

THE CENTRAL BANK OF THE BAHAMAS

FOREIGN DEBT OF THE BAHAMAS, 1965 - 1978

by

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### 1. Introduction

Foreign indebtedness of developing countries is generally explained in terms of their economic growth and development. Economic growth depends to a large extent on domestic capital accumulation but there were severe limitations to this in developing countries owing, inter alia, to a low level of productivity and savings. Foreign loans are, therefore, needed to complement domestic savings for financing the large investments in infrastructure and industry that the growth process demands. However, it has to be recognized that the inflow of foreign resources will give rise in the near future to a return flow of amortization payments, causing a pressure on the balance of payments.

As the production base is narrow, the additional income accruing from these investment expenditures will further stimulate demand for imports. Also, owing to the inequitable structure of income distribution in developing countries, the demand for luxury imports increases. The dual problem facing developing countries, therefore, is that of accelerating domestic capital formation to promote self-sustaining growth and that of expanding exports of goods and services to earn the necessary foreign exchange to finance their growing demand for imports and to meet amortization payments.

However, experience has shown that developing countries can

never rely solely on domestic savings to finance their development. Also their import requirements cannot be financed completely by export earnings as the growth of the latter is subject to wide fluctuations caused by external factors such as changes in the structure of demand in advanced industrial countries, tariffs and other protective barriers to international trade; and internal forces in the form of domestic structural barriers to the expansion of exports. Foreign borrowing makes it possible, in principle, to finance heavy investments that are crucial to the growth process by increasing the capacity to import capital goods and other inputs including technical expertise.

The central objectives of this paper is to show how foreign borrowing has sustained the economic development of The Bahamas and contributed significantly to the foreign exchange earning capacity of the country.

The study will analyse the structure and growth of public sector foreign debt over the period 1965 to 1978 and the management of the debt over the five year period 1973 to 1978. No attempt is made to discuss debt management prior to 1973 owing to the paucity of data on public sector debt operations prior to this date.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section two examines the budgetary operations of the Government and non-financial public enterprises to establish the underlying rationale for foreign borrowing. Section three discusses the structure and composition of the foreign debt. Section four examines growth trends in the outstanding debt. Section five deals with debt management in general terms and

then relates it more specifically to The Bahamas. The foreign debt operations of the Government and the public corporations are looked at separately for the years 1973 to 1978. In section six we will try to assess the benefits of foreign indebtedness by examining the impact of foreign borrowing on domestic employment, on Government finances and on the balance of payments. Section seven concludes with a discussion of the need for continued access to foreign loans for a country such as The Bahamas with its limited domestic resources.

#### 11. Public Sector Budgetary Operations

The public sector expanded its role in economic activity for the period under study both in terms of providing improved public services and of maintaining existing ones. The Government also increased its involvement in other key areas of economic activity such as the tourist industry. An analysis of the Government's budget from 1969-1978 shown in Table 1 reveals that the current account recorded a surplus for all years except 1971. However, when capital expenditures are added the budget shows a deficit for every year except 1973.<sup>1</sup> The deficit is compounded when net lending to public corporations is taken into account.

An important part of the public sector's activity is performed by public corporations which include Bahamas Broadcasting Corporation, Bahamas Electricity Corporation, Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation, Water and Sewerage Corporation, Bahamasair, Hotel Corporation, the Agricultural Corporation and the Development Corporation.

For the period 1973 - 1977, public corporations showed a combined current surplus of \$18.9 million. Capital outlays for the same period of \$75.6 million led to net borrowing of \$56.7 million. For 1978, capital expenditures is estimated to be of the order of \$16.2 million which will require financing in the amount of \$14.0m.

Budgetary deficit <sup>may</sup> should be viewed as a conscious attempt on the part of the public sector to promote economic and social development through improved infrastructural facilities, better education, housing and health facilities and through increased employment opportunities. Foreign loans are required to finance imports resulting from large capital expenditure for infrastructural, industrial and commercial projects undertaken directly by Government or indirectly through public corporations which provide the nation with essential social services. The country's dependency on foreign borrowing, therefore, should not be explained in terms of the inability of Government to control expenditure or to increase the sources of revenue but rather in terms of a deliberate pattern of development adopted by the Government.

