

BUDGET 1974/75

MIDWESTERN STATE OF NIGERIA

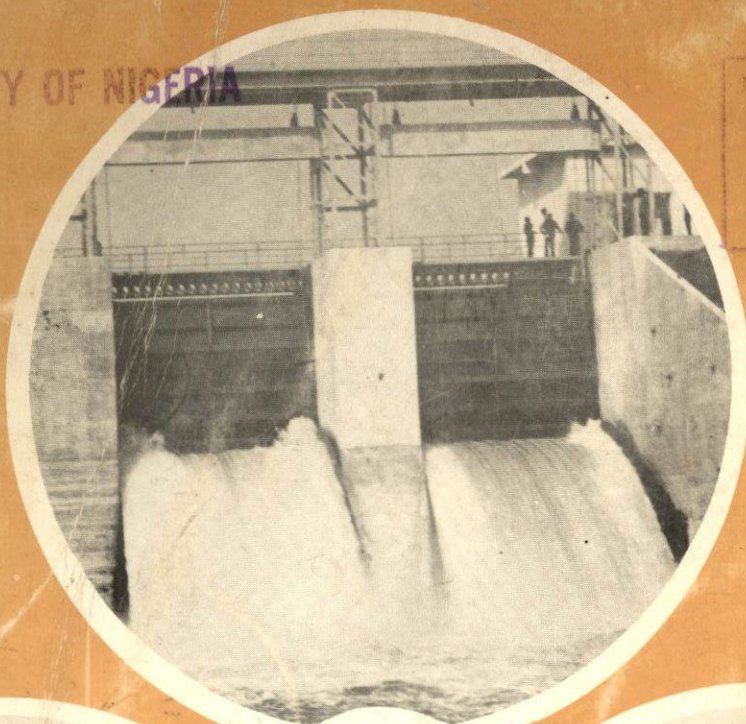
NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF
NIGERIA

LEGAL DEPOSIT

Received 23/7/74

712



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

2-75

BUDGET 1974/75
MIDWESTERN STATE
OF NIGERIA
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

OF NICEKIA

Preface	5
Budget Speech by His Excellency	6
Details of the Budget	11
Questions and Answers	24

CONTENTS

92
DT515
M. 039
1974-75
c. 1

OD
DT515
M. 039
1974-75

c. 1

CONTENTS

Preface	...	...	...	...	...	5
Budget Speech by His Excellency	...	...	...	...	...	6
Details of the Budget	...	...	...	...	...	11
Questions and Answers	...	...	...	...	...	24



HIS EXCELLENCY BRIGADIER OSAIGBOVO OGBEMUDIA
Military Governor, Midwestern State of Nigeria



MR. E. K. CLARK
Commissioner for Finance and Establishments

PREFACE

On May 8, 1974, His Excellency, the Military Governor of the Midwestern State of Nigeria, Brigadier Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, presented his budget for the 1974/75 year. His speech was followed by that of his Commissioner for Finance and Establishments, Mr. E. K. Clark, which gave details of the budget proposals. Thereafter, there was a question and answer session between the Governor and representatives of the 14 Administrative divisions in the State and other interests.

The session afforded citizens of the State the opportunity to ask some vital questions on the social, political and economic development of the State.

In his Budget Speech, the Governor called on the people to engage in more food production, an end to which the State Government is committed.

In this pamphlet we reproduce the Governor's and Mr. Clark's speeches as well as the edited questions and answers.

**BUDGET SPEECH 1974-75 BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
BRIGADIER OSAIGBOVO OGBEMUDIA, MILITARY
GOVERNOR, MIDWESTERN STATE OF NIGERIA,
BENIN CITY, MAY 8, 1974**

"Your Lordship,
Your Highnesses,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

MAY I first of all welcome you all present to this gathering and to thank you very sincerely for answering our invitation.

As you are all aware, the financial year 1973/74 ended on March 31, 1974 and a new financial year 1974/75 began on the following day, April 1, 1974. As usual, Government has to prepare and present its budget for the new year. It is therefore my pleasure to present to you the 1974/75 budget.

Before doing so, I would like to review briefly my Government's activities during the last financial year. In my broadcast last year, I mentioned that Government budgeted for a recurrent revenue of ₦72 million which was made up of ₦17.1 million to be collected from internal sources and ₦54.9 million from Federal sources under the statutory allocations. However, during the year, the estimates were further revised and the total figure increased to ₦94.9 million. During the same period, approved capital receipts, after the necessary transfer, amounted to ₦22.3 million. A later revision increased the original sum from ₦22.3 million to ₦43.5 million.

On expenditure, Government approved ₦62.1 million for recurrent and ₦20.6 million for capital. However, in the course of the year, as prices of materials escalated and the execution of certain follow-up projects became necessary, authority was given to vary contract sums and the scope of projects. During the same period, certain allowances were also approved. As a result of these various exercises, Government had to approve additional ₦33.2 million which was made up of ₦28.2 million for capital and ₦5 million for recurrent expenditure. When the year ended on March 31, a deficit of about ₦5.34 million in the capital estimates was recorded.

Nevertheless, I am pleased to say that notwithstanding the deficit it was a very successful year and remarkable in many ways. As you may have seen or heard, we were able to establish on a firm footing, the University of Benin, the University of Benin Teaching Hospital and the Continuing Education Centre. You will be glad to hear that the University of Benin will produce her first set of Science graduates in June 1974. In addition, we made appreciable progress in road development, in the provision of medical and health facilities, water-supply, rural electrification, agricultural deve-

lopment, particularly food production, industrial development, community and self-help development projects.

At this stage, I would like to mention that the sum of ₦123,690.00 was donated to the State Development Fund by 69 communities and other public-spirited individuals in the State. On the average, the money realised was higher than the amounts realised from the flat-rate tax payable by male adults. For this, I would like to express, on behalf of myself and the Government of this State, our gratitude to the communities and individuals for their generous donations, which can only be taken as an evidence of their total commitment to the policy of self-help which my Government continues to champion.

A quick survey of the progress made in the private sector shows that a number of people in the Midwest took advantage of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree to establish new businesses and purchase outright or own shares in alien businesses. Some indigenous contractors also acquired greater skills in the handling of Government contracts.

At this stage, I would like to inform you that many of our projects under the 1970-74 National Development Plan have been physically completed and that the others are nearing completion. This financial year therefore would be devoted to a mopping up operation and to laying a solid foundation for the Third National Development Plan, 1975-80. It is important to mention that the completion of each project means an increase in our recurrent expenditure.

The total revenue expected this year is ₦157.8 million which would be made up of ₦139.4 million from statutory allocations and ₦18.4 million from internal sources. The increase in revenue from Federal sources is due primarily to the increase in posted prices of crude oil resulting from the world-wide energy crisis.

There has been no change in the existing revenue allocation formula unanimously approved by the Supreme Military Council consequent upon the amendment of the relevant section of the Constitution. There is a second point worth mentioning too. Although some of the sources of internal revenue have been removed, for example, petroleum tax, bridge tolls, etc., revenue from internal sources increased last year and is expected to increase this year. For our size and population this is a laudable achievement or trend and I would like to thank all concerned for the great sacrifice they are willingly making for their own development.

Our estimated recurrent expenditure for the present year is ₦85.1 million. Our capital expenditure, in order to achieve the solid foundation for the Third National Development Plan, is estimated at ₦120 million. But in order not to start the next Development Plan year with too heavy a deficit, Government has decided on limiting its executive capacity to ₦101.8 million and would review this as and when more money becomes available. Since the Second National Development Plan was approved in 1970, prices of materials have increased many folds. Unexpected expenditure had been incurred as a result of the decisions of Federal and State Governments, and if the present trend is anything to go by, there is the likelihood of Government incurring more unforeseen expenditure. The increase in revenue therefore would do no more than pay off part of the carry-over, cater for the unforeseen and establish a firm base for the execution of the Third National Development Plan.

I would now take a few minutes to highlight some of the areas in which Government has increased its activities and have therefore been focussing its keen attention.

Agriculture

In order to increase food production, encourage our people to take up scientific methods of farming and to contribute to the strengthening of our Naira, we have engaged on large-scale mechanised farming. Two farms have already been established; one at Agbete and the other at Warrake. Later this year, that is, the next farming season, we propose to establish more farms with a total of 42,000 hectares when fully developed. A third livestock ranch will be established at Oria while the animal population of the existing two at Ubiaja and Igarra will be doubled. At the same time, we are establishing cocoa and oil palm plantations. Government has also granted loans to a number of farmers and more of them will be considered for loan this year. May I take this unique opportunity to appeal to all of you to increase your food production and to those who are not farmers to take up farming. Government will assist anyone making genuine efforts to increase agricultural production.

Forestry and Wild Life

In the urge to utilise and make the best of our resources we are conscious of the waste and damage which are likely to be done to our natural resources. Government will take adequate steps to protect our wild life and natural resources. Activities relating to forest regeneration and re-afforestation will be increased during the year. Judicious control will be exercised over the indiscriminate exploitation of our forest resources.

Commerce and Industry

I am sure that you are all familiar now with the

services of the Laundry in Benin and Warri, the products of our tile factory which are already in the market, both Rhino Cement and Sheet Glass which appeared briefly in the market and the Wood Treatment Plant. In the new year, a number of our industries, namely brewery, soap, battery, ice-cream, rubber processing, and cement will go into production. We have taken over the Bendel Steel Structure and paid off our partner. We are spending some money to improve it. During the same period, work will commence on the reactivation of the Sheet Glass Factory at Ughelli. A bottle manufacturing factory is also being established. In the near future, Government will only establish or join in the establishment of an agro-based industry which will utilize raw materials obtainable within the country. Perhaps, I should take this opportunity to disclose that Government would be cautious in its intervention in the private sector. It will do so only as the circumstances of the development of the State will dictate. Since 1967, we have established or bought shares in 35 industries. We are already receiving dividends from a few of them while efforts are being made to put the others on sound footing. I am pleased to announce that the standard of management of Government-sponsored industries has improved. However, Government invites citizens of the State to come forward to buy shares in its companies or to make out-right purchases of companies which Government intends to sell to the public.

Electricity Supply

Sixteen schemes are now in operation supplying electricity to several towns and villages while eleven other schemes will be commissioned during the new year.

Roads and Bridges

You will all recall that on a number of occasions I have complained that the type and weight of vehicles in use on our roads by some oil companies operating in the State were not foreseen in the design and construction of our roads. These vehicles and plants together with heavy rain have caused untold damage to many of our roads in the Delta. Consequently, in the subsequent contracts for the construction of roads, Government decided that roads in the Delta area should be made either of hard pavement or hot rolled asphalt. A lot of money would be required to reconstruct these roads. You may wish to know that while it costs about ₦80,000 to ₦120,000 to construct a mile of road in the dry areas of the State, it costs ₦500,000 to construct the same distance in the Delta.

Transport

More modern river-crafts are being purchased to facilitate movement and communication in the

riverine areas. Similarly, more buses are being purchased for use on the land areas. On this also, it is worth mentioning that a good fast boat is more expensive than the most expensive car in use by the Government.

Education

Efforts will be made in the new year to continue the accelerated development of all post-nursery institutions in the State. This will involve increases in the number of institutions, intake of students, the provision of adequate equipment, accommodation for staff and students, and consolidation of the effectiveness of educational administration. The Ministry of Education is being re-organised to meet the new challenges posed by the take-over of all post-nursery educational institutions. Government has approved the harmonisation scheme for the conditions of service of teachers. By this act, teachers and civil servants now have identical conditions of service. The total expenditure in this sector is ₦43.3 million.

In our drive to consolidate the unity of the State, two Unity Schools will be established in the current financial year. One of the schools will cater for girls and the other for boys. The first one will be established at Agbarho for boys. The location of the Girls School will be announced in due course. Twenty to thirty children per division will be admitted every year to primary IV. They would be expected to remain in the institutions until they reach the school certificate level. Special scholarship awards will be made available to candidates who wish to read for degrees in Education, Quantity Surveying, Engineering, Architecture, Surveying, Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry. The Under-graduate Loan scheme will this year be extended to first year students. I should like to point out again that on graduation any student who scores First or Second Class Upper or obtain distinctions in professional examinations will have his or her loan remitted.

Health

Under the four-year development plan, ten hospitals have been equipped and opened. By the end of the year, the remaining twenty-four which are being equipped presently will be opened. Plans for a 500-bed Specialist Hospital at Warri have commenced.

At the same time, Government has intensified its efforts in the area of preventive Medicine. Total expenditure amounts to ₦19.1 million.

Water-Supply

Government has approved the expansion of the present water-works, the extension of the pipe-lines to nearby towns and villages and the establishment of new water schemes in some of

the areas not yet served.

Housing

As you are already aware, the Federal Government has been generous to allocate 4,000 housing units to the Midwestern State, 250 of which are already under construction on Ikpoba Hill. In addition, we on our own are providing 1,000 units distributed in divisional headquarters and other strategic areas in the State. Along side with this, a special housing scheme has been launched for the benefit of post-primary school teachers. The construction of some of the buildings has commenced.

