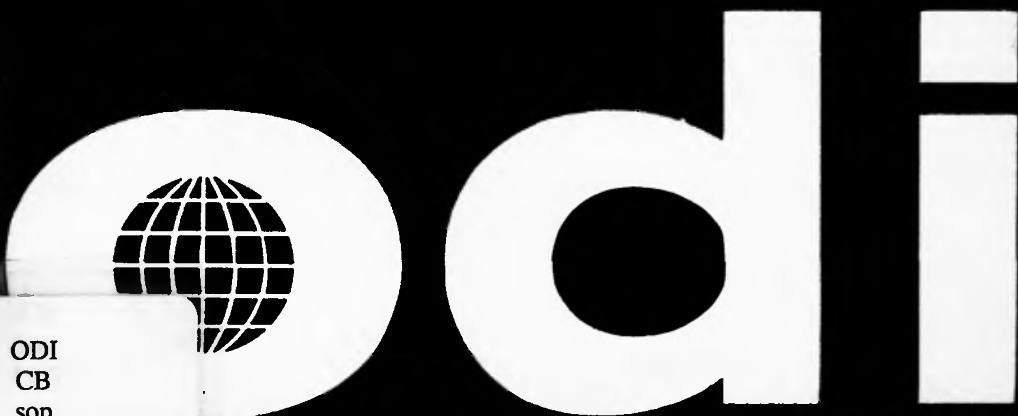


Aid Management Overseas

by Tom Soper

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Overseas Development Institute

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- 3 to be a forum where those directly concerned with development can meet others and discuss their problems and share ideas;
- 4 to spread the information collected as widely as possible amongst those working on development problems;
- 5 to keep the urgency of the problems before the public and the responsible authorities.

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Overseas Development Institute

Aid Management Overseas

by Tom Soper

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Aid and Foreign Intervention

Government-to-government economic aid has become an integral part of international relations and an important ingredient of foreign affairs. The present British aid programme of some £200m is a substantial transfer of resources and the way in which it is used is rightly a matter of concern to the government of this country. It is also a matter of concern to those governments who are the beneficiaries. The mere act of providing assistance is bound to influence in some degree the development, both political and economic, of the recipient country and thus it is anxious to ensure that the amount, terms and methods of utilisation are effective in the light of national objectives. Indeed, both the provider of aid and the beneficiary have objectives they wish to pursue and they properly wish to ensure that the aid contract between them is set out in such a way as will make the attainment of these objectives possible.

When the parties concerned are governments it is reasonable to think in terms of employing the traditional channels of inter-governmental negotiation. In practice this means, at the highest level, ministers from one country dealing with ministers from another country, through and with the assistance of the appropriate government departments and their civil services. In Britain's case the lynchpin in such operations is the Diplomatic Service working through Embassies for foreign countries and through High Commissions for Commonwealth countries. From the Ambassador or High Commissioner downwards these are the people who by virtue of their being in an overseas mission are the natural candidates for participation in the original negotiations and subsequent accounting activities.

This system has much to commend it if the object is to ensure enforcement of a contract. The aid operation of the United Kingdom however is not simply a matter of contractual accounting; and it has now gone far beyond short-term objectives. As expressed in the White Paper of the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM),

'The objective of the British aid programme is to help developing countries in their efforts to raise living standards. Our purpose is therefore to promote social and economic development. But development means more than reducing poverty and unemployment. It means fulfilling aspirations towards steady and continued social and economic progress. It means the transformation of traditional societies into modern ones. Our aim is to do what lies in our power to help the developing countries to provide their people with the material opportunities of using their talents, of living a full and happy life and of steadily improving their lot.'¹

¹ *Overseas Development: The Work of the New Ministry* (Cmnd. 2736), HMSO, 1965.

The programme may in its side effects contribute to the attainment of many objectives but they should be subsidiary to the main one which is to assist in the orderly promotion of economic and social advancement in the recipient country. And it is because both the provider of aid and the beneficiary have a common interest in this that aid flows at all. If it was manifestly against the interests of either party it would dry up.

However, once it is accepted that the donor has an interest in promoting the economic development of the recipient the corollary must also be accepted: that the donor has an interest in the economic condition of the recipient and of the character and aims of its development. And here 'interest' means something more than an ordinary wish to be aware of what is going on. If aid is to assist in the economic development of a country it must be used effectively. This means that the use to which it is put is of concern to the donor. For purposes of simple accounting it is probably enough to ensure that ploughs come from British workshops; for purposes of agrarian improvement it is vital to be satisfied that these ploughs are suitable for the ground they have to work on, that they can be properly used and maintained, and indeed that such an investment in the light of other alternatives represents a wise allocation of resources. If the recipient government is also interested in economic advancement these factors are of concern to it, too, and thus both donors and recipients have a mutual interest in ensuring the most effective economic use of the resources provided through aid. But however rational this may sound, the practical effect is that the donor, an outside foreign nation – and in the case of Britain and her ex-dependencies the former imperial power – is becoming involved in the domestic affairs and priorities of a sovereign state which more often than not has only recently achieved political independence and is understandably reluctant to admit to any encroachment on sovereignty. Furthermore, domestic political factors, which are not unnaturally of considerable importance to any country, may in the eyes of the recipient have priority over economic ones. The donor on the other hand may be more interested in narrower economic considerations. Nevertheless the fact is that the relationship created by aid-giving brings with it an involvement in a recipient's political and economic policy.

The basic difficulty in aid management is to reconcile this involvement in the internal affairs of the recipient country with claims of national sovereignty. How best this reconciliation can take place is to be discussed later. For the moment it is useful to look at some of the points of contact where this involvement in the domestic affairs of a recipient takes place, if aid is to be put to effective use. The list does not aim at completeness: it simply indicates some of the activities that have to be undertaken.

To begin with, there are the actual negotiations for aid. Here the donor government requires to be fully informed on the state of the recipient's economy, on its development plan and on the projects included in the plan. This requires an evaluation of the specific requests for aid within the chosen field.

Second, the dossiers for aid need to be carefully prepared and presented in a form that is acceptable to donors. This is essentially the responsibility of the recipient governments but in many cases the shortage of skilled persons in this field is so great that donors can and do give assistance in the preparation of the documents.