#### 111. The Structure of Public Sector Foreign Debt

Foreign indebtedness may arise for a variety of reasons namely to cover a current account deficit; to finance a budgetary deficit; to finance expenditures of a capital nature of public corporations or to meet the foreign exchange needs of the private domestic sector for investment and operating capital. The need to borrow to resolve financial difficulties associated with balance of payments

has not arisen in the case of The Bahamas as the surplus realized in the invisible trade account, due primarily to foreign exchange receipts from tourism, have traditionally been sufficient to offset to a significant extent the visible trade deficit. The private sector no doubt constitutes an important source of foreign borrowing but this study is concerned with foreign indebtedness originating in public sector borrowing.

There are two sources of foreign loans in the case of The Bahamas - direct borrowing from international institutions and foreign currency loans raised from domestic banks, hereafter, referred to as 'internal foreign currency loans'. Domestic banks provide Government with foreign currency loans to purchase foreign-held property directly or indirectly through public corporations.

Details of the terms and conditions and purposes of Government foreign loans are given in Table 11. External loans had maturities of five to fifteen years with interest rates ranging from  $5\frac{1}{2}\%$  to  $10\frac{3}{4}\%$ . Internal foreign currency loans ranged in maturities of five to twenty years with interest rates of  $6\frac{1}{2}\%$  to  $10\frac{3}{4}\%$  for the four loans shown in the table. Repayments, in the main, were on a semi-annual basis. The consortium loan was obtained in domestic currency as well as in foreign currency and the foreign currency portion was pegged at a rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}\%$  above the London interbank offer rate. With regard to the foreign currency portion of the Registered Stock issue, these were available in the range of maturity dates shown. The first interest rate was payable on May 1, 1978 and subsequent payments on

November 1, and May 1 of each subsequent year at a rate of  $1\frac{1}{2}\%$  per annum above the Nassau interbank offer rate obtaining two days prior to the respective interest rate dates.

International loans raised in 1966, and 1967 and 1972 with twelve to fifteen years maturity were at rates between  $5\frac{1}{2}\%$  and 7%. While the rates on loans obtained in 1973 and 1977 were higher at between 6% and  $10\frac{3}{4}\%$  owing to tighter credit conditions in the international market. Rates on internal loans were also high due to the fact that Government had to compete with the private sector for credit, therefore, having to pay rates of up to 10% or higher.

Admittedly, the rates charged on certain loans are high but they may be justified by the expected flow of income and social benefits that the nation will derive from the investment of these loans into productive economic activities.

The purpose for which the loans were obtained are clearly outlined in Table 11. In the cases where funds were earmarked for a variety of capital projects, the purpose is cited as 'general budget finance'. The first foreign loan, the revolving loan which was obtained from a domestic bank was used to finance imports and services from abroad. All other loans were for financing various capital development projects or for purchasing foreign-held property in the agricultural and tourist sectors.

Details relating to the terms and conditions and purposes of Government Guaranteed debt is shown in Table 111.

External loans were guaranteed for three public enterprises - Bahamas Electricity Corporation (B.E.C.), Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation (Batelco) and Water and Sewerage Corporation.

The first two corporations had to resort to foreign borrowing to finance the import component of their extensive capital development projects as outlined in Table 111. in view of inadequate surpluses or transfers from the Government. Loans to B.E.C. and Batelco carried longer maturities of 8 - 20 years with interest rates ranging from  $5\frac{1}{2}\%$  to 10% as shown in the table.

The Water and Sewerage Corporation obtained external financing from the World Bank in the amount of \$10.0 million and from the Caribbean Development Bank a sum of \$3.2 million to implement an expansion project aimed at increasing the supply of potable water for New Providence. Both loans were granted for a period of 20 years at a rate of interest of 8.9%. In addition, co-financing to the extent of US \$6 million was available from local commercial banks.

In regard to internal financing, foreign currency loans were made to the Broadcasting Corporation and the Hotel Corporation. In respect of the former, a loan for \$0.4 million was received from a domestic bank for eight years to finance the expansion of the radio station. A further loan of \$2.3 million was obtained from another commercial bank for the building of the television station. In 1977 the Hotel Corporation, which now controls some 14% of total hotel capacity, obtained a loan of \$11.0 million from a local commercial bank which it used for the extension and renovation of government owned hotels and for the renewal of hotel equipment and the building up of working capital. No interest rates are quoted on these loans which are in the form of an overdraft facility.

From the foregoing, it is clear that foreign currency loans



were raised mainly for development of infrastructure, the tourist industry and for the upgrading of human resources.