Local Government

Local Government Councils in the State continue to experience financial difficulties. In order to alleviate their difficulties, Government is providing them with funds. Last year, in addition to the financial assistance rendered to the Councils by the Federal Government, we contributed ₦959,030. This year, we are granting the sum of ₦2.2 million to them. Added to this, a special sum of ₦3.1 million is being made available for special development projects in the fourteen administrative divisions of the State. The aim of this is to cater for special areas and intensify community development everywhere in the State. Let me hasten to say here that the future of the Local Government system in the State is now under active review.

Catering Board

The Midwest Catering Rest Houses have been re-organised and renamed **Midwest Hotels**. The Board has also been reconstituted and a sum of ₦600,000 for modernising existing facilities and to operate the fully completed ones in the divisions has been provided. Each Hotel is under the management of a Committee selected from the locality and chairmanned by the Divisional Officer.

Sports

Recently, Government set up a Committee to review sporting and recreational facilities available in the State and to make recommendations for any improvement. On the basis of the report submitted by the Committee, the sum of ₦2 million is being spent to complete a number of stadia in the State and provide other facilities while ₦.9 million will be devoted to the improvement of other items. Work on the development of Warri and Sapele stadia is due to commence shortly. Warri stadium will cost approximately ₦1m while Sapele will cost over ₦300,000. Work in the divisional headquarters stadium and other sporting centres which commenced last year will be completed. In all they are 16 in number. At

this stage, I would like to pay tribute to the communities who have on their own taxed their lean resources to provide some facilities in their areas.

Administration

The major item continued to be the building of the Secretariat and the State High Court. It is hoped that during the year, a number of Ministries will move to the completed part of the Secretariat, thus cutting down on the expenditure on rented private quarters by Government. It is also hoped that, in the same period, office blocks will be provided in other areas of the State in order to facilitate administration.

Finance

Steps are being taken to expand the New Nigeria Bank to enable it give more assistance to its growing number of customers, especially those in the rural area. A ₦4 million loan has been approved by the Federal Military Government towards this end. In our determination to harness most harmlessly the scattered resources of the State, an Investment Trust will be established this financial year.

Midwest Newspapers Corporation

The Government believes in the freedom of the Press. It is for this reason that six years ago, the Midwest Newspapers Corporation was established to publish and print the *Nigerian* and *Sunday Observer*. We have just approved the estimates of the Corporation and the re-organisation preceeding it which brought in a new management. In order to be able to play its role, the sum of ₦3 million is being made available for the purchase of new equipment and to enable it move to a new location along the Benin — Sapele road. Since the inception of the Corporation, Government has not in any way interfered with the publication of the newspapers, but has laid for it a frame-work within which to operate so as to satisfy its national objectives.

For the avoidance of doubt and for the benefit of those who may not be aware of the objectives of the papers, I would like to repeat them :

The objectives are to:

- educate and inform;

- play up those factors in our national life which would unite the country and play down those factors more likely to cause friction;

- produce accurate reports, objective analysis and avoid sentiments and sensation.

Midwest Broadcasting Corporation

Government has provided ₦400,000 to purchase

more TV sets for public viewing centres and post primary schools. Already 600 sets have been issued. On broadcasting, Government has provided fund for the expansion of the Corporation's services and the purchase of more equipment for educational broadcasting.

Boundary Disputes

A Boundary Settlement Commissioner has been appointed to go into all cases of boundary disputes. In the meantime, I wish to appeal to all people in whose areas there are existing disputes to exercise restraint and not to take the law into their own hands or do anything to hinder or obstruct the work of the Commissioner.

Customary Court

For some three years now, Government suspended the customary courts. During the period, a Committee was set up to study the operation of the courts and to make recommendations for their reforms. The report is now being considered and an announcement on the subject will be made shortly.

Task Force

I have already referred to the untold damage being done to many of our roads. Another major problem which we face is the high and increasing cost of road construction. In order to reduce costs and to achieve greater results and maintain continued progress in our road development efforts, my Government established four Task Force units in the last financial year to undertake road development projects in all the administrative divisions of the State. Each Task Force unit was provided with a bull-dozer, grader, roller, water tanker and a tipper vehicle. The units are at present working on several roads where they are making satisfactory progress. These include Issele-Uku to Ohordua road, Uzebba to Otuo road, Uzebba to Afuze road, Ekiadolor to Ago-Ekpanu road, Ogha to Oviru Court road and Otujeremi to Okwagbe road. More Task Force units will be established this year and more equipment will be provided for their use.

After this brief survey of government activities last year and its plans for the future, the Commissioner for Finance will later explain the details of this speech.

I cannot end this speech without paying tribute to the Federal Government for the assistance which it has given to this State materially and for its willingness to advise the State when necessary. I would also like to pay public tribute to the members of the National Youth Service Corps assigned to the Midwestern State for the contribution they are making to the development of the State and in particular for their useful suggestion

on the activities of the State Government. I also wish to thank the law enforcement agencies for their co-operation.

Finally, I would like to place on record my Government's appreciation and gratitude to the entire population of the State for their continued support and contribution to all our activities during the past year.

I would like to compliment the Public Service for its loyalty, industry and dedication to the cause

of my Government. This support has been a source of inspiration and encouragement to my Government at all times. I will once more call on all of you, the citizens of this State, to face the challenges of the future with greater determination and to continue to recognise the fact that "Man is the architect of his own future". That spirit has been and should continue to be the source of whatever success or achievement that has resulted from our endeavours.

May the Almighty God bless you all.



A cross section of the audience at the Budget Speech day.

DETAILS OF THE BUDGET BY MR. E. K. CLARK, COMMISSIONER FOR FINANCE AND ESTABLISHMENTS

YOUR EXCELLENCY, Civil Commissioners,
Chiefs, Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, may I crave your indulgence to congratulate His Excellency the Military Governor for his brilliant and progressive Budget speech.

My duty this morning is to expatiate on the 1974-75 budget of the Midwestern State Government, the broad outlines of which His Excellency has just announced to you. The State Government is budgeting for a total Revenue of ₦182,276,050 and a total Expenditure of ₦187,049,370 made up as follows:

	₦
Internal Revenue	18,430,890
Payments through the Federal Government	139,403,040
Total,	157,833,930
Recurrent Expenditure	85,191,800
Therefore excess of Recurrent Revenue over Recurrent Expenditure	72,642,130
Transfer from Recurrent Surplus to Capital Expenditure and Development Fund	72,000,000
Other Capital Receipts	24,442,120
Total Capital Receipts ..	96,442,120
Capital Expenditure	101,857,570
Deficit	₦5,415,450

As at April 1, 1974 an estimated deficit of ₦5,339,420 was brought forward from the 1973/74 financial year. This in effect means that our capital budget shows a total deficit of ₦10,754,870.

The comparative figures for the last financial year including the supplementary estimates are as follows:

	₦
Internal Revenue	17,056,650
Payments through the Federal Government	77,908,750
Total	94,965,330
Recurrent Expenditure	62,102,050
Balance	32,862,280

Transfer to the Capital Expenditure and Development Fund	30,000,000
Other Capital Receipts	13,505,770

Total 43,505,770

Capital Expenditure	48,845,190
Budget Deficit	5,339,420

The details given above show that the total recurrent revenue rose from approximately ₦72 million last year to approximately ₦158 million this year. The increase in the Internal Revenue is ₦1.38 million or 8%. Given our size and population, this increase is satisfactory. Perhaps I should draw attention to increases in some of the sources of Internal Revenue, notably: Personal Income Tax 750,000; Pools Betting Tax ₦220,000; Motor Vehicle and Drivers Licence Fees ₦200,000; and Fees from Government Institutions ₦252,000.

The total approved recurrent expenditure of ₦85,191,800 shows an increase of ₦23,089,750 or 37% over the 1973-74 year's approved provision of ₦62,102,050. This increase is higher than the average expenditure growth rate of 28.3% between the 1969-70 and the 1973-74 years. The excess is, however, largely accounted for by the fact that several development projects have been completed and are now generating additional recurrent expenditure. It may also be mentioned that in the course of the 1973-74 year an additional provision of ₦4,896,020 was approved for recurrent expenditure.

Of the total approved recurrent expenditure, Government Ministries and non-Ministerial Departments account for ₦32,636,790 while various Boards, Corporations and other agencies of Government account for ₦52,555,010. The expenditure of Ministries and Departments increased by ₦7,146,170 or 28% while subvention to Boards, Corporations and other agencies increased by ₦15,943,580 or 31%. Details of the recurrent expenditure are as follows:

Head	Details of Expenditure	1974/75 Estimates Total Expenditure ₦
921	Military Governor's Office	3,240,780
922	Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources	3,642,270

923	Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction ..	302,260
924	Ministry of Education ..	1,148,150
926	Ministry of Establishments ..	284,680
927	Pensions and Gratuities ..	122,000
928	Ministry of Finance ..	1,048,850
929	Miscellaneous ..	4,194,030
930	Public Debt Charges ..	2,336,190
931	Transfers to Other Funds ..	2,700,030
932	Ministry of Health ..	1,462,120
933	Ministry of Home Affairs and Information ..	1,857,850
934	Ministry of Justice ..	519,540
935	Ministry of Lands and Housing ..	860,370
936	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs ..	296,190
937	Ministry of Trade and Industry ..	702,180
938	Ministry of Works and Transport ..	5,965,540
939	Audit Department ..	318,400
940	Judicial Department ..	1,369,510
941	Local Government Service Board ..	42,610
942	Public Service Commission ..	133,360
943	Statutory Corporations Service Commission ..	53,880

Total Recurrent Expenditure
for Ministries/ Departments **₦32,636,790**

STATUTORY BOARDS, CORPORATIONS AND OTHER BODIES

Sub-head	Details of Expenditure	Approved Estimates 1974-75 ₦
1	Midwest Hotels (Recurrent only)	100,000
2	Midwest Rural Electricity Board	1,526,350
3	Sports Council and Sports Governing Bodies ..	912,000
4	Midwest Newspapers Corporation	3,000,000
5	Benin Recreation Club ..	8,000
6	College of Education, Abraka ..	800,000
7	Ethiopia Publishing Company ..	247,000
8	Midwest Polytechnic ..	1,198,000
9	State Library Board ..	960,400
10	University of Benin ..	5,641,770
11	State and Divisional Education Boards ..	23,404,770
12	Medical Grant to Local Government Councils ..	240,000
13	Non-Government Hospitals ..	100,000
14	State Hospitals Management Board ..	7,000,000
15	University of Benin Teaching Hospital ..	5,738,000
16	Community Development Grants ..	100,000
17	Midwest Arts Council ..	277,150
18	Midwest Television Board ..	1,544,450
19	National Industrial Safety Council ..	280
20	Pilgrim Welfare Board ..	5,000

12

21	Youth Clubs — Grants to and Training of ..	2,000
22	Voluntary Organisations ..	34,800
23	Unified Local Government Service ..	71,000
24	Grants-in-Aid Local Government Orderlies ..	34,000
25	Bendel Development and Planning Authority ..	200,000
26	Midwestern State of Nigeria Water Board ..	400,000
27	Subvention to Bureaucrat ..	10,000

Total Grants/Subventions to
Statutory Boards, Corporations
and Other Bodies **₦52,555,010**

Apart from the normal recurrent expenditure growth which is necessitated by the increase in activities, there are a few aspects of the recurrent expenditure estimates of the new year that deserve mention. Firstly, two Ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Works and Transport were re-organised by the Government during the 1973-74 financial year to make them effective instruments for achieving their objectives. Both Ministries are now organised on zonal basis with sufficiently senior officials incharge of the zones. The Ministry of Education is also being considered for re-organisation, also to make it a more effective organ of administration.

In addition, two new agencies have been established — the Midwest Hotels, created out of the former Catering Rest House organization and the Midwest Farms. The intention in establishing the Midwest Hotels as a Board distinct from a direct Government Department arises from the need to have an organisation which can more efficiently manage the former Catering Rest Houses in the State. For the current year a total sum of ₦600,000 has been approved for the new organisation for improvement to its various rest houses. It is hoped that it will, from now on, be able to provide better services for all its customers and to make profit. New ones in various Divisional Headquarters would be furnished and equipped. During this financial year, the following Midwest hotels will be opened: Bomadi, Ubiaja, Igarra, Abudu, Ughelli, and Oleh.

The Midwest Farms as an organisation has been established by the Government to supervise the various mechanised farms which include fish ponds which the government has either established or is proposing to establish in the course of the new year. It is important to ensure that the new farms are run by an appropriately oriented agency in order to ensure that they are run efficiently and profitably. Details about these mechanised farms will be given later on.

