



World Bank Group Archives Exhibit Series

World Bank Institute Celebrates Its
50th Anniversary

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The World Bank Group Archives Exhibit Series contains exhibits originally published on the Archives' external website beginning in 2002. When the Archives' website was transferred to a new platform in 2015, it was decided that older exhibits would be converted to pdf format and made available as a series on the World Bank's external database, [Documents & Reports](#).

These exhibits, authored by World Bank archivists, highlight key events, personalities, and publications in the history of the World Bank. They also bring attention to some of the more fascinating archival records contained in the Archives' holdings.

To view current exhibits, visit the [Exhibits](#) page on the Archives' website.



World Bank Institute Celebrates Its 50th Anniversary

March 2005 marks the 50th anniversary of the World Bank Institute (WBI), formerly known as the Economic Development Institute (EDI). On March 11, 1955 the World Bank announced the establishment of an Economic Development Institute, with the support of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. The purpose of this Institute was to serve as a college where senior officials from developing countries could discuss the formulation of development policies and programs, and to learn from each other's experiences. Sir Alec Cairncross, a well-known economist, was invited to become the first director of the EDI.



Economic Development Institute classroom, Washington, D.C. 1956

The first location of EDI was a house at 1620 Belmont Street N.W., which belonged to Mrs. Eugene Meyer, the wife of the first World Bank Group



Field trip to Gerberich Payne shoe factory, March 4, 1958, Mount Joy Borough, PA

president. The Institute was formally launched on January 9, 1956 with the start of the first six-month course. The course was organized into seminars and discussions held every morning followed by afternoon and evening meetings. Occasional field trips were also considered to be an important part of the learning program. The fourteen participants of this course were senior officials from all over the world including Colombia, Egypt, India, Japan, Mexico, Thailand, Uganda, and Yugoslavia.

Sir Alec Cairncross said in his closing words at the first meeting on January 9: "...we believe that, as the years go by, and there grows up in each country a small group of key men have all been trained here, the Institute will become progressively more influential. It is in this first course that a pattern and standard will be set for later courses; what you do here will go to form the character and determine the future of the Institute. May you, and we, be worthy of the



opportunity and the challenge!” (*International Bank Notes*, Vol. 10, No. 2, February 1956).

Over the years the EDI grew significantly and increased the project content of its curriculum. It also conducted courses in various languages starting with French in 1962 followed by Spanish in 1963. In 2000, the Institute was renamed the World Bank Institute.

According to the WBI web site the Institute currently delivers more than 1,000 learning activities a year to nearly 80,000 clients in more than 120 countries; and awards some 350 scholarships annually.



Economic Development Institute participants in discussion, Washington, D.C. [195-]