#### 1V. The Growth of Public Sector Foreign Debt

As an introduction to the growth of public sector foreign debt, mention will be made of the ownership structure and asset-type composition of the debt, details of which are depicted in Table IV. With respect to portfolio shares, the table reveals that loans comprised the major proportion of the external debt and the internal foreign currency debt. In fact, the portfolio of external debt consisted only of loans up until 1973 with the introduction of government securities issued under the Registered Stock Act of the same year. In regard to the internal foreign currency debt, the amount of \$0.3 million and \$2.1 million shown for government securities for the years 1968 and 1971 represent treasury bills.

The ownership structure of the debt is heavily skewed in favour of <sup>international</sup> internal financial institutions in the case of the external debt and in favour of commercial banks with regards to the internal foreign currency debt. Prior to 1972 the entire external debt was held by international financial institutions, thereafter the structure of ownership changed with the introduction of commercial banks and offshore financial institutions in 1972 and 1973 respectively. The pattern is reversed for the internal foreign debt. Commercial banks were the only debt holders up until 1973 when other local financial institutions became part holders of a small proportion of the internal foreign currency debt.

A more detailed analysis of the growth in public sector foreign debt will be given looking first at the Government foreign debt and then at the Government Guaranteed debt.

(i) Government Foreign Debt

The historical pattern of Government foreign debt is shown in Table V. The only foreign currency loan obtained in 1965 was the revolving loan of \$6.6 million from a domestic bank to finance imports and services from abroad. The total Government foreign debt rose to \$20.9 million by the end of 1966 with the addition of one external loan in the form of a bonded debt in the United States amounting to \$14.3 million. Government foreign indebtedness increased further to \$28.1 million in 1967 with two new external loans - a supplier credit from the Export-Import Bank of \$4.2 million for the harbour development project and a loan of \$3.0 million from the Canadian Export Credit Insurance Corporation to go towards financing the expansion of the water supply system in New Providence. Government's foreign debt outstanding at the end of 1967 showed an increase of \$21.5 million over 1965. Foreign indebtedness rose by \$2.5 million in 1968 primarily as a result of additional drawings on the initial credit advanced by the Export-Import Bank.

Regular amortization payments on external loans decreased outstanding external debt by some \$2.0 million per year from 1968 to 1971. However, internal foreign currency debt for the same period showed no change as the new loan of \$2.0 million for the purchase of the Royal Victoria Hotel was wholly offset by a repayment in the same amount on the revolving loan. Total

Government debt outstanding at the end of 1972, therefore, stood at \$29.2 million.

In 1973 a refinancing loan of \$30.0 million was obtained from a consortium of banks, \$17.2 million of which was in foreign currency. Of this \$17.2 million, \$10.3 million representing the external portion was raised from offshore financial institutions and the remaining \$6.9 million was obtained locally from commercial banks and other local financial institutions. With the addition of the consortium loan and the first instalment of \$3.1 million of supplier credit from the Export-Import Bank for the school building project, external debt outstanding for 1973 totalled \$33.5 million, an increase of \$2.7 million over 1972. The internal foreign currency debt increased by \$6.1 million as the consortium loan of \$6.9 million was partially offset by repayments of \$0.8 million on other internal foreign currency loans. Total Government foreign debt outstanding for 1973, therefore, stood at \$46.0 million.

Repayments on existing loans accounted for the decline in external debt between 1974 and 1976. The marked rise in the internal foreign currency debt between 1973 and 1976 was primarily due to the \$20.0 million loan obtained from a commercial bank in 1974 for the purchase of the three Cable Beach Hotels and the \$2.5 million received from another commercial bank in 1975 for the Hatchet Bay Plantation purchase. Overall Government foreign indebtedness between 1974 and 1976 showed a decline of \$11.6 million to \$56.3 million at year-end 1976.

On October 21, 1974 the Government under the Registered

Stock Act issued stocks in the sum of \$40 million, \$10 million of which was received in foreign currency. Of this \$10 million, \$8.5 million was taken up by external sources and \$1.5 million by local financial institutions. A further external loan of \$4.8 million was granted in 1977 bringing total external loans outstanding to \$34.8 million. The internal foreign currency debt peaked in 1977 at \$37.6 million with the addition of the \$1.5 million Registered Stock issue and the new loan of \$6.6 million from a commercial bank. Total Government foreign debt reached a record level of \$69.4 million in 1977 falling to \$59.9 million at year-end 1978 as a result of periodic amortization payments on existing loans.

