ESSAY REVIEW

SOCIAL WELFARE OR SOCIAL CONTROL?

THE PROCESS OF urbanization in Africa confronts local and national governments with a host of problems. The growth of many of the larger cities has been phenomenal. In global terms, Africa remains the least urbanized of continents; but it has recently been estimated that cities in Africa are growing more rapidly than in any other area of the world. In the inter-censal figures for the period 1950-60, it has been estimated that the population growth rate in African urban centres over 20 000 was 69 per cent. This compares with a growth rate of 67 per cent for Latin America and 42 per cent for the world as a whole.[1]

So far there has been very little work done on the meaning of this rapid urbanization in terms of other developmental problems. The decade 1960-69 has witnessed growing problems, arising out of the widening income differentials between the rural and urban sectors. Other characteristics of the urban problem have been the unequal distribution of income, housing shortages, urban unemployment, and increasing pressure on limited social services.

Two monographs recently printed in Rhodesia, therefore, are a most welcome contribution to a study of these problems. Dr Gargett discusses how local authorities have attempted to deal with African urban settlement in particular with regards to housing, and the distribution of welfare services.[2] Mrs Gwata's study endeavours to measure the response of Africans in the Salisbury townships to the cultural and leisure facilities provided by local government and central government agencies.[3]

The two works are remarkably similar in their theoretical assumptions, which it will be argued, are inappropriate for dealing with problems of urban development in Rhodesia. A 'transitional phase theory' runs through both books. The very title of Gargett's book, 'The Administration of Transition', betrays his main subject of concern, which comes up again and again:

> In the writer's view the social purpose of public assistance for Africans in urban areas should be to facilitate the transition to urban living by reducing the insecurity of the wage economy.[4]
> Urbanisation as a way of life involves the adoption of attitudes and values foreign to traditional peasant society. The real transition that is being made is not from country to town but from traditional to modern.[5]

[1] A. Gavriola, 'Special features of urbanisation in tropical Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1971), **9**, 291-6.
[2] E. Gargett, **The Administration of Transition : African Urban Settlement in Rhodesia** (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977), 104 pp., Rh$1,65.
[3] M. F. Gwata (with a Foreword and Chapter 1 by D. H. Reader), **Rhodesian African Cultural and Leisure Needs** (Salisbury, Univ. of Rhodesia, Dep. of Sociology, Commissioned by the National Arts Foundation of Rhodesia, 1977), 59 pp., Rh$0,55.
[4] Gargett, 69.
[5] Ibid., 37.

The significant features of the townward movement in Africa have been the abruptness of the transition and the immensity of the cultural gulf to be bridged.[6]

Nowhere are we given a clear quantitative or qualitative statement of this 'transition'. At any rate the assumptions made by Gargett are not of much help in an understanding of the urban problem. From a holistic point of view, the concept of 'transition' explains very little of the problems stemming from rural-urban migration; and there is also the paternalistic hint that Rhodesian urban Africans have been powerless to shape the nature of their lives according to their own perceptions. Gutkind, in his critique of the 'transitional phase theory' has reminded us that:

It is more exact to speak of a particular style of life as particular as any other set of arrangements considered suitable at a particular moment of time and serving particular ends.[7]

Gwata also proceeds from the same evolutionary theoretical assumptions as Gargett. What emerges from her work is characteristic of social anthropologists and to a lesser extent urban sociologists who were working in Africa during the sixties; cities were utilized as instruments through which urban behaviour which deviated from village life could be measured.[8] Gwata's approach to her subject is therefore essentially aimed at juxtaposing the urban African community against a rural backdrop in order to gain knowledge of untouched African life as it existed before colonialism:

This rather sharp division of time is essentially a phenomenon of industrial society. In the traditional situation the African people's recreational activities were of such a nature that they were largely integrated with their means of making a livelihood. For example hunting which in modern society is considered to be a recreational activity was pursued for purposes of obtaining food. Furthermore work and recreation could occur simultaneously and there were no restrictions on the individual's movements in the rural areas.

Today the black man finds himself in Salisbury, under the service of an employer who pays him for his labour. He is bound to an eight-hour day with specific holidays and free weekends. Work and relaxation can no longer run concurrently and he cannot just move about as he likes. The urban woman now only looking after the home without fields to till also finds herself with some spare time. The transmission of culture and the general process of socialization which were interfused with the daily life of the traditional society are missing from the present work situation.[9]

---

[6] Ibid., 7.

[7] P. C. W. Gutkind, *Urban Anthropology : Perspectives On 'Third World' Urbanisation and Urbanism* (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1974), 21.

