

political consciousness of the masses is the most critical function of MAMSER. Awareness is a positive resource for development. On the other hand, ignorance is a serious constraint to development and orderly progress. Hence, the conceptualisation of the set objectives for political education through intellectual contacts with renowned academicians and intensive media and grassroots campaigns. The programme has moved to organising important fora such as people's parleys, village square meetings for grassroots reach, conferences, symposia and seminars for the urban elites.

In order to achieve these lofty goals, the directorate designed a three-phased programme. The first phase, the mobilisation phase, focused on mass rallies nation-wide with the sole aim of mobilising Nigerians to decisively reject the sectional, divisive, corrupt, selfish, dishonest and directionless politics of the past for mature, peaceful, orderly, issue and development-oriented politics. During the first phase, a nation-wide political awareness tour was undertaken round the country. About 54 Local Government Areas were visited and more than 74 mass rallies were held over a period of 78 days. The basic message of MAMSER during the period can be summarised thus: The nation-wide political awareness tour sought to make Nigerians decisively reject the massively corrupt politics of the past characterised by rigging, money, tribalism, regionalism and religion. The directorate appealed to all Nigerians to use their votes wisely to elect good leaders of honour, integrity and great vision for progress and real development.

Nigerians were urged to reject corruption in favour of honour and transparent honesty; to eschew confusion and stagnation of the past for peaceful progress; to reject slavish dependence and poverty in favour of self-reliance and greater productivity. Currently, the second phase which places significant emphasis on teaching people practical skills of translating their domestic rights into real political power, by voting for good candidates with good programmes, is progressing. The directorate has recently published a political education manual intended to highlight the basic rights and responsibilities of citizens. Part of this phase actively involved MAMSER in co-operation with the National Electoral Commission (NEC) in the verification of voters list and claims by political parties. During the period of politicking by the defunct political associations seeking registration as political parties, MAMSER persistently called on them to involve the grassroots people in the formation of their associations but the politicians characteristically chose to ignore the warnings by the government, NEC and MAMSER, and played the game as it was done in the past. The political associations underated the level of consciousness among the rural people until NEC's result showed that they have not actually interacted with the grassroots enough to elicit their support.

Hence, there were ghost names on the membership register of most associations. Now, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) has directed these aspirants to go back to the MAMSER-suggested path of grassroots involvement which they (the politicians) had hitherto rejected. Grassroots involvement is a necessary step towards the achievement of a better society which Nigerians are longing for. It is, therefore, hoped that the political aspirants will give this new experiment all the support it deserves so that the parties can derive their existence from the mass participation of people and thus survive to sustain democratic ideals during the third republic.

The third phase would focus (during the first quarter of 1990) on how the people will demonstrate their increased consciousness, political maturity, and demonstrate skills acquired thus far by ensuring a free and fair local government elections. MAMSER is of the belief that the nation must pay greater attention to the issues of building an enlightened electorate, raising a patriotic and honest leadership, formation of popularly-based political parties, ensuring free and fair elections and formation of popular organisations in order to ensure the defence of democratic rights of the people and social justice.

MAMSER, through its political education programmes, promises to ensure unity, peace, social justice and progress in the country. MAMSER is optimistic that political apathy and the culture of silence in the face of brazen oppression by a few will be a thing of the past particularly with the creation of two new political parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) — which are grassroots-oriented. MAMSER also believes that these negative traits will give way to the politics of ideas, development, unity and peaceful progress in the third republic.

Mass Education

The Political Bureau had, in its report, identified illiteracy and ignorance as the major impediments to the greatness of our society and as such recommended the establishment of the Directorate For Social Mobilisation. Concomitantly, it is pertinent that mass literacy should be the cornerstone of its existence.

Thus, the Directorate For Social Mobilisation set for itself, a target of making about 25 million Nigerians literate by 1992. The results from the states after the first phase of the programme which ran between July and December 1988 showed that only about half a million people benefited from the phase. The whole programme which has run through the stages of research, analysis and programme formulation to actual activity, will continue as soon as funds are available. This is a giant leap in

its determined march to the realisation of a dream to substantially reduce illiteracy in our society by 1992. The programme is, however, being hampered by the lack of funds to acquire the needed teaching aids and pay for the services of the teaching personnel. The directorate is determined to continue this popular grassroots programme as much as the finances at its disposal can permit.