Third, consultants and technical assistance personnel operating under various technical assistance schemes have to be supervised and supported by an administrative arm.

Fourth, where capital rather than technical assistance is involved there is a need to carry out a general surveillance of the implementation of the project.

Fifth, a continual and regular assessment of the results achieved is required to ensure that lessons are learned from the past and that they are applied to future operations, thus improving performance.

Sixth, there is a need to ensure the closest possible co-ordination among donors in the field.

Seventh, there should be a close relationship amounting to a continuing dialogue between the donor government and the recipient so that a full understanding of each other's position can be achieved. Further, and of more significance, as neither donor nor recipient knows the answers to the problems of development it is essential for both to operate together in a search for the answers with each contributing those special skills that each possesses.

There is no doubt that the means adopted to achieve these objectives can vary considerably. Different recipient countries will need different treatment depending on their own stage of development. Different donor countries will adopt a variety of methods according to the amount and type of aid that is given. Also there is not necessarily one single method that on its own is adequate to cope with the many problems. In the case of Britain the staff of the Ministry of Overseas Development participate directly in many of these activities. The divisions within the Ministry over which eight under-secretaries preside cover Finance and Western Hemisphere (Caribbean and Latin America), International Affairs, Africa, Asia, Overseas Appointments, Education, Natural Resources, Social Development and Training. In addition there is a Controller of Special Projects. The Ministry is staffed primarily by career civil servants, many of whom have served overseas, and a specialist arm has been added under a Director-General of Economic Planning under whom there are three Directors responsible for the World Economy Division, the Geographical Division and the Statistics Division. The Ministry is also assisted by an Advisory Staff including Building Research and Housing, Co-operatives, Education, Engineering, Films, Geology, Labour, Locust Control and Research, Land Tenure, Local Government, Marketing, Medical, Natural Resources, Police Training, Roads, Science, Social Development, Storage, Surveys, Tropical Pesticides Research and Tropical Products. Thus there is located in London a group of people with a wide variety of experience, both administrative and specialist.

Although London is the headquarters many of the individuals on the staff of the Ministry make regular overseas visits for advice, consultation and negotiation. Also from outside the Ministry – in the universities for example – non-officials can be invited to assist with overseas commissions of enquiry sent out on specific *ad hoc* tasks. This concentration of skills in Britain which can be used for aid operations in all parts of the world has much to commend it. It is however the contention of this paper that for aid operations to be effective it is essential also to have a strong overseas arm of aid representation. Indeed visits from London-based specialists do not supplant the need to have other specialists resident overseas. On the contrary it makes it even more imperative to have a properly equipped team permanently located overseas with whom the visiting experts can talk.

In almost all of the activities that have been mentioned representatives based overseas should and would be directly concerned in a number of ways. With regard to the actual negotiations for aid they would be expected to advise the donor government on the general economy of the recipient, on its development plan and on the projects included in the plan. This in practice means the evaluation of specific requests for aid in support of projects. This would not preclude any other assessment by the staff of – in the case of Britain – the Ministry of Overseas Development both in its relevant geographical department and in the planning division. The home-based staff and the overseas representatives would, or should, operate jointly on this. The overseas staff, however, would have the inestimable advantage of being *en poste*, alive to the current economic and political climate of the country to which they are accredited and in direct and daily touch with commercial and governmental opinion of the recipient country. It may be that such a country has a strong civil service – either indigenous or under-pinned by expatriates through the Overseas Service Aid Scheme (OSAS) – and one that is supported by a strong professional arm. But if this is so the work of the British overseas mission could be increased rather than reduced as there is provided an opportunity for a most fruitful relationship between officials in direct and regular contact with each other. In any event the staff of an overseas mission should have particularly useful views on how much aid is required – it is assumed that the decision whether or not to give aid has already been taken at the political level – and what terms are most appropriate for the recipient. They could indeed be a most useful advocate for the recipient country. If because of domestic balance of payments difficulties the donor government insists on tying aid to donor procurement and if this is inappropriate for the intended recipient, which may need the bulk of its aid for local cost support, the overseas mission is in a strong position to argue the case for the benefit of the recipient. It would also benefit the donor. To give too little of the wrong sort of aid at the wrong time helps nobody. It has to be remembered, too, that in the case of Britain the government department concerned with aid consists of civil

servants and advisers whose parish is a vast one of some seventy overseas countries currently receiving aid. It is therefore not impossible that the special needs of a particular country get overlooked in the context of pressing claims from others. Representatives in overseas missions however have as their main concern the relationship between the country they represent and the people to whom they are accredited. They are therefore able to be eloquent advocates of aid terms that make sense for the particular country they are working in rather than having concern for the general aid pattern that is considered appropriate for the donor.

Overseas representatives can play a significant role, too, in interpreting the position of the donor to the recipient. Indeed, they can 'advise' the recipient on the mood of the donor, what they are likely to get if they play their cards well. They can even, if the relationship is close enough, offer some help on what cards to play. This honest broker role is especially important in African conditions when African overseas representation in the capitals of the major donors is bound, for the time being, to be very thin on the ground with so many new diplomatic appointments to fill in so many countries. Thus consultation on these matters between the British government and an African High Commission in London as well as consultation between an African government and its representative in the United Kingdom is likely to be less useful than it should be simply because of the very wide range of responsibilities that fall on African missions overseas, whose heads are sometimes accredited to two or more European countries.

But it is mainly in the realm of a close and continuing relationship with the people of and in the aid-receiving country that overseas representatives can do so much. It is in this way that the recipient can be best helped in preparing dossiers for consideration by the donor, in ferreting out and selecting projects for support, and in searching for the most appropriate means of coping with problems of development. A visiting mission of experts from London can contribute to this but it is not an adequate replacement for day-to-day contact and discussion.

Similarly among the donor representatives themselves, both bilateral and multilateral, regular informal consultation and exchange of ideas and experience is the only way to ensure any reasonable degree of co-ordination in the field. But the essence of all this is that such contacts, whether among donors or between donors and recipients, should be regular and informal and it is obviously through the permanently based overseas representatives that this can come about. In spite of modern air travel, regular informality is not possible to attain through the technique of the visiting mission.

