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AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS FOR BLACK STUDIES PROGRAMS

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It may be argued that decisions as to the kinds of African development materials to include in a Black Studies program should be shaped in large part by the reasons for including such materials in the first place. These appear to fall into three main categories: First, African development issues are relevant for American Blacks;* there is evidence to suggest that the successes or failures of African nations in attaining development may have direct bearing on the success of Black liberation here in the United States. Second, analysis of development issues in the African context may illuminate the extent to which academic models typically formulated in the United States are apt as sources of meaningful hypotheses for the solution of political-social-economic problems. Third, critical analysis of the African experience may expose the manner in which racist ideology--so prevalent in the United States--functions to obscure the operative mechanisms of exploitation.

This paper aims to examine the kinds of materials relating to African development which might be incorporated in Black Studies programs in light of these three reasons.

I. Relevance:

Many scholars and individuals concerned with issues of Black liberation

* It should be noted that, from an educational point of view, the relevancy of problems studied tends to influence students' motivation and hence the amount of learning that actually takes place.
have long emphasized that oppression of Blacks in the United States is rooted in the historical fact that Africans were dragged from their homelands to work as slave labor on southern plantations. The profits of the tri-cornered slave trade and the production of raw materials in the slave South contributed importantly to the industrial revolutions which constituted the foundation of modern development in America and Britain.

The reluctantly acceded 'liberation' of American Blacks in the course of the Civil War did little more than change the pattern of oppression of Blacks in America: The myth of inferiority, backed by organized mob violence, was refurbished to force the former slave to remain in the lowest paid menial jobs (or entirely unemployed, especially in the recurring depressions), to crowd into ghetto slums in the cities, and to send their children to inferior, segregated schools. This myth served a double function by dividing whites against Blacks, for it weakened the bargaining power of both. It hardly seems to be an accident that in the south--where the myth is most deeply rooted and the incomes of Blacks average a third less than whites--whites' incomes tend to be almost a third below those of whites in the North.

At the same time that new forms of subjugation were being imposed on American Blacks after the Civil War, the European powers were intensifying their 'Scramble for Africa'. They sought to portray the Africans as ignorant savages to justify their imperial conquest. In reality, their industrial base gave them a military advantage in the innumerable battles and extended guerilla warfare mounted by Africans desperately seeking to preserve

\* A century or so earlier, the British used similar arguments to justify their policies of clearing Scottish tribes off the Scotch Highlands in order to raise commercial sheep to produce wool for their factories.
their freedom. As in other parts of the world, the lack of the Africans in the face of European advance also contributed to defeat.

Over the years, Black Americans have formulated various theories as to the necessity of forging links with the peoples of Africa. To cite only two: Marcus Garvey argued that American Blacks should organize to return to Africa, for only there among their African Brothers, he maintained, could they hope to find fully equal opportunities. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, became increasingly convinced that the surest path to equal opportunity for Blacks in the United States lay in the emergence of a united and independent African continent: Pan-Africanism, the unity of the hundreds of millions of Africans, was, in his view, the essential foundation for realization of the full value and dignity of Blacks throughout the world.

There is not space here to explore these or other theories in full. That there is evidence to support the argument that successful African development has and may continue to contribute to attainment of improved status for American Blacks seems best illustrated by the fact that in the last decade, as 42 African states have won political independence, American Blacks have mobilized more successfully than ever before to assert their rights as American citizens.

The relevance of African development to the status of American Blacks argues strongly for ensuring that Black Studies programs include penetrating historical analyses of Africans' struggles to defend and develop their own political, economic and cultural identity in the face of the militarily-

* In a like manner, it has been maintained that the founding of Israel as a national homeland was essential to ensure equal opportunities for Jews as national minorities wherever they lived.
advantaged colonial powers. The portrait of the untutored African savage—so widely projected through all communications media and even in schools in the United States—needs to be exposed as a feature of the racist mythology designed to keep Blacks in their place both in Africa and the U.S. So, too, is it necessary to show how the division of one group against another on the basis of alleged 'racial' differences operates to the detriment of both. Appropriate materials would include the study of the range of African cultures and institutions affecting all aspects of African life and the impact of colonialism in shaping a dominating set of political-economic institutions; and an opportunity to evaluate current efforts of Africans to reassert and advance their own culture and identity.