Social Mobilisation and Communication

The most important tool of social mobilisation is communication. An effectively managed communication network that takes the varied nature of the target audiences into consideration and tries to satisfy their needs is highly desirable for a programme of social engineering. Thus, the directorate has recognised the stronghold of the urban elites on the radio, television, newspapers, magazines, debates, seminars, workshops, conferences and other sophisticated media and, therefore, use these media to communicate with them. In pursuance of this, the directorate has paid working visits to more than 98 percent of the media houses (print and electronic) in Nigeria during which time the chairman fielded questions on the aims, objectives, achievements, prospects and problems of social mobilisation in a depressed economy. The interviews and discussion were usually frank, educative and illuminating to the extent that both sides have come to acknowledge the enormity of the problems of the majority of our population in the rural areas in terms of inadequate information and basic facilities needed for good living. Also the various professional associations such as the Nigerian Political Science Association, Nigerian Labour Congress, National Council of Women Societies and National Council of Nigerian Youth have been found to be veritable channels for communicating important socio-political messages to these crucial groups of people.

Even then, the majority of the productive population to whom development-oriented communication should be directed are in the rural areas where they are cut off from vital information needed to improve their lots. A farmer, for example, is regarded as indifferent to innovations on new ways of improving crop production. Whereas the farmer would be willing to use such information, he is not prepared to leave certainty for uncertainty in adopting new methods because he would rather have small yields that are consistent and reliable than big yields that could be followed with total crop failure. What this amounts to is that information packaging for ruralites has not often conformed with their felt needs and are therefore irrelevant. Grant (1978) expressed the view that:

It seems to me that we (scientists and journalists) use wonderful terminology such as 'changing the change agents' and 'the green revolution' and many other cliches. I think we are pretty good at communicating among ourselves, but when we get out into the remote rural area it is obvious that we are not so expert in there — where communication is so vitally needed.

Indeed, there is an urgent need to re-orient our mass media organs towards the active involvement of the rural population in the free flow of information to enhance their economic well-being. It is important to evolve a grassroots approach which favours the establishment of rural radio, community newspapers, face-to-face dialogue, public address system, town crier or the gongman, age/social groups, the minstrel, village square meetings, extension services, community television viewing centres and opinion leaders. The traditional media, says Ugboajah (1978) have served many generations such that a careful harmonisation of their strong points with the modern media is what is needed to fully integrate the ruralites with the new trends. He said:

... if bells are used for summoning a religious gathering or announcing the presence of an itinerant tailor or petty trader in a rural neighbourhood, if the village gongman uses his wooden gong for summoning elders to a meeting in the village square, why should these channels be discarded in summoning the villagers to health demonstration, to a co-operative farming lecture, to a child welfare workshop, to an adult education class or to an agriculture extension exhibition? If palm fronds are displayed in front of compounds to communicate that some items are for sale therein, why cannot this approach be adopted to communicate the availability of new cocoa seedlings awaiting distribution in the compound of local agricultural representative? (Ugboajah, 1978).

This concept of traditional communication is what Ugboajah termed 'oramedia' which to him are great legitimisers, because they are highly distinctive and credible. He advocated the use of community-based communication as against the over-used electronic media which are elitist and of little use for public enlightenment programmes in rural areas. There is the need to break with the 'urban-oriented colonial heritage' in Nigeria's communication programme format planning such that the messages fit both the channel and the medium to achieve the desired result.

It is no wonder that the rather indiscriminate adoption of modern technology for the electronic media has led to the perennial 'sleeping' and 'waking' of most of the gadgets and in some cases this sleep has resulted in premature deaths. One may wonder why the use of redifusion and the rugged celluloid film was hastily jettisoned for the modern AM/FM and video films when the expertise required to optimally utilise and maintain them has not been acquired. In Tanzania today, the indigenous delivery systems have proved to be more effective in serving the people's needs than the imported types. This is possible because a convenient merger of the 'old' and the 'new' was carried out. For example, the villagers formed themselves into listening groups and act as inter-personal relays for radio