The Management of Aid to British Colonies

If the functions that need to be performed to ensure that the aid programme operates effectively require a vital role to be played by representatives stationed overseas, the question arises as to what type of aid mission is best suited to further these objectives. For this it is useful to look at the present structure of British overseas representation and the way in which it has evolved. There are two broad categories of operation that need to be distinguished: assistance to colonial dependencies, and assistance to independent countries.

So far as colonial territories are concerned, the number since 1945 has steadily declined until today in 1967 there are some 30 dependencies left with a population of under 10 million. It is, however, worth while looking at the system adopted because the present machinery and character of British aid cannot be divorced from historical antecedents and it has been influenced in a variety of ways by this earlier system. Many of its defects and also its qualities stem from this.

There is, of course, in the ordinary sense of the word no British diplomatic mission in a colonial dependency. The Queen's representative on the spot is the Governor, who is also an integral part of the dependency's government. Thus a High Commissioner or Ambassador would have no role to play. But the Governor is also the executive head of the colonial government and thus forms a close, direct and continuing link between Ministers in London and the overseas government. So far as the civil servants in a dependency are concerned, although members of *Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service* (formerly the *Colonial Service*), they are in fact employed by and are the servants of the government of the dependency. They are not part of the British home civil service, neither are they members of a 'supra-national' cadre of overseas civil servants. In practice there is some movement of officers from one dependency to another but this is limited as it means moving a person out of the civil service of say Fiji to that of another country, say the Bahamas. In territories where there is a shortage of experienced and skilled persons the civil servants in the most senior posts will for the most part be expatriates from the United Kingdom. In other dependencies, for example some of the Caribbean islands, the indigenous people themselves will occupy almost all of the posts.

From an aid point of view a number of consequences have stemmed from this governmental and administrative structure. Expenditure has been subjected to control and checks at many points. Irregularities or uncertainties can be looked into, and the British Parliament can satisfy itself as to the propriety or otherwise of what has been done. So far as development priorities are concerned, there is again a system which is

normally based in the last resort on British parliamentary sovereignty. The development programme – whether it has reached the sophistication of a formal plan or not is immaterial – of a dependency which receives budgetary or development aid from the UK has to be approved by the British government. In practice a considerable amount of discretion is left to the people on the spot, but the ultimate sanction of the British Parliament is there. Thus in these cases development priorities can be scrutinised and, where it is thought necessary, modified. Where direct economic assistance is involved it is within the powers of the British government to make conditions. In a sentence, accounting, development priorities, and the imposition of ancillary conditions have, under the British colonial system, all to a considerable extent been ‘taken care of’ with ultimate responsibility vested in the British government. In spite of having a Governor and an overseas civil service which by any standards could be regarded as highly experienced and competent, the authorities in London in practice have been reluctant to delegate too much executive authority to them. London control and influence has been exercised in a variety of ways: commissions of experts have continually been sent out to report on this or that aspect of a problem. Their findings have been presented to the relevant Secretary of State (normally Colonial) in London, and he has taken subsequent action on them.

Aid Management and Independence

With the achievement of independence by the bulk of the dependencies of the British Empire the economic and technical assistance that had previously been part of the colonial system was in substance needed as much as before. But a wholly different relationship between Britain and overseas countries has developed as each country moved step by step towards independence. The framework within which decisions on priorities, accounting procedures, and the channelling of resources had once been made became no longer appropriate for operations conducted between sovereign powers. The British representative was no longer the Governor or chief executive of the government in question. Instead an overseas diplomatic mission was set up under a High Commissioner whose status was exactly comparable to the head on any other foreign mission, no less, no more. Britain was just one of many countries with which the newly independent state had relations. Development priorities were entirely the concern of the overseas government itself. It is true that in many countries, particularly in Africa, British expatriate officials have remained *en poste* as civil servants in the new independent administration. But they have become the servants of the new governments, employed by them and responsible to them and thus totally separated from the British machinery of government and control. Furthermore, as the years pass by, more and more of the most senior posts where policy matters are subject to influence from civil servants have become filled by local people. In the Asian Commonwealth, and particularly India and Pakistan, the civil service was, even prior to independence, manned by highly experienced indigenous civil servants. Thus when the provision of economic and technical assistance to independent Commonwealth countries became a major aid operation, new factors had to be taken into account.

In a pragmatic and *ad hoc* sort of way existing institutions were made use of rather than creating new ones. The obvious organisations to deal with aid overseas were considered to be the diplomatic missions and the reasons for this can be rationalised. In the first instance the activities of such missions were part of the accepted machinery for dealings between the countries concerned. By contrast, the establishment of a new and separate foreign body specifically responsible for aid might have been questioned by the new state. Secondly, aid was rightly seen to be a delicate operation and experienced diplomats were regarded as being the most suitable people for coping with it. Thirdly, even if there was no improper political interference through the provision of assistance, aid could not be divorced, either from the donor or the recipient angle, from the political scene. Again, therefore, diplomats with political experience and aptitude

could be seen as appropriate people to handle it. In any case, in the late 1950s the British aid programme to independent countries was not large. New institutional creations, whether at home or overseas, seemed irrelevant. In London various departments of state had responsibilities for it and it was convenient that operations should be conducted through the traditional channels.

The Plowden Report, 1964

However, before long considerable reappraisals of the whole field of British overseas representation were being undertaken. In 1962 a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Plowden was appointed and its report was issued in February 1964.¹ It was concerned with 'the purpose, structure and operation of the services responsible for representing the interests of the United Kingdom Government overseas . . .'. The British Council lay outside its terms of reference although as is discussed below there is a close and important relationship between British Council, overseas representatives, and British overseas missions.

At the time of setting up this commission there were three groups of official British representational services overseas:

- (i) the Foreign Service which had since 1943 been a separate service of the Crown and which consisted, as members of one unified service, of the Foreign Office in London, the Diplomatic Service abroad, the Consular Service and the Commercial Diplomatic Service;
- (ii) the Commonwealth Service which was created in 1947 with the amalgamation of the Dominion Office and the India Office. Members of this new service were members of the Home Civil Service but with liability to serve overseas in the High Commissions in Commonwealth countries;
- (iii) the Trade Commission Service which came into being in 1946 and which operated in Commonwealth countries only. It consisted of members of the staff of the Board of Trade who volunteered for overseas work. Commercial representation in foreign countries was an integral part of the duties of the Foreign Service.

