

FOOD, POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT: SOME COMMENTS  
ON THE COLOMBIAN EXPERIENCE

By

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Students who take Agricultural Economics 660 are duly forewarned. To understand the relationships linking "Food, Population, and Employment" considerable reading is necessary. Additionally I think it important that students have the opportunity to develop a major research paper. This requires even more time, both theirs and mine. Enrollment is therefore limited: by the number I can handle and by the number of students willing to put up with such unreasonableness.

But the results are a joy. I am privileged to work with a select few, and they by term's end have the satisfaction of having accomplished something significant. Initially to encourage the student to do his best, I offered publication in the Staff Paper series as bait. Increasingly this is no longer necessary; the papers stand on their own merit and warrant wider distribution.

In the present contribution Arturo Escobar examines the interplay of food/population/employment in Colombia, a country of great potential, but where a growing segment of the population is being bypassed by the development process. In part Mr. Escobar attributes this to the capital-intensive nature of agricultural change, but above all to a failure of the urban sector. He sees the remedial measures so far put forth by government as no more than palliatives.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Between the end of the nineteenth century and 1930 Colombia experienced a period of unprecedented economic development; indeed, some people believe that the country achieved an important stage of transition that could be classified as intermediate between the spectacular economic development achieved by the countries of the North Atlantic and the backwardness of most countries in Asia and Africa (1, pp. 11, 286). Among the factors most commonly cited as having played an important role in the transition are: 1) an upward shift in the population growth potential after 1850, which called for growing interdependence and more complex social and economic organizations (1, p. 280; 2, p. 120); 2) the increasing importance of coffee in the economy of the country, with all the set of innovations and internal improvements that it supposed (1, pp. 295, 132); and 3) in general, the high degree of technological innovations in agriculture, industry, transportation, communication and related activities (2, p. 120).

Another very important issue that hit upon the economy of the country was the beginning during the early 1920s of a large borrowing program, mainly from U.S. bankers, and the payment of the U.S. indemnification of 25 million dollars for the secession of Panama (4, pp. 3-34). This period of "The Dance of the Millions," which lasted until the collapse of the bond market by the end of 1928, was characterized by heavy investment in internal improvements. Of special importance in this regard was the expansion in the construction of highways and railroads that attracted a large number of peasants who abandoned their plots in search of better wages. Internal physical mobility also increased during this period and a larger number of workers found their way into the dynamic manufacturing sector which saw its share in employment grow from one percent of the total labor force in 1870 to about 3.4 percent in 1925; this increasing physical mobility accompanied rapid urbanization particularly in the largest cities whose rate of population increase rose to 3.8 percent per annum between 1918 and 1938 from the 2.5 percent of the previous period (1, p. 301).

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\*In slightly modified form, this paper was first submitted as a part of the requirements for Agricultural Economics 660: Food, Population, and Employment, Fall Term 1977/78.

It was a period of material progress for the country and most observers of Colombian economic history coincide in asserting that the peak of the process occurred at about 1925 (2, p. 124). However, its benefits did not filter down to the masses. The distinction between a true petit-bourgeoisie and the proletariat began to be clear and it also became increasingly evident that the benefits of the "Dance of the Millions" remained the patrimony of the dominant classes while reaching in a very limited scale the less privileged groups (4, p. 32; 2, p. 123). Moreover, this interval of prosperity propitiated the creation of a new harmony among the Colombian governing classes that became manifest in the strengthening of the Conservative-Liberal alliance (3, p. 132).

This alliance seemed to be a strong one; but the signs of discord had already appeared and in fact, in 1925 a group of Colombians founded the first Communist Party. However, the socialist subversion was not able to achieve any significant change. A further frustration for these forces occurred with the aborted revolution of 1948 which conferred a reprieve to the traditional society and the subsequent reinforcement of its class and political structures through the National Front Pact of 1958 by which the two parties, Liberal and Conservative, were to share the presidency and other high offices until 1974.

Government programs took more the form of social palliatives directed toward the preservation of the status-quo, rather than of sound development policies directed toward the aggrandizement of the country as a whole. This situation has been eloquently expressed by one of the foremost Colombian sociologists who, referring to Colombia's evolution during this century once stated that (2, p. ix)

. . . although it is in many ways a privileged country that was at one time capable of self-development and was outstanding for its progressive and heroic people, during this century Colombia has undergone a melancholy change. Through a series of collective frustrations, "Colombia the beautiful" found itself caught in a web of spiritual, economic and political deformations.

Some of the aspects of Colombia's development that conditioned this state of things are the subject of the present paper.

#### A Concept of Development

The area of International Development covers a complete spectrum of development strategies and theories. On the one hand, there is the choice which aims to raise the GNP regardless of the emergence of poverty and hoping that this can be eliminated by adequate income transfers through subsidies and social programs once the national product has been maximized. This position, however, has been increasingly criticized over the past years especially in the light of the growing evidence that maximization of production does not necessarily lead to the optimization

of consumption since income increases and likewise the purchasing ability of most of the population are unevenly spread.

More recently, on the other hand, the consideration of income distribution and equality has entered the panorama of International Development which has witnessed the appearance of a large number of mixed theories and middle grounds; some of these approaches claim the achievement of fundamental changes in the societal structures to be an absolute necessity for a true development whereas most of them propose income redistribution goals to be achieved through more or less traditional approaches.<sup>1/</sup>

The equity-oriented theories assert that it is by no means clear that income distribution policies will retard the pace of economic growth; rather than this, some of the proponents of this alternative believe that (9, p. 18)

. . . there are a priori grounds for supposing that situations will exist in which investment strategies which aim to generate income among low-income groups will be more efficient at achieving complex "growth plus distribution" objectives, and may even be more efficient in stimulating growth, than conventional investment appraisal routine suggests.

Transferring incomes to the poor through taxes and subsidies is also seen as a difficult and expensive means to reduce poverty; a more viable alternative would be to finance programs which generate income among the poor through appropriate employment.

Poverty, employment and income distribution are very closely related to each other. In most developing countries poverty emerges as the most striking aspect of the employment problem; a program of full employment should be, in this way, the first and more efficient way to eliminate poverty; and, in Third World countries, this would require income redistribution measures.

Development can be considered as the creation of the necessary conditions for the realization of human potentialities and for the achievement of happiness. Thus, the most basic economic criteria to judge a country's degree of development would be the levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality existing in the country, as the elimination of these

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<sup>1/</sup> For recent pronouncements on these issues see, for instance, for a more traditional approach, the extracts from the Janoway lectures on "The Evolution of the International Economic Order" given by Sir. W. Arthur Lewis at Princeton University in March 1977 (5); for a kind of mixed theory, with comments on both of the main directions in development ideologies, see Paul Streeten's article on "Changing Perceptions of Development" (6); and for Neo-Marxist contributions, particularly the Latin American dependency theory, see the books by de Kadt (7) and Wilber (8).

three factors is the most fundamental prerequisite for development to occur. Food is the most obvious of these necessary conditions for the realization of the human potential; the second basic necessity is a job not only as a means of providing income but also as something that appears to be naturally needed for the development of personality; and income distribution is a measure of the degree of equality in the country as well as the link between per capita income and the number of people living in poverty.<sup>2/</sup>

A country's development can then be looked at by following, through several economic and social indicators, the evolution of the levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality. The purpose of this paper is to study some of the aspects of Colombia's development by following the evolution of these three conditions in the food, population and employment sectors.

Part I describes the evolution of the agricultural system and its effects on the social and economic structure of the country. Within a primarily agrarian society, Colombian agriculture has experienced a typical capitalist evolution as the country moves to a more urban-oriented, modern economy. The sequelae of this process have affected all sectors of the economy and induced the creation of large masses of unemployed and underemployed living in poverty conditions. The nutrition and health status of the population is used as a poverty indicator.

Part II sketches the evolution of the population in Colombia; particular attention is given to the last ten-year period when drastic changes in the trends of population growth have occurred as a result of active population policies and family planning programs. Past fertility trends have influenced the demographic composition of the labor force of the country and the new changes are expected to alter significantly the employment panorama in the years to come. Finally, Part III, to which many of the elements of the first two parts converge, analyzes the employment situation of the country viewing it particularly through some of the most important sectors of the urban economy and through the degree of inequality existing in the country.

## I. AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NUTRITION IN COLOMBIA

### Agriculture and Food<sup>3/</sup>

#### Participation of Agriculture in the Economy of the Country

The agricultural sector in Colombia expanded at a slower rate than industry and some other important sectors during 1950-1972 as economic diversification continued and the country shifted from a rural to an

<sup>2/</sup> For a more exhaustive explanation of this conception of development see the paper by Dudley Seers "What Are We Trying to Measure" (10). In fact, the conception used in the present paper is a slightly modified version of the one exposed by Seers in the aforementioned paper.

<sup>3/</sup> Most of the information for this part was obtained from the excellent study on Colombian agriculture prepared by Dr. S. Kalmanovitz for the National Department of Statistics, DANE (see 12).



urban-oriented economy. The participation of agriculture in the GDP of the country declined from 38 percent in 1950 to 26.7 percent in 1972, whereas the industrial sector increased its participation from 14 percent to about 20 percent for the same period (11, p. 53; 12, p. 106); in other words, the percentage of the manufacturing sector in relation to the agricultural one rose from 38 percent in 1950 to 78 percent in 1970 (Figure 1).

These figures seem to suggest that, still today, the share of agriculture in the total output of the country is greater than that of the industrial sector; however, if other sectors such as construction, electricity, communications and mining, that are more related with industrial than with agricultural activities are considered the participation of the industrial sector becomes much greater than that of agriculture. A first conclusion then is that Colombia, contrary to widespread belief, is not predominantly an agricultural country (12, p. 107). However, agricultural products are still dominant in exports although its total share in exports is declining significantly; it declined from 83 percent for the period 1955-1959 to 75 percent for the period 1965-1969 (11, p. 4) and provided a livelihood for about 45 percent of the population by 1970 (11, p. 15).

#### Participation by Different Groups of Crops

The diversity of Colombian agriculture is certainly bewildering. Equally diverse has been the evolution of the different crop groups; different forms of production have determined the existence of marked differences in productivity, participation, real value and demand among crops and this at the same time is no more than the reflection of the evolution of the social forms in the countryside. These differences are outlined in the following paragraphs.

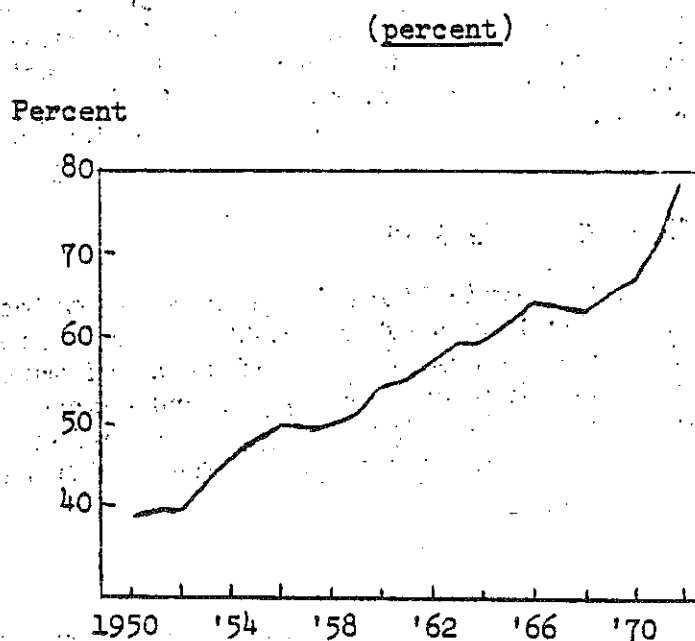
#### A classification of crops

Colombian crops are usually divided into five groups for purposes of study (11, 12a, 13, 14):

1. Mechanized, commercial crops: cotton, sugar cane and rice; more recently, soybeans and sorghum
2. Coffee
3. Plantation-type crops: cocoa and bananas
4. Mixed-technology crops: corn, potato, wheat and tobacco
5. Traditional crops: beans, cassava, plantains, and cane for panela

With the exception of the commercial crops (group 1), which are clearly dominated by units of capitalist production, the other subgroups present several forms of production. Production of coffee and the plantation-type crops, for instance, is dominated by units of ten hectares or more which supposes certain degree of modernization and use of agricultural inputs. This situation is less prevalent for the crops of group 4, here referred to as mixed crops, for which a strong competition between

FIGURE 1. COLOMBIA: GROSS INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT AS A PERCENTAGE  
OF THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT, 1950-1972\*



\*Source: S. Kalmanovitz, "La Agricultura en Colombia 1950-1972. II. Evolucion General de la Produccion Agricola," DANE. Boletin Mensual de Estadistica, No. 276, Bogota, Colombia, Julio 1974, p. 106.

capitalist and traditional forms of production exist, and for the traditional crops (group 5) for which modernized production is almost nonexistent.