Other new features include the provision made for:

Building Projects personnel in the Ministries

of Education and Health which handle extensive government building projects for purposes of ensuring greater efficiency and economy. Both Ministries will each have a Civil Engineer, an Architect, and a number of sub-professional staff;

Legal personnel to be deployed in the Ministries of Finance and Trade and Industry in order to cope with the volume of increasing legal work;

A Law Revision Commissioner who has been appointed to re-draft and codify our set of laws;

A Boundaries Settlement Commissioner who has been appointed to look into various local boundary disputes in the State;

Six new sub-divisional offices in certain special and riverine areas to bring Government closer to the people, namely:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| (i) Patani | (iv) Gbokoda |
| (ii) Ndoni | (v) Ofunama and |
| (iii) Burutu | (vi) Amai |

In addition Police posts will be built at Siluko, Ohosu, Ndoni, Gbokoda and Toru-Ebeni. One major purpose of our budget is to ensure efficiency and maximum productivity in a considerably fast growing economy with its concomitant complexities. The civil service has to be adapted to meet changing economic conditions.

Capital Receipts

The approved capital receipts, as I have already stated, is ₦96,442,120 which includes ₦72 million earmarked for transfer from the recurrent budget surplus. The increase over last year's revised provision is thus ₦52,936,350. This is encouraging and we hope the growth trend will continue. However, because of the deficit of ₦5,339,420 in the Capital Expenditure and Development Receipts Fund at the end of the last financial year only ₦91,102,700 will be available this year for our development projects.

Capital Expenditure

The approved capital expenditure of ₦101,857,570 is more than the last year's revised provision of approximately ₦48.6 million by about ₦53 million. The break-down of the proposed expenditure is as follows:

Head	Details of Expenditure	Estimated Expenditure, 1974-75
		₦
981	Buildings	17,202,250
982	Roads and Bridges	20,782,780
983	Water Supplies	7,610,000

984	Electricity Development	3,360,000
985	Industrial Development	7,756,640
986	Special Agricultural Development	11,078,060
987	Special Education Development	9,973,020
988	Loans to Statutory Corporations and Government Sponsored Companies and Other Bodies	11,136,970
989	Integrated Rural Development	156,980
990	Contractor Finance Programme	10e
991	Other Non-Recurrent Expenditure	12,880,860

Total, Capital Expenditure = ₦101,857,570

As I have already mentioned, we are budgeting for a deficit of ₦10,754,870. Some people may ask why a State Government that expects to earn as much revenue as we expect in the new financial year is budgetting for a deficit of nearly ₦11 million. It is to be pointed out that no State can afford to ignore the aspirations of its people and especially if it consists of as many ethnic groups as the Midwestern State. Furthermore the Government is still engaged in reconstruction work as a result of war damages to much of its economic infrastructure. Under the able and progressive leadership of our Military Governor, the State Government is doing everything possible to achieve the objective of laying the foundations for a sound economic development. Besides it is not unusual for Governments to have deficit budgets although I should like to emphasise that the Government is not going to embark on every project at once but will regulate the manner in which projects will be executed.

Agriculture

The total approved expenditure for agriculture, including livestock and forestry development in the new year is ₦14,720,330 out of which ₦3,632,270 is for the recurrent expenditure services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and ₦11,078,060 for capital expenditure projects. This provision of ₦11,078,060 for capital expenditure is higher than the total revised provision of ₦3,294,000 approved for the 1973/74 year by approximately ₦7.8 million and represents 10.8% of our capital budget. Some of the major items of this capital expenditure are:

	₦
Forestry Development	535,440
Grain Storage Facilities	500,000
Cocoa and Oil Palm Small-Holders Scheme	836,600
Rubber Development	100,000
Livestock Development	2,561,690
Mechanised Farms	4,685,300

Forestry Development

The Government intends to regenerate our forests in order to ensure an uninterrupted supply of timber for both internal and external markets. Apart from the provision of ₦535,440 for the new year the Government has approved a forestry regeneration fund of ₦5.4 million for normal regeneration. It is also actively considering an accelerated programme of regeneration over a 15-year period at a cost of more than ₦25 million and has already lodged an application with the Nigeria Agricultural Bank for a loan for the project.

Conservation of Natural Resources

The Natural Resources of this State, especially its wildlife and the beautiful places in which these animals live, as well as the forests which guard the water catchment areas so vital to the survival of man and beast are a priceless heritage for the future. The Government of the Midwestern State, fully realising the value of its natural resources has decided to conserve them for posterity with all the means at its disposal.

In pursuance of this, Government will develop and utilize to the fullest, the natural resources and wildlife potential of the State by converting the Udo Forest Reserve, the Sakpoba Forest Reserve and, the Okomu (Nikrowa) Forest Reserve into Game Reserves and State Parks and developing them to attract tourists both from within and from outside the country.

Grain Storage Facilities

The ₦500,000 provision is intended to supplement a grant from the Federal Government received last financial year. It will be utilised to build grain storage facilities in order to minimise waste and ensure a fairly steady grain supply in the State all the year round. Two storage silos will be built, one at Ubiaja at a cost of ₦500,000 and a second at a site yet to be chosen also at a cost of ₦500,000. Each silo will be capable of storing 5,000 — 6,000 tons of grains. In addition, a store has been renovated in Benin and will hold another 1,000 tons of grains.

Since wastage and spoilage of grains on small-scale farms accounts for a considerable loss of the grain crop, it is the intention of government, through one of its agencies, to locally manufacture small silos suitable for use on medium and large-scale farms. Government will make loans available to medium and small-scale farmers for the purchase of such silos.

In order to combat insect and pest infestation and damage on grain crops, Government will extend the existing serial spraying of large-scale mechanised farms with insecticides to community farms and farm settlements.

Seed Multiplication

Apart from the usual multiplication of rice and maize seed for distribution to farmers, research will begin in the new financial year into the production of hybrid maize seed in order to increase yields. Government in collaboration with the private sector will subsequently go into the production of hybrid seed for distribution to farmers.

Cocoa and Oil Palm Small-Holders Scheme

Of the total provision of ₦836,600, ₦451,600 is meant for cocoa and ₦385,000 for oil palm small-holders scheme. Both provisions will be used to assist cocoa and oil palm farmers with a view to increasing the out-put of cocoa and oil palm products which have fallen very low in recent years. The scheme will be completed in about 5 years time and will cost a total of over ₦11 million out of which the Midwest Government will contribute 25% the Federal Government 25% and the World Bank 50% repayable over a long period of time. The State Marketing Board is also engaged in the development of oil palm and cocoa plantations.

Oil Palm Plantations

Government will commence work on two new oil palm plantations. One at Usen — Oghada — Ogbesse in Benin West Division and the other at Igieduma in Benin East Division in the new financial year. Each of these plantations will be 6,000 hectares. When mature, the plantations will supply palm oil and palm kernel products for domestic consumption and for export.

In addition, Government will re-activate and develop into viable projects various experimental oil palm plots located in different places in Western Ijaw Division.

Rubber Development

A total provision of ₦100,000 is being spent for rubber development during the year. In addition, the Midwest Rubber Development Agency — a Government agency — will spend over ₦300,000 on new rubber plantations estimated to eventually cost ₦674,645. To improve production in the State, the agency has for some time now been exploring ingenious methods which include the exploitation of privately-owned and abandoned farms, the proceeds of which are shared on a 2 : 1 basis (2 to the farmer and 1 to the agency) after the agency deducts its expenses.

Livestock

As already stated, a total of ₦2.6 million will be spent this year on livestock development at Igarra, Oria and Ubiaja. The cattle population of the

ranch at Igarra will be increased, the main intention being for the ranch to produce beef for consumption in the State. The Oria 8,000 hectare project will produce both dairy products and beef for local consumption while the Ubiaja goat and sheep ranch will produce mainly dairy products. The last projects, in fact began to sell milk to the public in the last financial year. The existing Pilot Dairy Project at Ubiaja will be expanded in the new financial year into a modern commercial dairy which will produce butter, milk and yoghurt.

The aim of our livestock programme is not only to increase our cattle population through the multiplication of exotic breeds but also to upgrade our local cattle by cross-breeding with superior exotic types. To this end, it is intended during the 1974/75 financial year to train personnel in artificial insemination techniques. By this means, our local cattle will be made to produce larger, quicker-fattening calves.

In addition to the Igarra, Oria and Ubiaja Cattle, Sheep and Goat Ranches, Government will encourage medium and large-scale farmers by means of loan in kind to keep their own dairy and beef cattle. Government will also establish a feedlot system whereby calves produced in privately-owned dairies and ranches will be purchased by Government for fattening in order to reduce the stress on pastures maintained by such farmers. Some cattle will also be kept in the existing Government large-scale mechanised Farms at Agbede and Warrake for beef production. Government will establish modern slaughter houses or abattoir in each of the six principal towns in the State.

Two new ranches at Patani and Uzere-Irri will be established for water buffalo experiments. The water buffalo will be expected to produce milk and beef.

Work on the livestock Investigation Centre in Benin City will be accelerated and completed in the new financial year in order to provide up-to-date facilities for the diagnosis and control of livestock and other animal diseases.

Feasibility studies on irrigation systems in large-scale ranches will be undertaken in the new year to enable us make the maximum use of our land and water resources.

Mechanised Farms

During the last financial year, a high-powered Government delegation visited Yugoslavia, Western Germany, and the United States of America to negotiate the establishment of large-scale mechanised farms and fish farms. It is hoped that these projects will commence in this financial year. The total provision of approximately ₦4.7 million approved for mechanised farms is allocated as follows:

Agbede Farm	₦485,300
Warrake Farm	₦1.2 million
Others	₦3.0 million

The Agbede Farm has already been established

and is functioning. At the end of the last financial year, it made a profit of ₦193,000. As you should be aware, another mechanised farm at a cost of ₦1.2 million will be established at Warrake this year. In addition, work on large fish ponds in the Delta areas of the State will start this new year. Apart from these projects, new mechanised farms will also be started in areas yet to be chosen. A swamp rice project will be established at Ndoni in Aboh Division. It is expected that these new projects will cost about ₦22 million on completion but part of the financing costs will be met from the profit to be made from the projects themselves.

In order to ensure effective co-ordination of the work of the several existing and proposed large-scale mechanised Farm Project, a Midwest Farms Management Board was established towards the end of the 1973/74 financial year. The Board will, in addition to co-ordinating the work of the various Farms, also commence operations in the fields of purchase, storage, distribution and processing of essential grains like maize and rice in the new financial year.

Tractor Hiring Service

The nucleus of a tractor hiring service which was established during the outgoing financial year will be expanded in the new year. The service provides for the hire, at 50% subsidy, of farm machinery and equipment for clearing and preparing new farmland for planting. I advise farmers to take advantage of this service, which is currently available at Ubiaja and Agbor.

Loans/Grants to Farmers and Fishermen

Apart from the foregoing, the Government has approved an additional ₦800,000 to assist farmers and fishermen either as loans or grants. Out of this provision, ₦200,000 will be used to assist farmers who participate in the Community Farm Projects and ₦600,000 will be given out as loans. All these measures are intended to boost agricultural production in the State so that more food, meat and fish may become available at reduced prices. In addition to loans to small-scale farmers, it is now the policy of Government to give medium-size loans ranging from ₦10,000 to ₦30,000 to large-scale farmers. Last year 9 farmers benefited from the loan; during the current year more people will be considered. I wish to appeal to would-be recipients of these grants and loans to make proper use of them.

The Federal Military Government established last year, the Nigerian Agricultural Bank with Headquarters in Kaduna to provide loans for large scale farming both to individuals, organisations and Governments. It appears that many Midwesterners are either not aware of the existence of the Bank or are not taking advantage of the facilities provided by the Bank. In order to qualify for consideration for loans from the

Nigerian Agricultural Credit Bank, farmers are advised to register and obtain title deeds for their farmlands.

Training School

In addition to the Farmers' Training Centre which is being established at Igbanke to give practical training to farmers in modern farming and cooperative marketing practices, work will commence in the new financial year on the establishment of a school of Agriculture. The School will train intermediate manpower for the Extension of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and potential managers for privately-owned medium-scale farmers will be established.

Trade and Industry

A total of ₦18,893,610 has been approved for various industrial projects out of which ₦7,756,640 (representing 7.6% of the capital budget) will be spent on direct investments by the Government, i.e. for payment for shares and establishing new projects and the balance of ₦11,136,970 (representing 10.9% of the capital budget) is earmarked as loans mainly to various Government-sponsored companies and agencies. The major companies and bodies that will benefit from the total provision are: Electro-Chemical Industry ₦0.53 million; the Midwest Brewery ₦1.12 million; Medical Cotton and Bandage Factory ₦0.46 million; Ukpilla Cement Factory ₦3.0 million; Bottle Manufacturing Industry (Provision yet to be determined for the year); Ughelli Glass Factory (Reactivation) ₦0.6 million; Local Government Councils Loans Fund ₦2.2 million; Indigenous Businessmen ₦0.4 million; Loan to Niger Agencies Limited ₦1.0 million; Loan to Bendel Steel Structures ₦2.5 million; New Industries ₦3.7 million.

