BRIGADES IN BOTSWANA

by

Gardiner P. Pearson

Introduction

Brigades in Botswana constitute a unique attempt to provide skill training outside the formal education system to primary-school leavers. Operating on the principle of "cost-covering," brigades attempt to pay their recurrent (non-capital) costs through their own labor. In theory, therefore, brigades are cheaper to run than vocational schools and provide a form of on-the-job training. In addition to receiving theoretical and practical instruction in skills, brigade trainees take "Development Studies," a course that seeks to instill awareness of the development process and the value and dignity of manual labor.

The first brigade was started in 1965 in Serowe, as an integral part of the Swaneng Hill School. Its capital was raised abroad by Patrick Van Rensburg, and the Botswana Government played no part in its founding or administration. Since that time 12 additional brigade centers have been founded throughout the country. Three were started by the Government and another one is now under Government administration.

Much has been written about brigades in the past few years and readers seeking further background on the topic are referred to the Anthony Martin report, Report on the Brigades in Botswana or Non-Formal Education in African Development by James R. Sheffield and Victor P. Diejomaoh (New York, African-American Institute, 1972). Because of the heavy involvement of expatriates during the establishment of many brigades, there has been considerable concern that brigade survival depends on volunteer staff, outside funding and freedom from governmental bureaucracy.

The purpose of this study, conducted between June 6 and August 13, 1972, was to examine relationships among the brigades, the communities in which they are located and local and national government. Some of the questions it attempts to answer are: to what extent do brigades fit into a nationally coordinated plan for an alternative to secondary education and how are brigades viewed at the various levels of government and by the people they serve. The report also attempts to identify the significant factors contributing to a brigade's accomplishments of its aims.

In compiling this report, I visited all brigade centers and spoke to many people involved with brigades as trainees, private administrators or public servants. To these individuals, who gave me their time and the benefit of their insights, I am grateful. I would particularly like to acknowledge the invaluable cooperation and assistance of James Molefhe, Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Education, Washington Meswele, Commissioner of Community Development, Mrs. H.C.L. Hermans, and Mr. Ross Kidd.
The National Brigades Coordinating Committee

Brigades in Botswana are ostensibly coordinated by the National Brigades Coordinating Committee (NBCC) in the Ministry of Education. The NBCC maintains a small staff of two or three expatriates, and is supposed to ensure that brigades undertake viable projects that do not conflict with or duplicate Government projects.

The fact that the NBCC, which deals with private brigades not subject to Government regulation, is supervised by the Ministry of Education is the basis for some friction within the NBCC. NBCC staff members occasionally resent what they regard as footdragging and obstructionism on the part of the Government, while some Government officials have developed strong antipathies to expatriate radicals in the NBCC. And despite the Government's official support of the brigades, some individuals in the Government are not convinced of the efficacy and utility of the brigade concept.

Four Government departments and Ministries are involved in meeting national needs for vocational training and in trying to solve the primary-school leaver problem, the Ministry of Education and the Department of Community Development (CD), both of which operate brigades, the Botswana Training Center, and the Directorate of Personnel.

Community Development

CD, a department of the Ministry of Lands and Local Government, is responsible for starting brigades at Lobatsi and Lekgaba. The agency also administered brigades at Kanye until they were terminated in 1972. CD became interested in the brigade concept primarily as an antidote to what it viewed as a growing problem of juvenile delinquency. Some organization or training program, it was felt, could keep idle young men off the street and constructively employed. These young men were chiefly primary-school leavers who had failed to get into secondary school and who remained in the towns looking for work rather than go back to their parents' farms. The private brigades tend to deride this "keep them off the streets" motivation as self-serving and shortsighted. They believe brigades should teach skills vital to national development, emphasize the dignity of manual labor, and offer an alternative to academic secondary-school education.

Although it adopted some ideas of the original brigades, CD, in a fundamental change of philosophy, rejected the notion of cost-covering; that is, paying for recurrent expenses through brigade labor or production. CD claims that if a brigade is to offer effective training, it cannot spend a great deal of time working to raise funds. Such work, the agency contends, becomes repetitive and time consuming and is not instructive. As a result, CD provides subsidies to cover costs not met by the brigades themselves. Since 1971, however, CD has placed a greater emphasis on brigades covering costs within five years.
Community Development's primary function is to organize villages for self-help programs. In every village or town where a brigade is located, there is also an Assistant Community Development Officer (ACDO) or a Community Development Assistant (CDA). The Community Development chain of command extends upward from CDA at village level to the ACDO at district level to the Community Development Officers in Gaborone. ACDO and CDA form Village Development Committees to cultivate vegetable gardens, build latrines and perform other tasks designed to raise the living standards of the village. There is little cooperation between CDA and the Village Development Committee on the one hand and the brigades on the other. Brigades tend to be pre-occupied with training and gainful employment, while Development Committees are adamant that a self-help project should involve only the people of the village working on a volunteer basis. This conflict presents a philosophical obstacle to the use of brigades in village self-help projects. Nonetheless, villages or areas where brigades exist apparently have a reservoir of technical skill that could be used for community development.

The Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education has several involvements with brigades. To begin with the ministry is the parent agency of the NBCC. In addition, it runs a formerly private brigade in Tutume in conjunction with Tutume Community College. Most importantly, the Ministry's Department of Vocational Training runs the Botswana Trade Center and is responsible for the proposed Vocational Training Center to be located in Gaborone. It is anticipated that the Center, scheduled for completion in 1974, will offer a series of courses in such skill areas as plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying, electricity, and motor mechanics. The basic objective of the Center will be to train individuals to pass the Class II Trade Test and to meet the national need for skilled workers. 'Because of financial limitations, the Botswana Trade Center has not trained many people since Independence in 1966. The BTC, however, does administer Class II Trade Tests for all trainees in builders and carpenters brigades, Although brigade trainees rarely pass the trade test, they have had no difficulty thus far in finding a job with mining or construction companies in Orapa, Selibe-Pikwe, Francistown or Gaborone. Aside from its testing function, the BTC has nothing to do with the brigades.

Other Departments

The Directorate of Personnel, concerned primarily with staffing the Civil Service, inaugurated the National Employment, Manpower and Incomes Council (NEMIC) in June 1972. On the Council are representatives from all branches of Government, trade unions and private industry. The Council is supposed to "make recommendations on the important issues related to national policy on incomes, prices, profits, education, vocational training and the allocation of skilled manpower in Botswana." Only recently has a national manpower study been completed, and consequently, no data base has been available for planning.
The Ministry of Works and Communications constructs roads and buildings for the Government through its Public Works Department. Public Works occasionally hires brigades to do construction work and would, according to the department, hire them more often if the quality of their output were more uniform. The relationship between PWD and the brigades is casual and haphazard. When a brigade coordinator feels the brigade needs work, he may go to Gaborone and check with the Chief Architect about the availability of contracts.

The Chief Architect maintains that using brigades on Government contracts presents several problems. Most important, he suggests, is the variation in work quality from one brigade to another and within the same brigade from one year to the next. Inadequate supervision is a constant source of difficulty for brigades particularly when they are operating away from the brigade center. Under such conditions, supervisors must often divide their time between instruction at the center and work at the construction site. In addition, Government building specifications are more exacting than standards learned by most brigades. Still, there is a great potential for the brigades in a relationship with PWD once some of these obstacles are overcome. In 1971, PWD -- which has neither the manpower nor time to accomplish all its assigned tasks -- subcontracted some R1,500,000 of its R1,880,000 in work assignments.