#### Commercial crops

The subgroup of commercial crops exhibited the fastest growth rates for the period 1950-1972 (Figure 2a). It grew at 8.2 percent per annum for the 23 years in consideration, almost five times faster than the traditional crops and coffee and between two-and-a-half and three times faster than the two other groups. Since most of the crops of this group are of recent development they started to produce at a relatively high level of technology and without considerable competition of precapitalists forms. Nevertheless, expansion in area was more important during the first ten years of the period and increases in productivity have been more significant since then.

Initially, the subgroup based its rapid evolution on the dynamism of the domestic market manifested particularly in the increasing industrial demand for agricultural products and in some increase in family income; once the domestic demand was satisfied it continued its expansion through the international markets and, as the present trends appear to indicate, its further development will depend largely on the export markets and upon the rates of industrialization and urbanization as well as the increase in family income as the substitution of manufactured products for traditional agricultural products continues (12a, pp. 112-119).

#### Coffee

Coffee is a special case in Colombia. No other crop approaches it in production and only corn has comparable acreages; on the other hand, it still accounts for a large proportion of the total exports of the country. Production for the period increased at 1.7 percent per year but most of this increase took place in units greater than 10 hectares. It is interesting to point out in this regard that, although in 1932 the units with less than three hectares accounted for almost 90 percent of all units, a process of concentration has steadily taken place particularly in the range of 10 to 100 hectares (Figure 3). In terms of production, units larger than 10 hectares using mainly wage workers accounted, in 1970, for more than 70 percent of the total (12b, p. 93). As far as the share of coffee in the total agricultural production is concerned, it represented more than 20 percent of the total for the same year and generated more than one-half of the value of export earnings, although its importance decreases with the continuing diversification of exports (11, p. 27) (Figure 4).

#### Other crops

Cocoa and bananas (the plantation-type crops) have also experienced profound changes although in a negative sense; banana production grew very slowly for the period although it showed signs of recovery during 1970-1972 (Figure 2a). Approximately, 40-55 percent of the bananas produced

FIGURE 2. INDEXES OF CHANGE OF COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURE, 1950-1972\*

(Base: 1958 = 100)

FIGURE 2a. COMPARATIVE INDEXES OF PRODUCTION

Percent

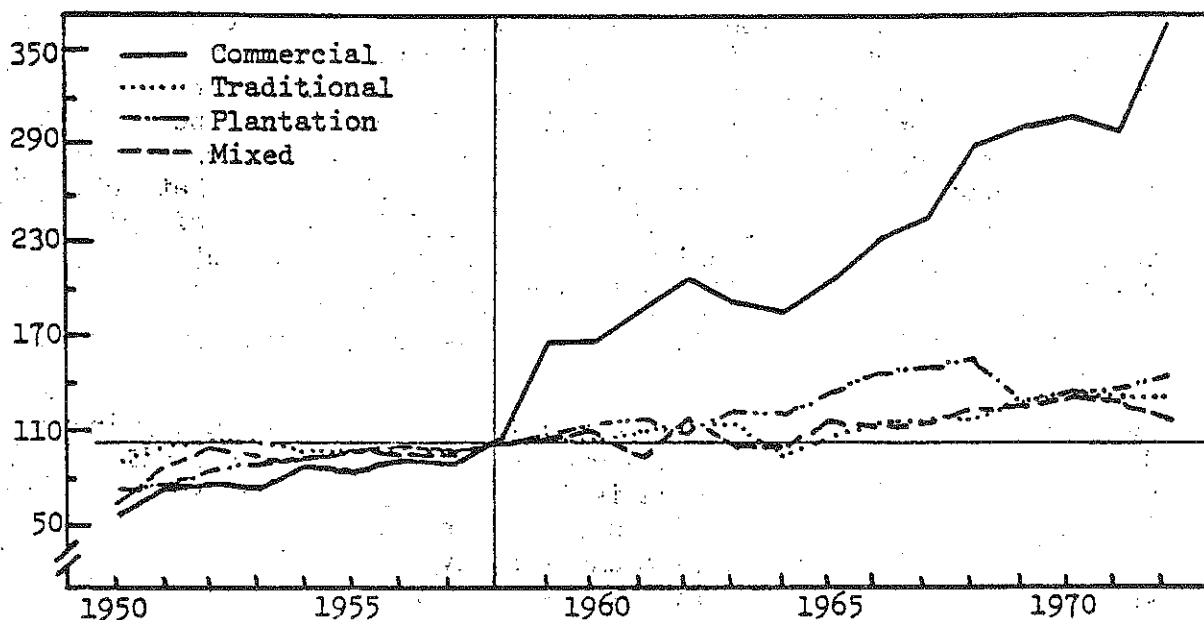
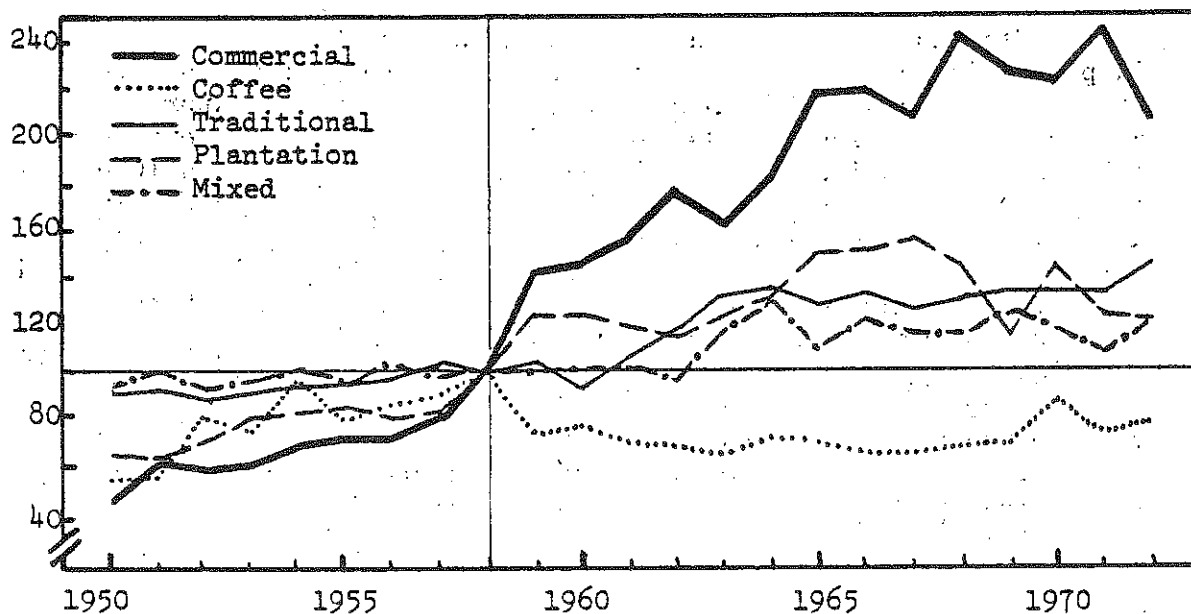


FIGURE 2b. COMPARATIVE INDEXES OF THE REAL VALUE OF PRODUCTION

Percent



\*Source: S. Kalmanovitz, "La Agricultura en Colombia 1950-1972. II. Evolucion General de la Produccion Agricola," DANE, Boletin Mensual de Estadistica No. 276, Bogota, Colombia, Julio 1974, p. 132.

FIGURE 2. INDEXES OF CHANGE OF COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURE, 1950-1972 (continued)

(Base: 1958 = 100)

