

THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES OF THE FEDERATION
OF MALAYA, SINGAPORE, NORTH BORNEO AND SARAWAK

Population: The combined population of these territories is nearly 7,000,000, of whom over 5,000,000 live in the Federation of Malaya and 1,000,000 in Singapore.

Nature of the Territories: Apart from Singapore the territories are predominantly agricultural insofar as they are developed at all, much of the area being thick jungle. Out of a total area of 81 million acres, only about 6 million are regularly cultivated, the chief crops being rubber (3,700,000 acres), rice (over 1,000,000 acres) and coconut (700,000 acres). The other major resources are the tin of Malaya and the oil of British Borneo.

Post-War Problems: All the territories suffered considerable damage during the war, when they were under Japanese occupation for 3½ years. The Japanese neglected the maintenance of anything which did not contribute directly to their war effort, so plantations were abandoned, machinery and buildings neglected, education, public health and other services were not maintained. The local governments and private enterprise have made great progress with the task of rehabilitation, and the United Kingdom Government have made available large sums by way of grants and interest-free loans.

Basis and Objectives of the Programmes:

The four territories differ widely in their state of development and the extent to which the tasks of rehabilitation and restoration have been completed. In consequence the starting points and the objectives of their programmes for economic development differ. But the purpose common to them all is to put in hand the most urgent projects which will help to secure the prosperity and social well-being of the peoples of the territories, and to prepare the ground for further development.

Every effort is being made under the development plans to broaden and diversify the economies of these territories by increasing the production of foodstuffs, especially rice, and of other agricultural products such as palm oil and cocoa, and by stimulating manufacturing industries. Nevertheless, it is clear that their economies will remain primarily dependent on rubber and tin, the export of which will largely determine their balance of payments position and their ability to earn dollars. While the main investment in rubber and tin will be by private enterprise, the Governments consider it necessary and urgent to help the improvement of rubber production by the smallholders who cannot command the finance available to the large estates.

The development programmes of the public authorities in the four territories are estimated to cost altogether about £107 million. This excludes private investment, of which no reliable estimate can be made but which is likely to be of considerable importance.