The Plowden Commission took note of Britain's position in a rapidly and radically changing world and examined the ways in which this affected British representational needs. They referred, *inter alia*, to 'the spectacular growth in the number of independent countries' which had 'almost doubled the number of capitals where Britain is now represented' (para. 11). Further they noted there had been a major change in the nature of the Commonwealth. The older Commonwealth countries had until the Second World War been content for the most part to let Britain represent them overseas. The new Commonwealth countries however in Africa and Asia were strongly nationalistic and were 'anxious to develop links with countries other than Britain' (para. 13).

In the light of these and other factors, Lord Plowden and his commissioners recommended as an ultimate aim the amalgamation of the Commonwealth Relations Office and the Foreign Office. But for fear that such a step would imply loss of interest in the Commonwealth they hesitated to ask for

¹ *Report of the Committee on Representational Services Overseas appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Plowden 1962-63.* Cmnd. 2276, HMSO, 1964.

the creation of a single Ministry of External Affairs. They did recommend, however, the creation of a unified service overseas which would 'take in the duties, personnel and posts of the Foreign Service, Commonwealth Service and Trade Commission Service. . . . The staff of the new Service, which should hold the same position *vis-à-vis* the rest of the public services as the Foreign Service now has, would be available throughout their careers for assignment to posts in foreign and Commonwealth countries, the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office' (para. 44). The Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Offices in Whitehall were to retain separate identities although they would draw their staff from the combined Services. These recommendations were accepted by the Government and a single diplomatic service is now in existence. The Foreign Office in London still maintains responsibility for Britain's relations with foreign powers and overseas representation is located in an Embassy under an Ambassador. The Commonwealth Relations Office – which in 1966 was designated the Commonwealth Office – is responsible for Britain's relations with Commonwealth countries and overseas representation is located in a High Commission under the High Commissioner.

It is significant that the Plowden Commission considered that one of the advantages of the unified service would be that it 'could ensure that economic and commercial work in the Commonwealth was brought into closer relationship with political work' (para. 45). They went on to propose 'that members of the unified Service should undertake economic and commercial duties in both Commonwealth and foreign countries but that they should be supplemented by officers from the Board of Trade' (para. 45).

This functional amalgamation is of crucial importance, and the essence of British representation overseas is that politics, economics and commerce are closely interwoven, that the responsible officers are all part of a single service operating under a single mission head – the Ambassador or High Commissioner. The Plowden Commission felt that economic and commercial work 'should be regarded as a first charge on the resources of the new Diplomatic Service and recognised by members of that Service as an important, though not exclusive, specialisation. Members of the Service should be given special training for economic and commercial work and be reinforced by officers seconded from the Board of Trade and other Departments. . . . Economic and Commercial work are two sides of the same coin. . . . There must be some division of labour between individual officers at a post but we are convinced that it is right in principle for economic and commercial work to be handled in the same section of our overseas Missions' (paras. 233/234).

This then was the general framework of the recommendations for overseas representation. How did aid and technical assistance fit into the pattern? The Plowden Commission acknowledged that this area of activity was of growing importance in our overseas relationships. It was seen as an amalgam of political, economic and humanitarian factors. In

particular they stressed in some cases its decisive effect on our future influence and trade in many areas of the world. On staffing matters in overseas missions the Commission felt that the aid operation demanded the provision overseas of 'staff with some knowledge of regional and world wide economic development and international financing' (para. 304).

With regard to technical assistance as distinct from financial aid the responsible office in London was at the time the Department of Technical Co-operation (DTC), established in 1961. The Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office dealt with the British Government's overseas affairs through their officers in overseas missions and thus quite naturally the DTC had no responsibility for overseas posts, with the exception of the Middle East Development Division (MEDD) located in Beirut. The Plowden Commission recommended that 'technical assistance work overseas should be regarded as an integral part of the tasks of the new Service. Wherever possible, technical assistance staff should be regular members of the Service, though there is scope for secondments from the Department of Technical Co-operation. Those seconded would be able to contribute their knowledge of departmental procedures and work, acquiring at the same time practical experience of technical assistance problems in the recipient countries. Only where the volume of technical assistance is substantial will it be necessary to have an officer concerned solely with it. The Department of Technical Co-operation should be consulted about appointments to full-time technical assistance posts or posts where technical assistance occupies a major part of an officers' time' (para. 307).

The Plowden Commission envisaged five main functions for officers engaged on technical assistance work overseas:

- (i) They act as a link between the Department of Technical Co-operation and governments who wish to have technical assistance.
- (ii) They keep in day-to-day touch with the thoughts and plans of Ministries in overseas countries. Close contact of this kind is most likely to lead to the discovery of suitable projects for technical assistance. They also seek to make the administrative task of applying for assistance as simple and straightforward as possible.
- (iii) They do all they can to help the progress of technical assistance schemes and to see that British experts are used to the best advantage.
- (iv) They assist British experts abroad in administrative matters such as housing and transport. This task takes a great deal of time.
- (v) They provide a link with the aid-giving agencies of other countries and those of international organisations like the United Nations. These links need strengthening. This is work which can only be done effectively on the spot in the recipient country' (para. 306).⁷

It will be noticed that these functions have a strong administrative bias with an emphasis on procedures. There is a hint of something in addition to administration but it is little more than a hint: close contact with the ministries overseas involved in development 'is most likely to lead to the discovery of similar projects for technical assistance'. But there is an ominous

observation in the reference to giving administrative support to British experts serving abroad: 'This task takes a great deal of time.' It is also significant that the listed functions have reference to technical assistance work only and not to economic and commercial operations.

Aid Administration: the Present System

The observations and recommendations of the Plowden Commission in so far as these affect the British aid programme have been quoted in some detail because they provide a rationale of the system that *mutatis mutandis* is in operation today. So far as administration in London is concerned there has however been a major development since the publication of the Plowden Report. In October 1964, with the coming into power of the Labour Government, the DTC was disbanded and a new Ministry of Overseas Development was established. This new Ministry took over all the technical assistance work of the DTC but in addition assumed responsibility for financial aid. Hitherto the Commonwealth Relations Office had been responsible for capital aid to the Commonwealth and the Foreign Office for capital aid to foreign countries. They now transferred these responsibilities to the new Ministry, thus combining together financial and technical assistance. The new arrangement also meant that at the head of the Ministry was a Minister with a seat in the Cabinet who could thus speak for 'aid' as something separate from Treasury, Foreign Office or Commonwealth Office considerations.