The Ministry of Agriculture is also interested in brigades, particularly farmers brigades, although these have not been notably successful. Other than being on the mailing list for agricultural extension material, however, the brigades have little contact with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Tutume

The village of Tutume, located about 50 miles north of Francistown, is one of several small villages strung out along a track that runs north through Bokalanga area in the Northeast District. The Bokalanga, inhabited chiefly by the Kalanga people, is somewhat behind the rest of the country in economic development. The recently founded Tutume Community College contains the first secondary school in the area; the builders brigade has been integrated with this school. Both the school and the brigade are the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Education, although both began as private undertakings. As of July 1972, there were twenty-four brigade trainees, evenly divided between third and second year. No new first year trainees were taken in early 1972 due to the school's transfer from private to Government administration.

Tutume Community College is in the midst of an extensive construction program, but until August 1972 all building at the school was being done by the Public Works Department and a group from the Shashi River brigades. The Tutume brigade, which is relatively small, was not used because the College's student population had outdistanced the building program and the Ministry of Education was attempting to catch up and because the Tutume brigade was without an instructor for six months in 1971 and early 1972. In August 1972, however, the brigade began work on the matron's and master's quarters for the school.
Outside the confines of the school, the Tutume brigade is barely known. Interviews with village residents, the postmaster and the head teacher at the village primary school confirmed that the brigade has had little contact with the village in its two years of operation. The brigade has done no work in the village and since there have been no graduates, villagers are not familiar with its purpose or benefits. Trainees and instructors said parents and others who are aware of the brigade look upon it, naturally enough, as a vehicle for getting jobs for their children. Jobs are also high priorities for the trainees, and, as in other brigades, trainees frequently turn toward the cities and the industrial/mining centers. Most trainees indicated they would like to stay in the Tutume area, if there were jobs to be had. There are a few independent builders in the Tutume area and both the teacher and postmaster indicated that there would eventually be employment opportunities for brigade graduates. The Bokalanga is just beginning to develop a demand for modern housing that would enable brigade graduates to earn a living locally.

The brigade's relations with local (i.e., District) government are virtually nil. The brigade is now run directly by the Ministry of Education; District Government has no jurisdiction over secondary education. Furthermore, the District Council is located at least 100 miles away in Serowe.

The Ministry of Education's plans for the brigade are as yet indefinite. The Ministry wants to expand craft and technical education available at the secondary school and plans to integrate training in animal husbandry and vegetable gardening into the secondary school program. Plans have also been made to start a carpenters brigade, a dressmaking brigade, and perhaps a baker's brigade. Each brigade will train no more than twelve students per year. An effort will be made to recruit from outside the Bokalanga so that the brigades at Tutume will not be identified with a single region.

Ngamiland Youth Training Center (Maun)

Maun, the capital of the Northwest District is three hundred miles west of Francistown at the southern end of the Okavango Delta. One of the more remote districts of Botswana, it is the site of a brigade organized in 1970, the Ngamiland Youth Training Center (NYTC). The NYTC was organized in cooperation with the Northwest District Council. According to the current (June 1972) coordinator, training at the center is designed to provide a partial solution to the unemployment problem in the Northwest District and to supply skilled carpenters and builders for both local and national development. It was also hoped that many trainees would remain in the district and set themselves up as small entrepreneurs. Some Council Members say one of the original purposes of the NYTC was to provide trained manpower for the many District Council projects that cannot be handled by the Council building team or the area's one local contractor. Each District Council maintains a small works department or building team to undertake small construction projects. These teams generally number no more than five men. Others state that the primary goal of brigade training is to make trainees self-sufficient in the hope that they will become employers rather than employees in the Maun area.
The NYTC and the District Council have enjoyed a good relationship. The Council has continuously awarded grants to the center, on occasion providing as much as one quarter of NYTC's financing.* And although NYTC is administered by a private board** and has been formed into a trust, it figures heavily in the District Council's Five Year Development Plan, which will afford many training opportunities for the builders and carpenters brigades.

Current Status

As yet there have been no graduates of the three-year building/carpentry courses or the two-year farming or dressmaking courses, all of which began in 1970-71. Attrition has been minimal. Of 16 trainees who entered the farmers brigade in 1971 only one had dropped out as of June 1972, owing to sickness. There have been no dropouts from the builders brigades.

Farmers Brigade

Prospective trainees in the farmers brigade must demonstrate a desire to learn modern methods. Brigade training emphasizes vegetable production; no training is offered in ranching or dairy farming.

The people of Shorobe, the village where the brigade's lands are located, have minimal relations with the brigade. The diet of the villagers contains few vegetables and they maintain a suspicious attitude toward produce farming. In addition, the villagers distrust some of the innovative agricultural methods employed on the brigade farm. Only three or four youths from Shorobe are represented in the brigade and whatever benefits accrue to the community from brigade activity will be gradual and long term.

* Northwest District is one of the richest in Botswana. The only district with an accumulated surplus from the 1971 fiscal year, its estimated income for 1972 with a population of about 56,000 was R228,730 compared with Central District's population of 242,000 and income of R750,850 and Kweneng's population 86,000 and income of R219,840. Figures from: Town & District Councils Estimates of Revenue & Expenditures 1972.

** The board of governors is composed as follows:

1) The Chairman of the District Council
2) The Secretary of the District Council
3) The Chief of the area (traditional authority)
4) The District Commissioner
5) A local representative of the town
Builders Brigade

Conversations with trainees in the carpentry brigade indicate that it is highly unlikely many trainees will remain in Maun after graduation. Most trainees hope to find work in the larger towns of Gaborone, Orapa or Selibe-Pikwe. Nonetheless, various individuals in the town, including the chief and members of the District Council felt that there was market within the Northwest District large enough to absorb some five to 10 builders. The importance of the district's tourist trade* and the area's economic growth tend to support this view.

Brigade Community Relations

Relations between the builders brigades and the village of Maun appear to be good. Not only does the brigade do a lot of work in the village, but trainees have done some work on their own for people in the village. Trainees are not recruited exclusively, or even preponderantly, from Maun, but from the Northwest District as a whole. This, coupled with the low standard of primary-school education and the consequent small number of students admitted to secondary school from Maun, is a source of dissatisfaction among the people of Maun.

Relations with the Community Development Department (CD) are weak at present, due in part to the self-help philosophy of CD. It would not be consistent with this philosophy for villagers to hire other people (e.g., the brigades) to do construction work. But because trained supervisory personnel are needed for any complicated construction projects, it is anticipated by the Assistant Community Development Officer for the Northwest District (who lives in Maun) that brigade trainees will be utilized.

Recently, the NYTC has been offering a novel kind of instruction in vegetable gardening. An instructor goes to a village and makes it known that he is available to provide instruction in new methods of gardening. NYTC provides seed for the on-site course, which lasts six months. At the end of the course, vegetable gardens are left in the care of villagers and the instructor moves to another village. So far the program has been completed in two villages and is underway in a third.

Lobatse Youth Training Center

The Lobatse Youth Training Center (LYTC) is located in the town of Lobatse, population 10,000, some 40 miles south of Gaborone. The LYTC, composed of a carpenters brigade of 51 trainees and builders brigade of 90 trainees, is operated under the auspices of CD. The center's coordinator is an employee of CD, and the center receives subsidies from the Department. A board of trustees, composed of the mayor, the principal of the Lobatse Secondary School, the education officer of the Town Council, the center's coordinator, a representative from CD and two representatives from the business community, formulate the center's policy.

* Botswana enjoys some tourism particularly in the north, where there are game parks and a large resort.
CD is seeking to reduce its financial and administrative involvement with the center as rapidly as possible. The agency's ultimate goal is to maintain a veto power over brigade projects, give advice and assistance when needed and audit periodically the brigade's books. It is hoped the board, rather than acting in an advisory capacity as it does now, will assume responsibility for the center. At present, the trustees are not eager to accept this responsibility, primarily because they fear legal difficulties might arise. They prefer that the Government (through CD) remain responsible.