FIGURE 2c. COMPARATIVE INDEXES OF CULTIVATED AREA

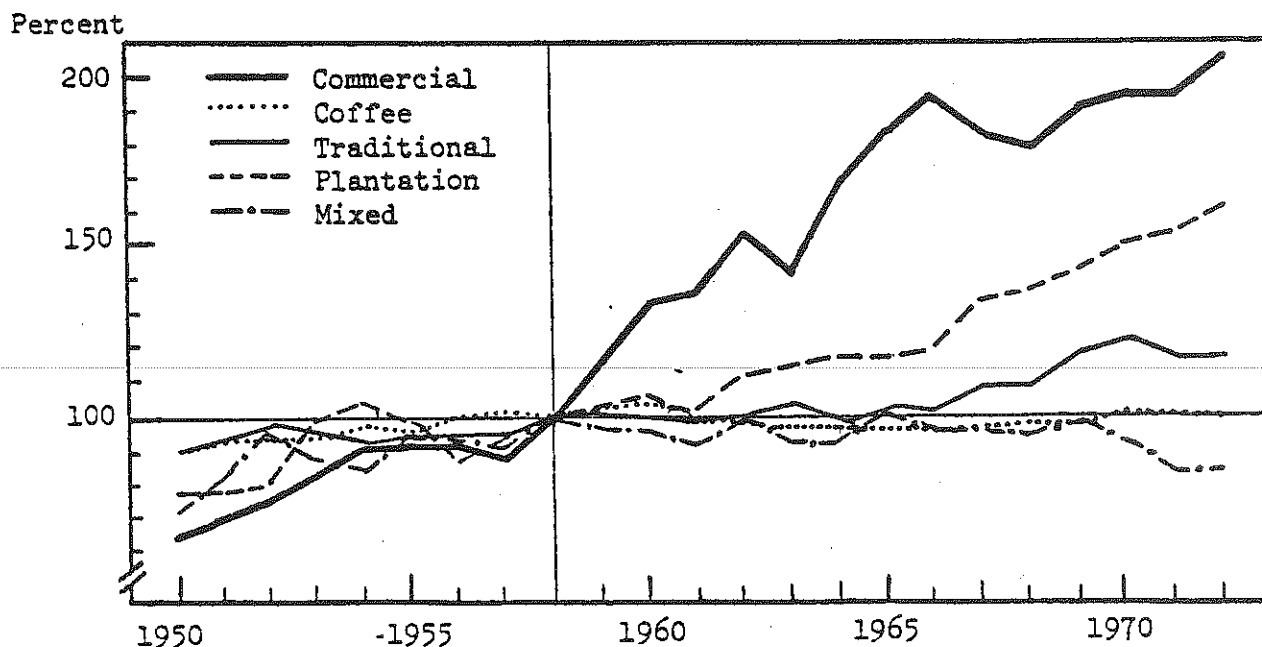


FIGURE 2d. COMPARATIVE INDEXES OF YIELD

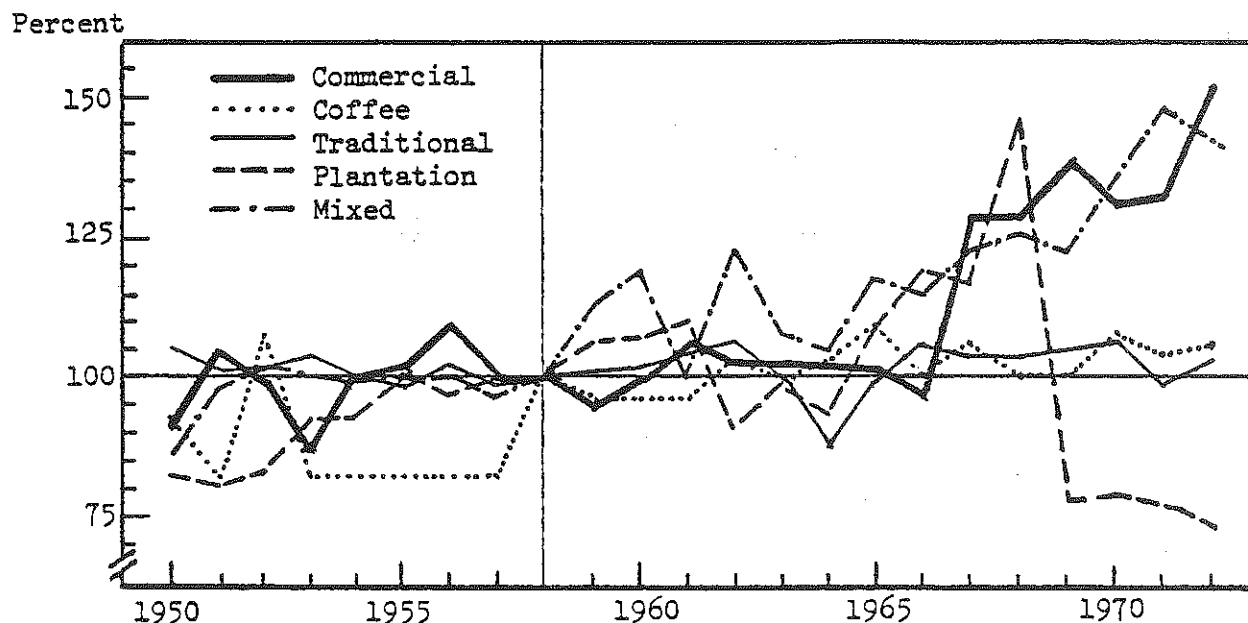
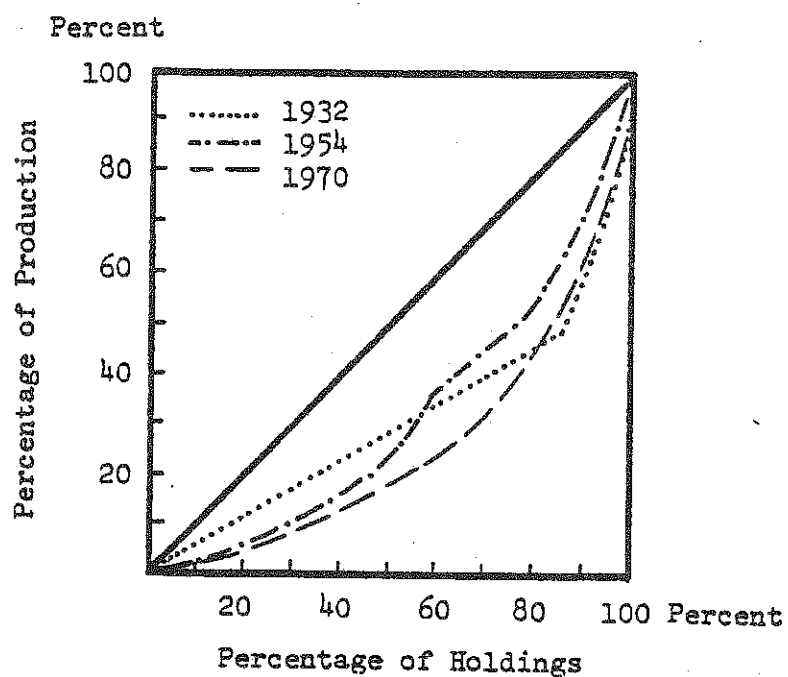
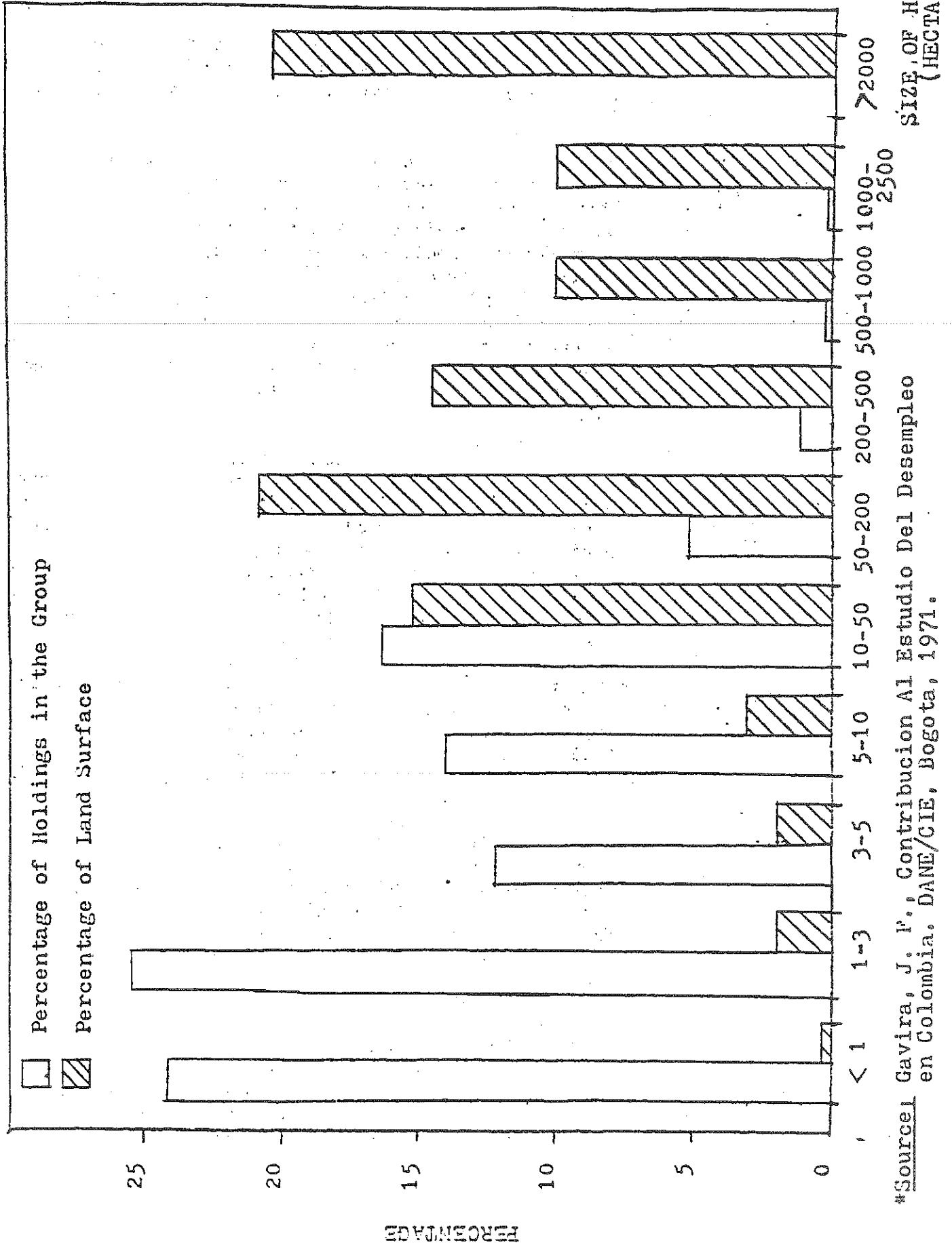


FIGURE 3. COLOMBIA: DISTRIBUTION OF COFFEE PRODUCTION,  
1932, 1954, 1970\*



\*Source: S. Kalmanovitz, "La Agricultura en Colombia 1950-1972. I. Evolucion de la Estructura Agraria," DANE, Boletín Mensual de Estadística, No. 276, Julio 1974, p. 93.

Fig. 4. Colombia: Concentration of Rural Property, 1960 \*



\*Source: Gavira, J. P., Contribucion Al Estudio Del Desempleo en Colombia. DANE/CIE, Bogota, 1971.

in the country are exported. Thirty-five to 40 percent of the cocoa consumed by the country, on the other hand, has to be imported, although its production is actively stimulated by the government (11, pp. 28, 42; 12b, p. 123).

The mixed technology group, which includes corn, potato, tobacco and wheat and which is the largest in acreage, presents a strong dualism between large modernized units and traditional cultivation. The sector has grown appreciably but most of the growth has occurred as a result of increases in productivity in the capitalist units; indeed, a relative reduction in area has taken place since small units have tended to disappear in competition with the capitalist units. However, the real value of production has grown very slowly (Figure 2b) as a result of the partially saturated markets and the resistance of the small traditional units to remain in competition. This situation appears to have affected the rate of growth of the capitalist units although these are expected to grow faster (12a, p. 127).

Crops of group 5 (traditional crops) lie at the other end of the spectrum on the growth scale. If the commercial crops experienced spectacular growth rates, the traditional crops have remained almost stagnant. Moreover, there occurred a slight decrease in productivity and the 1.0 percent yearly growth that the group as a whole showed for the 23-year period in consideration (1950-1972) was due to a 1.2 percent increase in area and a .2 percent decrease in productivity. This proves among other things that the technical innovations of the era were far from the reach of the small farmers and tenants, and that the fragmentation of the property probably affected also the productivity. These crops, on the other hand, are subject to unstable and unorganized markets and cannot profit from the potential advantage of exports or industrial markets as other products do. In actuality, they face a demand that tends to decrease as the urbanization of the country advances and the patterns of consumption are altered (12a, pp. 119-122).

Figures 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d show the evolution of production, real value, cultivated area and yield respectively for the period in consideration. The most striking fact, as it was described before, is the spectacular growth of the commercial, highly mechanized crops as compared with the rest of the groups. Parallel to this fact is the ever-decreasing importance of the traditional sector which reveals the character itself of the development of Colombian agriculture, based on private property and on the availability of big capitals. The consequences of this pattern of capitalist development are to be found not only in the drastic changes that have occurred in the land tenure system and in the concentration and accumulation of capitals in rural areas, etc., but also in the demographic structure of the rural population, the rural-urban migration, the patterns of industrialization and so on. Some of these consequences will be discussed in the following sections. But first a look at the evolution of the agrarian structure in Colombia is appropriate.



### Evolution of the Agrarian Structure in Colombia

Up to 1920, the agricultural sector in Colombia involved two principal types of tenure: the big hacienda system, which occupied the best lands of the country, and a large number of small peasants who labored the impoverished lands of hills and mountain areas. Coffee was the fastest growing crop and played a very important role during the period of rapid economic growth from 1925 to 1929. As a matter of fact, the end of the old hacienda system ran parallel to this period of increasing economic welfare for the country (12b, pp. 78 ff.).

The crisis of 1929 brought with it scarcity and high prices of agricultural products and proved to be a negative force opposed to the capitalist development of the country; however, the subsequent shortage of foreign currency that has characterized since then the economy of the country determined the adoption of policies of protection for the agricultural products that were materialized in the laws of 1948. But the crisis affected the agricultural sector less than other sectors and, in fact, agriculture started its recovery at about 1934. This recovery came from technification and increase in productivity in the large holdings, expansion of the agricultural frontiers and improvements in the infrastructure in the countryside. A further element of particular import was the period of acute political violence known as "La Violencia" which started in 1948 and shook violently the rural areas, and which helped significantly, as it will be seen later, to alter the land tenure structure of the country (12b).

The real take-off of Colombian agriculture is usually considered to have occurred at about 1945. Increasing exports and industrialization, the period of violence itself, and the introduction of new methods and techniques appeared to have been the most important factors associated with it. All these factors had a definite influence on the land tenure system and the rural labor force.