(ii) Government Guaranteed Foreign Debt

The features to note about the Government Guaranteed debt shown in Table VI are that up until 1974 all loans were from external sources and up to 1976 all external loans were made to only two corporations, that is, E.E.C, and Catelco. As mentioned earlier, both corporations went through an expansionary phase during the early seventies which required extensive external financing.

External loans grew from \$21.5 million in 1968 to \$32.7 million in 1973, an increase of \$11.2 million (52.1%) over 1968. However, the need for foreign financing by these two corporations was tremendously reduced with the end of their respective expansionary phases. The surpluses generated by these enterprises during the later years sent toward servicing the debt, hence the continuous decline in external indebtedness from \$26.1 million

in 1974 to \$9.6 million at year end 1978. Repayments made during 1977 and 1978 more than offset the new loans of \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million to the Water and Sewerage Corporation in these two respective years.

The first internal foreign currency loan of \$0.3 million was made in 1974 to the Broadcasting Corporation and this brought the total Government Guaranteed debt outstanding to \$26.4 million in 1974. In 1976, a loan of \$6.0 million was made to the Water and Sewerage Corporation and the only other internal debt incurred was an account of the Hotel Corporation in the amount of \$11.0 million in 1977. Internal foreign indebtedness grew by \$18.9 million between 1974 and 1978. However, owing to the marked decline in external loans during this period, total Government Guaranteed foreign debt outstanding only increased by \$2.4 million to \$28.8 million at the end of 1978.

The overall trend in the public sector foreign debt as revealed by Table IV is an upward one. The debt grew at a phenomenal rate between 1965 and 1968 from \$6.6 million to \$51.1 million, with a nominal decline of \$1.5 million in 1969. From 1969 to 1974, foreign debt increased by \$44.7 million to \$94.3 million reaching a peak level of \$101.3 million in 1977 to end 1978 at \$88.7 million.

#### V. Foreign Debt Service

To achieve a positive rate of economic growth it is essential that borrowed foreign financial resources be so deployed that the returns from the investment are not only sufficient to meet future debt service obligations but also to sustain the growth process.

Resources should be invested among projects in such a way as to generate foreign exchange since the capacity to generate sufficient funds to service the debt depends partially on the productivity of activities financed with the aid of external capital.

The income accruing from investment in infrastructural industrial or commercial activities will be available to service the debt or such income may itself constitute an inflow of foreign exchange to the extent that the output of the project can be exported. However, the ability to convert income saved into the foreign exchange required to service the debt raises problems since foreign exchange has alternative and competitive uses. It can be used, inter alia, for servicing the debt or for purchasing foreign goods essential to the growth and development of the economy. However, with proper national planning such conflicts over alternative uses that may arise can be resolved.

The foreign debt service operations of the public sector in the Bahamas for the period 1973-1978 is depicted in Tables VII and VIII and summarized in Table IX.

(i) Government Foreign Debt Service

The rate of expansion of Government foreign debt was less than that of estimated GDP. The nominal debt grew at an average annual rate of 4.5% compared with 7.3% for GDP. Consequently, the ratio of Government foreign debt to GDP as shown

in Table X declined for all years except 1974 and 1977. Government indebtedness also fell behind the growth in international reserves and exports, but increased faster than imports. The official reserves grew at an average annual rate of 6.6%, exports at a rate of 10.8% and imports at a rate of 1.1%. The ratios of foreign debt to the various indicators are shown in Table X.

Table IX shows that Government debt service increased from \$6.3 million in 1973 to an estimated \$16.3 million in 1978 (\$10.7 million in principal repayments and \$5.6 million interest payments). Amortization payments by Government grew steadily between 1973 to 1978 from \$3.8 million to \$10.7 million. The movements in interest payments were more varied.

Government debt service increased faster than the growth in GDP, international reserves and the volume of trade. Debt service grew at an average annual rate of 17.2%. Not surprisingly, therefore, the ratio of debt service to GDP, international reserves and trade volumes showed, in the main, an upward movement (see Table X). Government debt service ratio averaged 1.5%. The disparity in the growth rate of exports and imports on the one hand and of imports and debt service on the other indicates that there was sufficient foreign exchange to pay for imports as well as service the debt thus no conflict arose between the alternative uses of foreign exchange. The relatively low debt service ratio implies that debt servicing imposed no real burden on the foreign exchange earnings of the country.