I now wish to comment on these industrial projects:

Electro-Chemical Industry

This project estimated to cost over half a million Naira was started in the last financial year. On completion it will manufacture car batteries from local materials and so help to reduce our dependence on foreign manufactured batteries.

Midwest Brewery

About ₦2.5 million has already been spent on this brewery which is expected to be completed and to go into production during the financial year at a total cost of about ₦4 million. The product of the brewery is expected to be of the highest quality.

Medical Cotton and Bandage Factory

Work has already started on this factory which is expected to cost about half a million Naira on completion. When it goes into production it will manufacture dressings for hospitals. We hope that this factory and the Midwest Pharmaceutical Company (when that factory also goes into production) will help to reduce our dependence on imported medical drugs and dressings.

Ukpilla Cement Factory

The reactivation of the Ukpilla Cement Factory which broke down in September, 1972 barely six months after it began production has already started. It is expected to cost about ₦1.5 million while other expenses in respect of the factory are expected to cost another ₦1.5 million. All being well it will resume production in the course of this financial year, between November and December. Apart from this, arrangements have been concluded to provide the factory with a large generating plant of its own at a cost of about ₦1.7 million in the course of the financial year and plans are under consideration to expand its production capacity because of the world shortage and increasing demand for cement.

Ughelli Glass Factory

Agreement for the reactivation of the Ughelli Glass Factory has already been signed and work, which was slightly delayed because of foreign exchange difficulties, is expected to begin very soon. It is estimated to cost about ₦578,000 on completion and should resume production between November and December this year.

Loans to Local Government Councils

A total of ₦2.2 million has been provided to Local Government Councils through the loans fund established last year. The money is meant to be used by councils for the development of various industrial and commercial projects. In addition, the Government has approved ₦3.1 million also to be used for development purposes in the various Local Government Council areas. The provision of ₦3.1 million will be distributed as follows: Aboh Division ₦250,000; Akoko Edo Division ₦100,000; Asaba Division ₦200,000; Benin East Division ₦150,000; Benin West Division ₦100,000; Etsako Division ₦100,000; Ika Division ₦100,000; Ishan Division ₦200,000; Isoko Division ₦400,000; Owan Division ₦100,000; Urhobo East Division ₦400,000; Urhobo West Division ₦250,000; Warri Division ₦350,000; Western Ijaw Division ₦450,000.

The Government is anxious to assist Local Government Councils in the State to improve their revenue and to provide basic amenities.

Loans to Indigenous Businessmen

Apart from the small-scale industries fund on which I will comment later, Government has approved N400,000 for the purpose of granting loans to deserving indigenous businessmen and women. If the various banks continue to assist as in the past then this amount will be a useful addition for the purpose of helping large scale industries in the State.

Loan to Niger Agencies Limited

The Niger Agencies Limited, a Company wholly owned by the State Government is being granted a loan of N1 million to expand and to re-organise itself so that it can more actively participate in the trading business. The Company is already planning to buy a cargo ship to convey cement and other scarce commodities and it is expected that with improvement in its finances and staff it will increase its efforts to serve both the Government and the private sector. I hope you all know that it has a well established office in London and has overseas correspondents who can assist it to arrange orders.

Loan to Bendel Steel Structures

The Bendel Steel Structures which is based in Warri and is now wholly owned by the State Government, fabricates steel tanks and allied products. The proposed N2.5 million loan to it is intended to assist it to improve its workshop and capacity in order to be able to cope with bigger orders.

Delta Boatyard

This Company which is owned by the Government is responsible for the maintenance of all Government launches. The company proposes to expand its working space and as such the Government is granting it a soft loan of N562,450 during this financial year. It is hoped that with this loan it will be well established and will be able to make a greater impact in the transport sector within the State.

New Industries

N3.7 million has been approved for new industrial projects and for purchase of shares in reputable companies in pursuance of the Federal Government's Indigenisation Decree. To date, the Government has acquired shares in five such companies, bought over a sixth completely and is currently negotiating to acquire shares in another one.

Apart from the above mentioned industries, there are others that you would undoubtedly like to know something about. I wish therefore to give a few details about them also.

Bottle Manufacturing Factory

A new Bottle Manufacturing Factory which will be established at Ughelli near the Glass Factory is currently being discussed with our proposed foreign partners. The estimated total cost is about N1.1 million but actual expenditure in the course of this financial year has not been determined. The Factory is expected to provide bottles needed by various industries throughout the country. The feasibility study of the project which has been completed shows that it will be a very viable project.

Auchi Textile Centre

The Auchi Textile Centre will be expanded during the year at a total cost of N35,000. More modern machines will be provided and the centre will offer better training facilities to indigenes who are interested in cottage textile industry.

Wood Working Industrial Project

A Wood Working Industrial Project will be established by the Ministry of Trade and Industry at a total cost of N17,500 in the course of the year. The industry will offer training to carpenters and other allied wood workers. This is necessary in order to develop the local talents which are known to abundantly exist in the State. The industry will have a mobile unit so that it can reach people in the rural areas.

Small-scale Industries

During the last financial year the Government established the Small-scale Industries Fund which now has funds amounting to more than N400,000. For the new year the Government has approved N100,000 for the fund. The Committee appointed to administer it will begin disbursement this year and we hope that many small-scale businessmen and women will be able to benefit from it.

As of now the Government either owns or participates in a total of about thirty-seven companies and industrial projects. The main objectives of our policy has been:

to contribute towards the achievement of economic independence and to diversify the economy of the State which is ordinarily very important for any economy and is particularly important for us when we recall that it is only a matter of time when the oil in the country may begin to atrophy and when therefore the revenue from that source may dwindle to insignificance.

Apart from taking advantage of the facilities the State Government is offering, we hope that all industrialists in the State will also try to take advantage of the Federal Government's recently established Bank of Commerce and Industry to improve their businesses.

Finance

As His Excellency the Military Governor of the Midwestern State of Nigeria announced, the New Nigeria Bank will be expanded to enable it build more branches (especially in the rural areas) and to provide banking facilities to deserving indigenous businessmen and women. To meet this objective the Government is considering an increase of the Bank's share capital to at least ₦8 million in the first instance and possibly to ₦12 million later, 51% of which will continue to be held by the Government. The Bank has made excellent progress in only three years of operation and, therefore, deserves every encouragement. It is important to increase its share capital so that it can render financial assistance to many more people than at present. At this point, I should like to express my gratitude to other commercial banks operating in the State not only for their past co-operation with the Government but also for their assistance to our indigenous entrepreneurs. We will continue to patronise them and hope that they will increase their assistance to our people.

Sub Treasuries and Licensing Offices

A new Treasury Cash Office will be built in Benin to ease the congestion at the Headquarters. Six more will be built in various Divisional Headquarters in pursuance of Government policy to build good offices in all Divisional Headquarters and important towns. Licensing Offices will also be built in six Divisional Headquarters during the present financial year.

Electricity Supply

In the 1972-73 financial year the Government established the Rural Electricity Board with the aim of providing light and power supply in the rural areas of the State. The Board accordingly directs its activities mainly to the rural areas, its main objective being not only to make life more tolerable in the rural areas but to attract suitable industrial projects to all rural areas and so help to reduce the out-flow of the rural population to the large towns. Although the Board was established in the 1972-73 year it is already operating eleven stations at a cost of about ₦4 million in the following places: Uromi, Ubiaja, Afuze, Agenebode, Agbede, Agbarho, Igbanke, Ogwashi-Uku, Iguobazuwa, Orerokpe and Bomadi.

In addition, the Board completed work in the following four towns whose stations will be commissioned not later than July this year: Olch, Kwale, Igarra and Uwheru.

For the current year, a total of ₦4.5 million has been approved for the services of the Board,

₦1.5 million for recurrent expenditure and ₦3 million or 3% of our capital budget for capital projects. During the year the Board will commence work in 46 towns spread throughout the State, namely:

Benin East: Urhonigbe, Ehor, Evboesi, Evbohigbae, Ugoneki, Uhi, Ugo;
Benin West: Oluku, Odighi, Orah, Okoro II, Iguobazuwa II;
Urhobo East: Otujeremi, Ewreni, Okpari, Orogun, Agbarhra-Otor;
Urhobo West: Okpara Inland, Oru, Elemu, Abraka, Oviri Okpe, Eku, Alaja;
Asaba: Ibusa, Issele-Uku/Nkpitime, Akwukwu, Ebu, Ubulu-Uku;
Isoko: Ozoro, Uzere, Irri, Iyede, Emede, Enwhe, Iluologbo, Olomoro;
Warri: Okerenghigbo, Batere, Ogidigben/Ogborodo, Gbokoda, Orere-Beni River, Ode-Itsekiri, Ubesen;
Ika: Mbiri, Abavo, Akumazi, Owa-Oyibu, Ekuku Agbor, Agbor-Alirima;
Ishan: Ewohimi, Irrua, Ekpoma, Iruekpen, Ewu;
Akoko-Edo: Ibillo, Ososo;
Owan: Sabongidda-Ora, Otuo, Ozalla, Sebe, Etsako: Fugar, Ogbona, Iraokor;
Aboh: Ashaka, Abbi, Ogume, Amai;
Western Ijaw: Patani, Agbere-Odoni, Ojobo, Ayakoromo, Kiagbodo, Aleibiri, Torugbene, Okpokunu, Ofoni.

Road Development

A total of ₦20,782,780 (representing 20.4% of the Capital Budget) has been approved for the development of roads and bridges during the year. Among the most important roads to be reconstructed are the following:

Patani/Ughelli/Warri Road: Work has already started on this road which on completion is expected to cost ₦8.2 million. For the current year it is proposed to spend ₦1.44 million. It is one of the most important roads which will link the Midwestern State and the Rivers State.

Irri-Ivrogbor-Ozoro-Ihue-Ologbo: The estimated total cost of this road is ₦2.4 million out of which ₦500,000 will be spent this year. On completion the road will link parts of Aboh and Isoko Divisions.

Benin, Warri, Sapele, and Agbor Township Roads: The Government is helping the respective local government councils to reconstruct some major roads in Benin, Warri, Sapele and Agbor. These roads are expected to cost over ₦2.5 million on completion but for the current financial year about ₦1 million has been approved for them.

Roads in Divisional Headquarters: The Government is also assisting other Local Government Councils to reconstruct six miles of roads in each divisional headquarters. The roads on completion will cost over ₦1 million.

Amukpe-Eku-Obiaruku-Urhonigbe-Agbor-Ewohimi-Ewu Road: The estimated total cost of this road is ₦6.9 million and expenditure for this new year is expected to amount to ₦700,000. The road on completion will link the Benin-Warri road with the Benin-Okene road at Ewu. It will connect several towns within the State, e.g. Sapele, Eku, Abraka, Obiaruku, Umutu, Urhonigbe, Agbor, etc.

Irukepken-Uzzeba-Ifon Road: The estimated total cost of this road is ₦3.7 million and expenditure this year will be about ₦400,000. When completed, the road will link parts of Ishan and Owan divisions with the Western State.

Agbor - Umunede - Ogwashi-Uku - Ibusa - Asaba - Isele-Asagba Road: The estimated total cost of this project is ₦3.3 million out of which ₦1.2 million has been provided in this financial year. It is designed to connect towns in Ika and Asaba divisions of the State.

Other Roads: Apart from the above-mentioned roads there are a number of roads and bridges under package deals given on contract to reputable contractors. Prominent among them are: Ekakpamre - Egin - Warri road, Patani - Kpakiam road, Ohoro - Bomadi road, Benin - Ikpe - Ugo - Evboesi road.

This package deal is estimated to cost about ₦29.8 million out of which ₦5.3 million has been approved for this financial year. The Bomadi road will link the Patani-Evwreni-Warri road and, therefore, provide access to people in Western Ijaw. The importance of Ekakpamre-Egin-Warri road is that it is expected to link Warri with Egin as the contract includes the bridge along this road. Work on this road has gone far. For residential and industrial purposes Government has acquired 2,400 hectares of land along these roads: Abbi-Amai road, Auchi-Jattu-Agenebode road, Benin-Iguoriakhi-Iguobazuwa-Gbelebu road, and Siluko-Usen-Ogbese road.

This is yet another package deal with a total contract price of ₦10.4 million out of which ₦3 million has been approved for this financial year. These roads will improve the net work of roads in the State in the interest of our economic growth. It will be observed that most of these roads could be described as evacuation roads as they link areas of agricultural production with the major trunk A roads of the State.

Bridges

In order to make the roads safe and complete for use when constructed, bridges have to be built where necessary. Accordingly the following bridges are being constructed:

Ewatto Bridge: The total estimated cost of this bridge is ₦158,000 out of which ₦100,000 has been approved for this financial year.

Iguoriakhi Bridge: This is on the Benin-Iguobazuwa road. The estimated total cost is ₦1.8

million, out of which ₦200,000 has been approved for the current year.