### The Land Tenure System

After the agrarian legislation of 1936 properties of more than 10,000 hectares were restricted; this represented a good difference with the previous period when holdings of 100,000 hectares or more were permitted. On the other hand, limits had to be clearly fixed and so the marketing of land took a new impetus. However, this legislation did not propitiate the establishment of a large middle class in the rural areas that could produce agricultural surpluses to help control the agricultural prices and better support the industrialization of the country.

The process of rapid concentration of land ownership had, however, started with the economic boom of the 1920s. As a result of "La Violencia" the structure of the land tenure system experienced new serious changes; many absentee landowners preferred to sell their land and many small

farmers and tenants were compelled to migrate to the safer cities and towns. As a result of this, land saw a decline in its value and the new agricultural entrepreneurs benefitted from this circumstance (12b, pp. 82-85).

The most important institutional change that took place between 1950 and 1972 was the Agrarian Reform Law of 1961. Its main effect was the consolidation of the right of property to the colonizers, which covered about six million hectares from 1962-1970. Expropriations of lands and acquisition by payment, however, affected less than one percent of the total agricultural area of the country during the same period. The reform, in this way, focused its attention on the expansion of the agricultural frontiers including efforts for irrigation and adequation of new lands but without touching the distribution already existent in the country. Moreover, the law clearly specified that properties adequately exploited were not its targets and gave more credit, capital assistance and price support to the intensive capitalist sector (12b, pp. 90-93). Thus, it helped to consolidate the capitalist type of development that had been, and still is, characteristic of the country's agriculture.

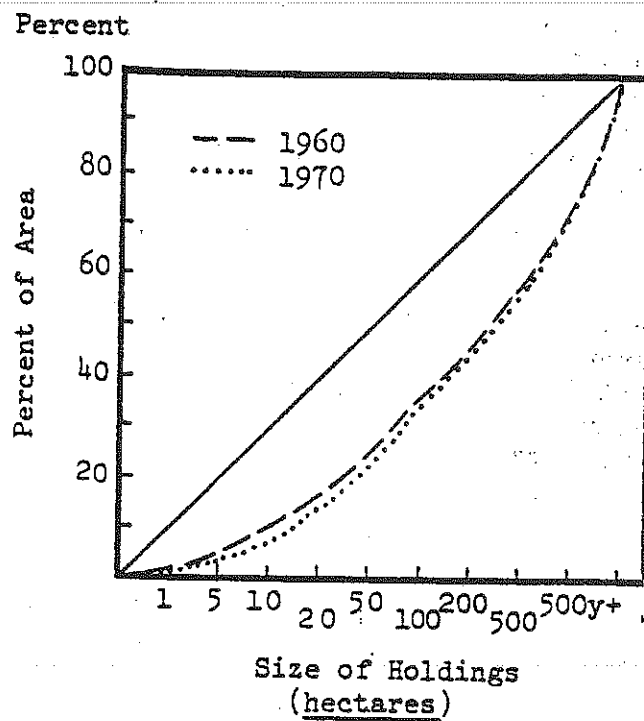
The concentration of land ownership has increased almost steadily throughout the country. By 1960, farms with less than three hectares accounted for one-half of the total number of units but occupied only 2.4 percent of the land; units greater than 500 hectares, on the other hand, amounting to less than 0.5 percent of the total number of farms, occupied 40 percent of the total surface (Figure 4) (15, p. 55). This process of concentration continued further from 1960 to 1972 (Figure 5). In other words, the process of capitalist development in the rural areas took even deeper roots during this period; and once again, only the big entrepreneurs and landowners were favored by these changes; the smaller parcels lost even more in regard to the land tenure system. This accelerated the changes in the demographic structure of the countryside.

#### The Rural Labor Force

It was already mentioned how the period of "The Dance of the Millions" that involved the country in the 1920s attracted a large labor force to the public works then undertaken by the government; however, the period of shortage of labor was brief and after it came a period of oversupply of labor as many peasants were liberated from the old haciendas and as the small parcels started to produce demographic surpluses which increased as the pressures exerted upon them became more acute. Migration to the cities alleviated to some extent this situation but the demand for labor did not increase rapidly enough since the agricultural development was slow at least until 1945. "La Violencia" also had its effect on the labor force; migration increased and the levels of salaries fell down (12a, pp. 78 ff.).

The proportion of people living in the rural areas has decreased sharply; it was a little above 70 percent in 1938 and dropped to about

FIGURE 5. COLOMBIA: CONCENTRATION OF RURAL PROPERTY, 1960, 1970\*



\*Source: S. Kalmanovitz, "La Agricultura en Colombia 1950-1972. I. Evolucion de la Estructura Agraria," DANE, Boletin Mensual de Estadistica No. 276, Julio 1974, p. 95.

47 percent by 1972 (12a, p. 87).<sup>4/</sup> Small farmers have been pushed either to the cities and towns or to the less fertile regions of the country where they have experienced rapid population growth with the subsequent fragmentation of their properties and the further migration of their younger elements to the urban centers or to the places where the seasonal variations of the commercial crops require large working masses.

In 1964 two-thirds of the rural population depended already on wage work. Unemployment although has decreased slightly since 1950, was approximately 25 percent by 1972 and this without considering underemployment or seasonal unemployment (Figure 6) (12c, p. 115). These high levels of unemployment have determined the low levels of salaries in rural areas; the situation is aggravated by the increasing mechanization in almost all sectors which conveys with it increases in productivity and a decrease in the demand for labor. In 1972, the traditional crops occupied the first place in labor absorption while livestock, for instance, in the same year occupied 80 percent of the agricultural land of the country and employed only 20 percent of the rural workers (12c, pp. 108 ff.).

The agricultural GDP of the country has increased 2.5 times higher than the salaries from 1950 to 1972; this reveals the increments in the real income of the big landowners and entrepreneurs, i.e., that the increases in productivity have led to a considerable increase in the net income and to a sharp decrease in participation. Indeed, it is difficult to foresee a situation in which the rural workers are adequately remunerated and a situation of full employment seems unlikely (12c, pp. 120-125).

Moreover, investment, technology and credit have tended to favor the large-scale agriculture and the commercial sector in particular. Approximately 60 to 70 percent of the land suitable for tractorization is actually mechanized. Fertilizer consumption increased at about 10 percent annually between 1960 and 1971. Improved seeds are used almost totally for the commercial crops but this is not the case for the other groups. Credit has been available plentifully to the modern sectors although institutional credit has also tried to reach the small farmers (12d, pp. 119-138).

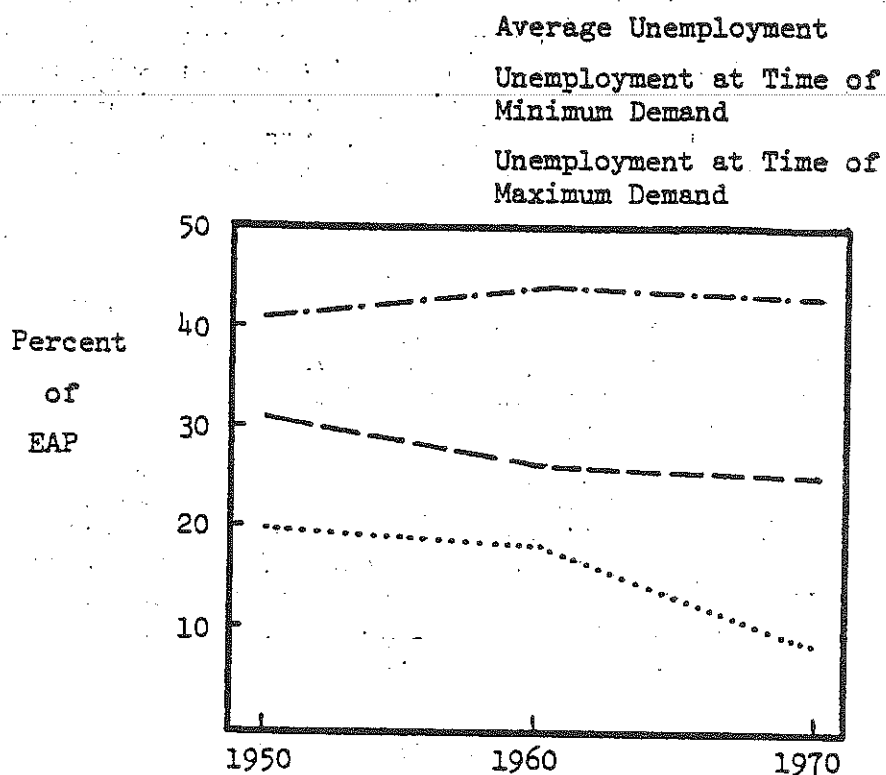
Societies and industries that originated around the commercial sector have continued to proliferate. Agricultural industrialization has brought with it a rapid accumulation of capital; new techniques have been adopted in every expansion and technological diffusion has almost invariably been associated with economies of scale (12d, pp. 119-138).

Participation of the government in the agricultural sector has also increased; it went from 4.9 percent of the national budget in 1950 up to 18 percent for the years 1970-1972 (12d, p. 136). However, these expenses exceeded the income the government received from agricultural taxes which

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<sup>4/</sup> The percentage of population living today in the rural areas is 40 percent (see 25).

FIGURE 6. COLOMBIA: RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT, 1950-1972\*



\*Source: S. Kalmanovitz, "La Agricultura en Colombia 1950-1972, IV. "La Fuerza de Trabajo Rural y la Distribucion del Ingreso," DANE, Boletin Mensual de Estadistica No. 277, Agosto 1974, p. 115.

means that funds have been drawn from other sectors of the economy to finance the public investment in agriculture. This situation, once again, has benefitted only the big landowners and entrepreneurs who have seen their rents increase without proper retribution to the government with taxes (12d, p. 137).

As has been shown, the pattern of development of Colombian agriculture affected particularly the small farmers and tenants. This can be best visualized by looking at the income distribution patterns in the rural areas (Figure 7). This situation of inequality has been growing and was even more acute in 1972; the principal conclusion implied is that "the agrarian problem has worsened and that there exist no restoring tendencies in the country toward a relative equilibrium and the amelioration of the conditions of the rural workers and small peasants . . . (12c, p. 125) . . . "An agricultural system based on big landholdings has been in this way established and strengthened in Colombia" (12d, p. 138).<sup>5/</sup>

It can be argued that the development of agriculture contributed to the accumulation of capital in some sectors of the economy as it satisfied the internal demand and generated export surpluses. But it also brought about social and economic changes to the detriment of a large segment of the population. These masses oppose demographic pressures on the rural and urban employment opportunities. Food balance sheets, on the other hand, show inadequate supply of some nutrients according to international standards. This situation, along with the low purchasing power of most of the population resulting from the skewed distribution of income, as well as the rapid population growth in relation to the sluggishness of the economy which has been unable to provide adequate employment for a large number of Colombians, has had profound consequences on the nutritional status of the population. To this situation we now turn.