[8] See, for example, H. Miner, *The City in Modern Africa* (New York, Praeger, 1967); H. Powdermaker, *Coppertown : Changing Africa* (New York, Harper Colophon Books, 1962).

[9] Gwata, 9.

Cultural theories such as this are not helpful and only serve to direct attention away from the institutional structure as the most important cause of Rhodesian underdevelopment.[10]

Another tendency implicit in both Gargett's and Gwata's work is the rather naive attempt to be value free and 'apolitical'. In both monographs the 'political' is tacitly identified with the proper functioning of the present Rhodesian political order; Gargett identifies it with legal processes and the administration of laws:

> The fact of urbanization and the response in terms of housing and other services need to be seen within the context of political legislative and financial measures . . . [11]

In the same vein Gwata refers to:

> the confusion of agencies and objectives due to a clash between municipal and governmental African leisure and culture provisions in Salisbury.[12]

Both studies are therefore divorced from the whole political, economic and social superstructure of Rhodesian society. Nowhere in either book is consideration given to whether the black man in Rhodesia caught up in an economically underprivileged situation can obtain his social and cultural needs via institutional changes.

Thus, a distinctive theoretical feature in these books is a functionalist and dualist characterization of the social formation and system of racial domination in Rhodesia. Gargett makes this quite obvious, when he writes:

> Economic considerations centre on the sub-economic position of most urban African families and on the dual economy, with a two tier wage structure in town and a vast majority under subsistence conditions.[13]

Implicit in this approach to Rhodesian urban problems is the assumption that the development of the developed white sector and the underdevelopment of the underdeveloped black sector are causally unrelated, and that the whole problem of underdevelopment is one of insufficient integration into the capitalist system:

> The political, legal and financial background to African urban settlement in Rhodesia is a picture of planned non-integration. Africans are seen to be in the city but they are not of it.[14]

Professor Reader, in his introduction to Gwata's study, obviously views the whole question of African cultural and leisure needs as being unrelated to the capitalist system:

[10] For an excellent critique of this cultural ideology see D. G. Clarke, 'Settler ideology and African underdevelopment in post war Rhodesia', *Rhodesian Journal of Economics* (1974), **8**, 17-38; and B. Mothobi, 'Some reflections on management beliefs about African workers in Rhodesia', *South African Labour Bulletin* (1975), **1**, 36-45.
[11] Gargett, 7.
[12] Gwata, 4.
[13] Gargett, 34.
[14] Ibid., 14.

> The whole problem of African cultural and leisure needs is set in the context of a people struggling to survive in a world of galloping inflation. No amenities which fail to take that salient act into account have much hope of acceptance or success.[15]

Let us now examine the policy implications for urban development and social work, arising out of the theoretical considerations discussed above. What both Gargett and Gwata have failed to consider is that the pictures they discuss are part and parcel of the total economic structure which has institutionalized the underdevelopment of the black population.[16] Therefore there cannot be any hope of improving African urban conditions, as long as policies are not based on this consideration.

The implications for social work arising out of the theoretical assumptions in the studies under review, are that social work is seen as representing commonly held or accepted values as a reminder of the 'conscience'. The plight of Blacks is seen as a dilemma and a 'moral' problem.[17] The object of social work as expressed by Gwata and Gargett is primarily to help individuals to adjust to 'social reality', represented by Rhodesian social institutions. There is a presumption made that Rhodesia is a democratic country, so that social work is viewed as a non-political 'neutralist' activity in which technical skills are used to pursue aims which are generally accepted as legitimate. The options for a meaningful improvement are therefore severely circumscribed. The radical critique of social-work professionalism makes explicit the real issue at hand.

> Social casework is seen as serving the capitalist system admirably since its basic assumption is that there is nothing wrong with society and that problems are the problems of individuals who cannot 'adjust' in some way. Because of the power of this form of professionalism in determining how clients' problems are to be defined, one of the functions of social work is to act as an agent of social control although this is not how social workers typically see their function. Above all, a practice such as social casework prevents clients seeing the totality of their situation or of feeling solidarity with other people in the same situation.[18]

The pertinence of this line of criticism of the theoretical framework of the two studies under review can be seen from an analysis of their contents. Chapter I of Gargett's monograph deals with the background to urban settlement in Rhodesia. The effect on urban Blacks of laws, such as the 1895 Pass Laws and the Master and Servants Act, is seen merely in terms of racial discrimination.[19] This preoccupation with colour discrimination, however, does not explain much. All these laws are better understood in their historical

