

THE TABLET

Founded in 1840

Vol. 223 No. 6741

2 August 1969

One shilling and sixpence

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A NEW NAME FOR PEACE

THE Pope's visit to Uganda this week should help to emphasise the importance of the work of the Christian Churches in development projects. The last few years have seen a new awareness of this. The Pope has described the aim of this new movement as "a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human".

This new awareness has affected the outlook of the Churches both at the international and national levels. At the international level it has become increasingly apparent that the most important single cause of the gap between rich and poor countries is that the less developed countries are at a constant disadvantage in their trading with the developed world. In particular, they are dependant on primary products such as cocoa, coffee, cotton and sugar for their export earnings, products for which the world markets are only expanding slowly, and which have fluctuating but generally low prices. In contrast, most developed countries produce industrial and consumer goods for rapidly expanding markets and, consequently, continually increasing prices.

Contributory factors preventing the less developed countries from accelerating their development are two legacies from colonial rule: "balkanisation", or the existence of many small States, none of which is an effective economic unit; and the persistence of estate agriculture, necessary for producing export crops, but tending to relegate food crop improvement to second place.

An Enormous Task

This sort of problem will not be solved by charitable giving but by educating people in such fields as the current imbalance in world trade and the limited use of many so-called "aid" projects. Co-operation between the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church was exemplified last year by the joint conference on world development at Beirut.

In his Message to Africa in 1967, the Pope described some of the problems facing the continent. He spoke of the lack of education and the need to improve agriculture. Both are very much apparent in East Africa, and a solution is made particularly difficult by the preponderance of subsistence agriculture.

Uganda, for example, is one of the least urbanised countries in the world, with only one city, Kampala, having a population of over 50,000. Many of the rural areas are densely

populated and the country as a whole has well over half a million farms or smallholdings, most of them under five acres in extent. With such land fragmentation it is a tremendous task to develop the extension services necessary to raise the standards of subsistence agriculture. The same problem is also facing most of Tanzania and much of Kenya and its solution involves far more than just the establishment of farm schools. It entails the formation of integrated programmes of rural development involving farm training, extension services, formation of co-operatives and health services, and provision of capital loans. Above all, it involves the integration of agricultural training with all levels of education, a task which has received particular attention in Tanzania following the Arusha Declaration.

While the Governments attempt to tackle the enormous task of rural development, they are being helped to an increasing extent by the Churches. Throughout East Africa, church projects are getting under way.

What the Churches are Doing

At Nyakashaka, in south-west Uganda, a project was established under the direction of the Church of Uganda with financial help from Christian Aid. A settlement scheme was set up for school leavers in which they learnt to grow cash crops. Each man was allotted six acres of land for a three-year trial period, together with up to £250 credit and provision of extension services. The scheme has been successfully established and is being followed by a second one at Wambabya, near Hoima, 120 miles north-west of Kampala.

Settlement schemes such as Nyakashaka and Wambabya are one of the most important ways of transforming subsistence agriculture and at the same time countering the tendency towards a drift to urban areas, where lack of employment leads to slums being formed. A further example of such a scheme exists in Tabora Archdiocese in Tanzania, where a block farm project is demonstrating co-operation in rural development. The plan is sponsored by the Young Christian Farmers (a lay apostolate movement) and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Tanzania Government. Seventy young men and women, school leavers, are learning how to cultivate maize by using improved seed and fertilisers. Each young person cultivates one acre on a group farm and yields have been doubled since the project was started.