II. Models vs. reality:

The second reason for studying the sociological, political and economic realities of African development lies in the possibilities of thus testing the universality of development models formulated in various academic disciplines in the United States. Models are useful only insofar as they provide sources of hypotheses which help to explain reality as well as to suggest appropriate action to improve it. If current U.S. models turn out to be culturally-specific—and hence inadequate for dealing with problems in other areas and cultures—then the opportunity to examine them critically may constitute a necessary first step in the formulation of more useful ones. This may be true, not only for Africa, but—given the culturally-separated experience of Black Americans—for achieving full Black Liberation within the United States itself.

This seemingly broad statement may be illustrated specifically in
the case of Economics—the study of which is critically relat
development. To evaluate the potential consequences of uncri;
ploying U.S. economic models in Africa, however, it is necessary to under-
stand the nature of the political-economic institutions inherited by the
African states after decades of colonial rule.

Lord Lugard, a foremost champion of indirect rule in Africa, quite
explicitly stated aims which shaped the colonialists' policies:

The backward condition of the people and their
preference for agricultural pursuits, offer the
prospect of continued markets for manufactured
goods. The tropics produce in abundance a class
of raw materials and foodstuffs which cannot be
grown in the temperate zones, and are so vital
to the needs of civilized man that they have in
very truth become essential to civilization. It
was realization of this fact which led the nations
of Europe to compete for control of the African
tropics.

As a result of colonial policies directed towards these goals, African
nations, upon attainment of political independence, inherited essentially
dualistic economies consisting of two sectors linked by a distinctly limited
set of exchange relations: 1) In the relatively modern export enclave, the
productive and infrastructural facilities were geared primarily to the export
of a few raw materials and the import of manufactured goods. The externally
dependent pattern of specialization and exchange characteristic of this sector
was perpetuated by a set of dominant foreign producing, trading, and/or finan-
cial institutions. 2) In the remaining sector—which might be called 'tradi-
tional' insofar as it was less affected by the colonial pattern of development—
the institutions differed in different countries, depending on specific
historical circumstances. In all cases, however, this sector tended to be
characterized by limited specialization and exchange and relatively low
levels of near-subsistence production. The primary linkage between the two
sectors consisted of the migration of hundreds of thousands of peasants to
the export enclave where they provided the low-cost labor supply required for production of cheap raw materials for export. A limited range of imported manufactured goods, purchased with their meager earnings, trickled back to the less developed traditional areas.

It may at least be questioned whether economic models based on assumptions of relatively free competition and mobility of the factors of production could contribute much to attainment of development in these circumstances. The Harvard mathematical economist, Georgescu-Roegen, has emphasized that the content of the fundamental principles of standard economics, as taught in this country, has been determined by the institutional setting existing here. He adds:

Without this institutional content, the principles are nothing but 'empty boxes' from which we can obtain only empty generalities. This is not to say that standard theory operates with 'empty boxes'. On the contrary...these boxes are filled with an institutional content distilled from cultural patterns of a capitalist society...It is precisely because the boxes of standard theory are already filled with a specific institutional content that this theory was unceremoniously rejected by the students of the economic process in non-capitalist settings.

There seems to be at least some evidence that efforts of those African states which have sought to create the necessary atmosphere to attract private investment in accord with the prescriptions of standard theory have not stimulated the development of nationally balanced economies capable of attaining increased productivity and higher levels of living in all sectors. What little

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* In some colonies, the initial impetus for this migratory pattern had been the introduction of forced labor; in others, hut and poll taxes were used to render cash earnings essential, with the alternative being imprisonment for tax default and forced labor on government infrastructural projects.

** Development is here defined as the attainment of a nationally balanced economy capable of achieving increased productivity and higher levels of living for the broad masses of the inhabitants.
private investment has occurred has usually taken place in further production of raw materials for export. Much of it has been foreign, particularly in the extraction of minerals, including oil and copper, so that a significant share of the resulting investible surpluses have left Africa. A spokesman for Lonrho, a British-Southern Rhodesian firm which has expanded rapidly in the independent nations of Africa in recent years* observed, in a remark reminiscent of Lord Lugard's pronouncement almost half a century earlier:

The prosperity of the developed nations depend in the long run on the development of the underdeveloped nations... After all, these new countries are both sources of raw materials and potential markets.