#### Nutrition and Health

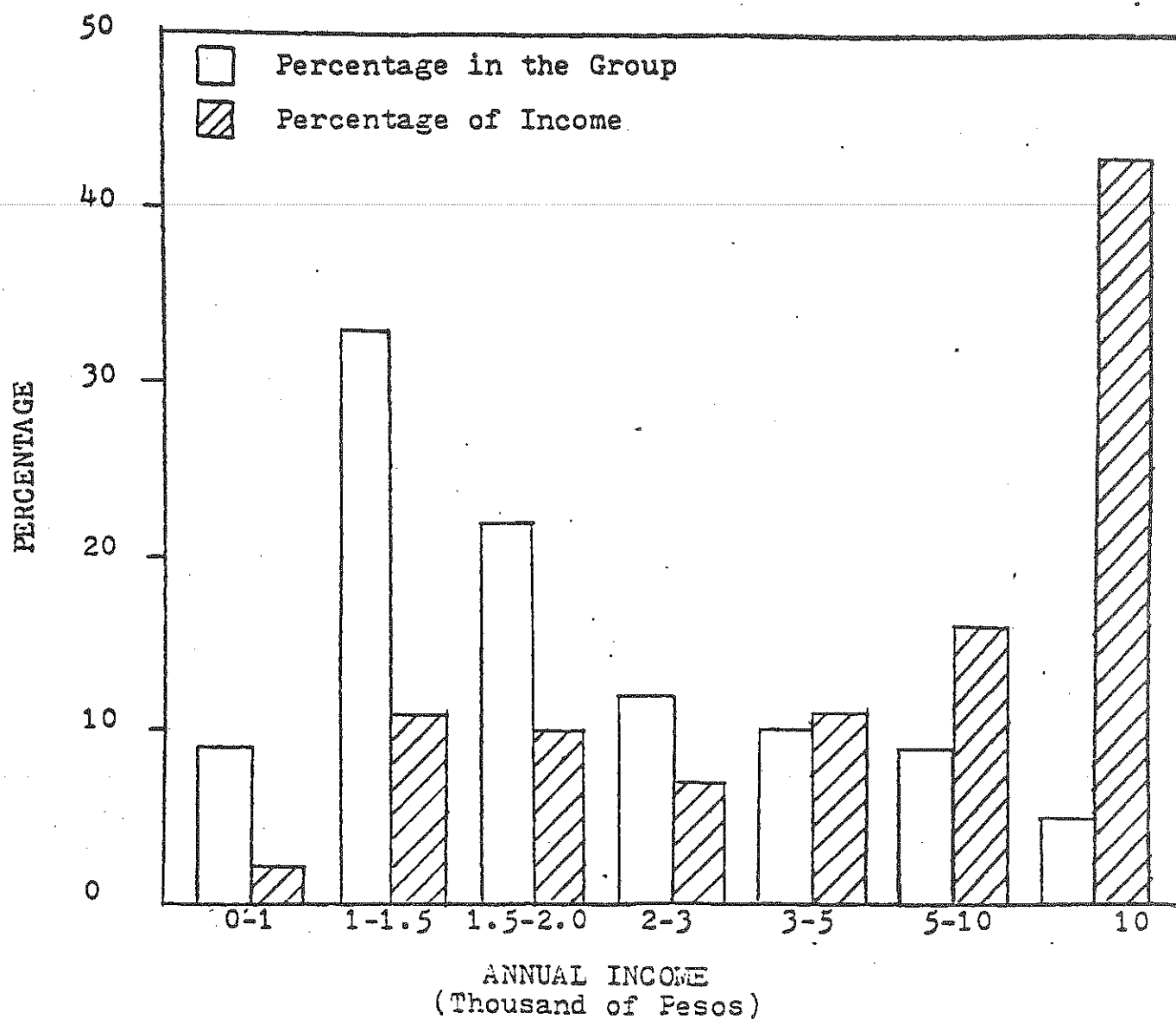
Partial data on the food and nutrition situation of the Colombian population has been available for a number of years especially through surveys carried out from 1963 to 1968. Five basic problems were identified: protein-calorie malnutrition in children, chronic undernutrition of the adult, some vitamin deficiencies (Vitamin A and some B Vitamins), iron deficiency, anemia and dental caries (16, p. 2).

Sixty-six percent of the children under five presented some degree of malnutrition (Table 1). Of these, 1.7 percent were found to be on grade I according to Gomez classification, 19.2 percent on grade II and about 45 percent on grade III. It is also interesting to note that children under one were found to be less affected than older children. Fifty percent of the mothers suspended breast feeding before the child reached one year of age and most of the mothers diluted the formula with water and unrefined sugar or with water alone (16, p. 10). Only 46 percent of them were found to give any extra food before six months of age (16, p. 11).

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<sup>5/</sup> Personal translation.

FIGURE 7. COLOMBIA: INCOME DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
OCCUPIED LABOR FORCE IN AGRICULTURE, 1960\*



\*Source: International Labour Office, Towards Full Employment, Geneva, 1970, p. 25.

Table No.1 Colombia Classification of the Nutritional Status of 3378  
Children Examined in Nine Surveys From 1963 to 1968 \*

Age Group	No. of Children	Nutritional Classification **			
		Normal	Grade I	Grade II	Grade III
Less than 1	660	48	36	14	1.5
1	608	30	44	23	2.3
2	686	30	47	22	1.7
3	627	32	46	19	2.3
4	469	26	50	22	1.3
5	328	29	55	15	1.0
	3378	33	46	20	1.7

\* Source: Colombia. Depto. Nal. de Planeracion. "Bases para una  
 Politica de Alimentacion y Nutricion en Colombia" Doc. URH-SD-031  
 Julio 1973), p. 20

\*\*Gomez Classification:

Normal: 7 90% expected weight for age (Harvard Standard)  
 Grade I: 89-75% "  
 Grade II: 74-60% "  
 Grade III: <60% "



Food consumption surveys showed inadequate levels of consumption of calories, protein, Vitamin A, riboflavin, thiamine, and calcium; iron and Vitamin C were found to be adequate. The percentages of inadequacy were found to be much lower for the lower strata of the population and lower for the rural than for the urban areas (17, p. 17). This is the reflection of the low purchasing power of most of the population and the unequal distribution of income.

Iron deficiency anemia is still very prevalent especially in rural areas; it has been estimated that between 25 and 40 percent of the people living in the countryside are affected by this condition, the origin of which is almost always associated with parasitic infections (16, p. 5). Finally, dental caries are thought to affect 90 percent of the population (16, p. 6).

Data from the health sector are less encouraging. Although the infant mortality rate has been decreasing, it is still several times higher than the rate existing in developed countries (Table 2). Gastroenteritis, diarrhea and pneumonia are the leading causes of mortality in the country. In 1967, avitaminosis and other nutritional deficiencies occupied the fourth place among the causes of mortality in children one to four years of age (Table 3). Results from the Interamerican Investigation on Infant Mortality carried out by the Pan American Health Organization in 1968 showed nutritional deficiencies to be responsible for about 35-40 percent of all deaths of children under five in three of the largest cities of the country and they were found to be associated with at least 70 percent of all deaths caused by infectious diseases. Data gathered from the records of public general hospitals have permitted the identification of the five principal causes of mortality in children under 15: 1) respiratory problems; 2) intestinal diseases; 3) nutritional deficiencies and anemias; 4) helminthiasis; and 5) general infections and parasites (18, pp. 5 ff.). These figures emphasize the permanent sequelae that result from the synergism of malnutrition and infection.

In 1971, 45 percent of the Colombian population lacked an adequate water supply and 50 percent did not have any sewage system; the situation is much more critical in the rural areas where almost 75 percent of the people have no access to fresh water supply systems. It has been estimated that about one-half of the contagious diseases are of hydric origin (18, p. 7); on the other hand, it is well known how this interferes profoundly with the biological utilization of foodstuffs.

It was against this picture that the government recently launched a National Food and Nutrition Plan (19). In fact this plan, which is the first of its nature in the country, constitutes one of the milestones of the present administration (1974-1978 presidential period) and includes as a part of it and as support programs the National Health Plan (18) and the Integrated Rural Development Program (20).

The plan is directed to increasing the consumption capacity of the poorest 50 percent of the population; as deficiencies in the demand were identified as the underlying cause of the food and nutrition situation,

Table No.2. Colombia: Infant Mortality Rates  
1963-1971

Year	Infant Mortality Rate	Mortality Rate of Pre- School (1-4 years old)
1.963	88.2	13.8
1.964	83.2	13.3
1.965	83.8	12.6
1.966	80.0	10.6
1.967	78.3	11.4
1.968	76.0	9.7
1.969	73.3	9.5
1.970	70.3	9.4
1.971	67.9	9.2
1.972	64.3	9.0

Source: Colombia. Depto. Nal,de Planeracion.  
"National Food and Nutrition Program" DNP-1  
260-J, Bogota, March 1975, Cuadro II

Table No.3. Colombia: Principal Causes of Death,  
Children 1 to 4, 1967 \*

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	Rate for 10000
Gastroenteritis and diarrhea	30.7
Bronchopneumonia	10.4
Bronchitis	10.3
Nutritional Deficiencie	8.4
Pneomonia	2.2
Colds	1.4

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\*Source: Colombia, Depto. Nal de Planeracion.  
"Bases para una Politica de Alimentacion y Nutricion  
en Colombia" Doc. URH-SD-o31, Julio 1973. p.26

an indirect objective of the plan became "the stimulation of the economic growth of the traditional agricultural subsector, integrating it actively to the market through the expansion of the demand for foodstuffs of direct consumption" (21, p. 34).<sup>6/</sup> A more specific objective is to insure an adequate nutritional status of the poorest sectors of the population, especially of the materno-infantile population (21, p. 33).

The Plan has five basic programs (see Chart 1): 1) a food production program, which concentrates its efforts in the promotion of some selected crops, mainly several legumes, cereals, starchy staples, small animal species and fish, and in the production and promotion of high nutritional value foodstuffs; 2) programs directed toward the improvement of the food commercialization system. The Integrated Rural Development Program is the most important mechanism supporting the first two parts of the plan; 3) a program of nutrition education; 4) programs directed toward the improvement of the biological utilization of foods; these programs are to be carried out mostly through the National Health Plan; and 5) a program of subsidized food distribution directed toward the most vulnerable population--pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under two, among the 10-20 percent lowest income group (19, pp. 5 ff.).

An important fact concerning the Plan is that the government has finally recognized the gravity of the situation and has taken measures to correct it. For the first time in the history of the country, a plan of such a magnitude is primarily directed towards the most deprived sectors of society. It has allowed a clearer picture of the food and nutrition situation of the country, too. However, it appears to treat more the symptoms rather than the causes of the problem; suffice it to say in this regard that the program of subsidized food distribution with all the problems that the coupon system usually entails, accounts for nearly 45 percent of the total budget of the plan (which was, at least as it was initially conceived and publicized, roughly U.S.\$500 million without considering the Rural Development Plan)<sup>7/</sup>; this is a very inefficient way of redistributing income and in order for a program of this nature to be effective it has to be performed for prolonged periods of time. The program of production and promotion of protein-rich foods accounts for an additional 15 percent of the budget of the Plan; but these programs, frequently offered as panaceas for the world's nutrition problems a few years ago, can only reduce protein-calorie malnutrition to a very small degree. In this way, programs that should have drawn more attention, as the National Health Plan, saw their importance diminished in favor of other programs the justification of which has to be found more on political than on scientific grounds.