Orhionmwon Bridge: The total estimated cost of this bridge is ₦2 million. The sum provided this financial year stands at ₦1.2 million. This bridge is on the Benin-Ikpe-Ugo-Evboesi-Abraka Roads.

Obiaruku-Amai Road Bridges: A sum of ₦114,200 has been provided for these bridges this year.

Water Transportation: In order to make the riverine areas enjoy regular transport service the Government has provided the sum of ₦1.2 million for the purchase of vessels to ply the water-ways.

Plant Hiring Service

In addition to the plant hiring services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources operated at Agbor and Ubiaja for the benefit of farmers; the Ministry of Works and Transport will organise a second plant hiring service intended to cater mainly for road and building contractors. The aim is to assist contractors who cannot afford to buy the expensive machinery they require.

Education

A total provision of ₦43,306,220 is approved for Education. This provision amounts to 23.1% of the total Capital and recurrent expenditure budget of ₦187,049,370. The break-down is as follows: Ministry of Education (Recurrent Expenditure)—₦1,084,320; Education Boards—₦23,404,710; Abraka College of Education (Capital and Recurrent)—₦800,000; Midwest Polytechnic—₦1,198,000; State Library Board (Capital and Recurrent)—₦960,400; University of Benin (Capital and Recurrent)—₦10,441,770; Ethiope Publishing Corporation—₦247,000; Other Capital Expenditures—5,170,020.

Education Boards

Education Boards accounted for a total of ₦18.76 million in the last financial year but now account for ₦23.4 million this year which is more than last year's provision by nearly ₦5 million. This is obviously a large sum of money to spend in one financial year and shows how anxious Government is that the Education Boards should have sufficient funds to be able to render efficient services.

Teacher's Vehicle Advance Fund

Teachers in the State began to receive vehicle advances along with civil servants since the 1972/73 financial year and by the end of the 1973/74 financial year 377 teachers had been granted advances totalling ₦1,075,250. With effect from the current financial year the Government has approved a separate advances fund for them with a provision of ₦450,000 for the year.

Teachers Housing Scheme

The Government has also approved a teacher's housing scheme for which ₦750,000 has been set aside for the current year. It is hoped that this will further improve the morale of teachers.

Abraka College of Education

It is intended to merge this institution with the University of Benin. At the moment apart from its normal curriculum, it operates a centre for training science teachers which is a part of the programme of the Government for preparing science teachers against the Universal Primary Education.

The Midwest Polytechnic

The Midwest Polytechnic is being provided with new equipment and the conditions of service of the academic staff are being improved to make them the same as those in similar institutions. For last year the Government spent ₦500,000 on this institution and for this year ₦1,198,000 has been approved. It is intended to expand it so as to increase its student population eventually to 2,000 during the Third National Development Plan Period.

The University of Benin

As you all know, the University of Benin is one of the biggest projects of the Government. For the last financial year Government spent about ₦7 million on it — ₦3 million for recurrent services and ₦4 million for capital projects. For this year a total of ₦10.4 million has been approved for it, ₦5.6 million for recurrent services and ₦4.8 million for the development of its permanent site to which, we hope, it will be able to move during the year. The Government is doing everything within its means to make this premium institution worthy of its name and role in the country. New faculties will be introduced in the course of the current year.

The Ethiope Publishing Corporation

The Ethiope Publishing Corporation provides bookshops in various towns and also tries to encourage indigenous authors. It intends to provide books that will be suitable for use in our schools to replace out-moded authors. We hope it will contribute in no small way to educational development in the State.

Other projects or Schemes which will be implemented this year include the following: completing eight new modern primary schools on which work has already begun to provide about 96 classrooms and also to building about eight new ones.

to bulk-purchase more science equipment at a cost of over ₦400,000 for all post-primary institutions in the State to expand some of the existing grammar schools and build new ones especially in educationally backward areas;

to begin improving the existing Teacher Training Colleges in order to increase their student population eventually to an average of 1,000 students per college and so produce sufficient teachers for the Universal Primary Education programme of the Federal Government;

to begin expanding existing trade schools so that by 1980 each of them would be able to admit 1,000 students;

to accelerate the development of the University of Benin permanent site for which ₦4.8 million has been approved;

and to building 5 new Education Board Offices at Afuze, Iguobazuwa, Bomadi, Igarra and Orerokpe.

Health and Medical Services

For the new year a total of ₦19,054,700 has been approved for medical and health services — both capital and recurrent — made up of Ministry of Health (Recurrent Expenditure) — ₦1.44m; Subvention to Local Government Councils — ₦0.24m; Subvention to non-Government Hospitals — ₦0.1m; State Hospitals Management Board — ₦7.0m; U.B.T.H. (Capital and Recurrent) — ₦8.8m; New Government Hospitals — ₦1.2m; Other capital projects including equipment — ₦0.55m. This provision for medical and health services is 10.2% of the total expenditure budget of ₦187 million.

State Hospitals Management Board

The approved subvention of ₦7 million this new year to the State Hospitals Management Board exceeds last years provision of ₦4.4 million by as much as ₦2.6 million. The Government is aware of complaints of drug shortages in hospitals. The increased subvention is, therefore, meant to take account of past drug shortages and also to cater for new hospitals to be opened in the new year.

In pursuance of the gigantic hospitals development programme enunciated by the State Government construction work was embarked upon at various times during the current Plan Period on a number of hospitals. At present, there are 24 such hospitals which have either been completed or are at advanced stages of construction.

Two of these hospitals, viz., General Hospitals, Igbanke and Bomadi, were commissioned during the 1973/74 financial year. It is expected that early in the 1974/75 financial year, the following new General Hospitals which have been completed,

will be opened in the following towns: Agbede, Abudu, Agenebode, Ebu, Ibillo, Iguobazuwa, Patani, Ubaja, Umunede and Uzebba.

It is proposed that later in the course of the year 12 additional hospitals will be completed and opened. An expenditure of ₦2.4 million has been incurred in this sector of Government development efforts and it is expected that when all the projects are completed this figure will rise to about ₦3.6 million. An additional expenditure of about ₦5 million will also be incurred in the pre-installation works and in the provision of all items of equipment and furniture in the hospitals.

Work on each of the 5 under-mentioned hospitals to complete our present programme, will commence in the current financial year, in the following towns: Afuze, Uhi, Okuama, Ogwashi-Uku, and Oleh. Each of these proposed hospitals is estimated to cost ₦150,000, exclusive of the costs of pre-installation works and purchase of equipment and furniture which respectively are estimated at ₦5,000 and ₦201,000 for each of them.

The present level of investment in health and medical services indicates a performance of over 90%. Essentially, the 1974/75 financial year will be a year of consolidation on those projects which had been begun earlier in the present Plan Period, although five new projects as indicated above have been proposed for commencement so as to fully consummate the hospital development programme.

Others

At present there are 23 functioning Government Hospitals in the State. These are: Specialist Hospital, Benin City; General Hospital, Agbor; General Hospital, Asaba; General Hospital, Auchi; General Hospital, Kwale; General Hospital, Uromi; General Hospital, Sapele; General Hospital, Warri; General Hospital, Forcados; Ossiomo Sanatorium, Ossiomo; General Hospital, Igarra; General Hospital, Sabongidda-Ora; Psychiatric Hospital, Benin City; Ogbe Nursing Home, Benin City; General Hospital, Ibusa; General Hospital, Akwukwu; General Hospital, Obiaruku; Mariere Memorial Hospital, Ughelli; General Hospital, Orokpe; General Hospital, Oleh; General Hospital, Ilue-Ologbo; General Hospital, Igbanke; and General Hospital, Bomadi. These hospitals share among them about 1,900 beds.

Also at present there are 9 Voluntary Agency and 10 private hospitals in the State. The following Voluntary Agency hospitals receive annual financial grants from the Government: St. Camillus Hospital, Uromi; Zuma Memorial Hospital, Irrua; St. Philomena's Maternity Hospital, Benin City; St. Mary's Hospital, Ogwashi-Uku; Pilgrim Baptist Hospital, Issele-Uku; Baptist Hospital, Eku; St. Luke's Catholic Hospital, Ozoro; Notre Dame Maternity Hospital, Uzairue; and Opus Dei Maternity Hospital, Ozalla.

Up to 1967 there were only 10 Government

Hospitals in the State. These were: General Hospital, Benin City; General Hospital, Agbor; General Hospital, Asaba; General Hospital, Kwale; General Hospital, Auchi; General Hospital, Uromi; General Hospital, Sapele; General Hospital, Warri; and General Hospital, Forcados.

The University of Benin Teaching Hospital

For the last financial year Government spent over ₦5 million on the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, ₦4 million for recurrent expenditure and over ₦1 million for capital projects. For this year the total approved subvention is ₦8.8 million, ₦5.7 million for recurrent expenditure and ₦3.1 million for capital projects. Already, its School of Nursing has been completed and has begun to offer training courses. The Hospital has also begun to offer training facilities for clinical students of the University itself. Like the University, this Teaching Hospital is no doubt one of the monuments of our time and the Government is doing its best to make it second to none in the country in the fields in which it provides services. It may interest you, for instance, to know that an Intensive Care Unit and an Accident Wing are being established in order to provide facilities for concentrated attention to very serious cases of emergency and accidents. We sincerely hope the Hospital will serve the State and Country to the best of its ability.

Water Supply

For the current year the Government is making available to the State Water Board ₦8 million for its services, ₦7.6 million for capital projects and ₦400,000 for its recurrent expenditure. The ₦7.6 million approved for capital projects is ₦5.1 million more than the revised capital expenditure estimate of ₦2.5 million for the last year. The objective of Government is eventually to provide every community with good water supply and this it intends to achieve not only through bigger schemes like the Akoko-Edo Dam project which cost about ₦3 million but through rural water supply schemes details of which are at present being worked out. It is expected that over ten towns and villages will benefit from this scheme this year. Apart from embarking on new schemes, it is intended to improve existing schemes in the larger cities like Benin and Warri in order to minimise the incidence of water shortage. As many of you might already have noticed, most of the existing pipes in Benin are being replaced with bigger pipes for this purpose. I hope that the Government will receive sufficient encouragement for the large sums of money it is spending for these and other services through the ready payment by every one of existing rates.

Housing Schemes

The Government now has two distinct housing programmes, namely:

- (a) its normal programme which is implemented through the instrumentality of the Bendel Development and Planning Authority; and
- (b) a new programme which it is implementing directly and through which it is intended to build 1,000 low-cost houses throughout the State.

Facilities provided by the Bendel Development and Planning Authority include mortgage loans and housing estates. As for the Government's low-cost housing scheme, work began on some of the houses in the 1973-74 year. The aim is to build 1,000 low-cost houses by the end of this financial year, distributed as follows: Warri 190; Agbor 90; Igarra 65; Auchi 65; Ughelli 65; Ogwashi-Uku 65; Oleh 40; Bomadi 40; Afuze 40; Abudu 40; Igubazuwa 40; Kwale 40; Orerokpe 40; Ubiaja 40; Sapele 100; Asaba 40; Total 1,000

It is hoped that these schemes will assist to ease the housing problem in the State and to encourage many people to own their own houses.

In addition to the State's own schemes, the Federal Government is building 4,000 housing units in the State out of which 250 units are to be built this year. Work has also started on these schemes in the State capital.

Fire Fighting Service

For a State that is growing as fast as ours an efficient fire-fighting service is necessary. Accordingly, the Government will re-open the former stations at Agbor, Auchi, and Asaba which could not be re-opened in the last financial year. In addition, a total of ₦136,000 is being spent this year for the purchase of fire-fighting equipment. This is ₦100,000 more than last year's provision of ₦36,000.

Community Development

For the current year ₦100,000 has been approved for Community Development grants as against ₦20,000 for the last financial year. The Government decided to increase this grant this year in appreciation of the continued enthusiasm of various communities to provide themselves amenities and essential services through self-effort. Apart from giving grants, the Government will continue to provide free technical advice. It is hoped that the increase in this grant will provide greater impetus for the various communities to work harder.

Integrated Rural Development

A total of ₦156,980 has been approved this year

as against ₦49,000 last year for our Integrated Rural Development programme. Under the programme training is offered to various village leaders to enable them provide leadership for community development work and generally in community affairs. We hope that many more leaders will come forward to take advantage of the increased number of training courses that will be offered this year.

Information

The Government now has two important information media, the MTV (for which a subvention of over ₦1.5 million has been approved this year) and the "Nigeria Observer". The aim in establishing both media is not only to serve the interests of the Midwest State but also to serve the interests of the entire Federation and we believe that this objective is being fulfilled. The Government expects both media to pursue this objective with the main aim of not only keeping people well-informed about day-to-day events but also of strengthening the bonds of unity that hold the States together. His Excellency has already elaborated on this point in his speech and it is hardly necessary for me to say more.