A major portion of domestic private investment—much of it in the form of labor invested in clearing land and planting—has tended to go into export crop production. The resulting expansion of output in the face of slowly growing world demand has contributed significantly to falling world prices which have seriously reduced their returns. Much of the limited investible cash surpluses remaining in Africa has been devoted primarily to speculative trade and real estate; few Africans have the know-how or sufficient capital to compete with manufactured goods imported or produced in last-stage assembly plants owned by foreign firms in the export enclave.

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* Lonrho, starting with a base in Rhodesia, had, by 1966, accumulated 67 subsidiaries and associated companies, both in independent African countries and those still struggling to achieve liberation. In East Africa alone, Lonrho had a majority interest in a company publishing major newspapers in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania (The Tanzanian paper was nationalized in 1970); a holding company with a number of subsidiaries engaged in cotton and tea estates as well as other areas of activity; and a transport company which owned, among others, a major share of the Dar es Salaam public transport system. In 1966 six members of Lonrho's Board of Directors held among them almost 140 directorships in various other East African firms. Lonrho also expanded its holdings in other independent African countries in the 1960s, acquiring a textile firm with branches in Nigeria and Malawi as well as Rhodesia and South Africa; 51 percent of a Belgian company with holdings in timber, transport, power distribution, insurance and auto sales in the Congo; Ashanti Goldfields, the most profitable of the gold companies in Ghana; and John Holt, one of the handful of foreign trading firms which dominate the export enclaves of West Africa.
The resulting growth of the national product—if any—has not spread
into the traditional sector which has tended to lag, leaving new generations
little choice but to continue back-breaking labor with a hoe to scratch a
subsistence from unfertile soils, or to migrate to obtain jobs in the mines
and plantations or to work as sharecroppers producing crops. In Liberia,
the consequent pattern has been described as 'growth without development.' In Nigeria, competitive efforts of separate state governments to attract
private enterprise contributed, not to balanced national growth, but to
heightened regional tensions which culminated in civil war. Kenya's efforts
to pursue prescriptions implicit in orthodox economic models have been charac-
terized as aggravating the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots', and have
been accompanied by growing tensions between ethnic groups. Ghana's post-coup
efforts—however one may assess pre-coup policies—have been unable to rescue
that nation's economy from a condition which may only be described as 'stag-
nation'.

The objective circumstances of the inherited African economies have led
many Africans to call for something called 'socialism'. Just what is meant
is frequently left vague. Hence African universities are increasingly giving
their students an opportunity to examine critically the models and hypotheses
suggested by both capitalist and socialist experience. On this basis, they
seek to discover those solutions which are particularly appropriate for
solving the problems of development in Africa.

It would seem to follow that Black Studies programs should likewise
provide participants with the opportunity to examine both capitalist and
socialist theories as sources of hypotheses for attainment of development in
Africa. In particular, students should be encouraged to evaluate the potential
consequences of suggested hypotheses in light of evidence relating to the
objective circumstances confronting the newly independent states of Africa.
The critical analytical skills thus developed, it is to be hoped, will be carried over into the students' evaluation of alternative suggestions for attempting to resolve problems posed in the United States.

III. The role of racist ideology:

The study of African development materials in Black Studies programs may contribute to participants' understanding that the critical issues in Africa is not racist ideology per se. Rather, the peculiar historical conditions of colonial and post-colonial experience, by making race appear to be the primary issue, have concealed the basic mechanisms of exploitation built into the inherited political-economic institutional structures of the African countries.

Examination of the underlying political-economic realities, as outlined in section II above, suggests that a fundamental feature perpetuating underdevelopment in Africa is the institutional structure directing the peculiar pattern of international specialization and exchange in which African nations specialize in exporting cheap raw materials produced by exceptionally low-cost labor in exchange for the high-valued manufactured goods produced by developed-nation trading partners. The latter, controlling the critical institutions dominating this trade, specialize in accumulating the profits.