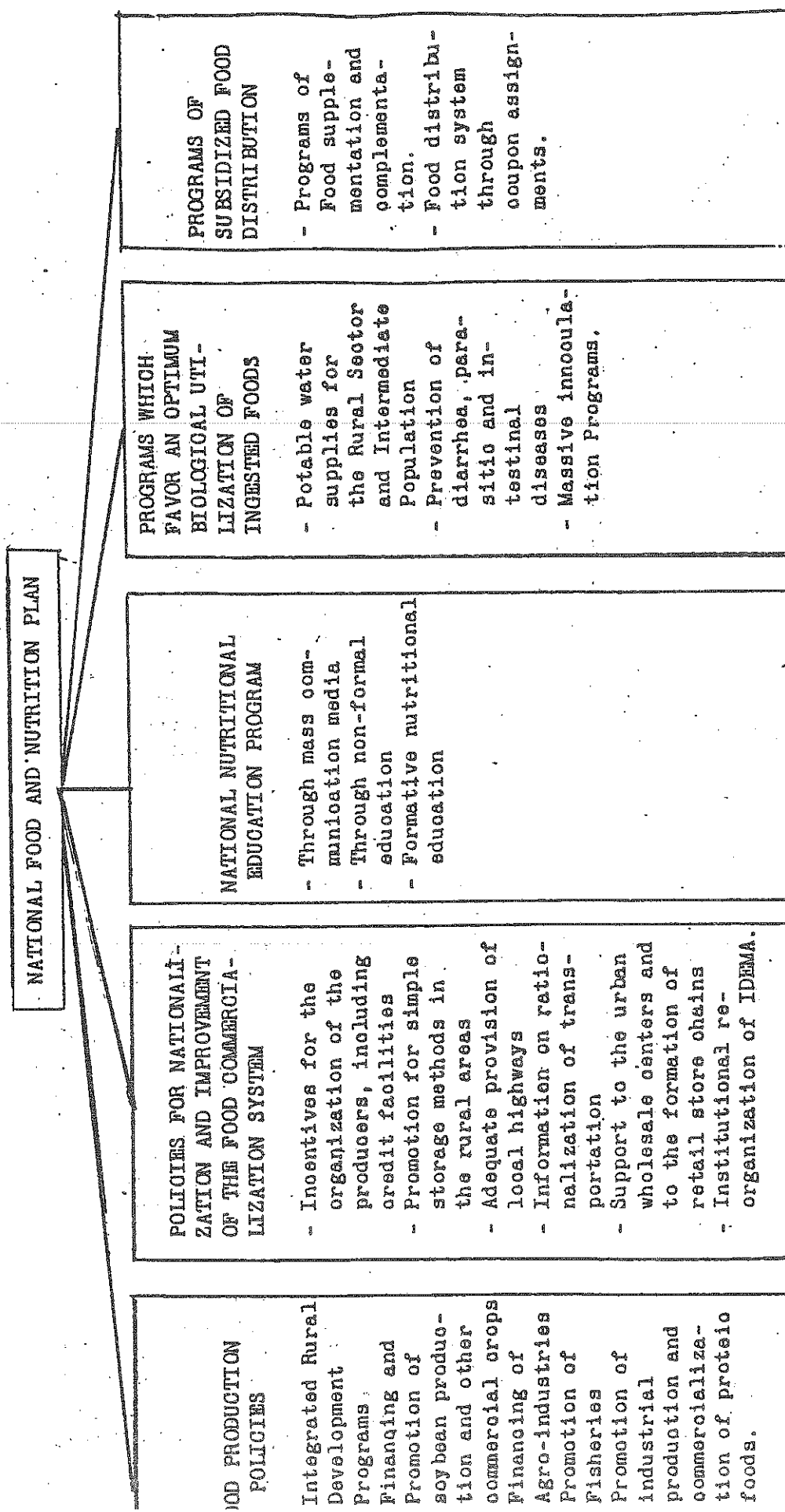
Another comment on the plan is that it seems to pay a great deal of attention to the traditional agricultural subsector; this is new in the

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<sup>6/</sup> Personal translation.

<sup>7/</sup> See reference 22. The original budgetary figures may change greatly since they are subject to the vagaries of the different financing organisms, including those of the interantional financing agencies.

CHART 1. COLOMBIA: NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION PLAN, ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEME, 1975\*



\*Depto. Nal. de Planeacion, National Food and Nutrition Plan, March, 1975.

country and apparently also in contradiction to the country's past agricultural development features. It also would seem plausible that these new directions have been taken in response to the increasing importance of the "small farmer" support movements throughout the developing world. However, as it will be analyzed in the last section of the paper, they echo the general development policies dominating in the country today.

Finally, it is also important to point out the impact that food and nutrition programs might have on the population situation of the country; historical and epidemiological data tend to confirm the fact that reductions in infant and child mortality and improvements in the health and nutritional status may be prerequisites to successful family planning efforts. It then seems logical that the combination or coordination of programs aimed to combat malnutrition and infectious diseases with family planning programs would render them more beneficial and effective.<sup>8/</sup> This appears not to be the case of the National Food and Nutrition Plan of Colombia; indeed, it makes no mention of the population situation of the country.

However, the government has recently recognized the population problem as one of the causes of the slow economic growth of the country; policies and programs have been defined and implemented and, in hardly ten years, the country has witnessed one of the most successful population control programs. These programs and the changes they have brought about, are briefly described in the following section.

## II. POPULATION

Until very recently, Colombia had one of the highest rates of population increase in Latin America. Fertility was high until the 1960s and did not show notable variations (25, p. 3). Mortality increased until about 1938 and started to decrease sharply since the early 1940s (26, p. 24). As a result of this, the population growth rates increased rapidly until it nearly reached 3-4 percent per year by 1965. The total population of the country, that in 1951 was 11.5 million, rose to 17.5 million in 1964 and 22.7 in 1973 (Figure 8).

However, very significant changes in fertility have taken place in the country during the last ten years. Between 1960-64 and 1967-68 the crude birth rate for the country declined from 48 to 43.3 per 1,000. This decline has been more marked in the urban areas than in the rural areas; the rate for the urban areas declined from 41.6 to 31.9 for this

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<sup>8/</sup> Latham for instance, talks of the synergistic effect that may exist among these three types of programs if they are appropriately coordinated (see 23). It is also interesting to point out the growing opinion that the roots of the decline in death rates and so of the population explosion in developing countries was due more to a worldwide improvement in nutrition rather than to the introduction of modern medical and public health techniques, as it is usually held (see for instance, 24).

period while for the rural areas the change was from 53.7 to 50.6 per 1,000 (25, p. 3).

On the other hand, the crude death and infant mortality rates have been declining since the 1940s; the crude death rate, which was 15 per 1,000 in 1964, went down to about 10 in 1971. As a result of these changes, the rate of natural increase of the population that was nearly 3.3 percent during the late 1960s and early 1970s has been estimated to be about 2.2 percent for 1975, which corresponds to a birth rate of 32 and a crude death rate of 10 (25).

How did these changes come about? Only from 1960 on, discussions about population growth started in the country; the lead was taken by the medical profession and, indeed, it was a medical organization, ASCOFAME (Colombian Association of Medical Schools), who first undertook systematic work in the population field sponsoring seminars and research. In 1965 another group, known as PROFAMILIA (Colombian Association for Family Welfare), which also grew out of the private medical practice, began to provide family planning services to the general population and has played since the most important role in family planning in Colombia. Finally, the government established in 1969 the Maternal and Child Health Section and included family planning among its functions and activities (25, p. 6).

In spite of serious opposition from several important sectors of the society, mainly the Catholic Church, the extreme right and a segment of the leftist intellectuality,<sup>9/</sup> family planning has found a big response among large segments of the population. It has been estimated that by the end of the decade practically all of the population will have access to family planning and that nearly 50 percent of Colombian couples will be practicing some form of it, up from the 35-40 percent in 1973 (25, p. 11).

In general, it has been found that more modern women (as identified by the indicators of higher socio-economic status, higher levels of schooling, and urban residence) are more likely to use fertility control measures and thus have fewer children (Table 4). However, it appears to be that attitudes toward family planning are only weakly related to modernism and

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<sup>8/</sup> The position of the Catholic Church on population matters is well-known; in fact, "it must be emphasized that it is truly surprising that Colombia, of all South American countries, took the lead, given its traditionalism and religiosity" (25, p. 7). The attitude of the people toward the Church's precepts, however, has been slowly changing in Latin America; small groups within the church itself have also become deeply involved in social problems and the Colombian priesthood has certainly occupied a place of prominence in this regard, too. For a discussion of the changes of the Church in relation to society and development in Latin America see for instance, the paper by de Kadt (27). The opposition of the left has basically come from the Foreign involvement in these programs; of all the funds spent in population programs in Colombia from 1967 to 1975, approximately 70 percent had foreign origin (28); however, the critique goes far beyond the mere money aspects.

Table No.4 Colombia: Age-adjusted mean number of live births and percent of women currently in union who have ever used a contraceptive method, by socio-economic status, level of schooling, and residence 1968

Modernism indicator	(Number)	Mean number of live births	Percent reporting ever-use of contraceptives
Socio-economic status			
Low	(1,323)	4.8	14
Medium	(1,045)	4.3	45
High	(567)	3.8	74
Level of schooling			
No Schooling	(531)	5.5	11
Incomplete primary	(1,488)	5.2	18
Complete primary	(402)	4.2	50
Beyond primary	(523)	3.5	76
Residence			
Rural	(1,619)	4.4	20
Urban	(1,332)	4.0	56
Total	(2,951)	4.2	35

\* Source: Baldwin, W.H. and Ford, T.R. "Modernism and Contraceptive Use in Colombia." Studies in Family Planning, March 1976. p.76



contraceptive use, although the knowledge of contraceptive methods is strongly correlated with both (Table 5) (29, p. 76); favorable attitudes toward family planning have been found to be largely independent of modernism and also of contraceptive use. This has led some investigators to conclude that, although modernization has led indisputably to fertility reductions without family planning programs, it does not necessarily follow that family planning programs cannot reduce fertility rates without modernization and that, moreover, significant reductions can be achieved through these programs without the prior occurrence of the fundamental social and economic changes that accompany modernization (29, pp. 75, 79). Indeed, this seems to have been, to a great extent, the case of Colombia.

On the other hand, the desire to limit the number of children seems to be a key factor in family planning. More than half of the Colombian women, rural as well as urban, with only two living children were found to want no additional children (Table 6) (29). The key factor associated with contraceptive use was, as it was said before, the knowledge of contraceptive methods which is strongly related to modernization.

The number of new acceptors per year in the clinic-based programs has doubled from 1969 to 1974. In 1969 the IUD was chosen by 63 percent of all acceptors and in 1975 by only 36 percent of them; this decline was accompanied by a corresponding increase in oral contraceptives, and an increase in sterilization especially among women (25, p. 9). These programs have also been extended to rural areas by PROFAMILIA since 1974, in what has constituted the first large-scale rural family planning program in Latin America (30).

In summary, it can be said that in a single decade Colombia has undergone a profound demographic transformation. The birth rate is expected to continue its decline but it is difficult to predict to what extent. One thing, however, seems to be certain: that the country will not go back to the high rates of increase that it experienced during the 1960s (25, p. 4).<sup>10/</sup>

One of the most important repercussions of the past trends in fertility and mortality has been the formation of a typically young age structure. In 1951, 42 percent of Colombians were under age 15; in 1964 the

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<sup>10/</sup> The political and philosophical considerations of the population programs as they have been enunciated and implemented in Colombia and their justification will not be debated here. Suffice it to say that a sector of the population ideologists denies the validity of family planning programs carried out without considering at the same time the achievement of significant changes in the structures of society. Harvey (31), for instance, considers that neo-Malthusian views of the population problem are inevitable if enquiry is founded in empiricism (Malthus' method) or in normative analytics (Ricardo's method) and that, in a world dominated by an elite, neo-Malthusian views lead to justify repression of the underprivileged in society (see 32).

Table No.5 Colombia: Percent of women ever in union by residence and schooling, who claimed knowledge of specified contraceptive methods, 1969 \*

Residence and schooling	(N)	Withdrawal	Douche	Rhythm	Condom	Pill
Urban						
Less than 1 year	(175)	14.3	24.6	8.0	30.3	58.3
Incomplete primary	(681)	24.5	35.4	27.6	48.3	75.6
Complete primary	(275)	38.5	46.5	43.6	55.3	85.6
Incomplete secondary	(348)	53.2	60.1	74.7	72.4	92.8
Complete secondary and higher	( 77)	59.7	70.1	84.4	81.8	97.4
Total	(1,556)	17.4	43.4	42.3	54.8	80.3
Rural						
Less than 1 year	(545)	8.8	10.3	7.7	17.8	39.3
Incomplete primary	(1,064)	17.6	14.7	20.7	29.1	60.7
Complete primary	(181)	26.0	28.2	40.3	43.3	76.8
Incomplete secondary	(128)	48.4	42.2	60.9	62.5	84.4
Complete secondary and higher	(17)	52.9	70.6	94.1	70.6	94.1
Total	(1,935)	18.2	17.0	23.0	29.8	58.0

\*Source: Baldwin, W.H. and Ford, T.R. "Modernism and Contraceptive Use in Colombia." Studies in Family Planning, March 1976, p.77

Table No.6. Colombia: Percent of women with at least one living child who wanted no additional children, by residence and by number of living children, 1969\*

Number of living children	Rural (N = 1,287)	Urban (N = 1,171)
1	26.0	25.7
2	67.0	55.3
3	80.1	80.2
4	82.1	88.4
5	89.4	90.8
6	94.8	96.7
7 or more	97.7	98.4
All	79.1	73.5

\* Source: Baldwin, W.H. and Ford, T.R. "Modernism and Contraceptive Use in Colombia," St. Family Planning p.76

corresponding figure was 47 percent and it is expected that, as a result of the changes in fertility and infant mortality, it will approach 40 percent by the end of the decade (25, p. 4). However, given the young age structure of the population, there will be more women entering the reproductive age group than leaving it for at least the next generation.