Educational Television Service

As you are all aware, an Educational Television Service was introduced during last year by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the MTV. So far this programme appears to have proved very successful and so will be gradually expanded. For this new year ₦123,000 has been approved for the service in addition to the sum of ₦100,000 meant for purchase of TV sets for distribution to those Grammar Schools that do not already have any. The aim of Government is to eventually provide all educational institutions in the State—including primary schools—with TV sets.

Administration

Out of the provision of over ₦17 million approved for various building projects for the year, over ₦4 million is meant for various administrative buildings, notably, the Headquarters Secretariat—₦2m; the Benin High Court—₦1m; Courts and Quarters for Judicial Personnel—₦0.3m; Sub-Divisional Offices—₦0.3m.

It is expected that a number of office blocks, especially in Benin will be completed and occupied by some of the departments at present housed in rented buildings. This, we hope, will both ease the housing situation in the State's capital and also improve the morale of officials. In the Delta area, the main office of the Ministry of Works and Transport has begun to move to Effurun. The Government expects that before the beginning of the Third National Development Plan Period, the

secretariat building in Benin would have been completed for occupation.

Flooding in Major Towns

To combat the menace of flooding and erosion in the major towns which occur during the rainy seasons, the Government has decided to seek external aid in order to solve the problem. It is estimated that it will cost over ₦10 million to combat the flooding in Benin, Sapele and Warri alone and already Government has begun to explore the possibility of obtaining aid. If however, no aid is forth-coming then the Government may decide to proceed with its own resources.

Sports

A total of ₦2.9 million is approved for sports during the year, made up of ₦2 million for the development of stadia and ₦912,000 for the recurrent services of the Sports Council and other Sports Governing Bodies including the Ogbe Stadium Management Committee for which ₦12,000 is approved. The ₦2 million earmarked for stadia development will be spent on the following stadia:

Akenzua Sports Centre, in Benin, which is intended as a new sporting complex in the State capital;

improving the Ogbe Stadium, including providing a modern synthetic track;

Warri Stadium, expected to cost ₦1 million on completion;

Sapele Stadium also estimated to cost ₦341,000;

three stadia located in the Divisional Headquarters which will be completed during the year each at a cost of ₦372,000.

The Government is grateful to all those who have been working hard to make the State successful in sporting activities and hopes every one will continue to give of his best.

Uniform Taxation

Finally, I will not like to end this statement without reference to the recent decision of the Federal Military Government to introduce, during this financial year, uniform taxation in the Federation. The advantages of a uniform income tax in the Federation are many. One such advantage is that it will facilitate manpower mobility, and this in turn will facilitate rapid economic development and national unity. Details of the reliefs and new tax rates are being worked out and public announcement will be made by the Federal Government before long. It is certain that additional reliefs will be available to income tax payers in this State, since the new rates will be lower than the existing ones. On the whole, tax payers will pay less under the proposed uniform tax than they do at present. Tax payers will, therefore, have no valid excuse for not paying up

their income tax promptly and so fulfil one of their civic responsibilities.

Fiscal Measures

While on this subject of taxation, I should like to mention that the Government is not introducing any new taxes this year excepting possibly two of those approved last year but which could not be introduced before the year ended, namely: registration of titles fees; and registration of business premises fees.

The back-ground work for the introduction of these two measures is still being carried out but it must be mentioned that the first of them — registration of titles fee — will not be an economic fee, since the service for which it is to be charged will be considerably subsidised by Government as a social service.

Apart from these two, the Government is contemplating revising a few fees which are already being charged and especially: Palm Wine Licence fee which is collected by local government councils and against which palm wine sellers have protested to my Ministry and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs and Casino tax against which there has also been strong protest, especially tax on winnings.

In addition, consideration is also being given to reviewing the special development rates which a number of Local government councils in the State levy and which in some areas appear to be as high as ₦2 per tax payer.

I should like to seize the opportunity of this statement to appeal to all investors — both Nigerians and foreigners — to come forward to invest in the Midwest State in order that we may realise to the full the objective of the efforts of the Government in trying to even out development in the State. Everything possible is being done to supply water, electricity and other services in as many places as possible and to extend the road net-work to all communities. We hope, therefore, that investors will come forward to take advantage of these basic services and to play their part in the social and economic development of the State.

In conclusion, I should like to immensely thank everyone in the State for the whole-hearted co-operation and goodwill which the Government has enjoyed in the past. It has been a source of encouragement to the Government and the Government hopes it will continue. The Government derives satisfaction from serving you and so looks forward to constructive and positive contribution to its programme of development. We hope the new year brings you a fulfilment of your hopes.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Chief A. Okolocha (Aboh Division): I am asking whether it is possible for your Government to take over the roads now being constructed by some oil companies?

Military Governor: As soon as they construct the roads and they are leaving, we'll take them over. That is our plan.

Second Question (Aboh Division): The TV sets you distributed in the area (Aboh Division) are often out of order, is it possible for your Government to retain permanent repairer in the area because sometimes we don't make use of them throughout a whole week?

Military Governor: In the past we experienced a number of problems with the TV sets; a new management has just been set up. The Permanent Secretary in charge of Divisional Administration has taken over the installation and maintenance of these sets. In the new year, this Administration will be in a position to keep the sets going when necessary.

Third Question (Aboh Division): For sometime now we have not been getting bus services. Is it possible for your Government to see that bus services go all along from Warri to Abbi, Amai and straight to Obiaruku, now that you have assured us that you are going to repair the bridges? How soon will the bus services come to the area (Aboh Division)?

Military Governor: In the Midwest we are buying more buses and many more local councils will have buses allocated to them for which they will pay back instalmentally to Government.

Aboh Division with its headquarters at Kwale will have an allocation of buses to use within the Division and the Midwest Line will continue to link the roads between the Divisions.

Oba Olubayo, Otaru of Okpe (Akoko-Edo Division): We wonder if it is possible for your Government to take over the further widening of the road between Auchi and Ibillo which is in a terrible bad state? And I don't know if it is possible now to get the Federal roads linking Benin, Auchi to pass via Akoko-Edo and then northern States; that is the one linking Auchi, Igarra and Ibillo?

Military Governor: First of all, what we are doing at the moment is to widen narrow roads, but that one is not as heavy as others and that is

why we shifted our emphasis to the construction of Lampese and other roads. But the main road coming to Okene is not likely to pass through this area as you wish. But it is going to be Auchi-Ukpilla-Ososo-Okene, and parts of Akoko-Edo Division will enjoy these facilities.

Second Question (Akoko-Edo): The second question which bothers our people is about the road between Okpe and Ososo. There is a very short road there. But for years now we have done communal labour in trying to construct it but there is a hill there which our local effort cannot surmount and we are just wondering if the government can assist in levelling down the hill so that it would be motorable and an easy access for officials to go round the Division?

Military Governor: I was there myself, I saw it. I discovered that it was not just a question of using bull-dozer but we have to use explosives to blow up part of the stones which jut out from the sides of the roads. When they start work, I will just ask the Divisional Officer to let us have his priorities. Perhaps, I will mention to him the need to connect this road.

Third Question (Akoko-Edo): My question is that Akoko-Edo is comparatively a backward area. We are wondering whether your government will site some industries to attract labour and manpower? I am saying this from my lay-man's point of view. Maybe, a quarry industry might be all right?

Military Governor: Thank you very much. Already there is a major industry costing us nearly ₦6 million. That is the cattle ranch at Igarra. After we have been able to do our equitable distribution fairly, then we can return to our starting point.

Fourth Question (Akoko-Edo): I am asking whether we can get something out of those rocks?

Military Governor: Yes there is a lot we can get. As you will recall, sometime ago I sent a stone crusher to the place and if you remember well I think the stone crusher is still working but not up to the capacity we want. However, we are trying to get a better one. But we have not been able to locate a good machine.

Chief S. A. Onwuegbuzia (Asaba Division): I am asking whether it will not be advisable for government to introduce a school of agricul-

ture at the former Rural Training Centre, Asaba, for there, we have about 12 houses which were formerly used by the Development Department outside the Teachers Training College which have now been transferred to Abraka College of Education? Can these buildings not help the Midwest State in the proposed school of agriculture?

Military Governor: Thank you very much. The situation is that the Rural Training Centre is the property of all the churches and for government to intervene in the manner which you suggested will require some discussions which in fact are already going on. At the moment the Anglican Bishop of Benin is the proprietor and sort of chairman of the group.

I visited there myself and I found the number of accommodation available, the fish pond, the hatcheries and all the rest and, of course, the very bad road which leads to it. As soon as we get our discussions through we will reactivate the place, and we will continue to produce grade one teachers as we used to do in the past.

Second Question (Asaba Division): To what extent does Asaba Urban benefit from its status as an urban area because when Sapele and others are mentioned nowadays, Asaba is entirely omitted; what is the position?

Military Governor: Asaba township is going to get ₦50,000 out of the sum allocated to Asaba Division.

W. E. Aghahowa (Benin East): I understand that Ugo via Sakpoba has an interior road which was earmarked for tarring in 1964 but up till now that has not been done; why has this been so? Or is it reflected in your current estimate?

Military Governor: We try to relate the priority of the road to what is already existing and at the same time the amount of money available.

The road you mentioned is an important road but not as important as the Benin-Ugo-Abraka road. In view of this, effort was shifted to the more important one for which the amount of ₦2.8 million has been earmarked. When we finish this, we will re-examine the second priority.

Second Question (Benin East): I have to thank you on the efforts being made on the river Ossiomo via Ikpe. Experts have been writing in the papers that Midwest has had more than any other State in the Federation. Why is it that sufficient money has not been provided despite the abundance for the effective completion of the road?

Military Governor: As it is, it is not the money

that is the cause of the delay; it is the executive capacity of the contractors. This project was at least reviewed in 1970 under the 4-Year Development Plan. We studied the design from time to time and the construction started thereafter. And the contractor is moving according to plan. It is not the question of money and I like to impress it upon you that there isn't that abundance which they have referred you to. If there is, you will be told how your budget will cope with it.

Chief E. O. Obamogie (Benin East): I have a very short question. I want to know why it is not possible for the government to take over the full responsibility for the running of all Local Government Councils in the State?

Military Governor: That suggestion is a very good one. But speaking from my own personal point of view I will support it. But as a Government, one has to look at it as a clear serious departure. The matter has to be considered and as I said earlier, the system of local government is under serious review and if we are able to come to a definite conclusion, we will be glad to operate it, provided the people in the area concerned, that is, the local Government Councils realise that we are merely helping rather than trying to dissolve Local Government.

S. I. Ayela-Uwangue (Benin West): What is your Government thinking about the long neglected Benin-Ekenwan road, for the Benin-Ekenwan road was nowhere reflected in your budget and, at the moment, that road is not passable?

Military Governor: It is true that it was not mentioned. It is equally true that not all the roads under construction have been mentioned. But the Benin-Ekenwan road problem started by 1971 when the Ministry of Works sent some plants to widen it up to some few miles after the main barracks, but without effect because the money we had at the time, if we spent it all on the same project, the other areas would suffer. So we decided to spread it out. There are still places where you do not find a road as good as the one you said is bad. In the next development plan there are roads we are putting forward for approval by the Supreme Military Council and if we are lucky, the Benin-Ekenwan road might be one of them.

Second Question (Benin West): Will the Government not consider it necessary to take over Ekiadolo-Ago-Ekpanu road as it is going to be the shortest road between Ogbesse and Benin City when constructed?

Military Governor: It is not a difficult thing for the Government to take over all the roads in the State but the difficulty comes when it comes

to do with financing the maintenance. We are trying to construct Ago-Ekpanu road now. As soon as we finish and if there is need for us to take it over and we are convinced that the council, having tried hard, is still not able to maintain it, then we would consider taking it over. But the Government must be convinced that the council has used all facilities available to it. But we will assist in widening the road as we are doing right now.

Third Question (Benin West): Iyekuselu district is made up of not less than 23 villages. Why is it that no hospital is sited near it? The nearest hospital to us is based in Benin? Secondly, is it not necessary for some of the low-cost houses to be sited in the district council headquarters?

Military Governor: We will consider that. But if you analyse it from the point of view of Benin East, they have two hospitals. The second point is a very strong point because there are about 30 district councils in the Midwest.

Fourth Question (Benin West): I don't want to be subjective, Your Excellency, otherwise, I would have said that Iyekuselu district has not benefited from the water supply scheme of the Government in any form and water is our problem in the whole of the district.

Military Governor: It is not true that Iyekuselu has not benefited, because 6.4 Kilometres after Benin here is Iyekuselu and there is water at Ugbowo.

Alhaji Oliola of Alegbette (Etsako Division): One of the honourable Commissioners sent to Alegbette last year said they were looking into the possibility of constructing a road from Alegbette to Agbede in order to link the towns together. The distance is about 38.4 Kilometres from Alegbette to Agbede and then the present road from Alegbette to Ubiaja is 35.2 Kilometres and Ubiaja to Auchu is 41.6 Kilometres. So, up till now we have not heard anything about it. We have been waiting to hear from Your Excellency, if it is possible for the road to be constructed?