Community Development's desire to give the brigades more autonomy and the fact that the initiative for establishment of the LYTC came from the town council help make the center's relations with local government excellent. The Lobatse Town Council had two major reasons for wanting a brigade in the town. The first was a concern for what they saw as an increase in juvenile delinquency—a rising number of idle youths hanging about the town. Secondly, they required skilled labor for their town development plan, and in this respect the brigades have been extremely useful. The Council has in turn contributed significantly to the financial success of the center. Until recent and apparently temporary financial and planning difficulties caused the Town Council to curtail its building plans, the Lobatse brigades did as much of the Council's construction work as they could handle.

Though contiguous with Lobatse, Peleng does not come under the jurisdiction of the Town Council, but is administered by the Central Government via the District Commissioner. Peleng is scheduled soon to come under the Town Council's authority, but the degree of social cleavage that exists between the professional people of Lobatse and the villagers in Peleng may persist. The center's coordinator hopes that this gulf can be bridged and has proposed an expansion of the NYTC board to include two additional representatives—one from Peleng and one from Lobatse. Although the Peleng village headman has twice been asked to join the board, he has thus far refused.

Two other factors are relevant to Center-Community relations. First LYTC is not a local training center. Trainees are recruited from all over the country as part of an effort to publicize the Center's program. Second, and of less consequence, is the Center's location on a side road about two miles from the center of Lobatse-Peleng. The Center is thus not easily seen by the people of the area, though perhaps as the town grows its location will become more strategic.

Insofar as vocational training for primary-school leavers is concerned, the Center's impact on the local community is minimal. Furthermore few brigade graduates remain in Lobatse. Indeed, according to the town clerk, out of the brigade classes that have graduated, totalling about 100 individuals, only four or five graduates have remained in Lobatse. These have been employed either by the Public Works Department or by the Town Council on its small building force. The balance of brigade graduates have gone to Francistown, Gaborone, Orapa or Selibe-Pikwe.
Trainees show little sign of dissatisfaction. None has dropped out of the program, though several have failed. As elsewhere, the certainty of excellent employment opportunities upon completion of the course is a tremendous incentive.

Botswelelo Center
Thamaga

The Botswelelo Center in Thamaga, a small town about 40 miles west of Gaborone, was organized by a Roman Catholic priest. Much a grass roots organization, it has as yet no ties with local government though its relationship with the community is strong. The center trains about 20 students, all but three of whom are women; it offers instruction in various forms of needlework. The three men make grass mats.

Upon discovering that between ten and 15 per cent of the primary-school leavers in Thamaga went on to secondary school, the coordinator in cooperation with the chief (who had already started several cooperatives in the village) broached the idea of a post-primary school training program. About 40 young women responded. A workshop was built within the village limits by the women themselves, some of the building material being supplied gratis by a local merchant. Sewing machines were obtained through the Botswana Christian Council, and an instructor was hired.

The center was immediately organized into a cooperative, in an effort to give trainees a proprietary interest in the project as well as management experience. The center's output is sold exclusively to the local populace, though the market is seasonal, owing to the periodic migration of most of the village to the lands and cattle posts. The project's largest income source is the sale to South African curio dealers of mortars and pestles used for pounding corn.

The center plans to expand the number of its trainees, when it can afford to have more instructors, and to add certain other craft skills, such as pottery-making, to its curriculum. Unlike needlework, the pottery manufactured would be sold in South Africa.

Several factors explain the center's good relationship with the community. First, the idea had the support of the chief, who in this isolated village is an important figure. Secondly, expatriate involvement in the project was limited to one man, the only European in the village who speaks the local language and involves himself in village life. And, the ultimate decision as to whether the project should be undertaken was left to the people of the village rather than imposed from above, either by Government or by an outsider. Whether or not the center will be cost covering and will make a permanent contribution to the solution of the primary-school leaver problem remains to be seen.
Mahalapye

Mahalapye is a town on the rail line about 125 miles north of Gaborone. The brigades at Mahalapye are closely integrated with the Madiba Secondary School, which is now under construction. At present Mahalapye has only a builders brigade that divides its time between training in the requisite skills and erecting the school's physical plant. As a result the brigade has done no work in or for the community and maintains no relations with local government. The brigade was begun in 1971 and presently numbers about 75 individuals.

Potentially strong links are being established among the Madiba Secondary School (and thus the brigades), the Government, and the community. First and second form students (eighth and ninth grades) at Madiba do volunteer work within the community twice a week conducting literacy classes in Tswana for children who have been unable to go to primary school. Students also help in the local hospital. In addition, CD has assigned a Community Development Officer (CDO) to the Madiba School as a liaison officer among the school, the community and the Government. Thus far, the CDO has informed the Village Development Committee of the brigade's desire to help with community problems. It is anticipated that when the brigade has time it will do work for the VDC and will make available technical advice and assistance for village self-help projects.

Serowe

Serowe, the capital of Central District and home of Botswana’s President, Sir Seretse Khama, is a large village located about 170 miles north of Gaborone. There are three major brigades at Serowe -- a builders brigade, a farmers brigade and a textile brigade. Other projects (an electrical brigade, a motor mechanics brigade, a tanning brigade and a machinists brigade) train very few individuals -- no more than 15 and sometimes as few as three.

As at other brigade centers, the builders brigades, which include painters, carpenters, brick layers and stone masons, are not only the most popular among applicants, but the most successful in training and placing graduates. Because they are seen as a means of access into the modern sector, the brigades constantly receive applications from all over the country (over 100 per year, of which 30 to 35 are accepted).
Textile Brigade

The textile brigades include a weaving brigade, a dressmaking brigade and a silkscreen printing group that is scheduled to be combined with the Unity workshop (a cooperative formed by graduates of the textile brigades): The weaving and dressmaking brigades each offer two-year courses and admit between 15 and 20 persons per year: As with most textile brigades, the number of trainees fluctuates because some girls decide not to complete their training and others leave as a result of pregnancy.

Farmers Brigade

The farmers brigade at Serowe is being gradually scaled down in favor of the Mabeleapudi program that will provide in situ training to youths and parents in villages that request the program. For several reasons the Serowe Community has little contact with the farmers brigade. Firstly, the brigade is situated approximately five miles from the center of Serowe, off the main road and out of sight of all villagers. Secondly, farming is not viewed as a desirable occupation by youth, or for that matter by many parents who want to see their children participating in the modern sector. Finally, the Land Board and the District Council have thus far refused to allocate land to the farmers brigade. There is also, of course, the problem that the types and techniques of farming taught to trainees are very much at variance with tradition. Indeed, they are not practically applicable by the average farmer. The dairy farming, vegetable gardening and "Savory" method of intensive beef cattle grazing require resources (irrigation, fencing, special breeds of cows, etc.) not available to the average Motswana farmer.

Of these facts the brigade coordinator is aware and it is acknowledged that should the brigade fold up its tents and steal away in the night, it would not be missed by the community or the local government. The purposes of the brigade as it is presently constituted are seen by the coordinator as being threefold. It serves as a private agricultural extension unit, it acts as a testing ground for various agricultural innovations, and it is operated as a demonstration commercial farm. The farmers brigade will concentrate increasingly on these roles as opposed to training primary-school leavers in the future.