---

[15] Gwata, 7.
[16] See D. G. Clarke, 'The Economics of Urban Inequality in Rhodesia : Considerations on the Langley, Whiting and Wright Report' (Univ. of Rhodesia, Dep. of Economics, Conference on African Influx and Urbanization in Salisbury, 19-20 Feb. 1972).
[17] Gargett, 46, 104.
[18] B. J. Heraud, 'Professionalism, radicalism and social change' in P. Halmos (ed.), *Professionalisation and Social Change* (Keele, Univ. of Keele, 1973), 89.
[19] Gargett, 7.

context as forms of extra-economic coercion which placed Africans in a position of powerlessness and exploitability in relation to their employers.[20]

Similarly the financial considerations discussed by Gargett as provided for in the African Registration and Accommodation Act, and the Services Levy Act, are best interpreted as ways in which Rhodesian governments have sought to modernize racial domination; for this reason the comparisons Gargett makes between Rhodesian and South African policies are from a holistic point of view irrelevant.[21] Rex has described the workings of the system of urban administration in Rhodesia and South Africa:

> The management of the semi-settled urban labour force however requires more than police control. Drains must be provided if disease is to be prevented and disease must be prevented because it spreads through domestic servants to white homes. Street lighting is essential to the effective prevention of crime. And beyond these more mundane material services it is also necessary to provide a minimum range of human and personal services to prevent unnecessary suffering and grievance which make for inefficiency. Yet there is a difficulty about providing these services. The native urbanites cannot afford them and white rate-payers, who are alone enfranchised will not pay for them. Thus, so far as social services at least are concerned an alternative source of income must be found. This is found through the creation of a municipal monopoly in the brewing of native beer.[22]

Gargett tends to mystify the Land Apportionment Act and the Land Tenure Act, by again viewing it as merely in terms of the colour bar. These laws by restricting the property ownership and property rights of Blacks and by restricting their political rights served to perpetuate the economic dependence of Blacks and to secure the ultra-exploitability of their black labour. The much-vaunted home ownership scheme only gained momentum in the 1960s after the division of the electorate into A and B rolls, which stifled African political advancement. In 1944, Huggins had warned the municipalities of the consequences inherent in their delay in implementing the Land Apportionment Act: 'Everyday the possibility of the African acquiring property in the township increases'.[23]

Chapter II of Gargett's monograph suffers from the same defects as the first one; it is mainly descriptive and there is little attempt at analysis. Thus, he merely mentions the unbalanced age and sex structure of the urban African population in the early days, without probing the institutional mechanisms that brought this state of affairs.[24]

In Chapter III, Gargett considers the question of housing. It is difficult to agree with him when he attributes the poor housing conditions in the inter-war period to a reluctance on the part of local authorities and to limited financial resources.[25] Nevertheless there is more to it than that; for the point

[20] For a more detailed exposition of this thesis, see F. A. Johnstone, *Class Race and Gold : A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976) ; C. van Onselen, *Chibaro : African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933* (London, Pluto Press, 1976).

[21] Gargett, 8-9.

[22] J. Rex, 'The compound, the reserve and the urban location : The essential institutions of Southern African labour exploitation', *South African Labour Bulletin* (1974), **1**, 13-14.

[23] Southern Rhodesia, *Debates in the Legislative Assembly . . . 1944*, **24**, 2501.

[24] Gargett, 21.

[25] Ibid., 41.

is that in the inter-war years, Rhodesia had no substantial industrial sector and so had no need to stabilize the labour force.[26] To disprove Gargett's statement that local authorities lacked financial resources to improve housing conditions is easily challenged. African locations in the pre-war years were a means by which municipalities maximized profits for themselves and the white ratepayers, as the Jackson Commission made clear in respect of the Salisbury municipality's financial administration:

> the operations are more in the nature of a banking business than of ordinary government or Municipal loans.[27]

In the inter-war years Bulawayo was notorious for the exorbitant rents charged in the location. A committee of enquiry by the Native Welfare Society disclosed that for the period 1931-41, the Bulawayo Municipality had been overcharging rent, despite the fact that it received a better return on capital invested in African housing than any other local authority.[28]

In Chapters III and IV we can see the laudable attempts that have since been made by the Department of Housing and Amenities in Bulawayo to provide welfare services and more representation in local government for African residents of the townships. A criticism that does spring to mind, after reading these two chapters, nevertheless is that the subtitle of the monograph, 'African Urban Settlement in Rhodesia', is rather misleading; for there are no comparisons made between what has taken place in Bulawayo and the position in Salisbury. A study of the social policy of the Salisbury City Council had this to say:

> But it has not necessarily been the legislative framework and wider government policy that has caused the underdevelopment of social policy in Salisbury. Local authorities have had considerable freedom in deciding the nature and direction of policy.[29]

Of course, the question of the progressiveness of one local authority *vis-à-vis* another is not entirely value free. Given the institutional background to urban African administration in Rhodesia, a 'progressive' local authority such as Bulawayo can only be credited with having had greater success in masking and perpetuating the inequality of an acquisitive society.