The youthful age structure of the Colombian population has unfavorably influenced the structure of the labor force. In 1964, only 48 percent of the total population aged 12 or older were economically active;<sup>11/</sup> this figure dropped to 45.7 percent by 1973; however, the participation of women increased by 3 percent during this period, although it is still low compared with that of males (23 and 77 percent respectively in 1973) (25, p. 4). In terms of the total labor force it is important to point out that the high fertility of the past implies a rapid increase in the labor force until 1985. The real impact on employment of the decline in fertility would appear, in this way, as a slower growth in the labor force in the period after 1985 (33, pp. 41, 42). Until then the unemployment problem in Colombia, as far as the growth of the labor force is concerned, will remain the same. Hence, the importance of emphasizing the links between population and employment policies.

### III. EMPLOYMENT

The employment problem is perhaps the most serious problem in Colombia. In 1967, unemployment in urban areas was estimated to affect between a quarter and a third of the active labor force (33, p. 13). Of this estimate, open unemployment is the largest component (Table 7). However, underemployment, i.e., the percentage of those in work but working short hours, and "disguised" unemployment and underemployment, i.e., those who are not openly seeking work or more work respectively, are also very important. This last element, the "disguised" aspect of unemployment, although difficult to quantify, is particularly important since it appears that the tendency for people to seek work is less when unemployment is high (33, p. 18). One last aspect of the employment problem is the unproductively employed labor, i.e., persons employed full time but in works where their contribution to output is low or even zero; this is particularly common in the service sector, and contributes further to enlarge the unemployment figures. A final estimate suggests, in this way, that in 1967 unemployment, underemployment and unproductive employment affected at least one-third of the total urban labor force (33, p. 22).

Another way to approach the problem of employment is to measure the active labor force with very low incomes. In 1967, one-third of the urban labor force received less than 200 pesos a month<sup>12/</sup> (Table 8); this suggests

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<sup>11/</sup> The average minimum age of entry into the labor force is estimated to be 12 years although in Colombia a large number of children under 12 also work.

<sup>12/</sup> In 1967, 200 pesos was considered to be just below the lowest minimum wage for individuals, not for a family (32, p. 20).

Table 7. Colombia: The extent of urban work opportunities, 1967 (Percentage of active urban labour force)\*

	Total	Males	Females
1. Open unemployment (persons without work and seeking it	14	12	19
2. Disguised unemployment (persons without work and who would probably seek it if unemployment were much lower)	(7) <sup>a/</sup>	10	<u>b/</u>
3. Open underemployment (person working less than 32 hours per week and seeking to work longer	2	2	1
4. Disguised underemployment (persons working less than 32 hours per week, who would probably seek longer hours if the opportunity were available)	3	2	4
Total	(25)	25	(25)

<sup>a/</sup>Incomplete total (See note 2). <sup>b/</sup>No estimate possible but probably substantial. The proportion of the labour force working less than 32 hours a week is larger than this figure which is obtained by expressing the number of hours underemployment in units of 48 hours (i.e. in its full-time equivalent before the percentage is worked out. Totals may differ from the sums of items because rounding.

\* Source: International Labour Office. Towards Full Employment (Geneva, 1970), p.18

Table No.8 Colombia: The extent of extreme poverty,  
1967 (Percentage of the active urban labour  
force) \*

	Total	Males	Females
Unemployed - open	14	12	19
- disguised	(7) <sup>a/</sup>	10	<u>    </u> <sup>b/</sup>
Occupied but with incomes below 200 pesos monthly	12	6	24
Total - all with incomes below 200 pesos monthly <sup>c/</sup>			

<sup>a/</sup> Incomplete total (see Note 2). <sup>b/</sup> No estimate possible but probably substantial. <sup>c/</sup> Including those under 15 years of age. These account, however, for only about 2 percent of the total urban labour force; to exclude them from the data on earnings would thus make very little difference to the over-all picture.

\*Source: International Labour Office. Towards Full Employment, Geneva, 1970. p.21

that a very large proportion of the population has inadequate incomes, and this proportion is greater than that of the unemployed and underemployed. "Poverty therefore" concluded the 1970 ILO mission to Colombia-- "emerges as the most compelling aspect of the whole employment problem in Colombia" (33, p. 21). Thus, the elimination of poverty will depend largely upon the provision of jobs with reasonable wages.

There are fewer statistics for the unemployment in rural areas. On the other hand, the levels of employment vary greatly from region to region and with the period of the year. Unemployment during the peak periods seems to be little, but shortage of work is important during other periods of the year. However, what is probably more important is the very low incomes of the people living in these areas, particularly those subsisting on plots of less than two hectares. The situation is worse if the fact is considered that basic government services in the countryside are very scarce or nonexistent (33, pp. 23, 24).

The employment problem "is basically a problem of chronic imbalance between the demand and supply of labor as the economy expands . . . it reflects the pace of population growth in relation to the sluggishness of the economy" (33, p. 25). The reasons for the slow absorption are to be found in the rural and agricultural problems that resulted from the patterns of agrarian development, and in the slow and inadequate expansion of the urban economy, mainly the reflection of the industrialization and development policies adopted by the government.

As it was seen in the first part of the paper, the capitalist development of the agricultural sector in general, and the land tenure system in particular, propitiated the creation and increase of unemployment in the rural areas. Most of the rural labor surplus has been pouring into the cities and, although it is certainly true that population expansion is of predominant importance, this accelerated migration has come to complicate further the problem of oversupply of labor force. On the other hand, and basically the reflection of the skewed distribution of income, the urban economy has been adopting inappropriate capital intensive, labor-saving techniques and industrialization patterns that do not correspond to the social and economic priorities of the country. These features of Colombia's urban economy have determined the slow absorption of labor in the cities.

The growth of employment remained about 2 to 2.5 percent per year during the period 1965-1970; this corresponded to a 1.4 percent growth in agriculture, for which raising productivity has been accomplished at the expense of employment, and 3.2 percent growth in all other sectors taken together (33, p. 33).

The growth of the labor force, on the other hand, has been increasing much more rapidly and will continue to rise by at least 3.5 percent per year until about 1985; if these trends are to continue, at least five million jobs need to be created between 1970 and 1985 to reach a high

level of employment, e.g., with some 5 percent total unemployment (33, pp. 43, 45).<sup>13/</sup>

All these extra jobs could not be found in the agricultural sector alone since employment in the rural areas has been growing by only 1.4 percent per year and the rural population by some 3.5 percent per year; on the other hand, the financial and organizational resources needed for this task would be immense; they could not be found completely outside the agricultural sector, since it would require a rate of growth of the nonagricultural economy at least twice its present value and this does not look very feasible (33, pp. 52-54).

In the agricultural sector, acceleration of the rates of employment will largely depend on how much agrarian reform can be carried out; this would also consider the improvement of production of small and medium sized farms, colonization, irrigation, and redistribution of lands; the implementation of supportive services, organization of new settlements and so on. Considering the past achievements and present objectives of the agrarian reform in Colombia, this appears to be difficult, although not impossible; it would surely require deliberate policies of land reform (33, pp. 65-67).

In the industrial sector, the mechanisms of import-substituting industrialization and the characteristics of the process of modernization of the manufacturing sector have contributed to the growing unemployment in the country. It has become increasingly clear that import substitution programs have limits in countries like Colombia, with a low per capita income and a skewed income distribution (34, p. 351). Up to 1967, the industrialization process in Colombia was heavily influenced by import-substituting policies; however, the most favored sectors were characterized by small domestic markets and operated within a stringent foreign exchange constraint. During the fifties and sixties, these policies were directed toward intermediate goods, durable consumer goods and capital equipment and this proved soon to have inherent difficulties which resulted in falling growth rates (34, pp. 352-355).

However, the rates of growth of manufacturing output and employment increased considerably during 1967-72 in comparison with the previous period of 1962-67; this improvement appears to have been associated with the increase in exports of manufactured goods fostered by the country after 1967. In fact, as some experts believe, "all exports that allow firms to utilize excess capacity by expanding output beyond the limitations of the domestic market can be considered 'labor intensive' and their effect on the output elasticity of employment is likely to be positive" (34, p. 358); the positive effect of manufactured exports on employment finds a partial explanation in this fact.

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<sup>13/</sup> Most of the figures and projections presented in this part, as well as part of the analysis, have been taken from the ILO report (33).



In general, however, the growth of employment in the manufacturing sector has lagged behind the output growth rate. The shift from labor- to capital-intensive techniques has been one of the most important causes of this phenomenon; but besides the technical change, the fact that large firms have tended to displace smaller firms is also important by itself; an upward trend in average size in the Colombian manufacturing sector has been evident during the last two decades (34, pp. 359, 360).

A partial conclusion is then that the manufacturing sector is unlikely to absorb an important part of the unemployed labor force given the current conditions of industrialization in the country. Another factor to be considered in relation to the nonagricultural sector as a whole is that a substantial proportion of the unemployed are absorbed by sectors of low productivity such as the so-called "services" sector in particular. In 1970, two-thirds of the Colombian nonagricultural labor force were engaged in nonindustrial activities, mostly in the sector of services; this percentage is high as compared with the one exhibited by developed countries at a similar stage of development (15, p. 56) (Table 9).

Finally, the industrial expansion of the country depends to a great extent on the expansion of the domestic demand and on the earnings generated by the export sector. As foreign exchange becomes scarce, as is usually the case in Colombia, industrialization relies increasingly on foreign loans and on foreign investment. This mechanism has operated in Colombia especially after the 1960s and is expected to accelerate in the future (15, p. 13). In this way, not only the external debt but also the dependency of the country on foreign capital and technology increase constantly.

Thus it seems unlikely that the unemployment problem in Colombia will be solved or significantly reduced by either the agricultural sector or by the modern sectors of the economy at least under their current conditions; changes in these conditions, on the other hand, are difficult to foresee given the present social and political structures of Colombian society.

Moreover, the analysis of the situation leads to the conclusion that the problem of unemployment has arisen from the general tendencies of the process of growth of the Colombian economy over recent decades. Poverty springs from unemployment and malnutrition from poverty and the whole sequelae of the problem extends to the point that they hinder the development of the individuals and subsequently the development of the society.

The question then is one of distribution. The distribution of income in Colombia is a highly skewed one (Figure 9); it determines not only the levels of poverty but also affects most aspects of the economy of the country; it affects, for instance, the balance of payment since the concentration of income tends to produce, to a great extent, sanctuary consumption, the origin of which is mostly foreign (35, pp. 34-37).