Relations with Government

Local (e.g., District) Government has very little to do with the operations of the brigades, for which there are four centers in the Central District; at Serowe, Palapye, Mahalapye and Shashi. At present the District Commissioner is chairman of the District Development Committee and a member of the Swaneng Board of Governors. The Swaneng Board of Governors is concerned primarily with secondary education at the Swaneng Hill School in Serowe, the Shashi River School in Shashi/Tonota and the Madiba School in Mahalapye. It does deal to some extent
with the brigades situated near each of these schools. Although there are no formal ties between the Secondary Schools and the brigades, they have in the past and continue currently to some extent to share management personnel. The informal ties are fairly strong. An effort is now (1972) being made to establish a separate brigade trust to look after the Serowe Brigades. Patrick Van Rensburg, the founder of the brigade movement who has recently turned his energies to other development schemes, has been on the Swaneng Board of Governors, will be involved in the separate Brigade Board of Trustees and is at present an invited member of the District Development Committee.

The stated purpose of the District Development Committee with respect to brigades is to coordinate the various development activities within the district. The brigades are considered an integral part of these activities. Duplication of effort is to be avoided through the implementation of a Five Year District Development Plan, but this plan is still being drawn up.

There is no District Council policy of giving the brigades grants, subsidies or preferential treatment with respect to contracts. The builders brigade is currently erecting offices for the Tribal Authority and the Council has given the Serowe Engineering Brigade (machine shop) a R2,500 contract for metal furniture for the district's primary schools. The Shashi carpentry brigade receives the contract to repair wooden primary school furniture in their area. This, according to the manager of the brigade, is their primary source of income.

St. Anthony's Mission
Palapye

Technically speaking, the dressmaking brigade which operates in Palapye's St. Anthony Mission is not a brigade. The 15 or so women who learn sewing, patternmaking and associated skills there, do not learn according to a set timetable or curriculum. They may stay as long as they like. Thus there are only trainees and leavers, but no graduates. The primary goal of the training is to upgrade the sewing skills of the community. Though the Passionist Father who established the sewing group insists that it is not a brigade, the principle that the trainees should cover the cost of their training through their output is an integral part of the program, and the coordinator attends meetings of the Swaneng Board of Governors. There is thus some communication between his program and the larger brigades of Serowe, Shashi and Mahalapye. There is no communication with local government owing, no doubt, to the extent and type of training.

The brigade has been publicized only through its trainees; they are encouraged to bring a friend. There is little or no contact with traditional authority in the area. Although this conclusion was not verified through interviews with other villagers, it would seem that owing to the small size of the program and its identification with the church, it is probably known to a small percentage of Palapye residents.
Kanye Youth Training Center
Kanye

Kanye is a medium-sized village, the capital of the Ngwaketse District about 25 miles northwest of Lobatse. There are three brigades at Kanye which comprise the Kanye Youth Training Center (KYTC) a builders brigade, a farmers brigade and a sewing brigade. The KYTC was started in the summer of 1971 by a local Board of Trustees and shortly thereafter the Department of Community Development declared that the Board of Trustees had no legal status and that CD was the owner and administrator of the Center. In future the Board was to act in an advisory capacity only. Without specifying the responsibilities of this advisory body, CD declared that the Board should carry on much as before. The Board, feeling that without guidelines for the scope of its responsibilities it could not operate effectively, dissolved itself, leaving the coordinator accountable to no one. This was the state of affairs as of July, 1972 when the writer visited the center. Efforts, however, were being made to give the Board of Trustees new legal status and make them completely responsible for the brigades. This Board would most probably consist, according to CD, of the District Commissioner, a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Chief or headman of the village, a representative of Community Development, and an individual nominated by the District Commissioner. In addition there would be five other members representing various voluntary organizations such as the Youth Club, teachers union and women's group, who would attend meetings and sit on committees. They would not, however, be legal trustees in-the sense of constituting an autonomous institution.

CD in the meantime, operating on the principle that the brigades at Kanye should be cost covering, provides only limited financial support. Owing to apparent prior mismanagement and misuse of funds the center is in serious financial difficulties, and the money received from CD is only a stopgap.

The Ministry of Agriculture is involved in the KYTC's farmers brigade providing the salary for an instructor, fencing and like materials, and a bull for breeding purposes.

Links with the Community

Brigade relations with the community are not extensive. The center, situated several miles from the village of Kanye over a bad road, is isolated, and parents, relatives or villagers rarely see the trainees or their program. The Coordinator is aware of this problem and hopes to move the builders brigade and the home-crafts/sewing brigade into the center of town. According to a representative of the District Council people in the community feel that they do not receive sufficient benefits from the brigades, particularly from the builders. Precisely what they have in mind is not certain, but the community would probably welcome more community building projects and training opportunities for more primary-school leavers from Kanye. Only a portion of the village is aware of the
Center and its function. The brigades have not been advertised or introduced to the village at the Kgotla meetings since the present coordinator took over. This feeling that the brigades were not well known among the villagers was reiterated by the Assistant District Commissioner. There is, in addition, no feeling either among trainees or villagers that the trainees are being trained to serve the community. The Community Development Officer pointed out with respect to the farmers brigade, that parents don't know what their children are doing or learning and are consequently reluctant to give them a free hand when they return to the lands. One proposal is to build dormitories for parents and relatives of the trainees so that at specified times they could stay at the center, see what the trainees are doing, and perhaps undergo some training themselves.

Local Government maintains an on and off relationship with KYTC and the District Council was represented by a member from the area on the Board of Trustees. The District Council has given occasional grants to the Training Center, and has made a used tractor available to the farmers brigade. The Council in the past has let building contracts to the builders brigade, but complaints (1972) about the quality of workmanship have put a halt to this practice until the Council is satisfied that workmanship has improved. The center, however, is doing some building for the District Commission and has a contract from Public Works Department to erect some secondary school buildings in the area. Council claims credit for arranging the current cooperation between the Chinese Agricultural Mission and the farmers brigade whereby trainees gain experience in irrigated vegetable farming on the lands of the Chinese Mission. The vegetables are then sold in the village by trainees, who realize as much as R100 per month.

There have been 29 graduates of the KYTC thus far; twelve girls and 17 boys. Although most of the trainees come from the Kanye area, practically all of the graduates leave to seek work in larger towns. No job placement plans were made for the girls who had completed the dressmaking course and their whereabouts are unknown. The 17 boys were ex-building trainees and two remained in Kanye; the remainder went off to the cities, Selibe-Pikwe or Orapa.

Shashi River School Brigades
Tonota

There are four brigades connected with the Shashi River Secondary School at Tonota, which is 25 miles south of Francistown along the railroad. There are a builders brigade, a carpenters brigade, a farmers brigade, and a textile brigade. The farmers brigade has been temporarily disbanded owing to a lack of recruits and the farm is now being operated as a cooperative by the 11 graduates who survived from the first group of 23 enrolled in 1970. The other brigades are continuing to function as training organizations.
There are currently about 140 trainees in the three brigades, about 50 in the carpenters brigade, about 60 in the builders brigade and about 30 in the textile brigade. The builders and carpenters brigades have three-year courses; the textile brigade has a two-year course.

Approximately 25 per cent of the trainees come from Tonota or the nearby area, though the brigades are viewed as catering to the entire country, and what recruiting is necessary is done via the national newspaper, the Botswana Daily News. Since the brigades have 150 applicants for 50 places, they no longer send, as they once did, a recruiting team into the village primary school. Perhaps because of this old policy or because Tonota residents are more familiar with brigade activities, instructors feel that trainees from Tonota drop out of the program less frequently than do trainees from other parts of the country:

Relations with the Community

Despite the policy of serving the nation at large, the coordinator of the Shashi brigades insists that they maintain a good neighbor policy with the village of Tonota. To this end some building, carpentry, etc., is done as requested by the village. However, the brigades are not viewed by residents as an integral part of the community but rather in the same category as the secondary school.

