Up to 31st October, 1972 Rs. 2.49 crore had been either released or committed. Rs. 7.51 crores are available for allocation to districts and each district has been informed of its share. The allocation to districts is done on the following basis :—

(1) 55% of total grant would go to 9 less developed districts and 45% to the 10 developed districts.

(2) Within these two categories 70% of the grant will be divided equally and 30% on the basis of population.

Organisation in Sind

In Sind, institutional and administrative organisations for the planning, implementation and evaluation of the programme have been created. On the institutional side, a People's Rural Development Board has been created with the Chief Minister as its Chairman. This board will consist of public representatives, one from each district and Secretaries of the Development Departments. The Secretary of the People's Rural Development Department will act as Secretary of the Board. This board will formulate policies with regard to the functioning of the PWP, IRDP and Agrovilles and supervise the activities of District Co-ordination Committees.

On the district level, District Co-ordination Committees have been devised to be set-up with a member of the Provincial Board as its Chairman. These Committees will consist of Chairman of Markaz Committees, District Officers of Development Departments and representatives of credit giving/servicing agencies. The Deputy Director, People's Rural Development Department, will act as Secretary. These Committees will approve schemes received from markaz committees, arrange for financial and technical assistance for execution of the programme and co-ordinate activities of development departments at the district level.

At the markaz level, markaz committees will be set up with a member of the District Co-ordination Committee as its Chairman. Other members of the Committee will be public representatives to be nominated one each from the Primary Unit and Officers of Development Departments in charge at markaz level. The Development Officer of the PRDP will act as Secretary. This committee will supervise the functioning of the Primary Units and co-ordinate activities of development departments at the level of markaz.

On the administrative side, a People's Rural Development Department has been created. This department will have overall charge and control of PWP, IRDP and Agrovilles. The Director-General will be posted in the

Secretariat and will be working directly under the Secretary, People's Rural Development Department. The Directorate will have one Deputy Secretary, in charge of Administration and Co-ordination, who will be assisted by one Deputy Director and three Section Officers (IRDP, PWP and Agrovilles and Co-ordination).

In the Directorate-General there will be three Directors, holding the charge of PWP, IRDP and Publicity. There will be 8 Deputy Directors, 3 in the PWP Wing, 3 in IRDP Wing, one for Agroviles, one for Research and Evaluation and one for the Publicity Wing.

The field organisation will consist at the district level of one District Project Officer (PWP), assisted by an Assistant Project Officer. There will be one Development Officer at the Taluka level for PWP.

The Federal Government had allocated Rs. 75 lakh for the Programme in the Annual Development Plan and has given an additional amount of Rs. 4 crore for the same purpose.

The decisions of the Frontier and Baluchistan Governments regarding creation of institutional and administrative machinery in the two Provinces are awaited. The Central Government has allocated Rs. 110 lakh for N.W.F.-P. and Rs. 88 lakh for Baluchistan in the Annual Development Programme for the implementation of the People's Works Programme.