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Financing Socio-Economic Development in the Black Homelands of South Africa

WOLFGANG H. THOMAS

IN the economic and political debate about South Africa's homelands, fiscal and financial matters have received remarkably little attention. There has been some technical discussion of the methods and procedures involved in regional budgeting and of the problems of fiscal discipline and the actual disbursement procedures of the two South African government departments concerned (those of Co-operation and Development for the self-governing homelands, and Foreign Affairs for the independent homelands). Minimal attention, however, has been paid to the principles underlying the mobilisation and allocation of funds for these development regions. The narrowness of the debate may be due in part to the somewhat schizophrenic attitude taken by many development experts towards these evolving states: those who accept their independent status seem more concerned with details of implementation than with a critical evaluation of long-term trends; those who dispute this status usually refrain from any debate of the practical problems of implementation. A similar vacuum is encountered in the related field of the socio-economic development of South Africa's coloured and Asian populations. Of the numerous articles about the President's Council, the constellation of states, or the gradual integration of coloureds, Asians and whites, few are concerned explicitly with the financial and fiscal dimension, and neither these nor the more general contributions on South Africa's economic system go very far in a direction where discussion is urgently required.

This contribution should be regarded as no more than a small step into a relatively barren landscape; at best it may help stimulate further debate which should include black and non-black academics and politicians. The emphasis in this article is placed on conceptual and politico-economic aspects rather than on statistical or institutional details.

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