Villagers of some importance, e.g., teachers, major farmers, the principal of the primary school, and the assistant village headman view the brigades as performing a necessary function in absorbing some of those students who do not go to secondary school, curtailing "juvenile delinquency" (their terminology) and providing the boys with a means of getting out of the village and into the modern sector. These older people feel that village life is a dead end and insofar as the building trainees are concerned, no more than one or two builders could work in the village on a regular basis. Migration to the construction sites at Orapa, Selibe-Pikwe and Gaborone is considered the logical solution by both elders and young people. Approximately 90 per cent of the graduates of the builders and carpenters brigades have gone on to such jobs (26 out of 29 graduates.) None of the graduates has returned to Tonota or the surrounding area to set up business on his own. Two stayed as instructors for the brigades and one went to Maun.

The future of the female trainees is uncertain. The 15 graduates of the textile brigade found themselves jobless in 1971 although employment was the understood object of their training. Consequently, six were organized into a cooperative production unit near the brigade site and the other nine apparently returned to their villages. The elders mentioned above feel that opportunities for the young women in the village (primarily as dressmakers) are greater than those for the young men.
Local government relations with the brigades are minimal. The builders have taken over the construction of a primary school in Tonota for the District Council, and the carpenters repair desks and furniture for a number of schools in the area. This work constitutes the brigade's major source of income. Community Development as represented by the Village Development Committee has little to do with the brigades.

One of the major difficulties confronting any effort to establish close ties between the brigades and the village of Tonota is the lack of village cohesion. Because five tribes, the Kalanga, the Bahurutsi, the Ndebele, the Bangwato and the Mazizuru, are all represented in strength within the town's wards, there is said to be little sense of community.

Finally insofar as the brigade-central government relations are concerned, the brigades at Shashi have limited their relationship with government to the granting of contracts to permit the brigades to cover their costs. Any other involvement on the part of the government is seen to be inimical to the efficiency and best interests of the brigades.

Kweneng Rural Development Association
Molepolole

The Kweneng Rural Development Association (KRDA) involves everyone of any consequence in the district capital, Molepolole, which is 35 miles northwest of Gaborone. The ideas of rural development presented at Rural Development Conferences, seminars and Kgotla meetings have had widespread publicity. The Board of Governors of KRDA includes the District Commissioner, the Tribal Authority, the Agricultural Officer, the CDO, the Youth Club Chairman; the District Council secretary as ex-officio members and ten elected members among whom are primary and secondary school teachers and Council members from the District. KRDA is located in the center of the village and is well marked. It operates a brickyard which is its primary source of income and it trains some 16 builders and 26 men and women in handicraft. Building trainees are primarily recruited from the Kweneng District, but a small number are admitted from other areas.

No graduates of the KRDA training programs have yet emerged, but the prospects for builders brigade trainees are, as everywhere, excellent. Most are expected to go to Orapa, Selibe-Pikwe or Gaborone. Since there are few good local builders in Molepolole, graduates eager to set up in business for themselves would seem to have opportunity.

The future of the handicraft trainees is less certain. The ultimate aim is to start a small factory turning out goods for the local market but there is some question as to the ability of such a group to compete with cheap articles from South Africa. Currently, school uniforms, for which there is a large market, represent the major source of income.
Those in charge feel that the average villager either does not know about the brigades or is unsure of their function. The District Commissioner attributes this in large part to the small size of the builders brigade, its newness, and the fact that its construction projects have been strictly limited to the few buildings erected on the KRDA site. He felt that it would be inadvisable to further advertise the brigades at this point since there would be insufficient places for the resultant applicants, and the brigade will not be building in the village for another year.

Despite the brigade's failure thus far to sink deep roots in the village, people are interested in vocational training as an alternative to secondary education. Representatives of Community Development in Molepolole said they had been stressing the importance of vocational training to the villagers, and the District Commissioner confirmed interest among secondary school students and their parents in having vocational training taught at the school.

The representative of the Tribal Authority stated that the people of the village need time to see what the brigades associated with KRDA will do. According to him villagers are quite favorable to the brigade idea, but public support and commitment must await concrete results.

The District Council is heavily represented on the Board of Trustees of the KRDA. After some initial misunderstandings as to the brigade's relationship and responsibilities in the community it is now on an amicable footing with KRDA, and is both interested and cooperative. Though it contributes no financial assistance, the District Council is eager to use the builders brigade for some of its anticipated construction projects. The brigade does not, however, feel capable of doing work of the requisite quality. It is, of course, working on its own buildings.

The KRDA is intended to be an integral part of the national development planning process. Any changes in or addition to its program must be approved by its executive board, the District Development Committee, the appropriate sub-committees of the National Brigades Coordinating Committee and appropriate ministries. It remains to be seen how effective or how important these linkages will be.

Tswelelopele Center
Ramoutswa

The Tswelelopele Center in Ramoutswa, a small village 15 miles south of Gaborone, provides training for young women of the village in sewing, knitting and similar forms of home handicraft. At this time the Center has 13 trainees and expansion was in doubt owing to a dispute with the Community Development Department concerning the center's autonomy.
The board of trustees of the Center consists of a representative each from the Catholic and Lutheran missions in the village, the principal and a teacher from the primary school, the CDO, the instructor of the handicraft brigade, the Chief of the district, the Education Secretary of the District Council and a Council member. The Council has been maintaining a wait-and-see attitude with regard to its relations with the Center. It has not wanted to commit itself until the question of the Center's autonomy is decided. This question centered around the ownership of the Center building which had been put up with money given through Community Development from an external source. The Board of Trustees was wary of government involvement, preferring to run the Center autonomously. They offered a seat on the Board to Community Development, but CD wanted more than to be informed of accomplished facts. A stalemate of eight months ensued. Finally in August, 1972 the Center was given ownership of the building and thus granted autonomy. However, when the writer visited the Center in July 1972, no decision had been reached and no concrete plans had been made for the future.

Insofar as training is concerned, the women tend to stay at the Center for about a year, though there is no definite training period. Thus far, in the two years that the Center has been in existence, there have been five or six dropouts. The Center does not promise employment, but the women can make money from the work they do at the Center. The main aim is to enable the women to function more skillfully as "homemakers." The Center hopes eventually to start a builders brigade and a mechanics brigade -- there is great demand for these skills. Most young men in the area go to South Africa to work on the farms and see a builders brigade as an excellent alternative to secondary school and farming.

People do seem to want an alternative to secondary education. The Deputy Chief of the area said that when support for the Tswelelopele Center was solicited at a Kgota meeting, many people offered to provide water, bricks, labor, etc. How the Center will fare in its relations with the village, and its securing of local and national government support remains to be seen.

Kgatleng Youth Development Association
Mochudi

There are four brigades operated under the auspices of the Kgatleng Youth Development Association in Mochudi: a builders brigade with 25 trainees comprising first and second years, a farmer, brigade, a leathercraft brigade and a mechanics brigade. There are 16 trainees, about half of them girls, in two classes in the farmers brigade. The six trainees in the mechanics brigade are all in their third year of training—with only one instructor, it was felt advisable that all trainees proceed at the same pace. Next year, following graduation, a new group will be brought in. The leathercraft brigade is no longer a brigade but a cooperative; the seven graduates are now working as a production workshop. There are no plans for further training in leathercraft. Each class of farmers has numbered initially about ten individuals, and the dropout rate has been low. The KYDA only accepts recruits for the farmers brigade when parents agree in advance to supply some cattle, land and a plow. Youths are recruited exclusively from the Kgatleng District to facilitate later follow-up.
Follow-up studies of about 15 graduates so far indicate that half continue farming while the others seek wage employment in the modern sector. Only the sort of farming and animal husbandry which can be carried on under prevailing conditions is taught; thus, there is no training in dairy farming or irrigated vegetable farming.