But although there was a change in the system of administration in London with an aid Ministry detached from the political Departments of State there was no change in the overseas organisation. The separate London Ministries in effect came together in the overseas mission with capital aid, technical assistance, commercial activities and political relations all under one roof and under one Ambassador or High Commissioner, and with aid operations conducted primarily through normal diplomatic representation. This pattern has remained basically unchanged but a number of important modifications have taken place together with a variety of ancillary developments. Two influences have brought these changes about: the pressure of aid work on the overseas diplomatic staff, and a change in the nature of the responsibilities devolving upon the officers concerned.

With regard to the pressure of work it soon became apparent that in a number of instances a First Secretary of a High Commission – or whoever was the responsible officer – found that the bulk of his time was spent in catering in one way or another with the problems associated with British technical assistance experts working in the country. The Plowden Commission had foreseen this although they optimistically saw it in terms of 'housing and transport'. In practice there were many more headaches that had to be endured: telegrams and correspondence about training courses, experts' visits, terms of service, volunteers etc. Many matters too were of a political or quasi-political nature. They might be occasioned by

no more than inexperience or bravado or merely stupidity by a visiting expert but the result could be endless time-consuming worries for the British representative. Apart from this there were the straightforward administrative responsibilities that are inseparable from the transfer of people from one country to work in strange conditions in another country. This preoccupation with ensuring that the machine ran smoothly has had two unfortunate results. It has meant firstly that an experienced First Secretary has been largely engaged in a 'nuts and bolts' operation and he frequently has been without adequate executive-grade help to assist him. This again had been foreseen by the Plowden Commission – 'There is a fairly widespread need to provide adequate Executive staff for the work of looking after the needs of visiting experts who are engaged to give technical advice. It is wasteful to have this work done by administrative staff as is too often the case at the moment' (para. 308). Secondly, it has in some instances made it extremely difficult for the responsible British officer to carry out and develop the Plowden Commission's requirement of keeping in day-to-day touch with the thoughts and plans of Ministries in overseas countries, with a view to discovering suitable projects. It has also become extremely difficult for the officer to provide 'a link with the aid-giving agencies of other countries and those of international organisations like the United Nations'. The role of the diplomat concerned with aid should be conceived as a continuing dialogue between the representative of the donor country, the relevant persons, both official and non-official, of the recipient country, and the representatives of other donors operating in the same area. From the British point of view this means that their 'aid diplomat' should spend as much time out of his office as in; and that he should through continuous contact with others immerse himself in issues of development. Only in this way can he get a full grasp of the economic problems of the country to which he is accredited. The identification of projects, assistance in the selection of priorities of development, and constructive influence in government circles both at home and overseas can only come by being deeply engaged in the economic life and thought of the country.

But already in these words that are being used to describe the duties of the overseas representative it can be seen that the nature of his responsibilities is undergoing a change. No longer is he just the administrator; he is becoming sucked little by little into the orbit of project selection and project appraisal and identification of development priorities. Indeed is it adequate to think of this only in the context of technical assistance as was done by the Plowden Commission? Should not the same role be undertaken for financial operations including agricultural, industrial and infrastructure development? The importance of keeping financial and technical assistance together has already been acknowledged in London with the setting up of the Ministry of Overseas Development, but sometimes in the overseas missions there is not that repository of financial and economic knowledge that is required to fulfil adequately the work needing to be undertaken.

Financial aid in particular is not something than can properly be entrusted to those who have simply 'some knowledge' of international finance, as was suggested by the Plowden Commission. A very thorough knowledge is required and one that embraces not only international matters but the domestic economic issues of the recipient country as well.

The corollary of this is that the donor becomes far more involved in the affairs of the recipient country than has yet been acknowledged. In a sense any aid represents certain involvement, but the economic objectives that have now been set for aid programmes are making this far more explicit. In the light of this how has the British system of diplomatic aid representation adapted itself to meet these new conditions?

Aid operations have been seen as an integral part of the work of the diplomatic service and as a function that can most appropriately be exercised by members of that service. In many instances where it is considered that aid responsibilities are not unduly heavy the officer concerned shoulders other responsibilities besides aid ones. Certainly an uneconomic use of expensive manpower should always be avoided but it is clear that economies go too far in many instances with the result that an aid programme of considerable size, reaching for a particular recipient country an inflow of perhaps £1m a year, is accompanied by an official in a diplomatic mission devoting only half his time to it. True there has been an improvement in this. At the end of 1965 the number of officials in overseas diplomatic missions ranking from Third Secretary to Counsellor inclusive who were solely concerned with aid was 35. A further 130 officers dealt with aid in addition to other matters. Corresponding figures for the beginning of 1965 were only 23 for those dealing exclusively with aid, and 110 for the rest. These figures do not take into account the aid work undertaken by the most senior officers (Heads and Deputy Heads of Missions) some of whom have considerable responsibilities in this field. A Deputy High Commissioner in particular frequently finds himself concerned primarily with aid. Thus, in terms of volume of work and numbers to cope with it, there has been an encouraging development at senior levels, although there is not always adequate appreciation of the role of the supporting executive officer.

There have also been developments in the type of officer employed in missions. Of the 35 full-time posts, seven are filled by ODM officers on secondment (one at Counsellor level, three at First Secretary level, two at Second Secretary level, and one at Third Secretary level). There are thus being fed into the overseas missions civil servants whose professional administrative experience is strongly associated with aid and development. They are not diplomats who happen to undertake an aid stint before moving on elsewhere. They are as skilled in aid matters as a civil servant in the Ministry of Defence is skilled in Service affairs. A further eight of the full-time posts are filled by officers specially recruited to fill aid posts who were formerly in *Her Majesty's Overseas Civil Service*. One of these is a Counsellor and seven are First Secretaries.