The underlying features of this mechanism appear to have been obscured by the fact that the colonizers were of different nationalities and color and

*Britain, for example, has for years since the late 19th century, typically imported more goods than it has exported, but has been able to offset this balance of trade deficit by its investment income--profits, interest and dividends from its investments abroad; only recently has its investment income been unable to offset its growing deficit on its trade account.
rationalized their domination by fabricating a racist ideology. In not a few cases, this seems to have led to the conclusion that merely to replace the alien colonizers, without altering the political-economic institutions they established, would eliminate the fundamental problems of underdevelopment.

It is perhaps significant that the ex-colonizers, themselves, have urged this proposition. For example, Sir Michael Blundell, one of the early British settlers in Kenya, noting that the British Government could not afford to continue to suppress the Kenyan nationalists militarily, finally supported Kenyan independence; in fact, since Independence, he has become a Kenyan citizen.* He put the issue quite bluntly:

The mere numbers--100,000 whites to 20,000,000 blacks in East Africa--meant that a white domination was impossible...I was trying to make our position safe by other means.

He therefore proposed that selected Africans be included in the political economic structure in a manner designed to ensure their support of the status quo:

the only possible policy was a liberal one which attracted the best of the new African thought which was coming to the fore, allied with measures which created a wider economic sphere for the African generally.

In fact, this policy has been widely adopted by the Kenyan Government, which is making extensive efforts to Africanize both the governmental and private sectors. In the area of land tenure, for example, the Government has adopted the policy espoused by the colonial Ministry of Agriculture, of which Blundell was head in the years just before independence: A 'Million Acre Scheme' was designed to turn over about a fifth of the former White

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* In 1968, Blundell was reported to be a member of the Boards of directors of Kenya Branch of Barclays Bank and 12 other companies in Kenya, as well as one each in Tanzania and Uganda.27
Highlands (seven million acres of the best land in Kenya) to small scale African farmers. Another fifth consisted of large farms—averaging about 700 acres in size—sold intact to wealthy or influential Africans. Many of these were ministers or highly placed civil servants who paid for the land with loans financed by the government.** The remaining three-fifths of the Highlands remained divided among less than 3000 farms owned by foreign companies and European settlers, the average holding being more than 2000 acres in size.***

Outside the Highlands, in the former 'African reserves', the Kenyan Government, relying heavily on advice and funds from Britain, has continued to implement the policies of land consolidation and registration. These were originally designed in the 1950s to undermine community support for the guerilla movement, which demanded return of the lands on the Highlands, by enabling Africans loyal to the colonial government to consolidate their scattered pieces of land and register its title.32 The original supporters of this approach quite consciously expected it to contribute to the emergence

* The cost of repurchasing the land from the European settlers at the 1959 market price was financed by British funds, two-thirds of which the African farmers were expected to repay over time—although not a few objected that, since the land had originally been forcibly taken away, there was no reason they should pay the debt.

** Kenya's 1970-74 plan envisages more government credit to large farms including these, than to small farms.

***A single tea estate, owned by a company registered in Scotland, holds about 20 percent of all the tea acreage in the country. The second largest tea company in Kenya, this company is controlled by a British firm with 31 subsidiaries and associated companies with interests in tea, textiles, jute and other products in India, Ceylon, New Zealand, South Africa and Rhodesia. The largest tea company in Kenya, Brooke Bond & Co., is one of the top 200 firms in England, and in 1968 merged with Liebig's Extract of Meat Co., another company with extensive holdings in meatpacking and meat export in East and other African states.31

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of a landed and landless class: able, energetic, or rich Africans will be able to acquire more land, and bad or poor farmers less, creating a landed and landless class. This is a normal step in the evolution of a country.

The post-independence government continued and expanded this program on the grounds that individualized title was essential to provide the incentive and security for loans needed to stimulate increased agricultural production.

Few major alterations have been made in the political-economic structure outside of land tenures in Kenya. A few Africans have been included on local boards of directors of branches or subsidiaries of large foreign firms and banks, but the main decisions are still made in their head office overseas. An effort was made to foster entrance of Africans into internal trade through the Kenya National Trading Corporation, but the corporation never handled more than a small share of total trade, and did little to alter the fundamental distribution structure. The outflow of reported investment income--profits, interest and dividends to foreign firms--increased from U.S. 25 million dollars in 1962 to U.S. 38 million dollars in 1968.