Relations between the KYDA and the local government appear to be good, one reason being that the brigade center (with the exception of the farmers brigade which is several miles away) is in the village of Mochudi and is closely associated with the village Community Center, a project of the people of Mochudi. But the people seem to be aware of the brigades only as an alternative for children who fail to be admitted to secondary school. Because of widespread recruiting efforts in Kgotlas throughout the Kgotleng District, the project coordinator feels that a relatively large number of people in rural areas are aware that some sort of farmer training program exists.

The Community Center of which KYDA is an outgrowth was proposed and built by the people of Mochudi, with help from Lady Naomi Mitchison and Chief Linchwe. Both KYDA and the Community Center share some common members on their respective boards of trustees, as does the Linchwe II secondary school. Thus the coordinator of KYDA, who is currently (but who need not be) principal of the secondary school, is on the board of trustees of both institutions. At present an effort is being made to form an umbrella board of governors on which will sit not only representatives of the secondary school, KYDA and the Community Center, but also the District Commissioner (ex-officio) and members of the District Council.

As indicated, District Council's relations with KYDA are amicable, but up until recently, neutral. Following prodding by a donor agency the council has taken a more active interest in the affairs of KYDA, but there are as yet no official members of the District Council on KYDA's board of trustees.

The Kgatleng District Council is poor and cannot afford to give much in the way of financial aid or building contracts to KYDA. Work for the Council has consisted of renovations to the Council medical clinic and construction of three classrooms for the Linchwe II Secondary School. These classrooms were then turned over to the Council for use as a primary school. The Council helps KYDA primarily through the maintenance contract which the mechanics brigade holds for the Council boreholes.

Work done by the builders Brigade for the Council has created conflict as a reputedly good local builder is a Council member. Though this writer did not hear of such a conflict existing in other districts one would expect Councils to be cautious about giving contracts to programs run by outsiders rather than a local builder, Council member or not. Probably other District building schemes are extensive enough to provide both local and brigade builders with work, or demand work too ambitious for a small local contractor to undertake.
Community Development, in the persons of the local CDO and two CDAs, appears to support KYDA in principle and in practice. The CDO is a member of the Board of Trustees and is kept informed of the plans and problems of the brigades. However, the Village Development Committees, of which there are several in Mochudi, have no relations with the brigades. This again revolves around the apparent incompatibility of the village self-help concept of Community Development with the commercial nature of the brigades. Nonetheless the CDO states that he has made a conscious effort to mention the brigades and recommend their services on a private basis to the villagers at VDC meetings. Complaints about quality have recently made him wary of advertising the builders brigade to any great extent in case Community Development's reputation might suffer, although some knowledgeable sources say that the brigade's quality of workmanship is certainly no worse, and probably better, than that of some local contractors. Complaints center primarily around the brigade's refusal to do work on a piecemeal basis. It expects to be paid in a lump sum and wants all materials at the site prior to building. Traditionally, individuals hire a builder and supply their own materials as they can afford them, thus stretching the job over a considerable period of time, a method which is not economically feasible for the brigade.

The District Authority has tried to employ the builders brigade but the projects have not yet been approved by the Central Government. The District Commissioner is an ex-officio member of KYDA's board of trustees, and is by virtue of his job, Chairman of the District Development Committee. This would link District development planning and the brigades but planning as yet is in its early stages.

The Coordinator of KYDA described the village attitude toward schemes, such as the brigades, that receive significant outside support. According to him, people see the secondary school and KYDA as the products of a few outside people who are clever at getting great quantities of money from unknown sources. Since the project is apparently successfully financed from another source, villagers see no need to contribute their time or resources to it. However, the traditional leadership of the village, headed by Chief Linchwe II, favors such innovative steps as KYDA and the people may in time follow his lead.

Lekgaba Center
Francistown

The Lekgaba Center in Francistown is a brigade program run by the Community Development Department, specializing in training craftsmen in ceramics, working in wood and ivory, carpentry and painting. For girls there is a course in homecrafts such as sewing, knitting and dressmaking. There are currently about 40 trainees in addition to about ten girls who come each morning from their homes in Francistown. Of the male trainees approximately 75 per cent come from Francistown or the surrounding Bokalanga/Northeast District area.
The males are being trained for self-employment. For the females, the training is designed to upgrade their current skills. The center helps independent adult craftsmen as well, acquiring materials which they can buy, and then buying and marketing their finished work. There are about half a dozen of these "freelance" craftsmen.

The first group of trainees graduated at the end of 1972 and their livelihood is a major concern, particularly the potters, for the wheel and the kiln are expensive. The center’s Director plans to retain at the center those who cannot make it alone or find employment as ceramics instructors. They will form a production unit which will not only give them an income but will help make the center self-supporting. Their graduate skills will be important in maintaining the quality of the center's output; normally trainees have produced nothing marketable during their first year.

The Lekgaba Center has an advisory board of people from the community. Among them are the Director himself, the clerk of the Town Council, a local member of Parliament, the District Commissioner, the mayor of Francistown, a Councillor of the Town Council, and two local men employed in the town. The stated aims of the advisory board are sixfold:

1) To act in an advisory capacity to further the program of the center.

2) To consider ways of improving and extending the training programs of the center.

3) To assess needs among the young people in Francistown and the North East District that could be met by training programs at the center.

4) To encourage interest and support for the center.

5) To seek means of raising funds with special emphasis on local support.

6) To take necessary steps in consultation with the Department of Community Development for making the center self-supporting.

In practice, however, the advisory board meets only when there are urgent matters to consider. In the period January, 1972 to July, 1972, it met only once. According to the Town Clerk, advice is rarely asked of or given by the board, and the board has frequently had difficulty getting a quorum. Neither the Francistown Town Council, in whose administrative territory the center is located, nor the North East District Council, which represents the area around
Francistown, had, as of July, 1972, supplied any sort of financial or moral support. The center’s position with respect to the central government is difficult, also. CD is apparently caught between the desire to have the center become financially autonomous and the desire to control the center's activities. Some observers consider CD's role to be unnecessarily heavy-handed.

The Lekgaba Center is not well known to the people of Francistown. It is too removed from the majority of the Batswana population of Francistown and the predominantly white business district. Also, the skills taught at Lekgaba, i.e., traditional types of crafts with tourist appeal are not those to attract the average primary-school leaver seeking employment in the modern sector. Nor do these skills show much potential for absorbing significant numbers of trainees.

Conclusions

Purposes and Premises of Brigades

There is need for a careful re-evaluation of several basic premises of the brigade concept, in particular the purpose of brigade training. Close examination reveals that there are almost as many purposes envisioned for brigades as there are brigades. Among these are: (a) Controlling juvenile delinquency and keeping idle youth off the streets; (b) instilling a sense of the dignity of manual labor; (c) making good citizens out of primary-school leavers; (d) producing self-employed private entrepreneurs in the rural areas: (e) fostering rural development through (d) and farmer training; (f) providing a semi-academic alternative to secondary-school education; (g) providing direct employment through the cooperative workshops; (h) providing cheap, local skilled labor for district or town building plans.

Too many objectives results in confusion; it's of prime importance that brigades concentrate on a few realistic goals.