Military Governor: This is under serious consideration. I know the road you are talking about. I passed through it myself. The task force for Etsako south-west will work on that road to link the two towns — Agbede and Alegbette.

Second Question (Etsako): I understand from an oil company that there is mineral in that part of the world. May I know if it is true and how soon it will be possible for exploration?

Military Governor: I am afraid, I don't know myself, but I know that the quotations which

have been given out by the Federal Government include those areas and the oil company will move stage by stage and depending where they find it, they will finally get there.

But we too are praying very seriously that there should be something there because the more they find the more comfortable we will be.

Third Question (Etsako): I am very happy to see that we can go to Alegbette comfortably now because I started from that place this morning. All this time we have not been getting such good roads. May I know if you can help us to tar the road?

Military Governor: The first major plan is to connect Ishan with other roads, thereafter, progress to more permanent roads. At the moment the Alegbette road is not under the plan for tarring but what we will do is to make it an all-season road, that is to say the road will come under a certain priority and as soon as we get to that stage it would be considered without further reference.

Mr. M. B. Ajayi (Etsako): My question is purely commercial and international. It has been announced during the last Federal Government budget that duty on rubber has also been abolished. I want to know from His Excellency whether the ¼k which was normally chargeable to the regional government is still obtainable or not?

Military Governor: The answer to it is that the decision on rubber remains the same as it was announced by the Federal Government. If there is going to be any variation, it is the Supreme Military Council that has the authority to do so. On the question of ¼k I don't know whether it was included in the Federal Government's last budget announcement. If it was, then, we can ensure that no body will charge you. But if it is not, then, it is the State Government's responsibility, and that matter has to be examined by the State Government.

Second Question (Etsako): You said something about the Niger Agency. What relation has the Niger Agency with the ordinary indigenous company in this State?

Military Governor: The first relationship is that they go at a neck-breaking competition because they want both ends meet. And another: Niger Agency will not justify its existence if it cannot make profit. Similarly, the indigenous company performing the same function will not justify its existence if it cannot put its head and neck together to be of benefit to the State. So there is the need for such relation between the indigenous and the Niger Agency, because Niger Agency has vast inter-

national facilities not available to indigenous businessmen. So they can sit down at times and discuss areas of co-operation. Thank you.

Alhaji B. U. Elams (Etsako Division): Your Excellency, Sir, a lot has been given to education in the budget speech. I am asking Your Excellency whether it will not be advisable for the government to provide one comprehensive grammar school in one of the remotest areas in my Division?

Military Governor: That is good. First, I thank you for the suggestion and we like to say that we were already taking initiative and the siting of the institution will depend on a number of factors.

Second Question (Etsako): Thank you, Your Excellency. The second one is the recent announcement and publication by two eastern States natural rulers appealing to their respective governors for the onward transmission to the Head of State for the construction of a second bridge across the Niger from Agenebode to Idah. I am asking, Your Excellency, whether the road to Okene through Ukpilla can be constructed and whether it will not be advisable for the government to take the initiative to start to construct the road now from Ukpilla through Opete to Agenebode to link Kwara State at Idah, then further on to the eastern States?

Military Governor: We have already started the construction to link Fugar road, Agenebode, and Auch, so there is no need for another road to link Ukpilla, because Ukpilla traffic can pass through Benin road via Ubiaja. What you are saying is that you want a road to Idah, isn't it? The second bridge, certainly, I am not sure whether it is on the list to be considered for certain reasons, and that is why we put in a ferry. At the moment the ferry is not making enough money which means the bridge will not be viable.

Third Question: Your Excellency Sir, my question centres on the road from Ukpilla to Agenebode through Okpekpe. There is one short road between Uzairue to Agenebode. There is another road which is only 6.4 Kilometres to Agenebode. Now this is a shorter road Your Excellency. May I know whether the Federal Government will eventually take over the construction of this road from the State Government?

Military Governor: The State Government is very willing at any time to take almost all these roads provided there is fund to do so. There is no problem of taking over roads or constructing

roads. As I said earlier on, the Uzairue/Fugar road will cost about ₦120,000 per mile but if you multiply that by 24 you will know whether it is worth the extra expenditure you are calling for, that is, if there is no bridge and no other problem besides. I want to assure you however that some of those things you are mentioning are being examined by a committee of experts for the Third National Development Plan; if you are lucky once again they will appear.

Fourth Question (Etsako): Another point is, we don't know to what extent the government considers the distance between towns for the establishment of hospitals. Your Excellency, my village is about 28 Kilometres to Agenebode, 27 Kilometres to Uzairue, 48 Kilometres to Auch where you have hospitals. As we have no hospital there, can I know what the government is considering about such a rural area?

Military Governor: There is one at Agenebode, there is one at Auch and the maternity hospital at Uzairue. And for the future, after looking through, if we think that the concentration of population is such that it requires a hospital then a hospital will go there.

But there are some places where you have to walk longer than 14 Kilometres. We are already considering a number of these things. When the Third National Development Plan is published you will have a number of these questions answered. At the moment, I am not in a position to explain to you the position because it has not been approved by the Supreme Military Council.

Solomon Nwokolo (Ika Division): It will appear to me that the Military Government has completely neglected Ika Division and Agbor in particular. I will like to know why the supply of electricity to Agbor has been made a Federal responsibility instead of State responsibility?

Military Governor: I will like to disabuse your mind that the Military Government has neglected Agbor or Ika Division. If it did so, there would have been no establishment of Midwest hotels, if it did so, the road construction which led to the death of that engineer would not have taken place; if it did so, there would be no contract awarded for the electrification of Agbor; if it did so, there will be no hospital at Umunode; if it did so there would have been no Grammar School at Abavo. When we awarded the contract for the supply of electricity to the N.E.P.A., there was no intention on the part of the Midwest Government to establish the Rural Electricity Board. At that time, the supply of electricity was the sole responsibility of the Federal agency.

Later, and there after, the Federal Government broke this monopoly and each State was allowed to establish its own electricity in areas not served by the then E.C.N. By the time we established ours, the contract for the construction of the Agbor scheme which includes Abudu and Umunede from Asaba had been awarded to contractors. It is the speed of the contractors that has brought us concern. If you travel from Asaba you will find that high tension lines and poles are already up. If you are coming from Benin side you will find that from Abudu they are already at the road junction going to Uromi area. So in actual fact, the delay was caused by the contractors not by the Government as some people think.

Second Question (Ika): May I appeal to the Military Government to ensure that the poles being installed are of superior quality, for the ones being installed at the moment are really of poor quality.

Military Governor: The N.E.P.A. has approved specifications which contractors would keep to. If the engineer inspects and finds that the poles are not of the right specification, a certificate will not be signed and the contractor will not get his money. Now that you have mentioned it may be we will have a look at it. But the truth remains that there is a N.E.P.A. engineer supervising the project.

Third Question (Ika): For sometime now, doctors posted to Agbor hospital either out of share indignation or inefficiency have not been doing their work well. If you go to the hospital you can hardly see a doctor. What is your Government doing about this situation?

Military Governor: If a doctor is not doing his duties efficiently for one reason or the other, he should be reported to the Hospital Management Board which has responsibility for the administration of hospitals in the area. The Board will discipline the doctor but I will hesitate to say that it is out of share inefficiency. It is not. If there is any problem, do not hesitate to report to the Hospital Management Board.

Fourth Question (Ika): Will the Military Government please ensure that only qualified doctors who are willing to work are posted to Agbor?

Military Governor: Thank you. I will take note of that.

Fifth Question (Ika): There was no mention of the provision of industry to Agbor throughout the budget speech. Of major importance is also electricity supply which is an important factor

in the establishment of industries. Now that electricity supply to Agbor is under review, may I know if the Military Government should not consider siting an industry in Agbor? Secondly, we would like to know if the Government can consider establishing a Polytechnic in Agbor too?

Military Governor: Mechanized farming is also an industry and two of my men in Ika Division were mandated to look into the possibility of establishing a mechanized farm in Agbor but unfortunately, they are still in the hospital. (as a result of wound sustained from a land dispute. ed.)

If you provide the land we will be prepared to start work on the mechanized farming.

You also requested that a Polytechnic should be established at Agbor. We have already established one and that is at Auchi. We can't establish two Polytechnics in one State. It is not necessary now. We must first of all utilize the facilities available over there to the fullest and there is need for further expansion, then we would spread out.

His Highness Momodu II (Ishan Division): Your Excellency, in your budget speech, you emphasised food production. Irrua was the first place to get a farm centre but surprisingly enough, the farm centre has been removed. What does the Government intend to do now with the centre?

Military Governor: Irrua remains the main area where we produce our food. If you go there now you will find that there is a project going on. This year we have approved up to a million naira for the purchase and installation of equipment at Irrua to produce more birds. The old one there is not functioning properly, and it also continues to remain as a good research centre for agricultural products. What you thought was removed was not in fact removed. We had merely reduced our activities in this sector. Irrua is in fact assuming more importance today than it has ever been with agriculture. If Your Highness goes back and have a look round you will see three equipment, two which cost ₦258,000.

Second Question (Ishan): You also mentioned customary courts in your budget. May I know whether the natural rulers will have a role to play in the set-up?

Military Governor: The natural rulers will continue to have a prominent role in the scheme of things. We set up some two years ago, a committee under Mr. Patridge in addition to the Research centre in my office to work out the role

of chiefs or traditional rulers in future Nigeria. These reports are being considered right now but in whichever way you look at it, our natural rulers will continue to be the link or liaison between the Government on one hand and the people on the other. So it will be suicidal for anybody or a group of people to turn up one night and say that traditional chieftaincy is about to disappear.

Prince Albert Okojie (Ishan): I do not know whether you have a means by which you assess the activities of the foreign banks operating in the Midwest and whether you are in a position to ascertain what help they have been offering to indigenous businessmen and the degree of assistance they have given?

Military Governor: Yes, there is, that is by asking for returns from the various banks and sometimes, if I have doubt in my mind, I invite the managers to discuss with me. They in fact present to me from time to time the papers containing the efforts they are making.

Second Question (Ishan): How many sons and daughters of Midwestern origin are in higher institutions of learning, both in Nigeria and abroad?

Military Governor: I cannot tell you vividly. I wonder if the Commissioner for Education can help? As soon as he gets it, he will let you know. (*Commissioner:* The answer cannot be made available immediately. It is not easy to get it immediately. But I do not think it is less than 10,000).

J. O. Agadaigho (Isoko Division): May I know whether water supply will be extended to the quarters of the town of Ozorro as water supply to the area is a problem.

Military Governor: In my speech I did say that we were planning extension of pipe line. If you travel from Ughelli to Ozorro you will find on the left side of the road some black pipes which are piled up. They are meant for the extension. When you establish water works initially you send pipes to areas where there is concentration of population. The reason for this is that when this present Government came in, it decided that instead of building gigantic water schemes it should build little units so that many more people would benefit from it. In Benin City, for example, every nook and corner has water while in the next village there is nothing. Instead we decided to give little here, little there and so on. And as time progresses we expand them. The pipes which you see along Ughelli/Ozorro road are meant for the extension. We know that the people of Ozorro did almost

three to four miles to get water in the past. Now it is less than a mile. Next time, we will bring it nearer and nearer until everybody gets water. So the expansion is a recurrent problem going on daily; you will get water next time you go there.

Second Question (Isoko): What is the Government doing now about the Ozorro hospital where up till now there is no doctor?

Military Governor: We sent a doctor and nurses there before from the Midwest civil service. Afterwards we get doctors and send them to these mission hospitals but these missions are very jealous about their rights. Consequently, they make sure that they hold on to what they have. And there is a limit to which they can tolerate us. We will continue to do our best to assist these hospitals. If they agree to hand them over to us we'll have no problems but again, over and above, there is an acute shortage of doctors. So, as soon as we get more doctors we will be sending them.

Third Question (Isoko): When will the people of Isoko benefit from the supply of electricity?

Military Governor: Do not say that you have not got your own in Isoko because Oleh is the headquarters. It is being extended to Ozorro and also 6.4 Kilometres towards Emede. And so, all over the place, anything within 8 Kilometres radius will benefit and Ozorro is less than 8 Kilometres to Oleh.

Chief S. O. Akpotu (Isoko Division): It has been observed, Your Excellency, that contracts for the construction of roads are usually awarded during the rainy season instead of dry season with the result that work carried out in such unfavourable weather renders our roads useless for vehicles to ply. May I know what your Government is doing to rectify this situation?

