

The Swaziland Credit and Savings Bank has continued to provide credit to farmers. Following independence, the Bank's Board of Management was re-constituted to reflect the new Governmental responsibilities and to give wider public representation. Although much time has had to be devoted to the problems posed by irregular and overdue loans, a number of innovations have been made. These include the introduction of standard plans for inexpensive houses and the introduction of loans for small businesses under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Mines. In conjunction with the same Ministry the Bank has recently arranged to share in the organisation of a small industries development corporation to foster and train Swazis in such industries as pottery, leatherwork, woodcrafts, metal works, etc.

Following its extension, the Swaziland Agricultural College and University Centre has mounted a number of short courses and seminars on farming, community development, and business management. All this, has gone side by side with the college's regular courses in Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics.

As has been announced recently, Government is still actively pursuing the land question. Following receipt and perusal of the land mission's report, preliminary arrangements are being made to take the matter a step further with the British Government.

Progress has also been noted in the field of Commerce and Industry. Two new factories have, over the past year, been established on the Matsapha Industrial Estate - the Matola Cement Grinding and Bagging Plant as well as Neopac, for cardboard and paper packaging. Manzini has seen a clothing factory be established.

Trade agreements have been concluded with Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. And while concluding trade agreements has meant an expansion of our market, the establishment of new industries has meant greater economic activity and increased employment opportunities to a few more Swazis.

Government hopes to boost small-scale business in the country through its trade development section which already gives advice and other forms of assistance to some businessmen.

A United Nations expert expected to arrive before long will advise on the re-organisation and management of the Swazi National Handicraft Industry. I believe this is one industry which calls for the unflinching support of, in particular, our rural population.

A report on the UNDP Mineral Survey is nearing completion; and it is hoped that the survey's outcome will lead to further mineral development. A preliminary survey of Lowveld coal deposits is being mounted, while prospecting for asbestos is in progress.

Future Government contribution towards the country's commercial and industrial development will include the formation of a development finance company, as well as a corporation which will assist in the promotion of small-scale business. It will also include providing a plant-hire service for small-scale miners.

Necessary steps are being taken to strengthen the base for the development of our tourist industry which seems to have a very bright future.

It is hoped that negotiations on the revision of the 1910 customs agreement will reach their final stage soon, following the last fortnight's "agreement in principle" on certain points. I trust that the outcome of the negotiations will bring an end to the anxiety which has hitherto engulfed some of us.