Gwata begins her study with a western orientated definition of leisure, which obscures its importance for capitalist groups in Rhodesia. Rottenburg's study of leisure in the West Indies would have provided a more useful basis for comparison than the works of Dumazadien and Goule. Rottenburg's concern was to disprove the belief held by West Indian planters in the 1940s that the British West Indian had a large preference for leisure over work and

[26] G. Arrighi, 'International corporations, labour aristocracies and economic development in tropical Africa', in R. I. Rhodes (ed.), *Imperialism and Undervelepoment* (London, Monthly Review Press, 1970), 236.

[27] Nat[ional] Arch[ives of] Rhod[esia, Salisbury], S86 ('Report of the Native Affairs Commission on Its Enquiry into Matters Concerning the Salisbury Native Location, 1930'), 30.

[28] Nat. Arch. Rhod., Historical Manuscripts Collection, RH16/1/1 (Rhodesian Institute of African Affairs : Corespondence and Other Papers, Chronological Series: 1935-62), Secretary Native Welfare Society to Town Clerk, Bulawayo, 12. Jan. 1943.

[29] B. Nussbaum, 'The Underdevelopment of Social Policy. Salisbury African Townships' (Univ. of Rhodesia, Dept. of Sociology, unpubl. B.Sc. Special Honours Sociology dissertation, 1974), 33.

that his wants were small.[30] Clarke has criticized the operation of the limited wants thesis in Rhodesia with reference to wages, and had Gwata applied it to the question of leisure, she would have provided us greater insights.[31] For example, it is stated, without comment or analysis, that 76 per cent of respondents had showed favourable reaction to the leisure facilities provided, and that only 12,8 per cent believed that, 'the facilities are provided to prevent mixing of the races or as a discreet way of oppressing the African';[32] but this cannot be accepted as an expression of social reality, without enquiring into the question of different levels of social and political consciousness. History would support the contention of the 12,8 per cent of respondents; from as far back as 1910, there is no doubt that the provision of leisure facilities by the settlers was intended to be a form of social control. The Native Commissioner, Belingwe, in a letter to the Acting Native Commissioner in 1910, wrote:

> For a moment let us consider what it was that made the (pre-war) British proletariat contented although working in many cases, in circumstances which were scarcely more conducive to a sustained interest in their actual labours than are those in which the mine boys work here. It was largely sport — or what the workman considered sport. For example, the hands old and young in every community were enthusiastic 'supporters' of some local football team whose Saturday afternoon matches furnished a topic of interest for the remainder of the week. Here the labourer's principal recreations are connected with beer and women, leading frequently to the Public Court and the risk of being smitten with one or other of the venereal diseases which are so insidiously sapping the strength of the native population. Those who employ and those who control native mine labour should, for a double reason, try to influence the native to change in this respect. Sporting enthusiasm is not the ideal substitution for present conditions but it would be a step forward and one, I am sure not difficult to bring about. The native is intensely imitative, often vain, and always clannish and all these are qualities which would further 'sport' — a parochial spirit of sport if you like — but one which would forge ties of interest and esprit de corps between the labourer and his work place. A patch of ground, a set of goal posts and a football would not figure largely in the expenditure of a big mine.[33]

This form of reasoning was to be echoed over the decades. In a letter to the Prime Minister in 1936, by Bullock, the Chief Native Commissioner, recreation was seen merely a means of perpetuating the migrant labour system: 'It is not thought that sexual intercourse is a necessity for young bachelors who mostly work in the towns for comparatively short periods if facilities are provided for games and recreation'.[34] One could quote many other statements in the same vein to illustrate the function leisure has performed in perpetuating the exploitative system in Rhodesia. Until the 1950s, at least, the definition of Welfare for Africans in official documents was simply the

[30] S. Rottenburg, 'Income and leisure in an underdeveloped economy', *The Journal of Political Economy* (1952), **60**, 97.
[31] D. G. Clarke, 'Settler ideology and African underdevelopment'.
[32] Gwata, 34.
[33] Quoted in Van Onselen, *Chibaro*, 190-1.
[34] Nat. Arch. Rhod., S1542/A1 (Chief Native Commissioner, Correspondence and Other Papers, General, 1914-43 : Acts, Notices, Amendents and Ordinances, 1933-40). Secretary for Native Affairs to the Prime Minister, 10 Sept. 1936.

provision of facilities for recreation. Voluntary organizations such as the African Welfare Society, the Women's Institute, left no stone unturned in their efforts to see that the natives were occupied in their spare time.