Military Governor: I know the problem you are raising. It is the Ivrogbo road. The Ivrogbo road contract was awarded to a contractor at a cost of ₦900,000 and he started clearing. You saw it yourself. Abruptly, he stopped and we were impatient with him and we decided that time had come for us to terminate the contract. Because no progress was made, we terminated the contract and got another contractor. That contractor came and discussed with the people of the State. After the discussion, we all agreed that the contract should start. By the time we terminated the contract it was already half-way through the season. In the next season we will certainly get work going and all the culverts will be built. Now, on the question of Warri, we awarded the contract but half-way through

we changed our mind that the construction of Warri should be of permanent basis and that some part of it, like Erejuwa, should be permanent concrete road which will be able to last while the main Sapele/Warri road should be drained. At the time you finish the discussion, the design and everything, a period of six months is gone. Now that the contract has been awarded to Niger Cat, Chief Opia and a number of people as you will see are already working. By next June you will have a beautiful road to go through.

Second Question (Isoko): Will it not be fair if the Government pays back a certain percentage of the total cost of community projects embarked upon, such as road construction which will not only benefit the immediate community but other communities as well, instead of the present system of handing out token sums of money, say ₦100 by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Information for any completed self-help project?

Military Governor: In this, I should say you will have my support if we have to exert pressure on Government to pay the amount. The only area where we seem not to agree is that the money is token but the spirit which is generated is not token. It cannot be evaluated or quantified in terms of cash. It is nothing to give you ₦100 because the official who came all the way from Benin to congratulate you and present a voucher to you may spend more than ₦100. But the main reason why it is not possible for Government to pay 30% of that project is that, what you have done may not be given the first priority by government. That is the main point. It may not be of the same priority. For instance, take a road between A and B. Government may think it is better to go straight and the community says no, let us link our two villages, perhaps that may help to ease communication, but that may not be a priority to Government. And at the same time it costs more money. In some cases and not in all cases we realign those roads than if we were constructing them straight. But in a number of cases Government provides the experts to advise the people undertaking the projects. We are very appreciative of the efforts but it will not be possible to pay 30% of that cost. That should not discourage you.

Third Question (Isoko): Would the Government not consider it necessary to establish small scale industries in the rural areas?

Military Governor: I will like to mention this thing again. Talking about small-scale industries, the Government does not usually get involved in small-scale industries. The industry which we are determined to pursue right now is agriculture. If you give us land, we will farm on

it. We have the expertise, the equipment and the brain; so if you will be kind enough to allow us have between 2 and 4 thousand hectares of land we will start farming any day. For instance the people of Ilue-Ologbo agreed to give us land and we are planning to move in.

Chief J. U. Emoybe, the Odio of Okpe (Isoko): May I know from His Excellency whether the road from Ozorro through Irri to Uzogbo and the other from Ellu to Okpe and Ojotonu off Ivrogbo are included in the Government's road construction project?

Military Governor: I can't tell you this, but quite a number of roads in that area have been included in the budget. When we bring up the main ones, you will see it.

Second Question (Isoko): In Isoko Division we have a water system at Ozorro, but we can hardly get water as from January to May. May I know what is responsible for this?

Military Governor: The capacity of the tank is being increased. This is to say that they are boosting the power of the waterworks.

Chief S. E. Oteri (Urhobo East Division): Is it the intention of the government to remove the old machines of the glass factory and replace them with new ones?

Military Governor: Partly correct, partly not. The reason being that quite a number of equipment there would be used and we are trying new ones to replace the damaged ones that are not serviceable. Besides, we will have a bottling factory which will cost about ₦12m.

Second Question: What help will the Government give to those areas where oil has been discovered as the farm lands in these areas have been rendered useless?

Military Governor: Before the oil company uses your land, it pays compensation for the use of the land. If the compensation is not adequate, there is a method for redressing the situation and in some cases, you go to court. But if there is a genuine case of a people, Government will not hesitate to provide assistance. Any people having this problem will have to come forward to the Government and Government will assist them if there are genuine cases.

G. Mukoro (Urhobo East Division): May I know whether the construction work on the Otujerami General Hospital which has been stopped for some time now will be resumed and when will it be opened as no mention of it was made in the current budget speech?

Military Governor: Work on the Otujerami General Hospital will commence as soon as possible and it will be opened. It does not take two years to build but there were problems initially and they have to be solved before you get your money invested. This is the position. Maybe by the end of this month or next, the decision will be conveyed to the contractor to resume work.

Second Question (Urhobo East): Shall we, the people of that area of Otujerami, hope that electricity and water would be extended to the area because of the hospital?

Military Governor: The hospital will require water and electricity. You have all the hope that there will be water and electricity.

Third Question (Urhobo East): The Midwest is about eleven years old now since its creation. Can we know something about the sharing of the assets between the Midwest and the Western State for all these eleven years?

Military Governor: We are pursuing it very vigorously. There has been a number of problems and we are trying to sort them out. It is very difficult after 5-6 years to start reconciling figures and this is one of the factors that is delaying us. I want to let you know that we are not sleeping, for we are still pursuing the problem. There is continuous consultation between us.

Fourth Question (Urhobo East): The bulk of Nigerian revenue comes from oil and in the allocation of revenue there is consideration for the oil producing States. Will it not be advisable for the State Government to give some considerations to the areas of the State that produce oil?

Military Governor: This is a good question. If you work out how much the Government is spending, then you will know the proportion which goes to the oil producing areas.

A. E. Ayamanor (Urhobo West): When will the road between Okirivwu and Sapele be tarred, for it is the only outlet and inlet to Sapele?

Military Governor: It has been awarded to a contractor and work will start in the next dry season. The reason why we stopped work is that we want to maintain the same standard from Warri to Benin and Warri to Sapele town and in fact straight to the Flour Mill.

Second Question (Urhobo West): The statutory allocation to the Midwest from the Federal Government for the 1973/74 and the 1974/75 shows an increase of over 100%. This increase

was largely related to oil revenue. Will it not be proper in the light of the above information to make it possible for those communities from where oil is being exploited to enjoy the benefit of this increased oil royalties?

Military Governor: The same question was asked by your predecessor. Between Patani and Warri, we are spending ₦29 million to build roads and bridges. In these areas, many more river crafts would be bought and you should know that to purchase a fast boat will cost not less than ₦20,000. There is no car being used by the Midwest Government that costs ₦20,000. If you work out the benefit which you derive, you will find that quite a substantial sum of the capital is expended on those communities. Unless, if you still want figures I will give you more figures. From Amukpe to Eku-Agbor road alone is costing nearly ₦20 million. The Ivrogbo road, Obetim road, Ashaka, Amai and quite a large number of roads, the road to Ekiagbodo, Otujerami, all the hospitals: if you work out the cost you will find that the oil producing areas, no doubt, have seen the benefit. One mile of road to Patani, from Ewreni costs ₦5.5 million to build whereas one mile of the road from Uzairue to Agenebode costs ₦8,000. So for every one mile you build in the Delta, you can produce equivalent of ten elsewhere or a minimum of five.

Third Question (Urhobo West): Are there any plans by the Midwest Government to expand the Sapele General Hospital?

Military Governor: Yes, there is.

B.B. Bakpa (Warri Division): What plans has the Government to widen the one road system in Warri from Enerhe junction to Nigerian Ports Authority?

Military Governor: Our plan is to widen it and put drain on both sides and the total cost from our rough estimate is nearly ₦8 million already.

Second Question (Warri Division): How many girls secondary schools are there in the State? And what plan has the Government to build more girls secondary schools to bridge the gap between boys' and girls' education?

Military Governor: I can't remember now but I can count them. Most of the schools are mixed and some of them are purely girls.

Third Question (Warri): To my knowledge, there is only one girls Higher School Certificate School in the State. What plans has the Government to provide H.S.C. Schools for girls?

Military Governor: We don't have Higher School Certificate again. That is going away. We are going to have School of Basic Studies and both boys and girls will have the opportunity to train there.

Fourth Question (Warri): What is the system of revenue allocation that now exists in the country?

Military Governor: The system is this.

When the oil company sells the oil a certain part of it is earmarked as royalty and that is a very small part of it. After that the State of origin gets 45% while the Federal Government gets 5% and 50% goes into the distributable pool where it is shared out on population and equality basis. That is the system as of now.

Chief D. Edukugho (Warri Division): Following the Federal Government budget speech, there were a lot of criticisms from every nook and corner in the country over the so called lion's share of the statutory revenue allocation to the Midwest. May I know if the Midwest Government will not be made a sacrificial lamb in the name of unity when the time comes for the Federal Government to find another equitable system of revenue allocation?

Military Governor: What I said and I will repeat here, and (I am sure many people will agree with me) is that the Midwest is prepared to support any system that will bring justice, fair-play and consistency. That was what I said and I still stand by it.

Chief N. K. Porbemi (Western Ijaw): I don't know if Your Excellency is aware of the dilapidating situation of Forcados general hospital because during the discussion this morning some hospitals were mentioned and Forcados happened to be one.

Military Governor: Yes, I am aware of it and we are doing something about it.

Second Question (Western Ijaw): Your Excellency told us that a lot of river crafts are to be purchased to ply the river? I don't know if your Government is aware of the difficulty because of the shallowness of the river; you cannot ply from Ndoni-Patani to Aboh during the rainy season. Is it not possible for your Government to take it up with the Federal Government to do some dredging?

Military Governor: Our solution to the problem is to look for a flat-bottom craft instead of the sharp one. It costs a lot and from my own knowledge of dredging, to dredge a 16-kilometre route will cost us our own fortune. Unless there is such money and unless the Federal Govern-

ment is convinced that that route is a viable route, it can't commit millions of Naira to dredge a creek because there are many more like that.

Third Question (Western Ijaw): I agree. In the past when Burutu was the headquarters of the main journey to the north and when all the produce from the north were exported from Burutu, that route used to be all right and it was viable. May I know what has made it now unviable?

Military Governor: When it was viable perhaps, this shallowness was not experienced. But now that you have more roads and export shifted to Lagos, Sapele, Koko and Warri, one no longer looks at this creek as very important waterway. But from the point of view of the State, they are and unless the State has money it cannot go into dredging because dredging costs a lot of money.

Fourth Question (Western Ijaw): I do not know whether His Excellency is aware that the Patani man has not got opportunity to enjoy that much talked about Patani road to the fullest for the road only stops at the outskirts of the town?

Military Governor: It is eventually less than half a mile and the other day, we cleared it. Isn't it? We will make sure the road is going to the direction of the one linking the Ohoadia road. What you will do is to connect an access, for it will be less than a mile. I will take it into consideration.

Mr. A. I. Okhenobo (Owan Division): Those of us from Owan Division will be very anxious to know something about the road from Afuze through Uokha leading to Otuo because this road leads to 5 clans in the Division out of 6 clans and carries a very heavy population. We are also anxious to know about the road that has passed through Afuze, Sebe via Auchu but has cut off Warrake whereas, the road from Auchu-Warrake Afuze to Sabo has been the Government recognised road. I do not know what the Government is doing about it?

Military Governor: The Warrake road stopped at the outskirts of the town. The road from Warrake to Sebe will be constructed. The second one is the Afuze to Otuo.

Second Question (Owan Division): The hopes of Midwesterners were raised with the establishment of the Food Production Company but on the contrary, it has not created the desired impact on farmers. Why is this so? Secondly, why should your Government not embark on organised co-operative farming units as a basis for creating a socialist agricultural revolution?

Military Governor: That the Food Production Company has not made a tremendous impact is

traceable to the fact that it has just been established. It takes over a year or two for farmers to make appreciable impact. Secondly, there are co-operative societies but not many people are getting themselves involved. However, it is possible for ten people to own more farm lands and make appreciable impact on the society than the efforts of a great multitude of people. It is the quality of production that matters. For instance, the Agbede farm is producing a lot of food as against what a whole community could produce, and added to that, its products are far more superior.

Mr. Emmanuel B. Otonko (N.Y.S.C. from South Eastern State): Your Excellency, the Midwest Government has been regarded as a pace setter in all fields of human endeavour. Your 1974/75 budget speech presented to the public has enabled the common man to air his or her views. In the light of this, I am asking to know if the Government will not deem it necessary to set up National Youth Service Corps comfort fund? This fund, when raised, would be exclusively meant for the comfort of National Youth Service Corps in the Midwest.

Military Governor: This is our first experience. We will sit back and see if we need adjustment.

Madam Boyo (as a spokesman for housewives):

My question is about the present day cost of living. Prices of food commodities have risen so high with the result that two naira of today can no longer buy the same quantity of meat as it used to be in days gone by. What is your Government planning to do in this respect, in order to alleviate the suffering of the common man in the market?

Military Governor: The answer to this problem is to engage in more food production, for this is the only way to save this situation. Another attributable factor to the high prices of commodities is the unnecessary formation of various market associations aimed at creating scarcity in the midst of plenty. We are appealing to those market associations to break their monopoly.

Mrs. G. Osagie (as a spokesman for the women "Liberation"): May I know, Your Excellency, why women have not been appointed as commissioners in your Government?

Military Governor: As for the appointment of women commissioners, due consideration will be given to it. In fact, time has come to give active consideration for the appointment of women Commissioners.



Published by Ministry of Home Affairs and Information, Information Division, Benin City and
Printed by Midwest Newspapers Corporation, Benin City Nigeria.