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*MANPOWER, LABOR ABSORPTION,  
AND EMPLOYMENT IN COLOMBIA*  
*Editorial Note*

In discussing the manpower problems in Colombia it may be appropriate to add a brief note on current policies and future perspectives of employment in that country.

Although the Colombian government did not adopt the ILO plan to steer the economy "towards full employment," significant changes have occurred since 1969. Deciding to concentrate its efforts on a few "leading sectors," resources were channeled into urban construction and nontraditional agricultural and industrial exporting.<sup>1</sup> Short-run results in increased output have been impressive.<sup>2</sup> It will be interesting to see if the growth rate can be maintained in the future.

Data for employment changes in the primary sector are incomplete and have to be reestimated. The statistics of the industrial sector show that there have been substantial gains in factory employment, averaging 7.4 percent between 1967 and 1972.<sup>3</sup> These gains seem to be largely due to the vigorous construction program and the shift of development strategy from import substitution to export diversification.

Clearly, this change towards increasing output and participation of the more labor intensive branches and industries is but

one means to tackle the unemployment problem. That it is not sufficient is reflected in the persistence of relatively high un- and underemployment, which were estimated to have been 10.5 percent and 15 percent, respectively, in 1974.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the "neo-orthodox" strategy has alleviated a number of constraints (most notably the foreign exchange bottleneck). This should make it possible to shift policy makers' attention from financial and fiscal worries to these structural problems, which have impeded gainful employment of the Colombian population in the past.

#### NOTES

1. This strategy has been proposed by Lauchlin Currie in his "operación Colombia" see L. Currie (1965, 1974).

2. Since 1967 GDP has increased by an average 6.5 percent, well above the historical average (1950-1967), which amounted to less than 5 percent. Per capita GDP rose by 3.2 percent in the last seven years, giving Colombia a per-capita GDP of US\$ 500 in 1974.

3. Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), unpublished statistics.

4. DANE, Boletín Mensual de Estadística, 287 (1975). Unemployment was, however, even higher in the late 1960s, averaging 13 percent in Bogotá and over 16 percent in Barranquilla.

#### REFERENCES

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