As an example, most brigades tend to set up permanent production units, particularly in textiles and handicrafts, thus the brigades become both trainers and employers, and it is possible that both functions suffer losses of efficiency. This step has usually been taken when brigades discovered that there was no market for the skills they were producing. In many brigades where this has happened training has been discontinued. However, in Serowe, Shashi River and Thamaga, the brigades continue to train when it is obvious that the only hope of trainee employment lies in the brigade workshops. In this area then, brigades would do well to cut down on their handicraft training and a) improve the quality of the output of those already trained, and b) concentrate on a skill such as building for which there is a high demand, plus a greater likelihood of covering costs and of having a higher training impact in terms of numbers. In short, brigades should not spread themselves too thin, and should concentrate in areas where they have a "comparative advantage."
Another purpose that needs to be examined is that of instilling civic and social responsibility in the trainees through the Development Studies program. Development Studies attempts to instill an awareness of the development process, and above all a sense of patriotism in the trainees. But the impression one gets is that only lip-service is being paid to these ideals. Most trainees are in the brigades for one reason, to get high-paying jobs in the modern sector. Though they speak of helping the nation develop and of being willing to work in the village, their primary concern is employment wherever it may be found. Few trainees return to the rural areas to assist in rural development; few remain in the small towns where the brigades are established. Almost all brigade trainees, thus far, have gone to the mines and large towns to work in the modern sector for which they have been trained. This is natural given the market forces and could not be reversed even if it were desirable to do so. However, as the brigades are currently organized and run, this migration to the modern sector leaves the villages and small towns with scant profit from the training activities going on in their midst. Thus purpose (e) above is not being accomplished.

Migration to the towns cannot and should not be discouraged so long as there are jobs available. Within five to ten years, however, most observers feel that this labor market will be glutted and trainees will have to find employment in the villages. Developing a job market in these areas will be more difficult. In order for rural villages to begin to grow and be capable of absorbing the output of the brigades, some outside influence such as conscious government development policies must provide the incentives and financial resources. Though government plans for comprehensive rural development are going forward at this time, the role of brigades has not been made clear.

Finally, the premise that the brigades must restore a sense of the dignity of manual labor should be questioned. Most Batswana want their children to go to secondary school and get white-collar jobs with the government or in the private modern sector, and this probably accounts for the tremendous demand for a secondary-school place. But this does not necessarily mean that the Batswana are unwilling to do the hard, manual labor required for development. Indeed, such an attitude is rather arrogant on the part of the brigades.

Batswana parents and children desire white-collar jobs and therefore secondary-school education because they see so many white-collar jobs in the economy. Vocational training in the secondary schools appeals to parents in Molepolole because their primary interest is in modern sector (i.e., remunerative) employment. Young people and parents will be as willing to do manual labor as white collar work when they see such work is available. Naturally, there is a prestige factor involved in white-collar employment, but brigades need not waste their time praising the virtues of manual labor. All they need do is publicize employment opportunities and demonstrate that theirs is a viable alternative to secondary school.
Private Entrepreneurship

It seems highly unlikely that brigades will contribute to the development of a private entrepreneurial class.

1. Brigade trainees in carpentry and building show no inclination to return to their villages for several reasons. They are reluctant to risk setting up on their own, which seems to be the prerogative of the "rich and powerful" and probably also of older individuals. There is demonstrably a limited market in the villages, and traditionally people have built houses in a piecemeal fashion, an uneconomical process for the builder.

2. The communal, cooperative nature of Botswana life militates against the formation of a class of individual entrepreneurs. Historically, as stated by Sekgoma Khama, "the whole structure of the society and the activities of the groups were such as to exclude individualism and encourage the placing of the interests of the group over the interests of the individual..."* Gradually this attitude is being changed, but is the change desirable? Perhaps the cooperative movement, as exemplified by the Serowe Builders Cooperative, would produce faster and more socially healthful results.

Cost Covering

A close look should be taken at "cost covering" from several points of view.

1. If brigades are to play a significant role in the development of the community (it is the writer's opinion that they must do so to survive), then to what extent does the emphasis on cost-covering affect the choice of projects undertaken? Will the brigades undertake remunerative projects such as Council office buildings or teachers quarters, at the expense of latrines or other projects which would affect the people more directly? Naturally there are political implications involved.

2. If the brigades are to function as some sort of community development project, can rural communities cover the costs of their work? Can the villages afford to hire the graduates either as private individuals or as a cooperative?

3. Cost-covering is often defended as a means of teaching trainees about cost estimation and accounting. But at two brigade sites some trainees seemed to think that the seemingly large sums paid by the people for whom the building was being done should end up in their own pockets.

Relations Between Brigades and the Government

As the foregoing description has indicated, brigades are not coordinated by or with existing government institutions at the local or national level. Some potential coordinating bodies exist, i.e., National Brigades Coordinating Committee (NBCC), National Employment, Manpower and Incomes Council (NEMIC) and the District Development Committees, but they do not as yet adequately integrate the educational efforts of the nation with the brigades.

NBCC, as presently constituted, is a weak institution. Although all Ministries and many departments are represented on the committee, meetings are regarded by many as a waste of time. Both sides -- brigades and government -- probably blame each other. An impartial examination would probably disclose faults on both sides. Certainly the existence of a coordinating committee does not seem to guarantee either coordination or efficiency. There may be some uncertainty as to the precise purpose of NBCC and no doubt considerable disagreement concerning the committee's powers. The difficulty of coordinating brigades is aggravated by the existence, side by side, of government and private brigades. A private individual can have no executive power over government brigades, and a government official can have little over the private brigades. As a result the NBCC has no executive authority and is merely an advisory body.

Since the President has emphasized that "the greatest challenge ahead of (Botswana) is undoubtedly rural development",* this will undoubtedly mean that brigades will have to surrender some of their autonomy to the Central Government and the NBCC will have to be given some executive power. Under these circumstances, government representatives would have to have the authority to speak for their ministries or departments.

The problem of coordination is much more easily solved on paper than in reality, and most institutions in any country continually face the dilemma of encouraging local initiative while maintaining a degree of central control. The creation of boards or committees on which the various vested interests are represented is a standard bureaucratic attempt to minimize duplication of effort and encourage national planning. Organization charts often conceal as much as they reveal however, and the effectiveness of the NBCC -- like most efforts of its kind -- is determined by its membership and its functions within the larger

system. In view of the preponderance of expatriates in the brigade movement, it is likely that an experienced Batswana would have more credibility within governmental circles as the Secretary of the NBCC. However, there are very few Motswana with such experience, and the complex jurisdictional issues concerning liaison between different ministries would remain extremely difficult regardless of the citizenship of the NBCC leaders.

To maintain the maximum degree of local initiative and flexibility with minimum control, the coordinating role should probably remain primarily a communications effort (e.g., learning about possible jobs under PWD sub-contracts and notifying appropriate brigades... seeking a bull, seeds or technical advice from the Ministry of Agriculture). By suggesting a greater clarity of purpose and a higher degree of executive authority for NBCC the writer is not advocating tightly centralized control over brigades, but merely more effective communications channels between brigades and other institutions. The use of an accountant who travels to various brigades has apparently been very helpful, and the informal planning/evaluation functions of NBCC might well be expanded.

With respect to NEMIC at the highest level of government, and the District Development Committees at the local level, it is too soon to judge their effectiveness. Certainly, NEMIC is in a position to relay information concerning present and future job markets to brigade coordinators, while the DDCA could play a key role in decentralized human resources planning.

Brigade-Community Relations

One issue dealt with in this study is the relationship of the brigade with the community. The underlying assumption is that a close relationship is beneficial and ought to be promoted. Yet, brigades, as presently organized, do not need the villages and the villages have little to offer them. A good case, however, can be made for close brigade-community relations. Brigades can be instrumental in raising the living standards of the villages by building clinics, public latrines and community centers. They can perhaps help create a demand for their own services and thus a rural building market by demonstrating the advantages of well-built brick or cinder block housing. Equally important is the possibility of brigades showing that a realistic and profitable alternative to secondary education exists, thus relieving pressure on the secondary school system. To do this brigades must make evident the advantages of brigade training.