Government future debt service commitments are outlined in Table XI.

The pattern of debt service estimated for the near future shows a gradual decline in debt servicing from the second quarter of 1979 up to 1983 with a rise of \$2.2 million to \$10.2 million in 1984 and after.

While debt or debt service ratios on their own may be insufficient to determine whether or not a country's debt is being managed properly, control of the nation's foreign debt is essential. Control is partially achieved by prudent borrowing policies and the spreading of maturities over a longer period of time so that amortization payments as well as interest payments can be spaced out rather than lumped together. The size as well as the timing of debt servicing obligations are important. Table XII shows that the Government's foreign debt is almost evenly distributed in the categories 2 to less than 5 years and 5 years and over.

In 1978, 53.8% of Government's borrowings were of 2 to less than 5 years' maturity and 46.2% were of maturities of 5 years and over. This suggests a lumping of payments between 1980 and 1985. However, Table XI depicts a reasonable pattern of debt retirement during this period. Although Government debt service over the period 1973 to 1978 grew at a remarkably rate, the debt service ratio of 1.5% was lower than that of most developing countries.



(ii) Government Guaranteed Debt

The Government Guaranteed debt and debt service fell behind the growth of GDP, the country's foreign exchange reserves and the volume of trade. The debt, in fact, declined at an average annual rate of 2.1% and debt service by 1.5%. As expected the ratios in Table X showed a marked decline for all years barring 1977 in each case. In regard to debt service, the decline in the ratios began after 1974 and continued throughout 1978 except in the case of the ratio of debt service to international reserves for 1978. However, we must bear in mind that the figures for 1978 are only provisional estimates and to this extent the analysis cannot be too definitive. The guaranteed debt service ratio averaged 0.9% for the period 1973 to 1978.

Overall, in view of the judicious deployment of borrowed foreign currency resources in projects which directly earn foreign exchange or in projects which complement the foreign exchange earning industry public sector debt servicing did not prove to be burdensome over the period under review and the outlook for the future appears bright. Total public debt over the period grew at an average annual rate of 2.0% compared with a growth rate of 7.3% in GDP, 10.8% in export earnings, 1.1% in imports and 6.6% in foreign exchange reserves. Total debt service at an average annual rate of 9.4% grew faster than GDP, foreign exchange reserves and imports, but slower than export receipts and the total debt service

ratio amounted to an average of 2.4%.

The country's capacity to earn foreign exchange continues to grow owing to its vibrant tourist industry, thereby increasing its ability to repay its debt. With an average public debt service ratio of 2.4%, it is not surprising that the economy can afford to continue to rely on foreign borrowing to finance the volume of investment necessary for the realization of the nation's growth objectives.

#### VI. Benefits of Foreign Borrowing

As mentioned earlier, Government resorted to foreign borrowing directly or indirectly through public corporations not to meet recurrent expenditures, but rather to finance investments vital to the growth process. The short run benefits of foreign credit is readily apparent in the form of the availability of foreign exchange but the cost in terms of the impact on the balance of payments and the Government finances is felt gradually and after a longer period of time depending on the grace period of the loans. The benefits of foreign borrowing must therefore be assessed in light of this. Benefits may also be assessed by looking at the impact of foreign borrowing on domestic employment.

Public sector borrowing in the Bahamas has had a significant effect on employment. The decline in tourism during the years 1974 and 1975 owing to world wide economic recession and inflation slowed our economic activity tremendously leading to a sharp rise in unemployment. The sharp reduction in domestic

income placed a severe strain on Government finances and the Government was forced to curtail its expenditure even at the cost of delaying the implementation of important investment projects. However, being cognizant of the overriding importance of tourism to the Bahamian economy, the Government decided to participate directly in the tourist industry to sustain domestic employment and growth by purchasing three luxury hotels from foreign private investors with a \$20 million loan from a domestic bank. This timely move by the Government prevented a possible unemployment crisis and maintained employment in the tourist industry. With world economic recovery the benefits of this investment by Government began to flow to the economy.

Foreign finances also help to increase employment opportunities to the extent that when new capital projects for which the loans are obtained are implemented, they will require additional workers for construction and other activities thus generating second and third round employment. As W.A. Lewis<sup>(1)</sup> observes, an increase in infrastructure does not imply an increase in output of commodities. It is hoped that the initial investment by Government will stimulate further investment by the private sector thus increasing employment.