In areas where they have been less directly involved in the day-to-day decision-making than the Blundells of the East and Central African states, the managers of foreign firms have devised new techniques to foster cooperative attitudes among new African administrators and politicians. Lonrho spokesmen, for example, have quite openly described their firm's approach: The company follows a consistent pattern of acquiring a small stake in a developing country, winning the confidence and cooperation of the government, and then branching out. "We work through personal contacts with ministers and heads of state", one asserted.
The potential value of these policies to the company was illustrated when the workers of the Ashanti Goldfields in Ghana went on strike shortly after Lonrho acquired the company. A small share of ownership had been made over to the Ghanaian Government. In turn, the Government promised during the strike to provide complete support to the company to keep the mine operating at full production levels. In the violence accompanying the strike, the police fired on the workers, killing several and wounding over thirty. The workers finally returned to work with most of their demands unfulfilled.

These policies of the ex-colonizers and foreign firms appear likely to contribute to the emergence of a limited group of powerful and increasingly wealthy Africans who may participate—if only marginally—in the benefits of the inherited political-economic institutional structure.* As government administrators, politicians, participants in local boards of directors of foreign firms, and newly-created owners of large tracts of land, they may accumulate a considerable share of that limited portion of investible surpluses which remains on the continent, either in the form of high salaries** or profits and interest on accumulated properties. Not a few African administrators

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*In Congo (Kinshasa) for example,—a country praised for its 'stable leadership' by President Nixon in advising U.S. businessmen to invest there—President Mobutu is reported to own or control a major holding in the Banque de Kinshasa (in which major local companies have been ordered to deposit their accounts); the Congo's Volkswagen agency; a multi-million dollar farm near Kinshasa; a Kinshasa department store; and the capital's bus system. He is also reported to own a million-dollar building in Abidjan, Ivory Coast; a two million dollar block of flats in Dakar, Senegal; and property in Switzerland and Belgium.

**The inherited governmental salary structure, designed to reward former colonial administrators at 'hardship' rates even higher than in their home country, ensures high level African civil servants and successful politicians of salaries many times the income of the average citizen.
and politicians have accumulated large sums from sources outside of their acknowledged incomes. Investigations have revealed that large foreign firms have not hesitated to include among their 'personal contacts' with ministers et al as much as ten percent of the value of anticipated contracts in the form of outright bribes.

The unfortunate consequence of these policies for Africa lies, not so much in the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few Africans, but rather their potential impact in hindering or distorting African development programs. It seems self-evident that corruption may contribute to distortion of critical government decisions, including the investment of scarce government funds in projects designed to perpetuate and expand the lop-sided development of African nations. But even the apparently legitimate accumulation of a major share of investible surpluses remaining in African countries in the hands of a few powerful individuals is likely to have negative consequences for development: lacking the know-how as well as the vast sums of capital required to establish modern industry, they tend to invest—if at all—in speculative real estate and trade. They frequently spend a major share of their incomes on conspicuous consumption, wasting scarce foreign exchange on imported luxury items like Mercedes Benz cars or air conditioned homes.

More dangerous, perhaps, is the emergence of a group of powerful Africans with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. A Kenyan Minister for Commerce and Industry observed as early as 1965:
There is a very great danger at the moment that the top one percent of educated and wealthy Africans will be absorbed into the old order—into the exclusive circles... If we go on without change, within the next five years we shall have a new social class with vested interests in control.

Blundell quite clearly expected the new African beneficiaries of the Kenyan Africanization approach to join those who sought to maintain the political-economic structure.44

As African political thought becomes more experienced in the actual practice of government, there will be a re-grouping on economic lines if democracy continues in Kenya; one party will be socialist and revolutionary in concept, looking to the landless and lower paid workers for support, while the other will increasingly be a progressive evolutionary alliance of property owners and 'haves' as distinct from 'have nots'.