But although in this way a more specialist element is being injected into the overseas representation it is still in essence an administrative specialisation. Very few, if any, of the officers concerned would claim to have high professional competence and experience in project selection and evaluation, in economic analysis or planning, in agricultural economics and so on. However competent they may be in aid administration – and their skill in this is considerable – there is a paucity of professional experience in many fields that bears directly and significantly on economic growth. If the donor were concerned only with tidy and tactful handling of administrative matters – and these are important – there would be no cause for concern. But as he is concerned with more than this there is under the present system a dangerous professional inadequacy.

To some extent this has already been recognised. Consideration has indeed been given to the appointment of Technical Advisers to Diplomatic Missions who can both act as a source of advice to governments and assist the missions in their task of aid management. As a first step, an Agricultural Adviser has been added to the staff of the British High Commission in Lagos and he took up his duties late in 1965. An agriculturalist is also being appointed to the British High Commission in Kenya. The principle here is admirable and other appointments elsewhere may follow but the appointment of only two such technical advisers is remarkably cautious. Nigeria is an immensely large African country with half the population of Anglophone Africa. True, the British aid contribution in Nigeria is only a small proportion of the total aid received by that country and is far behind the amount given by the USA. Even so in absolute terms Nigeria received £12m in 1965/6 from Britain. In Uganda and Tanzania, where the British contribution is crucial to the entire development programmes of these countries, there are no comparable technical advisers at all. No mission in East Africa has attached to its staff a general development economist. Yet the missions are directly involved – or should be so involved – in many ways with the country's overall development programmes, with individual projects, with evaluation, with appraisal, with progress reports, and with advice to the home government on the nature, size and direction of future support.

Another development that has resulted in the injection of an element of professional knowledge into the day-to-day life of the overseas mission is the establishment of a separate development division. This is a much larger and more complex operation than the appointment of a technical adviser. It has been done with remarkable success in the Middle East where the Middle East Development Division has been functioning for some 20 years. A newly created Development Division is currently being set up in the Caribbean. In the Middle East the Division came into existence in May 1946 as a branch of the British Middle East Office. In 1955 it became an independent unit under the Foreign Office, later to be transferred to the control of the Department of Technical Co-operation and now under the Ministry of Overseas Development. Its terms of reference on becoming an

independent unit in 1955 were:

'To encourage the economic and social development of the Middle East countries in consultation with Her Majesty's representatives in order to attain the stability and prosperity which will best serve British interests. The countries concerned are: Iran, the Persian Gulf States, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, the Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the Yemen.'¹

The Division now has responsibilities over a wider area including Turkey and Cyprus. Its senior staff normally consists of a Divisional Head who is an administrator, an agricultural adviser, a labour adviser, an economic and statistical adviser, a forestry adviser, an industrial and engineering adviser and an animal husbandry adviser. The cost of the Division is around £120,000 p.a.

Its main role has been that of technical assistance rather than aid management, for which responsibility remains with the British Diplomatic Missions, although the two crucially overlap. Its strength has been the result of a number of factors. Firstly, although openly and clearly a British governmental organisation, it has not been directly associated with political representation. Even at the time of Suez it was able to continue its work. Thus, although operating within the overall political framework of British interests it has not been forced to suspend its work in the light of ephemeral and transitory political moods. Secondly, there has been continuity in its professional staff which has meant that a corps of highly experienced and knowledgeable people has been built up who can offer with real authority – and hence all the more acceptably for that – advice and guidance both to the British Government and its Diplomatic Missions and to Middle Eastern governments. Thirdly, the staff spend all their time on problems of economic development. They thus have time to be out in the field, to undertake expert surveys and to be in constant touch with the many organisations both official and otherwise concerned with aid and development.

In the realm of technical assistance for education and training the British Council² shoulders, in many instances, the role of the professional arm operating in support of or in conjunction with the British overseas missions. Some 80% of the Council's activities are in the developing countries and in those countries about 90% of its work is concerned with education.

¹ *Tenth Report from the Estimates Committee Session 1963–64 Department of Technical Co-operation*, HMSO 1964, page 181. In addition to the evidence this Report contains useful memoranda on the MEDD submitted by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary for Technical Co-operation.

² The Council, although drawing the bulk of its financial resources from public funds, is a body independent of Government. Its affairs are directed by an Executive Committee on which are represented the Overseas Departments of State, the Board of Trade, the Department of Education and Science, the universities, publishing, sciences, the arts, industry, trade unions, and Parliament. In its overseas activities the Council has offices in over 70 foreign and Commonwealth countries.

The objects and methods of the British Council differ in a variety of ways from those of the Ministry of Overseas Development, and every attempt is made to avoid overlapping of activities. However, in many fields these activities complement each other. For example, in the provision of assistance for training, which is an important part of the British technical assistance programme, the Council's long experience in the placing and administration of overseas students under its own schemes has been put at the disposal of the Ministry, for whom it acts in this respect for the great majority of technical assistance trainees in Britain (currently numbering approximately 2,700). In the selection of trainees under its own schemes the Council is not restricted, as is the ODM, to persons nominated by overseas governments, nor is it required to operate on a government-to-government basis.

In foreign countries British Embassies are normally responsible for the administrative arrangements of ODM-financed trainees, but Council Representatives are available for advice and assistance in such matters as testing the knowledge of English of candidates. In many cases they can often stimulate requests for appropriate training. In the Sudan the Council is responsible for the general administration of all trainees and the fact that it has access to Ministries other than that of Foreign Affairs has given it a flexibility of approach that has proved most valuable and might with advantage be considered in certain other countries. In most Commonwealth countries the British High Commission administers ODM-financed trainees, although in India and Pakistan the Council plays a major role in this.

Similarly, in the field of recruitment of teachers for overseas, the Council and the ODM have agreed upon a division of responsibility, largely on a geographical basis, under which the experience of each is brought to bear in the most fruitful way. Council-recruited teachers receive administrative support where necessary from Council staff in developing countries, and similarly the Council looks after the needs of British volunteers overseas in addition to helping to identify suitable projects.

The Council has always been deeply involved in English language teaching, and in the developing countries this now mainly takes the form of assistance with teacher training. In some countries, particularly those where English is the medium for secondary education and increasingly for primary education, this has led to a new and expanding venture, namely assistance with science education and training of science teachers in new methods. In both these fields, Council staff overseas are operating, by invitation, within the framework of the educational system of the receiving country.