With regards the Government finances, the expansion in foreign debt leads pari passu to rising debt charges. Also we must bear in mind that capital expenditure also carries with it recurring expenses. Consequently, any new capital projects which are financed by foreign resources will result in further increases in recurrent expenditure. The prospective income yield

(1) See W.A. Lewis (3) pp. 407

from new capital investments must, therefore, be sufficient to adequately service the debt as well as to cover any recurrent expenses arising therefrom if foreign borrowing is to be profitable.

Table XIII shows Government foreign debt charges in absolute terms and as a percentage of total Government expenditure. Debt charges as a percentage of total expenditure grew from a low of 5.8% in 1973 to a high of 10.3% in 1975, falling gradually in 1976 and 1978 to rise again slightly in 1978 to 8.5%. The servicing of the debt has, therefore, not caused too much pressure on Government finances. The costs of foreign borrowing in terms of high debt charges must be weighed against the benefits to the economy in the form of rising employment and growth. The price the Government pays for foreign indebtedness in terms of debt charges, is relatively small in comparison with the long run benefits that this and future generation will derive from the assets created from investments in infrastructural, commercial and agricultural projects. Besides, by using foreign currency loans to purchase industrial property formerly owned by foreigners, that income which would normally be transferred abroad will now remain in the domestic economy and will, therefore, be available to go towards the servicing of this debt.

As far as the balance of payments is concerned, foreign borrowing eases the immediate pressure on the balance of payments that would have resulted from domestic borrowing. Although domestic borrowing may absorb some of the excess liquidity that characterises the banking system, if Government borrows from

this source and spends the money for capital projects the country's balance of payments will be adversely affected in view of the country's dependence on imports. Admittedly, the cost of foreign borrowing is higher than that of domestic borrowing, but this would not pose a problem if the foreign funds are invested in carefully selected high income yielding projects.

The inflow of funds will also relieve the pressure on our reserves and free them for meeting short-term fluctuations in our balance of payments. The demand for our exports, which are mainly of a service nature, is an exogeneous one over which we have no control. Therefore, in the event of a temporary shortfall in exports earnings, we can draw on our reserves to cover the balance of payments deficit as well as to meet amortization payments. If the need arises, we can also draw on medium term financing facilities from the International Monetary Fund.

If capital projects are financed by foreign loans, assuming a grace period of 2 to 3 years then the pressure on our reserves on account of debt service will be delayed. Meanwhile, the accretion to the country's foreign exchange reserves primarily from our buoyant tourist industry during this grace period will allow the Government to meet future debt service obligations. The inflow of foreign currency from external sources and the foreign currency raised locally and invested in the country strengthens the balance of payments in the short run. In the longer run, the income that these domestic assets generates will be available to

meet future debt servicing and as long as the inflows of foreign exchange on the current as well as on the capital account exceeds the outflows representing interest and amortization payments then our balance of payment position should remain healthy.

### Conclusion

Public sector foreign indebtedness in the case of the Bahamas arose out of the need to finance the import component of the capital projects earmarked by the Government directly or indirectly through the public corporations. In our case it is always better to resort to foreign borrowing rather than domestic financing so as to avoid any sudden drawdown of our foreign exchange reserves. As mentioned in Section VI, in an open economy such as ours domestic financing would lead to increased expenditures abroad with a concomitant fall in our foreign exchange reserves. Foreign borrowing, on the other hand, relieves pressure on our reserves.

Foreign indebtedness should not be considered a burden to later generations. Notwithstanding this, however, the debt should be properly managed so that it would not prove too burdensome to future generations. As long as foreign resources are used to finance productive economic activity then this will increase the country's capacity to repay its debts, and the benefits from the investments in infrastructure and in other capital projects will flow to future generations.

Given the nature of our economic system, continued foreign indebtedness seems inevitable for the development of the economy. A borrowing policy which obtains for the Bahamas a sustainable flow of foreign loans at favourable terms is to be encouraged. All efforts should be made to ensure that only the most productive and high priority projects which will generate additional income and employment should be allocated the limited foreign resources. What Lewis<sup>(2)</sup> terms 'prestige expenditures' should be kept at a minimum.

(2) *W.A. Lewis* (3), *ibid*, pp. 415

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