As stated earlier, brigades are not integrated with or even very visible to the communities in which they are located. Most brigades are located at a considerable distance from the political, social and economic center of the community, and consequently villagers cannot observe their activities. Brigades,
on the whole, rarely advertise their ideas, ideals and objectives at the Kgötla meetings in
the villages, or in any other way. They do not need the extra people and they are also
afraid of raising false hopes in the community regarding opportunities for training and
employment. However, the reluctance of the brigades to orient their activities toward the
villages seems to stem from their self-image as national rather than local institutions.
Brigades might concentrate on recruiting from the immediately surrounding area. The
smaller, dressmaking brigades (Palapye, Thamaga, Ramoutswa, Francistown, etc.) do this
but the builders, farmers and carpenters brigades draw trainees from the district or the
nation as a whole. Admittedly, determining the precise area of origin of any particular
Motswana is difficult. Most Batswana generally have three places of residence, one in a
central village, one at their cattle grazing lands (the "cattle post") and one where they
grow crops (the "lands"). Each place of residence is lived in for a certain part of the year.
The number of people who reside for the majority of the year in a village depends, in all
probability, on the traditional or modern economic orientation of the village. Despite this
mobility, however, there is no reason why recruiting and informational efforts cannot be
aimed at the village rather than the district or nation at large, since the village is the focal
point of Batswana community life.

Community Attitudes toward Brigades

Brigades are often looked upon as second or third best alternative to secondary
school education. Most Batswana want their children to go to secondary school and get
white-collar jobs with the government or in the modern sector. Thus people pay little
attention to brigades until it becomes obvious that they cannot get into secondary school
and cannot find work in the modern sector without a skill. Farming is often viewed as a
last resort, since it is completely divorced from the modern sector. Thus farmers brigades
are viewed as low-status institutions and can interest and keep few trainees.

Though an obvious point, it is important when discussing the lack of brigade impact
on the community to realize that people are interested in the brigades only to the extent
that they affect their lives. Thus if the brigades do not build in the village or train a large
number of villagers, people are not interested in them.

In the same way, grants of money from overseas sources give the brigades an
independent image. The people do not identify with them.

Most brigades are run by expatriates. Even where there are two coordinators and
the nominally senior one is a national, the national tends to defer to the expatriate. Yet
brigades such as Kanye and Lobatse which are run by Batswana, seem to be no better
integrated with the community than those which are run by expatriates.
Brigades on the whole receive little or no support from District or Town Councils and maintain poor liaison with them. The exceptions are significant in only two cases. The Northwest District Council provided R7,000 for the operation of the Ngamiland Youth Training Center in 1972 while the Lobatse Youth Training Center relies heavily on the Lobatse Town Council for building contracts.

Lack of liaison is partly due to Council reluctance to become involved in a new project, and partly to the brigades' desire to go it alone. They want to avoid involvement with government generally, local or national. Where communication does exist, in the form of Council members on the Board of Trustees, it is largely pro forma, and seems to produce few concrete results. Certainly there is little effort at planning and coordinating the goals of the two bodies.

Brigade Training

Carpentry and building trainees have thus far encountered little difficulty getting jobs in the modern sector at the mine construction sites or in the large towns. Few if any trainees return to their villages to work and none have done so as self-employed. Whether or not trainees pass the trade test administered by the Botswana Training Center, they apparently get jobs. This raises fundamental questions concerning the necessity and the nature of training. The unofficially estimated demand for these trainees will continue unabated, given the present rate of supply for the greater part of this decade.

Farming:

Farming is highly unpopular and has had limited success in attracting and holding trainees.

Shashi River has ceased its farmer training activities and the twelve former trainees work on the brigade farm.

Serowe's farmers brigade has been plagued with resettlement problems. 20 per cent of its graduates have come back to work full-time on the brigade farm.

The Ngamiland Youth Training Center's brigade, though apparently more successful in attracting and holding trainees, has not yet completed its first stream of training. It can thus not be properly judged.

The Kgatleng Youth Training Center’s farmers brigade has graduated a few farmers (no more than 15), and of these only half have returned to farm their own or their family's lands.
Teaching of farming methods such as dairy farming and irrigated vegetable farming that are possible only under ideal conditions or with large capital inputs not available to the average Motswana has been criticized as having adverse effect on brigades and progressive farmers by raising false hopes.

Handicrafts and Textiles:

Textile brigades thus far have not been successful in placing or setting up trainees on their own.

Serowe and Shashi River had to set up cooperatives to absorb their graduates. Those graduates who did not enter the cooperative workshops were lost track of.

Kanye's dressmaking graduates completed their training with no prospects or arrangements made for their future. They probably went back to their families.

Textile brigades suffer a high turnover rate. Pregnancy is an obvious cause but there are others not generally known.

In order to "cover costs," most dressmaking and textile brigades, with the notable exception of the Botswelo Center in Thamaga, produce for the tourist or export market. A major obstacle is lack of standardization and quality control.

The demand for graduates of the handicrafts brigade at the Legkaba Center in Francistown is extremely limited. It seems most likely that a cooperative workshop will have to be established to absorb these graduates.

Training Methods:

The fact that most trainees fail the Class II trade test administered by the Botswana Training Center and get jobs anyway raises two questions. First, why does anyone bother to take or administer the test, and secondly, are brigade trainees being overtrained? The Class II trade test denotes a level of accomplishment higher than that demanded currently by the nation's building contractors. Brigades should impart the skills that employers are looking for. The implicit assumption underlying a three-year training course for builders or carpenters is apparently that trainees should be equipped to start out on their own as independent entrepreneurs. Since this has not happened thus far, the brigades are undoubtedly overtraining and at the same time limiting their flexibility. If the three-year courses were reduced to two, or even one-and-a-half years, the brigades could not only train a larger number of Batswana, thereby making a greater impact on the primary school leaver problem, but they would also be able to react more quickly to changes in demand for skilled labor. A study should be made of the extent to which on-the-job training at construction sites duplicates and/or can supplant brigade training.
Other Non-Formal Education Opportunities:

Currently the Central Transport Organization (CTO) is administering a training program initiated by the P-E Consulting Group Ltd. of Great Britain. This program turns out mechanics in ten weeks (50 days) who are qualified to do such tasks as removing and replacing the rear axle, timing the engine or removing and replacing the propeller shaft on Bedford trucks or Land Rovers. Trainees have had no previous experience with engines or automotive mechanics. Though trainees are only qualified to work on Bedfords and Land Rovers, they can easily adapt new skills to any kind and make of vehicle. When it is considered that Botswana's economy will depend increasingly on road transport and that the Botswana Training Center requires several years to turn out mechanics, the tremendous importance of this training scheme must be realized. Presently C.T.O.'s program is aimed at satisfying C.T.O.'s requirements for mechanics. It is possible that extra people could be trained in the current stream, or that the course could be continued after C.T.O.'s demands were filled in order to turn out mechanics for private industry.

P.W.D. Training Scheme

The Public Works Department have proposed that they establish an on-the-job training program for some of the remoter areas of Botswana, hiring local labor. P.W.D. would supply a skeleton supervisory and training staff. Though this is only an idea at present, it is possible that the laborers so trained might be able to establish their own building group. Whether or not this is feasible in rural Botswana at the present time is open to question. However, the concept of P.W.D. acting as a training employer of non-P.W.D. workers is well worth further consideration.

A Drop in the Bucket

In view of the considerable attention which brigades have received both in Botswana and in other countries, it's important to keep in mind that the scale of the entire enterprise is still very small. So long as the demand for technical skills remains strong, brigades will present a viable "alternative" for primary-school leavers who cannot continue into secondary schools. Although it is too soon to judge their success or failure by any general criteria, it is clear that brigades -- as presently constituted -- cannot yet be considered a solution to the primary-school leaver problem. If brigades are to become more than merely a drop in the bucket, they must develop much more solid linkages with the local communities on which they must depend for support.