An economist has warned that the present policies in Kenya will probably lead, in a decade or so,45 to the consolidation of a professional, managerial and political elite. Land-owning, business ownership, and political power would increasingly converge, and the tax structure will be neither stringent enough in its application, nor sufficiently progressive in principle, to dislodge these accumulations of wealth and power. Meanwhile, all around Nairobi, Kisumu and Mombasa, slum areas of endemic poverty will be rapidly growing, and settling into a self-perpetuating misery. Measures against the urban unemployed will become increasingly punitive, as unrest and crime makes the streets unsafe, and illegal squatting upsets city planning and ruffles civic pride. Elsewhere in the country, there will be prosperous provinces, where the progress of coffee and tea farmers conceals the impoverishment of a growing number of marginal landless labourers, dependent upon casual work at the barest subsistence wage. ...Industrial development will have become frankly dependent upon an alliance of government capital with foreign technical skill, against which the enterprising Kenya craftsman will not be able to compete. The national economy will be making encouraging progress, but the nation will be falling apart.
In other words, what appeared in the colonial era to be oppression of Africans by an alien 'race', sanctioned by a racist ideology of inferiority, is today increasingly being revealed as a system of political-economic institutions which constitute the fundamental cause of the growing gap between 'haves' and 'have nots'—regardless of race or nationality—on a national as well as an international scale. Examination of the facts suggests that replacement of alien administrators and even the destruction of the sanctioning racist ideology will of itself be inadequate to overcome the causes of underdevelopment. What is needed, instead, appears to be a revamping of the entire inherited set of political-economic institutions to redirect investible surpluses away from the limited high income group and foreign interests engaged in export enclave activities towards the creation of a more balanced, nationally integrated economy capable of attaining increased productivity and higher levels of living for the broad masses of the population.

Black Studies programs concerned with African development should include materials analyzing the way in which racist ideology has functioned in the African case to conceal the underlying source of exploitation. It is conceivable that such an analysis might shed light on the way racist ideology in the United States, with its roots deeply intertwined in the ideology sanctioning the conquest of Africa, functions in this country.

IV. Conclusion:
This paper has attempted to examine the way particular kinds of materials relating to African development might be of use in Black Studies programs
here in the United States. Materials describing African history and culture might help American students to understand the roots of and combat the myth of racial inferiority which has long served to sanction discrimination against blacks in all areas of life in the United States. Critical analysis of American models of development—for example those relating to economic development—in the light of African reality may enable students to assess more realistically the potential of such models as sources of hypotheses to explain and solve problems. Relatization that racist ideology conceals the political-economic institutional base of exploitation in the African context may contribute to insights as to its role in the United States.
Footnotes


2. For documented analysis, see E. Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961).

3. For a study of the way the new forms of oppression were imposed and the role of racist ideology and mob violence, see W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America, (New York: S.A. Russell Co., 1935).


6. The British, for example, used political and economic arrangements with some tribes as compared to others to expand their influence; for early West African approaches see Curtin, The Image of Africa, especially Ch. 19.


9. DuBois, in Black Reconstruction, documents this point in relation to Blacks and poor whites in the U.S. African history is replete with examples of the defeat of African liberation struggles as a result of the division of one group against another. K. Nkrumah, in Africa Must Unite, poses African unity as key to African liberation. The economic problems caused by African disunity are outlined in R.H. Green and A. Seidman, Unity or Poverty? The Economics of Pan Africanism (Harmonds- worth: African Penguin Library, 1968), Parts I and II.


19. For study of failure of Nigreian Loans Boards to discover African entrepreneurs with viable projects, see P. Schatz.


25. E.g., A. Seidman, An Economics Textbook for Africa, (London: Methuen, 1969), presenting both capitalist and socialist theories, is reported to be used in most English-speaking African universities (letter from publisher to author, July, 1971).


29. Ibid., p. 263.

30. For summary of the land tenure policies described here, see Seidman, Comparative Development Strategies in East Africa, Ch. 7.


37. For reports of strike see West Africa 3/8/69; 3/15/69; 3/29/69.


41. E.g., Post 1966 coup investigations in Ghana resulted in a list of such companies reported in Daily Graphic, Jan. 27, 1967.
42. That this is a common experience in developing areas is suggested by S.A. Palekar, Problems of Wage Policy for Economic Development with Special Reference to India (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 115.


44. Blundell, So Rough a Wind, p. 217.

45. Harris, "Economics is Not Enough".