The basic advantages of British Council participation in all this technical assistance work is, firstly, that the Council staff consists of persons whose professional experience is closely bound up with education and training, thus providing the specialist knowledge that is so essential; secondly, Council Representatives are normally resident for long periods in a country

or region and thus have the opportunity of acquiring a deep knowledge of the people and the society in which they are working; and thirdly, because the Council is not a Department of Government its Representatives overseas can carry out their work with detachment from short-term political considerations which has enabled them, on occasions, to continue with this work when political differences between Britain and the country concerned have led to a break in formal relations.

French and American Systems of Aid Administration Overseas

The majority of donors operate, like Britain, through their diplomatic service, but there are two major exceptions, US AID and France.¹

So far as France is concerned, the operation of the aid programme varies according to the precise status of the country which is receiving the assistance. There are fourteen Francophone countries in tropical Africa which receive their aid through the Secretariat of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Co-operation and each has a *Mission Permanente d'Aide et de Coopération*. These were first set up in 1959. They are under the authority of the French Ambassador, who must be informed of their activities. The missions however have direct contact with the Secretariat of State and thus they do not have to work through the Ambassador. In some instances the Ambassador has been reduced in practice to a social figurehead and the really significant work is undertaken by the *Mission d'Aide et de Coopération*. The staff of such missions consists normally of a director and a unit of four specialists. Their role is to assist the countries in which they are situated in the formulation of requests for aid and to be fully appraised of the special needs and difficulties of the states. They also supervise the carrying out of projects both from a point of view of functional efficiency and also to ensure that they fulfil the prescribed conditions. There is in practice a very close relationship between these missions and the local administrations and there is scope for considerable influence on the choice of projects and the form they take. The closeness of this association and the degree of influence varies from state to state. But it is potentially and in many cases actually of considerable power. In the fourteen countries concerned there are still many French officials working in their administrations and thus the civil servants of these countries can work easily with the civil servants of France in the overseas aid missions. This 'ease' is a technical or functional ease, not necessarily a political one. Each side understands fully the administrative machinery and the thinking behind the various operations.

French aid to other countries is conducted through a variety of channels. In those countries where French aid is of little importance there are attachés, usually cultural and commercial, who are responsible for aid; and in some countries they are assisted by an official who is solely concerned with aid. These officials are part of the ordinary diplomatic representation. In

¹ For detailed accounts of the systems of overseas aid representation of France and America see *French Aid* by Teresa Hayter, ODI 1966, and *Aid Programming: The American Experience in Tunisia* by Andrzej Krassowski, forthcoming ODI publication.

Morocco and Tunisia there are *Services de Coopération Technique* attached to the French Embassies. In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam there are *Missions d'Aide Economique et Technique*. Both *Services* and *Missions* are roughly the same: they are separate organisations within the Embassies but with autonomous budgets and a director who is assisted by five or six specialists and a sizeable executive staff.

France in fact has virtually every type of overseas aid representation within its system. The attaché within an Embassy, special aid organisations as part of an Embassy but with a considerable degree of autonomy, and the *Missions d'Aide et de Coopération* which are apart from the Embassies and to all intents and purposes completely autonomous.

In the American aid programme missions separated from Embassies are responsible for aid management. In some ways the organisational structure is the exact opposite of the British system. In London there is the Ministry of Overseas Development, functionally separate from the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Office although there is close consultation and co-operation between them. But this separation of responsibilities at the centre is narrowed to a single diplomatic office overseas. In America on the other hand the reverse is the case with a concentration of responsibility at the State Department but with a division of responsibility overseas whereby the AID Mission is separate from the American diplomatic representation although formally under the US Ambassador. In a sense the separation of the responsibility overseas and the concentration of responsibility at the centre is not so clear-cut as it may first appear to be. In Washington, although American AID is part of the State Department, its administration forms part of a distinct entity within the Department and the AID, Administrator in Washington has direct access to the President.

Overseas the separation is more apparent as aid personnel are controlled by and responsible to the Director of the AID Mission. He is subordinate to the local Ambassador but he is mainly responsible to Washington, to which he has direct access. However, on important policy considerations bearing on the aid programme the AID Director would go through the local Ambassador. In any event all communications from AID overseas go out under the Ambassador's name. The AID Director however has the statutory authority to approve undertakings. He alone has this authority and if the Ambassador is to authorise them specific authority must be given to him to do so. So far as negotiations for aid are concerned, the relevant country negotiates with the AID Director in this field. Recommendations are then made to Washington. All subsequent work up to the actual signing is done by the AID Director in the field. The American method is for the aid case to be put directly to the AID office in the Department of State where at the highest levels its merits can be judged.

Under the British system, any differences are more likely to be thrashed out within the overseas diplomatic mission. The Ambassador or High Commissioner is the channel for the aid case to be made in London. The vital question is which system is likely to produce the best results, so far as

communication is concerned. The British maintain that relationships between themselves and overseas countries are an amalgam of factors of which aid is but a part. It is therefore important to have the British overseas missions presided over by the traditional head – the Ambassador or High Commissioner – who will see the issues in their full context and will make representation to London in the light of this. It should be noted that he is responsible in London not to the Ministry of Overseas Development but to the Foreign Office or the Commonwealth Office, although he and his officers may communicate direct with the ODM on a variety of aid matters. The fact that he has in the overseas mission individuals who are directly and exclusively concerned with aid means, it is argued, that aid counsels will have full weight for the diplomatic head who will reflect this in his dealings with London. The American system on the other hand does not attempt to ‘educate’ the Ambassador in the importance of aid; overseas the diplomatic and the aid operations run on parallel lines and differences are resolved inside the State Department in Washington.

A second important difference between the American and the British systems is the physical separation of the American AID Office overseas and the Embassy. Quite apart from the question of personal responsibilities and channels of communication, the physical separation is not an insignificant item. Aid operations are psychologically very difficult and there is no doubt that, for success, easy and informal access to individuals is important. By having aid personnel in a separate building from the inevitably more formal diplomatic mission great advantages have been obtained in matters of approach. The officials of the country receiving aid can deal directly and exclusively with people whose *raison d'être* is seen to be coping with problems of economic development. The AID Mission Director is seen as a specialist whose sole responsibility is assistance. There is thus less inhibiting confusion in the minds of officials in the recipient country as to whether they are talking politics or economics, and in some degree the American AID Missions are looked at in a not dissimilar light from the United Nations Technical Assistance offices. As has already been noted, where British Council officers have responsibility for education and training a similar advantage accrues from their a-political characteristics.