There are frequent references to 'culture' in Gwata ('Culture for present purposes may be defined broadly as the training and refinement of the mind, tastes and manners'[35]), but it is never quite clear how her concept is to be related to other developmental processes. The academic controversy on culture is too involved to be dealt with here; our main interest is to relate it to social development of Africans which presumably was one of the objectives of Gwata's study. The recommendations she makes for the improvement of leisure facilities are to a large extent nullified by the fact that 'culture' is discussed in a vacuum throughout the work, except for the occasional allusion to the low living standards of Africans. There is no discernible attempt to assess the impact of the colonial situation on African culture, so that statements, such as the one by Reader that 'the population of the sample Rhodesian African townships seems remarkably like a working-class group anywhere',[36] are barely useful as a basis for assessing cultural needs of exploited Africans in a particular context.

The effects of colonialism and domination on the culture of a conquered people have been well summed up by Paulo Freire:

> The relationships between the domination and the dominated reflect the greater social context, even when formally personal. Such relationships imply the introjection by the dominated of the cultural myths of the domination. Similarly the dependant society introjects the values and life style of the metropolitan society since the structure of the latter shapes that of the former. This results in the duality of the dependent society, its ambiguity, its being and not being itself, and the ambivalence characteristic of its long experience of dependency both attracted by and rejecting the metropolitan society.[37]

There can be no overestimating of the importance of culture for developmental purposes, but it cannot be confined to values, personality or judged by oddments of beads and pottery, but rather as Peel defines it:

> 'a way of life' rather than the actual observable pattern of living at any one time. It consists of ideal elements: people's notions about what exists and about the conditions of their existence, about what they would like to see for themselves and their society and about how they might achieve them.[38]

Given the limitations in Gwata's study, the recommendations she makes will only serve to perpetuate and legitimate the *status quo*.

CONCLUSION

If there is to be a meaningful change in the social conditions of urban Blacks in Rhodesia, there will have to be a drastic revision of the theoretical assumptions on which present policies are based: the pervasive effects of

[35] Gwata, 10.
[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] P. Freire, *Cultural Action For Freedom* (Cambridge (Mass.) Penguin, 1970), 59.
[38] J. D. Y. Peel, 'The significance of culture for development studies', *I. D. S. Bulletin* (1976), **8**, 8.

political and economic domination will have to be considered. The studies reviewed above largely beg the question in seeking causes for the under-development of Africans outside the capitalist system.

It might be more worthwhile to study the problems posed by urban settlement within the theoretical framework of Walton's definition of internal colonialism,

> *Internal colonialism is defined as a process that produces certain intra-national forms of patterned socio-economic inequality directly traceable to the exploitative practices through which national and international institutions are linked in the interests of surplus extraction, and capital accumulation.* Stated differently internal colonialism refers to those domestic structures of inequality whose origins lie in the interface between internal conditions and external influences stemming from metropolitan economies. Internal colonialism has reference to both a process whose central characteristic is exploitation, and to the patterned consequences of the process in the form of socio-economic inequality. *Exploitation* is distinguished from potentially diverse sources of inequality by the use of *power* (as opposed to market or voluntaristic mechanisms) to obtain the necessary inputs to the capital accumulation process at the lowest possible costs and to enhance the profitability of that process through monopolistic restraints on its distributive impact . . . [39]

Within such a conceptual framework the meaning of urban administration, and social services, in terms of developmental processes will emerge with less ambiguity: this would involve case studies of development-making processes, and the resulting differential consequences of these policies. Key policy areas from which valuable data on the workings of internal colonialism would be land use and land tenure. Finally, an analysis of the solutions sought to urban problems in Rhodesia within a cost-benefit framework would lead to quantitative estimates of the impact of alternative policies.

University of Rhodesia   T. D. SHOPO

[39] J. Walton, 'Internal colonialism : Problems of definition and measurement', in F. M. Trueblood and W. A. Cornelius (eds.), *Latin American Urban Research : 5* (London, Sage, 1976), 34-5.