Table No. 9 Percentage of the Labour Force in  
Industrial Activities with respect to the  
total non-agricultural labour force  
when agriculture had 42% of the total  
labour force \*

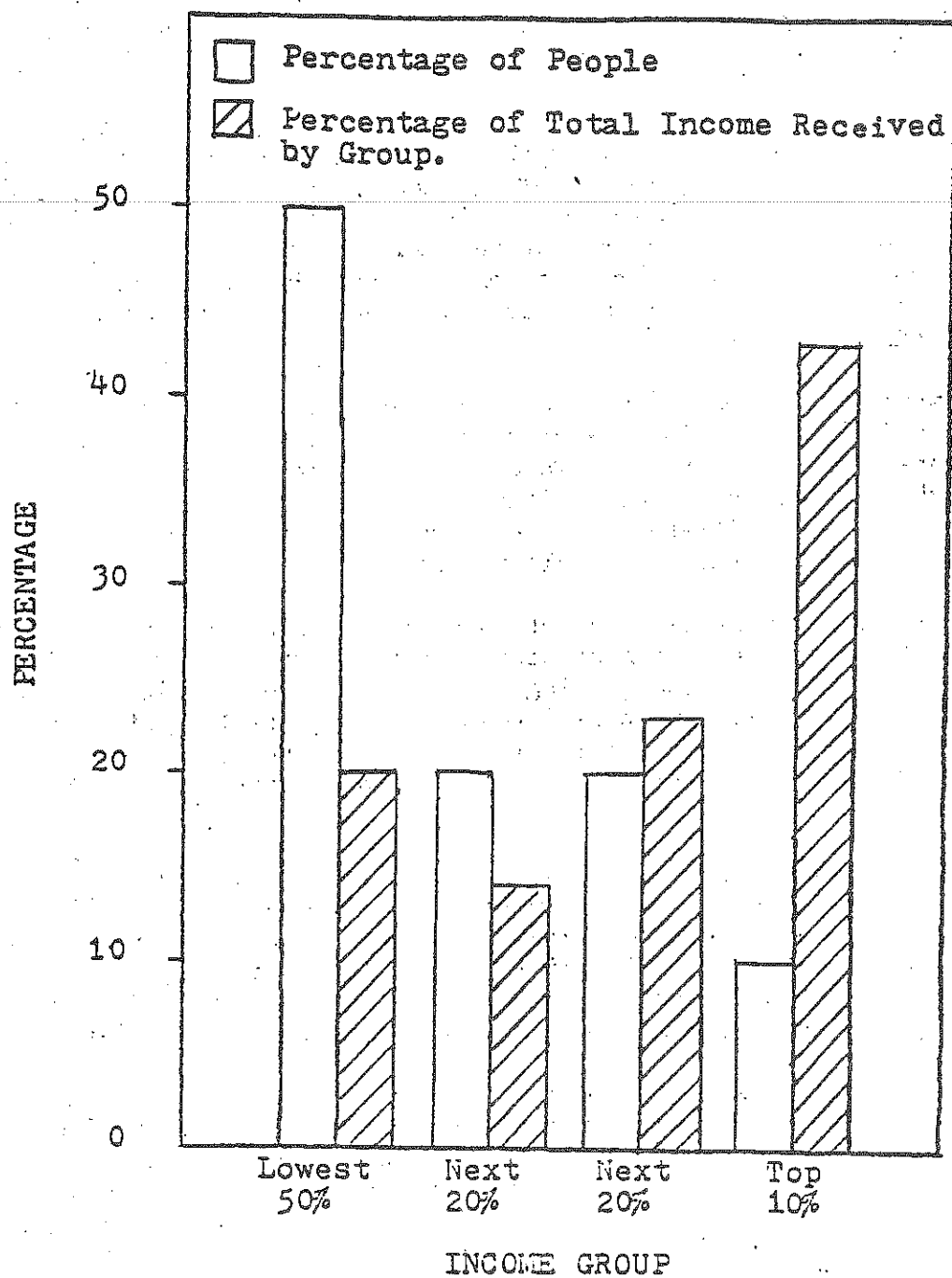
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Sweden (1924)	-----	60
France (1921)	-----	57
Italy (1950)	-----	52
U.S.A. (1890)	-----	48
Latin America (1969)	-----	31
Colombia(1970)	-----	34

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\*Source: Gavira, J.F., et al., Contribucion Al Estudio  
del Desempleo en Colombia. Dane/CIE, Bogota, Colombia,  
1971, p. 18

FIGURE 9. COLOMBIA: ESTIMATES OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL INCOME, 1962\*



\* International Labour Office, Towards Full Employment, Geneva, 1970, p. 141 (ECLA estimate).

But what is perhaps more important is that it determines greatly the patterns of investment in the country. A skewed income distribution confers the control of the economy to a small percentage of the population which usually has strong connections with international capital, and similar values, tastes and forms of consumption to those existent in the developed countries. It is this small group which establishes and determines the patterns of production and consumption in underdeveloped societies and which, as is the Colombian case, are not conducive to an overall development of society.

An open income distribution strategy, however, is not likely to be implemented in Colombia. Rather than this, the government seems to have chosen the alternative strategy of attempting to break into the international markets for manufactures; this policy has been explicit particularly since 1967 through the rationalization of export promotion measures; special subsidies for minor exports and the whole campaign of diversification of exports have also contributed to the increasing success of nontraditional exports.

However, as a recent study has pointed out, this strategy is likely to be a difficult one since exports are still small and, as they grow in importance, they might have to face import barriers in developed countries (34). A full employment situation is then unlikely to result from these policies. A different strategy that bases its programs on income distribution considerations is clearly needed.

It is also interesting to note how the opinion that an egalitarian distribution might be an almost necessary precondition for securing an adequate nutrition for the growing populations in developing countries is becoming more commonly appreciated.<sup>14/</sup> An equitable distribution would be more conducive to equitable employment opportunities and so to insure an adequate nutrition and living standards for most of the population.

The economic security that an adequate income confers to the people is also an element of definite importance for successful population control programs. Although the recent Colombian experience tends not to confirm this assertion, it is still too early to predict the impact of these programs on the overall development of the country. So far it appears to be that the new trends in population growth will have little

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<sup>14/</sup> See for instance, the papers presented by Sinha (36) and Correa (37) at the 18th General population conference of the International Union for the scientific study of population (IUSSP) held in Mexico City in August 1977. Correa also points out that "the need for equitable distribution is well-appreciated by the 'Western' thinkers and policy-makers. But because of their ideological preferences for private property and capitalist system, much like Malthus, they lose their intellectual objectivity." He quotes Myrdal's Asian Drama as an example (37, p. 7). This awareness is sometimes also present among influential individuals of Colombia's dominant classes.

impact on the levels of poverty existing in the country; it will mean, for sure, fewer people, but the degree of social and economic inequality and, subsequently, the levels of poverty will remain the same. The lack of synchronization of the population program with other very important social and economic policies, especially with employment generating and income distribution mechanisms, will reduce substantially the great beneficial effect they might have had otherwise.<sup>15/</sup>

The synchronization between population, food, and employment policies and programs is essential for the solution of the problems that the Third World countries are facing today. In fact, the situation in developing countries "can be viewed more instructively not as a race between food and population, but as one between population and employment on the one hand and employment and food on the other" (38, p. 514).

Raising the income of the poor lies at the heart of the problems of population and poverty; and the way to raise income is by providing an adequate employment to the majority of the population. Unemployment on the other hand, as the Colombian case suggests, is unlikely to be effectively attacked without considering, at the same time, a decrease in the indexes of social and economic inequality.

In the case of Colombia, and of many other developing countries, a full employment strategy has necessarily to involve both the rural and the urban sectors. It is true that for most developing countries, and Colombia is far from being an exception to this rule, "even with the best policies, urban industry will continue to be incapable of providing adequate job opportunities or a satisfactory level of living to all those wishing to leave the countryside" (39, p. 4).

Therefore, a part of the surplus labor force will have to be retained in the countryside.<sup>16/</sup> This would suppose changes in the pattern and

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<sup>15/</sup> Of course, drastic declines in the population growth rate will prevent the situation of aggravating more and more; but it will do little on its own for improving significantly the well-being of the poor for whom many times a new son will mean in some years an additional source of income. By the same token, it could be argued that the population policies as they are presently practiced in Colombia, tend to preserve the status-quo. Indeed, as Correa says, "if employment creation is the crux of the problem of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, then increase in agricultural production or reduction in population growth, on its own, has very little to offer." (37, p. 5).

<sup>16/</sup> The mechanisms by which employment in the rural areas could be generated, such as small-scale industries, support to the small farmer, collective organizations, etc., will not be discussed here. Some economists, however, confess their skepticism regarding this possibility. Poleman, for instance, believes that "people infected with rising expectations prefer almost anything to farming, and history equates progress with a decline, not a rise in agricultural employment" (38, p. 518). Thus, the leading role, as far as employment is concerned and according to this approach, is reserved to the urban economy.

strategies of rural development. The principal barrier to these changes would be the powerful landed interests that characterize the agriculture of the country. As far as the urban economy is concerned, the changes in the patterns of industrialization and development necessary for a full employment strategy are also likely to encounter strong opposition from the dominant classes. It is then that fundamental changes in the societal structures seem to be required.

### CONCLUSION

Poverty, unemployment and inequality are striking problems in Colombia and mainly a result of the country's patterns of economic development; moreover, these three problems, which are so closely associated, have been growing during the last decades. To this extent, then, we cannot say that the country has achieved a significant degree of development.

On the contrary, underdevelopment pervades most of the sectors of Colombian society. The sad truth is that little development has taken place and that the benefits of it have been, and continue to be, absorbed by a small group of the population.

The challenge facing Colombia today is how to design a development strategy that will ensure productive employment for all segments of the population; only then will poverty be eliminated and population control be meaningful and truly fruitful.

Such a strategy will require that the levels of inequality prevailing in the country be drastically reduced; this goal, however, seems unlikely to be obtained through the development approaches currently proposed by most political sectors in Colombia. A fundamental change in the social and political structures of the country appears in this way as necessary.

Only then the conditions for the complete realization of individuals and of the society as a whole will be established.<sup>17/</sup>

<sup>17/</sup> One last comment should be made in regard to this and it is related to the quality of the jobs. This aspect of the employment problem is usually neglected; the provision of an adequate income is taken as being the fundamental reason of employment; this is still understandable to a great extent for developing countries where the most basic needs are many times unsatisfied. But jobs should also be means of self-expression and creativity. And, if we are to accept the conception of development aforementioned, the degree of development achieved by the advanced societies should also be seriously questioned. For if it is true that poverty, unemployment and inequality have been substantially reduced, many other conditions exist that prevent individuals from a full realization. It seems to be appropriate to listen once more to the words of warning of Herbert Marcuse who, referring to the advanced industrial societies, once wrote that (H. Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man; emphasis added):

. . . the capabilities (intellectual and material) of contemporary society are immeasurably greater than ever before—which

(Footnote 17 continued)

means that the scope of society's domination over the individual is immeasurably greater than ever before. Our society distinguishes only by conquering the centrifugal social forces with Technology rather than with Terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increasing standard of living . . . And yet this society is irrational as a whole. Its productivity is destructive of the full development of the human needs and faculties, its peace maintained by the constant threat of war . . . Men must come to see it and to find their way from false to true consciousness, from their immediate to their real interest. They can do so only if they live in need of changing their way of life, of denying the positive, of refusing. It is precisely this need which the established society manages to repress to the degree to which she is capable of "delivering the goods" on an increasingly large scale, and using the scientific conquest of nature for the scientific conquest of man.

The social needs and goals in these societies are transplanted into the individuals' life whose needs and goals became those of the system; freedom becomes an instrument of domination and the individual, incapable of finding his full realization at his place of work, looks for his realization in the spheres of entertainment and consumption; mass production and consumption involves the entire individual and provides a reality for him. This is the reality of the system, a reality installed and validated by the accomplishments of science and technology, translated into raising standards of living and maintained by the every day more subtle forms of social control.

Most of the time the individual is not aware of this condition. A true liberation, however, depends on the consciousness of servitude; in developing countries, where so many times the prerequisites for the realization of the higher human needs do not exist since the vital needs are unsatisfied, a true conscientização should be a priority. Especial attention should be given to these facts when the developed societies are uncritically proposed as models to be followed by the poor countries of the world.





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