The third main difference between the American and British systems is the emphasis placed by the Americans on professional personnel rather than career diplomatists. The AID Missions are staffed by general economists, by educational advisers, by agriculturalists, etc. They are considerably more numerous than the staff of British Missions and even in countries where American aid is relatively unimportant – from the point of view of both the donor and the recipient – there is still a large corps of AID personnel. In Uganda British aid amounts to twice the size of the aid of all other donors put together and has been the mainstay of the First Development Plan. Yet there are only three people in the High Commission responsible for an aid programme amounting to over £14m. On the other hand, the Americans with an aid programme in Uganda of under £3m

have about 12 professional AID officers in Kampala excluding experts on specific Technical Assistance assignments. Direct comparisons are not always strictly meaningful, as many AID personnel are pure technical assistance advisers and correspond more to British experts working under, for example, British Council or ODM auspices who are not part of the United Kingdom diplomatic mission. Even so, the fact remains that American aid representation is on a much larger scale than the British counterpart and there is a concentration of professional experience under one roof that is lacking in the British system. The exceptions – for example British Council operations and the MEDD – highlight the overall lack of specialist knowledge in the general system.

To some extent the US approach is the result of peculiar American pressures and attitudes in the United States itself. The AID administration has been much more concerned with performance criteria than the British authorities have been in the past, although more attention is now being given on the British side to aid management and evaluation. There is therefore much more scope for evaluation in the field and this requires an increase in personnel overseas. Again, Congress procedures require an administrative checking and control that makes it necessary to have more people overseas. Even so the basic fact is that American aid representation overseas is characterised by its large size, professional quality and detachment from political missions and in all these respects it is considerably different from the British.

Proposals for Strengthening British Aid Representation Overseas

The role of overseas representatives is not just peripheral: it is at the heart of the aid operation. It is the continuing point of contact between the donor and the recipient, and if it is weak or inappropriate the whole aid programme will be adversely affected. If every pound of aid is to be made to go further, as was stipulated in the British National Plan, a strengthening of British aid administration overseas is vital. Obviously different conditions require different treatment. There is a spectrum ranging from countries where the British aid programme is itself large and where Britain is the major donor to those where British aid is small both in absolute terms and in the proportion of aid received. The needs at each extreme are different. There is however no doubt that British aid is inadequately administered overseas in terms both of the size of the staff and of their specialist experience.

The question is to identify in what ways the administration should be strengthened. The essence of the proposals in this paper is that increased professional experience needs to be injected into the system. But such a strengthening of the overseas missions does not involve the setting up of separate aid missions on the American pattern. By strengthening the aid arm *within* a diplomatic mission and by providing the Ambassador or High Commissioner with more professional support it may well be that aid will get a better 'hearing' in London than would otherwise be the case with a separate and isolated group. There would in practice be established a series of embryonic development divisions which could in the course of time grow into something like the MEDD. The cost of running the MEDD, which serves a large area of some 15 developing countries which are in receipt of aid from Britain amounting to over £12m, is around £120,000 p.a. Even if five such divisions were created a total expenditure of little more than half a million pounds would be involved out of an aid programme of over £200m. In fact it would take time to build up to the figure as such divisions cannot be suddenly established. The immediate need is to increase the professional element inside the diplomatic missions. One agricultural economist in Nigeria and one in Kenya are steps in the right direction, but they are very modest. Further, there is much to be gained from having specialists working together in a team. The exact composition of the team would be subject to consultation and would vary in accordance with such considerations as, for example, the extent of professional support already coming from the British Council. But the sort of mixture envisaged might consist of a general economist, an agricultural economist, and an educational

al adviser. Others could be added as the need arose. Such specialists should be fully supported by an adequate executive staff.

More specifically it is important that:

1. The career diplomat who is posted to an Embassy of a High Commission with responsibilities for aid matters should receive some specialist training before taking up his appointment; and if he continues in this field for a considerable length of time he should be given an opportunity to undertake refresher courses. Such courses would be based at some training institution but those attending them would be expected to have attachments to various bodies engaged in aid operations – official, semi-official and private – so as to familiarise themselves with their workings. This would enable them on joining overseas missions to advise on what services could be provided by Britain and in particular what technical assistance could be given, not only through official channels but by non-governmental organisations or private firms.

2. There should be increased flexibility in recruiting people with experience in problems of economic development to fill either by contract appointment or secondment diplomatic posts overseas that are primarily concerned with aid and development.

3. The costs of overseas personnel working in diplomatic missions but who are solely engaged on aid activities should no longer be a charge on the Diplomatic Service Vote. This Vote is naturally subject to a whole variety of other claims and thus the appointment of aid representatives emerges as a fight between the claims of other important appointments seeking a share of this vote. The cost of this transfer would be only a very small proportion of the total amount of aid provided. Aid personnel although paid for in this way could still form part of the Diplomatic Service establishment and work under the High Commissioner of Ambassador.

4. Aid should not be regarded as a part-time activity of diplomatic representatives unless the British aid programme to a country is exceptionally small. It is particularly undesirable for financial aid to be the responsibility of the officer who is also the commercial attaché whose interests are properly the promotion of British exports. There should in fact be a clear distinction of functions, and this distinction should be obvious not only to the people who are performing the function but also to those in the overseas country who are working with them.

5. The importance of adequate executive support staff should be recognised, as was stressed in the Plowden Report.

6. Greater use should be made of specialist attachés in the diplomatic

missions. The diplomatic head of the mission should have access to experienced professional advice on the spot from an attaché or group of attachés skilled in economics, or agriculture, or education, or whatever disciplines are considered to be most appropriate in specific cases. It is important that the diplomatic staff should be exposed to a continual nudging from specialists. If it is not possible for financial reasons to have such a team within a single mission, consideration should be given to having it accredited to a group of neighbouring countries. It is probably better to have some five people with a roving responsibility for the whole of east and central Africa, for instance, than five separate attachés in each of the relevant countries.

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The author of this study is Andrzej Krassowski.

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